

Submission to Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration

Mr Roger McDowell

Dear Senators,

I would like to express my concerns in relation to the erosion of the property rights of Australian farmers. The actions of Federal, State and Local governments are compromising the ability of farmers to efficiently and effectively produce the food and fibre that the country requires to remain self reliant in times of adverse weather conditions.

I would like to note several examples of actions which I believe are restricting farmers from running their properties as productive efficient businesses.

1. **Land is being 'tied up' with caveats** based on today's knowledge which will restrict the use of new technologies as they become available. As an example of technology improving viability - 60 years ago the land near Coonamble/ Walgett and other western area were assessed as marginal rangeland. Following the introduction of new crop varieties, planting equipment and technologies this area is now growing large scale grain crops in some of the most cost effective and productive operations in Eastern Australia.

2. **Conversion of 'Lease in perpetuity' land to 'Freehold' with restrictive caveats.** People who have owned land for generations are being forced to sign caveats which restrict their viability and drought resistance and convert to 'Freehold' Leases. The caveats include bans on cutting dead wood, lighting fires, and the growing particular grasses which are capable of outcompeting undesirable weeds and other detrimental vegetation. These caveats will place land holders in a position where they cannot make their land productive and drought resilient, and therefore they will remain reliant on government assistance during droughts.

3. **The introduction of caveats on land use without compensation is a restriction of farmers ability to conduct their businesses. Land holders need to be flexible and adaptive to respond to changing climate conditions. The introduction of restrictive caveats without any offset by way of compensation will mean that land holders are not able to conduct their enterprises efficiently. Their farms will become defacto national parks which are financially unviable, while they will still be required to pay rates, control feral animals and noxious weeds. This being the case landholders should either be compensated or paid a salary as national park rangers to carry out conservation work.**

My concerns are that landholders are being restricted in their ability to conduct farming enterprises on their own land! The aim of farming is to produce food and fibre for the benefit of all Australians. The current environmental/ climate laws are restricting our farming businesses without compensation and forcing farmers off the land!

The increasing population in Australia and world wide is increasing the price of food, and some countries are already stopping the export of food needed to feed their own people. If we loose the ability to feed ourselves our future will be held to ransom.