

Dear Committee Members,

As farmers on the Dorrigo Plateau (Mid North Coast NSW) we have since 1980 cared for our land under the philosophy of "Permaculture". We have spared certain section of our property after years of burn and slash activities by the previous owners, and created buffer and shelter zones for niche farming in conjunction with wild life conservation. Our property (215 ha) is located on the wester slopes of Mt. Champion and borders on to the now "Junuy Juluum" National Park in the east and the Bielsdown River in the west.

We have installed dams and water troughs for life stock to keep them off river and creek banks at our own expense, well before the Landcare movement started to subsidise such operations. Gradients of more than 25° were re-vegetated with native species to prevent erosion and to create habitat for red tailed cockatoos and other birds, mammals, reptiles and marsupials.

Whilst sparing certain paddocks we found that some native species of plants grew during a good season to a size that prohibited removal under NSW native vegetation law, effectively excluding such valuable land from primary production.

These areas now form a carbon sink for the benefit of the rest of society without contribution to our livelihood. Quite the contrary, these former paddocks are a cost factor with regard to council rates and charges, as well as maintenance and control of weeds and pests (lantana, privet, camphor laurel, fire weed, feral cats, pigs etc.).

We believe to belong to an egalitarian and compassionate society and beg to ask the following questions:

1. Does the adage still hold true, that there is nothing like a free lunch?
2. Why should the rest of society by way of such legislation benefit at our expense?
3. Is there a chance of ever returning such areas to normal production?
4. What compensation is planned if these areas are lost, and now serve as carbon sinks?
5. Can we expect to get a fair go?

God bless our democratic and fair system. We thank you in advance for your consideration of the challenge on hand and a fair outcome for those who do the right thing.

Yours truly
Marie & Rudy Keller