

'Kelloshiel'
1358 Triamble Road
Hargraves NSW 2850
May 16, 2000

The Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

By email: Environment.Reps@aph.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam

I am making this submission on behalf of Kelloshiel Partnership the grazing business I run on the property stated above, and make my comments specifically in relation to land clearing.

1. What does 'Freehold' now mean?

We have paid money to the State to achieve freehold ownership to be able to clear and develop our land. Any changes to our right to develop our land must be compensated for as a matter of justice with the allowance for country that would not be viable or already restricted.

2. The Native Vegetation Act - on the ground.

Acts such as the NSW Native Vegetation Act create a large degree of stress due to confusing and dictatorial wording. We are not and should not be treated as criminals because we want to increase our income from our own assets.

When land-holders apply to clear land, there is considerable delay which causes frustration and stress.

For every hectare on our property suitable to be cleared to run more superfine sheep an equal area in other parts of our property is returning to native vegetation due to economics and the type of country.

3. The Farm Business.

If I do not continue to do improvements to maintain my carrying capacity my income will fall, when we actually need our income to increase in order to remain a viable business. Yet, depending on who interprets the law I can be financially

destroyed for being a progressive land-holder. There are many other wool producers in our district in the same situation.

The NSW Native Vegetation Act has restricted our future income by restricting any developmental goals we may have for our business. It has also, therefore, reduced the value of our land, and the value of the businesses we run on that land.

4. There is no guarantee that the next owners of farms will perform any better environmentally than the original owners - generally the opposite is the case.

If properties cannot be run as profitable businesses, they are eventually sold. Most are split up - to either areas of land with diseconomies of scale (making them more unprofitable) - but mostly for 'hobby farms'.

Hobby farms are notorious for being not profitable and unsustainable. Furthermore, the land becomes more densely populated, often becoming overrun with weeds - exacerbating the environmental problems even more. The new 'residents' (when they are there!) have had very limited connection with, and understanding of, the land.

Ask any Rural Lands Protection Board for information on blocks of land being held by people who have to sustain their existence solely by their off-farm income! The Mudgee Rural Lands protection board had to look after over 5000 such blocks several years ago - there are probably more now.

Profitable farms are imperative, not a choice!

5. Farmers are conservationists.

No real farmers who have a long connection with the land want to destroy their assets by over-clearing. A more consultative process with the relevant government departments but not with fanatical environmentalists would, I believe, achieve many of the aims of conservation.

On our property, for example, we have been chairman of our local Landcare group for a number of years, executive members of Landcare at steering committee level in our district and recently participated in Farming for the Future training. We are also heavily involved in an NHT-funded Farm Forestry native

food trial project in Central Western NSW (which our family initiated).

We want WIN-WIN, fanatical environmentalists appear to want WIN-LOSE.

6. Australian Native Woody Weeds.
Under the NSW Vegetation Act (Australian native) woody weeds are protected, where on our property they are causing major difficulties.
7. Individuals paying for the public benefit.
Why should farmers bear the cost of environmental concern when cities can pollute and sprawl over good healthy land?
Because farmers don't have the numbers does not mean that they should be treated as second class citizens.

Furthermore, one section of the farming community should not bear the cost (such as tree planting, restraints on clearing, etc) to the benefit of others downstream without some compensation.

Why should a land-holder who does not have a fully developed property be penalised when compared with a land-holder with a developed property?

I therefore submit that when a landholder cannot come to an agreement with the governments and the land in question has a suitable title, and is viable to be developed, then compensation should be paid to the landholder.

Yours faithfully

Rodney Suttor
Kellosiel Partnership