



RADIO INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

ABC Shepparton – Breakfast Show with Nic Healey 19 September 2024

Transcript prepared from recording available at: <https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/shepparton-breakfast/breakfast/104351202>: Commencing at 45:12

Nic Healey: “Protect our Farms they’re a group in the Mitchell Shire who are a bit worried about Significant Landscape Overlays – what that’s going to mean for them in terms of red tape, cost and more. Now this week the group actually announced they’re actually going to be campaigning on this issue during the upcoming Council elections, and that’ll include doing a survey of the candidates who are running for Mitchell Shire Council and then rating them based on their support for farmers.

Lyndon Arnel is a farmer, and I spoke to him earlier about their issues...

Lyndon Arnel: “They’ve been starting to impose SLOs – Significant Landscape Overlays – on the properties. It’s something like – take out Puckapunyal and the parks/state parks and the town, it’s 10% of the Shire and some 300 properties are impacted on it.

Lyndon Arnel: “94% of that is actually farm zoned for farming, so that’s really where looking at getting Councillors...new councillors to be aware there’s actually farms here. The Shire is placing this and other restrictions on farms as well – this is just another layer of bureaucracy that’s unnecessary and it will cause costs to the Shire and increase costs to our farming. No matter what they say – nothing to see here – that’s really where we’re coming from.

Nic Healey: “Lyndon, just so I’m clear, when we’re talking about an SLO (a Significant Landscaper Overlay) the idea is that it’s meant to identify landscapes that need enhancement or conservation, what sort of restrictions would that place on farmers from your side of the fence?”

Lyndon Arnel: “It’s actually not quite that. It’s a Significant Landscape Overlay to protect views. Where it is to do things on the property we have to get a permit – we have to get an inspection and a permit. That’s how tight it’s going to put restrictions on us.

Nic Healey: “So not just in terms of those restrictions– so as you’re pointing out, that adds time, it adds wading through the bureaucracy, potentially some costs to the farmers as well.

Lyndon Arnel: “Absolutely, Yes. Absolutely. These farms are “farm” zoned – farming must be maintained primarily for farming. So every time you put a restriction on it, that restricts how we can actually operate our farms. There’s a two-fold thing here. All this was sprung on us – they said they did consultation with farmers – but even yesterday I ran into a local farmer here who had not even heard of it. You know, and this has been going on, they say, for two or three years, and that’s why they put a real ‘you’ve gotta get this passed, you’ve gotta get this passed’ – in other words, as far as we’re concerned – they started rushing things through. But, when you break it down, and get into the background of what this leads to or does. It beggars the mind I tell you.

Nic Healey: “So obviously you know what impact it’s going to make on you and you’ve spoken to fellow farmers and they’re equally worried right across the board?”

Lyndon Arnel: “Absolutely. Some of them are actually quite irate over it actually. You know, when you look at the levels of red, green tape, whatever you call it, that we have to do as a farmer anyway – we are the conservationists. Not putting an SLO for somebody to effectively, what it’s for is, someone who can drive past on a very poorly maintained road and have a look at the views on our property. We don’t have a problem of protecting those views – or I should say, moreover the features – to place the whole thing on the whole farm is ludicrous. Like, in our case, there’s a mount, it’s called Mount Koala, you can see it at the back of our property. We don’t have any features actually on our property, but our property is 100% in the Overlays. We’ve got the same restrictions as anybody else, so it’s a lot more insidious than just ‘oh, yer, we’ll just put it on these features so people can view them’. You know, the misinformation that’s going out from certain parties, but moreover, the biggest problem is the lack of information and inconsistencies the Council keeps saying, or the Shire, the planners in particular, becomes more worrying.

Nic Healey: “So with Council elections coming up, I was just looking a bit earlier, you’ve got over 20 candidates for 9 seats in the Mitchell Shire – it’s obviously a very hotly contested election. The plan is you want to make sure people know where each of those candidates stand on this particular issue?”

Lyndon Arnel: “Absolutely, yer. The thing is if you look at some of the blurb that some of the Councillors are putting out, bearing in mind – don’t hold me to the hard figures – but something like 80% of the population live in Wallan and that area there, which is almost 100km from here, but 85% of the land is farming. These people really need to understand who they’re representing. We don’t get much of say, farmers generally aren’t very vocal about things, we just get the job done. But, with this coming on us, we’re saying – hang on, this is just a step too far. Need to go back, talk to the people who you are affecting, and I’m talking about the councillors need to know this, talk to the people who are being affected by these ideas, placed on us that don’t know anything about farming. And, I think if we can get to talk to some of the Councillors, or candidates I should say, they get an understanding of – yer, ok there’s more than just Wallan – I don’t have a problem with their needs or that sort of stuff at all – but we’re part of the community too. And a significant part of the community when it comes to the financial advantage that the Shire gets. And that’s the sort of data that we’re coming up with now to place the Councillors and the Shire itself, now this is what you’re going to do, if you knock that off by 10% it’s a significant amount coming from the Shire.