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Research Director
Agriculture and Environment Committee
Parliament House
BRISBANE QLD 4000

11th April 2016

Dear Committee,

I am expressing my concerns about the proposed amended tree clearing laws .

As a bulldozer contractor working primarily in the agriculture sector, these amended tree clearing laws will affect my business in the future. It's not only my business, agriculture businesses and other small businesses in our North Burnett area will also be affected.

The tree clearing laws that LNP introduced was working fine. The self assessment laws are easy to follow and I can do my job associated with the laws. Farmers have been working from these laws and have not been destroying the land as reported over the last year. These farmers are clearing areas that have been previously cleared because they're losing their land due to the vegetation regrowth that is happening on their properties.

The tree clearing that my business has done over the last couple of years has been clearing regrowth. The farmers are losing their farming production because the regrowth has rapidly taken over their farming land since the wet weather we have encountered for the last six to seven years. The regrowth that I have cleared is so thick that the land is becoming invaluable.

One primary producer was unable to stock his farm to its potential because of the regrowth of trees. So this certain farmer has cleared his country as according to the tree clearing laws and now he can start restocking his farm. This was not a cheap exercise for him. By the time he cleared the regrowth and replanted with grass, gradually restocking, he was out of pocket by \$60,000. He is hoping the get a return in the future.

Last year one farmer spent over \$100,000 with my business wet hiring my bulldozers. This included clearing regrowth vegetation, earth dams and stick raking. This amount of money would not have been spent if the amended tree clearing laws were introduced.

This is just an example of two farmers who are trying to continue sustainable farming in Queensland. Our farmers who we contract to are very sensible in clearing their farms. They don't want to cause land problems by wiping out all the trees. The farmers we do business with do not rape the land of trees or vegetation.

They see the sense in clearing areas for grazing and other areas are left because it is not worth spending the money on clearing areas that are not viable and these areas do not produce anything for them. 95% of my tree clearing is regrowth. I have not cleared any grazing areas that have harmed the environment.

My other concern about the new amendment is clearing in watercourses. This amendment makes it impossible to make a dam. To construct an earth dam the area needs to be cleared of all vegetation. The area cleared is only where the dam is being constructed not in the back up water area. If this area is not cleared then the dam cannot be built. Dams have to be constructed in watercourses otherwise there is no water catchment.

Most farmers who build dams in the Mary Burnett catchment area try to have a sustainable water supply for the dry times. With the droughts always looming, farmers I contract to are building dams that will supply water for their stock for a minimum three years. If the new laws change to no clearing in riverine areas then farmers will not be able to sustain a good supply of water, hence I will not be building any dams, so no work for my business in the future.

I have already had some of my bulldozer work squashed because of the introducing of this amended bill being tabled. If the amended bill was introduced two years ago, 95% of my bulldozer work would not have happened and I would not have been able to employ anyone. Whilst I was selectively clearing regrowth grazing land, I employed locals in my area. This is good for our economy in our area.

If I am limited to wet hiring my bulldozers in the agriculture sector then other businesses in my area will suffer. Central Queensland businesses will not get sales from my business. This equates to spare parts to number of businesses, freight for the dozers, freight on parts and the list goes on. Also as I have already mentioned I will not be able to employ anyone to operate my dozers.

My biggest concerns of clearing trees are the suburbs. The developers seem to be able to clear in Koala habitats and not leave one tree standing or leave a few. If I do come across any special wildlife in an area to be cleared this area is left for the wildlife. I investigate the area with the farmer and then we work out how much of an area should be left the wildlife in the area. This is not known by scientists or conservation groups because they don't bother asking.

If these amended laws are introduced I will have to think seriously of selling or downsizing my business as it will be unprofitable to keep my business as it is now. I am really concerned that I will not be able to keep my business running in the future.

The tree clearing laws that are in place now are working fine. My customers the farmers are not over clearing as reported in the media. They are trying to keep their farming land viable hence keeping my business viable. When I read in the Country Life paper over 400,000ha of vegetation is standing and increasing and approx. 350,000ha of vegetation is cleared. This is not over clearing. As usual the conservation groups don't report the full truth. They are only promote scare campaigns.

Our small community will suffer if these new amendments are introduced. I do hope some common sense and more investigation is done and the outcome is for the agriculture or anyone associated with the land.

Summing up. I am clearing regrowth vegetation only so the farmers can keep making their farms profitable in the future so they can feed the people in our own country and also the world. Please remember, if farmers are not allowed to clear or very limited to clear any of their farming land in the future, Queensland farmers and businesses like myself will not be operating. Hence the economy in Queensland will be compromised.

Your sincerely
Ewen Hendren