

Submission on Impacts of Native Vegetation & Biodiversity Regulations

My property of 558 Hectares is located in the Tumbarumba Shire in the Murray Valley above Jingellic. About 2kms of the boundary joins the Bogandyera Nature Reserve. The NSW Government has taken control of about 70% of the property, which is all the land with a slope of 18 degrees and above, and also about 100 hectares of land they call part of a "Bio Link". My comments are based on my own property and surrounding area, and may not apply to all areas, for instance, to a low rainfall area. I have enclosed documents with this submission to give factual evidence of at least some of the problems raised. More comprehensive and detailed information can be provided verbally.

Negative impacts on landholders

The restrictions do not just apply to clearing vegetation but also grazing. The reasons the portions of land have not been cleared is that some has been left for environmental reasons, shade etc. and the 100 hectares was for firewood, timber, poles, etc. to diversify income and eventually afforested to more profitable trees in an ongoing basis. The area has been grazed for many years. The affect on my operation if the NSW Government enforces the new legislation will be -

1. Loss of annual income of \$10000 per year due to restrictions on grazing.
2. Loss of \$5000 per year in capital value mainly due to restrictions on farm improvement.
3. \$1000 contribution to fencing required separating the 160-hectare conservation area from the rest of the farm.
4. \$5000 to build a new dam as the present dam is in the conservation area.
5. Replace one kilometre of boundary fencing between my neighbour and the conservation area at a cost of several thousand dollars.
6. Pay rates and fire brigade costs.
7. Control weeds and animals for the \$400 provided by the government. My estimate of the actual cost is about \$2000, the biggest expense is labour for animal control.
8. Fence maintenance due to tree and branch damage and fouling of electric fencing.
9. Further devaluation due to frozen assets, grazing restrictions and extra labour cost to control pest animals from increased habitat.
10. Increased fire risk and animal losses.
11. Purchase of firewood off farm for my own use as nearly all on farm wood is in protected areas.

Positive impacts on landholders.

There are no positive impacts to my property from the regulations. The notion that production increases with up to 52% native vegetation and that trees in this area reduces salinity is rubbish. Above about 10% tree coverage reduces productivity when most required, due to shading and moisture absorption. With regard to salinity, the country was littered with "Water Wells" early last century, some 150 feet deep and all produced water well below the tree root zone. My own experience when I sank a Well twenty years ago was, water at 15 feet, more at 21 feet and also tree roots but a satisfactory supply was not obtained until we broke through a layer of rock at 28 feet. Permanent springs are common throughout this area, many in uncleared areas, which means the water is below the root zone or in excess of the requirements of the vegetation. Annual rainfall is about 34 inches. I wrote to the Department about salinity requesting proof, that trees in this area reduce salinity, which they were unable supply. The Propaganda should stop until the proof is provided.

Impact on property values [Documents enclosed]

Property values are decreased when assets are frozen and restrictions and obstacles are placed on normal farming operations. Farms bordering National Parks are now devalued due to the affects of a poor neighbour, eg. Dogs, Roos, Weeds, Pigs, Fencing and fence maintenance and the lack of understanding of the importance of fencing to control all animals. The inability to obtain long term accurate information on land use, and as compensation is not provided, prevents properties being accurately valued, thus discounts are put in place by those that are aware, and a trap to those who are not. [Weekly Times Enclosure] I will be leasing all my property due to Government interference, which has now been going on for about 25 years and getting worse. Water and clearing, which include grasses, trees, roads, firewood, milling trees, etc, makes investing extremely risky. Projects such as, Hydro energy, Irrigation, Hydroponic production of feed, are now not risks one would take.

Administrative costs for landholders. [See Letter]

Due to Legislation permission has to be obtained even to rescue a sick animal out of the Bush, as this would be carried out with the use of a tractor, which would require clearing to gain access to the animal. The cost of obtaining permission from the Department Officer, who is 130 kilometres away, can be considerable. The phone cannot be relied upon in an emergency and one has to choose between letting the animal die or disregard the law and take the consequences.

Government measures to mitigate negative impacts

A \$400 incentive to lock up 160 hectares is the only offer made so far, this is an insult as the total cost is thousands of dollars. [See letters enclosed]

Impacts on non-landholders and regional communities.

As the small farms are closed down the population decreases, this has at least two impacts -

1. Business activity reduced in the towns thus businesses leave as the Banks have done.
2. Small farms in this area make up full time employment for Shearers and other farm workers. At the moment Shearers are not available as most young people can see the result of the current stupidity and migrate to the larger towns where they can live without continually being harassed.

Efficiency and effectiveness of regimes

The Authorities seem to lack understanding of the whole situation and want to "Farmer Bash" rather than deal with the problems on a consultative and cooperative basis. For instance we all know that feral animals damage the environment and that native animals in plague proportions also damage the environment. The response is, plant more trees, create more habitat and make the situation worse. I was a member of a land care group and I could not convince anyone that pigs on my property, which migrated from the national park, were creating havoc. I had tens of hectares rooted up, pasture and bush alike; also every log in the bush had been rolled over looking for food. The Pig and Dog situation is now "OK" at my expense, but not the other animals. The "carryon" about lack of hollows in trees for nesting birds and animals needs to be revisited as Cockatoos and Galahs are in plague numbers and these birds use hollows for nesting. There might be a case for this argument in some areas but not here.

Perverse environmental outcomes

My farm management style was to operate by leaving a good grass cover, because I believed it had many advantages such as soil improvement, retaining native grasses and also reduce soil erosion, this was proven by observing the colour of the water in the streams after rain. I now have leased property and the practice may not be carried on. The point I must make here is that the Kangaroos migrate to where the feed is and even if one has good environmental intentions it is another matter to carry them out when many factors are beyond ones control.

Implementation of regulatory regimes

I set in motion an application to clear land, details are explained in letter enclosed, and the out come should have been known on the first inspection, however they were prepared to waste my time and money. Other factors of concern are all the requirements of assessing the area and the expertise required. Some of the requirements are slope, soil, tree species, location of Aboriginal Sites and the list goes on. People with the knowledge required are not available locally, thus the costs of applying prevent the harvesting of assets, timber, grass trees, etc. and improvement for grazing. The Authorities expect the farmers to work for nothing and bear the cost they create; examples are in the letters enclosed. One example is preventing adequate clearing of fence lines, which creates more maintenance and additional stock work and pest control.

Yours Faithfully

W.R.Clarke