

30 January 2004

Dr Neil Byron
Chief Commissioner
Native Vegetation Inquiry
Productivity Commission
Locked Bag 2, Collins Street east
MELBOURNE VIC 8003

Dear Dr Byron

Draft Report – Inquiry into the Impacts of Native Vegetation and Biodiversity Regulations

The Council wishes to convey to you its support for the recommendations of the Inquiry as detailed in the draft report.

The present native vegetation controls seek to protect and increase tracts of native vegetation, but this should be done in conjunction with sound farm management practices. There is significant confusion caused by inconsistency in the interpretation of the planning legislation and the provisions relating to native vegetation in particular.

The draft findings of the Commission accord with Council's views in particular the recognition and involvement of local knowledge in determining the application of any form of native vegetation controls and the introduction of steps to remove inconsistency in interpretation and provide all sides with certainty.

The Council also strongly supports the position that environmental protection over and above what was the intended economic outcome for the landowners should be "bought" by the community. It is accepted this will be a difficult issue to resolve because of the difficulties in quantifying the community benefits that may accrue and placing a subsequent dollar value on them. This may be resolved by providing some of the resources free, eg seedlings, fencing or advice and assistance with developing long-term management programs.

The Council will await with interest the outcome of this inquiry and hopes that as a result there will be certainty for both landowners and the environment.

Yours faithfully

James McKay
Chief Executive Officer