

INQUIRY INTO ASPECTS OF AGRICULTURE IN NSW

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The Pastoralists' Association of West Darling

INDUSTRIAL UNION OF EMPLOYERS

Registered under the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Acts and the NSW Industrial Arbitration Act.

Submission to

**Standing Committee on State Development
Inquiry into Aspects of Agriculture in NSW
Parliament House
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Sydney NSW 2000
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Compiled by Rob Seekamp,
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The Pastoralists' Association of West Darling (PAWD) represents dry land pastoralists living in the Far West of New South Wales traditionally operating wool enterprises plus some beef cattle, in recent years due to continuing drought and the low prices received for wool members have diversified into other industries such as meat sheep and rangeland goat enterprises.

Members of the Association all who live in the Western Division of NSW have found many of the Government's drought assistance measures most beneficial, especially the waiving of Western Lands rentals and the paying of Wild Dog Board rates, also the transport subsidies have been extremely helpful and equitable. Everyone in the Western Division have benefited from these measures not the least productive few as it the situation with EC support.

However, an increasing number of Government charges and regulations are making running a profitable business more difficult, these include:

Transport costs

- Vehicle registration in NSW is generally higher than neighbouring states, especially for farm trailers which are in some instances more than double the cost of registering them in SA or Vic.
- SA and Victoria have a registration category for farm vehicles and machinery which are not generally used on public roads which allows these types of vehicles to get third party insurance cover (Green slip). Successive NSW Governments have always resisted calls to allow this type of concessional registration.
- State Government tax on fuels is higher in NSW than some neighbouring states, particularly Queensland. This is adding an additional impost to our

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members and comes on top of already increasing costs for fuel thus adding to increasing freight costs.

- Inadequate road funding in the Far West leading to the poor state of many of the main roads is adding extra costs and strains on the transporting of goods. Poor road conditions are also increasing the costs of running motor vehicles.
- Truck loading regulations in NSW are different to other states which allow higher weight limits on trucks and also allow the more practical and workable volumetric loading of livestock.
- The need to have almost all vehicles inspected annually for roadworthiness is another impost not imposed by other states. There does not appear to be any statistical evidence to suggest that NSW has less roadworthy related accidents than other states which do not have compulsory inspections.

Cost of operating semi government organisations

(Rural Lands Protections Boards and Wild Dog Destruction Board)

- The requirement for these rate payer funded organisations to operate under the State Government employment legislation puts considerable pressure on the running costs of these organisations.
- The Plague Locust and Meat Industry Authority levies which are placed on top of the RLPB rates go into Government coffers with no input from paying landholders on how these funds are spent.
- Government red tape and regulations place increasing strain on these organisations with their employees having to spend more and more time in the office and less time out doing the job they are paid to do, that is servicing their rate payers.
- The recent Bull Review into RLPB rating recommends that it be applied on an area basis. This does not take into account the productive capacity of land, hence does not reflect the capacity of a piece of land to produce an income. The current rating system should remain with regard to RLPBs, particularly in the Western Division.

Taxes and Levies

- The Fire Services Levy should be more equitable and be charged on all property owners as a levy on local government rates such as the Emergency Services Levy in SA.
- People living in low fire prevalent areas should pay a lower rate of Fire Service Levy.
- How the Fire Services Levy is spent should be scrutinised and made more transparent.
- Stamp Duty was supposed to be abolished with the introduction of GST. This did not happen and is placing increasing burdens on small business, particularly when it becomes a tax on a tax.

Conservation and Land Management

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- The monetary incentives for landholders to carry out Land Care works has been diminishing over a number of years, plus the bureaucratic hurdles associated with making applications is putting landholders off applying.
 - Catchment Management Authorities are being administered by people with little understanding of land use and its operation and in many instances much of the funding is going to the few people who are prepared to be the most creative with their submissions, in other words tell the most lies. This form of funding allocation is becoming most inequitable.
 - Regulations of land clearing are having a devastating effect on the control of Woody Weeds, or to put it in current bureaucratic speak, the control of Native Woody Species.
 - Incentives for rabbit control are almost non existent plus Native Vegetation laws in some areas are making rabbit warren destruction difficult. Rabbit numbers are low and must be kept that way as with the breaking of the drought they will soon increase.

Occupational Health and Safety

- OH&S, though very commendable has become extremely onerous, costly and impractical especially in farming properties.
- People working on properties must be encouraged to be responsible for their actions and be encouraged to think for themselves. The employer should not have to be responsible for the unthinking idiot as stipulated by the legislation.
- The costs associated with and the time taken to comply with OH&S regulations, many of which are extremely impractical are causing a huge impost on small farming businesses.
- A farmer needs to be multi skilled. The need to have accreditation for almost every task they carry out is very time consuming, costly, impractical and creating an accreditation industry, a further cost burden.
- NSW Work Cover premiums for primary producers are about double that of other states such as SA, yet another impost on doing business in NSW.

This submission has tried to demonstrate a number of areas where the costs associated with carrying out a business in NSW is much higher than other states. The PAWD very much hope the committee gives these issues the consideration they deserve.

