

Steven Lawson

VIC

Native Vegetation Inquiry
Productivity Commission
LB2 Collins Street East
MELBOURNE VIC 8003

I operate a small agro forestry business on private property at the western end of the Otway Ranges in Victoria. Some of the land has naturally regenerated native forests.

One property I purchased in 1988 with a “permit to use” for forestry is no problem and I feel secure to invest in and develop on this land. Our current local government acknowledges that the existing permit is valid and to harvest tree ferns (an understory species and an important part of my income) I only need a permit from the state government department under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act. (That’s another can of worms that I haven’t time to explain)

I purchased another property in 2001 and after obtaining a permit from the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Officer I applied to the local council for a permit to harvest tree ferns in October 2002. In June 2003 I received notice from council to inform my neighbours of my application and to place a public notice on the property and to also make a statutory declaration that I had done so. I went back to the council-planning department asking of the need to place the notice on the road. (Telling any of the public where to later get ferns without paying) The environment officer wasn’t in but would make a decision and inform me. I received confirmation of the need to comply with the original conditions at the beginning of August. After fourteen days the council may make a decision on my application. It has taken a year at least to basically rubber stamp a permit from a higher level of government. All this for a permit that only lasts two years.

Permits for “land use” must be an option for local government planning departments. We need longer-term thinking. (Planning) Other wise who will manage on a long-term sustainable basis.

The permit system is an erosion of private property rights and with out a balance between rights and responsibilities the system will continue to fail in delivering the success’s that landowners are capable of.

At the moment too many decisions on land management are made by the who are not responsible for their decisions.

Sincerely
Steven Lawson