

SUBMISSION TO:

Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation
Amendment Bill 2016

SUBMISSION COVER SHEET

Closing date for submissions is 25 April 2016.

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SUBMISSION

I provide my submission in support of the continuation of the Current Vegetation Management Act 1999 and rejection of the changes proposed in the Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 ("the Bill").

At this point in time I own/manage a Beef cattle business on 13000ha. of farming land in Central Queensland. Like many farmers I consider myself an exceptional Land Steward with an affinity for functional and healthy ecological systems.

Apart from stints at University, a couple of years in Brisbane and working overseas I have lived on the land all of my life. From 2005 I developed a consultancy business that quickly developed expertise in dealing with the Veg. management Act. Specifically, providing clients with PMAVs, map changes etc. That company became one of the major suppliers of services in Queensland and I personally saw, in intimate detail, how the Vegetation Act. worked across a broad cross-section of Queensland from the Brigalow, mulga, Open Downs to the Tropical North.

I can assure you that the uncertainty created by successive Labor governments in their changes to the Veg. Act. and its interpretation has created enormous damage to our environment. Farmers simply do not trust government. They clear land that they legally can but which doesn't make ecological or financial sense to do so. They leave country untouched and it has grown (in the absence of fire) into an unhealthy monoculture of Acacias or Eucalypt that catastrophically fails to produce anything except excessive soil loss (because of lack of grass). Farmers are not investing in land productivity for fear and/or recently a lack of cashflow. This lack of investment is beginning to have dire consequences on productivity; a situation that stands to become decidedly worse with real consequences for our food production capacity in this state.

When that nexus of trust was broken in the mid 2000's farmers lost the ability to gain useful and independent advice from their government advisers and government lost its capacity to productively manage huge swathes of our landscape.

The continued vilification of farmers for political motives is making the situation worse. Farmers will invest much less in this climate of uncertainty, and if they do they will not invest for the optimal environmental outcome.

In providing this submission I refer directly to the key provisions of the legislation which the 2016 Bill intends to amend.

1. Removing High Value Agriculture and Irrigated High Value Agriculture from the Vegetation Management Framework
There are large swathes of land – especially in Northern Australia- that remains largely unproductive and in many cases unhealthy ecosystems. After due process some of these should be cleared and managed in a way that will put more carbon into the system and cash into the business than the inert remnant systems that currently exist .

Signed:			
Address:		THEODORE Q. 4719	
Date:			18/4/16

On my own farm I am busy planting trees (e.g. Leuceana). I have some areas of remnant vegetation near irrigation but decided not to apply for HVA because of the cost and red tape involved (in applying). I imagine a number of other smaller operators are in the same boat.	2. Re-introducing Reverse Onus-of-Proof
<p>In our local area we have seen first hand the devastating effect of reverse onus of Proof as it stood under the previous Labor government. A family of high standing taken all of the way to the court door before the government dropped the charges of illegal clearing. A weak, if not baseless, charge was allowed to roll on unchallenged and a family went through 12 months of stress and paying huge legal fees.</p> <p>We know, of course, that the fear of these consequences is what drives most farmers charged with offences to simply plead guilty and pay the fine. We know too that is the same reason that the government introduced these archaic laws. Is it ethical? Is it reasonable to give farmers less rights that common criminals just to ensure a successful conviction?</p>	3. Including High Value Regrowth as an additional layer of regulation under the Vegetation Management Framework on leasehold, freehold and indigenous land
<p>In 2009 the government hastily prepared this mapping layer and its credibility was immediately and consistently shot down. I personally know of thousands of hectares of sorghum crops, claypans and dams that have been wrongly mapped as HVR. That credibility has not improved in the years since with preliminary investigation of the 2016 layer showing it to be no better than the 2009 version.</p> <p>This is a blatant cash grab by the government that, if passed, will have dire consequences for managing healthy and productive agricultural landscapes in this state.</p>	5. Increasing Category R vegetation to include the Burdekin, Mackay, Whitsunday and Wet Tropics Great Barrier Reef catchments and additional catchments Burnett Mary, Eastern Cape York and Fitzroy.
<p>Extending the buffer zone around streams to greater than 50m will have no positive environmental impact on the reef. It is another part of the political push by this government to use the public's genuine affection for our Reef to push this legislation.</p>	