Dear Sir/Madam, I wish to put in a submission to your inquiry into the impact of conservation controls on Landholders.

I am a Landholder, Chairperson of the Natural Resource Management Group of the Desert Uplands Committee in central wastern Queensland, and a member of our local Landcare Group.

I believe that to a certain level Conservation measures can definitely be beneficial to most Landholders. However beyond that level it becomes a cost to the landholder and a threat to his livelihood and security of tenure. We landholders are having to bear the cost of preserving the environment for all the rest of Australia. We are so small in number compared with the total population it is not fair and equitable.

Let me give you and example. Our next door neighbours have several hectares of wonderful natural springs. In these springs there have been identified a species of fish and two species of plants which are found nowhere else in the world! Totally unique to this place.

These people are struggling financially. We have had drought for seven years in the last eight and a half. These people could greatly increase their overall production and help to drought proof themselves if they fenced off the total springs area, planted introduced non-native pastures in the springs, then, when the next drought comes they would have abundant feed for their stock.

They have received advice from naturalists that this course of action would almost certainly choke out the rare plants, greatly reduce the water supply and probably kill out the rare fish. Our neighbours have agreed to preserve the springs in their current natural state.

However, as you can see, it is at great expense and future sacrifice to themselves. They alone are sacrificing their own income and standard of living to protect a wonderful natural resource. For whom???

The rest of Australia. They receive not a word of thanks, not a cent of assistance!

Is this fair and just?

The activities, wants and needs of every Australian has an effect either directly or indirectly on the environment. Surely every Australian has a "duty of care" to contribute to its protection and restoration.

The present trend of Legislation and threat of punishment, the "big stick" approach, is leading to great fear among many Landholders of losing one's livelihood and security of tenure. In my area this has caused such reactions as panic tree clearing, panic construction of more and larger water storage areas, the destruction, burying or concealing of aboriginal artifacts etc.

If these outside threats were removed, if indeed Landholders could be rewarded for, not restricted by, the natural resources, evidence of past indiginous culture etc on their land, the fear and destruction would cease.

If the value of these things to all Australians and to future generations could be recognized through monetary payment to Landholders to preserve and enhance them, they would become important and valuable to Landholders as well.

They would make up part of our incomes, part of our assets, part of our livelihood, and we would begin to notice them, monitor them, learn as much as we can about them, do training courses on how to better protect and preserve them etc. as we now do for our cattle, sheep and crops.

Surely this would be a much better approach to this issue than legislation and the big stick approach with the fear, suspicion and anger that it causes, and the encroaching impact on our incomes.

Nothing causes degradation more than poverty. Just look at parts of Asia and Africa.

Sir, we wish to put a proposal to you. Would there be a Govt arm, committee, or Govt funded group who would be interested in a trial with a small group of Landholders in our area?

We could trial the setting up of an Agreement between us whereby we are paid \$? per hectare per year to preserve and enhance the natural resources on our properties. We could all get together as a group to work out both sides of the Agreement i.e. what our part of the bargain would be in return for the payment. We envisage such things as training in monitoring, then the regular monitoring with photos where appropriate, of such things as the native vegetation, soil condition, water quality etc. Cooperating with native animal surveys, reporting back etc. There are many possibilities. The trial could have a time limit.....5 years? with careful evaluation during and at the end of the time.

If successful, it could demonstrate one possible path for conservation in the future.

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