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Dear Chair and Committee Members

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

I am a concerned citizen involved in voluntary ecological survey work in the Brisbane and Sunshine Coast regions. I was dismayed by the degradation of environmental protection laws such as the Vegetation Management Act by the previous Queensland government, in particular the severe weakening of protections against excessive and unnecessary clearing of vegetation.

It has been well documented that clearing of vegetation not only destroys valuable habitat for wildlife already under intense pressure but also causes changes in weather patterns and climate, loss of fertile soils, silting of river systems and increased risk of flash flooding all of which have serious impacts on society, agriculture and the economy. Personally I know through my survey work how much life even small patches of habitat can sustain and how important they are, particularly for birds migrating between the Northern and Southern states and between the highlands and lowlands. I believe that we need to preserve, enhance and connect our remaining habitats while still allowing landholders sufficient means to maintain their properties, if we do not then we are sure to see local extinctions of iconic species in our lifetimes.

The changes proposed by this Bill will return Queensland to a more balanced approach to vegetation management to the benefit of all Queenslanders. It will prevent unnecessary clear felling of dwindling woodlands, restore protection of riparian vegetation to reduce erosion and improve water quality, restore protection of valuable regenerating woodlands and encourage landholders to maintain their properties in a responsible manner. Importantly the proposed legislation will also apply retrospectively to deter irresponsible landholders from undertaking damaging clearing in the interim.

I therefore encourage the committee to approve the changes proposed in this Bill.

Yours sincerely

Chris Attewell