

*June 16 2005*

Submission to:

**House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.**

**“Inquiry Into The Impact On Agriculture Of Pest Animals”**

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**Oxford English Dictionary.**

**Pest *n.* 1 a troublesome or annoying person or thing. 2 a destructive animal, esp. an insect which attacks crops, livestock, etc, [ from Latin *pestis* ‘plague’]**

**The Current Situation:**

At the outset I make wish to point out it is not merely the environment and economics being impacted by **Pests** but more importantly the individuals and families. - this being both the direct and indirect impact and the **position adopted by those in authority refusing to accept that there is an issue and refusing an objective and compassionate response to the problem**, more so, in many cases these issues have been deliberately side stepped by the State for the past 30 years.

This committee must ensure every effort is made to clarify the facts and make a determined commitment to follow through with its findings. It could be argued the subject matter is the single most important issue impacting on the lives of many in rural Australia. **This is more relevant as this paper will demonstrate as Pests and their impact, and this impact is energised by other policies such as National Parks and Native Vegetation Laws, are a substantial force contributing to the marginalizing of farms and forcing landowners off the land.**

**This is contributing substantially to the 20% of farmers requiring structural adjustment and resulting in thousands of families being effectively dispossessed of their farms at values both monetary and quality of lifestyle, which are severally compromised.**

**ABARE and the banks have commented substantially regarding theses matters. However careful analysis of the interlocking range of policy, and observation of landscape over time has provided insights that now allow a deeper understanding of the complex and comprehensive roll Pests play in this little experienced scenario.**

**Deliberation by this committee and its specific determination will hopefully give hope to a generation that in the past 30 years have virtually given up on any consideration at all regarding having a future on their land both them selves and their children.**

The children in particular have seen such a severe struggle they have grown to see life on the farm as so uncertain, insecure and deprived of any real satisfaction from the point of view of lifestyle they - an entire generation have walked away from rural life as a choice. This has been a significant factor in the current realisation that farmers are fast becoming the vocation with the oldest work force – ***we have lost a generation.***

*Their parents, the generation who have lived through this for 30 years are also disillusioned, as they have been denied a normal and reasonably secure Australian way of life. In place of this quite reasonable expectation have had a real struggle with no acceptable response from those in a charge of policy. Their cries were heard as nothing more than that of wingers or the moaning of marginal land owners that should not be farming at all.*

*Marginal may be but in most cases not through their own doing but as a direct result of being exploited by policies and an attitude of indifference and political and ideological exploitation. Some lost thousands of acres some lost hundreds but all in the end gave up and were convinced acceptance and full closer was the only way they could go on – put the matter behind and try and get on with ones life*

**With that in mind and as a matter of the utmost importance this committee should take good stock of what it does not hear - it should take very careful note of what is not submitted - by those persons not present!**

I make this statement because very subject of the committee's enquiry due to **the shear indifference of our leaders** has inflicted such suffering, loss, and trauma on a **silent minority** in our community that these wonderful human beings, these suffering unheard families - **are now gone.....fallen by the way side.**

**How does one listen to those that do not speak or do not write and do not attend?**

**The committee must take a look at the facts on the ground.**

**A walk around the boundaries of our National Parks will show that 90% of all the land holdings adjoining the Parks are empty of stock or are forced to try and run only cattle in the short term. *It is so serious even the properties 1st removed from the parks adjoining the farms already de-stocked are now being impacted.***

**Generally, Members of Parliament can insensitively allow major issues affecting thousands of lives over many years to be left in the to hard basket. Which is really the members - I don't care basket. *The fact is they really do not care.* To many members it is all about numbers the opinion polls and deep-seated greedonomics. The entire life thrust from care centre to school and on to University to the work place, to our Local, National, Regional and Global relationships it is all built, more so *intoxicatingly focused*, on GREED. **True representation has nothing to do with it.** What is important to them is - *by what margin did I win this booth.***

**Members today also come from many walks of life and often do not relate to rural issues - *they have not been cultuaraly exposed to this social environment.* This reflects the changing Australian demographics. Cultuaraly they are more tuned to other issues.**

**Then are those who are from the very heart of the country both from the point of view of location and culture and these representatives are in possession of a very robust determination to deliver a balance in the policy needs of the rural Australia's contemporary policy requirements.**

The reality is, it is not only feral / exotic animals and plants which can be Pests but also native flora and fauna. In particular, if any animal numbers and their movement or more so containment as an issue or is not responsibly planned for, financed and comprehensively incorporated in an overall management plan then the resulting Pest pandemic could follow. It should be an expected event. Failure to address this issue may well be a substantive reason contributing to the National Parks system being dysfunctional.

**With out being insensitive – and appreciating the feral / exotic animal dilemma, if the community continues to approach the native animal population in the country as a warm and cuddly part of the extended family and allows these animals unrestrained freedom - viewing them as being equal to human kind in regards to their entitlements the issue of Pests will continue to plague us as a society resulting quite often in developments to the detriment of the environment, rural farms and communities.**

More to the point the city-based majority who in a greater sense have this attitude and dominate the political debate that generates the resulting policies promoting this sentiment are not the persons or industry impacted by these policies.

## **The Real Impact Of National Parks: *The Incubators of PESTS***

I now refer here in particular to the National Parks in the high country that is my homeland. These principles though would apply to all Parks. The reason I raise the Park issue is they and their management practice are the single largest contributor to the pest population – the breeding grounds.

From the start, their very establishment – the declaration of a National Park<sup>6</sup> generally is floored from the point of view of pest control. The declaration of a National Park or Wilderness Area<sup>7</sup> automatically enables the large land holding referred, to be exempt from all the normal approved planning procedures.

In this day and age undertaking any development with out the requirement of a Development Authority or an Environment Impact Study is quite extraordinary. This policy failure regarding National Parks sets a precedent that imbues an attitude of the Parks being a law unto themselves outside the normal social and environmental responsibility sphere.

Under the guise of National Parks the destruction of the Australian Alps in Victoria New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory is a national disgrace. The Authorities have removed the families that lived and loved the land for generations. These families raised their children bred their stock cut their timber built their homes fought fires suffered droughts and floods drove their animals and product to market and buried their dead - all here in the mountains.

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<sup>6</sup> NSW - National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 No 80

<sup>7</sup> NSW - Wilderness Act 1987 No 196

More to the point now, what little is known is misunderstood. Any decision is only made after numerous meetings and usually extensive deliberations which are void of a real deep relationship with all aspects of the actual referred environment.

As the Deputy Prime Minister John Anderson<sup>9</sup> quoted Dr. David Suzuki in his address to the ABARE Outlook Conference this year I will quote him here and it is the same quote “ *when you have an environmental problem, you’ll always get to the answer, the most durable economical and effective answer, fastest and most effectively, if you begin by consulting and listening to the people who live with the problem and are committed to live in the area.*”

So what is the first directive of the *declare it a Park Initiative* NOT an environmental impact study NO not an application for a Development Authority NO FIRST remove any person who has an attachment - *who has real experience and knowledge and get them out!*

As most National Parks do not have staff who live on site, most staff have no comprehensive field experience hence they have difficulty in comprehending the debate or possible outcomes. Animals are out of control.- both feral and native animals multiply unchecked with no real provision for their movement habitat or nutritional requirements.

Weeds flourish and the very flora structure is changing. Erosion and fire fuel loads are not only unprecedented but in addition misunderstood mainly through lack of experience. The huge numbers of kangaroos eating the pasture - destroying the Parks infrastructure are often malnourished and unwell. The prolific numbers of wild dogs preying on stock throughout the landscape. All this overflows over the National Park boundaries with a resulting significant devaluation of private land values to the level of farms being unviable.

National Park staff do not have even a thread of attachment to the landscape. Their involvement is an emotional, academic and ideological presence for which they are paid. The payment also is totally unrelated to the outcome of the work place involvement. This is entirely the opposite of the families who opened Park areas, which in the past were homesteads or grazing leases.

Economist Emeritus Prof Wolfgang Kasper<sup>10</sup> “A whole generation of young city people take economic growth for granted; you don’t have to do any thing about it. That property rights are important is not really taught at school; it doesn’t appear in economics textbooks in most cases. So the essential foundation for our wealth is just forgotten, and we have had a lot of shonky environmental science course that have promoted intervention, that now create a generation of young people who want careers, who get those careers from regulating, for Green and other reasons, what people do with land and other properties, its also happening in the cities. So, political activism is certainly a great part of it.”

These high country families referred did not eat if they did not relate very intimately to the environment around them and this made them very sensitive to every aspect of these mountains - breathing the very air meant understanding the mood of the wind rain and snow this was their life it was also their inspiration.

Failure to muster the political courage to deal with the National Park influence on this social and environmental injustice will entrench the problem perpetually.

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<sup>9</sup> DPM John Anderson ABARE Outlook Conf March 2 2005 page 9

<sup>10</sup> Great white Land Grab Feb 7 2005 Counterpoint ABC

## **The Corridor verses Fence Debate:**

**The Corridor and Fence debate goes back to and is part of the very foundation of the Wildlife Area, National Park conceptualisation. It is a debate that must be argued and determined, as it is the single largest reason for the Pests even existing. If this issue was resolved by way of National Parks being appropriately fenced private landowners could then be made accountable and eradication of Pests on private land could be enforced.**

**To clarify these I do mean Pest per say. By this I say feral animals would be totally eradicated and native animals reduced to the status where they would no longer have the numbers in any one area to be determined Pests. There is no landowner who wants to totally remove native animals from his holding - one requires balance.**

**There are those who see any attempt at restraining the movement of native animals outside of the approved areas as wrong. The argument is they should be allowed to access any natural corridors across the entire Nation. This point cannot be over emphasised, as this is the goal of the fundamental green movement.**

**It is an interesting scenario when one takes into account the road kill through out Australia in respect to the number of animals involved. The fact that for every animal hit a vehicle is badly damaged, persons are often injured, and traumatised or killed and families are devastated. Just what is interesting is that the toll for this carnage is always measured in the number of animals killed or wounded not on the cost to the society.**

**It appears there are those in our community who refer to the native animals and their lives in such a way and with such awe, almost reverence by way of identifying with them apparently as being more valuable then the human being. It is not dissimilar to persons now claiming whales are *persons* of the sea.**

Managed corridors for native animals to exit the National Park to enter an adjoining Park or public land holding is acceptable. In regard this provision circumnavigating entire perimeter of the Parks with few exceptions is nonsense. This is a firm indication the provision of the land - the square Kilometres provided within the particular declaration is apparently not sufficient. By so allowing open plan - no effective fencing and hence by this provision the animals have complete access to any corridor meaning the animals are not limited to the area covered by the declaration.

**In fact the land so declared “The National Park” is not an enclosure for wild life but merely a base for breeding so the animals referred can then access wherever it desires whenever it wants. This incorporates the entire landscape and naturally includes private property.**

On the other hand the opposing argument is thus. If the National Park is in-appropriately fenced, *as most are* - to stop access to the Park by sheep and cattle but inequitably allows the National Park animals to access the farmland. It would appear the fence according to the Dividing Fences ACT<sup>4</sup> is in breach of the law. *As the Fence in this case is deliberately designed to exploit the farmland and hence by its design cannot be determined as being equitable.*

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<sup>4</sup> Dividing Fences Act s 1991 No 72

The National Park's action towards any farm animal that enters the National Park is impoundment and fined. However there is no consideration by the National Park to even responsibly respond to the constant plague – thousands, of animals moving from the Park to the Farms. The reverse situation regarding the movement of animals from the farms to the Parks actually reveals very few - only measured in tens. Then usually only when a fence breach occurs.

The passionate indifference and blatant exploitation directed at private land is fuelled by an entrenched arrogance directed at those with on ground knowledge is not so difficult to understand when one considers it has been this way continually ever since the first National Park - its now an entrenched component of the National Park Culture. Most of the academic theory used as part of this culture has never been questioned.

**The balanced computation of data the over all essential combination between weather conditions and outlook area terrain species of flora species of fauna and their numbers both adult and juvenile are all matters that have to be considered in the Park management plan if a responsible approach is part of the over all management strategy.**

In addition it is essential to constantly monitor fire fuel loads and reduce them at acceptable low temperatures to the required levels. This is not diligently and regularly carried out the impact of a major fire will not only impact adversely on the flora and fauna but disruptively wipe out the fauna and flora balance and *the interrelationship between this symbiont group will suffer.*

If one reviews the above it reflects the true picture and it enables one to determine since the beginnings of the National Parks program there has been an agenda and that agenda was never to establish Parks as areas for strict enclosure with the animals limited by there declared boundary. Their location/movement limitation is in fact only inhibited by the ability of the animals to multiply and spread.

If the National Parks are responsibly funded and managed adjoining landowners can be made fully responsible for their holdings. With the overflow from the Parks stemmed by way of appropriate high and strong fences and culling within their boundaries, private land owners on the borders and beyond will be able to be held accountable - to clean up their Pest population which in that case would not be an unreasonable expectation.

### **National Parks: The Real Story - From living with one.**

**The National Parks are not tracts of land to enable the establishment of populations and an on going appropriate habitat for native animals to be contained within the boundaries determined by the declaration. In fact they are large breeding grounds - bases from which native animals without any restraint what so ever can virtually re-establish them selves across the entire landscape - Australia. This re-establishment in itself must be qualified. These native animals and feral followers now have no human predators better water supplies and improved pasture from farms across the landscape and there ability to multiply is now virtually unchecked.**

**It is true the Government has a number of program's specifically directed at the sustainable harvesting of Native animals through Wildlife Industries and regulatory policies such as Fauna Dealers (Wholesaler) and restricted Fauna Dealer regarding kangaroos and Skin Dealers under S125 of the NPW Act. However these are restrictive only 11 Fauna Dealer (Wholesaler licences) and do not allow those impacted the most to respond appropriately. Permits are generally available for Kangaroos on "let lie" bases. This is expensive wasteful and from a human resource**

**point of view passing the responsibility for the Parks mismanagement onto the shoulders both financially and physically to the private land owner. Furthermore the pasture losses and fence damage is not addressed with this approach. The burden should be the parks not the private landowner.**

**Hence this is the reason the farms - private landholdings along the borders are so seriously impacted the first to be totally taken over, but not the last. This need for more land will just keep on expanding as the numbers of animals dictate. This will also accelerate as the fauna numbers and the flora expands and re-establishes. There will be arguments thrust at this claim that, suggest the *numbers will stabilise* – over time this may be the case but this is outside the scope of this paper. However if that is to be an adopted position then containment by appropriate responsible permanent fences should not be a problem.**

This is also the reason for the increasing occurrence of road kills. They - in the majority being marsupials are like the 5<sup>th</sup> column. The advance guard is also increasing in numbers overflowing from the National Parks and farms and accessing more territory.

Last year alone saw a 40% increase in road accidents from kangaroos and wombats totalling 13,438 accidents<sup>12</sup>. No one appears to speak of the trauma suffered by these people and the enormous financial loss. *Instead the over powering emphasis is to ensure these victims of this policy/carnage – in some cases sadly, involving human loss of life - have the phone number to call so the wounded native animal can be hospitalised.*

As has been pointed out **it has always been viewed**, that the wild dogs and kangaroos merely exit the parks occasionally via the many corridors to feed and hunt, *as this paper demonstrates – this is not the case.*

In fact what we are experiencing is an expansion of the numbers in the National Parks to such a degree they are now through necessity taking over an ever increasing habitat areas outside the Parks and actually establishing themselves within these now extended boundaries – and this expansion across the landscape is ongoing, it is erratic and not consistent in its direction or its choice of land type other than to ensure food and water supplies.

Many different variables impact on this expansion including the Native Vegetation ACT. (Covered in the next section) Sufficient to say one cannot measure and say it is at the rate of 3 or 4 kilometres per year in all directions etc. A proper study would reveal this – expansion is taking place at an ever-accelerating rate.

Therefore any attempt to try and trap or cull by the private landowner to maintain some balance is a complete waste of time. This would not be the case if the population in the National Parks were established at an acceptable level to ensure the landscape could accommodate and provide water and sufficient nutritional requirements.

It is quite apparent this was never the plan by those who conceptualised the National Parks. If what I say is incorrect then Environmental Impact Studies and Development Authority Applications would have been undertaken, fences would have been erected and the determining of population levels would have been an essential part of the management strategy from the start.

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<sup>12</sup> IAG Insurance collision claims research 2004

The National Park declarations and their exemption from all planning guidelines was in fact all part of a National Deception. It was never intended the Parks animals be restricted to the perimeters within their declared boundaries. Further more as the kangaroos and dog following drive out the sheep the regrowth of Native Vegetation is assured so their habitat is expanded by way of infestation of the a-joining landscape. This phenomenon is accelerated as their numbers increase – hence the reference to it being as a cancer.

### **The Policy Mix - Cocktail: On Site example of having a National Park as a Neighbour.**

National Parks from the point of view of a neighbour – as in “a neighbour from hell.” They are what could be called massive cancers spreading across the landscape over-flowing with carcinogens impacting on neighbouring farms and communities. **The National Park itself**, particularly in high country regions - *since the high country folk have been removed no longer live there* - **is relatively unknown in a so necessary comprehensive way by the human recourse pool serving it.**

**The problem really becomes horrific when you combine 2 issues - 2 policy initiatives.** The Native Veg Act and the National Parks and Wilderness Areas Acts and the Parks refusal to be responsible with fencing or to manage stocking numbers.

**This aspect of the equation can not be over emphasised I do realise the Pest is not Native Vegetation but not to look at the impact of the plethora of policies and the over all interlocking impact removes the ability to clearly reflect on the real Pest picture.**

**In our case “Saarahnee” we have a boundary of 11Kilometers with the Namadgi National Park. The Park has a major kangaroo and wild dog problem. Last year the ACT Government had to cull - shoot 1000 kangaroos as the drought was so bad and the feed in the Park nil - the environmental damage to the Park was creating erosion which was impacting on the ACT water catchment - hence the culling.**

**However that is just the half of the story. Six months earlier at a meeting on our farm we asked the Park to cull because the impact of the kangaroos and *the wild dogs that follow the kangaroos* on our farm was bringing us to our knees. They refused on the grounds - *they would not consider culling as an option as it was against National Park policy.***

**The Native Veg Act controls/restricts/prevents the clearing of regrowth even on ground previously cleared. The sheep are fenced and eat the native high country grass, which is so suitable to *fine wool dry sheep*, as it is nutritionally low in protein. This practice is environmentally sound, a sustainable practice as the grasses are native and suited to this environment. Also this practice requires no tillage.**

**However the kangaroos have no restrictions on their movement from the Park which is not *appropriately “high fenced”* to keep them in. Hence as the Park Management do not maintain a level on stocking numbers there ability to ensure there is sufficient nutritional requirements and as the fires and the drought have denuded the feed with in the National Park and as most of the other *farmers bordering the Park have de-stocked and removed the sheep* our farm is impacted more so – *as the improved pasture the kangaroos seek is only found on my farm.***



**As the kangaroos enter the farm they DO not eat the native grass they prefer to eat the improved grass and the dogs follow them. The dog's eat, traumatise and scatter through the forests the sheep and then the native vegetation, which sheep are no longer there to eat, re-grows.**

I am not permitted to clear the re-establishing regrowth as a right and each year more and more is regrowing as I cannot put the sheep back due the wild dogs being more prevalent as the native vegetation becomes more dense. This becomes thicker and provides more habitats for more fauna including Pests. However the fauna is not the only place we should be looking for pests and nor should we look for weeds only amongst the exotic flora. As the following example of a native flora predator will prove.

**Still the problem goes even deeper - as this view of one particular impact on the local biosphere will show:**

All regions of Australia belong to the over all landscape. Each also has its own unique biodiversity, which has to be locally understood. The current legislation referred above is having a particular detrimental effect worth noting. Our property is located in the Montane Region 1100-1200 mm rainfall it is 1000-1550 meters above sea level. Species of trees are predominantly *E. pauciflora*, *E. stellulata*, *E. macrorhyncha*, *E. delegatensis*, *E. dalrympleana*, *E. nitens*, *E. fastigata*. - the one referred that is the one most concerning and which is taking advantage of the current dilemma is the predator tree, bi-phenyl rich, *Broad-leaved Peppermint - E. dives* it claims territory - *expanding across the landscape by killing other species/biodiversity so it can dominate the landscape.*

This species spreads like a weed consuming the landscape through the process of allelopathy. The actual poison used by *E. dives* to kill the groundcover is suspected of being "*peritone*" which is the valued component of the essential oil this tree is harvested and distilled for. It has been said the peritone found in this area is the highest measured from any *E. dives* harvested. The tree succours profusely and under the current legislation is left - by law to its own aggressive devices with extremely destructive impact on the environment as a whole.

In the process this rogue species is causing broad expanse erosion across thousands of acres predominantly on the western escarpment between the altitude of 1000m and 1350m. This species is causing sheet erosion because the bi-phenyl kills the understorey and ground cover. The dominance of this species does not reflect the mix of flora as it was prior to this scenario. It is now a mess – **another example of a city based armchair policy decision based on theory and not on-ground knowledge.**

**Policy Impact and Resultant Example of Farm Dysfunction:**

**These developments impact on our farm and its economic outlook generally in the following way.**

The improved pasture is all cell grazed – each paddock is 6 cells. An example is - the sheep flock is allocated to the 1<sup>st</sup> cell and the remainder of 5 is left to fallow for winter-feed and replenishment to avoid what is called ice cream grazing by the sheep. In addition one of the 6 cells is not grazed every 6 years to allow seed replacement and rest.

**However now this too has failed as soon as the starving kangaroos in their thousands – pests, find a cell with any regrowth they jump the fence or push through it and eat the grass - totally.**

**That is why on the program the breeding stud ewes are kept on the improved lower country. As they require high nutrition to achieve high lambing numbers.**

**To protect stud ewes we place 100/200 cull ewes in the paddock called Booth Gully which is located between the stud ewes and the Namadgi National Park. Electric fences are on the down side of Booth Gully and boom guns on the hills. Traps are set and baits are a regular part of the proactive program,**

**Each animal's fleece – sheep is tested in laboratories and all data is computerised. All the sheep have a bar-coded ear tag, which is processed by a bar code reader. They also have a metal stud tag for data security.**

**We breed ultra fine wool Saxon sheep. Prior to the drought the wethers of that year cut 3 kilos and the wool was sold and topped the sales.**

**The price paid to us was c20,864 clean per kilo of wool <sup>11</sup>. These animals where an average of 14.2 microns in the paddock. - *Now we have the animals as low as 11.5 microns.***

**Last year 300 of these sheep in Booth Gully were killed by wild dogs these were *the 14.2 micron animals*. This flock has a 7-year production capacity. The loss of these animals removed from us earning capacity of \$1 million. In addition it has removed all hope of whether flock operations on the property until the entire policy dilemma is addressed. *This in effect cuts our wool production potential by 70% or 20,000 kilos.***

**The situation is so bad now that animals located any where on the property other then the 800 acres in the stud breeding grounds results in loses of 2/3<sup>rd</sup> within 3 months of being located. In effect 90% of the property is de stocked!**

**Thousands of acres formally developed and cleared to pasture is now locked up. In the event the land referred could be partially unlocked it would require a range of expansive development restraints/approvals/limitations/studies. This cost would need to be expended prior to any approval being given further more this would be the case even in the event that no approval was given at all - after the studies were complete.**

**This range of required approvals itself has been redefined ad nauseam on numerous occasions as the Native Vegetation debate ebbs and flows State and Federally form year to year providing no certainty of freehold rights or sound balanced approach to policy on sustainable land management or who pays for public good environmental services.**

**During all this time lives are on hold and from the point of finance and management stressed to the point where this stress this uncertainty has sadly become a part of rural life in these locations.**

**On our property regrettably in 2005 for the fist time the dogs have been located within 10 metre of the electric fence into the stud ewes.**

**All our sheep have a complete computer based history bar coded on the ear tag. So we know the value of each animal, which has been killed. Establishing their value is simplified and based on**

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<sup>11</sup> AWEX report Auction Week 24 / 13 December 2002

the individual record of the animal's wool production and genetic indexing value - this is maintained in the computer.

The wild dogs and the kangaroos collectively and increasingly impact on us with the Kangaroo annually consuming all our winter-feed which we try up lock up. Hence fallowing pasture for winter use is hopeless.

In addition once the native vegetation starts to regenerate "interception" starts to impact slowly at first but increasing as the understory thickens and the forest establishes itself across the landscape changing the biodiversity. The result being for the next 100 years the water running off our hills is now reduced. **Regrettably all of the previous 6 streams originating on our hills have completely gone and our surface water supply is none existent.** <sup>13/14/15</sup>

Further more our water table is dropping due the tree / native revegetation growth is now requiring more water for its growth. Hence the "interception" effect.

Our farm used to contribute 6 stream flows to the Alum Creek, a tributary of the Murrumbidgee and now from our hills there is none. Many other farms and National Parks regions through out the high country are being impacted the same proportionally. The real impact on the Snowy catchment collectively is yet to be addressed and determined.

### **The Impact Process - Long Term.      This is the chain of events:**

Kangaroos enter the property from the National Park. They damage fences and eat the pasture usually preferring the improved pasture. This is due there being too many in the National Park. The Park is not fenced to stop this movement.

The wild dogs and feral pigs (*23 million feral pigs in Australia*) follow as the numbers increase across the National Park.

The sheep leave the pasture adjoining forested areas as the dogs use these areas to predate on the sheep not only killing many but driving others into the forests and traumatising them. Often they are not found but are driven into the forest – *deflocked, savaged, deserted and then die* - if not killed in the initial attack. The remaining sheep will not graze the area but hide nearest the fences at the further most point from the attack areas.

The Native vegetation - woody plants and grasses which is not *preferably* eaten by the Kangaroos but is eaten by the sheep, regrows as the sheep withdraw. This effect increases from a small % of the property to an ever-increasing area as time passes. The understory thickens, the forests become denser and the previously cleared areas - new wooded areas become the launching hides for more predation by the wild dogs and the scenario, once set in place - *perpetuates itself*.

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<sup>13</sup> Wilson, B P and Kreuter V.P.(2003) Woody Plant : Stream Flow interactions as a basis of management decisions in drylands.

<sup>14</sup> Burrows, W. H. (2002) Seeing the wood(land) for the trees.

<sup>15</sup> Scott D.F.(1999) Managing riparian zone vegetation to sustain stream flows,results of paired catchment experiments South Africa . Canadian Journal of Forest Researsch.

Then the landscape builds up a very real increase in plant growth and “Interception” really starts to impact ever increasingly. The biodiversity undergoes changes and outcomes are no longer predictable. It has become a rogue landscape. (See 3<sup>rd</sup> para page10)

The property owner first reduces numbers and exposure. Then removes stock, then baits, and traps. Woody areas become more predominate providing more habituate for the dogs to become more active. The sheep then become more traumatised and then as a last resort the land is de-stocked.

Or in the event he has sufficient holdings he removes the section of land 1000 – 2/3/4/5000 acres from the operating part of the property and uses it as buffer between him and the National Park.

Then within a few years - 10/15 and this area is so full of the same problem the next adjoining part of his holdings is impacted in the same way. This process just goes on. Often the inter-generations do not even relate to the fact that this is what is destroying their land. The time of the event is so slow and yet so relentless, so absolute it is often seen as something other than what it is. This is especially the case in higher rainfall areas.

With the land over grown with vegetation and water so reduced as to be no longer available to the paddock structure - the property is devalued. Droughts come the landowner can not move stock to previously used areas due no pasture no water and dog predation. The financial position is deteriorating and comes to a crunch when the Bank steps in and says the value has so diminished they the Bank have to call up the papers – *calling in the loan on the property*.

That is not where it ends – the property is sold with great difficulty as the value is no longer there and usually the owner loses all

This cycle may take 25 years it may take 10 or 30 BUT this is the cycle...it could go on for 100 years or until the trees and thickening completes its main growth period and then its demand on water is not as urgent and flow - *to a point, may return*. It is important to note this process is proportional - interception increases, as growth demand is increasing, levels out, and then reduces, *as growth demand diminishes*.

Further more, fires also impact on this process as does grazing drought and climate change. In a high rain fall area the impact of interception is far more intense and immediate then drought and climate change but is often confused and complicated by these phenomena.

In addition and at some point in this cycle the property will be classed as unviable and no longer eligible for Government assistance such as - Exceptional Circumstances. This only adds to the entire injustice and deprivation.

## **National Parks under Funded –**

The funding short fall was part of a pattern, which was politically expedient and premeditated social targeting. It is said by ABARE 20% of farmland will require Structural Adjustment. - Farmers to be moved off marginal land by 2020. Many farms will be declared marginal once their farms have been so devalued by the policies mentioned in this report. The impact of these polices so serious and the value of their land so undermined that over time they will become eligible for Structural Adjustment.

In fact it is seen as politically acceptable policy impacting on a minority in the electorate who is seen to be expendable. Social engineering to satisfy the political demand and appease the more powerful city based Green Fundamentalist.

National Parks, Pests and the Farmers are all impacted by the refusal of Governments to appropriately fund National Parks, and Public good environmental services. This at present entrenched position is not only as a result of comprehensive pressure from the Fundamental Green Movement directed at a weak and unprincipled policy hungry State Government requiring the political support from the city voter but also assisted by the Australian Government who does not see the matter as one that requires political expediency as they too have their agenda. (For *more info on that agenda and its impact on this report see notes page 17 D*)

In particular a number of legislative initiatives including Nation Parks and Vegetation Laws were completely under funded. It was politically expedient to carry out these initiatives – 50% increase in National Parks from the Carr Government, with out appropriate funding, as the real cost of these initiatives was too high and in this regard the **rural community being impacted** by the policies funding short fall were politicly expendable.

This disregard was also playing into the hands of the Green movement as it resulted in parks being treated *as locked up awaiting some mystical Pristine awakening*. Also there was a massive increase in numbers in native fauna in the Parks and the number of farms being de-stocked and the landscape left to revert to regrow the previously cleared native vegetation. This added up to more bio diversity, huge free carbon sinks, from the native vegetation reestablishment and thickening of forest all for basically very little Government expenditure. *These policies also had serious environmental downsides which proved their short sightedness.*

***It is important to point out while governments and those in authority are able to implement policy in response to any powerful interest group for political mileage without having to pay the real cost is not only undemocratic but runs the risk of losing balance and equity in the decisions making process. This approach to policy conceptualisation leads to the extremes in exploitation and is rooted in a mentality that requires the policy to be so structured so as to control, intimidate and restrict individuals and their rights, especially as is it is usually structured to deny access to balanced arbitration.***

***Theses policies are usually energised by extreme adversarial fundamentals – and these are the reasons if not stopped in the short term these policies are by those impacted resisted and rejected until they become dysfunctional and eventually are overturned due to them never achieving their purpose - they are unjust and socially unpalatable.***

This approach can not be justified on ideological, social, environmental, or financial in fact any grounds by claiming it is essential to the social economic or environmental fabric of our community. Even if the reason for the policy is seen as critical to the State for the good of society.

***No policy should exploit one part of the community for the benefit of the greater society – this is public good depredation dressed in democratic clothing. It is very divisive and in the long term not at all conducive to the fundamentals of a strong cohesive and supportive community and further it delays outcomes. While these issues are disputed and challenged the real subject the very purpose the policies relate - are ignored.***

## **Scenario:    *NSW Government Purchase of “Yanga”***

The above concerns outlined are all brought into play when private properties like “Yanga” *recently purchased by the NSW State Government* are converted to National Parks - *in this case along with 3 other properties.*

Not only is it the loss of jobs with the reduction of the work force and the loss of a productive property in the community but in addition the land will now only be managed by 2 or 3 Park staff. There will be no studies done as to the impact on the neighbours region in the long or short term. No studies of how many animals can be fed and contained within the boundaries nor appropriate fences built to ensure they are contained.

It is the beginning of a pattern that will lead to the properties becoming a major centre of disintegration in themselves first then for all the adjoining properties to be severely impacted by way of a downward spiral socially and economically and environmentally. This impact will spread ever-outward following the path outlined in this paper.

All the neighbouring properties should immediately consider their position collectively and take action accordingly. There is ample evidence available as to the outcomes of this policy decision. Failure to address this situation comprehensively will lead to predictable outcomes, which would be most regrettable.

## **Pests – Are We Serious ?**

Until the above issues are dealt with comprehensively any attempt to deal with Pests on private or public land will achieve insignificant results as has been the case historically. The last 30 years even with millions of dollars being spent has resulted in the situation today being more serious - having deteriorated further.

There are those in our community who protect their position by perpetuating this situation to the detriment of the entire community the environment and severely compromising sustainable land management best practice.

In regards wild dogs and the current accepted procedures regarding baiting with 1080, trapping and the use of electric fencing etc used or recommended the RLPB National Parks and remaining landowners. My family has been a part of the High country since 1843. I have known trappers and the wild dog scene and its impact on farmers for 50 years. I refuse to address the current practice here as these practices perpetuate the problem by failing to deal with the course of the problem.

The current procedures are merely patronising the landowner. Pursuing this direction only encourages the authorities to reinforce and sustain across the board the National Parks policies and management philosophy. This philosophy is based on dysfunctional management practice exploiting the rights of a minority of Australians through entirely failing to be socially accountable. This exploitation has become so institutionalised and so entrenched culturally it has become apart of our culture with many no longer even questioning its presence.

If the current efforts made by the RLPB, National Parks and supporting landowners in providing materials, financial and human resources are so convinced that their bandaid approach under the ever

**intensified ministerial restrictions applied is any different then trying to use a bandaid to treat cancer then I can only assume they have severe difficulty in viewing the situation from the holistic and historic point of view. Then again for them to comprehensively do this may leave no alternative then to make themselves redundant.**

## **The solution:**

It should be clearly understood the resistance mounted against any initiative, even if the initiative only suggests or considers change to the National Parks related Departments would be much resisted.

The “National Park Bastion” is the very citadel of the Green Fundamentalist Movement and has been the case for many years. This citadel was the structure that provided them with a financial political and human recourse pool for their unchallenged onslaught into the very fundamentals of the Australian Political Landscape. Challenging this will take very serious political commitment and robust determination.

There are 5 simple steps.

1.-----

Reverse the directive regarding all new National Parks and Wilderness Area declarations. Insist that they by law require the same requirements regarding Development Authority - related<sup>4/5</sup> approvals and Environmental Impact Studies<sup>3</sup>. This is to be with no exceptions and must be retroactively enforced, impacting on all existing National Parks<sup>6</sup> and Wilderness<sup>7</sup> Areas.

2 -----

Establish a fund and direct the Rural Assistance Authority to process on behalf of the Government submissions from persons who believe they have been disadvantaged or suffered in any respect through the impact from the established of National Parks and Wilderness Areas and equitably resolve these outstanding grievances.

3.-----

The Governments both State and Federal direct through the appropriate legislation the removal of all references exempting National Parks and Wilderness Areas from having to conform to a wide range of legislation and planning regulations and instruments. This will bring National Parks and Wilderness Ares back under the scrutiny of the wider public service and general public and provide a response

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<sup>4</sup> NSW - Dividing Fences Act 1991 No 72

<sup>5</sup> NSW – Rural Lands Protection Act 1998 No 143

<sup>3</sup> NSW - Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 NO 203

<sup>6</sup> NSW – National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 No 80

<sup>7</sup> NSW - Wilderness Act 1987 No 196

from the society as a whole so much needed to avoid future accusations and acts of exploitation and victimisation.

4.-----

The new initiatives will require a new human recourse culture in the National Parks. The attitude towards “lock up” is wrong and not conducive to science based sound management practice so needed for sustainable management and National Park care. The National Parks also should have staff living in the Parks. These vast areas cannot be related to intimately by being managed from office-based desks. *The* occasional visit for a few hours a week in to the environs of the park is not the answer. For the best results where these areas had persons living with in their boundaries with attachment and commitment. Consideration would need to be given to the accommodations - this would be an exciting challenge and work activities so as to ensure these would be compatible with the Parks sustainable and natural state - ever changing as it is. Priority should be given to train those who feel they have an attachment to the region the area and who want to maintain that attachment. Training schemes and scholarships should be established to help these people remain involved with their families.

5.-----

A complete science based study carried out to ensure National Park management is based on sound management principles that will ensure National Park objectives are achieved without the National Parks becoming or remaining socially unaccountable.

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*At this point I must congratulate those persons who with vision, concern and compassion took the initiative to encourage the formation of this committee's undertaking.*



## Comments and Notes:

### **A. Melbourne University Zoology Department and Puckapunyal.**

In the most recent example of enclosing a large area by fencing – Puckapunyal in Victoria is the best example. The army base was fenced and it was found after a few years the kangaroo population had increased by approximately 700% to the point many of the animals were suffering from lack of nutrition and illness mainly due to the fact that increased population had become too many for the area enclosed.

To look into the problem and recommend a solution the Defence Force called upon the service of the Zoological Department of the Melbourne University. The team lead by Professor Morgan made a wide range of practical recommendations, which were implemented. This was achieved after considerable difficulties thanks to protestors and objections raised from the Fundamentalist Green Movement.

The result was immediate and of great benefits the kangaroo population now abundantly living in the environs of Puckapunyal

### **B. New Zealand Park Experience with Fences.**

In New Zealand when a National Park was fenced to help impact reduction, it was found there were a number of positive aspects not realised in the initial consideration. Among these outcomes was the fact that feral – exotic animals could not get into the Park such as foxes possums and cats etc. I realise there will be a range of views on this subject – this example is merely to say there are upsides as well.

### **C. Real Socio Economic Impact and The Actual Cost of Such Change.**

The socio economic cost of this initiative would be astounding. In the first instance being of great benefit to those in the now adversely impacted farms and rural communities. I realise this will be at substantial dollar cost to the State Budget. It must be realised although we can see now the down side and the real impact on rural communities - not the city based communities where the policy was initiated it must be realised if this policy was left to run another 30 years - the current National Park Act was introduced in 1974, the socio economic fall out would be astounding.

The net cost to the State I could not estimate as the reform would also have an upside economically as those many dysfunctional areas in the rural communities now producing nothing or little but losses would become viable and in so doing produce input to the state coffers by way of taxes and cash flow for them selves and local based suppliers.

The cost has to be met with in the State Budget. In the event it is too large a financial burden to fund all existing or more new Parks then a sell off of the Parks surplus to what the State can afford would be required. It would place a real focus on the need for analysis of the costs regarding these projects and not just have the rural communities pay the cost out of their pockets to their economic and social demise.

This would stop once and for all Governments being tempted to exploit a positive political outcome to the detriment of a minority group and their inability to legally or physically respond because their rights have been compromised by the devious drafting of the legislative documentation to ensure legal impotency.

Once again not to introduce these recommendations would mean the minority affected, in this case being the rural individuals and communities, would be impacted to the point of becoming a dysfunctional basket case. Ref *Funding* : page 11

## **D. Australian Governments Green House Track Record – Questionable:**

This was apparent at the recent - 2005 COAG meeting. The States and the Federal Government *did not want the subject* on the program. They are trying to stretch out the need to deal with the Native Vegetation / Clearing Laws as much as they can know achieve clear ground rules, deadlines and proven levels of emissions and methods of measurements relating to the ongoing impact of the “Australia Clause” in the Kyoto Protocol. The Governments know these laws to be unjust. The Australian Government has an agenda in meeting Green emission reduction levels at any cost. It is quite clear Australia is keen to obtain international acknowledgment - *see note below*, for being a responsible global village member doing its bit to help shore back the planets wows.

This is the reason Senator Ian Campbell the Federal Minister for Environment is claiming Australia has achieved the Kyoto reduction levels directed at Australia by the protocol even though Australia has not signed the international accord. This reduction he claims is due the reduction on land clearing of vegetation in NSW QLD because of Native Vegetation and clearing laws. This is with out any payments to farmers for carbon credits claimed by the minister in his statement. Even though he admits they the farmers have created the carbon sink.

In addition and equally concerning the Australian Government through its deep involvement with the Australian coal industry is permitting 4\$ billion in emissions from Coal fired power stations to enter the atmosphere with out calling them to account. All the time this is permitted with a blind eye towards the coal and associated power industry.

It is interesting the Coal Powered Power Stations creating the problem are indirectly exploiting the farmers who are solving the problem. This is an example of where the Australian Government could assist with policies promoting more equitable outcomes.