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Dear Chair and Committee Members

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

I am Peter Reay of Cairns, Queensland and thank you for the opportunity to comment in support of the proposed legislation amendment bill.

As a public advocate for the natural environment for over 40 years, I can appreciate the effort here in making a balance for the natural and human land uses. Therefore, this bill is extremely important in re-establishing a better balance than what was the case. This bill is important for a number of reasons and some of these are listed below:

- protecting koalas, or other threatened species of concern to you;
- the impact of tree clearing - increasing drought in our already drought stricken state – it has now been proven that the more trees we have, the more rain we have;
- the impact of tree clearing on climate change – tree clearing causes millions of tonnes of CO2 to be released into our atmosphere;
- tree clearing near catchments can cause land erosion and run off into our river catchments – the erosion and run off caused by clearing along the Great Barrier Reef catchment banks is a leading cause of impacts to our Reef; or
- reducing the impact of salinity and maintaining a healthier top soil.

In supporting this Bill I would want to emphasise some key areas of recommendation that further clarify the significance of this Bill as outlined below:

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).

***N.B. This could be extended to much of the urban/rural interface areas also or in urban protection zones or urban forest, where vegetation is mitigating run-off issues to the Great Barrier Reef, which is facing rapid decline or chronic decline.***

**I thank you again for this opportunity to comment on such an important Bill.**

Yours sincerely

**Peter Reay**

**Public Advocate**

*For a safer and healthier Earth for our children-ask the children*