

CRACOW STATION PTY LTD

THEODORE QLD 4719

Sunday, April 24, 2016

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Research Director Agriculture and Environment Committee
Parliament House BRISBANE QLD 4000
vminquiry@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Sir or Madam,

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

This is a letter to voice our vehement disagreement with the State Government's proposed changes to vegetation management laws in Queensland via the Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016.

This proposed legislation will have absolutely no ecological or environmental benefit and will lead to the mass degradation of the very environment that it is designed to protect.

As responsible land managers we cannot sit back and watch this happen and urge the State Government to reconsider its approach to managing Queensland's dynamic and precious landscape.

Our experience in managing the vegetation on our property is extensive. Cracow Station has been owned and operated by Sarah's family since 1903, running beef breeding cattle and progeny. The property is managed with full consideration to environmental outcomes and long term sustainability – as it must be for our children's business future.

Our cattle are grazed under a rotational system and we have invested significant capital in water improvements, vegetation management, pasture establishment and fencing. This allows for the on-going development of native and improved pasture species, improved soil humus, the minimisation of weeds and the production of quality beef. We regularly undertake pasture and dung sampling for independent monitoring to ensure our grazing management strategies are effective in achieving our desired environmental outcomes.

Ours is not a unique story. Across Queensland, thousands of landholders are applying a similar set of stringent and progressive management criteria to produce 'clean green beef' in harmony with our environment.

A "lock-up and leave" principle when it comes to management of Queensland's diverse vegetation types, which are by their nature dynamic, robust and ever-changing, is very likely to cause widespread land degradation through soil erosion, salinity and a lack of biodiversity.

Put simply, an overgrown, thick monoculture of trees inhibits pasture growth, degrades the land and wreaks havoc on animals' wildlife habitat which relies on food availability. We know because areas of our property deemed as 'remnant not of concern' according to our regional ecosystem and now Property Map of Assessable Vegetation maps have been left largely unmanaged for more than 25 years due to departmental advice and regulation.

These areas are largely devoid of grass cover, wildlife species and the soil is eroding away due to timber thickening – see photos below. This 'remnant' woodland bears little resemblance to the type and density of the woodland which existed pre-European settlement as evidenced by our 'pre-clear' maps. This is a consequence of both the 1902 drought which killed large areas of timber and clearing activities undertaken from 1903 onwards and we consider some of the now-dominant timber species such as cypress pine to be damaging woody weeds.

One of the conditions of Cracow Station's Grazing Homestead Perpetual Lease tenure was that the property was used for grazing and agriculture. To this end, the timber was managed sustainably for many years. Implementing legislation that reneges on our right to continue responsibly managing regrowth timber is, in effect, retrospective legislation without financial compensation. This has seriously impacted our grazing business over the years by reducing the stock carrying capacity, while at the same time delivering a negative impact on biodiversity and land condition. This proposed new legislation will have a similar impact on agricultural land right across Queensland. The last thing we want to be saying in 30 or 40 years' time is "we told you so."

Land that was once cleared must be allowed to continue being managed responsibly. If not, timber thickening will continue unabated resulting in poor land management outcomes, a loss of flora and fauna biodiversity and the loss of productive agricultural land. Agricultural production and conservation can coexist but land managers cannot do their job effectively while hamstrung by bureaucratic red tape and constantly-changing laws.

Yours faithfully,

Richard & Sarah Cox - Owners/operators Cracow Station Pty Ltd



(Above) This remnant not of concern area – mapped as narrow leaf ironbark – has been left unmanaged for more than 25 years. This is due to departmental advice that the cypress pine trees throughout the area were protected and therefore unable to be selectively cleared. Cypress pine is not listed as a vegetation type on our pre-clear map (Queensland Herbarium) anywhere in or near this area. This area was originally open narrow leaf ironbark forest although a large percentage of the trees died in the 1902 drought. The country has been regenerating since then albeit with very different vegetation make-up to the original forest. Timber thickening has occurred through the encroachment of aggressive species such as cypress pine. As per the photo, there is very little ground cover left therefore creating major soil erosion issues.



Another remnant not of concern area mapped as narrow leaf ironbark. Explanation as per above.



(Above) Managed open ironbark forest. This photo was taken approximately 200m from the above photos. This area is growing thick and dense stands of native black speargrass and has been selectively cleared using chemical treatment over the years.



(Left) Native speargrass in open spotted gum forest on Cracow Station. This area has been selectively cleared using chemical methods.