

S:\G\State Govt Issues\Submissions to State Govt\Qld Vegetation Management Bill 22 Apr 2016.docx

22nd April, 2016

Research Director
Agriculture and Environment Committee
Parliament House
Brisbane, Qld 4000
Email yminquiry@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Research Director,

On behalf of the Bulimba Creek Catchment Coordinating Committee Inc., I would like to provide this submission to the Queensland Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016.

Our organisation has been active since 1997 and now runs as a social enterprise and not-for-profit Catchment Committee working over the Greater Brisbane area. We are strong advocates for waterway and biodiversity protection and have made our own environmental investment buying a property in a strategic corridor linking National Parks in the Mt Barney area (a regional contribution to conservation and future ecotourism).

Our work entails waterway, bushland and parkland rehabilitation and enhancing wildlife habitat. To achieve our goals we foster community and volunteer development and involvement. We were awarded the 2005 National Riverprize at the International River Symposium.

Not only have we been appalled at the wholesale clearing in northern Queensland, as seen on the social media, but we have had direct problems in Brisbane and our own catchment because of the weakening of the Vegetation Management Act, which has enabled pre-emptive clearing by owners and developers before they actually put in a development application to Council.

Council cannot circumvent the lack of protection now imposed by the current Act. This has created a loophole for pre-emptive clearing, because Council cannot always cover valued vegetation by imposing Vegetation Protection Orders on smaller urban acreages lots – like Hemmant and Tingalpa for instance. Council's Natural Assets Local Laws are being undermined by the lack of vegetation protection coming from the State Government.

A case study is a pre-emptive clearing of remnant vegetation in 2014 at [REDACTED]. All the mature standing trees were removed by the developer before an application for development was lodged on this rural land. Council's response claimed, in part, *"Given the robustness of the mapping, the inclusion of this additional area within the Neighbourhood Plan is not considered necessary"*. This, when taken verbatim by a developer, means everything outside the Biodiversity Overlay mapping and not having a VPO on it – can be cleared completely.

It is clear also from similar pre-emptive clearing in Burbank by the Logos Christian Church in 2015, where vegetation mapped for koalas and in a waterway corridor was completely cleared. While Council has endeavoured to enforce a compliance notice to reinstate the valued vegetation, nothing has been achieved for 15 months. The Local Assets Local Law is not strong enough to deter or enforce its own conditions. Council is clearly being hamstrung by the lack of an adequate State Vegetation Management Act. We implore the Parliament to pass the said Amendment Bill.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]
Heather Barns (Secretary)