



Research Director
Agriculture and Environment Committee
Parliament House
BRISBANE QLD 4000

20-4-2016

vm inquiry@parliament.qld.gov.a

Dear Committee,

Re: Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016

Cotton Australia submits two recommendations to the Committee.

- 1. The Bill be rejected in its current form.***
- 2. The Committee recommend to the government that they lead an open constructive consultation process on the Vegetation Management Bill.***

Cotton Australia is the peak body representing the interest of approximately 600 Queensland cotton growers, whose annual cotton production contributes approximately \$1 billion (farm-gate) to the Queensland economy.

Cotton Australia is a proud member of the Queensland Farmers Federation (QFF) and endorses the QFF submission to this inquiry.

Cotton Australia is very concerned that the government did not consult with the agricultural sector and key stakeholders before the Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 was tabled and as it stands, Cotton Australia asserts that the Queensland Government has not considered critical concerns from the sector.

Accordingly, Cotton Australia submits to the Committee that it recommends to the Queensland Parliament that the Bill be rejected outright.

Cotton Australia wishes to engage in a genuine discussion on vegetation management reform but does not believe there is a willingness by the major political parties and other key stakeholders to do so under the current circumstances. We therefore, call upon the Committee to recommend to the government that they lead open and constructive consultation on vegetation management to achieve a position that will lead to long term stability.

The Committee must understand that vegetation management is a critical issue for Cotton Australia and its members; the brevity of this submission is not an indicator of relative importance. This submission is short, because the issue is too important to be debated in an atmosphere of political theatre.



Advancing Australian Cotton

Cotton Australia has very real concerns about a number of aspects of this Bill, and the impact it will have on the rights of landholders and the opportunity to stimulate the economic development and the growth of jobs in rural and regional Queensland.

Cotton Australia provides the following commentary on two key concerns, although it must be stressed that they do not encompass all concerns

- *Removal of the High Value Agriculture and High Value Irrigated Agriculture clearing permit provisions.* Given the government's recent decision to make in excess of 300,000 megalitres of additional irrigation water entitlement available, it does not make sense to deny this pathway for agricultural development. For a variety of reasons including urban development and resource industry expansion, the State's availability of highly productive land is decreasing, and HVA and HVIA provisions provide a highly regulated way of ensuring sustainable development of new agricultural land. The ability of irrigated land to generate profit and boost economic activity is well documented.
- *Removal of Mistake of Fact Defence.* Cotton Australia has undertaken a cursory review of the digital mapping which is integral to the vegetation management framework in Queensland. It is clear, even from this basic review that the quality of mapping is poor, and on this basis alone it would be a travesty of justice to remove the "Mistake of Fact" defence, which could see landholders incarcerated solely due to the inadequacy of the mapping.

Finally, Cotton Australia would like to emphasise that it is willing to enter into honest and open discussions regarding vegetation management reform, but these discussions cannot commence while both sides of politics are polarised and disinclined to genuinely engage in this critical debate.

For further information please contact Michael Murray [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]
Michael Murray,
General Manager,
Cotton Australia