

Agriculture Review (Aither)
Level 2, 45 Exhibition Street
Melbourne
Vic 3000

5 June 2018

Executive Summary

The submission seeks to show that many farms are disadvantaged by the inappropriate actions taken on public land by political parties responding to emotional public pressure without verification as to consequences. Farmers are then inhibited in their response by such laws and regulation as the EPBC Act. Some State Government land management policies have been disastrous not only to farmers, the environment, biodiversity and whole rural communities.

The enclosures span decades and show by using evidence from the Canberra fires the extent of damage and cover up. Also the enclosures reveal reasons and information not put before the public, possibly explaining why politicians have not taken action and allow single interest groups to divert attention away from the main object of environment and biodiversity protection

Submission

In lodging this submission as a farmer, backed by other farmers expressing their adverse experience on ABC Country Hour and media, it is difficult to establish which Federal or State Government Law applies when maintaining a developed farm, or seeking to improve the capacity by making landscape change, or culling over populations of native animals without incurring red tape.

This submission is ex cathedra on matters concerning tree morphology, by having been in the timber industry, involved with wood technology, forestry and being a demonstration sight for the NSW Gov Trees on Farm Project 1984.

Under item 1 of the terms of reference the main concern should be for proof of efficiency of the EPBC Act and any other Act, Federal or State, being in harmony with the Laws of Nature that have evolved in Australia as a result of unique soils, fauna, flora, diverse land types, all complicated further by varying governance under state rights and two levels of land management for private and public land.

The enclosed letters and environmental myths were written in an effort to help the softwood industry in its quest for more pine planting and in this context, forestry on private land is part of agriculture.

The letter of 5 Dec 2017 shows lessons have not been learned, with tragic consequences and environmental policy is biased towards the impractical and inexperienced wishes of the majority who make demands but do not pay the consequences. This action wins votes for political parties, but the environmental consequences are ignored.

The 6 Feb 2018 letter shows the negative effect of political opportunism and no science; however the letters advocate ways and means for the necessary changes and fair distribution of costs.

The extent of damage in Kosciuszko Park in 2003 is seen in the photo from NRMA Open Road showing the whitened skeletons of trees killed in the fire.

The photo of "trees" on private land 10k west of Adelong on the Snowy Mountains Hgw are typical of regrowth, 'protected' by Acts supporting carbon capture for the Kyoto Agreement. The purpose is to show the similarity of the public land in the Dec 17 letter and that of "trees" on private land. The species differ but the crowding is the same both predating the Trees on Farm Project by about ten years.

The enclosed letters, while critical of political opportunism do mention counterproductive interference motivated by single interest groups who may feel they have made gains for their cause, have in fact made it more difficult to achieve real gains for the environment and biodiversity.

The latest politically induced scheme is Carbon Farming, advocated in 2008/9. As at 28 May 2018, ABC Country Hour had input querying any benefits and risks of the concept where landholders undertake not to de-forest their land.

With nothing learned from the Canberra/ Kosciusko fires and the political interference in Victoria at the behest of green groups, provided the fuel for those calamitous fires, the equally hazardous conditions of Carbon Farming is presented to financially depressed farmers.

50 years accumulated the fuel for the Canberra fires, Carbon farmers could face fires in a shorter time span and the liability of restitution of fees.

From the evidence above the whole concept of Carbon Farming is not viable and not worthy of protection under the aegis of EPBC Act in its current form.

Farmers are in two groups where the biggest have representation through VFF, Agforce, NSW Farmers' Association etc and NFF. The small farmers dependent on off farm income are unable to justify the cost of representation. The consequence is, the input to enquiries, studies, White Papers lacks detail covering large and small farm requirements and experience from being chairman of a NSW Farmers' district council demonstrates reluctance by Federal and State Governments to commit to action where state rights might apply, even when use of COAG is available to resolve the problem.

Also arising out of unequal representation, the true situation facing agriculture as an industry with its latent ability to materially assist environment and biodiversity advancement, is not put before the public, not understood by economists, only to become the whipping boy for media exploitation and emotion based impractical ideas. One of the principle reasons for misunderstanding Agriculture's situation was promulgated by the Frazer Government re subsidies. See enclosed Agriculture Subsidies Explained. While farmers in Australia do not proclaim that farming is not a normal business,(that in fact subsidies the community) misunderstanding will continue.

Agriculture and forestry need protection under EPBC Act. Under the NSW Forestry Commission farms close to forest reserves had grazing rights that increased their financial ability and had a positive benefit for the area grazed in reducing fuel load and weed infestation. Now, because these areas are national parks the adjoining farms and neighbouring farms are disadvantaged.

Consideration should be given for the reasons causing such imbalance in management of public land that affects agricultural land, the environment and biodiversity.

Dense populations with the political clout ask for, or demand changes regardless of costs or consequences to minority communities. Because there is no cost or inconvenience demands

continue to be made and the damaging and negative results are not reported; therefore it is necessary to provide a financial link and progress report.

But Such a measure would be a small tax increase through local government for cities and large towns, the reduction in various taxes, the gains in environment and biodiversity in rural areas allows for increase in self generated investment that truly gives the desired environmental results. Repairing 160 years of neglect will take time.

Recommendation

- (1) Alter the EPBC Act to administer all public land and private land throughout the Commonwealth.
- (2) The Act to be in harmony with the Natural Laws of Nature, recognising the differences in the unique Australian environment and geography.
- (3) The cost of biodiversity and environment to be shares by all.
- (4) Forced acquisition of rural land to be fully compensated.
- (5) Agricultural land should be for agriculture only as in the UK
- (6) The policy of the law should be for reduction in use of fossil carbon, facilitating new industries and methods that achieve that policy
- (7) Onus of care for domestic pets to rest with the owners at all times to facilitate baiting for feral animals closer to dwellings



Enclosures

Tumut & Adelong Times Feb 25 2003

T& A Times Dec 5 2017

T& A Times Feb 6 2018

Two Environmental Myths

Agriculture Subsidies Explained

Photo ex NRMA Open Road

Uncontrolled regrowth Snowy Mountains Highway- Adelong (Private Land)

Heat over hazard

PETITION TO SEEK ACTION

A petition is about to be circulated throughout the Tumut district expressing concern over the significant loss of public and private property during the recent extensive bushfires in the Tumut Region.

The petition, a copy of which was released to the Times yesterday, calls on the Legislative Assembly to: "Establish an independent judicial inquiry into the causes of fire and the degree to which lack of Hazard Reduction measures by the National Parks and Wildlife Service contributed to the severity of the fires."

One of the organisers of last week's public meeting in Tumut to discuss bushfire issues, Graham Pheasant, said he expected the petition would be warmly embraced by those who had attended that meeting as well as those who had not.

"There is enormous local disenchantment with the green brigade which has controlled the fire management and access policy of the Kosciuszko National Park for far too long, and at enormous cost."

"Hazard reduction was the major thing on everyone's mind at the meeting, with many speakers in favour of giving greater control to regional managers and involving local brigades in a sensible hazard reduction programme utilising whatever windows of opportunity exist."



It's material like this in the KNP - between 30 and 50 tonnes to the acre which caused such ferocity to the January fires, according to this MP who toured the KNP prior to the worst of the bushfires.

'More burning not the answer' says Colong...

Sir, - Attacks by Pheasant and Thackeray (4-2-03) on the Colong Foundation for Wilderness, the NPWS and the State Government are an insensitive ploy to change the way Kosciuszko National Park is managed, regardless of the damage it would cause.

Over several weeks the NPWS sacrificed a precious asset, Kosciuszko National Park, by undertaking very extensive back burning operations to protect the local community. In this context, blaming NPWS park management for the fires is shameful.

Regarding the lack of burning, Professor Rob Whelan, Dean of Science at Wollongong University, said "National Parks are not the reason for these fires. More extreme hazard-reduction in forests will not guarantee protection from fires in severe conditions, but will threaten biodiversity... the reality is that we are in a flammable, fire-prone environment. We need to accept that and find creative ways of coping."

While the protection of human life and property is one of the Kosciuszko National Park Plan of Management's main objectives, it also identifies the potential impacts of different burning regimes on environments, vegetation communities and animal habitats.

One of its key objectives is the exclusion of fire from plant communities aged between 15-50 plus years. This restriction is in place in order to foster an old growth stage, which is currently restricted to only 10% of the Park due to the damage caused by frequent burning regimes conducted in the past.

Graziers conducted regular low intensity burns to encourage the growth of "green pick" favoured the growth of shrub species. This was exacerbated by the physical impact of grazing, which led to the degradation of ground cover and subsequent erosion. With shrub regrowth at the expense of grasses and inter-tussock herbs, the graziers were forced into an irreversible cycle of burning and grazing. Fuel loads increased due to the shrub and fine litter levels.

Next, the Hume Snowy Bushfire Prevention Scheme imposed three decades of fuel reduction, burning about 80% of the Park. It was eventually concluded that the regime, aimed to protect catchments, was actually destabilising them, through reduction of fuels (litter and herbaceous cover) below a level necessary for soil protection and stability. However, the objectives for fuel reduction were achieved in less than 10% of the burning blocks.

More burning is not the answer in Kosciuszko National Park and will lead to soil erosion, loss of biodiversity and natural beauty. A more sophisticated approach is needed than a scorched earth policy.

Yours etc,
Keith Muir,
Colong Foundation
for Wilderness

'...but seeing is believing results of green control'

Sir, - Having spent some 14 days encapsulated within the Brindabella Valley by mountains and smoke, I have had the sad misfortune to witness the worst fires that have occurred in this area for what some science-minded people believe to be some 1000 years. This was not a bushfire, this was a holocaust of the most unbelievable proportions.

To those of you that have not seen what I have seen, open your mind and picture this as your read:

You are standing on a mountainside and there is nothing but Australian bush in any direction. The hillsides that still have trees, are black and brown and the leaves are frozen stiff in fire petrification.

Those hillsides that exploded in a crowning inferno of fire are devoid of bush, with only bare stalks as trunks and there are so many of these crowned fire areas you give up counting. When you look at the ground, there is no organic material at all, none.

Not a tuft not a tiny little root, it's just black. If you are lucky enough to find the remnants of tufts of growth, when you touch it, it disintegrates into a puff of black soot.

The flies are buzzing about picking the next spot to generate more maggots in, from the decaying corpses of wallabies, kangaroos, ring tailed possums and lyrebirds.

The small mammals and insects and reptiles are gone in massive numbers, vapourised and few if any to be seen. Although a lot of the decaying fauna cannot be seen, the ever-pervading smell of this is a constant reminder of the excruciating deaths that took place here.

The steep hillside below you, is starting to slide into the creeks and gullies with the start of

the rains, this black morass, the start of a liquid avalanche headed to the sea and there is no way to stop it.

The huge trees burnt at the base so badly they fall unannounced and with them they take young, strong smaller ones and hence further exacerbate the catastrophic erosion problems yet to come.

You just can't believe what you are seeing, you almost have tears in your eyes, but instead the anger comes to the fore, you want to strike out, you want to just scream at those responsible for this, the most horrific act of culpable vandalism that has ever been perpetrated on this land. And do you know what, it has all been allowed to come to pass by people like Bob Carr and Bob Debus and all those who have allowed these people to have their greedy little green control.

The above scenario is real, I have seen it with my own eyes, I have smelt it with my own nose and I have hours of this destruction on video film.

I spent hours in a mountain pasture that had been fire managed previously, smack bang in the middle of this holocaust, successfully fighting grass fire alone, in a pasture and only with branches of brush I broke off with my bare hands gathering blisters, whilst helicopters flew overhead and water trucks were no-where to be seen. One lone person was able to contain and put out just short of one kilometre of grass and bush edge fire, due to sound fire management practices having been carried out in the autumn.

You radical Greens, don't you dare raise your head, because there are no words in the English language that can exonerate you and your ilk for the death and destruction that the bush, the wildlife, the farmers of NSW and Victoria and people of Canberra have had to

endure because you and your cohorts in politics, with Mr Debus and Mr Carr at the top of that pile, have succumbed to untested emotional bunkum that has resulted in historic, catastrophic destruction of our land and animals.

We scoff at the ancient burning witches at the stake, but hundreds of years later you attempt to blame God for the murder of our wildlife that you are entrusted to care for, not once man enough to admit that you "Got it Wrong".

If Mr Carr and Mr Debus had the courage of their convictions they would resign immediately from politics after apologies to the public of NSW for such gross mismanagement, but no, it's election time and suddenly there 100 million dollars available for farmers to save trees on their property.

What? Don't you have any left in our parks? I know that the farmers are feeding your wildlife whilst suffering a drought. I know one farmer who is allowing 40 odd wallabies to eat off his tiny lucerne paddock, when this farmer can least afford to do so, because after seeing the destruction he cannot bring himself to consider the alternative for these poor little guys. This lucerne paddock has never suffered such wild grazing before, not even pre-fire during this very drought. As the movie says, this is one of the thousand stories.

Mr Debus, I bring to your attention Hansard, May 29, 2001, when you were so quick to crucify Transgrid, a company and a department that understands ecological sustainability in conjunction with modern man's needs.

To quote you in part Mr Debus from this Hansard file:

"If the investigations showed that prosecutions were warranted, they will be launched and

anyone found culpable will face the full consequences of their irresponsible actions. I make it clear that the Government expects all of its agencies to comply with all environmental requirements. If they do not, they must expect to be prosecuted like any other organisation or individual. The House can be assured that the damage done by this operation will be rectified, the people responsible for it will be held accountable and all government agencies will work closely together to ensure that such environmental vandalism does not occur again."

What do you have to say Mr Debus? Will you have an enquiry into your position and consider the actions you should take against yourself, as you indicate should happen in Hansard? As the Attorney General, are you capable of making such decisions? I think not.

In reality, a gentleman of honour and integrity would fall upon his own sword to clear the way for a better future for us, the people you are supposed to be serving, but politics is a dirty game and to me looking in from the outside like millions of other Australians, politics lost its honour and integrity a long time ago. So just go right ahead and bribe the farmers with our \$100 million, for this time it just may not work.

People of NSW, make your vote count on March 22, because this State and this Country, just cannot afford to suffer such a travesty of environmental vandalism as we have just had to endure again.

God help us and our environment, because our politicians certainly seem to have no intention of doing so.

Yours etc,

New approach to environment is required

SIR, - BY way of prologue: "to err is to be human", the best counter is to learn from experience and best of all, other people's experience.

The Tumut and Adelong Times' recent article, "Negotiations begin on forestry future" should be more than passing interest to readers.

It is not forestry future, it is also agriculture, fixing economic imbalance, tourism and equity for all. Three agreements need re-writing which makes it urgent and any reforms in NSW could well affect other States.

Minister Toole did not impress in local government and now with forestry, and its complicated and politicised past, he is not in a position to make the decisions that will give true sustainability and the ecological balance achieved by Aboriginal communities.

The Australian population have several problems leading to imbalance. The distribution of population is not like other advanced economies because the concentration of political power is in cities where practical experience of dealing with the vagaries of wide open spaces is an unknown quantity. Naturally, city people want to influence outcomes through political action, based on what they have seen or heard of TV, radio or journals.

What is not realised over the last 40 to 50 years, much of the information available is imported and inappropriate for our conditions, or is based on sophism where the lie told often enough becomes the truth. (Nazi propaganda advocated by Joseph Goebbels has worked well for single interest groups).

City people demand old growth forests, no removal of forest waste where logging is permitted, land clearing is deemed vandalism and for national parks the policy is lock the gate and throw away the key.

Having introduced these changes, who checks on progress or problems? Critically, there is a benchmark for comparison: it is history, science and common sense.

The situation is made worse with totally inadequate funding for the 40% of the State in public ownership. This was not quite so bad

when the bulk of public land was under forestry and funds could be allocated from royalties. Politics stepped in and most of the state is national parks relying on eco-tourism to see a mass of exotic weeds, feral animals and fuel accumulation for the next big fire.

It is not fair to blame city voters for mayhem and tragedy, when for political reasons information is withheld by government and nothing learned. Likewise, when dealing with forests, not plantations, industry contributes to public disgust by logging in coups.

The history behind the Eden affair goes back to when settlers making use of a good harbour and requiring building materials from the forests found that a large proportion of trees had spiral twist (a genetic problem), therefore only the straightest grained trees were felled leaving by the 1960s a forest useful only for wood chips. Trials were made of logging in small coups that were virtually 'land clearing' with quick results in regrowth of the same mix of species and retaining the mix of browsing insects and animals. Timber trade magazines showed pictures of saplings in abundance and wallabies using the space. From what we know now, all those years of logging the straightest grained trees have favoured the retention of a genetically favoured spiral grained forest.

Industry has brought odium on itself by using larger coups in areas where traditional methods sufficed, but were more costly than operating in coups.

Eucalypts have a very small seed of long viability, so growing carrots and need to thin the seedlings is the same for eucalypts. Circa 1860s the Aboriginal practice of burning every four or five years ceased. The result now is that there are more trees than before white settlement, a view held by historians and reasonable probability supported by those trade magazine photos and confirmed by a glance as readers drive by Tumut State forest beside the Snowy Valley Highway. Those saplings are about fifty years old, compared with trees planted 1985 for the "Trees on Farm Project" that

were spaced at six metres as shelter belts, single trees have more than sixteen times the volume for holding carbon than the 20cm diameter specimens in Tumut State Forest.

Thus the futility of locking up agricultural land to grow more trees, particularly where in past decades large areas of rural land has for various reasons created the conditions for silviculture activity, to restore balance and utilise the land to the best advantage. All the hype and euphoria about lowering water tables, locking up carbon to save climate change succeeded in conning North Coast landholders entering into contracts to grow small areas of forests as a supplement to a retirement fund. The problem now is what to do with these plantations heretofore markets. Some of the problem is small areas too costly to harvest and actual users too far away. The Aborigines kept large areas for grassland to harvest seed for making flour and growing yam daisies. The forest areas were kept clear of litter, used for cooking and ceremonies with the result of no catastrophic fires and trees able to grow for two to three thousand years.

For the benefit of those numerous single issue lobbyists covering ethics, wilderness, animal rights, sustainability, national park supporters, climate change, etc, please note the following.

The Canberra/Kosciuszko fires were a wakeup call silenced by a perceived need for the Government responsible to avoid responsibility.

What happened was a disaster that should have called for examination of why it happened, the extent of damage and how such a tragedy was not used to prevent another incident from ever happening again. The consequence was that six years later 152 people in Victoria lost their lives. The resultant enquiry on the Victorian fires found that they started from power poles, but to have a fire of that magnitude required fuel supplied in part of the influence of single issue groups having legislation preventing removal of litter from roadside trees and a building code not providing



Lessons weren't learned from the Kosciuszko National Park fires.

adequate fire break clearance. How ethically responsible is it to back a policy of locking up an area resulting in such a build up of fuel (see photo) so deep that horse riders could not ride there.

The dead lyrebird gives some indication of the hundreds of dead canopy dwelling small birds incinerated before falling to the ground. The heat so intense at group level that 75mm of soil was sterilised, mile after mile of mountain ash trees killed by the heat and then a few days later a storm washed the sterilised soil into the Cotter River.

There is a host of opportunities for doing better for our environment if only we as a society can accept that mistakes have been made and a new approach along Aboriginal lines is called for. The necessary financing has been

covered elsewhere and is equally important, if only the Government will accept the challenge.

For the future of the timber industry, using Ms Maree McCaskill's figures on the size of the forest estate, the logical action for the next 60 to 100 years is to return much of the old Forestry Commission's estate back to its original goal of harvesting in perpetuity at a percentage rate dependent on the growth rate of the forest.

Much of the forest estate on the North Coast has been infected with lantana, South American tobacco bush and camphor laurel trees. To hand this legacy over to national parks as part of an election campaign shows cynical disregard for true conservation, or complete ignorance of how to overcome such a situation.

South of Sydney to the Victorian border blackberry, privet and St John's Wort infect the parks and forest areas with an overflow onto agricultural land.

As stated above, financing is the key and as much of that has to come from those noisy single interest groups living in cities, who demand but cannot pay because there is no provision at this stage for payment.

Transforming 150 years of various levels of neglect on public land will require different action depending on location. From some areas where silviculture removes vegetation the waste may be feedstock for an industry replacing fossil fuels and in which agriculture could play a part.

Yours etc,
Jim Beale,
Gillmore



A lyrebird, killed in the 2003 fires.



Private tree planting (left) vs trees at the Tumut state forest.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Lock it up and throw
it away approach
isn't working

SIR – IN response to Dr Mehreen Faruqi's letter "National Parks under threat", one has to agree that parks are underfunded, but how extra funds should be spent is debatable.

By changing the rating base of local government (under scrutiny by IPART), funds would become available to assist parks, forestry, agriculture, to start restoration of public lands away from the existing scrub of exotics, feral animals, over population of native animals and ironically, native trees becoming weeds unto themselves through overcrowding.

The tried and proven Aboriginal practice of fuel reduction, tree species of the provenance, spaced for normal growth, with pastures and herbage conforming to their agriculture is the example to adopt.

In the last 160 years, with no Aboriginal input, land management has been in decline and seemingly made worse since 1967, not because grazing leases were cancelled, rather the policy of "lock it up and throw away the key". The consequent build up of fuel for disastrous fires, led to the wiping out the koala population of Ku-ring-gai National Park and further loss of life of endangered wild life and humans in the Canberra and Victorian fires.

Weed species have spread from public land to farms lowering productivity and increasing costs. Harboring of wild dogs with resultant cruelty to farm and native animals is not an issue with the general public. These mistakes are due to public land being managed to a lower standard than private land and the few paying for the majority in our society, hence the need to change the local government rating base.

There is no sense in having huge fuel loads alongside our all-important pine plantations. The loss or damage to any plantation at a time when more should be established is an unacceptable risk. Considerable time and effort is spent discussing renewable energy, carbon trading and subsidies provided, but the long standing industries based on solar power have every obstacle put in place to impede progress.

To build a house and furnishings from timber, requires 60% less energy than using brick and metal. Products using wool or cotton are free of fossil carbon. NWPS were given an impossible task, when for political reasons only, large tracts of forest land was transferred. The Forestry Commission were always better able to care for land in their charge using income from royalties. Who

wants to visit a landscape of exotic weeds and trees stretching the length of the state? It was a very poor decision.

Clear felling in coups at Eden with the underlying genetic problem in those forests was justified, but to do it anywhere else, other than in plantations, is a divergence from harvesting in perpetuity. If politicians can make bad decisions, so too can industry.

Learning from society's mistakes, complying with the laws of nature and basic financial management, future operations will be different, but not greatly different. A change to the rating base of local government with its projected expenditure for the environment for the year ahead would be the most noticeable impact. National Parks could have a commercial arm to help establish and maintain them as truly Australian, selling bush tucker.

Parks are too big and should return forestry areas to forestry because by doing that forestry has a clear hand in establishing fuel reduced areas adjacent to pine plantations. Such silviculture activity would produce waste that should be used as bio-fuel. The objective is not to grow more trees, but to grow trees that can act efficiently. "Young trees sequester more carbon" is a fallacy. Look at a mature tree and observe the branches and leaf coverage is many 'young' trees.

There was an estimate of the roo population at 60 million, or three times what it was in 1860. To prevent mass cruelty when the next drought comes, harvesting of this resource and other animals is humane and essential for balance.

It is conceivable that expanded forests would need rail transport and if powered by bio-fuel then there is a real contribution to slowing climate change.

We do not need concocted fabrications making out that we are the worst polluters per capita because we have so many animals as contended by three academics, all animal liberationists. A herd of animals eats tonnes of carbohydrates, converts the herbage into other life supporting carbohydrates and emits water and methane at ground level near to bacteria that convert methane to carbon dioxide.

A jet aircraft has tonnes of fossil hydro carbons to fly it and does so at an altitude that spreads the converted fuel to water vapour, carbon dioxide and as a by-product nitrous oxide, all three green house gasses.

Let us get our priorities right.

Yours etc,
Jim Beale
Tumut

Call for greater transparency in LG

NEW South Wales local government councils' could do more to demonstrate how well they are delivering services in their reports to the public, according to a report released last week by the Auditor-General for New South Wales, Margaret Crawford.

Many councils report activity, but do not report on outcomes in a way that would help their communities assess how well they are performing, the Auditor-General's office said.

Most councils also did not report on the cost of services, making it difficult for communities to see how efficiently they are being delivered. And councils are not consistently publishing targets to demonstrate what they are striving for, the report found.

The report recommends the Office of Local Government (OLG), as the regulator of councils in New South Wales, issue additional guidance to councils. OLG should develop a performance measurement framework – with associated performance indicators – to support more transparent and informative reporting.

The report also recommends OLG work with NSW Government agencies to help streamline and consolidate local government reporting requirements.

LGNSW President Linda Scott said the sector had been calling for a better reporting system for more than five years – and was still looking forward to the NSW Government's response to an April 2016 IPART report which examined the reporting and compliance burdens on local government.

"I welcome calls for more trans-

parency in local government," Cr Scott said.

"We look forward to working with the OLG to improve reporting to local communities."

"Councils are legally required to use the OLG's Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework (IPR). The Auditor General said OLG's framework focused on outputs while remaining silent on aspects fundamental to transparent reporting on service delivery."

"The Auditor-General has recommended the OLG develop a more transparent system that focuses on outcomes for residents and ratepayers and we welcome this support for our calls for a better system."

"I welcome the fact that a number of councils, including Tweed Shire, Shellharbour, Liverpool City, Dungog, Eurobodalla and Albury City, are singled out as 'better practice' examples."

LGNSW and member councils have been working together to promote the importance of data and reporting.

Cr Scott said that councils strongly support being able to better inform the community about their good work.

"The 2012 audit of the OLG found the public reporting system required of councils did not include adequate information to judge council performance, and although OLG commenced a review of the Framework in 2013 it was deferred, with revised guidelines due last year," she said.

"This report from the Auditor General is a timely reminder to the Government that if they are genuine

about council transparency and accountability to ratepayers they need to get cracking to work with the sector on new guidelines and a response to the IPART inquiry."

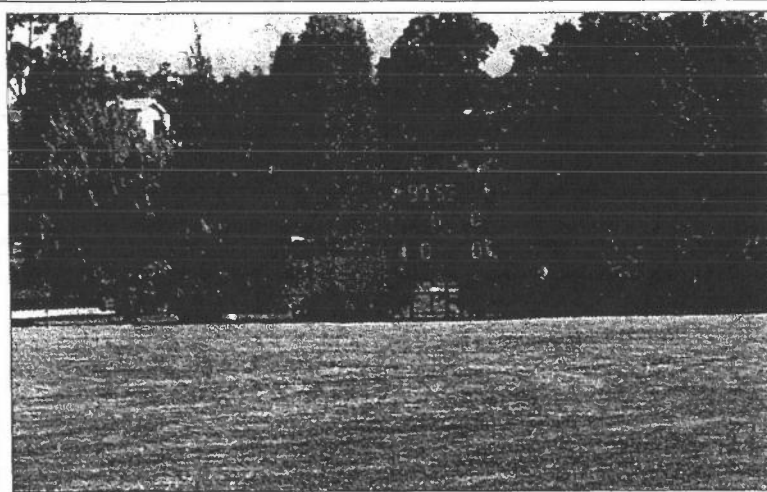
Cr Scott said the state's 128 councils provide a wide range of services under 67 Acts, administered by 27 different NSW Government agencies, so moves to consolidate and coordinate the reporting system were well overdue.

"LGNSW will continue to work closely with the Auditor General to improve approaches to comparative reporting, which currently don't adequately acknowledge that councils need to tailor their service types, level and mix to the needs of their local communities," she said.

"As the Audit Report says, the current output-focused approach risks 'unjustified and adverse interpretations of performance' – an issue that arises regularly in debates over the financial sustainability of individual councils."

"LGNSW urges the Government and the OLG to accept the Auditor General's recommendations that they adopt a partnership approach to the development of a better reporting system, and that they consolidate the raft of reporting requirements."

"I also call upon the Government to remove the secrecy provisions so the Auditor General can share her draft findings, so the entire sector can work together to build a smart reporting system that is able to clearly demonstrate when councils are efficiently delivering the outcomes their communities want and need."



The new scoreboard at the Adelong Showground.

Scoreboard's official
unveiling Saturday

THE latest example of Adelong's generous community spirit will be unveiled on Saturday when the grand opening of the Showground scoreboard takes place.

The occasion will include a barbecue and the scoreboard will, then be put to the test when the Elders Cup cricket clash involves Adelong and Wyangle takes place.

Various contractors and businesses have provided funds, labour and time to the project and Adelong Cricket

Club treasurer Hannah Speers said the scoreboard was a great example of the community pulling together.

"It wouldn't have happened without so many community-minded businesses and individuals working together," Ms Speers said.

The project harks back to 2016 when the Adelong Cricket Club, on the back of a successful year, decided to put some money back into the facilities at the ground.

They secured \$2000 grants from the

Snowy Valleys Council Sports Committee and the Adelong Bendigo Bank to go with the club's own \$2000.

Other users of the showground, including the Gundagai-Adelong Junior Rugby League, Adelong Touch and Adelong Junior Cricket organisations also came on board.

There's been a raft of contributions from various sections of the committee since, and on Saturday, all that hard work will be recognised at the opening, which begins at 12 noon.

Two Environmental Myths

Myth one: Young trees sequester more carbon than old trees.

The proposition is based on what the observer can see; a seedling becomes a sapling, then a tree after 30 to 40 years, but to 60 years there is little change and is illustrated with a bell curve graph. The observer does not see or connect with the mathematical constant: twice the diameter four times the area and for cylinders, volume.

The observer cannot see the cell structure of the sapling is thin walled containing starch, sugar and water that will change as the tree grows from the centre outwards to true wood gradually increasing the cell walls to the species ultimate density.

Depending on which species and its density, will determine its apparent growth rate. A ribbon gum will be bigger than a round leaf gum in the same time span because of the difference in storing carbon in harder, more durable cells in the round leaf gum.

The observer should note that the 60 years plus tree has a canopy consisting of many seedlings and saplings, with sapwood gradually changing to true wood.

The canopy is the driver for capturing carbon and the cambium layer ultimately converting it to wood, so that the 100 year old tree has a canopy the same as a 3000 year old tree with a steady ongoing storage of carbon. The gradual increase in diameter and height is hard to estimate. There was evidence of Murray River red gums in the early twentieth century of stumps left by the settlers measuring over thirty feet in circumference or three metres in diameter.

For a tree to reach its full potential, space between the trees is important for the canopy and utilisation of rainfall, but also for Australian natives, the canopy must be browsed by leaf eating insects and animals, the litter, small shrubs under the trees should be removed to prevent hot fires and replicate Aboriginal practice. Young trees have to grow, to sequester and store carbon.

The aim of growing trees should be, not quantity, but quality and compatible with the species of the provenance.

Myth two: that Australians are the worst polluters per capita.

The authors were three self confessed animal liberationists, one a mathematician and two professors. In support of their argument was that while we produce huge quantities of coal it is used out of Australia, therefore not counted against the population.

Sheep, goats and cattle were targeted because they produce some methane in their digestive system and can be counted in tens of millions and worse if outdated figures are used, as against twenty million humans.

The problem for global warming, ocean acidification and/or climate change, is the ever increasing use of fossil fuels by an increasing human population, while a reasonably static population of animals use organic based herbage. All the animals are counted in with no credit for the large percentage exported, or the fact that the population of cattle in Australia is about 4% of the world total.

Sydney University was quoted after the claim as having found soil bacteria in the Snowy Mountains capable of neutralising all the methane our animals produce.

March 2018

Agriculture Subsidies Explained

Definitions

Ex Funk and Wagnalls; pecuniary aide directly granted by governments to an individual or private commercial enterprise deemed beneficial to the public.

Ex Readers Digest Oxford Complete Wordfinder; a money granted by the State or public body etc to keep down the price of commodities etc (housing subsidy) b money granted to a charity or other undertaking held to be in the public interest c any grant or contribution of money.

Therefore

Subsidies are for the benefit of the public NOT the recipient.

In Australia economists and media infer subsidies shore up inefficient farmers in time of natural disasters.

Size of subsidies to EU farmers is highlighted in our media compared to minute payments to Australian farmers.

The basis for EU subsidies is food production, reward farmers to keep farming, compensate for partnership with tourism and environment protection.

Differences

UK Government (EU Governments similar) has accepted agriculture is not a normal business but is a partner in the total economy that provides services beyond the value of produce sold and those services are for the public good.

Consequently, no taxes on Agricultural land. Rural land, is for agriculture and forestry use only.

Building activity confined to alteration of existing structures.

National parks are managed in harmony with agriculture land. Wildlife controlled.

Droughts are centuries apart. Floods, wind, snow are main natural disasters.

Soils, geologically young, crop yields higher, longer daylight in growing season.

Animal husbandry requires shedding over winter and stored food.

Australian farming, the evidence shows, is treated as a normal business. Its support communities in rural towns and cities are subject to the same conditions. Power, fuel, water for towns and irrigation cost more on the basis of supply over long distances with no consideration that there is a benefit to the 70% of population living in seven cities and that those extra costs should be shared equally.

Rural land is taxed at inconsistent rates depending on which local government area, but produce sold at same commodity price. Result: 60% of farms rely on off farm income, small farms near towns worst affected.

National parks are underfunded. Management policy "Lock it up and throw away the key" while other public land is managed to an inferior standard than private land. Consequently private land is adversely affected with weeds and animals, feral and native.

Drought and fire is common, floods can be massive but mainly local.

Soils are geologically old, highly erodible, nutrient deficient requiring inputs.

Animal husbandry requires storage of food and water, but for prolonged drought is beyond the capacity of the farm. Conclusion: Australian farmers subsidise the public.



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We're driving through a forest of
ghost trees – the skeletal remains
from a catastrophic bushfire

THREDBO

Location: 37km from Jindabyne | **Elevation:** 1365m

Thredbo is a 40-minute drive from Jindabyne on gently winding and well-maintained roads. In winter, when the trees are covered in snow, it can be a fairy-tale drive. Its slopes are the steepest of all the ski resorts, attracting thousands of skiers and snowboarders in winter.

Thredbo has also become increasingly busy in summer. When snow gives way to grass, the area becomes Australia's number

alpine flora and the path is lined with native billy buttons sprouting cheery yellow flowers. Here, at the top of Australia, the air is cool and, even in summer, snow drifts can be present in shaded areas. In winter, the track is covered in snow and can only be taken on with cross-country skis.

Once you reach the summit, you'll enjoy a 360-degree view of the 700,000 hectare Kosciuszko National Park that makes the effort to get here worthwhile. The park is a conservation area that has been named a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve and

ALPINE WAY

Location: 121km from Jindabyne to the Upper Mt
We leave the bright lights of Thredbo and turn onto
Way – the 121km road that connects Jindabyne to t
Valley on the NSW and Victorian border.

Within minutes, we're driving through a forest of the skeletal remains from a catastrophic bushfire t through the national park back in 2003. Forty-five fires burnt across the area, destroying 400 hectar almost two-thirds of the park. They also razed 24 t cattlemen's huts and the flames were so fierce tha eucalypt trees, commonly known as alpine ash, stil regenerated, and small saplings are only now start The fires even reached Thredbo's outskirts and the snow-makers were turned on to keep the flames at

This part of the Alpine Way is both bleak and bea head over the range and begin our descent to Corr the alpine ashes grow tall and thick, thanks to a we airstream that flows through the valleys. Motorists about the hairpin bends and steep descent; signs c trucks to use a low gear. The roads may be closed i to the snow and, on the Corryong side, a sign warn: road might not be suitable for caravans.

Despite the ominous warnings, in summer the ro navigable through its smooth and windy sections, v every corner. It's the type of road that makes you e – real driving – again, provided you take the bends i certainly an improvement on peak-hour congestio in Sydney. We encounter just two other vehicles on down and when we open the sunroof and wind dow windows to breathe in the fresh mountain air, we fe and invigorated at the same time. This leisurely 90 is one of the highlights of our road trip.

ROAD CONDITIONS AND PARK FEE

Snow can block the Alpine Way in winter. It's the law vehicles must carry snow chains and it's recommen 4WD vehicles driving in the park also carry them in extreme weather. Entry into Kosciuszko National P, per vehicle per day, or \$29 per vehicle per day in u



Uncontrolled regrowth Snowy Mountains Highway - Adelong