

16 April 2016

Research Director
Agriculture and Environment Committee
Parliament House
BRISBANE QLD 4000
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Dear Chair and Committee Members

Submission to Committee on Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016

As Brisbane City Council's first environment officer we introduced the first vegetation controls for the City back in 1988. Back then the city was clearing 'three football fields a day' of bushland and wetlands and we convinced government that it was unsustainable and it was possible to control it and still have development. I am disheartened and very concerned at the return of broadscale clearing rates in the State back to the record levels we had in the 1990s prior to the Vegetation Management Act (and the panic clearing phase). We cleared 300,000ha in 2013-14, totally senseless in this time of carbon sequestration and under-utilisation of much of our already cleared land.

Why are we still clearing in such uncontrolled and unsustainable ways as our means of managing our beautiful, diverse multi-functional and productive Queensland landscapes.

Urgent action is needed to reinstate the Vegetation Management frameworks we had in place prior to the previous Government, essentially including updated vegetation assessment maps so the correct classifications are in place and funding to ensure close monitoring and effective enforcement and prosecution where needed.

We need to work with all sides of the political spectrum to make sure that the brakes are put on this runaway clearing. Recognising this the reinstatement at its most basic must:

- Mapping must map and classify the high values in Qld vegetation including koalas, regrowth, riparian vegetation particularly in significant catchments and moving more towards the protection of a comprehensive, adequate and representative vegetation system across the State.
- Deal with the problem of the loophole that exists under the clearing approvals for 'high value agriculture'. For example extensive grazing is not high value agriculture. This loophole has to be closed along with the inadequate provisions for control of clearing under the rationale of 'thinning'
- Concurrence agency status must be reinstated, and relevant legislation at State (mining, planning) and Federal levels needs to align with the Vegetation Management Reinstatement Act's objectives and measures.

The second area of reform is the administration of the Act and ensuring adequate funds (and polluter / offender pays principle applies) for mapping, groundtruthing, monitoring and enforcement.

I would like the opportunity to appear before the Committee in their hearing into this inquiry.

Yours sincerely

Mary Maher

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