

SUBMISSION on the

NATIONAL POLICY STATEMENT for HIGHLY PRODUCTIVE LAND.

The writer has read the document 'Valuing highly productive land'

This document is well written and well presented. The arguments are set out succinctly and the questions are well thought out. The writer wishes to compliment those responsible for this excellent document.

The writer feels strongly that Local Government do not handle the control of valuable productive land at all well. A solution is presented herewith and hopefully can be given serious consideration.

Firstly, the writer believes that a NATIONAL POLICY STATEMENT must be raised and implemented. It must be well written and carefully worded. It must be firm in its wording that classified highly productive land must be protected and that attempts to get around the intent must not be tolerated.

To administer the above Policy document, a NATIONAL LAND COMMISSION should be set up with powers to classify land and further, to take land and set it aside for productive use where necessary.

This means that the classification of productive land and the decisions and planning approvals for subdivision of land would no longer be in the hands of Local Government but would require the approval of the above Commission. This would ensure that the land in question is protected against inappropriate subdivision.

While it is believed that local councils and regional councils have been largely diligent in the subdivision decisions made, it is apparent to this observer that a Commissioner aided by two or more councillors can be persuaded to approve a subdivision by the eloquent presentation of an experienced legal team, who, while working in the interests of the applicant, can use information supplied by the applicant that is doubtful in quality and will ultimately contribute to a poor decision resulting in the further breakup of high quality, highly productive land usually in the vicinity of urban settlements. (Sadly, the Commission will be sometimes be persuaded to override the recommendations of the Council staff evaluation of the application.)

It is believed that this weak form of decision making above should be terminated and a more uniform system developed which cannot be challenged and which will apply the NPS forcefully. At present there is simply too much opportunity for smart legal argument to be used to persuade a local Commission who are often inexperienced, lack understanding of the existing rules and sometimes, inadvertently have a vested interest in the outcome of the application. This suggested reform would have widespread ramifications for developers and local government alike but used effectively would ensure that our highly productive land in the vicinity of urban settlement would no longer be removed from production.

This form of 'reform' will create much anguish and bitterness especially amongst those who have valuable land close to urban development. If the Government and Society in general are serious about the issue of protecting highly productive land, then draconian steps will need to be taken. These will involve the removal of many existing planning regulations, the rehashing of many local government operations, 'restructuring', great cost, redundancies and much unpleasant local hard feeling.

SO, THE APPLICATION OF A SOLID NATIONAL POLICY STATEMENT BY A SERIOUS GOVERNMENT WILL ENSURE THAT WE ARE ABLE TO USE OUR HIGHLY PRODUCTIVE LANDS INTO THE FUTURE.

However, PART OF THE DISCUSSION around this whole question of the protection of productive land must include the preference of our society to own urban property. Changing this long held traditional obsession will remain a massive challenge for this generation and those to come. This writer has noted that this discussion has been brought forward in the discussion document. Government must enter this discussion and encourage development away from the 'quarter-acre paradise'.

THIS SUBMISSION asks that Government give serious consideration to:

1. Establishing a national body to classify and protect highly productive land using a well designed, strong NPS that cannot be challenged.
2. Remove from local Government the whole existing ability to classify productive land. Classification to be effected by a team working across the whole country and using uniform methods and standards.
3. Remove from Local Government completely, the ability to approve the subdivision of land deemed highly productive.

