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Farmers call for rethink on conservation

The NSW Farmers' Association has strongly refuted today's call by the Humane Society International to lock up one-fifth of Australia's landmass for assessment under National Heritage, calling it an unpractical goal at the hands of environmental activists.

NSW Farmers' Association Conservation and Resource Management Committee Chair Louise Burge says that such organisations take no responsibility for the impact of their demands on the viability of our communities, our economy and our food security.

"Environmental activists want more land to be allocated to conservation, either by creating additional reserves or through laws that prevent farmers using their land," Mrs Burge said.

"But land is the means by which we produce food and fibre – by which we feed and clothe Australia and the world.

"This issue doesn't just affect agriculture or the farmers whose land is at risk; it is an issue that affects every single Australian.

"The amount of money that has been wasted on poor environmental processes is unsustainable," Mrs Burge said.

"While we certainly support biodiversity, we must consider the broader impacts – the economic, social and environmental costs of ever increasing locked up lands, without the appropriate plans and funds to manage them.

"We have seen this with the bushfires of 2002, 2006 and 2009; the 'lock up and leave' strategy is simply not working.

"As a result, the Association is calling for a fundamental rethink about the current approach to environmental management. Decisions should not be made from the ideology that we can simply revert land to conservation, without any flow on effect on humans or the environment being considered.

"We don't need to lock up more and more land, as the Humane Society has put forward. We need to ensure that we learn from the traditional practices of the past and work to achieve biodiversity outcomes in the most cost effective manner.

"Let's better manage the reserve system we already have, before we look at adding another one-fifth of Australia's landmass to conservation with no funds or ability to manage it," Mrs Burge concluded.

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