

Native Vegetation Inquiry
Productivity Commission
LB2 Collins Street East
MELBOURNE VIC 8003

Shaun & Tonya Ellis
Milbrook Ellis & Co
RMB 1230
TALLANDOON VIC 3700

Dear Sir/Madam,

We are writing in relation to the impact of Native Vegetation and biodiversity regulations on our farming enterprise. We operate a dairy farm enterprise situated in the Mitta Valley in North East Victoria. Our property comprises 1100 acres, with 600 acres of Native Vegetation. Our dairy farm is a third generation farm and currently supports three families. We aim to milk approximately 400 dairy cows at the peak of our season.

We have attempted to clear our Native Vegetation land on previous occasions and been unsuccessful. The impact of this rejection, to clear, in part, our Native Vegetation area has cost us financially for approximately fifteen years, and with the current drought conditions, the financial impact is increasing. We strongly believe that if we had been able to clear 300 of the 600 acres of Native Vegetation our farming enterprise would not currently be suffering such financial adversity.

The significant financial impact has resulted due to off-farm agistment costs and the need to purchase significant amounts of fodder to feed our stock. These costs would not be incurred if we were able to use this land in a productive manner.

The regulations prohibiting the clearance of our property are placing our farming enterprises future in severe jeopardy. If current drought conditions prevail, the financial impact of off-farm agistment and increased fodder costs could in real terms mean that one or two of our families will have to seek off-farm employment. The future of our children to continue our farming tradition is also jeopardised.

We respect the preservation of the natural environment and have only ever wanted to clear the area of land, which had previously been milled. The native vegetation in this area is already limited due to the previous milling, with the land being overtaken with blackberries and vermin. These problems are spreading to our productive land, increasing the costs associated with controlling and maintaining our land.

The location of this 300 acres that we would like to clear and use productively in our farming enterprise, is surrounded by large quantities of bush. Its clearance would have little if any impact on the erosion and salinity of the surrounding Native Vegetation. We strongly believe that the relaxation of the regulations controlling Native Vegetation could in our case, have a resounding effect on the future of our farming enterprise.

Yours truly,

Shaun and Tonya Ellis