

My husband and I have worked hard all our working lives to buy and pay for the land we own, all of which is freehold. We have recently found that we are unable to develop the land as we wish because of the draconian vegetation laws imposed on us by all levels of government. These laws, brought in by stealth, without any consultation with those who are directly and so adversely affected, have also taken away our democratic rights to a fair trial when these laws are broken. We are now guilty and given no opportunity to put up any defense. In some cases we have not even been informed what the breaches are. Not only do such laws stifle the initiative and innovation of farmers to improve their land for the overall good of the society we live in, they greatly reduce the opportunity of landowners to be efficient and productive. It also means that, once valuable land, with the stroke of a pen from green fundamentalists, who have no idea as to the complexities of managing a property sustainably, has been greatly devalued. This makes it either difficult or impossible to sell for its proper value, should it become necessary.

If a thief steals something the victim is usually compensated, yet it is not considered necessary to compensate landowners whose livelihoods are taken away by the imposition of such laws. How is it that governments, who are elected by the people, to work for the people can go against all that is just and take away basic rights? If we live in a democratic society we expect to be innocent until proven guilty, to have a fair trial, so our case can be judged impartially by jury and the constitution upheld. All these rights have been stripped away, leaving us feeling we are living in a communist state. We live in Australia because it is a free and beautiful place in which to live, at least it used to be. We care for our land and wish to pass it on to the next generation as a viable business or career.