

# Media Release

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## \$150,000 can't buy love

Speaking today from her Benalla home in rural Victoria, Senate Candidate Madeleine Love, said "String of beads, bag of flour, and \$150,000 to leave the land for someone else who wants access to it. Unlike the Indigenous population 170 years ago, farmers of today know this is goodbye forever, and it isn't expected that many will take up the offer. Economic rationalism can't buy off a love", said Ms Love.

"The largest payment of \$150,000 can be made only to small-asset farms, where a significant part of the income will already be coming from off-farm sources which may not be substantially affected by the drought. This is largely a vote-buying effort", she said.

Ms Love asked "If 'farmers' do walk off their land forever, who or what is going to be using the land, and who or what will have access to the water rights belonging to the property?"

The Age reported Professor Peter Cullen of the Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists pointing to adjoining landholders as the likely purchasers of the newly vacated land.

But Ms Love said "This is not going to help the long term sustainability of the agricultural industry at all. The cashed-up adjoining landholders will simply acquire the water rights of the existing property on purchase. The new purchaser will, as before, stock or crop to capacity in the good years and suffer in a relative sense in the lean years. So what will change by this apparently tremendous act of generosity?"

Ms Love said "If any farmers actually leave, society in rural centres will be further diminished, and the cashed-up adjoining land-holders will be the beneficiaries in the good years and require subsidies in the lean years. This will do little for Australian society, nothing for the economy but it won't equate to Howard's desperate grab to gain the feel-good votes", she said.

"We cannot afford to have the same treatments that saw the forced removal of Indigenous traditional owners from their land occur again", she added. "We need long term sustainable solutions for farmers and we need native title upheld. Governments should learn from our Indigenous communities who lived sustainably on the land for 40,000 years", she said.

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