

**BRISBANE VALLEY - KILCOY
LANDCARE GROUP INC**

SUBMISSION FOR:

**INQUIRY INTO
THE IMPACT OF
CONSERVATION CONTROLS
IMPOSED ON
LANDHOLDERS.**

The Secretary
PO Box 116
Kilcoy Qld 4515

gcows@caliph.net.au
Fax: 07 54971909

ISSUES FOR THE INQUIRY INTO PUBLIC GOOD CONSERVATION

Introducton:

The Brisbane Valley-Kilcoy Landcare group's membership consists of 180 people who are today's land managers. About 60% of the members have been in the group since its formation 10 years ago. This information should inform the Australian community how important land and water conservation is to the land manager here in Queensland. Our group is one of many that have formed over the years that focus on rural industry and the future management of our natural resources.

Land managers of today would have to be the cream of the crop. The economic climate has killed off poor managers, as there is no room for miss management of land or funds. The community as such does not realise that a land manager is not going to irrigate, fertilize, plough, and plant crops or any other farm activity if there is no return. They do not work for the sake of work as they do not water for the sake of water and why not – because it all costs money and that is one resource that land managers do not have a lot of to waste on unnecessary activities.

The present day land manager has inherited many issues in relation to conservation from government handling of conservation. We just have to look at the Tree Clearing issues – our fore-fathers were paid to cut timber now the present day farmer has to spend time and money retreeing their land as well as fight for 'right-to-harvest' if they have farm forestry.

There are many weeds that have been planted by the advice from government agencies or another. Bushland weeds are another growing problem in the rural areas. The sales of garden plants that have the potential of becoming bushland weeds have not been stopped. Once again the land manager has to bear the cost of eradicating these weeds and if they do not then they have community pointing the finger or pastures rendered unpalatable to stock and therefore loss of income.

Fencing off riparian areas is another area where the land manager does not know what is fact or what is fiction. There is so much conflicting information being documented that confusion reigns. Queensland government as yet has not dealt with the issue of ownership in regarding waterways – this has not been settled which once again leads to confusion when dealing with the riparian areas.

How to equitably share conservation among all members of the community?

The present day public appears to have developed an environmental conscience and if this is the case then the cost of conservation by landholders should be reflected in the price paid by consumers for their products.

This is not the case. Those land managers who have chosen to produce their product in an environmentally friendly way are not paid any differently than others who chose not to.

The only way they can recoup something extra is if they outlay money to advertise how environmentally friendly they farm.

It really is true 'that it is hard to be green when you are in the red'. Australian government has not realised yet even with the National Heritage Trust the land managers need more recompense and recognition for their practices.

Locking up land is not the answer either as weed and pest control becomes a large factor in management of those areas. If the constraints put on land managers are too rigid and are without rewards then the population on the land will decrease and who then will manage our large country's rural areas.

The Australian public has to decide if having a clean green Australian image is important enough for everyone to pay for. If this is the case then either the cost of rural based industry products must increase or everyone pays an environmental levy.

Another option is Catchment Bonds – land managers who changed their practices to enhance the environment on-farm but in doing so face financial losses should be credited for these changes by the public who use the catchment. This could take the form of money or taxable credits.

Impacts of conservation measures and their costs

The following are the activities and related costs of a Dairy farm trying to improve the environmental practices on-farm.

Planting of Pastures

Aim - to reduce soil erosion and sediment loading in waterways from pasture paddock.

Action – to introduce Zero Till when planting new crops therefore no ploughing of land.

Cost – New equipment; New skills and techniques to learn.

Benefits – On-Farm - Reduction of soil erosion, Improved strike rate of plant; Improved moisture levels in soil,

Community - Cleaner and healthier waterways.

Effluent Control

Aim – to improve effluent management on-farm and reduce risk of pollution of waterways.

Action – Work with EPA agency to develop system suitable for farm.

Work with Codes of Practice developed for Effluent Management on farm for QLD.

Develop plan of development. Implement plan on-farm.

Cost – Earth Moving Contractor was hired to build two dams. 2km of piping needed to be laid to off-stream water storage. Time and materials to build system.

Benefits – On-farm – safe system for effluent control, reuse of product, reduce in fertilizer costs. Work also was needed to comply with Quality Assurance of milk on-farm.

Community – Cleaner and healthier waterways.

Property Management Planning

Aim- to improve management of all resources on farm.

Action – to participate in a course on PMP

Cost – cost of course, map of farm, time away from farm, implementing plans that were developed through course.

Benefits – On-farm – improved utilization of land, water and people resources on-farm.

Community – improve management of land and water.

Financial assistance for conservation by landholders

The Landcare Tax incentive scheme for conservation works was once again means tested.

Earnings had to be so low to claim this tax credit that the land manager would have had to be on their last leg and then who would have the funds to put into conservation on-farm.