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Research Director  
Agriculture and Environment Committee  
Parliament House  
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Dear Chair and Committee Members,

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

Michael and I are Queensland residents and as such have a vested interest in decisions made about how the State's natural environment is utilised and managed. We are making this submission because we believe reinstatement and strengthening of vegetation management laws in Queensland are absolutely crucial for the long-term health of the state. Furthermore, we believe that implementation of such laws to better protect the natural environment are absolutely crucial to the long-term health of the nation and ultimately the planet. We are two individuals who recognise the very real and pressing threat of climate change to the future of the world and all its inhabitants, and understand the importance of natural vegetation and associated ecosystems in ameliorating this dire situation.

Protecting the State's vegetation is important for so many reasons. It is important in helping protect our many threatened species, including our iconic koala. The Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage Protection states that "the biggest threat to koalas is habitat loss" (<https://www.ehp.qld.gov.au/wildlife/koalas/koala-threats.html>). Once these animals are gone there is no bringing them back and what a horrible indictment on our track record for preserving threatened species if we were to drive koalas to the point of extinction in the wild.

It has now been proven that forest coverage increases rainfall and minimises rising land temperatures (Bonan, 2008; Galos et al. 2013). Australian research also posits land clearing over the past 200 years as being as significant a factor in this country's droughts and changing climate as increasing carbon dioxide in the atmosphere (McAlpine et al., 2007). It is therefore ridiculous and completely counterproductive to clear trees and increase drought in an already drought-stricken State: Queensland needs more trees not fewer.

Our use of land in Queensland also has a significant impact on the health and future of another of Australia's icons and world-heritage listed site, the Great Barrier Reef. More specifically, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority *Outlook Report 2014* states that land-based run-off is one of the two top threats to the health of the Great Barrier Reef

ecosystem, coastal development being the other one. The threat is from sediment from soil erosion caused by broad-scale land clearing and from run-off caused by broad-scale land use, including run-off of nutrients from fertilisers used in agriculture as well as run-off of pesticides used in agriculture. The Great Barrier Reef, one of the seven natural wonders of the world, is the most complex natural system on earth (Greening Australia). It is home to 1400 types of coral, 125 species of fish, 240 species of birds and six of the world's seven marine turtles. It is an awe-inspiring natural wonder that every year contributes \$5.2 billion to the Australian economy and employs 68,000 people (Greening Australia). Sanctioning further land clearing in the State with its huge concomitant threats to the Great Barrier Reef is preposterous in the face of these facts.

We support the passing of the bill to protect Queensland's ecosystems and wildlife. We support it in particular because we understand 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 Great Barrier Reef catchments;
- 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 (which has led to only 1 offset being registered for vegetation impacts since 2014).

Yours sincerely,

Christine McCoy and Michael Kearey

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