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Earlville, Cairns
Queensland, 4870

To the Agriculture and Environment Committee,

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

The state of affairs in Queensland regarding further proposed changes to the *Vegetation Management Act 1989* (the *Sustainable Planning Act 2009*, the *Water Act 2000*, and the *Environmental Offsets Act 2014*) is concerning me greatly. I have always been a believer in the future of our country and in the role that bush producers can play in achieving a brighter economic future. Both these things need one thing to eventuate and that is for the government(s) to provide the capacity for such growth.

Farmers use the land every day of their lives and many of their families have done so for decades. These are skilled and qualified people who both know what they are doing and what is best for their area of land.

Farmers, including graziers, rely on the sustainability and health of the environment as the fundamental factor to successfully producing food and other produce. It is against their very nature as twenty four/seven professionals to do anything to harm their prospects.

Tree clearing has been an emotive topic for many years and as such it has been leant to being over-exaggerated in some cases. All farmers are facing droughts and subsequently dwindling numbers of livestock and as such cattle can often be a rather thankless industry to pursue- especially in tough economic times. Changing the use of their land into cropping is already difficult enough with tenure laws and astronomical associated fees. However clearing an appropriate area of land to give farmers their best shot at remaining viable and to produce food for the rest of us should take precedence. Much of the private land where tree clearing applications are proposed are all formerly used by cattle or other industries. This stands to reason that these areas are not pristine and considering this I believe farmers already do enough to appease those with environmental concerns during the application process to clear land and change their land use as it is. For example, all stations experience back burning as a measure of safety for their homesteads, livestock and to also encourage fresh regrowth for their cattle to feed. Much of the land under application to be cleared, or which has been cleared since 2013, has been regrowth- not ancient oak or gum forest. To take the *Vegetation Management Act* back in time will only hurt these Queenslanders and our state [and national] economy even worse.

I don't see how the Queensland Government can propose the changes that they have while at the same time talk growth and jobs, to be seen to support the White Paper on Developing Northern Australia and the initiatives within of the Federal Government to see rural farming and production become the crowning jewel of Australia once again. The Queensland Government need to re-evaluate their stance on these issues because they are currently contradictory of each other.

We are taught in schools that everyone needs a farmer and I would like to remind the politicians in Brisbane that they do as well. Farming in this day and age is a much healthier and viable use of land than resource extraction and contributes to the wealth- as well as health- of our citizens enormously.

Locking up land for the purposes of conservation is not what these proposed changes are about. Many in parliament pretend it is, or would like Queenslanders to believe this to be the case. The changes won't be targeted at National Park and land areas of unique natural significance (which are already under protection for ever), these changes will affect those on properties which have been historically developed or farmed. Such land was created to be utilised to feed and with so many farmers adopting environmentally friendly and more sustainable techniques these proposed changes to the Act are nothing short of unjustly demonising farmers and for what? Political gain in urban based seats which are so removed from the reality of hardships in the bush and from the truth of where their food actually comes from?

If the Queensland Government allows the proposed changes to come into effect then they will have served to drive another nail in the coffin bearing the once proud and great tradition of Australia being a primary food producer in the pacific.

I ask the Queensland Government to consider all submissions and to be objective in their deliberations so as to look at the reality of the situation, to what's best for the economy as well as environment and to strike a healthy balance which will not jeopardise the financial future of farmers as well as their mental health (given that ill health mentally is a rising factor for remote based Queenslanders). I ask them to govern for the interest of the rural and struggling peoples of Queensland, not just in the interest of populist based politics. Furthermore I ask the Queensland Government to align all their policies (including the Cape York Regional Plan) to the same level of interest and level of possibility as they espouse they hold and appear to show for the historic and bipartisan supported White Paper on Developing Northern Australia.

Kind regards,

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