

SUBMISSION TO:

Submission No. 550

**Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation
Amendment Bill 2016**

SUBMISSION COVER SHEET

Closing date for submissions is 29 April 2016.

Please complete and submit this form with your submission to:

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Colin & Noeleen Ferguson

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28th April 2016

Agriculture & Environment Committee

Submission Re: Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016.

Dear Committee members

We provide our submission in support of the Current Vegetation Management Act 1999 and rejection of the changes proposed in this Bill.

We strongly object to the removal of Section 22A (2) (I) -

- irrigated high-value agriculture clearing as a relevant purpose for making a development application under the Sustainable Planning Act 2009 (Sustainable Planning Act).

Removal of this *one key provision* will be the sole reason for a complete halt to a proposed modest expansion that would adjoin and encompass an existing 18 hectare irrigated fodder (lucerne & rhodes grass) cropping area on our family's cattle grazing property.

We require this Development Permit to clear **a total area of 29 hectares** of remnant vegetation strategically located within the overall 80 hectare development.

The blanket removal of this provision under Section 22A will result in **no alternate or proposed relevant purpose** under current Queensland legislation to allow clearing of remnant vegetation for the scope and type of irrigated development within Queensland.

In our particular circumstance we do not consider the affected 29 hectares as broad scale clearing - it appears that we will be 'collateral damage', 'out of sight out of mind' and a presumed 'easy mark' in the overall political opportunistic scheming of this ill-conceived Bill with complex, far reaching ramifications for Queensland's agriculture sectors.

The removal of this provision will not fairly balance the government's commitment to reduce carbon emissions with the landholders' ability to responsibly manage remnant vegetation on their properties.

As part of the rigorous application process, current guidelines provide detailed information on how to demonstrate land suitability and financial viability for a development approval that:

- the land is suitable for the proposed irrigated high value agriculture
- the development will be economically viable
- there is no suitable alternative site and clearing is limited to the extent necessary to establish and cultivate crops

It is the **one** relevant purpose which will allow our advanced case to progress under DNR &M's assessment pathway (commenced early 2015) to be deemed a properly made application, then submitted to the State Assessment Referral Agency (SARA) for final assessment in order to obtain the required Development Permit to clear the **29 hectares**. Yes 29 hectares. The development area adjoins the remaining **17,100 hectares** of remnant vegetation on the property.

This area is required to allow two suitable sized centre pivots full 360 degree rotation, which will streamline, integrate effective and efficient best management water, soil conservation, crop and

environmental practices. It will underpin and strengthen the identified practical, common sense, achievable economy of scale approach to the integrated long term business and financial goals of our property's enterprise plan.

The removal of this provision will have immediate consequences for our cattle husbandry practices and financial viability. In our country, cattle energy and protein levels become critical considerations during the dry seasons. Through the latter quarter of 2015 declining grass conditions clearly demonstrated:-

- the importance of providing quality fodder to support and maintain breeder condition.
- the need to be self-sufficient and prepared to supplement feed should this and future season's climatic conditions decline.
- the strategic financial loss from not commencing this development

The season to date looks like it will head the same way as 2015. When commencing the application process with DNRM in early 2015 we had anticipated to have obtained the development permit, get the planned Stage 1 crops planted, irrigated, cut, baled and in the hay sheds by May 2016 at the latest. Departmental indifference, political posturing and a clear lack of appreciation for the livelihood of affected graziers has resulted in lost opportunity.

On reading Hansard records relevant to the Introduction, First Reading and Referral to the Agriculture and Environment Committee of this Bill into Parliament on Thursday 17th March 2016 we were extremely disappointed and offended by comments made by several Government Ministers.

Deputy Premier Trad comments - "This bill restores the right balance between protecting vegetation that plays a critical role in maintaining healthy and sustainable ecosystems while not diminishing the ability of our agriculture sector in this state to expand and flourish."

Why will that not include our affected 29 hectares? Correct legislation must reflect the diversity of the vegetation landscapes across the entire State. This proposal clearly lacks such balance.

Environment Minister Dr Miles comments - "There are farmers out there losing sleep over this, and they should not be. Queensland farmers and graziers have nothing to fear from these laws. In fact, these laws compliment the good stewardship that our agriculture communities are known for".

I can assure Committee members that we have lost sleep and heaps of it.

There has been no genuine consultation as evidenced by reading relevant Hansard records when this Bill was tabled in Parliament. Senior Ministers comments only showed further contempt for the correct consultation process that should have been afforded to the entire Queensland community prior to its introduction. Mr Wellington's comments and action are to be commended and sincerely appreciated by the wider regional communities.

We wish to request the opportunity to speak with Committee members at one of the public hearing venues in our region to provide further information relating directly to the proposed Bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

Yours sincerely

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