

Research Director  
Agriculture and Environment Committee  
Parliament House  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

27 April 2016

Emailed to: [vm inquiry@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:vm inquiry@parliament.qld.gov.au)

Dear Sir/Madam,

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

As a former Queensland Vegetation Management Officer (Townsville and North West Districts, 1999 – 2000) I strongly support the purpose and passage of this proposed legislation.

I especially note the catastrophic rise in clearing rates since 2010, when controls were substantially weakened, evident and reported in SLATS monitoring, and referred to in the Bill's Explanatory Notes:

*The Statewide Landcover and Trees Study (SLATS report) released in November 2015, showed that the rate of clearing of woody vegetation has been increasing since 2009–10 from about 78 000 hectares per year to about 296 000 hectares per year in 2013–14.*

I note Queensland's unique position in eastern Australia in the early 1990s, as still having large tracts of relatively representative remnant native vegetation across much of the State, and then in the 1990s the extraordinary land clearing episodes, when clearing controls on freehold land were proposed, and again more recently, when the Newman administration diluted controls and dismantled effective compliance and enforcement operations.

I also point out that assessing the effectiveness or otherwise of controls by referring to annual clearing rates (such as above) is misleading, in that this rate is *not* a swinging indicator, such as, for example, an interest or inflation rate, but rather provides an annual Statewide total, which should be added to previous years' losses to gain an accurate assessment of overall loss and associated landscape impacts. For example, a drop in annual clearing rate from, say, 100,000 to 20,000 ha may be seen as an improvement, but both figures fail to disclose cumulative losses to date, or the percentage of remnant native vegetation cleared that year. In fact, a lower annual rate of 20,000 ha may not reflect better management, but a more devastating loss than a prior higher annual rate, if it represents a higher proportion of native bush that remains. That is, cumulative losses and contextual information (already held by the SLATs unit) are critical in this discussion.


This reporting matter aside, given past vegetation losses and cascading impacts on terrestrial, freshwater and marine environments, I strongly recommend that this Bill, which seeks to reinstate many protections and also responsibility for permitted (and mapped!) land clearing to landholders, be passed into law as soon as possible.

Furthermore, I would strongly support tighter controls on both freehold and leasehold land, and a buyout of clearing rights on rural land supporting the most valuable remnant and endangered vegetation.


It is absurd that, in 2016, we are dealing with such negligence and damage to Queensland's biodiversity and landscapes, and the Great Barrier Reef wonderland, when the urgency for responsible management essential to halting ill-conceived works, both large scale and cumulative, was well recognised both scientifically and politically post-Rio, by the early 1990s.

Please reinstate management that is capable of both protection and repair worthy of Queensland's extraordinary natural heritage.

Yours sincerely,



Margy Gaynor



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