

SENATE INQUIRY NATIVE VEGETATION LAWS, GREENHOUSE GAS ABATEMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

SUBMISSION by Ken Jones
1 March 2010

Terms of Reference

(1) The impact of native vegetation laws and legislated greenhouse gas abatement measures on landholders, including:

- (a) any diminution of land asset value and productivity as a result of such laws;
- (b) compensation arrangements to landholders resulting from the imposition of such laws;
- (c) the appropriateness of the method of calculation of asset value in the determination of compensation arrangements; and
- (d) any other related matter.

Submission

(1) Native vegetation laws and legislated greenhouse gas abatement measures, to varying degrees, impose restrictions and limit what were prior legitimate commercial activities of private landholders.

At the same time private landholders are still required to manage and maintain the land while being denied the opportunity for commercial benefits from the expenditure of their time, money and other resources. e.g. suppressing invasive weeds etc.

These laws and measures have generally had a negative impact on individual landholders, their families and the broader regional and rural communities in particular.

These impacts have included financial hardship, frustration, despair and anger at the injustice of the situation. This has resulted in additional stress for individuals, their families and their communities and an increase in mental health issues across the nation. The combined impacts and the flow-on effects are significant and need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

- (a) Land asset values are generally based on their ability to produce a commercial return and their productivity. The imposition of these laws and measures restrict commercial activities and reduce the value of the asset.
- (b) Fair and just compensation for the diminution of asset value and productivity (ie change of use) is essential to effectively address the range of negative impacts outlined above.
- (c) Fair and just compensation arrangements should be developed with input from relevant stakeholders and their representatives. These would include; government, landholders/users associations, valuers and community interest groups.
- (d) I do not see any conflict between the stated aims of the laws and the aims of most landholders and land managers i.e. sustainable long term viability, health and productivity of their asset.
Conflicts arise where one section of the community is marginalized and required to bear the burden and costs of government policies reflecting society's broader aspirations. In this case conflict only arises where a change of use occurs (from

the imposition of these laws) without fair and just compensation. I believe a new “structural adjustment” way of thinking, based on identifying and applying the tangible financial value to the community of the environmental management requirements where these laws are applied, would better align stakeholder interests and achieve the stated aims and objectives of these laws.

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(2) in conducting this inquiry, the committee must also examine the impact of the Government's proposed Carbon pollution Reduction Scheme and the range of measures related to climate change announced by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr Abbott) on 2 February 2010.

Submission

I understand the Government's proposed Carbon pollution Reduction Scheme is simply the imposition of another large tax and I fail to see how it will address the practical environmental management challenges that we are facing. The Opposition Leader has outlined a range of tangible activities and (measurable) measures that may deliver more practical outcomes.