

ADDRESS TO MOUNTAIN CATTLEMENS ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA  
BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE VICTORIAN FARMERS FEDERATION,  
MRS. HEATHER MITCHELL

IN OUR PRE-ELECTION CAMPAIGN WE ASKED THE THREE MAJOR PARTIES TO RESPOND TO A SERIES OF QUESTIONS RANGING FROM THE SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL AFFAIRS TO THE EXTENSION OF THE RURAL WATCH PROGRAM.

YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN THE DETAIL OF SOME OF THE ANSWERS ON POLICIES CLOSE TO YOUR HEARTS.

WE RAISED THE ISSUE OF THE MULTIPLE AND BEST USE OF PUBLIC LAND AND ASKED THE QUESTION:

DO YOU SUPPORT THE MULTIPLE USE OF PUBLIC LAND, EXCEPT FOR NATIONAL PARKS, INCORPORATING THE SUSTAINABLE USE OF REGENERATING RESOURCES?

THE LABOR PARTY RESPONDED IN THE FOLLOWING TERMS

"THE MULTIPLE USE OF PUBLIC LAND IS NOT SUPPORTED. PUBLIC LAND IS USED FOR THE MOST SUITABLE PUBLIC PURPOSE - AS DEVELOPED THROUGH THE LCC RECOMMENDATION PROCESS.

"IN RESPECT OF THE HIGH PLAINS - THE LAND CONSERVATION COUNCIL IN 1979 RECOMMENDED THAT GRAZING SHOULD BE PHASED OUT OF SOME

PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE ALPINE AREAS (4% OF THE AREA) AND THIS WAS ACCEPTED BY THE LIBERAL GOVERNMENT. SUBSEQUENTLY, THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT HAS ENDORSED THIS POSITION AND ONE ADDITIONAL SMALL PHASE-OUT AREA (THE HOWITT PLAINS) (1% OF THE AREA) HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED AS A RESULT OF THE LCC REVIEW OF NOVEMBER, 1983.

"WHEN IMPLEMENTING THE PHASE-OUT, THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION, FORESTS AND LANDS WILL ATTEMPT TO RELOCATE THE EXISTING GRAZING TO OTHER UNGRAZED OR LIGHTLY GRAZED AREAS NEARBY. THE DEPARTMENT IS ALSO NEGOTIATING A MORE REALISTIC LEVEL OF PAYMENTS FOR GRAZING RIGHTS IN THE HIGH COUNTRY, WITH LONGER LICENCE TERMS AND, HOPEFULLY, SOME REQUIREMENTS FOR PROPER MANAGEMENT OF THE LAND, SUCH AS VERMIN AND WEED CONTROL, BY THE GRAZERS."

THE LIBERALS SAID:

"IN GENERAL I SUPPORT THE MULTIPLE USE OF PUBLIC LAND, BUT NOT ACROSS THE BOARD. SOME USES MUST BE MORE EXCLUSIVE THAN OTHERS. THERE ARE PRIORITIES FOR THE USE OF PUBLIC LAND. AREAS NEED TO BE RESERVED FOR FLORA AND FAUNA OR WATER CATCHMENTS, FOR EXAMPLE. MY PARTY'S APPROACH WOULD BE TO ESTABLISH APPROPRIATE MANAGEMENT ZONINGS AND A MANAGEMENT PLAN WOULD BE PREPARED IN CONSULTATION WITH THE COMMUNITY, INCLUDING WHERE APPROPRIATE THE VICTORIAN FARMERS FEDERATION."

THE NATIONALS WERE MOST SUPPORTIVE AND STATED:

"YES. AREAS SHOULD BE MANAGED FOR MULTIPLE USE - NOT AS NATIONAL PARKS.

"MULTIPLE USE IS A PARTICULARLY APPROPRIATE MANAGEMENT METHOD FOR RECREATIONAL PLANNING AND CONTROL.

"THE NATIONALS BELIEVE THAT PUBLIC LAND MUST BE MANAGED TO MEET A WIDE RANGE OF COMMUNITY REQUIREMENTS, INCLUDING, RESOURCE AVAILABILITY, PASSIVE AND ACTIVE RECREATION, THE WELLBEING OF AUSTRALIAN NATIVE FLORA AND FAUNA, VISUAL AMENITY, WATERSHED MANAGEMENT, FIRE MANAGEMENT INCLUDING STRATEGIC BURNING, AND CONTROL OF EXOTIC FLORA AND FAUNA SPECIES.

"MULTIPLE USE IS VERY COMPATIBLE WITH CONSERVATION BECAUSE:

- \* THE HABITAT NEEDS OF AUSTRALIAN NATIVE FLORA AND FAUNA ARE MET BEST BY FOREST OF VARYING AGE.
- \* MAN MANAGED REGENERATION HAS A CLEAR ADVANTAGE ECOLOGICALLY AND PROVIDES A VALUABLE TIMBER RESOURCE.
- \* SENSITIVE CONSERVATION AREAS CAN BE SET ASIDE, HABITAT TREE CORRIDORS LEFT, STEEP SLOPES AVOIDED AND BUSHFIRES REDUCED.
- \* EXISTING LAND USE CATEGORIES CAN BE APPROPRIATELY REASSESSED TO ENSURE THAT THEIR MANAGEMENT IS ACHIEVING THE OBJECTIVES FOR WHICH THE CATEGORIES WERE ESTABLISHED."

I KNOW THAT YOU HAVE BEEN FIGHTING THE CROWN LAND RENTALS ISSUE AND THAT OVER RECENT MONTHS YOU HAVE BEEN WORKING CLOSELY WITH THE FEDERATION.

WE ASKED FOUR QUESTIONS ON THIS ISSUE. THE ALP AND THE NATIONALS ANSWERED EACH OF THE QUESTIONS IN TURN WHEREAS THE LIBERAL GAVE ONE ALL EMBRACING ANSWER. LET ME READ THE QUESTION AND THEN THE LABOR AND NATIONALS RESPONSE AND THEN I WILL READ THE LIBERALS OVERALL RESPONSE.

1. DO YOU AGREE THAT CROWN LAND RENTALS SHOULD BE BASED ON COMMERCIAL RENTALS LESS A SERIES OF DISCOUNTS TO ACCOUNT FOR THE SPECIAL FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH RENTING CROWN LAND?

\* LABOR PARTY RESPONSE

"YES, IN LINE WITH THE AGRICULTURAL RENTAL POLICY IMPLEMENTED OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS, CROWN LAND LEASES HAVE BEEN ASSESSED AT MARKET RENTALS LESS APPROPRIATE DISCOUNTS WHERE APPLICABLE."

\* NATIONAL PARTY RESPONSE

"THE VICTORIAN FARMERS FEDERATION AND MUNICIPAL REPRESENTATIVES WILL FORM PART OF A CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE TO REVIEW AND MONITOR FEES, AND TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF LICENCES.

2. DO YOU AGREE THAT THE DISCOUNTS SHOULD ACCOUNT FOR:

\* ACTUAL OUTGOINGS?

\* AND OTHER FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH GOOD LAND MANAGEMENT SUCH AS SALINITY CONTROL AND SOIL CONSERVATION?

\* AND OTHER DISADVANTAGEOUS ASPECTS OF RENTING CROWN LAND?

\* LABOR PARTY RESPONSE

YES, TO EXPAND ON ANSWER ONE ABOVE, THE CURRENT AGRICULTURAL RENTAL POLICY ON CROWN LAND PROVIDES THAT QUANTIFIABLE COSTS FOR SHIRE RATES, WATER PROVISION, FENCING AND DAM MAINTENANCE CAN BE DEDUCTED FROM THE MARKET RATE (BASED ON A DSE SYSTEM).

RENTAL RATES AND MANAGEMENT CONDITIONS SHOULD ENSURE CROWN LAND IS MANAGED TO CONSERVE LAND VALUE AND QUALITY AND ENSURE PRODUCTIVITY IS MAINTAINED OR IMPROVED WHERE SUITABLE, IE. IMPROVED FODDER PRODUCTION AND PLANTING OF NATIVE TREES.

THE CURRENT POLICY PROVIDES FOR NOMINAL RENTAL RATES OF \$1.00 WHERE LAND RESTORATION IS UNDERTAKEN, IE, REAFFORESTATION PROGRAMS ON UNUSED ROADS AND WATER FRONTAGES.

DISCOUNTS ARE PROVIDED FOR PUBLIC ACCESS TO CROWN LAND (U/RS AND W/FS) AND ADDITIONAL DISCOUNTS FOR VERMIN AND NOXIOUS WEED CONTROL ARE PROVIDED FOR ON UNUSED ROADS AND IN PARTICULAR WATER FRONTAGES.

\* NATIONAL PARTY RESPONSE

YES. THERE DO NEED TO BE SOME DISCOUNTS FOR FACTORS SUCH AS ACCESS.

PROBLEMS CREATED THROUGH PUBLIC ACCESS, BY WAY OF DISTURBANCE OF STOCK, VANDALISM OR RESTRICTION ON THE PRODUCTIVE USE OF SUCH LAND, MUST BE RECOGNISED IN SETTING LEASE FEES. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, LEASE FEES SHOULD BE A NOMINAL CHARGE ONLY.

3. DO YOU AGREE WITH THE VIEW OF THE GOVERNMENT ESTABLISHED PRICING PANEL THAT ON ALPINE AND SUB-ALPINE AREAS THERE ARE 'BENEFITS WHICH ACCRUE TO THE CROWN IN LICENSING THESE AREAS'?

\* NATIONAL PARTY RESPONSE

YES

4. DO YOU AGREE THAT THE BENEFITS WHICH ACCRUE TO THE CROWN FROM LICENSING ALPINE AND SUB-ALPINE AREAS FOR CATTLE GRAZING SHOULD BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN DETERMINING THE CROWN LAND RENTALS FOR THESE AREAS?

\* NATIONAL PARTY RESPONSE

YES

LABORS ANSWER FOR QUESTIONS THREE AND FOUR WERE

"ANY BENEFITS SHOULD BE IDENTIFIED BY RECOGNISED EXPERTS IN THEIR FIELD OR IN THE RURAL INDUSTRY AND QUANTIFIED AS FAR AS POSSIBLE IN DETERMINING A MARKET RELATED RENT."

\* LIBERAL PARTY RESPONSE

"IN GOVERNMENT, THE PARTY WILL INSTITUTE A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF ALL ASPECTS OF THE RENTAL OF CROWN LANDS. I ALSO FAVOUR WHERE APPROPRIATE, THE SALE OF UNUSED ROADS FOR EXAMPLE TO THE PRESENT LESSEES."

OTHER VFF ACTION ON CROWN LAND RENTAL ISSUE

CROWN LAND RENTALS

WE HAVE RAISED WITH THE DEPARTMENT A SERIES OF ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION INCLUDING :

- THE LEVEL OF GROSS RENTAL AND DISCOUNTS PROPOSED FOR EACH REGION AND LICENCE TYPE
- THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PROCEDURES TO FACILITATE THE SALE OF CROWN LAND AREAS
- THE INCLUSION OF GRAZING AND CROPPING LICENCES INTO THE FARM UNIT ACCOUNT SYSTEM
- TO DEFINE WHAT TYPE OF LAND IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS WILL QUALIFY FOR A REBATE OF RENTAL CHARGES.

ONLY RECENTLY A PROPOSAL HAS BEEN MADE BY THE DEPARTMENT THAT RENTS BE INCREASED BY 5 PERCENT ACROSS THE BOARD FOR NEXT YEAR.

WE ARE SEEKING INFORMATION ON AGISTMENT AND LEASING COSTS ON PRIVATE LAND BEFORE THE LAND USE COMMITTEE DEVELOPS A RESPONSE.

ON THE CONCEPTS OF REGULATION AND INCENTIVES IN CONSERVATION ISSUES, WE FOUND THAT THERE IS SUBSTANTIAL AGREEMENT AMONGST THE MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES. THAT CONSERVATION STRATEGIES SHOULD BE IMPLEMENTED WHEREVER POSSIBLE THROUGH EDUCATION, ADVICE AND INCENTIVES RATHER THAN BE THE SUBJECT OF BUREAUCRATIC REGULATION.

THIS WAS CLEAR FROM RESPONSES THAT THE FEDERATION OBTAINED FROM THE MAJOR PARTIES IN THE FEDERATION'S PRE STATE ELECTION CAMPAIGN.

THE LIBERAL PARTY GAVE FULL SUPPORT TO EDUCATION, ADVICE AND INCENTIVES AND STRONGLY SUPPORTED UNDERSTANDING RATHER THAN ENFORCEMENT.

THE NATIONAL PARTY STATED THAT EDUCATION, INCENTIVES AND ASSISTANCE ARE MORE APPROPRIATE THAN ENFORCEMENT AND RECOGNISED THAT PRIVATE LANDOWNERS RESPOND BETTER TO ASSISTANCE AND ENCOURAGEMENT.



THE ALP NOTED THAT, "REGULATION IS ALWAYS THE LAST RESORT. EDUCATION AND ADVICE ARE THE PREFERRED METHODS OF ACHIEVING CONSERVATION OF PARTICULAR SPECIES AND/OR HABITATS AND VOLUNTARY CO-OPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WILL BE SOUGHT WHERE POSSIBLE. THIS ALSO APPLIES TO LAND PROTECTION MEASURES WHERE EDUCATION, ADVICE AND INCENTIVES ARE USED FAR MORE OFTEN THAN REGULATION.

"THERE ARE NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR INVOLVEMENT OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IN INCENTIVE PROGRAMS. THIS WILL BE DEVELOPED THROUGH LAND CARE AND APPLICATION OF THE LAND PROTECTION INCENTIVE SCHEME. AGROFORESTRY NEEDS TO BE EMPHASISED AS A CONSERVATION ISSUE AS SHOULD THE GENERAL OPPORTUNITY OF FORESTRY DEVELOPMENT ON FARMS.

"THE GOVERNMENT IS KEEN TO DEVELOP A FIVE YEAR PROGRAM FOR FORESTRY DEVELOPMENT ON FARMS AND SEEKS TO INVOLVE THE VFF IN ITS PREPARATION.

"QUESTIONS OF TAXATION CONCESSIONS AND REBATES ALSO NEED TO BE CONSIDERED, BUT CARE MUST BE TAKEN TO ENSURE THEY ARE WELL TARGETED AND EFFICIENT."

## SUMMARY OF ELECTION STATEMENTS

BOTH THE NATIONAL PARTY AND THE ALP HAVE PROMISED THE FEDERATION THAT THEY WILL INCREASE THE OVERALL LEVEL OF SCIENTIFIC SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL AFFAIRS. THE LIBERAL PARTY ON THE OTHER HAND STATED THAT IT WOULD "LIKE TO SEE THE OVERALL LEVEL OF SCIENTIFIC SERVICES PROVIDED BY DARA AT LEAST MAINTAINED AND HOPEFULLY INCREASED."

THE VFF EXPECTS TO BE MORE CLOSELY INVOLVED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLICY AND PRIORITIES IN THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL AFFAIRS FOLLOWING THE ELECTION - REGARDLESS OF WHICH PARTY OR PARTIES WIN.

THE RURAL FINANCE CORPORATION CONTINUES TO ENJOY STRONG SUPPORT FROM ALL THREE MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES. THIS WAS CLEAR FROM RESPONSES THAT THE VFF HAS OBTAINED FROM THE PARTIES.

THE FINANCIAL RESOURCES DEVOTED TO IMPROVING THE FINANCIAL SKILLS OF FARMERS SHOULD BE INCREASED AFTER THE ELECTION REGARDLESS OF WHICH PARTY OR PARTIES ARE ELECTED.

ALL PARTIES SUPPORT THE PROVISION OF ASSISTANCE DURING DROUGHTS. HOWEVER IN DETERMINING THE LEVEL AND TYPE OF ASSISTANCE, THE LIBERAL AND LABOR PARTY PREFER FLEXIBILITY TO A SET STANDARD SERIES OF CORE MEASURES. THE NATIONAL PARTY AGREED THAT THERE SHOULD BE A PREDICTABLE SET OF CORE MEASURES.

THE THREE PARTIES ACKNOWLEDGED SOME PROBLEMS WITH THE MUNICIPAL RATING SYSTEM BUT NONE WERE PREPARED TO SUPPORT ITS ABOLITION.

ALL PARTIES SUPPORTED THE NEED FOR AN EXPANDED RURAL WATCH PROGRAMME THROUGHOUT COUNTRY VICTORIA.

ALL MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES AGREE THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION, FORESTS AND LANDS' PROGRAMS RELATED TO LAND PROTECTION AND PARTICULARLY THE CONTROL OF PEST PLANTS AND ANIMALS SHOULD BE PROPERLY FUNDED.

ALL PARTIES SUPPORT THE REPRESENTATION OF PRIMARY PRODUCERS ON THE BOARDS OF PORT AUTHORITIES. THE NATIONALS ADDED THAT THE VFF WOULD BE ASKED TO NOMINATE REPRESENTATIVES TO THESE POSITIONS. THE LIBERALS ARE PREPARED TO AMEND THE LEGISLATION TO GIVE THE VFF DIRECT REPRESENTATION ON THE AUTHORITIES.

THERE IS SIGNIFICANT DIVERGENCE OF OPINION ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE OFFICE OF RURAL AFFAIRS BETWEEN THE THREE MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES.

THE OFFICE OF RURAL AFFAIRS IS FULLY SUPPORTED BY THE ALP.

THE LIBERAL PARTY WOULD REVIEW ITS OPERATIONS TO SEE IF ANY OF ITS FUNCTIONS SHOULD REMAIN.

THE NATIONAL PARTY CONSIDERS THAT THE OFFICE OF RURAL AFFAIRS HAS BEEN MISUSED BY THE GOVERNMENT AND HAS TO A LARGE EXTENT BEEN A PROPAGANDA UNIT FOR IT.

THE NATIONALS WILL ALSO REVIEW THE OFFICE OF RURAL AFFAIRS AND EITHER DISBAND IT COMPLETELY, OR RADICALLY ADJUST ITS ROLE.

BOTH OPPOSITION PARTIES AGREED THAT THE OFFICE OF RURAL AFFAIRS SHOULD NOT BE FUNDED AT THE EXPENSE OF THE MORE TRADITIONAL FARM ORIENTATED ACTIVITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL AFFAIRS. THE LABOR PARTY CLAIMED THAT THE OFFICE HAD NOT BEEN FUNDED AT THE EXPENSE OF OTHER MORE TRADITIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT.

THE ALP CONTINUES TO BE AT ODDS WITH BOTH OF THE OPPOSITION PARTIES IN ITS POLICY ON THE IMPOSITION OF THE PUBLIC AUTHORITY DIVIDEND PAYMENT ON THE GRAIN ELEVATORS BOARD.

THE LABOR PARTY STATED THAT, "IT IS ENTIRELY APPROPRIATE THAT THE PEOPLE OF VICTORIA SHOULD RECEIVE A DIVIDEND ON THE CONSIDERABLE EQUITY THEY HAVE ACCUMULATED IN VICTORIAN PUBLIC AUTHORITIES."

BOTH THE NATIONAL AND LIBERAL PARTIES PROMISED TO REMOVE THE PUBLIC AUTHORITIES DIVIDEND PAYMENT FROM THE GRAINS ELEVATOR BOARD WHEREAS THE ALP STATED THAT IT WOULD CONTINUE TO BE IMPOSED.

OPINIONS DIVERGED ON THE ISSUE OF CONTROLLING WEEDS ON ROADSIDES. THE NATIONAL PARTY AGREED THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION, FORESTS AND LANDS SHOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR CONTROL OR ERADICATION OF ALL PEST PLANTS AND PEST ANIMALS ON ROADS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.

THE LABOR PARTY DO NOT AGREE WITH THIS CONCEPT AND STATED THAT CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS FOR CONTROL OF WEEDS ON ROADSIDES ARE APPROPRIATE AND SHOULD CONTINUE.

THE LIBERAL PARTY STATED THAT, FOR PRIORITY WEEDS AND PROHIBITED WEEDS, THE DEPARTMENT WILL TAKE FULL RESPONSIBILITY AND THAT THE AIM WOULD BE TO REACH AGREEMENT ON THE CONDITIONS AND TERMS FOR THE CONTROL OF WEEDS ON ROADSIDES.

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