

A personal view.

Background

The family has been farming for 700 years, originating in England. William Henry came to Australia in 1882 at the age of 21 and helped create our long heritage of Merino Sheep and Cattle enterprises. We are the third and fourth generation in this rural enterprise.

I am a wife and daughter in law. I met my husband when in High School. I married and moved to the Charleville area when I was 20 years old. I had nothing in common with this part of the world as I was from the city. As I grew to understand my new part of the world I also started to see what makes this family tick.

I could see a passion that I have never witnessed before. This family lived and breathed sheep and cattle production. While we are separate entities a day never goes by where there is not some form of consultation happening between families.

Even through droughts and flooding rains this family was always making plans for the health and management of their animals. I had always seen an animal as just an animal. NOT so. To this farming family, every animal is paramount. because it is an animal, not because it simply earns them an income. This passion and dedication to animals is the true essence and sole of this farming family.

This is what makes them so important. NOT everyone can be a farmer. It is a lifelong apprenticeship passed down from the previous generations.

Our Vision

To be able to farm animals in the environment we know best. We wish to teach our children our ways and give them as many opportunities available to them. We wish to have the flexibility to run and develop our enterprises, so we may hand them on to the next generation in a better condition than we received them. This ensures our children the ability to use their skills and knowledge to grow and earn a living from this enterprise.

Impacts of Vegetation Management laws Family and Property.

The impact of the Vegetation Management laws on our family has been profound. I can remember the day I heard the government announcement as if it was yesterday. I was totally gutted, not only for myself, husband and parents in law, but for my children. This day would change the future of our farming entity forever. We no longer had the ability to plan for the future, in our generation or that of our children's. I think I cried for days. It was like a part of me had died.

We are now locked in an agreement we never had any real say in or wanted. At the stroke of a pen we could no longer develop 50 percent of our property. Yes we were able to use it, but not develop it. That is like having a home that I can use the rooms, but not being able to change any part of half of those rooms.

The ability to plan future development has been restricted. Our family has areas locked in PMAV's.

This process to lock these areas in was one of the most stressful things this family have ever done. We were made to feel like common criminals and our opinions counted for nothing. It was as if the DNR were on a mission to keep as much of our land out of the PMAV as possible. My husband and father in law are the most passive men you would ever meet. The process of locking PMAV's in busted these men's sole. They became angry through pure frustration because no one gave a toss. It broke my heart to see the passion die. It got to the point where my husband would not get in the car with DNR, as he could not look at them through hatred. I will never forget this look. My husband and son, then 16, followed the DNR around on bikes as they did their transects. They witness department officials walking over logs, heading towards trees to give them a positive remnant transect for their needs. This day changed my son's opinion of the DNR and government for ever. He could not believe how unfair this was. The "Bullshit we have to go through to just have our land" were his words.

We estimated that we have lost an additional 100000 dollars a year in unearned income. This is a prediction over 20 years of a development program. This additional income would have enabled us to pay off an additional property for our children. It would also enabled us to pay wages for our son or daughter to help run this enterprise. This enables them to stay in our community and give it a future. The 100000 dollars that government granted us is equal to a loss of 1 years income on a developed property.

It is hard to gauge the loss to our property asset value. We do know for a fact that people interested in buying a property now look at PMAV's first. If it has a PMAV they look at it. If not they do not. This to me is unfair to people who could not afford to go through the process of PMAV. Selling or buying land is no longer on a level playing field.

Future

The future of our family run enterprise is very uncertain. As parents we want the best for our children. We have asked our son to get an apprenticeship and our daughter has moved away to the city as it provides more opportunities for her.

We are able to cope with floods and drought, as they are part of running this type of enterprise in a semi arid environment. The amount of government interference in our business has changed our out look for the future of our children. They have experienced the cruelty of this interference in our lives, making them very hesitant to come home. Why would they want to come home. We are probably our own worst enemy, encouraging them to leave and get a real job. Sad, really when we no longer think of one of the nations most important industries as not a real job.

Our latest fear is the Carbon reduction Scheme. I really do not think our rural families can take any more hits. It is like we are just waiting for another kick in the guts from the government. We MUST make this a positive outcome for farming families in the form of income or we will certainly loose our next generation. We work hard to take great care of our land, so we should be rewarded. There is no sense in locking it up solely for trees,

when we can use it and lock up carbon in the soil. It would be a win win situation. No one likes to work for nothing. Our son can do his apprenticeship and earn \$80 an hour, have weekends off, while running his own business. Why would he want to trade that, unless he had a better option!!!

As a family enterprise we would like our children to continue our heritage. There must be a reason for our children to come home. They must make these decisions on their own terms. There is a huge amount of pressure on the next generation to continue our legacy. We can regulate vegetation, sequest carbon for the environment as much as we like. The reality is that the world needs food to survive, but farming needs the next generation, to survive. Without future long term, balanced, planning for industry production, we will all die.