

From: [REDACTED]
To: ym inquiry
Subject: Reinstatement of the Vegetation Management Act
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To the Agriculture and Environment Committee

I whole-heartedly support the Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016.

You all have the figures on the massive increase in tree-clearing in Queensland in the last few years and the amount of CO₂ that is released into the atmosphere by destruction of these trees. Australia's CO₂ emissions are still rising despite the Federal Government's agreeing in Paris to limit temperature rise to no more than 2 degrees and to reduce emissions.

We have just had the hottest February and March on record, April temperatures have been above average and over 1000 km of the Great Barrier Reef have experienced bleaching of corals caused by high surface water temperatures, the largest bleaching event ever. For decades now politicians have been refusing to take global warming seriously enough but we are running out of time. The GBR definitely is being pushed to its limits and won't survive repeated bleaching events if sea temperatures continue to rise.

The most effective agents able to absorb some of the CO₂ that is already in the atmosphere are trees, which use CO₂ and produce oxygen. We are totally dependent on photosynthesis by plants for our every breath, you'd expect we would value them, not treat the largest plants as pests. We should be planting millions of trees to mitigate climate change, but just stopping the destruction of the ones already growing is a good start, and would decrease our CO₂ emissions.

This Bill is not about singling out primary producers and limiting their profitability. Initially, primary producers will suffer the most from continuing climate change. Longer and hotter heat waves, drought, extended fire seasons and changed rainfall patterns will devastate primary production in some areas, and limit it in others. It is in no one's long-term interests to keep adding to the CO₂ levels by tree-clearing, regardless of the perceived short-term interests of some.

Apart from the effects on the climate, tree-clearing is a major driver of the rapid decline in native wildlife in Queensland. Not only are many arboreal animals killed or injured or dispossessed every time a patch of bush is bull-dozed, but nesting sites, food, shelter etc are no longer available for countless other species as well. Whole ecosystems are wiped out.

Land clearing disturbs topsoil which then is more likely to become airborne or waterborne, so there is more erosion and more sediment washed into rivers and eventually into the sea. Increasing sediment from the land is one of the factors contributing to the poor health of the reef in many areas.

By not allowing permits for clearing for high value agriculture this Bill should limit large scale tree clearing of remnant vegetation and reduce the decline of native plant and animal species and movement of sediment. Apparently very little of land cleared on this pretext under the Newman Government has actually been used for agriculture. Across large areas of southern Australia wide scale removal of trees for farming has eventually led to salinity problems. Without deep rooted trees using groundwater the water table has slowly risen bringing salts with it to the surface, so the area becomes useless for farming. This has been studied for decades. Why are some politicians and primary producers so keen to make the same mistakes across vast areas of Queensland?

It is vital that this Bill be passed before yet more damage is done to Queensland's environment and the planet's climate.

Denise Seabright

[REDACTED]
Rollingstone Q 4816
[REDACTED]