

Forum presentation Notes to the National Trust Forum on Nature Conservation on Private lands

This paper is based on a Ph.D. research project being conducted by myself in Western Australia (WA) and Victoria with the purpose of determining viable covenant mechanisms for achieving voluntary and long term nature conservation on private lands. It assesses factors and issues that influence private landholders' decisions towards the up take of a permanent covenant. The reported findings focus on landholders that do not have any form of a conservation covenants or agreement in Western Australia and Victoria. The findings are based on the results of a questionnaire mail survey that involved 140(450) randomly selected landholders from all over Victoria and 112 (450) from Western Australia.

This presentation will attempt to answer the following questions that relate to covenant uptake by landholder:

What are the perceptions and attitudes of landholders to permanent covenants in terms of their necessity for nature conservation on private lands? In order to answer this principal question, we set out the following objectives.

To assess landholders';

attitudes towards current uptake of a permanent covenant

general attitudes to uptake of permanent covenants;

perceptions on the effectiveness of permanent covenants for long-term nature conservation compared to other mechanisms.

perceptions of an existence of benefits in the uptake of a permanent covenant

perceptions on the necessity of a covenant for assuring continued nature conservation on their land.

The required information was gathered by presenting questions in the form of statements to the respondents, in which each respondent was required to indicate how strongly he/she agree or disagree with the statement. Each statement was tailored to measure their various perceptions and attitudes.

Let us look at the property features and demographic information from the two States.

We find that the most common conservation features cited in WA are **Native bush** followed by **Streams/River**, while in Victoria it is **Streams/creak/Rivers** closely followed by **Native Bush/Forest**.

The majority of properties in both States are of **mixed farm type** comprising sheep with either crop or cattle.

The average age of the respondents in WA was **53 years** and **49.6 years** in Victoria.

Looking at Land tenure, ownership and property size.

Almost 69 percent of the properties in Western Australia had been in the family for more than 31 years as compared to 51.4 percent in Victoria, and only 9.8% of the properties in Western Australia in contrast to a larger proportion of properties (21%) in Victoria had been in the family for less than 10 years.

The majority of the properties in both states are 100% freehold tenure.

The average size of properties in Western Australia was **2340 hectares**. The property size in Victoria was much smaller in comparison to WA, with an average of **467.2** hectares.

The primary reasons for having conserved nature on their land in Victoria and WA are **to support native vegetation** and for **shed and shelter for stock**. WA however also cited having retained the conservation features for **soil salinity control measure**.

Attitude toward the present use of a covenant.

Let us now look at the landholders' attitudes to the present uptake of a permanent covenant.

Respondents were presented with the statement *'Presently, I prefer to maintain the nature conservation areas on my land WITHOUT the use of a permanent covenant'*

The response in WA shows **ninety percent of the respondents agree** with the statement. It is noteworthy that in WA **only two percent** disagree with the statement.

In Victoria the proportion of those that agree **is also relatively high** (77.6%) but much smaller in comparison with WA.

Let us look at the **general attitudes to the uptake of a permanent covenant**.

In response to the statement *'I would not consider a permanent covenant under any circumstance'*

Half of the landholders in Western Australia 'agree' with the statement, while a relatively smaller proportion of (17.6 percent) 'disagree'.

In contrast to WA, the response in Victoria shows a much lower proportion (28.8 percent) of those that agree with the statement and a higher proportion of 27 percent of respondents that disagree with the statement.

Thus Victoria shows a relatively equal proportion of those that are in agreement and those that are in disagreement with the statement

The proportions of those that are neutral are similar in both States.

Table 6a. I would NOT consider entering a permanent covenant under any circumstance (WA)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	1. St. Agree	29	23.6	26.9	26.9
	2. Agree	25	20.3	23.1	50.0
	3. Neutral	19	15.4	17.6	67.6
	4. Disagree	10	8.1	9.3	76.9
	5. St. Disagree	9	7.3	8.3	85.2
	6. Undecided/Dk	16	13.0	14.8	100.0
	Total	108	87.8	100.0	
Missing	System	15	12.2		
Total		123	100.0		

Table 6b. I would NOT consider entering a permanent covenant under any circumstance (Vic).

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	St. Agree	25	17.9	18.0	18.0
	Agree	15	10.7	10.8	28.8
	Neutral	39	27.9	28.1	56.8
	Disagree	25	17.9	18.0	74.8
	St. Disagree	12	8.6	8.6	83.5
	D/Know	23	16.4	16.5	100.0
	Total	139	99.3	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.7		
Total		140	100.0		

Let us look at the [Perception on effectiveness of a permanent covenant](#).

In response to the statement ‘*There are more effective mechanisms other than voluntary covenants for promoting the long-term nature conservation on private lands*’, 45.4 percent of respondents in Western Australia agree with the statement, while 25 percent neither agree nor disagree, and 14.8 percent are undecided.

In Victoria, 31.3 percent of the landholders agree with the statement, while a small proportion (12.2 percent) disagree.

A large proportion of landholders (30.2 percent), neither agree nor disagree, and 27.3 percent say they ‘do not know’.

Thus more than half of the landholders in Victoria cannot say with certainty whether there are other more effective mechanisms than permanent covenants for promoting nature conservation on private land.

And in both States therefore we find there is quite a large proportion of landholders (45% in WA and 30.3% in Victoria) that consider there are more

effective mechanisms than voluntary covenants for promoting nature conservation on private land than permanent covenant.

There is a bigger proportion that hold this view in Western Australia than in Victoria.

We also find that in both States the majority of landholders are either uncertain or do not have an opinion on whether there are more effective mechanisms than voluntary covenants for promoting nature conservation on private land.

This majority is strongly correlated to a lack of familiarity with permanent covenants.

Looking at the next objective on effectiveness of a covenant for salinity control measure, we gave the statement “Permanent covenants are an effective mechanism as salinity control measure where it occurs on private land”

We find that a large proportion of landholders in WA do not consider covenants as effective mechanism for salinity control. In fact this proportion is much large than that if Victoria

Where the majority either are neutral or they do not know.

Let us now look at **Perception of covenant benefits.**

The responses to the statement ‘*The benefits of a permanent covenant are not apparent to me*’

The results clearly show the majority of respondents in both Western Australia (75.5 percent) and Victoria (76.1 percent) agree with the statement.

Table 4a. The benefits of a permanent covenant on my land are NOT apparent to me.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1. St. Agree	36	29.3	34.0	34.0
	2. Agree	44	35.8	41.5	75.5
	3. Neutral	6	4.9	5.7	81.1
	4. Disagree	13	10.6	12.3	93.4
	5. St. Disagree	4	3.3	3.8	97.2
	6. Undecided/Dk	3	2.4	2.8	100.0
	Total	106	86.2	100.0	
Missing	System	17	13.8		
Total		123	100.0		

Table 4b. The benefits of permanent covenant are NOT apparent to me.

		Frequenc y	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	St.Agree	36	25.7	26.1	26.1
	Agree	43	30.7	31.2	57.2
	Neither	21	15.0	15.2	72.5
	Disagree	22	15.7	15.9	88.4
	St.Disagree	4	2.9	2.9	91.3
	D/Know	12	8.6	8.7	100.0
	Total	138	98.6	100.0	
Missing	System	2	1.4		
Total		140	100.0		

Now let us look at **Perception of covenants in relation to their necessity for future conservation assurance.**

In response to the statement '*The nature conservation features on my land will be conserved by the management that will take over from me even without placing a permanent covenant on it*', 65% of the landholders in Western Australia agree with the statement, while a 25% of them are neutral or undecided.

In Victoria, a significantly smaller proportion (42.5 percent) than in WA agree with the statement. While a significantly larger proportion of respondents in Victoria (40.3 percent) than in WA are either neutral or they do not know.

Thus we can clearly see that **two thirds** of landholders in WA do not view permanent covenants as necessary for supporting the conservation of nature on their property as they are of the opinion that the nature conservation features will be conserved by the management that will take over from them even without placing a permanent covenant on the land. A similar view is held by almost half of the landholders in Victoria.

It is also apparent that **quarter** of landholders in WA and close to **half** in Victoria have no opinion, or are uncertain on whether the nature conservation features on their land continue to be protected by future managers even without the use of a permanent covenant.

If we look at the relations among the attitude and perception factors, in both States we find highly significant and positive relationships of landholders' view of covenant benefits and their general attitude to the uptake of a permanent covenant.

There is also a highly significant but weak negative relationship between attitude and age in Victoria, with older landholders exhibiting a more positive attitude to the possibility of a covenant uptake than younger landholders.

There is however no significant correlation between landholders' attitudes to covenant uptake and their perception on the necessity of covenants for long

term nature conservation or their perception of the relative effectiveness of permanent covenants in comparison with other mechanisms.

In contrast to Victoria, WA clearly showed a highly significant and positive relationship between landholders attitude to the uptake of a permanent covenant and their perception of the effectiveness of a covenant as a salinity control mechanism. Thus landholders that consider covenants as effective measures for salinity control have a more positive attitude to the uptake of a permanent covenant.

In WA there was no relationship between attitude to covenant uptake and age or landholders' perception.

Table 6 Correlation matrix of perception factors to the general attitude to the uptake of p. covenants

I would not consider a permanent covenant under any circumstance	Victoria		WA	
	Correlation coefficient	Significance (P-Value)	Correlation coefficient	Significance (P-value)
1. The benefits of a permanent covenant on my land are NOT apparent to me.	.431	.000	.202	.023
2. Presently, I prefer to maintain the nature conservation areas on my land WITHOUT the use of a permanent covenant.	.232	.004	.230	.011
3. Permanent covenants are an effective mechanism as salinity control measures where it occurs on private lands.	.130	.068	.374	.000
4. The nature conservation features on my land will be conserved by the management that will take over from me even WITHOUT placing a voluntary permanent covenant on it.	.058	.255	-.067	.257
5. There are more effective mechanisms other than voluntary permanent covenants for promoting the long-term nature conservation on private lands.	-.048	.292	.018	.431
6. Age categories	-.215	.007	-.069	.249

Conclusions

In conclusion we can point out the following:

Landholder attitude to covenant uptake in both Victoria and WA are positively attributed to their perceptions on the necessity of covenants, among other reasons.

In WA unlike Victoria, the perception of the necessity of a covenant as a mechanism for salinity control is strongly correlated to the likely uptake of a permanent covenant.

In Victoria, unlike WA, Age is a significant factor in the likely uptake of a permanent covenant.

In both States the perception of the relative effectiveness of permanent covenants to other conservation mechanism, and certainty or uncertainty of continued future conservation without a permanent covenant do not significantly influence their attitude on the uptake of a covenant.

What see therefore is that a quarter of the landholders in WA are strongly against the uptake of a permanent covenant on their land irrespective of the circumstances.

Another quarter is against a covenant uptake though to a less degree.

In contrast to WA, the proportion of those that are against the uptake of a permanent covenant in Victoria irrespective of the circumstances is significantly smaller.

In each State however, close to one third of the landholders are uncertain or noncommittal on their position regarding the uptake of a permanent covenant.

The larger proportion of landholders in WA than Victoria that are against the uptake of a permanent covenant may be attributed to a combination of factors some of which include a commensurate larger proportion of those that feeling permanents covenants do not have any apparent benefit, those that express confidence about future land managers' ability to maintain the nature conservation features on the land without having to employ a permanent covenant, and the large proportion of those that are against engaging in a conservation arrangement that would entail permanent restrictions on some use of the conservation land.

In both States the results also clearly show the majority of landholders do not view any apparent benefits accruing to them from the uptake of a permanent covenant, and the proportion of those that hold this view is significantly greater in Western Australia (76.5 percent) than in Victoria (57.3 percent).

We can therefore conclude that irrespective of how long covenant programs have been running in the two states, there is no distinguishing difference in the attitude of landholders that do not have any form of an agreement on their property to the uptake of a permanent covenant.

Thus, in both States the importance of outlining the benefits of a permanent covenants to landholders is clear, as demonstrated by the significantly large proportion of landholders that indicate they do not see the benefits of a covenant, and the significant and positive relationship noted between landholders' perception of covenant benefits and their attitude to the uptake of a permanent covenant.

The focus in promoting permanent covenants in both states therefore lies in the ability draw up more innovative and effective publicity strategy to convince many landholders of the benefits of the covenant, and for Western Australia the need to demonstrate how a nature conservation covenant does or would act as a measure against salinity.