

John McKindlay

NSW

PH:

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Native Vegetation Inquiry
Productivity Commission
LB2 Collins St. East
Melbourne VIC 8003

3/24/2005

Dear Sir

Our property is 15km from Moama/Echuca close to the Murray. Our holding is 400 hectares, 300 is irrigated and 100hec is dry land . We have been very active in the local landcare scene both with the Green Gully Landcare group and the Moama and District Landcare group.

We have fenced off 70% of the river bank from stock and much of it has been planted with a native cane grass to reduce erosion. Over the years we have established 5.5kms of trees and understorey and 12kms of saltbush. The implementation of a full recycle system for our farm has reduced any run off from irrigation and we have established 80hectares of deep rooted lucerne to limit accessions to the water table. We believe we are environmentally conscious and we actively promote the landcare ethic. As well as our normal farm operation we run a native plants nursery supplying farms, Landcare groups and Government Departments.

We have a 80 ha paddock that has been stocked but never ploughed because of the large amount of trees still remaining . However around 70% is open areas cleared of trees 80 years ago .

Early in the year we applied to the DLWC to clear part of this 80ha paddock

Because of the drought the paddock was in a bare and wind swept condition and even having good drought breaking rains, it is growing mostly unproductive weeds such as Cape weed and Corkscrew as well as about 35% native grass. Although there are a large number of Grey Box and Bulloak there is perhaps 2 thirds of the paddock open and without clearing any trees it could be cropped.

It was hoped that permission would have been granted to crop and in return there was to be understorey planted and some timber fenced to allow regeneration of the grey box and Bulloak. Unfortunately the application was refused on the grounds that it represents an endangered eco system of the Grassy Box Woodland.

The refusal of our application leaves long term grazing of this area our only viable economic use for the paddock. This will most likely result in the continued decline of the health of this grassy Box Woodland.

Because the pasture is fairly unproductive carrying capacity is around 100 wethers to the paddock.

1 wether 6kg * \$7 =\$42 less \$10 per head running costs = \$32 per head =\$3200

It should be noted that lucerne could double carrying capacity. But we can't do that under the guidelines.

Cropping the paddock and achieving average yields of 2.5 tn of wheat @\$160 per tn =\$400 per hec less \$200 leaves a net profit of \$200/ha *53 hec =\$10600.

It might not sound like a lot of money that we are fore going but it would represent 10% of our net farm income. Income that the farm generates to keep family members on the payroll and another family in the district.

On top of that we are coming out of a drought that has eaten away at our financial reserves . Because a large part of our income is tied up in irrigation

we are most definitely not out of the drought until the dams fill to overflowing.

Not being able to crop will mean the paddock will be pushed harder with stock and there wont be any fencing done, hence no regeneration.

Native pasture for us was some thing to look after but now it is a liability with regard to our short term survival and long term real estate value .

Recently land was sold adjacent to our holding for \$700 per ac similar country unploughed and scattered trees the purchaser immediately cleared and put a crop in . Dry Land values are governed by their proximity to town and whether they can crop. If we can't crop, our asset will be severely discounted.

I believe that the Native Vegetation act and the way it is administered now will not achieve what it sets out to do because it puts the farmer in a position where he is penalised for looking after his native veg and having restrictions imposed on his ability to farm a particular property will ultimately impact on the farmers asset sending values down. It is ironic that the native veg policy for No Net Loss of Grassy Box Woodlands is going to have the reverse effect.

If the native veg act is to work then realistic compensation on an annual basis needs to be paid to replace the lost economic opportunity.

Yours sincerely,

John McKindlay