

Stephen Kearney

Yeronga, Qld, 4104

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Research Director
Agriculture and Environment Committee
Parliament House
BRISBANE QLD 4000
Email: vminquiry@parliament.qld.gov.au

Submission to the Agriculture and Environment Committee inquiry into the *Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016*

Dear Chair and Committee members,

I, Stephen Kearney, fully support the bill *The Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016*.

There are a number of reasons why I support this bill. I believe amending the Vegetation Management Act will *reduce sediment run-off into the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) lagoon; reduce Australia's GHG emissions and protect ecologically important regrowth vegetation*.

Additional to these valuable reasons, of greatest concern to myself are:

The need for this bill to lessen the impacts of land clearing on Australia's and Queensland species, especially those species threatened with extinction.

There are a number of reasons why this bill and adequate vegetation clearing legislation generally is required to lessen the impacts of land-clearing on native species in Queensland.

Queensland has an insufficient Protected Area Network

In Queensland we currently have an insufficient and in many bioregions an inadequately representative Protected Area system (DoE 2014). Across the state we have 6 percent (between 4 and 7 percent, depending on the source) of our land under some form of protection. This, compared to the global average of 14 percent (World Bank 2016) and the global target for 17 percent by 2020 (CBD 2020), is inadequate. To counter this inadequate protection for our terrestrial environment, adequate legislation to regulate land-clearing is vital in ensuring protection of biodiversity.

Harming Australian biodiversity to increase exports doesn't make sense

Although land clearing in Queensland is for many activities, the Australian government states that nationally, most land is cleared for cattle grazing (DCEEE n.d.). Additionally, Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) have published figures that, in 2014, 74 percent of the total Australian beef production was exported (MLA 2015). MLA also show that over the past 3 financial years, the Queensland grazing industry produced 43 percent of the total herd for Australia, more than double the next highest cattle producing state, NSW (MLA 2016).

If clearing in Queensland is occurring for cattle production, for which it produces the most of any states or territories, and three quarters of which is destined for overseas markets, all Australians (both current and future generations) are bearing the brunt of the negative (losing biodiversity) and only a few are reaping the benefits.

I believe, because of this, any additional land-clearing for grazing in Queensland is unnecessary and at the cost of biodiversity.

In 20 years from now, I'd like to not be known as the ones who stuffed it all up

When I was younger my grandparents from Tasmania explained to me about the extinction of the thylacine and how misinformed farmers played a major role in this (Wroe and Attard 2012). When I have grandchildren, I don't want to have to explain to them about the extinction of the koala because we wanted to export more beef to the US and China.

The bill doesn't go far enough, however it is a reasonable compromise for now

I actually believe that this bill does not go far enough. Further protection is required to ensure the continuation for our unique species. However, for now, I feel this is an adequate compromise.

Finally, I see the two following situations to be similar to the situation of land-clearing in Queensland. And the answer to these questions/situations are quite clear, however when it comes to land-clearing the answer seems a bit hard for some to understand.

1. If I buy a block of semi-rural land and decide I want to build a large, multiple story affordable retirement units on it. However, the planning scheme does not allow this.

Am I able to go ahead with what I want to do? Even if I could make millions in the process (and if I don't there will be nowhere for people to live (similar to the argument that everyone will starve if we don't clear more land))? **No.** Adequate laws are in place to ensure development is sustainable and fitting to the area.

2. Resources (minerals, gas, etc.) in Australia are property of the Crown.

Why do farmers (many of whom are just leaseholders) think they own and therefore can do what they like to the trees and other flora and fauna on top of their land?

I believe this bill provides an opportunity to un-do the wrongs made by the previous Newman LNP government. The amendment of the Vegetation Management Act will ensure a better outcome for Queensland, Australia and the international community by reducing the sediment run-off into the World Heritage listed GBR; reduce Australia's carbon emissions (and help us meet international targets); protect important regrowth vegetation and provide better protection for our unique biodiversity.

Yours sincerely



Stephen Kearney (Hons)

References

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