

A Submission to the Productivity
Commission Inquiry into Government
Drought Support

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I wonder, as do my family and friends,
why I again spend time and effort
providing a submission to the Productivity
Commission.

In 2003 I provided, as did others, a submission
to the Productivity Commission explaining
that legislation such as S. Australia's
Native Vegetation Act creates a situation
of perpetual drought in the case of those
unfortunate enough to have native vegetation
on their farm. The resulting report was
clearly impotent; nothing has changed.
We have, now, a drought upon a drought.
If even the most simple person in the village
can see what needs to be done why do
we have inquiries?

2.

There is much to indicate the Productivity Commission is but another vehicle to further promote the "farce" of "public consultation" trumpeted by government.

While convinced that in spite of this inquiry government stupidity will persist, I console myself by the thought that by writing this submission I may be placing on public record, for the sake of history at least, record of the extent of the malevolence and bloody-minded ~~bar~~stardly prevailing in contemporary government and its bureaucratic institutions.

Current drought relief programs have no hope of being equitable. They bear all the hallmarks of social engineering aimed at advantaging the clamorous and the better positioned over the self-reliant independent battler. In fact creating a wholly perverse outcome.

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All indications suggest this is deliberate. The ultimate aim can only be the demise of the family farm.

The socialists, and evidence abounds that they infest the corridors of power in Australia, are enamoured of the thoughts of Lenin and Marx both of whom regarded family farms as capitalist institutions ultimately parasitic upon proletarian labour.

Probably the majority of contemporary economists see family farms as prehistoric relics barely ahead of hunting and gathering. Their perspective in some ways parallels that of Lenin and Marx, particularly as they encourage the gobbling up of family farms by agribusiness.

4

Farming families find themselves as meat, and very lean meat at that, in the sandwich between the capitalist and the socialist. No real understanding of the predicament of family farms in Australia is possible unless this dilemma is recognised.

There is urgent need for an opening up of the political ground in Australia so that each individual is recognised and treated as an individual, not part of some arbitrarily devised social group.

I shall now more specifically deal with some of the many opinions deserving of challenge raised in the Issues Paper.

1. What has the Commission been asked to do

The terms of reference state that Australian Ministers for Primary Industries consider "current approaches no longer most appropriate"

5

Of course, they were never "most appropriate" but one would have thought that the Ministers might have waited until the Commission had consulted those who have to live with the "current approaches" before passing judgement.

But, of course, the Ministers' attitude demonstrates what has been the problem all along, political decisions being made by people who lack any sensitivity to the reality of the situation.

Caution is advised with the use of the term "climate change". Government is using "climate change" to frighten people.

This is an old political strategy - scare the daylight out of citizens with half-truths and rumour and then rush forward with the cry "follow us, we will save you." Hitler used this strategy and look at the mess he got into.

6.

2. Australian agriculture

"Agriculture plays an important role in Australia's economy"

Why hasn't somebody told government
It might then be able to understand that
agriculture plays an important role
maintaining the budgets of low income
people in Rural areas.

3. Agriculture and Drought

"Australian drought policy characterises
severe drought as exceptional circumstances
where an event

• is rare" =

vegetation clearance regulations: once your
right to farm has been stolen it cannot
be again taken — what can be more "rare"
than that?

• results in a rare or severe downturn in
farm income over a prolonged period... =
under vegetation clearance regulations
downturn in farm income is perpetual —
is that prolonged enough?

7

"• cannot be planned for or managed as part of a farmers' normal risk management" =
how can a farmer plan for or manage to cope with utterly unpredictable changes to government law and regulations implemented to win the vote of single issue pressure groups?

8

4. Rationales for government drought support.

There is much evidence (some hinted at by me in this submission) to suggest government rationale for drought support is strongly linked to the opportunity provided to indulge in ideologically driven social engineering. That this can take place behind a "feel good" facade of helping "poor farmers" would be very attractive to self-serving government.

The end result is becoming clear to those who care to ^{look}. The only people allowed to farm in Australia will, before too long, consist of a select few, probably corporations, favoured by government.

5 Impediments to greater self-reliance and preparedness

Reference is made to the 1989 Drought Review Task Force

"governments agreed that farmers should assume greater responsibility for risks arising from climate"

In return government ".... would seek to create an environment which was conducive to management and planning"

Government has not done what it said it would do.

10

How can one manage and plan when government is forever, at ~~the~~ political whim and fancy, creating new rules and regulations.

To give an example, the Native Vegetation Act which is such a blight on agriculture in South Australia was introduced by stealth and secrecy and continues to be implemented in stealth and secrecy by an out of control tyrannical administration, seemingly answerable to no one. If the Commission remains unconvinced I suggest it go and have a talk to District Councils in South Australia.

How is one to plan and manage when, in truth, your farm is controlled ultimately by bastard government?

In our case 75% of our farm and 80% of our income was confiscated overnight. Such activity by government is hardly "conducive to management and planning"

11

What economies of scale we enjoyed went in a stroke of the bureaucratic pen. The situation where it was sensible and economical for us to operate a farm truck became a case where owning the truck was uneconomic and we were forced to us freight contractors. Thus in one blow our total production tonnage was significantly diminished while the cost to us per tonne transported was increased.

This is what happens when government seeks to "command and control" the farmer.

It is not climate farmers have to fear, it is government!

In South Australia, where many farms were held under a very workable perpetual lease arrangement, Labor government introduced an imposition of farmers called "Accelerated Freeholding". Accelerated Freeholding was soon revealed as a strategy to camouflage confiscation of land without compensation. Those farmers

12

whose land contained areas that excited the envy of government departments were forced to relinquish that land to the government. In many cases this involved the most valuable land such as coastal and riparian frontages. The fact that government was quite happy to use devious regulation to extinguish legal contracts was seposed. How can one manage and plan when the very basis of the farm, land tenure and ~~contracts~~ contracts, are not honoured by government?

But, wait there is more, The above mentioned Drought Policy Review Taskforce advocated "movement away from business related relief payments to providing education and training...."

Now, by implication, farmers are deemed unable to handle drought because they are "uneducated" and need "training".

13

The evidence, in reality, suggests that government is untrustworthy and lacks morals. Perhaps it is government and its assorted gaggle of minders, party hacks, consultants and lobbyists that require "education" and training.

Whether "education" and "training" would dissolve calcified ideology would be worthy of investigation by the Productivity Commission.

Reference is made to Ellis, Rural Livelihoods and Diversity in Developing Countries who describes five assets attributed to farming households
"ability to adapt to stress events and thus become self-reliant"

- natural capital: the natural resource base available for use =

To have government arbitrarily diminish significantly the resource base by introducing laws which reduce "natural capital" will not enhance "ability to adapt".

124

- physical capital : infrastructure =
It is of no help if "physical capital" is diminished by government interference which wipes out economies of scale and reduces income available to increase and maintain infrastructure,
- human capital : levels of education, skills and experience =
All the education, skills and experience in the world are of no use if the natural capital has been appropriated by government. The experience one gains is that government is an insensitive tyrant more than willing to destroy both farmer and farm by means of ~~of~~ reckless regulation.

If independence and self reliance are desired it is a mistake to promote "get big, or get out" and "farming is a business not a way of life". The fact government endorses these glib statements demonstrates little understanding of what drives independence and self reliance.

15

- Financial capital: cash reserves investments and non farm ^{income}

Cash reserves, investments and non farm income do not persist if they have to be used to replace income lost because of government confiscation of natural capital. In our case off farm assets and income sources were sold to make up the short fall caused by depletion of natural capital.

- Social capital: The ties between the individual households within a community = Laws such as those restricting native vegetation management do not effect all farmers equally. It is those farmers with native vegetation who lose natural capital and are the most greatly affected. This leads to unequal standard of living between community households. It is well documented that this is recipe for weakening the bonds which unite communities.

16

6. Are assistance measures effective and efficient in severe drought

" Policy Design is important in efficiently targeting groups which are the focus of government intervention "

Or, as is more likely, targeting those in favour with government.

" Support has the potential to favour less viable or riskier farming operations "

It also has the potential to exclude those the government does not like and those who live on the edge, financially and socially, or suffer oppression created by bad law such as those relating to native vegetation and zoning under planning legislation.

The present "drought response strategies" provide excuse for government to interfere with the citizens' freedom and to attempt sly and crafty ideologically orientated social engineering.

17

7. What are the alternatives

"One of the key justifications of government intervention in times of drought is that farmers are not able to insure themselves against income loss from drought."

Nor can farmers insure themselves against bad government and the introduction of malevolent, misanthropic government regulation to satisfy clamorous single issue groups.

Most genuine primary producers do not want hand outs from government or charitable organisations. What they do want is government off their backs and the removal of governments' command and control agenda.

It is disturbing to find that when I contact advertised providers of drought support I sooner or later find myself dealing with someone behind a desk at Centrelink

18

Centrelink is nothing but a facade to hide governments agenda to control the population. The poorer you are the more you ^{are} deemed in need of control.

Centrelink is but a gigantic spying and intelligence gathering organisation operating on behalf of government with obvious totalitarian aspirations.

If our society was genuinely free, its people independent and self-reliant, we would not need Centrelink and incidentally, we would need much less government.

One suspects that it is the latter conclusion that drives much perverse government policy. Government fears becoming less important and therefore less in control.

Farmers and citizens generally should not have to pay the ever growing list of taxes dressed up as levies (e.g. Save the River Murray, Emergency Services, Natural Resources Management etc., etc.)

The concept of "user pays" should be thrown out. It very quickly revolves into a "those who cannot pay cannot use" scenario, thus favouring those better off.

The unhealthy, ideologically driven proliferation of laws and regulations that constrain and stife independence and self-reliance must be reversed.

Laws which deny a citizen ownership of naturally occurring vegetation and fauna on his property are absurd.

We are told that laws that control land clearing are to preserve native vegetation. But such laws penalise the landowner. The more native vegetation the greater the penalty. This is the ultimate pervisity. Citizens will never appreciate the natural values of their land while mischievous laws mean those very values are used to extinguish property rights and diminish natural capital.

20

Farmers are told they must give away coastal and riparian land, provide wildlife corridors and fence livestock from native vegetation to allow native species and systems the opportunity to adjust to possible climate change. It is totally ignored that the plethora of controls and regulations profoundly impede farmers' ability to adjust and adapt to an variation in the climate.

An endless array of government advertisements in the media create the lie all farmers, even those worst off, are being provided with "drought support". I am sick and tired of explaining to relatives and friends who, being aware of our farm's plight, assume we are receiving support, that we do not and cannot receive government drought assistance. I explain that government is deliberately excluding the poorest and least well positioned farmers.

21

We suffer perpetual drought, drought created by government regulations.

Once famine was caused by nature today famine is caused by government.

We are considered "not viable" (yet we are still here after 40 years) and cannot access bank finance or drought assistance.

We cannot borrow so interest rate subsidies go to those who can, further advantaging the better off.

Farm Management Deposits are meaningless to those deprived by government of the opportunity of capitalising on good years.

Government must take some perverted delight ripping up any semblance of a level playing field.

rights. The Australian government has shown a disturbing tendency to use people's misfortunes to reduce human rights and privacy.

I am angered and frustrated by the wickedness ~~and~~ I see demonstrated by government.

I scratch my head and ponder just what I would like the Productivity Commission Inquiry to keep in mind throughout its deliberations.

I find I cannot do better than put before the Commission words attributed to Gordon Barton,

"Most of the bad things done to people are done by governments."

I attach two items of correspondence by the writer considered relevant to the Inquiry.

Gary Anderson

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email: eptribune@ruralpress.com
Letters must include author's
signature and or phone number for
verification.

During the 1920s and 30s my father and his brother survived hard times. They netted fish, collected periwinkles, shot kangaroos, native pigeons and wild duck.

They trapped rabbits with steel jawed traps, collected wood for fuel from the scrub and with material found in the town dump built a shed for a family cow in the parkland!

Today any one of these demonstrations of self-reliance brings the sheriff running with drawn gun.

Mad regulation coupled with draconian penalty has ensured an enslaved population.

Successive governments have reduced a nation of independent, self-reliant people to an aimless, bewildered rabble dependent on the drip feed of social welfare.

Why has government done this?

It is so persistent and widespread it can only be deliberate.

It involves the taking of rights, and enforcing dependence upon government for basic necessities.

This gives government great power.

We all know that the hungry dog fawns before the one who holds the bone! This political strategy was used in Stalin's Russia and feudal China.

Pauline showed us the way out but we must hurry before the darkness comes!

Gary Anderson
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Governments have taken independence

Recent advertisements and a letter to the editor in a local paper express the view "Australians expect to be cared for from the cradle to the grave by government."

Having filled the thieving hand of government by way of what was rightly described, 'gross over regulation' the people have nothing left, therefore such expectation is entirely understandable.

Eye Peninsular Tribune 8 April 2004

LETTERS

STOCK JOURNAL Dec. 30 2004

Native vegetation law is making drought worse

Letter of the week

It is just another load of green
 in a world where drought is
 killing people.

The Native Vegetation Act
 was the last straw for
 people who have been
 struggling for years.

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 is a disaster for the
 people of the State.

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