

Mr Kevin Blackman


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Research Director
Agriculture and Environment Committee
Parliament House
BRISBANE QLD 4000

By way of email to: vmquiry@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Chair and Committee Members

Submission to Committee on Vegetation Management
(Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016

I make this submission as a Queensland citizen, primary producer and land manager with over 20 years experience in rural, regional and remote Queensland.

I am in support of the 'Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016'.

I agree that there should be a tightening of the vegetation management framework for controlling land clearing in Queensland. I am witness to both good and bad land management practices on a daily basis and was horrified to see the unrestrained and largely thoughtless opportunism taken by some primary producers and developers as a result of the amendments made to the Vegetation Management Act in 2013. The effects to environmental health as a result of land clearing are known. Unrestrained and unplanned or poorly planned land clearing has always been disastrous. Good land management and 'best-practice' land management

intrinsically involves the inclusion of, and proximity to healthy ecosystems. I am very concerned about large-scale land clearing for 'high value' agricultural land in the north of this State. The soils are poor and quickly depleted and the environment is fragile – a few good seasons in virgin soil before the chemicals, pesticides and soil loss begins. Current legislation demands that we continue to make all the mistakes from the past and recklessly compound our increasing environmental problems. Please refer to Image A.

As a long-term resident of the Wet Tropics region I am very concerned about the clearing of riparian vegetation, especially in the Great Barrier Reef catchments. I live in the highest rainfall region of Australia and every single time it rains I see the rivers run red as soil from the cane, banana, pawpaw and cattle farms runs unimpeded into our creek and river systems to plume its sediment, fertilizers and pesticides out into the Great Barrier Reef basin. The once tree lined tributaries have been turned into drains. The banks of the larger creeks and rivers fall in because there is no riparian vegetation to hold them together. Habitat for so many fish and other animals is gone. Our waterways are poisoned and flaccid and get worse every year as some farmers clear and push for that extra bin of cane or another few bunches of bananas, or graziers overstock until there is naught but muddied water entering the sea. North Queensland should not be treated as a frontier for exploitation but rather a carefully thought out and managed landscape. I live sandwiched in-between two of the world's most magnificent World Heritage areas and see encroachment into the Wet Tropics effect the Great Barrier Reef first hand. We need to address this serious problem. Please refer to Image B.

I support the reinstatement of the application of the riverine protection permit framework to the destruction of vegetation in a watercourse, lake or spring.

I am not a fan of offsets because the ledger can never be balanced, and it always advantages the developer over the environmental values it seeks to compensate. That said, I welcome any strengthening of and increased scientific rigour to any offsets legislation.

I could talk about the effect vegetation clearing has on global warming but I'm sure that your committee already knows and has ample access to all this information.

In conclusion, its 2016, the reinstatement of strong vegetation management regulations should not be contentious but instead a normal part of everyday life. Time to grow up Queensland.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Kevin Blackman



Image A - Back of Abergowrie adjacent to Wet Tropics World Heritage area, Image date 05/05/2014 and a direct result of LNP legislation and policy. Reminds me of flying over Indonesia.



Image B – Tully River banana farm showing collapsing banks and erosion in highest rainfall area of Australia.