

*SEBIRE, Geoffrey Maxwell*

## **SOME LIFE EXPERIENCES (C.V.)**

### **BACKGROUND**

- *Boyhood – Yarra Valley – fertile – very productive mixed farming area.*
- *Developed a love of the land and its uses in the broadest sense*
- *Some early years spent as a Trained Primary Teacher.*

*From 1957 to the present time have farmed in the Strathbogie area – Plateau country (up to 2,000 ft.). The head waters of the Sevens Creek commence about the South Eastern portion. The Sevens Creek is a tributary of the Goulburn River.*

*When purchased, the property was semi-developed and neglected. Approximately 1/3rd plus still bush timbered land.*

*The “**Strathbogie Massif**” is geologically various aged Devonian Granite with more recent volcanic overlays (shallow), emanating from the “Violet Town Volcanics” – generally the Northern portion of the area.*

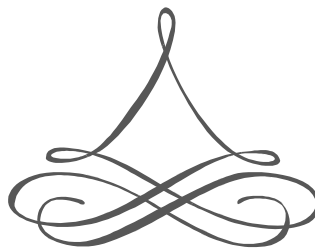
*I have witnessed original type forest hardwood timber extraction and the more recent 1963 destruction of some of the best Eucalyptus areas for the doubtful change to Pinus Radiata plantations.*

*Some of this change has been a disaster for good land use. This **initial** change was Government created.*

### **SOME INTERESTS**

*In the past: APPU (VFU) – Land Use Committee  
VFU - Water Use Committee  
Euroa District Advisory Committee – Lands Department*

*At present: Member (Deputy Chair) Goulburn Valley – Irrigation Diverters  
Member, **Goulburn System** Committee  
Chair, King Parrot Creek Stream Flow Management Committee.*



**RESPONSE TO THE FEDERAL PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION  
INQUIRY DRAFT REPORT – IMPACTS OF NATIVE VEGETATION AND  
BIODIVERSITY REGULATIONS**

***THE DRAFT – Scope of the Inquiry.***

*The Terms of Reference and Scope seem broad and motivational.*

*I shall limit my remarks, in general to Victoria. There are differences between States – their differences and needs must vary.*

*The reasons for Regulation – that some regulations are needed will always be true – but their extent is questionable.*

*Is there a subservience of Government to the ballot box vote of the Green Vote?*

*Is the Green Vote based on pure science, or accurate empirical (practical) values, or aesthetic values? Sometimes!*

*Is it an **EMOTIVELY** based situation?*

*Probably – very often!*

**NEGATIVE EFFECTS**

*Are the Regulations onerous, often illogical and damaging to farmers caught in the web of the mandatory regulations, 1989? YES!*

*These regulations are absolutely **discriminatory** and amount to **theft** by the State of an individual's assets and what should be seen as an individual's Common Law Rights. Municipal Council efficiencies are also greatly impaired.*

**COMPENSATION**

*In reality there is none, and Compensation with strings isn't true Compensation at all.*

*Note the comments of the Late John Halfpenny – “The Sun-Herald” after the introduction of the Native Vegetation Regulations – “The Government couldn't afford to pay compensation” etc.*

*Is it right that a few should be lumbered with the impositional loss, while those with clear acres (hectares) are unaffected.*

*Are the areas involved necessary for F & F protection – very occasionally – but generally **NO**.*

*One must question the very need to create some of the regulations (and how they came about).*

*Now; Consider human response mechanisms – which lead to those Regulations*

- 1. The Emotive Response*
- 2. Bred out of the Fear Response*
- 3. Publicity in its many forms which plays upon the former two*
- 4. The accuracy or otherwise of the Academic portion of Society!*
- 5. Political leverage – again, does it seem to pay to be placatory – the fine line between truth and half truth?*
- 6. Does personal integrity in debate become sacrificed by self concern for promotion within a system? Political? Beauracratc?*
- 7. Is humility and common sense sometimes sacrificed for basic ethics?  
Perhaps the truth is: That many of those who provide the “forcing factor” on Politicians have ready and able access to the Multi-Media. Many of us rural people (“the bush”) just rarely have this ready option.*

## **IMPACTORS**

*These impactors bear directly, or sometimes indirectly, on some, or all of the elements under the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry:*

- *Background - 2*
- *Scope of Inquiry – 3a, b, c etc.,*

***Perhaps we should now take a QUANTUM LEAP.***

***IMPACTORS*** (some only):

***Impactor 1:***

*CO2 as a Greenhouse Gas – the feared words! We sure couldn't exist without it!*

*To do justice to the subject needs many hours – maybe days. The public is confused – academic debate wide ranging – knowledge still being acquired, but we surely know that earth's CO2 levels will continue to rise, as will earth's population, as will the need to provide food for that population.*

*We do know that enhanced CO2 levels have multiple and synergistic positive enhanced plant growth effects.*

*Do we ever argue the case or just plainly state to the people, that these positives are real? At this point in time plant growth from these causes is claimed to be measurably greater than during earlier (recent) time periods.*

*Does the public understand that trees and biota are CO2 cyclic?*

*Does the public understand that mankind's status on the earth means the production of greenhouse gases?*

*Does the general public take on board that oceans provide the main long period (geologic time) Carbon Sink?*

*I quote IDSO – “the **diminishing NOT the expanding** deserts” – “Tree ring growth” etc.*

***CARBON CREDITS** should be discredited. The Kyoto Protocol **in this regard** should be disregarded.*

*Carbon Credits, if used at all, should be restricted to direct industrial efficiencies in all pollution circumstances – **NOT** tied to trees or other Native Vegetation in other realms.*

**Impactor 2:**

**EROSION – YES – A Problem.**

*But, more clear thinking is necessary. Greenhouse may be a help here!*

*Man has created erosion but so, enormously, has Nature. Degradation and aggregation are natural processes. Do we fully understand or even properly try to decipher the two or report them truly? I think **NOT!***

*Consider organic detritus. This is a form of **SILT** which impacts our waterways – our streams, rivers and reservoirs. Without a fine screen, most people would be unaware of its presence in the stream at their back door.*

*The Farmer often gets blamed for causing this erosion!*

*Incidentally – Drought – drought bonds – commodity prices and related income – rising Municipal Rates are just a few factors to become part of this Inquiry.*

*Back again to **Organic** detritus – our reservoirs are being negated by it – a slow process but there will be an ultimate economic effect.*

*This **Natural** detritus comes very largely from “stream adjacent” (verge) biota and from forested areas.*

*The greater the **Biota Dynamics** applied by Land Care Systems and Catchment Management Authorities via the proliferation of trees and other species along our streams – the greater the amount of detritus. And of course for example, Blackberries,, and of course vermin and other weeds.*

*There **IS** a place for trees and other biota, but not to excess.*

*Impactor 3:*

***SALINITY – OH! - SUCH A PROBLEM! BUT still overplaying the farmer as the cause!***

*Who created the initial huge gravity irrigation schemes? Why! the Government of the day and their bureaucrats.*

*I refer to some wise remarks made by the late Prof. Samuel Wadham, Dean of Faculty of Agriculture, Melbourne University back in the early 1940's in a small booklet which summarised an earlier series of radio lectures.*

*Further, who kicked the Heytsbury Closer Settlement Scheme “into gear”?  
In earlier times, who allowed Mallee Blocks that were unsustainable?  
What about the Snowy?*

***DRY LAND SALINITY!*** *Is it all created by dry land farmers and tree removal or what went wrong?*

*Does hydraulic back pressure (water movement) due to raised water tables on huge adjacent irrigation areas have an effect in this manner – I would think so!*

*Particularly with the slow impeded percolation through some types of geological strata of ground water movement from higher elevation catchments and then to almost flat riverine plains. **Capillary** action plays a part too.*

*Isn't it true that Lucerne and some perennials (grasses) such as Phalaris have a capacity to remove soil water as equally as does trees.*

*Trees have many values – I used to see every tree as an asset in one form or another. Now, beyond certain limits, I see them in a very different light indeed.*

*Would you, Gentlemen, understand how much ground a mature White Gum robs of sustenance for pasture – or crop – or orchard?*

***Impactor 4:***

***TOURISM – Magic word. If we could eat it we wouldn't need food farms at all would we?***

*All tied up with Visual Values? Aesthetics we'll call it!*

*All tied up with Native Vegetation you say – that scrubby rubbish in your paddocks. Visit a vine growing area almost any time and see another truth.*

*See the visitors for fruit to orchard areas. The parlour tourist coaches come, and buy and talk with farmers and go their way.*

*Tourism is for all the senses – Touch, Taste, Smell, Auditory, Visual.*

Visit , for example, the Strathbogie Plateau (just one small example) and enjoy the wonderful “meld” of pasture land (multiple species) – cattle, sheep – vineyards – orchards – berries – together with native vegetation. The latter has been retained anyway – without Regulation.

“Meld” includes the necessary organised changes to Agriculture to satisfy the basic food and material needs of our society – **TOGETHER WITH aesthetic values.**

**You know my thoughts now don’t you? But! Yes! I’ve excellent video coverage of this panorama (The proof).**

*The restrictive Native Vegetation Regulations circa 1989 are unnecessary.*

*They do nothing for Tourism at all. They are more likely to be absolutely negative – an impediment to economic progress.*

*They are, as already stated, an uncaring imposition on the few of us who have had our lives and planning interfered with – a monetary asset taken from the few of us with undeveloped areas, and, an exacerbated vermin and weed problem.*

## **IMPROVEMENTS AND A PHILOSOPHY OF CHANGE**

1. *Far less regulation. Put a bit of “Common Sense” with “Science”. A lot of the regulations are humbug, economically wasteful and inhibit progress.*

*Altruism cannot be forced upon people. That concept is abominable and smacks of the Totalitarian State.*

2. *Improve Educational Processes – particularly in biological, natural and earth sciences.*

*A hard call but we should try. It’s the best option and we should make the effort.*

*Make information truthful, and, above all, interesting.*

*(e.g.: Prof. Julius Sumner Miller’s radio talks of the past).*

3. *Build a future based not only on education processes, but on trust, fair play and sound advice.*

*Many professionals lack experience and actual knowledge on the ground – **The empirical arm of Knowledge.***

4. *If there are houses to put in order, Government agencies should start with their own. Some examples:*

(a) *Vermin and Noxious Weeds on Crown Lands and Roadways.*

(b) *Managed cool burns (to a greater extent) would save (prevent) much of the savage detrimental effects of wild fire.*

*The **economic** loss of such fires is enormous and impacts farmers and the public generally. **Poor dull farmers know that much!!***

*Remember (just as examples) the N.E. Victoria and Canberra fires of last year.*

5. *Cease promoting new areas of Pinus Radiata. We should **NOT** be a cheap resource for overseas markets.*

*There is a place for plantation forestry more particularly Eucalyptus Regnans **BUT NOT on GOOD AGRICULTURAL LAND. Ultimately, if not now, we will need this resource (the land).***

6. ***This is a corollary of No. 5 above. Very importantly – improved Forest Science Use Forestry Science to facilitate improved forest use (Native). Forests in the main should be made more productive – not just **locked up**. This is a negative action.***

*There is a need to reserve in virgin state, **some areas** for base research.*

*The State of Maine, U.S.A., has lifted productivity enormously (and claimed without loss of Flora & Fauna). Maine is a **Timber State**.*

*Their conditions and species are different from ours, **but, could still be usefully compared with our systems.***

7. ***WATER** – This must be included because this resource is crucial to all life. This is unfortunately only a passing reference (time limits).*

*Because of the modern upgrading of Risk Analysis, projects such as the upgrading of Lake Eildon (Victoria) – so that its full capacity may be used should be **not just a State** but also a Federal priority.*

*It has National significance – the health of the Murray River System – and its enormous impact on productivity, including the environment, within much of the inter-related Murray -Darling Basin economy. It is much more inter-related than the average citizen realises. (The Federal and 4 States Agreement – COAG etc.).*

8. ***VICTORIA** – Question the value of the present Land Care system. It is wasteful, with many short comings.*

9. *As a corollary to No. 8 above. Consider the re-vamping of the old Victorian Lands Department. It worked – until it was submerged in larger bureaucracies.*

*There are so many factors which time precludes my attention. The implications of the Draft could become a book. Some of the **BASIC** elements I have attempted to touch briefly upon.*

*The reasons for this Inquiry are so infinitely embracing. Sometimes remarks that seem tangential are really not. I have taken a few liberties with Syntax – but I won't apologise.*

*I thank the Commission for accepting this Submission.*

Signed: *Geoff M. Sebire,  
Sunday, 22nd February, 2004*

*Address,  
Vic.*

## ADDENDUM NOTES

*I know of many from the farming community who totally support my Submission but feel lacking in their capacity to prepare a Submission of their own. This seriously undervalues their impact.*

*The short time period for me for preparation of this Submission is a disappointment but so be it!*

*I add several reference areas in the hope you will note them in your final deliberations.*

1. *The Murray-Darling Basin Commission Report – “An Investigation of Nutrient Pollution in the Murray Darling River System” – Gutteridge Haskins & Davey 1992.*

*This analyses where major nutrient pollution arises and has implications re wider claims and the “laying of blame”.*

2. *IDSO – the informative book on the wide ranging effects of enhanced levels of CO<sub>2</sub>, authored by Sherwood B. Idso.*

*His work draws together for critical comparison Scientific papers from many sources, of the many effects both negative and positive of the rising levels of CO<sub>2</sub> on Planet Earth.*

*Part of the final summary (pages 125 – 135) shows a positive richness of natural values (maybe critical ones) associated with rising values of Carbon Dioxide. The book is a reading must and I commend it.*

*I have reproduced some of the back cover page notations, and C.V. of Sherwood Idso. Hopefully, you will be able to source the book in a major library. The copy I have, I imported – I’ve found it difficult to procure a second copy.*

*The title “**Carbon Dioxide and Global Change : Earth in Transition**” - printed in the U.S.A. by **IBR Press, a division of the Institute for Biosphere Research, Inc.** 631 E.,Laguna Drive, Tempe, Arizona, 85282. U.S.A. ISBN 0-9623489-1-0*

*Another concern – the notion that those who suffer loss due to the Native Vegetation Regulations, Victoria should be altruistically acceptive (as suggested by ACF speakers) I find objectionable – extremely so.*

*We own this land at high cost – both past and future. We are responsible for it in many ways. In fact, we are altruistic anyway. We can manage it very well. The idea of “forced altruism” indicates a complete misunderstanding of the human psyche.*

*To revert to over regulation, as we have been doing in this country of recent times, results in a pseudo politico / police state – over regulation and the ridiculous position when to receive a simple planning permit requires the intervention of multiple tentacles of duplicative bureaucratic authority.*



*Where does it all end?*

*I return you to my suggestions – philosophy for change – again and also offer these thoughts*

*Today, society enjoys an enormous knowledge bank – yet how many are able to utilise it?*

*We should show humility.*

*This knowledge will be added to – altered – subject to peer pressure – and – subject always to empirical testing.*

*The farmer is so good at this process – often without a self sense of his/her own value in the process.*

*Perhaps to understand ourselves we could think of Gaian philosophy.*

*Finally, if required, I offer myself for further discussion of my Submission.*

*It has been a taxing privilege to make the effort.*

*My respects to the Members of the Productivity Commission (and to Deputy Member Lisa).*

*Thank you again.*

*Sincerely,*

***Geoff M. Sebire.***

**“CARBON DIOXIDE and GLOBAL CHANGE:  
EARTH IN TRANSITION”**

***The Author:** SHERWOOD B. IDSO is a Research Physicist with the USDA’S agricultural Research Service at the U.S. Water Conservation Laboratory in Phoenix, Arizona where he has worked for the past 22 years.*

*He has also been closely associated with Arizona State University over most of this period, where he has served as Adjunct Professor in the Departments of Geology, Geography and Botany and Microbiology.*

*His B.Phys.M.S. and Ph.D. degrees are all from the University of Minnesota. Dr Idso is the author or co-author of over 400 scientific journal articles and more than 50 popular articles.*

*His published works have been cited in the scientific literature in excess of 3,000 times, and in 1977 he was the recipient of an Arthur S. Flemming Award given in recognition of “his innovative research into fundamental aspects of agricultural climatological interrelationships affecting food production and the identification of achievable research goals whose attainment could significantly aid in assessment and improvement of world food supplies”.*

*He is a member of Sigma XI, the Scientific Research Society, the American Geophysical Union, the American Society of Agronomy and he serves on the editorial board of the international journal Agricultural and Forest Meteorology.*

