

SUBMISSION

**to the
Native Vegetation Inquiry
Productivity Commission**

On

Impacts of Native Vegetation & Bio-Diversity Regulations

February 2004

By

Don McShane

This submission relates more directly to the recently signed bilateral agreement between the State and Federal Governments for the Protection of non-Forest Vegetation communities but some statements can be seen as addressing issues in a more general sense.

1. Where is the problem in Tasmania with non-forest vegetation communities?

What need is there for protection?

Where is the cost benefit statement?

Apparently without any studies or consultation the State government has arrived at a figure of 80,000ha. to be protected (sterilised) from further development. Half of this area is on private land.

- Where is it?
- Which properties are affected?
- What area on each property?
- Which are the threatened species on each property?

2. Is this a fair and just methodology for the Federal Government to allocate funds to State governments?

(i.e. if you, the State Government introduce regulations and restrictions on landowners' activities we, the Federal Government will give you a share of N.H.T. part 2 money).

Isn't this a type of bribery or blackmail?

3. The main so called 'threatened species' are silver tussock and kangaroo grass. Farmers can verify that these are the most prolific and widespread of native grasses in Tasmania.

4. 40,000ha. on public land would surely be sufficient for conservation.

That is a large area in a state the size of Tasmania.

There are some private landowners who can afford and wish to offer non-forest land to be protected from development. These areas would be additional to the 40,000 ha. of public land.

5. Compensation. There is no mention of compensation and apparently it is not intended.

- farmers have to be flexible in their operations and practices.
- farmers have to react, sometimes with little notice, to economic and market demands - farmers may need to use some non-forest grassland (silver tussock country) to grow wheat or poppies when the wool market is slack.

If farmers were compensated

- the areas to be protected would become more realistic
- the State Government could well discover that half of the 80,000 ha. would suffice.

6. A Voluntary System?

The Tasmanian Government is offering farmers the opportunity to enter into 'voluntary' Vegetation Management Agreements.

If the farmer does not enter into this agreement then he/she will be forced by law to abide by the local Planning Scheme (structured by Government).

The system then is not voluntary.

7. Local Government to bear the Burden.

The Tasmanian Government has forced Local Government to implement the controls.

-it is unpopular

-it appears to be a cost shifting exercise. There is considerable evidence of this - refer 'Rates and Taxes- A Fair Share for Responsible Local Government'.(Parliamentary Standing Committee - chair David Hawker M.P.) released October, 2003.

-it should not be the responsibility of Local Government.

Conclusion.

- 1. An impact statement is imperative** - assessment of likely costs and benefits and weighing economic benefits against environmental considerations.
- 2. Conservation demanded by the community should be bought by the community** and the issue becomes more realistic.
Compensation should be based on commercial reality.
Purchase of entire properties could be considered.
- 3. The public has a right to a precise disclosure of areas to be protected and the reason why 80,000ha. is needed.**
- 4. The Government must not try to deceive landowners that 'voluntary' agreements are the answer.**
- 5. Regulations reduce returns and property values**
 - farmers must have flexibility
 - property values must not be affected by unsubstantiated and unnecessary controls.

Tasmania has a highly developed conservation ethic and farmers are at the forefront.

Tasmania should not be forced to follow the conservation plans and restrictions of some other states which are unpopular, restrictive and generally limit the income earning both for the individual landowner and the state's economy. In this instance it is largely unnecessary.

Signed
Don McShane
Tas.
31 January, 2004