

Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

26<sup>th</sup> March 2010

To Whom It may Concern

I make the following points in support of property owners being returned what should be rightfully theirs – **PROPERTY RIGHTS**. Our farming business is no different to any other business – we must maximise returns in order to be profitable and sustainable long into the future. This means, by its very nature, that we are carers of the environment and very aware of farm production sustainability.

- Research demonstrates that soil degradation and compaction problems can be arrested by controlled traffic and new technology farming practices. On our farms we have considerable expenditure continually being expended on machinery to provide for controlled traffic farming eg. GPS systems technology, automatic steering of tractors and tillage machinery designed and fabricated to provide for the needs of controlled traffic. Minimum-tillage has been researched and practised on our properties for more than thirty years as a conservation measure.
- The erosion of property rights has meant that a land owner is unable to remove single trees from within cultivation boundaries. Individual trees are a severe impediment to cost efficient farming for the following reasons;
  - They rob a considerable radius of ground around the tree.
  - Noxious weeds grow at the base of a tree.
  - Coolabah trees have very large surface roots surrounding the tree, which cause considerable damage to machinery.
  - In zero-tillage extensive use of herbicides is used for weed control. Ground rig application of herbicides is made much more costly having to go around single trees because of a doubling up of chemical and ill placement of same. Some of the chemical used is residual which exacerbates the problem.
- If science advised that the protection of environment needs more than 10% of remanent timber to be left on rural property than the Australian community needs to accept that the whole community needs to pay for it by way of compensation.
- Most farmers would accept that leaving up to 10% of the remanent timber on their farm should be considered a significant personal contribution to environmental protection. Increases above 10% will severely erode the profitability of the farm.
- Landholders experience is that there are significant differences in land values between cleared and farmed land and uncleared land. There certainly is a significant difference in gross margin returns between cleared and farmed land and uncleared land.

	Uncleared Land (cattle)	Cleared & Farmed (av of. Breadwheat & legume return)
Gross Margin \$/ha	\$15	\$252.00

7 year average on our property near Mungindi NSW (Independently Benchmarked figures)

- A demonstration of the "*soft society*" syndrome that prevails in Australia is when everyone wants protection for themselves and protection for the environment at no cost to them. A sensible vision would have some reference to the economic health of Australia as well as environmental health.
- One could well argue that the degrading of the environment has to be stopped and turned around. One could argue similarly that the degrading of the rural economic environment has to be stopped as well.
- The benefit to the local and wider community will be substantial if farms are allowed to be managed more cost efficiently and profitably. Profitable farms provide opportunity for everyone and the environment.
  - Employment opportunity
  - Better employee conditions
  - Happier and less stressed communities.
  - Viability and sustainability for rural Australia.

Australian farming has long been considered efficient by best world practice standards. It would be unforgivable to allow such an important part of Australia's history and future to be condemned to being unsustainable due to poor and unfair government environmental policy.

Yours faithfully

Lisa M Orchin