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Senate Inquiry confirms farmer's views

The NSW Farmers' Association welcomes the release of the Senate Report into Native Vegetation Laws, Greenhouse Gas Abatement and Climate Change Measures, saying it confirms farmer's long-held views that landholders have been forced to bear the burden of broad environmental objectives.

NSW Farmers' Association President Charles Armstrong says the findings also show farmers fundamental property rights are at risk. Where such a loss or burden is incurred, "just terms" compensation should be available to the farmer.

"It is positive to see the Committee recommend re-examining native vegetation legislation to establish a balance between maximising agricultural production and best practice conservation," Mr Armstrong said.

The Association has been advocating the importance of balancing social, economic and environmental objectives for regional communities for some time.

The other key recommendations include a review of the impact of native vegetation legislative and regulatory regimes, particularly at a state level; and a review of best practice in relation to stewardship initiatives with a view to re-orienting future regulatory activities.

The NSW Farmers' Association lodged a comprehensive submission to the inquiry, and NSW Farmers' Association President Charles Armstrong appeared before the Committee Hearings.

"Our submission in response to the Inquiry called for just terms compensation in relation to the impacts of native vegetation, climate change, land-use planning, mining and water legislation," he said.

"It is pleasing to see the Committee consider the importance of compensation. It is hoped that the Senate Committee's support for compensation for landholders where regulation of land renders it of a substantially lower value will extend to regulation beyond only native vegetation."

The Association also welcomes the suggested examination of covenants preventing or restricting existing land use practices when converting from leasehold to freehold.

"This is an issue we have been trying to work through with the NSW Government for some time now. It is reassuring to see the Federal Senate decide to pursue this matter.

"Similarly, it is pleasing to note that the recommendations call for investigation of the ongoing management and maintenance costs of land taken out of productive use as a result of native vegetation legislation, including rates and taxes, as well as weeds and pest animals.

"All Senators supported the need for further development and funding of stewardship programs and market-based incentives. As such, it is hoped that this will be a priority action.

"The Association thanks its Members for contributing to this Inquiry – their submissions made up a large part of almost 400, indicating the enormous level of concern about this issue," Mr Armstrong concluded.

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