



(extern) Native Vegetation Regulation Review,
Office of Environment and Heritage,
Level 12, PO Box A290,
Sydney South NSW 1232

SUBMISSION NATIVE VEGETATION REGULATION REVIEW

The review of the NVR is appreciated when its intention is to simplify and ease restrictions on the ability of the primary producers to earn an income on their rural acquisition of significant financial investment. Unfortunately the document presents as more confusing than before.

The restrictions imposed on agricultural properties by the NVA/NVR are an indictment on the ability of the farmer to use the land to its potential to produce food, whilst earning sufficient income to live on and service the loan.

Some years ago the scientific fraternity determined that the number of residents Australia's land mass could support, being the driest Continent in the world, was 20 million. Australia has only a few per cent of arable land which is fast being swallowed up as the Nation's cities and suburbs spread their tentacles, devouring all the best agricultural land in their expansion.

In NSW decentralisation necessitated expansion into satellite rural townships where the population expansion has necessitated the tentacles of development into rural holdings, thus reducing the available suitable land for primary production.

Further masses of productive rural land is being destroyed by coal mining, coal seam gas wells, windfarms, etc. Where is the food and fibre to be produced for local use and as a major export commodity?

Farmers are expected to produce the same amount of food and fibre on less productive land and with the restrictions of the NVA/NVR farming is becoming an impossibility.

It is quite offensive for bureaucrats and their staff to take pay from taxpayers (many of whom are farmers) when they know and care little for those who produce the FOOD THEY EAT. They receive their regular salary, working in pleasant air-conditioned environment, whilst the farmers are working long hours producing FOOD FOR THEM in all kind of weather conditions.

The NVA/NVR is stifling the ability of the farmer to develop land for further production, in spite of massive increases in population in Australia and in the rest of the world where our rural exports go.

Since the introduction of the NVA and its regulations, the restrictive practices imposed on primary production enterprises are made null and void when developers are allowed to destroy all vegetation for new building estates - destroying koala habitats when koalas are declared an endangered species. Similar destruction of native vegetation and habitat occurs with coal mining, both underground and open-cut, coal seam gas sites and windfarms. Where are the native vegetation regulations then when so much destruction occurs?

With the advent of all forms of mining, the coal industry for one, in purchasing rural agricultural properties and buffer zones, proceed to completely vandalize the rural landscape, alter the water table, even to the extent of sending adjacent farm bores dry, Irrespective of it being previously highly productive land (Liverpool Plains, Hunter Valley, Bylong Valley etc.)

Coal seam gas companies are encouraged to establish their bores on active agricultural land where the farmer is expected to co-exist with a procedure which has the potential to devastate his rural production and poison his water table and land with chemicals used for the fracking process of extraction of coal seam gas. Where are the guidelines for such devastation of productive land and who oversees they are carried out? Use of overseas experience by proponents is no way to introduce this industry to Australia with its unique soil structure.

Water is a very precious commodity in this vast land, where in particular the Artesian basin is a unique and vast water source. Any mining intrusion into this basin has the potential to destroy water for primary production, Irrespective of the proponents assurance IT SHOULD NOT HAPPEN.

Windfarms are also permitted to devastate large areas of vegetation for their erection and associated road works. This area has recently had its roadways and nearby paddocks mapped with an environmental grant to protect High Value conservation areas. These same protected trees will soon be ripped out with bull-dozers to widen roads for windfarm components to be transported to windfarm sites where known koala colonies exist. Goodbye koalas!

Judging from the EA of the Bodangara Wind Farm, such documents are inaccurate and meaningless as the truth seems to get in the way of profit.

With all these restrictions threatening to destroy a farmer's ability to produce the cleanest, greenest food in the world, the last thing we need is further restrictions on our productivity such as the NVA/NVR.

More productive land is also being lost for carbon offsets and similar where once productive land is tied up for 100 years – a long while to wait for food to be produced again on it. You cannot eat trees! Farmers are required to put in wildlife corridors – this also restricts production. Carbon sequestration payments are a farce as soil carbon is measured AFTER a farmer has spent years improving his soil. Payment is only given on subsequent improvement of carbon levels – yet if drought or fire lower the carbon levels the Government has to be re-imbursed. As drought and fire are regular occurrences, what farmer would be foolish enough to agree to such a foolhardy scheme?

I note with concern that no mention is made in the NVR of how the regulations are applied to the above matters of coal mining, coal seam gas, windfarms etc. It appears that the Native Vegetation Act has sections in it relating to the above enterprises where the NVR does not apply to the above business enterprises. This was revealed when I queried windfarm track widths for property access to windfarm erection sites for plant and equipment – 10m plus 1m shoulder each side, compared to 6m width for rural properties in the same Central area. This restriction is permitted in NVA part 6, clause 26 – item 2 D. As I do not have the NVA in its entirety, I can only assume that it contains sections that give carte blanche to the above Royalty earning enterprises.

We have been involved in the Draft Guidelines for Windfarms where in Part 1, page 1 it clearly states that Industrial windfarms can be erected on RU1 Primary Production land, RU2 Rural landscape land, RU3 Forestry and RU4 Rural Small Holdings. This conflicts with the NVR restrictions on farmers not to disturb native vegetation. I can only assume that the intrusion of mining, coal seam gas etc. has a similar overriding clause which is farcical.

The sections dealing with the thinning of re-growth and the lack of permission to remove future re-growth is quite nonsensical and pointless and can only have been dreamed up by city bureaucrats with no rural knowledge. Such procedure will only result in stunted trees and no ground cover.

Many farmers have been heard to say that if they cannot do sustainable clearing and are not being recompensed for the loss of the use of their land, they will no longer risk their lives fighting bushfires in such areas.

In conclusion, foreign investment involving the destruction of rural agricultural land and sanctioned by the Government, for the massive Royalties, appear to be granted much more consideration over the primary producer WHO IS PRODUCING FOOD FOR THE WORLD. This disparity is a disgrace and the NVA/NVR should be revoked in it's entirety.

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(name and contact details not for publication)

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