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There are many issues facing Australian farmers in today's society.

The erosion of our property rights is at the crux of the problem.

The right to farm is now always prefixed with 'allowable activities'.

What seems to be forgotten is, we purchased our freehold land legally, and most have no caveats on them. But now it seems that when you purchase your land, you pay big money for it, you pay the rates and bills, you look after it in floods, fires, droughts and any other natural disaster that comes along but, you have the least say in how it is run, how to turn a profit, with stakeholders ranging from government officials; who can gaoil you if, heaven forbid, you run over a native grass. The greens; who protest about everything and anything and if you don't agree with their ideologies then you are targeted and persecuted. The community; who seems to be made up from a minority with the loudest voice. The local council; who listens to the minority.

People with the most to lose (the farmers) have the least rights; people with nothing to lose (other stakeholders) have the most rights but with no vested interest.

We are landowners not landholders, how dare our ownership be degraded to holder. I'm sure that people who own houses in the metropolitan, would not like it if they were told that they were house holders not owners, and that I was a stakeholder in their property and I didn't like their garden layout and wanted it changed immediately, or they could be charged and possibly gaoled for failure to follow a directorate.

#### Biosecurity Weeds

We are told that "Australia is in a unique position because of its isolation and strong quarantine regulations"

Some of our biggest biosecurity threats are the things that are bought in legally.... Parramatta grass, rats tail, lantana, bahia grass and even cane toads.

Australian farmers spend millions of dollars annually on trying to eradicate weeds and pests that were brought in and many were spread by government officials – giant rats tail was bought on to our place by national parks and parramatta grass was bought on by DIPNR. (it has personally cost us thousands of dollars and thousands of hours and we're still trying to get rid of them)

The government body and individual persons that permit the importation of plants, animals or insects into the country, which become environmental or economic pests, should be held accountable financially, for the control mechanisms to eradicate them. When will they learn.....We are sick of footing the bill for the error of judgements that are made, and "oops I didn't know it would spread" doesn't cut it.

Our quarantine laws should be stricter, with manned, stronger border controls as well as cameras. People who try to bring illegal matter into Australia should be fined and deported or gaoled. There should be no tolerance on putting our livelihoods at risk.

Plant Nursery's should be more accountable for what they import, grow and sell.

## Biodiversity

“The new land management code will support landholders to manage their land to ensure more productive farming methods and systems, while responding to environmental risks”

“clearing of some native vegetation may be carried out with approval for the purposes of allowable activities”

“landholders may be required to notify LLS for low impact land management activities”

“approval for high impact clearing is required”

The new codes are a one size fits all approach, there is no latitude for good land managers they are treated the same as bad. All land is treated the same, regardless of soil type, characteristics or vegetation.

The above statements mean that every time we want to do anything, we would have to go hat in hand to LLS and beg for permission to be able to manage our own land.

It supposedly provides landowners with more choices to better manage their NV on their property, but the code is unwieldy and impractical with obstructive requirements and it won't be by our choice but rather by the governments choice, on what is allowable.

There is a lot of anger and mistrust between the farming communities and the government. The LLS say they are working on bridging the gap and earning our trust, and will even sit around our kitchen table and listen to our concerns.....really.... LLS has a very tight frame work to operate in and they will stay firmly within it, if the code doesn't make sense or 'readily demonstrates a significant limitation of the outcome' then they will 'happily throw it in the mix for a future review'. There is very little to no recourse for farmers to put their case forward. So again, tough luck.

We had a discussion with a senior land service officer the other day, which really opened our eyes to the belief pattern held;

\* approvals could take up to 3 months (*after all they are busy people, farmers needs are irrelevant and obviously not time critical*)

\* 18 degrees is classified as vulnerable land and all weeds on that land are deemed as NV (*we need to get rid of the weeds and let the grasses take over, they will do a better job of stabilizing the hills),(control invasive weeds before that take over productive farm land)*

\* clearing or spraying on vulnerable land to the minimum extent with little to no soil disturbance is allowed (*no tractors or dozers*) And you will have to justify to the department any soil disturbance on the land. (*18 degree is not steep country around here, this should be increased to 30 degrees =PNF's and forestry*)

\* their interpretation of the codes was very green based, (*with very little practical knowledge of how farms work in the real world.*)

\* also had very distinct interpretations on the act and the codes. *(farmers are and have always been the best environmentalists, the only reason that there are any NV left is because we have looked after it successfully for generations.)*

\* logs, branches and limbs cannot be removed for firewood off land over 18 degrees or again you will have to justify it. *(these should be removed for OHS reasons as well as removal of fuel hazard)*

This bull at a gate approach to us did nothing to foster any type of working relationship or trust.

### Offsets Scheme

Under the Biodiversity Conservation Act, offsets are in perpetuity. We are expected to look after the land, control the weeds and feral animals, pay the rates, preserve the biodiversity value of the land for ever and ever and ever (a caveat over the free hold land, devaluing the property) The land will be of no value to the farmer, but a cost, permits for clearing fence lines will be needed, and all at a cost (user pays) no exceptions.

Under the offset scheme, we have become price takers, not price setters. The government decides the value of the biodiversity, which seems to be inflated or devalued in favour of the government.

### Mapping

\*There are errors and inaccuracies in the mapping.

\*our internet isn't good enough to actually load the maps

\*laws were passed on the basis that the maps were correct

\*6 months to have errors rectified, or you have to pay for the changes

The maps were to be definitive and the laws have been passed on the assumption that they would be accurate. Many farmers were unaware that the maps were available and so have missed the deadline for correction without a cost. Why should we have pay for the government errors?

There has been an enormous amount of money spent/wasted on environment protection and biodiversity conservation over the years, with little to show for it. The satellite imagery from the maps were supposed to be that good that they could pin point and identify a single paddock tree or stand of trees accurately, (if this is the case, why is it that certain people are still growing illegal crops and not getting caught.)

### Farmer suicide

In Australia, a farmer is twice as likely to commit suicide.

Farmers just want to farm, but the government continues to ignore the issues faced by small scale farmers; red tape, inappropriate, onerous regulations and making it easier for big agriculture to turn a

profit, and to continue to financially disadvantage and sink smaller family farms for which they take no responsibility.

The truth about farmer suicides is inconvenient and politically incorrect. "Farmers are unlikely to consider suicide if they are making a fair living and are appreciated for their efforts". People who engage in farming have a strong urge to supply essentials for human life, and to hang on to their land and other resources needed to produce these goods, at all cost.

When the green eco-terrorists come and protest at your front door, and stop you from working, then trespass onto your property and intimidate you, even destroy your machinery that you haven't even finished paying for, and nothing is done - no arrests, no fines, they are criminals, but nothing is done. If you do not agree with them, then you are targeted and we know from personal experience, that they will cut the brake lines in your car, regardless if you have your young children with you, and they will phone over and over with death threats, regardless of who answers the phone. And the government is very conspicuous in their absence at these times.

We are under attack and on the defensive all the time and it gets wearing. We are not appreciated for what we produce, instead we are also threatened by the government – if you do the 'wrong' thing on your farm, we will fine you or imprison you. We are watching you, we can see everything you do. The regulations are onerous and the fines are not in proportion to the supposed act, some of the fines are worth more than the farm.

Oh and don't forget that we are guilty until we prove ourselves innocent, and we must self-incriminate or you will be fined for that as well

It would be better if the government led by example, the national parks are a disgrace and again from experience, we know that through lack of hazard reduction, when the NP burns, they burn at least half of your property as well, and it is up to you to re fence it. They are full of rubbish, weeds and wild dogs are not conducive to native flora and fauna, so they should look after their own back yard before they tell us what to do. After all it has been demonstrated time and time again that private land is better managed, has more wildlife and native vegetation than public land, as a result of our good stewardship.

We need a regional rather than a state approach to biodiversity and environmental conservation, a viable balance between agricultural production and environmental needs, with the true stakeholders of the land, the people who paid good money to live a life of hard work, with little return; a life reliant on the weather, just so they can continue to supply clean, green, Australian grown food.

Regards

