

From: [Jill Fechner](#)
To: [vminquiry](#)
Subject: SUBMISSION in support of new Vegetation Management Laws.
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Agriculture and Environment Committee

Parliament House

BRISBANE QLD 4000

vminquiry@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

I am writing in support of the Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (VMROLA Bill) currently under consideration by the committee.

This Bill reverses damaging changes to the Vegetation Management Act or VMA made by the previous government in 2013. As a result of those changes land clearing rates have been rapidly increasing after a long period of decline. WWF reports that over 200,000 ha of habitat for threatened species has been cleared in the period 2012-14. Clearing of remnant bushland nearly doubled in the year after the changes of 2013.

I care strongly about Australian native wildlife who lose their habitat and their lives due to escalating land clearing. I am a member of Wildcare Australia and we are seeing an increased number of Koalas killed on roads or found on the ground in such emaciated condition due to tree clearing in the south east corner that they have to be euthanized.

According to the Queensland Auditor General "land cleared in reef catchments increased by 229 per cent, from 31 000 ha per year in 2008–09 to 102 000 ha per year in 2013–14." Land clearing pollutes the Reef by disturbing soil, increasing runoff and erosion.

Greenhouse emissions have risen to more than 6% of Australia's total emissions. This is counter to the purposes of the Act to conserve remnant vegetation, prevent the loss of biodiversity, prevent land degradation and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Climate change and also ocean acidification caused by excessive emissions are major threats to the Reef as the recent mass coral bleaching crisis makes clear.

I care strongly about the Reef and am very concerned that land clearing is damaging the Reef through increasing water pollution and increasing greenhouse gas emissions.

The VMROLA bill restores regulation of clearing of high value regrowth on freehold land, removed by the previous government. The regrowth losing protection was more than 20 years old, and contained endangered ecosystems, essential habitat for threatened species, watercourse and wetland protection buffers and slopes vulnerable to erosion. Such important bushland should be protected regardless of land tenure. Restoration of regulation of high value regrowth is critically important to the Act's purpose to prevent the loss of biodiversity, prevent land and water degradation and reduce greenhouse emissions.

The VMROLA bill restores the 2006 ban on broadscale clearing, which was reversed by the previous government for so-called High Value Agriculture. The reversal of this ban saw over 112,000 ha of remnant bushland approved to be cleared, which would end up polluting waterways and nearshore marine habitats including the Great Barrier Reef. Nearly all of this now condemned bushland is habitat for threatened species. The high value agriculture provision goes against the Act's purpose to conserve remnant vegetation, prevent loss of biodiversity and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The VMROLA bill restores the capacity of the government to prosecute illegal clearing. The Department of Natural Resources attributed some of the recent resurgence of land clearing to the reduction in enforcement under the previous government. Effective laws need effective capacity to prosecute those that break them.

The VMROLA bill restores the requirement for a permit under the Water Act to clear trees within the stream bed, also removed by the previous government. VMROLA bill also expands regulation of clearing of regrowth in 50m buffer zones around watercourses to all Great Barrier Reef catchments. Land clearing particularly around or in watercourses is rightly recognised by the Auditor General and Reef scientists as a major negative impact on water quality and the Great Barrier Reef. These provisions of the Bill are critically important to the Act's purpose to prevent the loss of biodiversity, and prevent land and water degradation.

The reinstatement of effective land clearing laws is also a promise by the Queensland Government to UNESCO, and a major reason why UNESCO didn't list the Great Barrier Reef as endangered last year. This Bill substantially delivers on that promise to the world to protect the Reef.

I support each of these particular changes proposed in this Bill. I support the Bill because I believe it will restore stronger controls over land clearing, and so prevent further harm to the Reef and to native wildlife.

Yours sincerely,

Jill Fechner

, Browns Plains QLD 4118, Australia