

Herbert River District Canegrowers

To

**Productivity Commission
LB2 Collin Sturt East
Melbourne Victoria**

RESPECTING

**INQUIRY INTO IMPACTS OF NATIVE VEGETATION
AND BIODIVERSITY REGULATIONS – DRAFT
RECOMMENDATIONS AND FINDINGS**

The impacts of native vegetation and biodiversity clearance and conservation regulations does not cover the severity of impacts to landholders in proper detail. Predominantly, any form of restriction to native vegetation does not solely affect the landholder, but produces a rippling effect to local industry, commercial businesses and the natural turnover of the introduction of young farmers to rural industry. A more in depth investigation is needed in this area to canvass the socio economic impacts and what affects to metropolitan and regional communities growth rates are.

Landholders rights and security of tenure arrangements was also mentioned but did not uncover underlying issues of the further loss of landholder asset value and a severe reduction in capacity for further income earning potential. Land values would also be jeopardised with these values attracting a corrupted value rather than the true commercial value it was once purchased for, hence forcing land holders to be unviable and unsustainable. There needs to be better communication, representation and delivery of proposed legislation rather than implementing legislation then ask for public comment. It is without uncertainty that public scrutiny of any proposed government legislation, prior to its' implementation will lead to more effective and positive attitude from landholders. It is firmly of the belief that landholders genuine maintain conservation values and would rather work with than against government representatives on native vegetation issues.

Draft recommendation one does not include government being accountable for incorrect judgements made and compensation to a landholder when a rejection is found to be incorrect made. The government in this report, in all instances, bears no punishment on the destruction of a landholder's property value and or viability in the instance when government issues incorrect rejections. The impacts of this is wide spread and covers issues directly attributed to the landholder in the form of erosion of land values, potential income generation and erosion of mortgage potential.

Draft recommendation three should include ground truthing and not to rely solely on satellite imagery on all applications and be included as part of the application process. Conjointly, government representatives who assess these applications also need to have better credentials and better qualifications. These people need to understand rural industry and the impact should an application be rejected. A lot of the time, assessors rarely have any insight or more so carry prejudice about conservation principles that do not reflect the application at hand.

At "lock-up" stage each landholder needs own situation evaluated as to see whether land will "make or break" them. A system of land compensation or land buy back needs to be implemented. This would eradicate the situation where a land lock up could cause the landholder to become financially retarded. Land compensation could be funded by the introduction of a conservation tax. The conservation tax would work hand in hand when lock up is made purely on precautionary principles, which has seen small parcels of 10-100ha of land stripped of freehold tenure.

In conclusion, the draft recommendations have identified some key discrepancies that adversely erode landholder's capacity to maintain a secure income and position themselves for further investment. Regional communities and their capacity for further growth.

Erosion of nearby townships/towns to further develops by reduced employment possibilities.

(Could use Albert Pennisi as a case example).

Land valuations decreased. Decrease of youth looking for security of rural industry Ingham as example of above. – Close of business.

IMPACTS OF Regulation

Jeopardises competitiveness of industries

Increased cost to larger community especially lower income earners and pensioners

Long term – will render primary industry uncompetitive in world market. Cheaper to import produce from overseas eg sugar.

What recompense does landholder hold? Govt should be accountable for inactions if imposes to landholder a loss of income and viability,