

Research Director
Agriculture and Environment Committee
Parliament House
Brisbane, Queensland 4000

29th April 2016

Please accept this as my submission to the inquiry into the Queensland land clearing reform Bill.

I support the bill (the Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2016) and laws to stop destructive land clearing across Queensland and to conserve remnant native vegetation.

Clearly, the Newman government's relaxing of vegetation management laws have had devastating impacts allowing uncontrolled clearing in the name of agricultural productivity at the expense of biodiversity and wildlife habitat. Agricultural productivity targets must not be achieved by trashing our natural environments, degrading woodlands and riverbank vegetation or threatening the health of catchments which feed into our rivers and coastlines, risking pollution to one of our greatest coastal assets - the Great Barrier Reef.

I believe it is very important the bill (the Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2016) be made retrospective to prevent panic land clearing in the interim and hold landholders responsible for their actions, in the event of illegal clearing. Restoring protections to riparian vegetation is essential to healthy catchments and protecting regrowth woodlands will maintain and enhance the capacity for bushland to sequester more carbon as the world moves to urgently address the risks of climate change and reduce our damaging CO2 emissions.

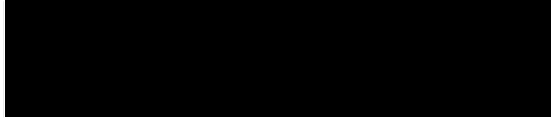
Australia's loss of biodiversity has led to one of the worst species extinction rates in the world and the science is telling us we must protect what remains of our natural environments, conserve and enhance remnant vegetation areas to provide refuge for our wildlife as climate change impacts worsen over the next 50 years and into the next century. Industrial agriculture and land clearing is responsible for much of the devastation across inland Australia and the desertification of vast areas over the past century. Our forests and woodlands are essential to our climate and the production of rainfall, the filtration of underground water sources and the healthy functioning of our river ecosystems. Grand agricultural schemes have failed to create sustainable land use outcomes, because in the long term they are destructive to our environments and the ecosystems we rely on for life.

Supporting generational farming families on their land to enhance native vegetation cover and stream side habitat, while producing healthy food crops for our domestic and international markets is a win/win for the land, the farming regions and protection of our water catchments and ultimately our coastal environments. All land use strategy must acknowledge that we are all connected by the web of life and seek to value and respect those relationships above and beyond material gain. The current economic model used by most businesses fails to value the intrinsic threads of life without which human civilisation will not survive.

Better protection for native vegetation will have long term beneficial impacts for environmentally sustainable development and our ability to sustain healthy livelihoods for our generation and all who come after us.

There is no greater threat to our planet than global warming, yet the skeptics will be the ones also complaining about their right to clear vast areas of regrowth, demanding we build bigger dams to irrigate massive areas for export production and selling these ideas to foreign corporations for a get rich quick retirement at the expense of local farming communities. It really is time to protect the wealth of our lands, not the wealthy at the expense of our environments.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.



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