

Mr Peter Maslen

**GULMARRAD NSW 2016**

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Dear Chair and Committee Members

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

While I am no longer a Queensland resident, during the decades I lived there and the travels I made before, during and since that period over this great part of Australia, demonstrated to me the need for improved controls on land clearing throughout the state. The need for sound, strong and enforceable legislation to protect native vegetation is needed more now than when the original Vegetation Management Act 1999 was introduced. I worked for many years in environment development control areas of local government and have witnessed at firsthand how poor legislation and policies can impact on our ecosystems and fauna. The significant increase in vegetation clearing 2010 has proved the current approach is flawed. As an Australian I make this submission in an attempt to gain the creation of environmentally sound legislation to protect Queensland's vegetation and its associated ecosystems.

The following are some of the reasons why Queensland environmentally sound vegetation clearing laws and regulations is required especially when federal legislation is failing in this respect.

With 2 snails, 12 reptiles, 15 mammals, 4 fish, 3 invertebrates, 17 birds, 13 amphibians and 202 plant species listed as endangered and 37 reptiles, 29 mammals, 5 fish, 5 invertebrates, 36 birds, 19 amphibians and 395 plants as vulnerable in Queensland, that we are aware of, protection of their habitat is essential. Weakened land clearing legislation has increased irresponsibly the real potential for this list to increase driving some species into extinction. Iconic species such as koalas have been dramatically reduced under current legislation which has been poorly enforced so the continued existence of weak legislation will increase this decline. Vegetation clearing legislation needs to be strengthened so that we can potentially enhance habitats and reduce the number of species that are considered endangered or vulnerable.

It is well documented that tree and vegetation clearing results in changes in local climate and commonly reduces rainfall with the resultant potential desertification of lands. This is acknowledged by anyone with a good understanding of climate and land management. Increasing the potential for drought is not sound management of our rural resources. Legislation needs to be retained and strengthened if increased drought is not to be realised.

Climate change in a negative manner has been finally recognised by the world in general proven by the recent United Nations signing of the Paris climate agreement by 175 nations. Increase vegetation clearing will release tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere. Responsible sound vegetation clearing legislation will reduce the potential of this occurring.

Vegetation clearing in catchments and particularly within the riparian zones of water courses increases the reduction in water quality of our waterways. With uncontrolled vegetation clearing erosion increases; land quality is reduced for natural and agricultural benefits and the poor water quality impacts on downstream users and receiving waterways such as the ocean of the Great Barrier Reef.

The Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 must be passed to protect Queensland's ecosystems and wildlife. This bill is important particularly because it:

- reinstates the protection of high value regrowth on freehold and indigenous land;
- removes provisions which permit clearing applications for high value agriculture and irrigated agriculture;
- broadens protection of riparian vegetation, especially in the Great Barrier Reef catchments of Burnett Mary, Eastern Cape York and Fitzroy Great Barrier Reef;
- reinstates the application of the riverine protection permit framework to the destruction of vegetation in a watercourse, lake or spring; and
- 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).

Yours sincerely



Peter Geoffroy Maslen