

Research Director
Agriculture and Environment Committee
Parliament House QLD

To members of the Inquiry Committee,

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

On behalf of the Consumer Rights and No-Tolls party, I offer this submission.

Our party strongly supports the reinstatement of stronger land clearing legislation as per the proposed Bill. We acknowledge the necessity of strong laws in this area to address the devastating effects which unbridled land clearing in the past has had on the environment and the species supported by it. With Australia holding the unenviable reputation for one of the highest levels of species extinction in the world, we cannot afford to ignore the need for preservation of native habitats.

Eastern Australia was identified as one of 11 regions within which more than 80% of global forest destruction was projected to occur between 2010 and 2030, thus falling into the category of a “global deforestation front”. <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/apr/19/the-effects-of-queenslands-land-clearing-are-devastating-nsw-must-not-follow>

Nearly half our mammal species, including koalas, some wombats, wallabies and bandicoots, are either extinct or endangered as a result of land clearing, habitat destruction and other man-made causes. Numerous bird species are extinct or threatened.

http://www.bushheritage.org.au/about/ourchallenge/natural_world_land_clearing

Much of Australia’s agricultural land has been significantly degraded by poor management practices in the past, resulting in severe erosion, loss of topsoil, pollution / drying up of waterways, salinity problems, etc.

Land clearing has been recognised as a serious threat to the ecology of the Great Barrier Reef for a number of reasons: increased run-off of eroded soil into waterways flowing to the reef; increased pollution from agricultural chemicals and artificial fertilisers into waterways flowing to the reef; increased greenhouse emissions from land clearing and grazing of livestock contributing to climate change which is impacting the reef.

With large, often foreign owned companies buying up prime agricultural land and some hoping to clear more north Qld forest lands for grazing, it becomes imperative that strong laws are in place to mitigate the environmental devastation which is currently occurring. The cost of allowing these companies to put slabs of Australian beef on the plates of our Asian neighbours will be the continued loss of native vegetation, ecological / species diversity, soil and water quality and adding major contributions to climate change.

We need to stand back and look at the big picture here. There is a growing consensus among scientists, doctors, environmentalists, and animal rights activists that our current food

production system is not sustainable. Simply put, this system is destroying the planet, and meat production and consumption is arguably the most to blame. We can go on trying to stop, slow up or divert the bulldozers, but ultimately we need to look at alternatives in feeding the human population. It takes a fraction of the resources (land, water, chemicals, energy) to produce a kilo of plant protein compared to animal protein. If we all reduced our consumption of animal products, we would not need to be destroying this planet and its animals for food. A fraction of the land already cleared would produce enough food to meet demand, and previously cleared lands could be reforested.

Consumer Rights and No-Tolls strongly encourages innovation and forward thinking by government and administration. While we need strong laws to moderate land clearing, we also need to be looking to a sustainable future in food production. Turning our state into one huge cow paddock isn't the solution. Rather than promote livestock production, shouldn't we be investing in plant-based foods, and investigating and developing an array of alternatives to meat which are nutritious, satisfying and have minimal impact on the fragile Australian environment?

A number of overseas companies who have recognised the global need to move towards a plant-based diet are developing a range of alternatives to red meat, poultry, dairy and eggs. Even on our supermarket shelves, we can see a growing range of meat, dairy and egg -free alternatives on offer. Long terms studies demonstrate that a healthy plant-based diet is not only better for the environment, but enhances health and longevity. The state's health budget could be greatly diminished. Farmers could concentrate their efforts on producing alternate crops / foods using a fraction of the cleared land they already use. Crops like hemp (the seeds are highly nutritious), millet, amaranth, moringa – all grow without high inputs of water or chemicals, and provide sound nutrition for humans.

Let's get all stakeholders together, putting aside self-interest, and come up with ways to move in a new direction. In the mean time, please restore stronger laws regarding land clearing through adopting the ***Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016***.

Yours faithfully,

Jeffrey Hodges

Secretary,

Consumer Rights & No-Tolls Party