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## News release

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### **Farm Property Rights - Shameless Compo Grab**

Most farm lobby demands for financial compensation for restrictions on the use of land and water as a result of changes to government policy have no economic, environmental or moral justification according to the Australia Institute.

The finding is in a new Institute paper, *Property Rights and the Environment*, by Andrew Macintosh and Richard Denniss. Releasing the paper today Institute Director Dr Clive Hamilton said the farm lobby demands were a barely disguised grab for taxpayer funds.

“The Howard Government is sympathetic to a National Farmers’ Federation demand to enshrine in law a land holder’s right to compensation for changes in government policy in relation to land use, such as measures to protect native vegetation.

“There are no grounds to make farmers a special case. Should we enshrine in law the right of employees to be compensated if the government changes industrial relations policies in a way that reduces employee rights?

“No-one in Australia has unlimited rights to use their land as they see fit or to demand compensation just because government policy changes. Residential tenants know this, home owners know it. No justification can be found to legally enshrine such rights for farmers.”

Dr Richard Denniss said the NFF was using the term ‘property rights’ emotively and inaccurately to secure government largesse for farmers demanding compensation for reductions in rights they do not even have.

“Some farmers believe they have the right to do whatever they want and if they are prevented they should be compensated. This is not based on law, logic or morality,” he said.

“The paper says that while there is no argument for providing improved rights for compensation for land use, there is an economic basis for recognising the impact of changing water policy.

“However, the compensation model for changes to water use proposed by the NFF places too much of the risk on taxpayers and not enough on farmers,” Dr Denniss said. “The whole issue demands greater public scrutiny. Land holders claims must be balanced against the needs of the broader community.

“When there are grounds for compensating land holders and communities for restrictions on property rights, compensation payments should be made on a discretionary basis having regard to the particular circumstances. But they should not be enshrined as an automatic legal due.”