

Submission on Inquiry into Public good Conservation on private Land

Who benefits from public good conservation? It is perceived to be the general public 96% of who do not own the affected land

Who pays for this public good conservation? The 4% of the Australian community who happen to own the land, that is the farming community.

Why???? The question that has never been answered in this debate to date is why a small percentage of the population should, and to date has borne the full cost of this burden.

This is probably one of the most inequitable pieces of rubbish that is come out of government both state and federal. Made even more so by the fact that a large majority of the urban population do not give a damn as to what is done with the environment.(survey by M Brennan, Southern Cross University, showed that only 26% of respondents cared about the environment and this 26 % were only prepared to commit negligible amounts of money to this cause).

The average farmer is far more aware of his environment and contributes far more money and effort to improving it than he is given credit for. So why should Government cower to urban-based minority interest groups to impose even more control on him? Especially when the groups demanding this have to a large extent never left their city environs.

What is the cost of this to the farming community? In NSW with the Native Vegetation Conservation Act the burden is totally unsustainable. This is exacerbated because those farmers who have had a conservative approach to their operation are now landed with an unfair amount of the load.

Some of the consequences of this Legislation:

- Financial institutions are now valuing land on whether it has been cleared or not and whilst uncleared farming type country used to be seen as a highly desirable product it is now seen as low grade and devalued by up to 70%
- This means that grazing enterprises that because of the very nature of their industry in the last few years have a diminishing equity base have almost had it undermined to a dangerous level. Invariably this leads to higher risk margins that just exacerbate the problem.

- Locking up land is putting undue pressure on other land and causing severe degradation to that land because of the inability to rotate and spell.
- People who have bought land budgeting on clearing and farming it now find they own an unsellable article that cannot pay its way and in some cases face certain bankruptcy
- In the undeveloped parts of the state, rural town ships are being denied large amounts of income generated by farming. Not only the profit margins of the farming over grazing but also the money spent on farming over grazing. In my local town of Moree this is now amounting to several millions of dollars.
- This whole conservation debate is being used by some people in the green movement and even by some people within the Government regulators as an agenda that has very little to do with conservation and a lot to do with anti-establishment socialism,
- Following on from and a direct product of this attitude is the fact that a lot of this so called conservation initiative is that a large part of what is now happening in NSW is achieving the exact opposite effect to what was intended. Rather than conserving high value areas they are being degraded because of idiotic requirements to get consent from the Department of Land and Water to even carry out practices that improve native vegetation. This can incur considerable cost to the farmer with no guarantee of approval so the easy option is to do nothing and let things degrade.
- Until such stage as a true value is put on conservation, be it land water or whatever, and the community that demands this has to pay for it, the demands are going to get more and more and the burden on the farming community will be totally unsustainable

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