

Native Vegetation Enquiry  
Productivity Commission  
LB2 Collins Street East  
Melbourne Vic 8003

From: Russell D Gillard  
Residential Address. NSW  
Property Address: NSW

NSW Farmers Association membership no: 3 8768

Re: Impact of native vegetation and biodiversity/threatened species laws.

I purchased my property of 1600 acres in November 1995. My plans for the property were to use approx half, 800 acres and leave the other half as it was, it is hilly and not suitable to clear, we *wanted* the natural bush, with the wildlife and birds. There are some parts with scattered vegetation, one area had approx 20 acres clear. We applied to Land and Water Conservation to clear more of it, so that we could grow a crop/plant trees/ graze animals. We wanted to use the land in a typical farming manner, to return some income from our investment in the property. We were granted a permit to clear 30 acres. We advised L &WC that this was to plant olive trees, to date we have planted 2000 trees. We felt that planting trees would have less impact on the environment. Our original plan was to have a mixed farm, olive grove plus grazing animals. We do not have enough area for any pasture development. There are several areas which would be suitable for grazing if timber was thinned.

The history of the property is that of grazing sheep, where some of it was cleared. It was left unused for 20 years, which interested us in that there would be very little chemicals left in the soil. The property runs along the Western train line, there is considerable evidence that much of the red box and ironbark trees were cut out of the property for railway sleepers. This left an imbalance in the native tree varieties. Black cypress, which is prolific in the area is growing in 'wheatfield' density, it is choking out a lot of the eucalypts. Until recently cypress was not to be thinned. A bushfire in 1986 has also favoured the regrowth of cypress over ironbark and redbox trees.

Improvements to the land have been restricted. There has been soil improvement in the area of the olives only. Weed and pest eradication have been carried out in consultation with control officers from Pastures Protection Board and our local council. I would like to mention the cooperation and assistance of the staff was a very high standard.

At present I work in Orange and our plan was to develop the farm to partially or fully sustain us in retirement and/or able us to retire early. Without the ability to develop further, our plans will not be a reality, our future is unsure.

The value of the property is not known, we have not tried to sell it, however we own 1600 acres in total, we have the use of 100 acres, that is 1/16<sup>th</sup>, or 6.25%. Would you buy a 16 storey office block, where you could only lease out 1 floor? I doubt it. Yes, the value of the property has been drastically affected.

In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century my wife's uncle worked for the equivalent of L&WC, he was welcomed onto peoples property, his advice in dam placement, cropping types for soil improvement, erosion prevention etc. was sought after, he was a well respected man in the community. Todays equivalent is despised.

Q. What went wrong, what changed? Answer: Their attitude

Our experience with L &WC was mixed. There were some staff who were very helpful and gave us positive guidance, however there were others who had a very negative attitude, they made me feel like a beggar, cap in hand asking for permission to work my own freehold land. I do not have the ability to record telephone conversations, so you only have my word that a member of staff from Dubbo L & WC told me that I should be grateful I'm getting a permit to clear 30acres and I was lucky to get that, which was followed by the threat that if I cleared any more than that, there was a fine of \$110,000. and are vegetation order. L& WC staff could certainly learn from Pastures Protection Board and council staff how to communicate with people.

I thank you for taking the time to read this.

Russell D. Gillard.