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Research Director  
Agriculture and Environment Committee  
Parliament House  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

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

I am a retired Brisbane based senior.

The earth cries.

I thank the Hon the Speaker for his casting vote to at least get this Bill this far. It is disappointing though to read his comments that the environmental groups refused to participate in the roundtable consultation process.

Some may say only those who are direct stakeholder landholders should be commenting on this issue, this Bill. But climate change has altered all that – we are all affected now and are all broad stakeholders now. So I am writing as one of these broad stakeholders.

For the benefit of the public I would urge Hon Opposition Members to work with the Committee Research Staff and set out clearly with practical examples in the Committee Report any objections they have to proposed provisions including any valid supportable objections raised by other submitters.

Similarly I would urge Hon Government Members to set out for the benefit of the public practical facts and figures to support what is proposed. The debate is couched too much in the conceptual language used in the legislation and in briefings and the notes.

I am sure we all want to protect the reef as much as possible and protect it from damaging discharges coming from all the major estuaries.

I am sure all right thinking people would accept that responsibility for unlawful clearing should rest with the occupier.

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On “mistake of fact” I think the general public would agree with the Hon the Deputy Premier that as the Act has been in place over 15 years and given the amount of information and assistance available that what is proposed is a reasonable approach. There is an old maxim that “ignorance of the law is no excuse” which some seem to be forgetting – its application is the only way a democratic society based on the rule of law and the separation of powers can function.

One aspect that the general public may have difficulty with is the provision that applications will no longer be able to be made for high value agriculture clearing and irrigated high value agriculture clearing purposes.

I may be misunderstanding the practical application of this but my impression is that this creates a stop on opening up new agricultural land. I just wonder what effect this has on the ongoing development of Queensland and whether it flies in the face of the need to produce more food in the future. I would think that for the benefit of the public Hon Government Members would need to set out clearly in the Committee Report why there are no deleterious effects from this approach.

At the same time I support maintaining and improving Queensland’s vegetation coverage. Our sink deficit is a real problem. Frankly I like the idea of planting millions and millions of trees each year. It’s a shame the Government has not instituted some scheme under which this could be facilitated.

So re-regulating high value regrowth on freehold and indigenous land is an essential part in not only maintaining our sink capacity but protecting habitat for fauna, indeed some endangered fauna, and preserving necessary biodiversity so necessary to ecosystem survival.

I commented on a few subdivider applications to BCC years ago. The Council was talking about tree planting offsets for trees felled in subdivision production but I don’t know how far this has been taken.

Councils across Queensland have wide scope to plant trees on footpaths. Maybe this is something that could be explored. I think BCC has increased the trees subdividers must plant on new footpaths but it is still seems limited.

Maybe we should explore the possibility of limited clearing for agriculture from time to time in selected areas on a tender basis with permits going to the highest bidder above a base figure subject to there being adequate offset planting as part of the arrangement. The landholders get a capital value windfall.

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Finally I hope that if there is a deadlock the Bill can be split to get as much as possible through.

Leslie Midson BEcon BCom AAUQ

Signed 21 April 2016