

To: Senate Finance & Public Administration Committee.

From: Scott Cooper

Senate Inquiry into Native Vegetation Laws, Greenhouse Gas Abatement and Climate Change.

Background:

I am a 5th generation primary producer, of which 4 generations have farmed the current property for the last 104 - 105 years. In that time, my family has produced sheep, cattle, horses & grain off this property.

Submission:

As far as native vegetation goes it is my view that having sections of this Prime Ag country declared native vegetation and still having to pay rates on this country that I cannot use for production is not right. We do not receive compensation for this either, nor do we receive carbon credits. It seems the government makes us pay for this vegetation to make themselves feel like they've done something for the environment. Yet with parklands & national parks the rate payers, tax payers bear the cost of having this land unproductive. If we can't clear this land, then we should be compensated for the loss of productivity. The way it stands now these sections of land are virtually worth nothing to a potential buyer. Though a mining company can come and clear this vegetation, the same vegetation that we as farmers are not allowed to clear under state law. Where are our property rights? Just because the government is getting royalty then it's all ok. Also having these trees in the middle of paddocks reduces the efficiency of spraying, planting & harvesting operations. It was ok in the days of sheep & cattle, but for cropping it is less desirable. As our business changes farmers need the flexibility to manage their land as they have for decades. Farmers don't want to degrade their land, it's their livelihood. They want to pass it on to their children in a better state than when they got it & in a profitable state.

The other thing that concerns me is the coal seam gas industry. These companies can come to a property and in order to extract the gas have to dewater the coal seam. Now in doing this they remove large amounts of water, which affects the shallower aquifers that we as landholders rely on. Again, this will affect our productivity. Whether it be for stock water or irrigation purposes. These CSG companies plan to extract around 2000000 mega litres from the coal seams over the next few years. This is 50 times the amount that is being used now by farmers & townships within the Condamine alluvium. Landholders seem to be scarifying production for these industries.

Summary:

Landholders need to be able to manage their land the way they think best, after all they want it to remain viable well into the future, for their children's, children. If not, then the government should pay the rates on land they have deemed native vegetation & compensate producers for the lost production these areas have and will incur, not to mention the carbon credits they will accrue.

Thank – you for taking my submission into consideration.

Scott Cooper.