

The Secretary

House of Representatives Standing committee on environment and heritage

Dear sir/madam

PROBLEM 1

I have a farm with an arable area of 380 ha situated in the southwest of Victoria. One block of 130 ha still has around 32 ha of so called remnant vegetation which has become a considerable burden to our overall viability since the anti clearing legislation was introduced.

Initially the local shire had it valued at \$700 per acre - the same as the surrounding cleared and productive country. After the anti clearing legislation, we naturally lodged an objection with the local shire who did reduce the value on the bush section but to what we don't know, and can't seem to find out. We suspect it to be around \$300 to \$350, as there was a similar block brought by a conservation fund (with government assistance) within a couple of miles of this block. After numerous meetings with various politicians and the DNRE, etc., we are told there could be a possible further reduction. From a commercial point of view this block of trees is totally worthless and a burden to our enterprise and so are the rates we have to pay on it.

We have also tried to sell it to various people including the trust for nature. After several visits from various environmental representatives it appears it is not endangered enough to be given any consideration. Again this leaves us with little or no room to manoeuvre.

Carbon credits seem to be targeted towards the plantation industry and there seems to be little or no information on the subject or time frame on implementation which suggests that they will be of little or no benefit.

We are also in a burgeoning blue gum area. They are prepared to pay up to \$4000 per ha for clear sowable country compared to \$270 per ha for bush which in all likely hood would be deducted from the sowable ground. This leaves us with a loss of \$119,000 which could make all the difference in our ability to up-grade, and to remain financially sustainable. Token gestures of \$1.20 contribution to internal fencing (nothing for boundary fences) and rate relief pale into insignificance in comparison.

There are also many neighbours in the immediate area with the same problem.

PROBLEM 2 potential problem

The Eumeralla river also splits our main block in two. There is no easement on either side of the river so we assume to own to the banks of the river. Over most of the year it is just a stream but in winter it can inundate large areas of the farm, so drainage or removal of cumbungi to improve water flow is crucial. This is also exasperated by people up stream improving their drainage into the river so we have to cope with larger amounts of water over shorter periods of time. A lot of the up stream works has been funded with government money through drainage schemes etc. We have no problems with the above providing we can keep our section relatively clean (always done at our own cost) For the last decade or so we have had to apply for permission to clean the river out ,why I don't know. A wetland heritage area has been applied for downstream and if successful could severely impact on our drainage program.

We also now find a "river zone " has been created which consists of an arbitrarily line drawn some distance out from each bank of the river. The lines' course doesn't seem to follow wet land areas so how a decision was arrived at in regards to its placement is a mystery - Also, no person or person came to investigate the natural topography of the land, nor to inform us this was indeed even happening. It seems to have been implemented by South West Water, but with no consulting landholders or the general public, some years ago. We had nearly completed all the conditions for a permit to mine agricultural lime when the council suddenly discover the river zone. As luck would have it we were a metre outside this line which apparently must be rigidly adhered too. If we had been inside the line it would have cost \$2000 to \$\$6000 to shift the site.

PROBLEM 3

Then there is the coastal zone which extends inland from the sea for some four to five hundred metres. Again introduced with no consultation and little or no publicity. The restrictions here are unknown to date, so we have no understanding of where we stand in relation to this area.

Just a few points in closing. This is not a degraded area, nor are there any salinity problems .

We are not environmental vandals and deeply resent being ostracized as such.

The religious zeal with which these policies seem to be implemented and enforced is worrying and fostering a strong community resentment .

This is FREEHOLD LAND, so to be denied the use of it without being in any way compensated, but left with all the costs is feel good politics at its' absolute worst.

Unfortunately I am not in a position to be a benevolent fund for the state of Victoria, or Australia and as no other sectors of the community have to foot the bill I am totally bewildered as to why I should.

My family has farmed this area since 1855. We have drained areas and we have cleared trees etc., as we were told to do by the governments of the day. We are now sowing trees and I feel we are in a sustainable situation fo the next 144 years - provided we are not sent broke under the guise of "environmental sustainability".

Regards
Joe \Crowe

PS The advertising of this inquiry should have been a little more comprehensive as I only noticed the one ad.+

PPS In regards to point number 3. We have just had to change our Titles over from Old Law to Torrens .The old title had a boundary at the high water mark which, due to the conversion, seems to have retreated some three or four hundred metres inland. Again we seem to have lost land we own and have paid rates on . That a government or any body acting on its behalf can fiddle with titles unknown to the title holder must surely be operating outside its own constitutional and legal parameters. Again I can only emphasize that this only gets people offside . In most cases these are the very people that if one is serious about conservation; are in control of the land and who are being alienated by the system. In a lot of ways you have to deal with a rural culture (independent, can do, anti authority) which policy makers seem not to have any concept of . If the system continues along these ways it might find little or no support from the people who can make the difference.

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