

SUBMISSION TO:

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

SUBMISSION COVER SHEET

Closing date for submissions is 25 April 2016.

Please complete and submit this form with your submission to:

Email:
vminquiry@parliament.qld.gov.au

Post: **Fax:** 07 3553 6699
Research Director
Agriculture and Environment
Committee
Parliament House
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Organisation or individual:	William & Sasha Treloar			
Principal contact:	William Treloar			
Position:	Manager			
Telephone:		Fax:		
Mobile:				
Email address:				
Street address:				
Suburb/City:	COOLADDI	State:	QLD	Postcode: 4479
Postal address:				
Suburb/City:	COOLADDI	State:	QLD	Postcode: 4479

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Is all or part of your submission confidential? Yes, all ☐ Yes, part ☐ No ☒ ☒ (copy box to indicate answer)

If part, please identify which sections are confidential:

Reason for confidentiality:

SUBMISSION

I provide my submission in support of the continuation of the Current Vegetation Management Act 1999 and rejection of the changes proposed in the Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 (“the Bill”).

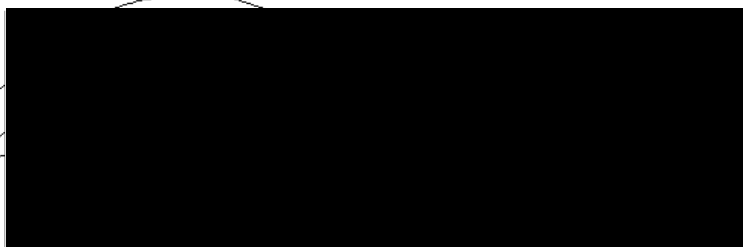

My overriding issue with the Bill is that its introduction in the Queensland Parliament on 17th March represents **yet another** variation to the Vegetation Management Framework, which has been amended over 18 times since its introduction in 1999. This constant change in legislation severely impacts on the ability of farm managers to plan and implement effective long-term property and business management decisions. Ecological processes work in much longer timeframes and can be severely compromised when mismatching, constantly changing regulations are enforced. Farmers have long called for certainty with the vegetation management regulatory framework. With the Bill being introduced when farmers are on their knees with over 86% of Queensland in drought conditions, it should come as no surprise that I am totally opposed to continued uncertainty and attacks on the viability of myself, the long-term sustainability of my business as well as attacks on fellow farmers.

We have had to alter our plans for future vegetation management significantly. Regulatory burdens impact on our capacity to operate our business through the time and energy required for compliance activities being diverted away from running our enterprise and seeking further productivity and profitability improvements. These laws are seen to work to suppress ecologically sustainable development that could support ongoing profitability.

In providing this submission I refer directly to the key provisions of the legislation which the 2016 Bill intends to amend.

1. Removing High Value Agriculture and Irrigated High Value Agriculture from the Vegetation Management Framework
This is change for the sake of change. The changes to the Vegetation Management Act in recent years have simply allowed for sensible and sustainable clearing of vegetation for example along fence-lines. It also allows for limited clearing for high value agriculture. The old laws that prevent broadscale clearing were still in place. Mulga is a renewable resource that has been successfully managed for decades.
2. Re-introducing Reverse Onus-of-Proof
It is unacceptable that a government for whatever reason wishes to remove the right of innocent until proven guilty. This loss of civil liberties is creating a regime of a police state not a democracy.
3. That no compensation will be payable to HVA, IHVA and Property Map of Assessable Vegetation (PMAV) applicants during transitional arrangements
By taking the regeneration of regrowth from landholders with no-compensation, landholders are denied the rights to earn an income. If society as a whole is to benefit, then the cost must be borne by society.

4. Including High Value Regrowth as an additional layer of regulation under the Vegetation Management Framework on leasehold, freehold and indigenous land
Virtually every other nation on earth – even developing nations such as Brazil - has created equitable policy arrangements that share the cost of maintaining biodiversity on private land between the landholders and the wider community. Queensland should be a world leader encouraging carbon sequestration.
5. Increasing Category R vegetation to include the Burdekin, Mackay, Whitsunday and Wet Tropics Great Barrier Reef catchments and additional catchments Burnett Mary, Eastern Cape York and Fitzroy.
This increase in Category R provisions is a further restriction on development in Northern Queensland, which is in stark contrast to the development imperatives contained with the White Paper on Developing Northern Australia.
6. Other matters relevant to the Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 that the review committee should consider appropriate and worth some consideration
There is considerable merit in providing mechanisms of rewarding ‘sustainable vegetation management’ where we are supported in offsetting ‘remnant’ regional ecosystem clearing in particular areas of the property, with improvement of degraded or poor condition ecosystems on other parts of the property. The aim is to achieve a ‘no-loss’ outcome where areas cleared are proportionate to areas restored or rehabilitated. As landholders we are striving for a healthier environment. Land management is a long term process and sustainable development programs have no chance within a consistently changing framework.

Signed:	
Address:	 Cooladdi Q 4479
Date:	22/04/2016