

Senate Inquiry: Native Vegetation: Greenhouse Gas abatement and Climate Change measures

Submission:

I would like to make a few brief comments on the above:

All members of the Senate Inquiry should be asked to read the following books as a minimum:

‘Wildlife on Farms – How to conserve native animals’ by David Lindenmayer, Andrew Claridge, Donna Hazell, Damian Michael, Mason Crane, Christopher MacGregor and Ross Cunningham CSIRO 2003 and

‘Planning for Sustainable Farming: The Potter Farmland Plan’ by A Campbell and ‘Woodlands: A Disappearing Landscape’ by D Lindenmayer, M Crane, D Michael (Contains extensive bibliography of texts to consider)

Following this the Senate should be able to answer questions such as:

What is an ecosystem?

What is biodiversity? and

Why is biodiversity important to the future sustainability of productive commercial farming practices?

Then I think the Senate should go and visit sites in the company of people who are known as scientific leaders in the area of native vegetation: people who have devoted their lives to scientifically studying native vegetation ecosystems, many of whom come from the land and/or through family or personal interest remain deeply involved with the land and farming practices - walk through the littoral zones with them and see these areas through their eyes, not through the eyes of farmers who have overextended their bank loans or who are obsessed with building their empires and clearing every inch of their land for profit. Speak to farmers who have had their backs to the wall and have learnt through experience that they have to try something different: and now are keen to speak to other farmers, through the Landcare programme, about their increased productivity while at the same time conserving native vegetation. Studies undertaken with farmers (as I understand it) have shown that re-plantings and re-vegetation do not generate the wildlife refuges that were first touted, nor does productivity increase with land clearing (in fact it declines) hence the need to ensure that tracts of land are preserved in their natural state. I do acknowledge, however, that the invasion of woody weeds is a matter for concern and I support its removal in some circumstances, but not at the expense of clearing an over-storey of established eucalypts and destroying precious ecosystems.

In order for Australia to achieve sustainability in the future, farmers need to make a commitment to diversifying farming practices and learning more about land management solutions that incorporates native vegetation and does not denude the landscape. It is telling that “Landcare was initially a collaborative idea of the National Farmers Federation and the Australian Conservation Foundation” (p40 Wildlife on Farms): it is

time to revisit the founding principles of that collaboration. I believe that farmers accept an obligation to protecting ecosystems when they become guardians of the land through ownership. The government's role is to ensure that ecosystems are protected for hundreds of years into the future and not make decisions based on arguments put forward by those who do not have knowledge of the complex and intricate environmental processes involved: processes that depend on diversity in the Australian native landscapes: the people who have the knowledge of these processes are generally environmental scientists and they are the ones who should be asked, not those who simply want to preserve outdated farming practices to the detriment of precious habitat for their own personal gains. There is a middle ground and it requires government financial support at targeted programmes to sustain it. For everyone.

Thankyou for taking the time to read my submission.