

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:

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vminquiry@parliament.qld.gov.au**Post:** **Fax:** 07 3553 6699Research Director
Agriculture and Environment
Committee
Parliament House
BRISBANE QLD 4000**Organisation or individual:** L and JM Martin**Principal contact:** Leonard Martin**Position:** Owner**Telephone:****Fax:****Mobile:****Email address:****Street address:****Suburb/City:**

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As above

Suburb/City:**State:****Postcode:****Is all or part of your
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Yes, all

☐

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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 overriding issue with the Bill is that its introduction in the Queensland Parliament on 17th 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 when farmers are on their knees with over 86% of Queensland in drought conditions, it should come as no surprise that I am totally opposed to continued uncertainty and attacks on the viability of myself, the long-term sustainability of my business as well as attacks on fellow farmers.

Most of us are 'greener' than the Greens but are depicted as 'black' by political groups with no integrity but a desire to mislead the ignorance of the majority by telling half the story e.g tree coverage in Queensland has increased by 437,000 hectares over 3 years (2012-2014) –refer to Queensland Government's Land cover and Tree study. Trees are growing at a faster rate than they are being managed . This information is being conveniently omitted from press releases for (what I believe is) political gain.

This is an attempt by the current Queensland Government to re-introduce their draconian vegetation management laws.

In providing this submission I refer directly to the key provisions of the legislation which the 2016 Bill intends to amend.

<p>1. Removing High Value Agriculture and Irrigated High Value Agriculture from the Vegetation Management Framework</p>

<p>The removal of High Value Agriculture (HVA) and irrigated HVA (IHVA) affects farmers in regions differently, with those in the north particularly hard hit. Throughout northern Queensland energy and protein become limiting in cattle diets during the dry season and this can cause farmers issues with stock survival and welfare through years of drought. HVA and IHVA permits provide farmers in northern Queensland with the opportunity to grow fodder and grain for supplementing in the dry season and finishing off stock for market.</p>

<p>The removal of HVA and IHVA is in direct conflict with the Australian Government White Paper</p>

on the Development of Northern Australia. A current example of this is \$220 million being spent to upgrade roads to communities across Cape York, but Queensland State Government Vegetation Management Framework is preventing indigenous and non-indigenous land holders from developing agriculture projects.

In central and southern Queensland, HVA and IHVA provides opportunity for farmers to drought-proof properties and stabilise production and income over variable climatic and market conditions. Sustainable clearing for relatively small pockets of high value agriculture enable agricultural production to improve continuity of supply to food processors and meet the increasing requirements of international markets and Australia's Free Trade Agreements.

Indigenous development is particularly compromised by the re-inclusion of High Value Regrowth (HVR) as well as the stripping of the right to develop traditional lands as HVA or IHVA. For example, Indigenous landowners on the Gilbert River in northern Queensland preparing to submit IHVA applications have now been denied the possibility of stabilising beef production and employing community labour on their properties.

I request that you base your debate on this matter with real data and science.

Any intelligent person who 'really cares' about the environment would enlist the support of the people who at heart currently manage a big portion of Queensland and have the ability to make a difference as they consider the environment every day.

2. Re-introducing Reverse Onus-of-Proof

The inclusion of Reverse Onus of Proof in Queensland Government's Vegetation Management Framework is a direct affront to the rights and liberties of farmers. Reverse Onus relegates farmers clearing vegetation to a level below that of criminals, where they are denied common justice under Section 24 of the Criminal Code: Mistake of fact. In Queensland not only are farmers presumed guilty until they are proven innocent, but they are refused the possibility of making a mistake.

This is 'bastardry' because murderers and rapists are innocent until proven guilty in a Court of Law. Within the current circumstances we are guilty until we prove our innocence against the whole power of the State.

3. That no compensation will be payable to HVA, IHVA and Property Map of Assessable Vegetation (PMAV) applicants during transitional arrangements

The proposal that compensation will not be available for HVA, IHVA or PMAV applicants during the Bill transition period may be a tactic to prevent panic clearing, but the implications for

compensation for vegetation management in the broader sense are quite alarming.

With the cessation of broad scale land-clearing, compensation for landholders to offset opportunity cost, lost development potential and decreased property value has been a critical omission from the Vegetation Management Regulatory Framework. The issue of compensation has been debated heavily by federal and state legislators, however a precedent was set by the Beattie Government in 2004 with provision of \$150 million over 5 years to offset landholder losses due to the removal of their rights to clear. This however was a copout with the funds unable to provide effective recompense for opportunity costs incurred, despite prior assessment undertaken for the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry in 2003. In 2004, there was no doubt considerable rejoicing by the Queensland Government who boasted of compensating carbon dioxide abatement for less than \$1 a tonne!

In the 2016 Bill transition period the situation is quite different to what it was in 2004. The threat to remove HVA and IHVA from farmers' potential to develop property provides considerable grounds for compensation, particularly for those that have structured investments and farm management activities to take advantage of HVA/IHVA in the near future. Also HVA/IHVA has attracted far greater interest in northern Queensland, with large swathes of marginal beef production areas provided the opportunity of growing supplementary feed to overcome the protein drought in the dry season.

The 2003 Commonwealth study mentioned above did not include north or west Queensland Local Government Areas and consequently grossly underestimated the areas to be considered for compensation. Another change since 2004 is the free market recognition of the value of carbon abatement with the recent auction of the Emissions Reduction Fund selling carbon at \$12.25 per tonne. The Queensland State Government needs to recognise the fact that they are robbing the rights of farmers to develop productive HVA/IHVA land sustainably and that the area for development and value for carbon are much greater than they were in 2004.

I believe that introducing HVR is an additional layer, that impacts negatively on our producers while meeting international treaties such as the Kyoto Agreement.

4. Including High Value Regrowth as an additional layer of regulation under the Vegetation Management Framework on leasehold, freehold and indigenous land

The re-inclusion of High Value Regrowth (HVR) as an additional layer of regulation on leasehold, freehold and indigenous land is an overt grab by Queensland Government in search of targets for meeting international treaties such as the Kyoto Protocol and more recently the 2015 Paris Climate Deal. In 2009 when initially introduced, this HVR layer was prepared hastily in a 'desk-top' mapping exercise with associated errors including areas of non-native vegetation (such as orchards) and bare earth. In preliminary investigations of several properties it appears that the accuracy of the 2016 HVR is no better than that in 2009.

If the free market places a value of \$12.25 per tonne on carbon, what is the estimated dollar value of "High Value Regrowth" and where is the Queensland Government's recompense for

farmers and indigenous land holders?

I envisage a significant cost of production in food and fibre and a threatened further supply reduction in time to come. We must focus on facts. Tree coverage has increased in 51 out of 77 Councils in Queensland, especially in the far North and North-west. Why should these producers be penalized?

5. Increasing Category R vegetation to include the Burdekin, Mackay, Whitsunday and Wet Tropics Great Barrier Reef catchments and additional catchments Burnett Mary, Eastern Cape York and Fitzroy.

This increase in Category R provisions is a further restriction on development in Northern Queensland, which is in stark contrast to the development imperatives contained with the White Paper on Developing Northern Australia.

The science is completely unproven on the necessity to include ≥ 50 metre buffers along streamlines. In fact, a study conducted in Queensland and published in 2016 shows that grass is a far better assimilator for nitrogen to prevent leaching into waterways. The current bleaching of the Great Barrier Reef is not caused by high nutrient runoff from agricultural lands.

6. Other matters relevant to the Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 that the review committee should consider appropriate and worth some consideration

Examples of the Government ignorance of real environmental knowledge and values are not hard to find, when we consider Veg Management.

As Primary Producers who own gum country, which adjoins the most pristine gum forest in the state, we are rather experienced with Fire management for over 50 years.

Their National Park Fire management was such that their staff 'played with' a fire for one month from 8.00 am to 5.00pm until it 'jumped' into us on a weekend. Our Bush Brigade managed to control it by working all night until 11.00am next day. This was not bad for the people who are not trusted to look after the environment, because, apparently, we have a vested interest in raping and pillaging our land for our advantage! That National Park now bears the scars of mismanagement as does a portion of our land where their fire came into us during the heat of the day. In some places the wattle is so thick that it is hard to penetrate by man or beast. This is very galling for an old Fire Warden who has been fighting other people's fires since he was a boy.

Please note that our flora and fauna within our Veg Management have little protection from a hot fire in the middle of the day.

Governments appear to have an insatiable thirst for more National Parks, but currently are

unable to provide the manpower with the knowledge to manage these large tracts of land.

Weed and Pest management are all part of Vegetation Management. Unfortunately weeds such as tree pear, lantana, harissea cactus, lippea and many others have been spreading along our Stock Routes with little or no control and are now entering our National Parks. Our droughts and kangaroos are also components of Veg Management. De-graded pastures that are locked up for re-generation now are eaten by 10 times our former roo population.

Maybe governments should be encouraging the landholders, who are very aware of their Veg Management, to continue to do what they do well and provide better management in the National Parks and Forestries for which they (ie Government) is responsible. We envisage our existing National Parks being destroyed within 50 years if such inept management continues.

We live here because we love our environment. We try to nurture it while eeking out an existence inspite of Government not because of Government.

Signed:	Leonard Martin
Address:	[REDACTED],
Date:	21.04.2016