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The Productivity Commission
LB2, Collins Street,
EAST MELBOURNE
VICTORIA 8003

Dear Madam / Sir,

I am writing to you in response to an article published in The Land newspaper dated 19/06/03, page 17 about government regulations and red tape.

I will keep my response short and simple at this time. I would be more than happy to elaborate at great length if so required but by the same token I do not wish to burden people with flow charts, power point presentations and meaningless graphs.

In the past decade we farmers in N.S.W have seen twenty-eight (28) of the fifty-six (56) pieces of the environmental legislation introduced. Some of these contradict each other.

On top of this we have seen our costs of production increase, we have experienced less than average seasonal conditions in many areas. This has forced an aging farming community (average age of N.S.W Farmers is 58 years of age) to hire less staff. The only thing that has kept many of us viable is that commodity prices have been reasonable. The picture will be very different in twelve months when the real effects of this drought start to show them selves.

We have become Tax collectors with the introduction of the G.S.T. a mountain of surveys and forms come from various departments, and in our spare time at our own cost to remain legal we can do courses in chemical usage, machinery operation etc. etc.

We are dubbed by the environmentalists as rapists of the beautiful land. The great majority of farmers have a love of the land and the animals they tend to. Good farming practice and animal husbandry leads to sustainability. One can not help being a little cynical when visiting a Capital City. *Oh no we would not see any pollution, disturbance of natural habitat of native flora or fauna. NO NEVER.* These same people who castigate us were noticeably absent during and after the disastrous fires last summer. Unfortunately often those that know the least are the most passionate and vocal about their cause, and gain the ear of the Government.

I do have a whole raft of concerns, National Parks have made a move on our area. A loss of employment and income will not be compensated for by tourism in our area. Our Council loses rates. This shortfall will have to be made up somewhere. In some instances National Parks has paid a whopping 260% above the Valuer General's valuation for Council rating. This may well push up valuations in this area causing hefty rises in rates, which affects the rural sector more than any one else as rates are in fact a land tax.

The N.S.W. State Government before the last election promised not to force amalgamation of Council areas. Since the election this has all changed, Councils have to submit proposals for boundary changes by August. The Premier has stated that if he has to he will crack the whip. Unfortunately looking at a map and drawing lines does not necessarily take in to account the best interests of the residents. If we were forced to have super councils the rural constituents would be the losers. Higher rates and less services.

Over many years successive governments have fostered the formation of departments that now have to try and justify their very existence. Our old Department of Land & Water Conservation is a great example. (*One employee for every eighteen farms in N.S.W.*) Now has a new name but I think many of the same faces. Even with a change of political parties most of the heads of department continue to advise or should I say dictate policy to the new Ministers.

In conclusion I would like to say that change is inevitable. When the Earth stops changing it will be as dead as Mars. While Earth is a living planet' species will become endangered, die out and new ones evolve. (*Not a lot of dinosaurs left except in government departments.*)

The authorities claim that consensus and consultation are the key words in their white and green papers for new legislation. Most of the committees are made up of ministerial appointees and certain stakeholders can be disadvantaged. Having sat on several of these boards I can speak from experience.

I would be happy to answer more specific questions. After all we have become used to it now!

Yours faithfully,
R.W. Sheaffe.