

From: [REDACTED]  
To: [vminquiry](mailto:vminquiry)  
Subject: Land Clearing Reform Bill  
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To: The Research Director  
Agriculture and Environment Committee  
Parliament House  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

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My name is Wanda (aka Vanda) Grabowski and my area of expertise lies in the area of wildlife and human interaction with a particular focus on Queensland's "vulnerable" koalas. I gained a Bachelor of Science Degree majoring in Australian Environmental Studies from Griffith University in 1993. I was honoured to be nominated a finalist in the Environment Category of the Pride of Australia Medal in 2010. I have a keen interest in providing a submission to the Bill just introduced to the Queensland Parliament to reinstate stronger tree clearing laws (*The Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016*) which has been referred to the Agriculture and Environment Parliamentary Committee for an Inquiry. My reasons for so doing include those detailed below but I also wish to contribute to the legislative process as a citizen of this state wanting to keep the very things that make Queensland such a special and wonderful place to live in. I came here from New South Wales because of the amount of native flora and fauna still remaining which had disappeared from so much of New South Wales. I wanted a lifestyle that incorporated the Queensland bush and I love it so much that I will do all that I can to help save our endemic flora and fauna.

By way of background information my introduction and love of koalas began as a volunteer carer at the Moggill Koala Hospital (MKH) from August 1993 to May 2004. I continued my volunteer work at the Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital (AZWH) in Beerwah from May 2004 till September 2013 taking care of sick, injured and orphaned koalas admitted from all over Southeast Queensland. I have been undertaking koala rescues for over ten years. All of this work has been as a volunteer.

I have become increasingly concerned about the escalating loss and fragmentation of koala habitat which is forcing koalas to the ground in search of food, shelter and dispersal opportunities. At this time they are in extreme danger of being struck by motor vehicles, attacked by domestic, wild and feral dogs and dealing with the repercussions of stress impacting their immune systems rendering them more vulnerable to the development of a range of diseases. The koala population is in serious decline all over South East Queensland and fundamentally that decline is a consequence of habitat loss and fragmentation. Queensland's faunal emblem is on the brink of extinction in many parts of this state.

I am a founding member of Koala Action Inc. (KAI) formerly named Koala Action Pine Rivers Inc. (KAPR) which began its work in 2004. KAI is 'action-based' committed to "doing" rather than paying lip service to koala conservation. A key component of our work is educating the community about the koala and the perils it faces living in close proximity to humans. KAI concentrates its activities on retaining remaining bush land habitat, rehabilitating secondary habitat to improve its carrying capacity and replanting cleared areas with koala food trees and other native trees, shrubs and grasses. KAI is also committed to supporting its koala orphan carers by facilitating the creation of koala

food tree plantations and subsidising costs related to raising koala joeys.

I am also actively involved in raising sick and injured orphaned koala joeys from my home in my own time and at my own expense. In addition, my volunteer works includes liaising with Sunshine Coast and Moreton Bay Regional Council, private enterprise and other community groups to ensure the sustainability of the koala in our region. I research, write and present papers at conferences on a range of koala related matters. As a spokesperson for Koala Action Inc. newspapers, radio and television have been utilised to encourage individuals and groups to “*retain native vegetation, rehabilitate bush land, replant koala food trees and other natives, restrain domestic animals and reduce speed on our roads when passing parks, reserves and bush land particularly at night*”.

I am a long term member of Moreton Bay Koala Rescue and have undertaken the role of Secretary for Queensland Koala Crusaders Inc. since its inception in 2012. I have held the position of President/Secretary of Koala Action Inc. for several years and continue to do so. I was also a founding member and spokesperson for the Pine Rivers Koala Care Association which began its work in 1995. As part of our interest in the care and rehabilitation of sick, injured and orphaned koalas I helped establish the Pine Rivers Koala Rescue Unit in 1999. I undertook rescue activities with the unit for over 5 years, before I resigned from the Association and the Rescue Unit at the end of 2004 due to unresolved “duty of care” and “animal welfare” issues.

In addition to the matters raised above, my concerns also relate to the impacts of tree clearing on the Great Barrier Reef and on water catchments in the region that flow into the Reef. Climate changes and the release of millions of tons of CO<sub>2</sub> from clearing is already having dramatic negative impacts on the Reef and in fact on all the natural ecosystems of this state. If something isn't done to deal with these issues sooner rather than later the human population will also be negatively impacted as it already is from heat waves, droughts, bush fires, pollution of the air, land and water.

A core component to alleviate many of these problems including the loss of native flora and fauna is the retention of remaining bush land habitat, providing resources of funding into replanting koala food trees and other native species and rehabilitating secondary bushland to increase its carrying capacity. Such efforts will also clean the air we breathe, retain the soil allowing it to remove toxins more effectively, reduce erosion and run off into our marine ecosystems and facilitate a purer water flow into creeks, rivers and catchment areas with the bonus of being able to absorb carbon dioxide from the air. Of course this isn't the only solution to many of the problems facing this country but it will make a significant difference

This Bill is an extremely positive and important component as well for the following reasons:-

1. The Bill removes the ability to get a permit to clear for so-called High Value Agriculture, and thus stop large-scale clearing of remnant woodlands.
2. The Bill restores protections for ecologically important regrowing woodlands ('High Value Regrowth') on Freehold and Aboriginal land.
3. The Bill restores protection for trees next to riverbanks ('riparian areas') and extending provisions from some to all Great Barrier Reef catchments.
4. The Bill removes the 'oops' defense of claimed mistaken clearing, and restores the *starting* presumption that a landholder is responsible for clearing that takes place on their property.

5. The Bill also makes much of the prospective legislation retrospective to 17 March, in an attempt to deter panic clearing and panic applications.

This submission is not only made on behalf of the groups mentioned above, it is also from me as an individual.

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