

VIC  
29/07/03

NATIVE VEGETATION INQUIRY  
PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION  
MELBOURNE

Dear Sir,

I write re the impact of Native Vegetation controls on Private land used for farming in Victoria.

The Cain Government introduced these controls under the Planning Act which, by Govt. Regulation, conveniently precludes any compensation for loss of use. As Victoria is 36% owned and controlled by the State, there is no logical argument for this extra private land to be locked up. How much more do they want versus what is reasonable or necessary? Which Countries overseas have similar controls with or without compensation?

When I want anything from the State Govt. I am told "The user must pay" But when they place controls upon my land for Conservation or Greenhouse Gas abatements for the benefit of the populous at large, I'm told I get nothing!

So as it costs the taxpayer nothing, more excuses will be made to lock up more and more land. However, if private land owners received fair compensation for the use of their land, only that land with important habitat or species would be involved.

As it stands, the people in the Cities enjoy to the fullest all their assets and

income – why should some farmers be the ones expected to sacrifice their assets and income? What would Rupert Murdoch say if he had to lose the use of say 20% of the Herald and Weekly Times land in Melbourne and plant it to trees? Suddenly the media might not be as keen on Native Vegetation retention. While the Govt. and Greenies are getting their way, and it costs them nothing, they will always want more.

So what are the costs borne by my farming operation? Land locally is making between \$1700 and \$2000 per acre, mostly to Bluegum plantations. However, they won't buy Bush land, and as I can't farm it, I own around 200 acres that is made valueless. This land was bought to clear and farm before the controls were introduced (without any consultation).

So I lose an asset of \$400,000 plus the income as well. This land is difficult to control – vermin and Kangaroos proliferate, and cattle have to be handled using horses. Even then, because logs trip horses up, it's not a safe workplace. Meanwhile my neighbors with clear land continue to farm unfettered.

Should some areas be identified as lacking trees, let trees be planted there, by all means. But never will a lack of trees in one area be overcome by having an excess in another.

Finally be no one accuse me of being against conservation. The Dictionary defines conservation as the wise use of a resource as distinct from mindlessly locking it up. Let my critics first demonstrate their loss of income and inconvenience over the last 15 years equalling mine, and then we can talk as equals.

I would be prepared to give evidence to support my submission if required.

Yours faithfully

(signature)

(NEIL KERR)

PHONE

FAX