

To
Native Vegetation Inquiry
Productivity Commission
Melbourne Vic 8003

Dear Sir/Madam

Re- Submission to Native Vegetation Inquiry

Having been General Manager of the South Coast Rural Lands Protection Board for some 27 years I would like to make general comment on some aspects of the terms of reference relative to the inquiry. My period of close association with rural land owners in the above role covers the years from 1965 to my retirement in 1992.

Firstly, I would like to express my concern that over recent years the rights of land owners and in particular the genuine farmer are being eroded through various government actions spurred on by single issue minority groups under the pretence of protecting the environment.

Whilst I agree that the environment must be protected it seems to me that the pendulum has swung too far leading to legitimate land owners becoming virtual tenants to the state for land they legally own.

I fully believe that all Governments should assist in managing environmental issues on rural land but only in an advisory capacity. In my opinion most land owners would co-operate with governments and environmentalists should environmental safe guards be genuinely required. However, this cooperation would only work if landowners are fairly compensated for loss of production income as a consequence of recommended environmental control measures. For those landowners who refuse to cooperate following fair hearings of their case severe penalties should be forthcoming.

To me when farmers are directed or ordered by government bureaucrats as to what and how much they should grow, how much water they can dam, where vegetation should be removed from, where wildlife corridors are to be located and what areas of buffer zones should be established on their land bordering national parks etc they have lost control of their properties.

Surely the Australian Constitution must have in-built safe guards within it to protect the rights of legal landowners from Governments exercising measures to undermine traditional existing rights.

This submission is very brief and is in general terms but I feel that on such a matter that goes to the very heart of our democracy I had to express an opinion.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Irwin Cole