



29 April 2016

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

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

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

On behalf of the Cairns and Far North Environment Centre, I am writing to express support for the Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016.

The Cairns and Far North Environment Centre (CAFNEC) is the peak regional non-government environment organisation for Far North Queensland. It was established in 1981 by concerned local and regional community members with an interest in nature conservation and environmental protection. Our mission as an organisation is to ensure the unique and special natural heritage of Far North Queensland is protected.

Land clearing, which has increased since laws were weakened in 2012, has had a devastating impact on Queensland's environment. The Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 is common sense as it simply reinstates necessary measures to address the negative impacts that tree clearing has on our environment, including:

- the impact of land clearing on increasing drought – in our already drought stricken state
- the impact of land clearing on climate change – tree clearing causes millions of tonnes of CO₂ to be released into our atmosphere
- tree clearing removes habitat for native species, many of which are listed as threatened on NCA, EPBC and IUCN lists.
- land clearing near catchments can cause land erosion and run off into our river catchments – the erosion and run off caused by clearing along the Great Barrier Reef catchment banks is a leading cause of impacts to the Reef



Since 2012, in Far North Queensland, we have seen an increase in soil loss and pollution of streams, the bulldozing of thousands of hectares of known threatened species habitat, and the addition of millions of tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions.

We support the Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 for the following key reasons:

- It removes the ability to get a permit clear for so-called High Value Agriculture, and thus stop large-scale clearing of remnant woodlands
- It restores protections for ecologically important re-growing woodlands on freehold and Aboriginal land
- It restores protections for trees next to riverbanks and extending provisions from some to all Great Barrier Reef catchments
- It restores the starting presumption that a landholder is responsible for clearing that takes place on their property
- It makes much of the prospective legislation retrospective to 17 March, a necessary move to deter panic clearing and panic applications

For all these, and other reasons, the Cairns and Far North Environment Centre urge the Committee to support the Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 to be passed by the Queensland Parliament as soon as possible.

We would also like to request an opportunity to appear before the Committee in their hearing into this inquiry when the Committee comes to Cairns.

Yours Sincerely,

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Director

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