

Submission to Inquiry of Native vegetation Laws, Greenhouse Gas Abatement & Climate Change Measures

To: Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee

From: Rebecca Meynink

Background

My husband and I are fifth generation farmers. My family has been in the Warra and Brigalow area for 78 years and I have three kids that go to the Jandowae State School. Our love and passion is our family and our farming enterprise. We are very fortunate to have some of the best agricultural land that is available.

Submission

I am very lucky that this country that we farm is in the top 2 percent of Queensland's cropping land. The only problem is that as a result of the Native Vegetation Laws my property now has several isolated areas of timber that is dotted all through the middle of and around the edge of my prime farming land.

I am expected to pay rates on these timbered areas at the same rate as my most productive country. These timbered areas only grow noxious weeds and are a great breeding ground for feral animals to which we have to spend our time and money controlling both of them and paying the rates.

The trees take allot of moisture out of the ground and nothing ever grows around them so the area that they cover is really multiplied by two as the crops that are grown are never any good for at least 50 to 100 metres around them. The feral animals that breed in them such as kangaroos and pigs then feed on all the emerging crops that I grow and destroy large areas causing even greater crop losses. And this I am dictated to by our government that this is what is best for everyone.

We do not want to knock all timber down at all as we value sensible clearing and shade lines and wind breaks. But all that I have witnessed from the radical lock down of tree clearing was panic clearing and allot of timber got pushed over just because of the thought that all of a sudden all of our rights were going to be lost and we don't know if our children or our grand children might want to clear that timber so the only way to solve the issue was to knock it down and this is only a bad result for both government and farmer as we had no wish to push this timber over.

These timbered areas may have had some rationale if I would have been able to claim carbon credits on it should the new ETS systems have ever eventuated. However the way the system was to be designed would have meant that these timbered areas would not have been eligible and I would have had to plant trees.

All of our country has Freehold Title and if you ask me it would appear that owning Freehold land is an absolute waste of time as it means nothing and I really have no rights as to how I manage and care for my land. As a farmer and a parent my only interest is to take care of my land to the absolute best of my ability as to not do this would only erode my ability to earn money from my business to help support my family and it would not be fair on my children and all the generations to come after us, because as farmers we plan for the future and the future to us hundreds of years away.

My country has come under threat of open cut Coal mining in the last eighteen months and this is where the laws are very stuffed up. The government puts restrictions on farmers to tree clearing and water restrictions and everything else they can think of when we all ready only want to do what is best for the land, but along comes a miner and what do you know none of these rules to water or tree clearing apply to them as they have told us that the trees on our soil that we are currently not able to clear, when they come in they will flatten the lot as they said none of these rules apply to them.

Look at what the Coal Seam Gas industry is doing to the country they are going to destroy and stuff more country and water aquifers than any business has in the past and they are just let get away with this but if a farmer wanted to knock some timber down or put in another bore for irrigation he would not be allowed. These mining companies are only worried about profit and the almighty dollar and they have no thought or care to what they are going to do to the ground and they are going to leave it for the next generation because they only think ahead ten or twenty years which is a bloody joke when it comes to prime agricultural land. If farmers thought like that we wouldn't be here today it would have all been buggered four generations ago.

You only have to look over the border into NSW and see the stupidity of the tree clearing laws and the big law case with a large wheat grower in the Moree Mungindi area a few years ago when he got in trouble for knocking trees over. I might not agree with him knocking those trees over but at least when those trees were gone he was going to be planting wheat where those trees were and that will feed this nation for the next couple of hundred years but a coal mine would be legal to knock those trees over and dig the soil up and destroy the landscape for the rest of eternity for a quick dollar and they would get away scot free.

Summary

We need the opportunity to make responsible planning decisions for our land ourselves. If this land is to stay locked up for good we need carbon credits to be paid to us for them as we are not a charity business and if they are hear benefitting mankind and I am to care for them and my children are to care for them we need some compensation for them. At the end of the day we need to be able to take control again of what we are doing as farmers as we have lost all our rights along the way and we are paying dearly for this and so will our children all thanks to people that have no idea how to best manage this great soil.

Thank you for taking the time to read my submission.
Rebecca Meynink