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**Subject:** Submission to Committee on Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016  
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Dear Chair and Committee Members

**Submission to Committee on *Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016***

I wish to make a submission in support of the restrengthening of Queensland's tree clearing laws. I believe there are many significant environmental reasons to support the passing of the bill, including those listed below:

- Since European settlement, approximately 75% of native vegetation has been cleared or significantly degraded. Most of the remaining native vegetation exists in the northern half of the continent and is worthy of protection. A considerable number of regional ecosystems are listed as endangered, and even more are listed as 'of concern' due to land clearing.
- Native vegetation provides habitat for a wide range of native fauna. Destruction of this habitat results in the death of millions of animals each year. Even iconic species

such as the Koala are declining rapidly in Queensland.

- The removal of vegetation leads to increased erosion, runoff and subsequent degradation of rivers and, ultimately, marine environments including the Great Barrier Reef.
- Vegetation maintenance benefits agriculture and, ultimately, society as a whole. The retention of vegetation maintains water quality, recharges water tables, cycles nutrients in the soil, provides shelter for stock, and provides refuge for native fauna to pollinate crops and eat pests.
- The broadscale removal of vegetation has effects on the climate, including decreasing rainfall and increasing the severity of drought.
- The broadscale clearing of vegetation results in the release of millions of tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere thus being a major contributor to climate change. The previous ban on broadscale clearing contributed to Australia achieving its Kyoto Protocol target.

I support the Bill to protect Queensland's ecosystems and wildlife, and recommend its passing for the following reasons:

- The ability to obtain a permit for broadscale clearing of remnant woodland for "High Value Agriculture" is removed.
- Ecologically important regrowing woodlands on freehold and indigenous lands will be protected.
- Riparian vegetation will receive additional protection in the Burnett, Mary, Eastern Cape York and Fitzroy River catchments.
- The defence of claimed mistaken clearing will be removed.
- The application of the riverine protection permit framework to the destruction of vegetation in a watercourse, lake or spring will be reinstated.
- Environmental offsets will be required for any residual impact, not just 'significant' impacts.
- The prospective use of retrospective legislation, to 17 March, to deter 'panic' clearing.

I support each of these particular changes proposed in this Bill. I support the Bill because I believe it will restore stronger controls over land clearing, and so prevent further harm to the Great Barrier Reef and to native wildlife.

Yours sincerely

Paul May