



The Summerland Greens

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The Summerland Greens Submission to Standing Committee on Natural Resource Management

The Summerland Greens believe that in order to achieve natural resource sustainability in the Northern Rivers Region, the State and Commonwealth Governments must:

- 1. Provide incentives to farmers to protect remnant vegetation**
- 2. Provide technical assistance and resources for property management**
- 3. Establish a long term environmental restoration industry**

DISINCENTIVES

1 Burden on Farmers

Farmers are expected to take responsibility for repairing decades of inappropriate land management practices and at the same time attend to the daily management of the farm. Leaving natural resource management to farmers without the provision of tools such as Integrated Property Management Plans and resources for fencing, weed removal and tree planting is unfair. The Plans in their current form are too complicated to complete and require too much departmental staff time to assess and approve.

2. Few Funds

Regional Vegetation Management Plans and Catchment Blueprints identify priority environmental restoration that is crucial for biodiversity and habitat protection on private and public land yet there are few resources to pay for on ground work. There is a lot of competition to access limited funds for resources such as fencing, seed collection, plant propagation and tools for weed removal so restoration projects tend to be adhoc and short term.



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3. Rural Unemployment

The northern rivers region has a high rate of unemployment and few opportunities for young people. Training schemes such as Green Corps are too short. Projects have three times the applicants than there are places on the teams and after six months the young people are sent away to look for work elsewhere. There is priority environmental restoration work that is not being done and young people especially need an opportunity to continue their employment and training with job security.

INCENTIVES

1. Resources for Farmers

Farmers need incentives to ensure that native vegetation is not cleared indiscriminately and technical support to ensure Integrated Property Management Plans are completed and approved. With a Plan in place farmers will know what resources they have, what they can do on their properties and what needs to be fenced, protected and planted. Provision of technical support for property mapping and a simple form like a tax return that is easily verified by minimal departmental staff will facilitate appropriate property management.

2. Money for Trees

Funds for departmental staff to assist with the preparation of Integrated Property Management Plans will facilitate collection of baseline natural resource data. Funds for on ground assessment, liaison with property holders and on ground restoration works such as fencing, weed removal, remnant protection and riparian revegetation are essential.



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3. Restoration Workforce

Environmental restoration has huge potential as a new industry for the Northern Rivers region to assist both private and public landholders to repair degraded lands. Establishment of a standing workforce to concentrate on priority restoration and repair work needs to have a genuine training component and offer long term career opportunities. An environmental restoration workforce would control weeds, plant trees, erect fences, undertake soil conservation works, build walking tracks and construct public facilities. This restoration workforce would also assist farmers to manage private lands achieving community benefits such as the protection of native vegetation, provide wildlife habitat and improve water quality.

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