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Parliament House
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Dear Committee Members

RE: Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016

I write in support of the *Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016* as introduced to Parliament by the Honourable Jackie Trad MP on 17 March 2016.

I am concerned that the environmental protections of the Queensland Government, in the past few years particularly, have been inadequate and focused on short-term economic gains in development. I support the Bill to amend and improve controls on vegetation management towards more sustainable development. In particular, amendments to the Vegetation Management Act on protecting riparian zones and the 'mistake of fact' defence are important to the protection of ecosystems in Queensland.

Protecting and enhancing riparian vegetation is the simplest and cheapest approach to environmental improvement at all levels. The importance of riparian vegetation to environmental health is clearly established in the scientific community. Consequently, the removal of riparian vegetation has many negative impacts; including flooding, erosion, sedimentation, salinity, nutrient runoff, excess evaporation, invasive species proliferation, water quality, habitat loss, and many other cumulative effects. By reinstating protections to riparian vegetation the risk of these impacts will be reduced.

While growing up in Cairns and working in Cape York, I witnessed many examples of illegal land clearing using various defences similar to the present 'mistake of fact' defence. In Cairns as a child, I vividly recall remnant forest burned by 'arsons' that enabled development in previously protected areas. As an environmental officer in the Mitchell River Catchment from 2007-2010 I continued to witness clearing and burning of regrowth to downgrade the vegetation classification. The landowners expressed that they did so to keep the land from being 'locked up' from future development despite no plans to do so. I believe that the amendments to the Vegetation Management Act will improve controls on unnecessary land clearing in Queensland.

I support the *Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016* to provide some protection from land clearing.

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