

Vic  
1 July 2003

Native Vegetation Inquiry  
Productivity Commission  
LB2 Collins Street East  
MELBOURNE 8003

### IMPACTS OF NATIVE VEGETATION AND BIODIVERSITY REGULATIONS 2003

From a community perspective in Victoria living in an area west of Melbourne where the native vegetation is predominantly native grassland, there have been only two instances that I can recall where the regulations have been used to control the destruction of native vegetation. One was destruction by a contractor of plants of National significance within a protective fenced area, the other destruction by a landholder clearing 15ha of high quality native grass, which also happened to be located near a designated salinity area.

Overall the regulations have been rarely applied even though the native grasses are reduced to less than 1% of their original cover. It is one of the most threatened ecosystems in Victoria and plants and animals within this system are extinct in this area or are bordering on extinction. It would appear that the regulations are not effective in controlling this spiral of destruction.

We have salinity, soil erosion, weed infestation and water quality problems, which are directly linked to loss of native grasses, and the function that they perform in mitigating land degradation.

What appears to be needed is more information regarding the direct links between native vegetation and land degradation and agricultural production. These links need to be tied in with regulations, which reflect the realistic costs of reparation of degraded land. The links between the knowledge which is available from research and studies of the benefits of native vegetation need to be more widely communicated.

I have included some papers from research and general sources which highlight the practical benefits of native vegetation not only from the biodiversity perspective but also for the benefit of sustainable agriculture, and more.

General headings are –

#### SALINITY

'It is often believed that trees are an essential component of the water balance of wooded plant communities. However studies in Western Australia have shown that summer active pastures can provide an equivalent level of control over deep drainage. (Carbon et al. 1982).' page 137, 'Perennial native grasses - the quiet achievers', W.H. (Bill) Johnston, from Balancing Conservation and Production in Grassy Landscapes - Proceedings of the Bushcare Grassy Landscapes Conference, Clare, S.A. 19-21 August 1999

#### WEED CONTROL

**SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION** The report called for the Government to shift its focus from repairing damaged environments to maintaining largely undamaged ecosystems, saying the maintenance of healthy ecosystems would cost up to 100 times less than repairing any damage'. From the Sustaining our Natural Systems and Biodiversity Report - The Australian, Wednesday June 5, 2002.

#### EROSION CONTROL

#### FIRE PREVENTION

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission,

Sincerely, Frances Overmars