

## Submission to the Review of the Native Vegetation Regulations

I believe the current regulations are workable, to a degree, for some landholders, however, in many situations are too restrictive.

The regulations negate the opportunity to fully return the land to its former state. Obviously the cost and time needed to undertake the work is expensive and cannot be justified.

In my region all properties are affected by I.N.S. There are a significant number of W.L. lessees who have not applied for a P.V.P. for several reasons including the above. The lessees feel they are prisoners of the Nat.Veg. Act and if they do secure a P.V.P they are merely "out on parole" with very strict limitations.

There is a genuine feeling that the requirements for trees outside the 20% retention zone (the country being cleared) will do little to restore the landscape and will still require very significant money and time.

Pasture cropping needs to be accepted into the regulations. This can be a vital tool in combating pasture in low or declining condition and should be used even in maintaining a pasture. It is recognised that lucerne is a valuable tool in native pasture however it can be difficult to establish. Where a lucerne pasture is to be established it should be allowed to be sown one year after the last of the three harvestable crops.

Some facts that have to be remembered:

1. Even where land is cleared and after 3 harvestable crops the germination of the cleared I.N.S. new generations of these species will continue ad-infinitum
2. Even now much of the mallee lands has its integrity endangered by the intrusion of I.N.S
3. Restoring land is very expensive

Of major concern is that the area being rehabilitated each year is being far eclipsed by the area of new I.N.S. germinations. I.N.S. is getting thicker and thicker. On my own property there are areas where I.N.S commenced 80 odd years ago and now have in excess of 20000 I.N.S. plants per hectare.

There is a need to address the potential of the next type of plant invasion in this region - plants which are not on the I.N.S list nor classified as noxious weeds, e.g. onion weed, pepper leaf senna and blue heliotrope. These plants are spreading quickly via our public road system. Councils have taken little or no action.

These plants are: Perennial

Vigorous

Inedible to animals even in drought

Prolific seeders

Hence they virtually grow unmolested. They are spread by vehicles, road machinery, water and, birds and livestock which eat the seeds and void the undigested seeds kilometres away. They are weeds of the roadsides and disturbed areas ( e.g. cultivation) and are very difficult to control, they have the capacity to infest the land that is being rehabilitated. If allowed to establish, the pastures will be more difficult to control than the I.N.S. that has been removed from the land. The public roads are the conduits for the plants into new areas.

What is needed is for more landholders to embrace the concept of land rehabilitation.

Changes to the regulations:

Make the P.V.P more "user friendly" and effective

1. Significantly less trees and larger stem diameter on land to be cleared
2. That pasture cropping (min till and no till) be allowed as R.A.M.As. where there is need to restore a pasture in low or declining condition or just to maintain the pasture. This can be done under a "code of practice"
3. That plant species that fall between the I.N.S. and Noxious Weeds such as those mentioned above be declared Feral Native Plants to also include Turpentine and Hop Bush etc..  
Native Feral Plants to be destroyed wherever they occur.
4. That a regulation does not necessarily fit all landscapes. They need to match the rainfalls, the soils and the climate of each region or landscape.
5. The regulation needs to be made more attractive to landholders in order to gain increased acceptance and response from landholders, particularly those who do not hold P.V.P.....this is in the interest of the land itself, the landholders, the rural communities, the nation of Australia and the long term food security of the world.

I support the Vegetation Management Plan of the Cobar Peneplain.

I am a Western Lands Lessee of 51 years. My family has been the owner of the one property for 112yrs .Two sons and their families are now dedicated to that property working to make the land and their community a better place.

Michael Nicholson

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