

To the Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee,

PO Box 6100

Parliament House

Canberra ACT 2600

Australia

From Ben Beccia & others

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee inquiry into Native Vegetation Laws, Greenhouse Gas Abatement and Climate Change Measures.**

Dear Committee,

We thank you for this opportunity to express our concerns in relation to this inquiry.

**Forenote:** Prior to the advent of the current Federal, State & local government environmental laws, properties were purchased as 'estates in fee simple' & as 'freehold' titles. These purchases were made in good faith by the purchasers on the utter basis that the governments of the day & subsequent governments would not tarnish the subsequent realisability of these properties, with what can only be surmised as vicious & vindictive environmental laws. If purchasers knew then, what they now know about these laws, many would never have consciously contemplated entering into these purchases. We would not have! We have been misled & deceived. Indeed, were these elected government bodies, corporations instead, they would now be accountable & liable for compensation under a multitude of legal rights & processes.

Our concern is about the ( adverse ) impact of the native vegetation laws introduced on the diminution of land asset values. Since the introduction of the Commonwealth's EPBC Act & any other environmental acts & prior to this, the enactment by State governments of their native vegetation framework plans, the enactments of 'Environmental Significance overlays' into local planning schemes by either State and /or local governments, & as of recently, by the introduction of greenhouse carbon legislation ( 'carbon sinks' ) has induced a plight of irreversible diminution of land values the width & breadth of our vast nation. This plight has largely gone unnoticed, until recently. Whilst this nation's land owner constituents duly recognise & accept the environmental challenges ahead portrayed by global warming, we are stifled by governments & public bureaucracies which have effectively sequestered our land in the name of the environment & without any concern for the collateral damage inflicted on our livelihood. This damage has been largely occasioned through the diminution of land values, by reducing available equity in land

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which could have been encumbered by the owner to increase the land's productivity and / or invested elsewhere within our economy.

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The evidence that exists to reflect the diminution is substantial in terms of the number of owners & properties affected & readily verifiable by qualified persons ( that is, chiefly registered land valuers ). In our particular situation, we would also be representing de facto, those landowners

unaware of this inquiry, the land which circumferences Melbourne's existing urban growth boundary. Much of this land, in the past, was expressly set aside, via the provisions of the local planning schemes, by the relevant local municipalities for future urban development uses. Since, the evolution of the above laws, much of this land's intended future use has been effectively removed & relegated to purposes for environmental protection. The anecdotal & verifiable diminution in value per acre in this area is in the order of at least \$200,000 per acre or at least approx \$500,000 per hectare, in today's dollars. The area involved would be in the thousands of acres. It seems that 'environmental protection' comes at a high price to those who've had the **least** say in it.

Whilst the above numbers & values are substantial, they are similar if not moreso, when consideration is given to the rural, farming & grazing land impacted by the above laws across this nation. The analogy here being a much lower diminution per area rate, however, multiplied by a much much larger area ( being in the millions of acres ).

Our contention here centres upon the much higher readily realisable land values in the absence of the above laws. These much higher land values & the hopes & aspirations hinged to them have now been all but obliterated, without any mention of recompense from anyone. It must be a significant rejoice for any worthy environmentalist to have our continent 'locked up' as it were, in the name of the environment. In ordinary economics, values are not obliterated, they are 'sold'. In this case, the Federal government, should therefore purchase all these properties at their higher values in order to recompense the owners for their losses & retain the properties in the name of the environment. In theory, this would be justifiable, though in practice, that is, from a Federal fiscal perspective the fundable losses would be in the thousands of billions of dollars, these days, also known as trillions. Not entirely palatable, is it! In this instance, it seems that the above laws should only be applied & fully compensated for, wherever the Federal government is keen to see an area environmentally protected. Where this is not the case, they should all be repealed immediately, including the State & local government laws. Where areas are removed from Federal environmental protection they should **not** be afforded re protection by State and / or local governments. Hence, this matter should be approached with the full collaboration of all concerned - Federal, State, local governments, corporations & individuals.

Again, we thank the Senate committee for the opportunity, to address our concerns in this matter & are only too happy to oblige it with further information it may need in arriving at equitable resolutions herefor. In concluding, we trust that our duly elected representatives give serious consideration to the concerns raised here & proceed to formalise equitable processes to counter these concerns.

Yours sincerely,

Ben Beccia.