

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage Inquiry.....Landholders

What is meant by public good conservation?

- One of the impacts on landholders and farmers in Australia when addressing conservation and environmental measures, is that clearing is all too often thought of as being a detrimental process. Clearing if carried out to an appropriate management plan can be of significant benefit in allowing natural native pastures to regenerate as was proven in Western New South Wales in the early 1960's in certain areas. Clearing applications should be dealt with as individual cases and on their merits.
- Legislation can often prohibit diversification and sustainability and the Western Lands Act in New South Wales is an example and fortunately it is under review at present as many of the sections are outdated. Landholders should be able to diversify and undertake dryland cultivation in appropriate land systems, if they make an application.

Impacts of conservation measures and their costs

- Landholders receive little or no monetary incentives or assistance when addressing conservation and environmental measures and if respective conservation groups expect and want these measures, then there should be a sharing of costs. Conservation groups tend to financially contribute very little, but expect and demand a lot.

The majority of landholders on the whole are conservation minded in their management techniques, but due to low commodity prices and extreme climatic variances, there has and will continue to be lack of financial means to undertake many of these initiatives.

- The Commonwealth Government needs to seriously look at measures to address conservation and environmental management with the National Heritage Trust Funding nearing its end of providing funds to address many of these processes. The Commonwealth should be seriously looking at a levy by all Australians, similar to the Medicare Levy that is structured and targeted for this purpose. This would benefit all Australian and tourists visiting our country and various destinations within our shores. Constantly selling off assets for these purposes is not good business.

Financial assistance for conservation by landholders

- Landholders should be able to receive financial incentives and this would provide encouragement to undertake conservation measures and paddocks and areas could be spelled and locked up to allow these processes. Landholders could be given incentives to fence off sections along river systems where applied for. This should not become mandatory and in law.
- Environmental flows are necessary, but they must be dealt with in conjunction with agriculture, stock and domestic, urban, irrigation, river health, environmental and ecosystem needs. At present the Council of Australian Government (COAG) reform and the National Competition Council policy, that has enormous power over the lives of Australians are restrictive and regressive and are about containing, not progressing with any water policies and sustainable management. If the National Competition (Water) Policy principles were imposed on food, then we would not grow it.