

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation
Review
Submission Liberal Party Rural and Regional committee
22 June 2018

2.2

Farmers have been on the bad end of covenants, having huge costs in regard to fencing, weed/fire management and game management. They have received very little for these covenants in regard to ongoing costs (what does it cost the Government to manage a National Park) and as such have very little trust or management knowledge to enter into further agreements, especially covenants for perpetuity.

Why does the Federal Government offer the property owner to enter into environmental offsets covenants, instead of the Federal Government buying these properties and then selling these environmental offsets themselves if there is such a huge market for these assets?

2.3

The listing of threatened species and communities under this Act needs to be looked at. Why are private landowners being hit with all the responsibility of protecting these threatened species? This happened recently with a proposed listing, not because this is where the majority of the species is, but due to the Regional Forest Agreement, the listing would only apply to private land.

2.3

The word 'potential' needs to be removed from this Act. Something is either there or it isn't.

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Under this Act wildlife corridors are being made alongside roads, this is causing major fire issues and traffic hazards. More planning needs to be done to rectify this situation, so that major fires, accidents and huge stock losses can be prevented. This was the case in Victoria recently.

2.4

Why can't the Federal Environment Department tell people where the bulk of these threatened species and communities are. What mapping (on ground assessment, not satellite imaging) of threatened species and communities has the Government undertaken on crown land.

2.5

Why is no compensation paid to affected landowners under this Act? The Federal Government needs to acknowledge the devastating emotional and financial consequences this Act is inflicting on farming families.

2.5

Farmers have a duty of care like everyone and as such we happily reserve 5% of our land for conservation. Why are farmers now being forced to lock up greater areas of land. Consider for a moment the outcry if urban homeowners were told they could only use half of their property, and were required to manage the other half as a National Park.

Resolution of these issues is often dragged out over extensive time frames. In my own case I have been seeking resolution of issues around threatened species on our family farm with the State Government for 15 years with still no end in sight. We have yet to deal with the Federal Environment Department.

Bureaucrats just don't seem to care about the impacts on farming families.

2.5

Australia needs a 'one stop shop' Environment Act that covers the entire nation. We do not need three levels of Government trying to deal with the same issues.

3. Key Questions for consultations

1. Yes. have not made a referral yet still dealing with State Government (15 years and still counting)

2. No.

3. I have sought advice from Local Government, State Government, Federal Government, Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association, and legal advice from solicitors and barristers. All levels of government have limited understanding and workable knowledge of the EPBC Act.

On a more practical level, the qualification of Environment Protection Act Officers is doubtful when you consider the following incident; I had two EPA officers visit my property recently looking at a Eucalyptus Ovata community. When I took them to the community one of them asked "is this Ovata community", to which the other one replied "yes". The fact that these are the people doing the assessments, and they don't even know what they are looking at is absurd.

4. Email would be the best form of communication.

5. I have been dealing with this issue for fifteen years, at a financial cost of \$100 000's. I believe I have spent the equivalent of six months full time work attempting to resolve my Forest Practices Plan MAC1435. The process has been fraught for my family and I.

Botanist reports are extremely expensive, and the whole process is a legal nightmare – no one has the knowledge to navigate the Act.

6. Yes, I have paid for extensive flora and fauna assessments on my property undertaken by independent botanists. I have not utilised these areas of my farm for fear of failure to comply to the requirements of the EPBC Act.

7. No. I have no trust in covenants or environmental offsets.

8. No.

9. The current situation demands that farmers bear the financial and personal costs of the Federal Government's biodiversity conservation objectives, whereby our rights are reduced and our responsibilities significantly increased.

The Federal Government needs to have trust in the farming community to manage their privately owned land. Good environmental outcomes should be rewarded through the offering of financial incentives, instead of the current fear driven, 'big stick' approach.

10. This Act has caused more environmental issues than it has resolved. I believe you need to work with people and use collaborative relationships to get great outcomes, rather than force people to comply. This Act has simply reinforced the 'country city divide', failing to acknowledge the complexity of responsibilities the agricultural sector is facing due to the Australian Government's efforts to protect the nations natural environment.

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