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## LAND USE CONFLICT IN RURAL AUSTRALIA: FROM A SHARED VISION INTO A GREAT DIVIDE

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The City-Bush divide is an irony in a supposedly multicultural and modern Australia. The fear of a rift between the City and the Bush is now reality. The social impact of this division has deep and permanent implications beyond contemporary economic inequities and environmental concerns. We believe it affects the very heart of our people. It is an issue that is not receiving the attention it deserves. In this paper we analyse part of this 'City/Bush dichotomy' in the context of shaping the Australian environment. This paper is about attitude and vision.

The cliché "Australia rode on the sheep's back", has turned from a symbol representing our post-1788 heritage to one of shame and guilt. Rightly or wrongly, Australians all once rode on primary production with shared vision. Today's primary producers are increasingly viewed as environmental vandals, their culture and view of the land are rejected in modern urban Australia. Is there room in a multicultural Australia to listen and potentially learn from this culture?

Australian society is designing its preferred future landscapes, and the purposes they should serve. At the broad scale the current process is through political and legislative means (for example, the National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development 1992, the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (C'wealth) Act 1999*, the *Vegetation Management (Qld) Act 1999*). We contend that the *process* of achieving outcomes is creating conflict, where strength in numbers appears to rule. Land use conflict is a cultural dilemma not easily solved by the command and control process of politics and legislation.

Can we regain collective or shared visions of land or are we doomed to creating the Australian landscape by default through conflict? Is this socially sustainable?