

From: [REDACTED]
To: [vminquiry](#)
Subject: Inquiry into vegetation management
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Submission

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

Cover sheet

From

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Submission not in confidence.

To

Research Director

Agriculture and Environment Committee

Parliament House

Brisbane Q4000

Background

I have spent most of the last 53 years in Northern Australia (mostly in North Queensland) as a researcher (reaching senior principal research scientist in CSIRO) and farmer. My PhD is in the dynamics of tropical forests. My major contribution to agriculture was my responsibility for the initiation of the avocado industry on the Atherton Tablelands when I started the first commercial orchard in 1971.

Until recently I was Deputy Mayor of Tablelands Regional Council. I did not seek re-election in March this year.

Details of submission

I reject the changes proposed in the Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 for the following reasons –

- a. In relation to removing high value agriculture and irrigated high value agriculture, this amendment will cause the slow but certain, economic and social deterioration of many communities (particularly those in the North) already under pressure from low wages and high unemployment.
This amendment severely constrains the ability of farmers and service centres to

adapt to changing market opportunities. Furthermore they are denied the opportunity to take advantage of soil and water resources which had they been in the SE would have been used to the benefit of Queensland for at least the past 100 years. As an example about 70km to the south of where I sit, the current returns from extensive beef cattle grazing in savannah woodland are about \$55/ha/annum at farm gate. The soil and water available here could support a major agricultural extension to the Atherton Tableland with farm gate returns from horticulture as high as \$74,800/ha/annum (Cummings Economics). In addition I note that agricultural development is almost invariably the main driver of economic and social development. The infrastructure developed for agriculture is often the basis for tourist development which by itself has limited capacity to pay for general infrastructure. That developed for mining is usually too site specific and specialised to aid other ventures. Important social issues of equity and opportunity are at stake. Is the Government prepared to further disadvantage communities in the undeveloped North? Much damage to our long term future has already been done by poorly thought through environmental legislation. A serious rethink is called for before a decision to add to our burden is made.

b. It is a sad day for Queensland when land owners are confronted with having to prove their innocence, receive no compensation for ad-hock decisions which are made by public servants and which devalue and cause loss of income. I also note that I have to pay to have mapping errors corrected that were made by bureaucrats. In my own case I have the ridiculous situation where pine plantation has been mapped as remnant vegetation.

c. While vegetation management issues might appeal to many urban dwellers, the so called science which supposedly form the justification for these amendments are at best, sourced from cherry-picked conclusions. So much relevant information about factors controlling CO² emissions and reef health are seeming ignored to the detriment of good legislation and the general benefit of the State.

Geoff Stocker PhD

21/4/16