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To Whom It May Concern

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

It is great to see that the Queensland Government through the proposed vegetation protection bill, appreciates the value in Queensland ecosystems and vegetation. Australia is one of 12 mega-diverse countries in the world that within them hold 70% of the world's biodiversity. I feel that Australians have a duty to protect these global resources, particularly as we are one of the few of the twelve countries who are first world and can therefore afford to protect their environment. However, this is not the case with Australia being the highest in the world for species extinctions and that is not including the current statements by renowned ecologists like Tim Flannery etc saying we are on the cusp of a new wave of extinctions if we do not protect the areas we have left.

More locally it is great to see the Queensland government appreciates the critical relationship between catchment vegetation and ocean health. The protection of Australia's national economic and ecological asset, the Great Barrier Reef means longevity of \$5.2 billion income (based on 2011-2012 figures). One of the main attractions for international tourists to choose Australia as a holiday destination is the reef.

"A high proportion of the value-added and employment generated emanates from tourism activity, with almost \$5.2 billion in value added and about 64,000 FTEs generated by the tourism sector."

Deloitte Access Economics (2013) *Economic contribution of the Great Barrier Reef*, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Townsville.

I mention economics first as I regretfully assume that the protection of species for their intrinsic value has not been high on the Australian political agenda. However, I believe that species deserve protection as they indicate that the ecosystem is functioning healthily and we are part of that ecosystem.

In addition, whether you believe in climate change or not, the loss of the amount of vegetation that has been cleared from Australia, and continues to be cleared, undoubtable has an impact on local climate, local water tables, local river and wetland health, soil quality etc. Whilst these are complex issues and difficult for people to grasp, the fact that fixing them

once they are broken is significantly more expensive than protecting them, and how to fix them is currently beyond our ken, is more obvious.

The details which are good

- Removes the ability to get a permit clear for so-called High Value Agriculture, and thus stop large-scale clearing of remnant woodlands.
- Restores protections for ecologically important regrowing woodlands ('High Value Regrowth') on freehold and Aboriginal land.
- Restores protections for trees next to riverbanks ('riparian areas') and extending provisions from some to all Great Barrier Reef catchments.
- Removes the 'oops' defence of claimed mistaken clearing, and restores the *starting* presumption that a landholder is responsible for clearing that takes place on their property.
- It makes much of the prospective legislation retrospective to 17 March, in an attempt to deter panic clearing and panic applications.

Areas of concern/improvement

- Exemptions for fire. Currently fire is being used as an excuse for landowners to clear large areas of public land ie along roadsides, adjacent to national parks etc. This is of great concern as many of these areas are the only examples of that vegetation community that is left. Additionally, the role in vegetation strips and slowing wind velocities etc is not fully appreciated. Clearing on the landowner's side to protect their own assets is a more viable option.
- Clearing areas of under 5 hectares falls to local government. Local government claims often to be under-resourced to police these regulations. With that in mind local government need very clear and easy to use powers and regulatory tools to help enforce these small but collectively large losses of vegetation.
- 'Consistent with the purposes of the lease, clearing conducted under a self-assessable vegetation clearing code.' This seems very general as opposed to more specific and measurable requirements such as 'there should be no loss of vegetation that is rare or threatened', 'any vegetation clearing must be referred to council if under 5 hectares'.
- Self-assessment in my experience does not work and is very open to interpretation.
- Clearing for fencing and tracks. The onus should be for the landowner or government department to prove that it is necessary and there are no other alternatives. For example, in our local national park a bridge was no longer able to support the weight of a fire truck. Solution, construct a new road. The cost of construction and ongoing management of a new road is very significant never mind the loss of vegetation and resultant runoff to waterways. Hence justify reasoning.

Yours sincerely

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