

23 April 2016

Submission to the Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016

The Mary River Catchment Coordination Association is a very active Integrated Catchment Management organization based in Gympie. The organization is overseen by a committee (the MRCCC) of representatives from 24 industry, government and community sectors with interests in sustainable natural resource management.

For well over 20 years, the MRCCC has worked with government, industry and the wider community facilitating actions aimed at improving catchment health, and protecting and conserving water supplies.

The MRCCC strongly supports the Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016.

The figures produced in the SLATS report are indeed alarming and underscore the need for the reinstatement of a more responsible vegetation management framework in Queensland.

Our organisation has a particular focus on riparian vegetation, the importance of which is well-established in terms of water quality. The Mary River Catchment is the southern-most reef catchment, and MRCCC is responsible for delivering the Reef Water Quality Grants Program (RWQGP, formerly known as Reef Rescue) in the Mary River Catchment to the grazing industry.

It was indeed a retrograde step when the previous government removed protections relating to the destruction of vegetation in and along watercourses. For this reason we strongly advocate for the reinstatement as proposed in this bill.

River health is about far more than protecting riparian vegetation. In the time since the changes introduced by the previous government, we have seen far more clearing in the catchment, some of it on quite steep land and for dubious agricultural benefit.

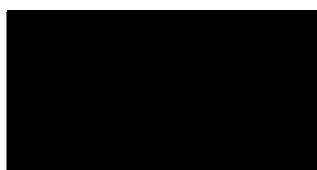
Modelling figures suggest that the Mary is a major contributor to sediment entering the southern part of the reef. We need all the help we can get to reverse this. It renders our work almost futile, trying to reduce sediment run-off into the river and reef when there is no legislation to prevent ill-advised clearing.

*The MRCCC gratefully acknowledges the support of
The Sunshine Coast Regional Council, Noosa Council and Gympie Regional Council,
the Australian Government Department of Environment, the Burnett Mary Regional Group, the Queensland
Department of Main Roads, Environment and Heritage Protection and Science, Information Technology,
Innovation and the Arts,
and landholders throughout the Mary Catchment.*

DONATIONS TO THE MARY CATCHMENT PUBLIC FUND ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE

In 2015, the Gympie –based Koala Action Group was formed and is auspiced by MRCCC. The impetus for the group’s establishment was the marked increase in clearing of koala habitat and the ineffectiveness of existing legislation to prevent it.

While this organisation is often involved in tree planting, having legislation that affords some protection for remnant vegetation and ecosystems is absolutely crucial to the health of the catchment.



Ian Mackay (Chairman)

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