

To Senate inquiry into Native Vegetation Greenhouse Gas abatement and Climate change measures.

Our family partnership operates property in the _____ district of NSW. We operate a mix of cereal cropping, oil seeds legumes and beef cattle. The cropping program is a mixture of reduced and no till farming, concentrating on maintaining ground cover to reduce soil erosion and maximize water infiltration in a marginal rainfall zone. By utilizing modern technologies the property is productive, maintains natural biodiversity and can provide opportunities for the next generation to build on.

However this is where the problem begins.

This land type, (and it stretches from Condobolin north to Walgett), is subject to Invasive Native Scrub (INS). This insidious weed is nature's version of cancer. If not removed, it slowly takes over, starving the soil of moisture and nutrients. The result is a barren wasteland devoid of groundcover which is extremely erosion prone. And remember, *this is a process of nature*. History has shown that by removing INS and allowing ground cover to return produces a better outcome for the landowner, the birdlife, the environment and the long term sustainability of the property. It is not rocket science.

The problem we have is the onerous covenants that are continually placed on our operation. We are attempting to transfer land from Leasehold to Freehold, but if we sign off on the proposal the covenants will affect the long term viability of the farm. Simple as that. We are expected to manage INS by HAND METHODS or SPOTSPRAY....on the size of our holding this is like picking clover out of the MCG with a pair of tweezers!!!

Another covenant does not allow the sowing of better more productive grasses. How narrow minded is that! On the one hand farmers are being told to embrace change to make them self supporting and to prepare a range of drought strategies to get away from Exceptional Circumstances relief packages and alleviate the Government purse, yet a Government department blocks the ability of the land owner to HELP himself.

Our children have an inherent love of the land and would like to return to the farm but as parents we struggle to see a long term future for them if continual barriers to sustainability are placed in front of them. It's hard enough to make a go of things on the un-level playing field that the Australian farmer operates in, without further restrictions forced on us, for the so called good of the nation, with no thought to compensation for loss of income and property right.

The Land and Property Management Authority state that compensation does not apply because you still have grazing rights on the said land, but what good is that if grass doesn't grow due to INS. You try and feed an animal on a concrete slab, because that is what happens to land locked up by covenants restricting sensible management practices. Farmers are flexible operators who adjust their programs as required to remain viable. To take away the flexibility to manage any form of weed, detrimental to the property, is like taking the tools off a carpenter. Without a range of tools you can't do the job properly.

We need to be allowed to use whatever methods are required, be that mechanical, chemical and grazing techniques to maintain a healthy landscape for now and into the future if our youth are ever to return to the industry.

The resulting diminishing land value due to lost production has seen agricultural land drop by 15% according to local property consultants. This has eroded equities placing enormous financial pressure on an already cash strapped community. Properties were purchased on the understanding that debt serviceability would come from 90 to 100% of the holding. Covenants on some titles will see 60% of the land being available to service that debt. This is so blatantly unfair!!! Talk about restriction of trade, the government collected stamp duty off 100% of the land, the farmer pays taxes, insurances and rates on 100% of the area but is EXPECTED to service all of this off 60% of his land holding.

To be honest, the progression down the compensation path is a long drawn out procedure which could cost a bomb. Returning full property rights to the landowner is the more sensible way to go and

if the land owner chooses to surrender some land for environmental purposes, that land would be subject to compensation. Then if he can't survive by his own hand, without restrictions on him, the land would sell and that is when the government has the choice to purchase.

If the government fails to return property rights to the landowner, compensation or custodian payment will be the only way to go but in reality, COMMONSENSE says that would place an enormous financial burden on Australian taxpayers, many who haven't been asked if they support the concept, let alone understand the issues facing farmers today.

Therefore I would like a referendum at the next election asking the people of Australia if they would compensate farmers to lock up land for supposed environmental benefits, bearing in mind that with population increases to come, people have to be fed somehow.

An issue that government DOES NOT take seriously enough is the emotional effect that restrictive practices are having on small communities. The recluse nature of a lot of men on the land has manifested itself due to financial constraints. The fear of the future, of not being able to work with their sons and daughters because of a bureaucratic minefield before them, of not being skilled enough to deal with that..... Farmers are physical workers not lawyers They are running scared of doing something wrong that their fathers had taught them was the way forward. Wives who would have previously shared the work load with their partners are off working to help out (often travelling hundreds of kilometers every week), labor is scarce, and pressure builds on the family unit..... This should not be happening to families. And it is only happening because of the failure of government to support its own people before nations abroad.

This inquiry is the opportunity to recognize land owners as the best custodians of the land.

I enclose photos of the INS re-growth that is the heart of our problem. The density of the problem should show that a range of methods have to be available to achieve a positive outcome. Also the photo of the boys... you tell them that it's all over because some crowd in a city says you're not needed.

Yours Faithfully

Greg Moody



Drastic effect of Invasive Native Scrub



Positive result in the foreground. INS encroachment at rear.



The concrete slab effect.



Blue wattle INS on paddock that has produced 8 crops in the last 12 years.



Re growth on old cropping country.



Previously open grazing country.



Massive proliferation of emu bush. Impossible to clear by hand methods.



Emerging hop bush seedlings. With no control will be one metre in height by December 2010.