

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

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

Dear Committee members,

I understand that this Bill is being introduced in order to bring back some order and properly considered process to native vegetation conservation and management in Queensland. This is sorely needed since the previous government, to its great shame, repudiated pre-existing sensible laws that prevented uncontrolled vegetation destruction and watercourse degradation. The proposed reinstatement legislation, if enacted soon, should arrest broad-scale vegetation clearing before too much damage is done to Queensland's natural heritage.

The proposed Bill will have a number of important positive effects, including particularly:

1. Removal of the ability to obtain a permit clear for so-called “high value agriculture”.
This should stop most large-scale clearing of remnant woodlands with its consequent killing of vast numbers of native animals and plants, many species of which would soon become endangered if not so listed already.
2. Restoration of protections for ecologically important regrowing woodlands (‘High Value Regrowth’) on freehold and Aboriginal land.
Some natural vegetation types such as brigalow were radically over-cleared in the past, and considerable areas of these should be allowed to regenerate to reestablish viable ecosystems.
3. Restoration of protections for trees next to riverbanks (‘riparian areas’) and extending provisions from some to all Great Barrier Reef catchments.
The retention of natural vegetation buffer strips at least 100-200 m wide along rivers and major creeks has been almost universally recognised for ages as a basic water quality and soil conservation measure. It is incredible that a government in Queensland, within the last few years, deemed these buffer strips to be unnecessary in most cases.
4. Removal of the ‘oops’ defence of claimed mistaken clearing, and restoring of the *starting* presumption that a landholder is responsible for clearing that takes place on their property.
It is important that landowners appreciate the reasons for having regulations and are encouraged to cooperate in applying them.
5. The proposed bill makes much of the prospective legislation retrospective to 17 March, in an

attempt to deter panic clearing and panic applications.

This is also very important, to avoid substantial extra last minute destruction of natural vegetation.

The current very weak natural vegetation and water quality protection legislation in Queensland is clearly unacceptable. It embodies an attitude that continuing destruction and degradation of these assets is not only acceptable but should be facilitated by government; in this it is reminiscent of attitudes prevailing before the 1980s.

I consider that the natural flora and fauna of all Australian States and territories has an intrinsic value, and concerted attempts need to be made by the various governments and citizens to prevent and reverse severe declines in all ecological communities. Strong and fair regulations governing vegetation management on private land are essential for achieving this. In contrast, a “free for all” approach would soon result in the extinction of many ecological communities and individual species. That would be a national disgrace! In Queensland's case, additionally strong measures are necessary to prevent turbid water and water polluted with pesticides or fertilisers from flowing onto any part of the Great Barrier Reef, which is already under severe stress.

For the reasons outlined above, I strongly recommend and hope that the *Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016* will be presented in full to the Queensland Parliament and soon voted into law.

Sincerely,

Ian Johnson

[REDACTED]

WEST PENNANT HILLS 2125

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

24April 2016