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Secretary: 

SUBMISSION - by Graham W. HACON & John W. McCRACKEN

TO - House of Representatives Standing Committee on Primary Industries & Resources

MATTER - Australian Farmers & "Climate change"

PREAMBLE - Agriculture in Australia is at the crossroads. In recent years, farm expenses have "skyrocketed" without a commensurate increase in farm returns. Some items of outgo (e.g. superphosphate) have doubled, fuel costs etc. have soared & more & more Govt. regulations have not helped. The Govt. proposed Carbon Emissions Trading Scheme if introduced will only exacerbate the problem & sound the "death knoll" for many farmers - it will cause huge increases in costs that will make many farm operations unviable. Should this occur, agricultural output will reach the stage where a heavy reliance will be placed on the importation of foodstuffs. Overseas countries who are not burdened with a carbon tax, would have an open gate to flood our market with cheaper products, at our expense.

HISTORICAL DATA - During the 19th & 20th century's temperatures, fires, rains/floods & droughts were of a cyclical nature & they were not influenced by any human intervention. In Victoria Mildura recorded a temperature of 50.7°C in 1906 - in 1939 a temperature of 115/116°F was recorded at the Tongala Police Station & some few weeks ago, temperatures around 47°C were recorded. In past decades,

We experienced much longer periods of heat than we do today.

The Bairnsdale (Vic) Advertiser, recently published local rainfall figures for the period 1880-2008. We studied these over a term of decades (12), beginning with the decade ending 1889. Rainfall in the second decade was an increase on the first - in the third decade, it was a decrease on the second - the following decade an increase the next a decrease. This pattern continued through the twelve terms. A yearly average in each decade, naturally followed the same pattern & the difference between the highest & lowest yearly average was only 150mls (6")

Apart from the 1950's there was one, two or three years in each decade when rainfall was less than 550mls (22") & these years could probably be termed drought years.

Based on these patterns, it would not be unreasonable to come to the conclusion that our weather conditions at least in relation to rainfall come & go in cycles & are not influenced by any human actions.

CHANGES IN CLIMATE

Yes, we have always experienced changes in climate since the year "dot" but they have been natural occurrences & not caused by any human intervention - and this will continue. There is no scientific evidence that carbon emissions are the cause of any global warming - global temperatures have actually reduced in the last decade & not one single computer model can forecast what nature is planning.

Some scientists are predicting that sea levels

will rise approx. 1 metre within the next 100 years!! - what a prediction!. Neither them, us, nor our children will be here to reveal that the prediction was, perhaps, wrong. If these scientists are that good that they can tell us what nature will do in 100 years, what about telling us what will happen to the sea level 2, 5, 10 years hence when we still may have our heads six feet above the ground, rather than under.

We humans have exhaled carbon dioxide since the days of Adam & Eve and we don't think it was planned by our creator that this carbon dioxide would be detrimental to our habitat. Carbon dioxide is heavier than air & most is absorbed by trees, plants & water.

THE ELEMENTS

Farming has always been, & will continue to be, a fight with the elements - drought being the main antagonist. Throughout history, droughts have come & go as demonstrated by the Bairnsdale rainfall statistics & there is nothing we humans can do to prevent this - we cannot influence nature but we can make some provision to at least alleviate the impact, mainly financially, on farming operations.

DROUGHT ASSISTANCE

In recent times, Governments have provided financial assistance under Exceptional Circumstances assessments. The criteria for such assistance has always been contentious & the farmer who has been able to build up his assets through good, sound farming practices, has been ineligible for the

Govt. handout - in many cases, assistance has been given to some whose operations/viability may have been questionable. The farmer "extraordinary" has been penalised

PROVISION (FINANCIAL) FOR DROUGHT

This could be provided by way of a taxation concession - something along the following lines.

Example: A farmer has a tax liability of \$8000. The A.T.O. collects the \$8000 & allows a 75% rebate (\$6000) as provision for a drought year. The rebate of \$6000 is retained by the A.T.O. & held as a reserve & payable to the farmer, in need, in a drought year to assist with living expenses, purchase of hay, grain etc.. The scheme could operate annually over a term of decades with total rebates paid to the farmer if no drought claims made by the end of each decade. A.T.O. could recoup the rebates by investment of the funds held under their control from time to time.

PROPOSED CARBON EMISSIONS TRADING SCHEME

This is a diabolical & ill conceived scheme that cannot possibly be an advantage to any part of our community. It will not have any effect, whatsoever, on anything to do with climate, but it will have a dramatic effect on the economy. Our cost of living will increase substantially & the increase in farm expenses would be such that it could well put some farmers out of business.

The Manager of the Murray Goulburn milk processing factory in Rochester (Vic) stated, on air, that the introduction of this scheme would add \$90m. to their operational expenses & that they would not be able to

absorb this expense. Accordingly, it would have to be borne by the dairy farmer in the form of a considerable lower milk return.

The scheme must not proceed — the Govt. would be committing political suicide.

INSTITUTE, AMEND, REVIEW.

We have no concerns about so called "climate change" but we are concerned about the future of farming & its constant battles with the elements, government regulations & the heavy impost of many categories of expenses.

Water & the costs thereof, is one of our greatest concerns & maybe some of the following could be introduced.

- Water storages be built in high catchment, mountainous areas where water can be gravitated, by pipeline, to areas for town use & farm irrigation.
- Water storages be built in high rainfall areas where supplies can be pumped for town use & farm irrigation.
- Of rivers that flow into the sea, harness say 50% of this water by diverting into water storages for pumping to other areas.
- Areas that are noted for flooding — make provisions to save this water.

(All of the above actions would provide thousands of jobs & would provide a huge stimulus to many manufacturing industries etc.. The Governments recent handouts of some \$50bn. would have been better placed this way — the course

they took has not created any new jobs)

- The Local Govt. rating system is an abominable, inequitable, outdated system & a huge impost on farmers. We all use shire facilities & therefore all of us should contribute to shire costs (which is not the case) - (e.g. tenants, tourists, passers by etc. pay nothing).

We are of the opinion that G.S.T. is the only fund to which we all contribute - therefore, replace the Local Govt. rate collection system with, the shortfall to balance the Shire's books, coming from the G.S.T. pool.

- More research in to collection/storage/filtration of water by way of tanks in suburban & heavily populated areas to provide quality drinking water etc. for households. This would release more water from reservoirs for farm irrigation & thereby assisting farm production.

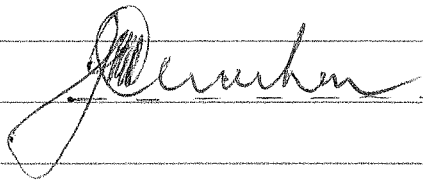
CONCLUSION

It is our opinion that all Governments over the past few decades, have not shown enough foresight to ensure that facilities/services such as water, power, medical etc. have been upgraded to cope with an ever increasing population, brought about by natural sources & excessive immigration

There are too many dissenting scientists around the world & too many non-believers in this country regarding "global warming" & "climate change", to prompt such actions as Carbon Trading.

If and when, infallible evidence is

produced (which it hasn't yet) then the whole world can unite with the appropriate action.

Graham Hacon (G.W. Hacon)  (J.W. McCracken)

AUTODRS

HACON, Graham Walter
Age 85 yrs.

- Semi retired grazier.
In the mid 1930's, forced to leave school at the age of 11 yrs. to run the farm in North Central Victoria, due to an accident involving his father. Farm operation was merino sheep on 1300ac of dry land. By the late 1950's, 80% of the farm was irrigable. A very successful farmer with extensive knowledge & experience in farming practices & climatic conditions. Served as a Councillor on local shire & for 40 yrs, was an advisory to the State Rivers & Water Commission. Inaugural chairman of Goulburn Murray Irrigation Council.

MCCRACKEN, John Wilson
Age 74 yrs (Brother-in-law of G.W.H)

- Retired Bank Manager & ex small time stud/commercial beef cattle farmer. As a bank officer, worked in every Vic. country rural region. Extensive experience in rural areas as a Bank Manager. Keen interest in the "man on the land".