

Submission to public enquiry :Impacts on Landholders by the government for public good conservation

In my current position as a professional officer whose work is funded by an NHT grant to get biodiversity management (otherwise known as nature conservation) into the strategic planning framework of rural producers in North Queensland I am often in contact with those producers we call biodiversity champions. These people conscientiously undertake the role of implementing best practice nature conservation on their properties, for example, the retention of large patches of native vegetation, replanting of riparian zones, appropriate effluent control, conversion to minimum tillage. Many of these practices have no positive financial outcomes, people do it because they value themselves as good land managers. Most of these people get small amounts of assistance through landcare funds for trees, but the range of land management practices that people introduce to contribute to public good conservation are not exclusively tied up with replanting vegetation. People build dams to catch and recycle effluent, they cement heavy traffic areas to prevent excessive soil erosion, they fence off wetlands and other sensitive sites and they conserve forest where it could be converted to pasture. Many of these people get no recognition or support from the government or the public, yet in many cases it is the urban public who benefit from lack of silted waterways and nitrogen laden streams, ect. People are in fact disadvantaged in many ways as they pay the same rates for their unimproved land as they do for the their productive land.

I have had several farmers outline to me a way that the government could provide an incentive based approach for farmers who contribute as part of their farm management to public good conservation. These include schemes which allocate credits which reflect the type of management undertaken, these credits could add to the value of the farm and be used as a tool to market their goods. For example you could choose to buy milk that had been produced by a farm that had 4 wildlife credits, I have also heard many times, that farmers would love to set up a scheme whereby urban people could contribute directly to farm conservation by helping on farm , sponsoring projects and getting a greater understanding of the constraints for nature conservation within a rural production business. These are a few thoughts, available for more comment should it be required.

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