

Native Vegetation Senate Inquiry

Senate Finance & Administration Committee

Parliament House, Canberra

From

My submission to this inquiry is about the unfair way native vegetation laws have penalised farmers in NSW and Q'ld. When these laws were first introduced we were told it was to maintain biodiversity and protect native flora and fauna. However it has turned out the real reasons were, and still are, so the Commonwealth could comply with the Kyoto Protocol while the State Governments could continue to export coal. Farmers have lost the right to develop freehold land so mainly foreign owned companies can continue to mine coal and send the profits overseas. Coal exports are expected to nearly double from NSW and Q'ld in the next decade and yet they seem to bear no responsibility for these emissions. What new restrictions will have to be placed on our private property to cover all of that?

In the Moree Plains shire cleared farmland is worth between \$2000 to \$4500/ha depending on the exact location but uncleared land is only worth about \$1200/ha because native vegetation laws mean the land can only be used for grazing sheep or cattle. Also an introduced weed called lippia is spreading rapidly in native grassland which can only be controlled by cultivation. Clearing single trees from existing cultivated paddocks is also illegal so introducing new technology like controlled traffic is restricted. All of this means the value of our assets is reduced while productivity is being strangled at the same time as the Prime Minister asks for more productivity from the whole country.

Politicians have been quite open about their objectives of meeting Kyoto Protocol targets by stopping land clearing, eg. Peter Costello on the ABC's 7.30 report of June 6 2007, but never acknowledge that one small part of the population has borne the whole burden of this policy. If greenhouse gas abatement is so important the whole community should be involved not just farmers. I don't believe compensation should be sought by farmers but some honesty by past and present politicians about their reasons for locking up freehold land would be good. I would like to regain my right to develop my land under the same laws as everyone else in Australia. In the future food security may become important as the world's population increases rapidly so we must be allowed to increase production somehow and the main way of doing this in our environment is to increase the area planted. Everyone in the world who can afford to eat at all eats grain-based carbohydrates (bread, rice, pasta) at least once a day and it all comes from cleared land which has been cultivated, planted, and harvested by farmers. To continue this process we need security of title to the land and the ability to increase productivity the same as any other business.

Native Vegetation Senate Inquiry

Senate Finance & Administration Committee

Parliament House, Canberra

In conclusion , I hope this inquiry can shed some light on the way farmer's rights to use their land as they see fit have been eroded over the last fifteen years. The Federal and State governments have stopped land clearing so they can comply with international treaties whilst continuing to collect mining royalties. A very small section of the population has so far shouldered the cost and this is unfair. To paraphrase Winston Churchill ; Never has so much been stolen from so few by so many.