

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [vminquiry](#)  
**Subject:** Submission to the Inquiry into the Queensland land clearing reform Bill  
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Research Director  
Agriculture and Environment Committee  
Parliament House  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Research Director

I am writing to express my support for tighter and more effective land clearing laws. Currently the Vegetation Management Act is ineffective at protecting native vegetation and biodiversity, as is evident by the rate of loss of native vegetation and habitat across Queensland. I believe the proposed legislative changes will go some of the way to reducing land clearing if they are properly implemented and policed.

Research shows that since the Newman Government weakened the Vegetation Management Act, land clearing has occurred at unprecedented and unsustainable rates. And not just in the exempt prime agricultural land, but also in areas not covered by exemptions (eg land not suitable for crop production). Evidence also suggests that very little government action has been undertaken against those undertaking such illegal land clearing activities.

It greatly saddens me to see the last remnants of Queensland's once vibrant vegetation and natural environment being quickly whittled down to the point of virtually no return. We are at the point where entire ecosystems are being permanently demolished.

Strengthening the vegetation management laws will provide an opportunity to prevent species extinction, reduce erosion and sediment runoff, protect the reef, protect Queensland's nature-based tourism industry, and reduce Australia's contribution to climate change.

The current proposed changes will be beneficial because:

- 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.

However I feel more could be done, for example by:

- Including existing urban areas and new urban development areas under the Vegetation Management Act (such land uses have always been exempt under the VMA) - New developments are currently being cleared of all native mature trees, which makes them

devoid of shade, birds and nature, resulting in unattractive and unhealthy urban environments.

- Protecting revegetation projects - Government/private funds spent on revegetation activities should not be put at risk of land clearing in the future.
- Removing offsets associated with the removal of threatened/endangered ecosystems and/or threatened/endangered species habitat, purely because such ecosystems should be protected outright. Offsetting such threatened environments is ineffective because revegetating with saplings in another locations ~~can not~~ replace the mature habitat – koalas can not live in a 1m high saplings.

Overall I would like to express my support for the proposed changes to the Vegetation Management Act, in addition to my suggestions for additional improvements.

Sincerely

Karen Toms

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