

TO: Senate Committee Inquiry into 'Native Vegetation Laws, Greenhouse Gas Abatement and Climate Change Measures'

Our property in Central Tablelands, between Mudgee and Bathurst, is 2683 hectares. Area of native vegetation on property is 1505 hectares. Carrying capacity in normal year is 4000 sheep and 100 cattle.

In 2000, we applied to clear some land. The amount we wanted to clear was:

- Less than 2½ % of the total area of the property
- Less than 4 % of the existing native vegetation on the property

Approximately 56% of the property is native vegetation, so had we been allowed to clear, we would have retained more than 50% of our property as native vegetation.

We weren't asking much. We own the land and have a viable enterprise that has been paying income tax even during the last period of extremely difficult economic and climatic conditions (i.e. our property has been extremely well managed.)

Native Vegetation regulations have had an adverse impact:

▪ **Financially**

Improvement in productivity has been limited. We can't grow the business. There is not enough improved land to have any more sheep or cattle.

We are still paying rates on land, pest and weed control, general stewardship, but no income is being produced from the land and there is no possibility of there being income produced by the land.

But the Government can (and has) taken credit for no land clearing, but it is also taking credit for all the greenhouse gases stored (carbon credits). This is WIN-WIN for the Government (for doing nothing) and LOSE-LOSE for us. This whole scenario is very similar to a bully in a playground taking lunch money from a defenseless younger child WIN-WIN for the Bully, and Lose-Lose for the victim. Make no mistake about it: we are a defenseless victim under this Government Legislation. We are also prohibited from harvesting the timber. This is again an economic loss for us.

▪ **Socially**

If we could grow our business, we could employ permanent labour. This would result in benefits for local schools, shops, business houses and community organizations. Small country communities are dying because they are losing their rural basis and they are losing their sense of identity.

Also because our business has been restricted by Government legislation, the next generation can see no room for future development and growth. They can only envisage being hamstrung. This is creating an aging rural population. Also the next generation can see no future on the land because of Government legislation and is opting for other career paths.

- Environmentally

We run a rotational grazing system. Not being able to clear the land and create extra grazing areas has impacted on the grazing pressure on existing paddocks. This has a flow on effect to stock (less area for grazing – vital during years of drought) and recovery time for each grazing area.

An extra paddock or two would have alleviated the need to purge existing paddocks (incurring years of recovery time and associated costs) and the necessity of selling off stock as a management strategy.

- Personally

It is extremely frustrating to own something but be dictated to as to how to use it. This land is owned by us but we can't do what we want with it (even though we consider the request to clear land was reasonable and modest and that we can demonstrate good management and great pastoral care and sensitivity over generations.) Nor have we been compensated for our loss. We have been forced to forego income, with no compensation or acknowledgement or apology. This would be similar to a politician winning an election but being told they couldn't enter parliament or speak or vote for any legislation.

Managing our business over the last number of years of drought has been particularly stressful. Rotating stock through a limited number of stressed and barely-coping paddocks would have been less difficulty and less stressful and worrying had we been able to clear land under the application we made over 10 years ago.

Another frustration is that we made a submission re Native Legislation, to the State Government, with no recognition of our situation or meaningful acknowledgement of our loss. Here we are some 6 years later doing it again. Been there, done that and probably same poor result. However, that we are putting in yet another submission is an indication that our frustration levels have not dropped.

We find it rude, insulting, offensive, aggravating, that a few politicians (of both persuasions) can strut about on an international stage spruiking about how much they've achieved re the Kyoto protocol while it is individual farmers at grassroots level who have made the sacrifices (unrecognized and uncompensated) and have born the costs.

What have these grandstanding politicians gone without?

Robert Colley
(Director)

Sally Colley
(Director)