

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Good morning,

I've attempted to submit the online form and it gets rejected with an IT error message. Please find below the submission I am making on behalf of my employer.

Increased targeting of primary producers by activists & the associated trespassing onto private property has resulted in the following changes to the community we engage in Landcare and our ability to work:

1. Increased suspicion of our motives for being in rural & often remote areas. This suspicion has resulted in an increased number of occasions when being parked in work vehicle on side of rural road to make phone calls, check messages, take photos for role - has resulted in intense scrutiny of staff & vehicle by other rural road users. This has also occurred when mapping weeds in road reserves where staff are walking wearing hazard vests. Previous 7 years of this same work in same vehicle in same areas never produced the number of occasions when polite but concerned enquiry direct to staff about who they are & what they're doing has occurred since March 2018.

2. Reduction in enthusiasm for sharing photos of farm life on social media by clients & staff. We are an environment org, constantly exhorted by State Landcare team @ DELWP, Landcare Australia, and Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority Landcare to actively promote the role of Landcare to support farmers, biodiversity, agriculture, sustainability, and positive change in land management practices. Every media, engagement, funding, stakeholder event we go to has this as "what you need to do to connect with community". We are expected to and encouraged to present the front of our work on the land on social media, website, and media articles on a regular basis.

Cool. But to do this we have to have trusting image capture relationships with those who are connected to what we do. Biodiversity doesn't need written consent but private farms do. Since 2018 we've had to change how we use images of farming & farmers - making sure that when we take images of project sites, possible project sites, livestock, land, equipment & people - that we do this with the full knowledge of farm, & that if films and images are used that we don't identify the property.

It used to be that farmers were keen to talk about what they do, show the warts and all in a conversation over time about positive change. Now more often than not, up comes a barrier of who might watch and use the film about (for example) planting trees or fencing a wetland to decide that farmer & that farm are the next target because something someone watching "believed" turned a film about planting trees into a "take a farmer down".

Farmers are rightly concerned that opening up a window into their world also opens a window to folk who want to target anyone representing farming in any way.

This is an insidious and demotivating change in communication freedom for everyone.

3. More security & more requests for training in remote camera use from farmers.

We have actively used remote sensing cameras to monitor wildlife in our projects for years. In the last 3 years a steadily increasing run of private land holders have connected to us asking about the gear we use and what it can show. Since 2018 this stream has increased dramatically- so much so that we've produced a short facts fact sheet to answer the common questions. We've also been asked more about legal requirements for use of this gear and how the images can be used for compliance. Every time we've posted on social media about the cameras the phone rings with another farmer in Australia wanting to talk about this. Its a huge void of info and one we hope we can be a future part in resolving so that farmers at every level of need can get the tools they need to feel more in command of their assets. Rural crime of all kinds is

increasing & more farms are looking for self-directed solutions that don't mean they feel so at-the-mercy of strangers determined to steal their piece of mind, assets, biosecurity.

4. Increased topic of conversation & expectation on our staff to be ad hoc eyes.

Farmers often don't leave their properties for days. They may not have the broad connections both geographic and social to industry, community, and places. That seems to make some very keen to seek knowledge and networks via our staff. Since 2018 the wanting to know about what other farms do to (for example) control gorse, has moved more towards looking to know what other farms do about farm crime. This has also resulted in increased ask for our staff to look out for what farmers think activists will look like and to ask other people we encounter on roads or in road reserves what they are doing. Helicopters, planes, vans, drones, and convoys of vehicles have become much less benign. When the State Government Stavely Ground Release Survey unmarked Plane was doing mapping runs in the district, I was on 9 different farms and asked who that was & what were they doing. And it wasn't just curiosity, the farmers felt under the microscope. One of those farms is on that activist map & they were really stressed when the plane went over low.

We hope that by communicating these issues, that the enquiry team will connect with this insight. It will be replicated in the experience of others in agriculture service industries across Victoria.

Regards Mrs Lisette Mill.