

From: [REDACTED]
To: vminquiry
Subject: Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016
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To the Research Director
Agriculture and Environment Committee
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Submission to Committee on Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other
Legislation Amendment Bill 2016

I would like to express my strong support for this Bill. Preservation of remnant vegetation and high value regrowth vegetation is very important for me for personally, and from a scientific viewpoint I believe it is extremely valuable for conserving the natural habitat and biodiversity in our State and in the sea around us.

Living in North Queensland now and previously in Far North Queensland, I see rivers of mud flowing out to the Reef after heavy rainfall. As an environmental scientist I appreciate the critical importance of careful land management to mitigate runoff and the dependence on effective legislation to minimize detrimental impacts of land clearing and preserve intact habitat for native species.

I believe this Bill will be valuable to restore protection for vegetation along riparian areas and extend protection to all catchments draining onto Great Barrier Reef waters. The GBR waters urgently need vastly better protection than currently provided.

I am deeply concerned about degradation of coral cover along the Great Barrier Reef and the domino effect of coral loss on marine animals that depend directly and indirectly on the Reef. Widespread severe coral bleaching this year is the most dramatic evidence to date, attesting to poor environmental management, but this is by no means the first such evidence. Numerous scientific studies provide formal data on this. In addition, I have personally observed the tragic process of reef degradation during three decades of snorkeling and diving in GBR waters.

I am also deeply concerned about declining populations of native birds and terrestrial animals, including iconic species like koalas and threatened birds like the Black-throated finch, Coxen's fig-parrot, Palm cockatoo and Golden-shouldered parrot, whose survival depends on suitable management of private land. Undoubtedly some private land owners voluntarily preserve important wildlife habitat but others do not.

I believe the bill will be valuable to prevent large-scale clearing of remnant woodlands on the grounds of so-called High Value Agriculture, and restore protection for river bank trees, and restore protection for High Value Regrowth vegetation. I believe it will also be important in restoring the starting presumption that landholders are responsible for clearing that takes place on their property, and important in making the prospective legislation retrospective to 17 March to potentially deter panic clearing.

For decades I have been involved in small-scale private efforts to mitigate environmental degradation (planting native trees and maintaining recent plantings) and by supporting conservation organisations that

undertake larger revegetation projects. It is distressing and frustrating that our collective revegetation efforts continue to be undermined by poor land management including unregulated or poorly regulated broad scale clearing of remnant vegetation and high value regrowth.

I was appalled to see the sharp increase in woody vegetation clearing after 2013 changes in regulation. [Queensland Department of Science, Information Technology and Innovation, 2015. Land cover change in Queensland 2012–13 and 2013–14: a Statewide Landcover and Trees Study]

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission. I fervently hope this bill will be passed.

Yours sincerely
Julia Hazel

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