

Dear Senate Committee,

I write with some examples that need to be considered with respect to the Native Vegetation legislation in States. The legislation is punitive and impractical. It places all the onus on the individual for the common good which unfairly takes advantage of farmers, though I concede it would also apply to city dwellers.

A couple of years ago, a dairy farmer in Victoria experienced a huge wind storm which screwed off branches and felled several grey box trees in his resting paddock. He brought in machines to clean up the fallen timber and broken trees which were about to fall and relieve partially severed branches in order to make the paddock safe for his cows - and himself.

At the time, the Native Vegetation Legislation had been put in place in Victoria and as Local Councils were responsible for implementing the legislation, they did so with gusto, fining the dairy farmer thousands of dollars for clearing his trees and ordering him to plant more - which we helped him do at our own expense - but the saga showed just how impractical the legislation is and the fine was outrageously high.

In another example, a farmer in my own area cleared a gully of blackberries and was also heavily fined for clearing them and was ordered to re-instate them!

Finally in 2009, a trained forester was managing his bush block and thinning his trees as well as clearing away understory to prevent a hot fire if one came and his neighbours complained to Council who invoked the Native Vegetation Laws against him. A compromise was that the farmer would not clear understory or thin his trees on the neighbour's boundary. On February 7th, 2009, the neighbours died in that fire but may have been alright had there been a reduced amount of fuel-load.

Yours sincerely,

Wendy Jubb Stoney.