

Submission to Inquiry into Public Good Conservation by W J (BILL) Yates
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My interest in public good conservation arises from the fact that my family own and manage dryland grain and livestock property near Moree which despite covering some of the richest soil types in Australia is coming under regulation to prevent development for arable agriculture. My family has run this area sustainably for 100 years. My interest in the management/retention of native vegetation has led to my membership of the Moree Regional Vegetation Committee (RVC).

Current RVC perceptions are that some 20 % of the preclearing native veg be managed for conservation but agency perceptions are that such be restricted grazing , fenced etc, additional large areas grazed have little conservation value to the regulators and realistically it seems unlikely that a large proportion of the grazing lands will be allowed to be cleared /farmed. In my operation farming country older than 20 years generates a longterm gross margin of \$10 per acre which includes \$20 per acre cost of fertiliser. Currently cattle are returning closer to \$20/acre sheep rising at around \$15. Prevention of development of alluvial grey and brown clays for farming effectively denies the use of the fertility bank in these soils at a value of \$200/acre. On the positive side of such development is the cash flow effective control of regrowth (belah, budda, box, coolibah which effectively preclude the above calculated grazing returns) better enterprise flexibility(eg use of grazing crops to fill feed gaps), control of weeds such as Lippia spp . The negatives are tendency for soil salt levels to rise, structural decline loss of biodiversity. These can be addressed by the leaving of corridors of veg/windbreaks and returning land so developed to a native grass/legume pasture at the end of the cropping phase.

Veg plans should address the rotational needs of this land; tying development assistance /approval to a management plan which restricts the defined area to return to pasture after 10 years. Areas included in managed for conservation area should have 80% of fencing, weed control, feral animal control costs met from public funding. Areas of high salinity drainage ways should be remain in grassland with some incentive to do so , connectivity of veg promoted with emphasis on biodiversity. Any attempt to restrict development on greater than 20% of an individual holding should be public fund compensated through development funding with covenant restricting the period of farming.

To deny further developement of the alluvial soils of the Murray Darling (which through either technology or population accessibility reasons remain undeveloped) for political/ degradation reasons due to 100 years of overdevelopement (of soils of much inferior fertility and more erosively unstable) is unfair and against the productivity/wealth interests of farmers, community, state and nation.

Yours Sincerely

W J Yates

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