

To Whom it may concern,

I would very much like to contribute to the Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper by telling my story.

My name is Alistair Gabb, I am a 32 year old male who will become the 5th generation to farm our family property in Western Victoria. In October 2013 I made the decision to come home to our family farm. I subsequently not long after arriving home purchased a 234 ha block of land about 5 km away from the family's farm as my own first step to becoming a land holder in my own right.

During the hand over period with the Vendors consent I sprayed the block to prevent seed set as a weed management tool for the coming years cropping season. Whilst doing this I also sprayed around 70 ha of previously un cultivated country with the idea of developing it into higher producing cropping country. This is where all my troubles began.

At the beginning of February 2014 we received a phone call from our local shire informing us that a concerned citizen had reported my actions of spraying the previously uncultivated ground with concerns that I had sprayed out some native vegetation.

(One must note that prior to signing the sales agreement and after viewing the section 32, both myself, my solicitor as well as talking to the real estate agent could not find any documents, covenants or over lays on the block of land in question. No information in any of the resources available to my solicitor and real estate have that implied I could not go ahead and develop the land into higher producing agricultural land.)

Following this call we did the right thing and had a woman from both DEPI and the local CMA visit the block of land in question. Upon their advise we halted further management actions as they were of the opinion we may be in breach of the **EPBC Act**. Until that moment I had never heard of the **EPBC Act** and what it represented. We have now been talking to and had a visit from two compliance offices representing the **EPBC Act**. They visited my property to inspect the alleged offence of spraying an area of native grassland. My current situation is un known to me as I am waiting on the offices to get back with the course of action which will be taken from this point.

Mean while I am less than six months into my farming career. Trying to service what I consider a large debt and I am having my hands tied behind my back. My ability to produce has been diminished significantly and with the season and time ticking on I am un able to make decisions on what I can do to produce and make money, money to service my debt. There is a very real possibility that my venture into farming on my own may not last out its first two years due to an Act of which **I was not aware** of prior to purchasing my block. Had I been made aware of it then I would not be in this situation.

We as a nation and the world for that fact are continually being told we need to produce more food to feed the ever growing population surge around the globe. I am by no means saying the environment is not important, I have strong personal beliefs that it is to be cared for and preserved for generations to come. How ever the masses of red tape governments are imposing on us farmers with legislation like the EPBC Act is shaping up to have significant effects on our Agricultural industry. Our nation weather it be small vocal activist groups, large business and even our very own Governments seem to be continually making it as hard as possible for our Agricultural sector. I am not suggesting or looking for a hand out all I am saying is that we are becoming so over governed and shrouded in red tape that it is hindering our ability to produce and be competitive on what is now a very global market.

Where is our right top farm!

Regards

Alistair Gabb