

**SUBMISSION TO PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION  
IMPACT OF NATIVE VEGETATION AND  
BIODIVERSITY REGULATIONS**

**Narrandera**  
Shire Council

*Our Ref. KMM/law – 50/15/15*

10 July 2003

Productivity Commission  
LB2  
Collins Street East  
MELBOURNE VIC 8003

Dear Sir

**Subject: Public inquiry on Impact of Native Vegetation and Biodiversity Regulations**

I refer to the inquiry by your Commission into the impacts of environmental legislation and reforms on agricultural production.

Council would like to offer the following comments in relation to the inquiry:

Over the last three years our Council has been represented at public forums associated with environmental services and associated legislation. Some of the issues have included water sharing plans and environmental flows, Plains Wanderer recovery plan and vegetation plans

The common link in all these issues is the negative impact on the right to farm and productivity of farming. No doubt you would appreciate that farming is subject to a wide range of influences, including drought and market fluctuations of agricultural produce. Whilst landholders have adapted to these influences, a new range of threats to viability has arisen from environmental reforms and legislation.

It is Council's observation, over many years, that the majority of landholders are sensitive to the need to protect the environment and their change in farming practices and participation in programs, such as Landcare, attest to this.

Landholders are now threatened with proposals, which are affecting their land value and capacity to farm caused through water reform, and conservation restrictions, on areas where threatened species have been identified. In regard to water reform, there has been no substantial scientific evidence as to the benefits of environmental flows over a range of options up to 1300 gigalitres in the Murray Darling Basin. Economic development of the region and viability of farming is being threatened by assumptions over these environmental flow options.

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In another area, Native Vegetation Plans are preventing long term planning of farming activities. I have attached an extract of a newspaper article, which gives you one example provided in a study by the University of New England. This study shows that the *NSW Native Vegetation Conservation Act* has depressed land values in the Moree region alone by 21%, and reduced farm household incomes by 16%. Similar experiences, and concerns, have been raised at meetings in the Western Riverina. One case in point is the establishment of conservation buffer zones in relation to the Plains Wanderer. This is also having a major impact on the viability of farming within these areas.

One final and important issue is that socio-economic studies are not undertaken on a meaningful, and realistic, basis for both water reform and native vegetation proposals. The Western Group of Councils has raised this issue on a number of occasions, however, no significant response has occurred.

I thank the Commission for the opportunity to make a submission on this important issue, and trust that this information is of some assistance.

yours faithfully

**Ken Murphy**  
**General Manager**

*Attachments*  
*Cc: Cr Quilter*