

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

SUBMISSION ON NATIVE VEGETATION LAWS, GREENHOUSE GAS ABATEMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE MEASURES.

I object most strongly to the Native Vegetation Act and consider just compensation for reduction in capital value and lack of income must be paid. Farmers overseas are valued and subsidised for their good work. Australia penalises farmers and devalues their properties, taking their earning capacity from them.

I consider it most unjust that farmers including my husband and I have paid good money, mostly on loan for freehold properties believing we are entitled to make a living from it. Gradually that right has been eroded by SEPP 46 and the Native Vegetation Act.

We have to pay Council rates, insurance, infrastructure, weed control etc on the land but are not allowed to improve or develop for our own benefit and are given no compensation. We spend much time repairing fences damaged by feral animals and carrying out weed control measures as required by Government bodies, yet we are not allowed to make a living from this same land. If we are not allowed to make a living from this land we **MUST BE PAID JUST COMPENSATION**.

Our land has been devalued because of its lack of earning potential and reduced to the value of a hunting block for ethnic city people to visit occasionally to shoot the wildlife even little birds. They do not care for the land as farmers do. They rape and pillage the land destroying wildlife and starting fires for other people to fight while they return to the safety of their city homes. We and other farmers carry out weed and vermin control, improve the soil organic matter and soil biota, carry out erosion control and in general improve the land to a healthier state.

Our income has diminished by about 2/3. If farmers are no longer permitted to make a living on their FREEHOLD properties, then the Government must pay just compensation for loss of resale value plus an ongoing payment for carbon credits created by the vegetation taken from them.

I feel it is totally immoral for a Government to second farmers' trees to satisfy their own agenda. It is nothing short of theft of OUR TREES growing on OUR FREEHOLD LAND. Any carbon credits belong to the farmer who owns the land or ongoing payments must be paid by the Government to the farmer.

Farmers are not generally environmental vandals. Most are farming sustainably improving the soil while endeavouring to make a living. Left to its own devices the land would deteriorate. Weak, spindly native grasses with small root structure in rock hard baked soil would shrivel and blow away in drought, causing dust storms which were seen recently. Uncontrolled stunted regrowth of eucalypts and pines etc. would choke each other and the native grasses underneath would disappear leaving the topsoil under them to erode away. Farmers not bureaucrats see these situations on a daily basis since the legislation of the Native Vegetation Act (NVA). With this ill thought out legislation Australia would become one large desert.

Farmers are spending much time, money and energy improving their knowledge of how to improve the soil - to increase the carbon, the organic matter to feed the mycorrhiza and fungi to improve the water retention properties to try to minimize the impact of drought. They should be rewarded for their efforts not penalised.

Realistic fire prevention is a must to protect lives, stock, property and of course flora and fauna. Preventing the building of access tracks for fence maintenance and firefighting and putting in dams for firefighting is essential and should not be restricted as it is in the NVA. We do not want a repeat of the fires as in Victoria with its horrendous loss of lives, stock and property plus thousands of hectares of

native vegetation. Perhaps this great loss could have been prevented or at least minimised if sensible fire prevention had been permitted and carried out.

If the Government does not pay just compensation for the loss of farm productivity, it will still cost them in more pensions, drought support, farm exit fees, healthcare costs, taxes etc. Surely it is better to show that the environmental work of farmers is valued.

The Government's own Forestry NSW has stated in its literature that "trees have a dollar value on the contribution that forests make to reducing atmospheric carbon dioxide levels which has resulted in a carbon trading system for businesses wanting to improve their economic and environmental sustainability". Why then are farmers not being compensated for retaining and planting trees? If they are required to satisfy the Kyoto Protocol we must either be paid carbon credits or other ongoing compensation.

Farmers have been pushed to the brink and many cases - over. Older farmers who can no longer make a living because of the restrictions of the NVA find in some cases they cannot access the age pension because they must have a 20 year ^{attachment} to that particular farm and home. If they have had to destock, live in town to get work to pay the bills during the drought, when they return home and apply for the age pension they are not eligible as their 20 year period starts on the date of their return, completely ignoring the fact that they have lived on the farm for 30-40 years prior to leaving to get work.

Similarly in Queensland some young families are finding the same hurdle when applying for Exceptional Circumstances drought relief. Because they have done the responsible thing in going elsewhere for a short time to get finances to service their bills and to live on, they are penalised.

For those applying for the age pension they find that the value of old but necessary farm machinery and livestock push the assets test to a level where the pension cannot be accessed. Yet older people in an urban area can own a multi-million dollar home and have no time of attachment to the home restriction. Again one rule for the farmer and one for the urban dweller who does nothing for the environment.

My husband and I recently undertook a Farm Planning course put on by the CMA. We hoped to improve our farming skills and learn new techniques to improve our soil etc. Instead each lecture seemed to be aimed at telling us what we cannot do and that "the eye in the sky" can monitor our every move down to an area of one square metre and if we dared to break any of the rules of the NVA we would be convicted on the evidence of satellite photography and given massive fines. These Gestapo tactics are a disgrace. It is soul destroying to be told in no uncertain terms that we are unable to make a living or legally improve the capital value of our investment.

Is it any wonder so many farmers are suffering depression and many have been pushed over the edge to suicide after trying to cope with years of drought and Government restrictions..

How has this all been allowed to happen? Is this Australia or South Africa? Where are our Senate's watchdogs who were voted in to protect our rights? Have they taken the easy way out and voted as the party dictates? Have none of them a conscience and the back bone to stand up and say "This is unjust"? What happened to Don Chipp's policy of "keeping the bastards honest"?

I have recently found an advertisement hidden away in the Classifieds of the "Land" newspaper - best to keep it hidden so no farmer will see it and lodge an objection - regarding a draft review of the NVA. Submissions have to be in by 31st March 2010. What a joke - if it was not so pathetic - it is being organised by the same Government that organised the recent debacle of the house insulation!!!! We have not had a chance to study it - we do have a farm to run - but I am sure that it will show no consideration to farmers, their care for the environment and the clean, green and healthy food we produce.

Farmers have had enough. They work 12-15 hours 7 days improving the environment and producing the healthy produce that we do. Do the bureaucrats really want Australia turned into a desert when the farmers have been forced off their land? What will the bureaucrats do when the supermarket or the restaurants that they frequent have imported food that is old, tasteless and full of chemicals that Australian farmers have not been permitted to use. Many foods will have been irradiated to kill

disease and insects that can be brought in from overseas countries without our high standards.

Farmers will in future be analysing what each electoral candidates stand for and not voting for parties which trade their integrity for votes. They are not worthy of our vote or our trust.
