

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

### **Public Submission by Malcolm Mars dated 29 April 2016**

I refer to the Bill proposing to amend the Vegetation Amendment Act 1989, the Sustainable Planning Act 2009, the Water Act 2000, the Environmental Offsets Act 2014 to:

- tighten the vegetation management framework for controlling land clearing in Queensland
- limit the clearing of riparian vegetation, especially in the Great Barrier Reef catchments
- reinstate the application of the riverine protection permit framework to the destruction of vegetation in a watercourse, lake or spring, and
- reinstate certain environmental offset requirements

As a former Qld resident and current Qld land owner I have a keen interest in our natural environment and am strongly in support of the provisions contained in the Bill for the following reasons:

1. The Bill will restore the law back to the way it should be which was the culmination of years of public pressure on the Qld Government in order to ban broadscale land clearing.
2. Since the law was changed by the former Newman Government clearing rates tripled and ending broadscale clearing was a major election promise by Annastacia Palaszczuk while in opposition. Furthermore, it has been reported that only one prosecution (without conviction) for illegal land clearing has been made in the past year despite 200 complaints.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-02-25/illegal-land-clearing-prosecution-queensland-figures/7201246>

3. Tree clearing adversely impacts upon water catchments and releases millions of tonnes CO2 into the atmosphere leading to climate change. Top Australian scientists have just reported that large tracts of the Great Barrier Reef are likely to be dead within 20 years as climate change drives mass coral bleaching events. This would devastate Qld's tourism industry.

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/latest-news/large-parts-of-reef-dead-in-20-years/news-story/fbf3bb5d906da0f4c5023c12dba69bb7>

4. The Australian Government achieved its commitment to the Kyoto Protocol primarily due to the avoidance of land clearance and has now signed on to the Paris Agreement which commits the Government to work towards net zero emissions.

<http://reneweconomy.com.au/2015/the-paris-climate-deal-what-it-means-for-australia-and-its-policies-61728>

5. Tree clearing results in the loss of habitat and impacts on threatened species such as the iconic koala.

6. Other negative impacts associated with tree clearing include the loss of biological diversity, reduction in soil quality, reduced rainfall and drop in humidity leading to higher temperatures and increased fire risk.
7. The Qld Government has a global responsibility to protect our natural environment and assist towards achieving our targets in respect of climate policy.

The provisions of the Bill also provide the following benefits:

1. Removes the ability to get a permit clear for so-called High Value Agriculture, and thus stop large-scale clearing of remnant woodlands.
2. Restores protections for ecologically important regrowing woodlands ('High Value Regrowth') on freehold and Aboriginal land.
3. Restores protections for trees next to riverbanks ('riparian areas') and extending provisions from some to all Great Barrier Reef catchments.
4. Removes the spurious defence of claimed mistaken clearing and restores the starting presumption that a landholder is responsible for clearing that takes place on their property.
5. Aims to deter panic clearing and panic applications by making much of the prospective legislation retrospective to 17 March.

I trust that my submission will be taken into account and look forward to the passing of the Bill as a matter of urgency.

Regards

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