



Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry on the Impacts & Trends in Soil Acidity

Ms Jenny Lindell, MP
Chair, Environment & Natural Resources
Committee
Parliament of Victoria



Terms of Reference

- Review projected social, economic and environmental impacts of soil acidity at a regional and catchment scale
- Develop recommendations to reduce the projected impact of soil acidity identifying areas for potential partnerships with industry and the community
- Identify future research and development priorities



The Committee

- Seven Members from both the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament
- Australian Labor Party, the Liberal Party and The Nationals
- Operates under the *Parliamentary Committees Act*
- Functions are to inquire into and report to the Parliament on environmental; natural resource; and land use issues



Barriers to Management

- Application of lime and planting of deep rooted perennial pastures are well established management options for acid soils
- Lack of understanding of acid soils
- Significant financial constraints



Raising Awareness

- Recommended that the Victorian Department of Primary Industries develop and deliver a comprehensive education and awareness raising program on acid soils
- Recommended that a simplified decision making support system for farmers be developed



Soil Testing

- Many farmers do not test their soils
- Increasing the awareness of farmers through soil testing has been the cornerstone of acid soil management programs interstate
- Recommended that the Victorian Department of Primary Industries negotiate the delivery of reduced cost soil testing to the regions most affected by acid soils
- Concerns about the accuracy of soil tests



Applying Lime

- Concerns were raised about the quality and labelling of agricultural lime, and landholder's understanding of lime
- Weaknesses in the regulation of agricultural lime in Victoria
- Merit in the development of national standards for agricultural lime products
- The cost of transporting lime is an important issue to farmers



Research & Development

- Measuring the costs associated with the impact of acid soils
- The implications of intensified agricultural systems on the acidification process
- The link between soil and waterway pH
- Management of acid subsoils
- Mapping of soil pH



Other Management Options

- Development of acid tolerant species
- Land use change
- Use of organic materials



Concluding Comments

- Government has six months to table a response to the Committee's report
- Landholders emphasised the need for tailored solutions to acid soils that suit individual catchments
- Need for government to be strategic