

**SUBMISSION TO:**  
**Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation**  
**Amendment Bill 2016**

**SUBMISSION COVER SHEET**

**Closing date for submissions is 25 April 2016.**

Please complete and submit this form with your submission to:

**Email:**  
 vminquiry@parliament.qld.gov.au

**Post:** **Fax:** 07 3553 6699

Research Director  
 Agriculture and Environment  
 Committee  
 Parliament House  
 BRISBANE QLD 4000

<b>Organisation or individual:</b>	Trafalgar Pastoral Company		
<b>Principal contact:</b>	Roger Landsberg		
<b>Position:</b>	Owner/Manager		
<b>Telephone:</b>	[REDACTED]	<b>Fax:</b>	[REDACTED]
<b>Mobile:</b>	[REDACTED]		
<b>Email address:</b>	[REDACTED]		
<b>Street address:</b>	[REDACTED]		
<b>Suburb/City:</b>	[REDACTED]	<b>State:</b>	[REDACTED]
		<b>Postcode:</b>	[REDACTED]
<b>Postal address:</b>	[REDACTED]		
<b>Suburb/City:</b>	Charters Towers	<b>State:</b>	QLD
		<b>Postcode:</b>	4820

Is all or part of your submission confidential?    Yes, all ☐    Yes, part ☐    No ☒

If part, please identify which sections are confidential:

Reason for confidentiality:

## BACKGROUND

Roger Landsberg and his partner Jenny own and manage the family property [REDACTED] 60 kms south west of Charters Towers which has been in the family since 1913. Another property, [REDACTED] near Moura in central QLD was purchased in 2015. Two of their five children are also currently involved fulltime in the family business. A third generation beef producer, Roger is passionate about sustainable management and has been a keen advocate in this field since 1986. As the inaugural chairman of Dalrymple Landcare Committee, the first Landcare committee in an extensive grazing area in Australia and subsequent sub-catchment groups, Roger and others set about identifying solutions to land degradation issues in North QLD. Roger has trialled and adopted many management practices that have led to increased production benefits with improved environmental outcomes.

He has been a member of various CSIRO, MLA, JCU and QDPI advisory committees and is the recently retired chair of the North QLD Beef Research Committee and a past member of the North Australia Beef Research Council. Roger also served on the QLD Landcare Council and was a member of the Tropical Savannas CRC Advisory panel. Roger received the QLD Land and Water Carers Primary Producer of the Year Award in 2009 and was a National Landcare Primary Producer finalist in 2010. A latecomer to formal study, Roger graduated in 2010 with a Graduate Diploma in Rangeland Management from Rangelands Australia at UQ Gatton.

## SUBMISSION

I provide my submission in support of the continuation of the Current Vegetation Management Act 1999 and rejection of the changes proposed in the Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 ("the Bill").

My main concern with the Bill is that its introduction in the Queensland Parliament on 17<sup>th</sup> March represents yet another variation to the Vegetation Management Framework, which has been amended over 18 times since its introduction in 1999. This constant change in legislation severely impacts on the ability of farm managers to plan and implement effective long-term property and business management decisions. Ecological processes work in much longer timeframes and can be severely compromised when mismatching, constantly changing regulations are enforced. Farmers have long called for certainty with the vegetation management regulatory framework. With the Bill being introduced with over 86% of Queensland in drought conditions, I am totally opposed to continued uncertainty and the inability to control the long-term sustainability of my business and the grazing industry in general.

In providing this submission I refer directly to the key provisions of the legislation which the 2016 Bill intends to amend and to which I believe I have the scientific and experiential evidence to prove that the legislation should remain in its current form.

## 1. Self Assessable Clearing Codes

Woody thickening, predominantly eucalypt seedlings and suckers, some acacia species and native shrubs such as currant bush (*Carissa ovata*), has become a major concern in the north QLD region. Anecdotal observations from graziers are supported by documented reports (Krull *et al*, 2007) indicate increasing tree density in 64% of the sites monitored in the Burdekin region. The reduction of historical burning practices is attributed to be a major cause (Krull & Bray, 2005, Sharp and Whittaker, 2003, Grice and Slatter, 1997, Hodgkinson *et al*, 1984). Trees compete with grass for moisture and nutrients altering the tree/grass balance. Enhanced atmospheric CO<sup>2</sup> fertilisation also exacerbates the problem (Krull *et al*, 2007). This reduces grass production therefore adversely affecting country carrying capacity (Harrington *et al*, 1984) and fuel availability.

If adjustments are not made to reduce stocking rates or tree cover, pasture species composition and density and groundcover is reduced. Continual overgrazing eventually leads to landscape dysfunction from the loss of patches that promote moisture infiltration to the soil. Floral and faunal biodiversity is also affected (Ludwig *et al*, 1997, Grice and Slatter, 1997). Increasing tree density also hampers visibility and stock movement increasing mustering costs.

Land condition is defined as the capacity of grazing land to respond to rain and produce useful forage. Good land condition has a healthy coverage of 3P grasses that ensure water is used effectively, while poor land condition is characterised by a sparse cover of 3P grasses, low water infiltration and high runoff and reduced forage growth. (Ash *et al*, 2002)

On most northern Australian grazing properties the most productive land is that adjacent to major streams where alluvial soils are located. This is commonly known as frontage country. Historically, paddocks have been fenced so that animals could access the water and productive country, so fences were at right angles to the stream. As the frontage is relatively narrow, the paddock usually consisted of a number of different soil types. As the other soil types were of lesser quality than the alluvial soils, the animals would favour the riparian and frontage pastures which led to the overgrazing of that soil type, although the total carrying capacity of the paddock was within sustainable limits.

Although prescribed burning was carried out on a regular basis prior to the 1980's, the alluvial soils tended to not burn evenly or at all, allowing eucalypt and shrub seedlings to grow uninhibited. The tussock grasses on these soil types are fire tolerant, but require 1500 – 2000kg/ha of fuel load to be effective in controlling woody recruitment (Hodgkinson *et al*, 1984). The uneven burning or mostly lack of fire following major recruitment events in the 70's and 90's has now seen most of those seedlings reach heights >3m, which is beyond the ability of fire to have an effect (Dyer *et al*, 2001). In the worst affected areas on "Trafalgar" carrying capacity has declined from approximately 4ha/AE to 10ha/AE.

Due to decreasing profit margins in the grazing industry, producers are not using fire as a land management tool because of the need to utilise the forage base for grazing cattle. A more strategic approach is required to control woody growth as a substitute for fire. The current Self Assessable Thinning codes are adequate for this purpose and allow the thinning of woody seedlings without damage to other vegetation and the risk of wildfire. Because of the highly prescribed rules applying to the current self-assessable codes there is little or no chance of over

clearing occurring, but penalties apply in cases of misdemeanour.

## References

Ash, A.J., Ksiksi, T. and Corfield, J. (2002) *The Ecograz Project: developing guidelines to better manage grazing country*. CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems, Townsville.

Dyer, R., Jacklyn, P., Russell-Smith, J. And Willams, D. (2001) Using Fire to Manage Pastures. *Savanna Burning: understanding and using fire in northern Australia*. Tropical Savannas CRC publications. Pp. 54, 56, 58, 60-62, 64-66, 69-70, 72-73, 75-76, 78-79.

Grice, A.C. and Slatter, S.M. (1997) Fire in the management of northern Australia pastoral lands. *Tropical Grassland Society of Australia*, Brisbane. Occasional Publication No. 8, pp. 24 – 36.

Harrington, G.N., Wilson, A.D. and Young, M.D. (1984) Vegetation Ecology and Management. *Management of Australia's Rangelands*. CSIRO Publishing, Australia. Pp 51 -54.



Hodgkinson, K.C., Harrington, G.N., Griffin, G.F., Noble, J.C. and Young, M.D. (1984) Management of Vegetation with Fire. *Management of Australia's Rangelands*. CSIRO Australia, pp. 141 – 151, 155.

Krull, E., Bray, S., Harms, B., Baxter, N., Bol, R. and Farquhar, G. (2007) Development of a stable isotope index to assess decadal-scale vegetation change and application to woodlands of the Burdekin catchment, Australia. *Global Change Biology* 13, pp 1455–1468.

Krull, E.S. and Bray, S.G. (2005) Assessment of vegetation change and landscape variability by using stable carbon isotopes of soil organic matter. *Australian Journal of Botany*, 53, 651– 661.

Ludwig, J., Tongway, D., Freudenberger, D., Noble, J. and Hodgkinson, K. (1997) *Landscape and Ecology: Function and Management*. Principles from Australia's Rangelands. CSIRO Publishing, Australia.

Sharp, B.R. and Whittaker, R.J. (2003) The irreversible cattle-driven transformation of a seasonally flooded Australian savanna. *Journal of Biogeography*, 30, 783–802.

Signed:	
Address:	 CHARRLES TOWERS B. 4820
Date:	15/4/2016.