

The Secretary  
Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Re-Inquiry into Public Good conservation

Dear Mr Dundas,

Thank you for allowing me to take the opportunity to make a late submission to your inquiry. I am a landholder in the Edenhope area with 320 acres of retained native vegetation on my property and am in the process of allowing more regeneration. I also have a number of wetlands and have been involved in conserving these with some government assistance.

I would argue very strongly that there is very little incentive for someone like myself to retain land in its natural state unless they are committed to making their own contribution to the environment. There are some funds available to fence off areas and revegetate others but in my situation and many others I receive no other benefit from my commitment other than my own satisfaction at having made a commitment. There is some demand for vegetated properties but few ways of generating income. Governments at the Federal or State level need to address this issue as soon as possible. In this area less than 5 % of privately owned land now contains remnant vegetation.

I am aware that you will be listening to a number of landholders from this area but one of my concerns is that they will not provide your committee with a balanced view of the arguments in this area. In the northern parts of the Shire pivot irrigation has resulted in the clearing of large areas of native vegetation and although the regulations require a 1:10 replant ratio this is difficult to enforce and is openly flouted by some landholders. Regulations need to be in place to stop the total clearance of native vegetation in this area and in the areas now being planted to bluegums in the southern areas of the shire.

Many landholders in this area are committed to conservation and this is growing. Unfortunately there are still some landholders in the area who have little regard for any conservation and would clear all their remnant vegetation given the chance. A number of them purchased land with scrub for quite low prices in anticipation of clearance at a later date. The only way this group of people will be controlled is by legislation or by some form of compensation for the vegetation they retain.

Retention of these areas will be of great public good and the West Wimmera is lucky to still have large areas of remnant vegetation and 30% of the states wetlands. The general public should contribute to the retention of these areas

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and I feel and have argued strongly at a number of levels that a compensation programme needs to be developed and initiated as soon as possible. At least one shire in Victoria has provided a rate rebate for landholders retaining native vegetation and we have discussed the issue of land stewardship in Wimmera Catchment Management area. However, for uncommitted landholders who do have remnant vegetation or wetlands the development of a scheme to provide a financial compensation for a retention of valuable conservation areas is essential and needs to be put in place as soon as possible with Federal and State support.

Yours Faithfully

Barry Hall  
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