

We have a beef farm on the far North Coast which has been in the family for over sixty years. We have seen many changes over that time, but none have impacted as badly on us as the Native vegetation Act, it has been extremely difficult to work under.

- Firstly and most importantly, we are **Land owners** not land holders, just as you are a home owner not a house holder. We look after our land to the best of our ability. Farms are assessed as an asset, something we own. So the better we look after it, the more it is worth. We do not want or need someone looking over our shoulders and telling us what we should be doing, when often the advice is ill-conceived (eg the introduction of cane toads). We have had a government agency come up to our place to do an assessment on the health of our creek. They drove up the back hill when it was wet and left deep track marks from skidding, they had come from a property with parramatta grass, which they spread to us, we have spent thousands of \$\$\$'s trying to fix their screw up. So we have no faith in government authorities, they come and go, they are paid to do a job, but this is our life and our livelihood.
- The definition of clearing is still too onerous. If you are spraying weeds, it is very difficult to stop all the overspray from getting onto native vegetation. Sometimes it is impossible to even see the native vegetation in large infestations of weeds.
- *'A PVP that proposes broadscale clearing cannot be approved unless the clearing will improve or maintain environmental outcomes'*. – This does not take into account that the owner of the land needs to make a profit or just break even, and may need extra land cleared to achieve this goal. Environmental outcomes should not be the first outcome considered, the viability of the land owner should be.
- Control of timber stock. Sustainable logging. - Land owners should be allowed to harvest their timber assets without the need of a PNF. They should be able to sell posts, rails and poles off farm when needed. When money is short on the farm, this is a necessity. It seems to be forgotten that trees are a renewable resource.
- Thinning timber is a commonsense approach to sustainability. It makes sense to thin out the worst of your sucklings to give the straight healthy ones a better chance, these will be the ones that will be used for future infrastructure building materials, eg. Sheds, railings, home repairs, posts and poles.etc
- Under LEP's, there is a restriction on felling trees 40 metres either side of a stream or gully, this is ridiculous as we have gully's all over the property which are probably less than 80 meters apart.
- Koala preservation – There are a lot more koalas and other threatened species out there than has been recorded. Landowners will not volunteer information on numbers of koalas or report sightings of threatened species, as they fear the consequences. If you admit to having them on your property, the restrictions of what you can and can't do become massive. You are penalised for maintaining a healthy environment for them. By putting restrictions on the felling of trees with droppings under them in our area is ridiculous, there are so many trees around that they will just move to the next one. We need a more commonsense approach.

- We have a lack of service support. Many of the new RAMA's are self assessed, but there have been no forums telling us what the new laws are, and no departmental staff will give you a straight answer, they say they need to assess the property first. If it is to be self assessed then the laws had better be very clear on what is and isn't allowed. (the government is very quick to call meetings and tell us what we are no longer allowed to do, and how much they will fine us for doing it, but when the RAMA's changed, there were no meetings called to tell us what we can do now)
- Government documents are not meant for the lay person, most of it is technical jargon which is not easy to understand, and is often misinterpreted. There must be more plain English, simple explanations available. A good example of this is the issue paper for this submission, we were totally confused about what the focus actually was, the question prompts made no sense, and there was no service support to contact to get an explanation from.
- Clearing of boundary fences, internal fences, tracks and roads need to have realistic width. Our dozer blade is 13'6, so on an external fence we would need to run a line double that at least, and on internal fences at least that. Commonsense needs to prevail. "to the minimal extent" is better than having an actual measurement.
- There is too much red tape and restrictive regulations. Every time we want to do something on the farm, we have to go hat in hand to some government department or our local council, to get permission. This is really frustrating, as we both work in off farm jobs and have limited time available. When the weather is right and the time is available, we should be allowed to conduct our activities then. Eg when it is finally dry enough for us to burn here, the fire restrictions are already in. There is also a doubling up of regulations, with councils doing there LEP's – council originally tried to rezone our whole property as E3, when the state government stopped that, they are now trying to place a green overlay over all the former E-zoned land. They have also changed a lot of the farm land from RU1 to RU2.
- Stress. Depression. Suicide. Relationship breakdowns. – We have been put under so much stress with just the everyday factors of farming. – Drought, floods, cyclones, diseases, ticks, etc. – add to that our financial worries, family concerns as well as the social pressure from the greens on any thing relating to farming and agriculture. Then to top it all off we have governments who make decisions about agriculture on the fly, with no regards to the consequences. Then as an added bonus we get to write submissions in our 'spare' time. We are always on the defensive, trying to guard our farms and our fee simple rights of ownership. There is a whole industry out there making up rules and regulations to achieve an agenda, and getting paid to do this, we are the silly bunnies who continually respond to their requests for submissions. The inquiry papers are usually on similar topics, but slightly different scopes. They are sent out over and over until everyone has had enough, and don't bother to lodge a submission, and then the agenda can be implemented through the fact there was no submissions against it.

- Dobbers- There should be something in our laws to protect land owner from the people who dob you in to the authorities, who then take you to court where you have to prove you are innocent. They don't have to prove that you are guilty. The same person or group can repeatedly accuse farmers and loggers of wrong doing and stop work procedures are put in place, there is no recompense for your time and your money against them. If a substantial penalty was applied to these people, they would be less inclined to make false accusations and cause trouble.
  
- In our area we have steep protected land, the problem is that the gradient was taken from the top of the hill to the bottom, and none of the flat or smaller gradients in that area were taken into account. Each property owner knows where it is safe to go and what is best for that area, give us a bit of credit for commonsense.  
 We have dieback in our iron bark trees, this could have been prevented years ago but because of the supposed steepness, we were prevented from performing the necessary work. So thanks again to the interference by the government departments, we have now lost all our iron bark trees. We are really frustrated by the lack of foresight and lack of commonsense in the departments.
  
- Native plants- there has been a fair bit of conflict over what constitutes a native plant, eg. some of the literature states that bladey grass a native while others say it is not. There is also no accurate native vegetation data of Northern rivers trees and plants. Nor any definitive date of old growth.
  
- We need the flexibility to change weed management operations – ploughing, slashing, burning, spraying – each of these would depend on our finances, time and weather.
  
- We also need the flexibility to change our farming industry. (If it is really wet, we might need to grow rice, but if it is really dry we might need to breed camels). We must be able to remain viable. The way it works is this, if we make money from the farm, we can then spend money on the farm.
  
- Over the last 60 or so years we have done the right thing, we did not over clear, we sustainably logged and burnt off at the right times, over half of our property is timbered. We left the trees, so that each of our children could build a house from them, we left the rainforests because of its beauty we cleared the areas that weren't susceptible to slips, we have shade for our animals, we have healthy creeks, we look after what is ours. But it appears that the farmers who have done the wrong thing in the past are the ones who benefit under the native veg act, as they have very little native vegetation left, but the ones like us who have done the right things, are the ones being penalised and threatened with prosecution every time we move.

