

## Submission

The EPBC Act's Framework is at the very core of the problem.

As landowners, not landholders of freehold land, we do have property rights. It seems that the landowner's rights have been eroded, while "Stakeholders rights" have been elevated.

Under this act, farmers are guilty until they prove themselves innocent and they must self-incriminate. No one else has such draconian laws placed on them.

The greens protesters can commit crimes – "Domestic terrorism" - is classed as – "to intimidate or coerce a civilian population – to influence the policy of government by intimidation or coercion." Greens can trespass onto your land and intimidate and threaten you, but nothing is done – the fines are minimal if any, but heaven help a farmer if they even look at felling or trimming a single tree, collect firewood off vulnerable land, or even collect a staghorn which has fallen from a tree; the book will be thrown at you, large fines equalling or greater than the value of your farm and/or prison time.

The biodiversity on our farms are under threat, from a majority of weeds that were introduced deliberately, many were "sleeper" weeds – The majority of new incursions to Australia flora have resulted from a combination of inadequate quarantine procedures and policies – we need to improve and strengthen our border controls and hold accountable the people who allow this to happen. Politicians and decision makers should be held accountable personally, not able to use tax payer's money to cover their mistakes.

The inability to use all our farm assets has impacted on our financial viability – We have good timber which we could log and sell.

The above 18-degree vulnerable land ruling will impact severely on our ability to farm – The department is inflexible in its one size fits all approach – with no leeway for clearing weeds on vulnerable land (weeds to be deemed NV.) This flies in the face of the Biosecurity Act, which says you have to maintain and/or eradicate your weeds.

Doomed if we do, doomed if we don't.

When we can't get rid of the weeds – that impacts on our bottom dollar, when we can't utilise our natural resources, that impacts on our bottom dollar. With the offset schemes now in perpetuity – the land will be of no value to us – that will impact on our bottom dollar.

This act was supposed to give us, as farmers, more choices but has instead taken our choices away – it has hog tied us to such an extent that it makes most small farms unviable.

If the government was serious about making the EPBC Act work and building a relationship of trust with the farmers, then they would consult directly with the landowners, - who are the true stakeholders and custodians of our land – and discuss issues such as Regional not State approaches to conservation and consider land types in their classifications – allowing farmers the same 30-degree limit on vulnerable land as for the PNFs and State Forests.

There is certainly animosity and mistrust between the government and farmers (landowners). Our legal, moral and financial rights are slowly being eroded away – we are being watched like a hawk – we have a set of rules and regulations so complex – no-one can understand them – we are treated like criminals, we are even blamed for the bad weather, through climate change – and we are bullied and harassed by the government, media and the greens – we are twice as likely to commit suicide. We are at crisis level and nothing is being done to help us, we are pushed and pushed, while the Government remains ignorant to our pleas.

Open, fair dialogue is needed, and the government needs to listen to us, not the other way around. After all, we have the best NV on private land, we have more native flora and fauna on private land and we can sustainably manage our properties, which is more than can be said for National Parks, so we MUST be doing something right.