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Research Director
Agriculture and Environment Committee
Parliament House
BRISBANE QLD 4000
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Dear Chair and Committee Members

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

My name is Ariana and I am a concerned citizen and science student of the University of Queensland. I study a dual major in ecology and zoology and understand the severe, negative consequences of land clearing on our biodiversity and climate stability.

It is imperative that land clearing is slowed or stopped if we want to slow climate change and prevent extreme in native plant and animal species, and the essential ecosystem services that they provide.

Some key reasons for why land clearing needs to stop include:

- Many of QLD's species are at risk of becoming extinct if land clearing continues, such as the koala (an icon that we cannot lose).
- Without trees there will be increased occurrence of droughts, which will intern detriment farmers, in which instance they will seek compensation. Therefore, land clearing has no worth to farmers in the long term.
- Our forests are carbon sinks. Land clearing realises huge carbon dioxide emissions. Hence, land clearing is going against Australia's COP21 commitment to reduce our green house gas emissions. Further, re-planting efforts do not mitigate these emissions as old growth forests store more carbon.
- Trees along Riparian zones are essential for preventing erosion and runoff. This is of particular concern for the river catchments that lead to the Great Barrier Reef. Previous clearing events have been directly linked to reef declines and are one of, if not the leading cause.
- In terms of economics, it is known that clearing of marginal land does not increase agricultural productivity. Therefore farmers are doing more harm than good to their livelihood.

This new bill is important for the following reasons:

- It reinstates the protection of high value regrowth on freehold and indigenous land.
- It removes provisions which permit clearing applications for high value agriculture and irrigated agriculture.
- It broadens protection of riparian vegetation, especially in the Great Barrier Reef catchments of Burnett Mary, Eastern Cape York and Fitzroy Great Barrier Reef.
- It reinstates the application of the riverine protection permit framework to the destruction of vegetation in a watercourse, lake or spring.
- It reinstates a broader requirement for environmental offsets to be required for any residual impact, not just ‘significant’ impacts as is currently provided for in offsets legislation (and has led to only 1 offset being registered for vegetation impacts since 2014).

Some exclusions of the bill that I disagree with include:

- The Bill retains thinning “self-assessable codes” meaning there is no limit to scale; no need to demonstrate prior “thickening; landowners can bulldoze up to 75% of forest cover leaving thin strips, as well as 18 endangered ecosystems, with no offsets; and landholders can change the vegetation map randomly.
- The Bill does not remove unreasonable exemptions. Purposes other than ecological ones should not allow exemptions.
- PMAVs are not removed in the Bill even though 22 million hectares of Category X land is included in PMAVs. This land cannot be cleared.
- The Bill retains static “High Value Regrowth” definition which is outdated and needs to be updated to a modern baseline.

Although this bill has room for improvement, it is a huge improvement on the devastating legislation that is currently in place. Therefore I support the passing of this new bill by QLD Parliament. Serious change needs to be taken to prevent land clearing, and if this bill is not passed then there will be huge public outcry.

Yours sincerely,

Ariana Magini