

## Submission to the Review of Native Vegetation Act Regulations

The reaction of farmers across NSW at meetings convened by the Office of Environment and Heritage to explain proposed amendments to the N.V.A. Regulations has revealed the bitterness engendered by the SEPP46 controversy some 17 years ago has not receded despite replacement by the N.V.A.

It is time for a new beginning.

Evidence that a majority of rural landowners are environmentally aware and pro-active in adoption of progressive farming and grazing management methods, the preservation of bio-diversity and habitat, tree planning and regeneration, is featured in the media almost on a daily basis. The will, the experience, the ability are out there.

Coercion by regulation may deter the few who may degrade the environment but such measures are counterproductive when the majority are alienated in the process. Applying the dead hand of authoritarianism to agriculture is, to be frank, a disaster.

The only way forward is to establish co-operation and sound working relationships between the farming community and government agencies.

In a recent C.S.I.R.O publication "Contested Country-Natural Resource Management in Australian" contributor of chapter 4, Grahame R. Marshall (page 44) says:

*"Success with the regional delivery model clearly depends on large measures of voluntary co-operation from rural landholders in particular, since many of the environmental solutions sought under the model entail changes in how they manage their privately owned land"*


How true! And how exasperating the failure of government at both political and bureaucratic levels to grasp this simple fact of life!

In the Catchment Management Authority structure we have the vehicle able to co-ordinate the development and promotion of a new paradigm driving the co-operative effort required to speed up-take and progress in environmental care and farming practices across NSW.

Success however depends on two vital qualifications being addressed. Firstly that we have a commitment by governments to greatly expand resources allocated to agricultural research and secondly to ensure the composition of C.M.A. boards and the staff they employ include more than token numbers of people with practical farming experience. At board level in particular there must be people appointed who have earned the respect of the farming community.

The Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority as it now stands provides the example to follow and template for the future.

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