

From: [REDACTED]
To: [vminquiry](#)
Subject: Vegetation Management Submission
Date: Friday, 29 April 2016 10:41:32 AM

Research Director
Agriculture and Environment Committee
Parliament House
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Sir/Ms

I write to support increased restrictions on the clearing of native vegetation. I support the Queensland Government's bill in this regard as at least a start in the right direction. I also write as a landholder and resident on 12 hectares of North Queensland bush who has been developing a semi-commercial exotic fruit orchard on about 2.5 of those hectares, using only land previously covered by woody weeds.

My personal priorities as a Queenslander, are the primary reason for supporting strict requirements to preserve what we have left of Queensland's native vegetation. I place the highest value on Queensland in terms of its natural beauty, flora and fauna. However, I believe that my values here also very much coincide with the medium and longer term welfare of Queensland's human population.

I am aware that woodland destruction, euphemistically called "tree clearing", often gives an initial large boost to beef cattle production as grassland provides more fodder. However, the boost is temporary. After a decade or so, there will have been some years of drought leaving periods of bare land which then results in soil erosion that would have otherwise been prevented by the tree cover. The land becomes devalued and less productive economically, ultimately less productive than the original woodland. It is likely that it will then take many human generations before the land is much use either to humans for production or as natural habitat for our wildlife. In the past, this poor outcome could have been economically justified. If during this process, interest rates were as high as they were a decade or so ago, a "rational" economic assessment could have made the case that the investment of the proceeds of a big boost to production for a few years, could yield interest in money terms which outweighed the income from continued sustainable management of the land. However, interest rates have been in long term decline and it seems that they will remain not far from zero for the foreseeable future. A mentality still persists, of flog the land and live off the interest from the good first few years, but this mentality no longer makes economic sense from any perspective.

Who gains a short term benefit from "tree clearing", is another issue. A good deal of land is foreign owned and much agricultural employment goes to underpaid young foreign travellers, 457 visa holders and people illegally working on a tourist visa with minimal benefits to the general Queensland economy or to taxation revenues.

Another issue is "tree clearing" to allow "high value agricultural production". There are two aspects here. It seems that most tree clearing proposals under this heading are in practice fraudulent. For example it seems that in the case of awful large scale woodland destruction on the Olive Vale pastoral station near Laura last year, there was no real intention to establish intensive irrigated agriculture, instead, it was much more a case of an agribusiness getting a short term boost to beef cattle production whilst inflicting annihilation on beautiful woodland and causing long term degradation of a large block of land. On the other hand, where there is a real intention to establish intensive agriculture, it should be noted that such ventures are almost always failures and can be a major drain on the taxpayer, witness the struggling Ord river scheme in North West Australia and the failed HumptyDoo project in the Top End. After 150 years of European settlement of the entire continent and accompanying experimentation with modern production, it is clear that with thin old soils, very erratic rainfall and no good prospects for reliable irrigation, almost no part of Northern Australia that is not already developed, is suitable for larger scale "high value agricultural production".

Finally, there are many very obvious reasons for not allowing any more "tree clearing". There is the threat of extinction to species of flora and fauna and the inevitable mass killing of native animals in the process of removing their habitat. There is pollution of our rivers by increased soil runoff some of which is smothering the Great Barrier Reef. There is the issue of increasing dust storms. There is the very obvious issue of releasing the carbon stored in the trees, exacerbating climate change. I note that climate science predicts that the frequency of severe cyclones will increase and cyclones will extend further South. As a survivor of cyclone Yasi and

resident within 15km of the coast of North Queensland, I believe that it is our Government's responsibility to lead the way in decreasing global carbon emissions and should therefore not continue to permit "land clearing" which substantially increases these emissions.

Yours Sincerely

David Kault



Townsville
Qld 4816

