

Kristin Keane

Edge Hill Qld 4870

29 April 2016

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

Dear Chair and Committee Members

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

This letter is to show my support for the re-instatement of vegetation protection that were repealed by the former Liberal National Party government. This decision has resulted in significant areas of vegetation being cleared across the state of Queensland. A key example is Olive Vale Station on Cape York, where the landholder was issued with a permit that approved clearing of up to 30, 000 hectares. This type of broad-scale clearing impacts not only vegetation communities but also has a flow on effect to native fauna including listed species, as well as water quality in freshwater systems and the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

The activity of vegetation clearing, including broad scale practices, has the potential to result in the:


- ) Loss of individual trees that may have nesting hollows, and used for roosting and nesting by species protected under the Nature Conservation Act 1992 (NC Act) and the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act)
- ) Clearing of flora species of conservation significance under the NC Act and EPBC Act that have the potential to grow in all vegetation strata, including protected orchids in upper branches or sedges in groundcovers that may be grubbed as part of any broad-scale clearing activity
- ) Loss of key habitat for native fauna and those of conservation significance listed under the NC Act and the EPBC Act
- ) Loss of essential habitat shown in mapping administered by the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection and the Department of Environment for species of conservation significance listed under the NC Act and the EPBC Act respectively
- ) Loss of remnant vegetation (classified as endangered, vulnerable and least concern) that is managed through the Vegetation Management Act 1999.
- ) Loss or impacts to significant cultural heritage sites and objects administered under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Act 2002
- ) Native fauna, such as *Casuarius casuarius johnsonii* (Southern Cassowary) and *Dasyurus hallucatus* (Northern Quoll) listed as Endangered under the NCA and EPBC Act, becomes increasingly vulnerable as wildlife linkages are reduced due to the clearing of habitat. The loss of contiguous corridors as a result of clearing forces species' to traverse cleared landscapes, and become increasingly vulnerable to mortality from predators (including domestic dogs) and traffic strike. Obviously a depletion in food resources occurs as a result of clearing which will encourage fauna to traverse cleared lands to opportunistically forage.

- ) Loss of riparian habitat and degradation of waterways, including impacts to in-stream aquatic fauna and water quality. This may contravene the provisions of the Water Act 2000 and the Environmental Protection (Water) Policy 2009 (EPP Water).
- ) Impacts to the water quality of Great Barrier Reef catchments.
- ) The ripping up of tree roots and disturbance of the soil substrate. This loosens sediment that then is vulnerable during periods of rainfall to discharge to waterways and wetlands (including potentially internationally recognised RAMSAR wetlands, to whom Australia is a signatory). These concentrated sediment loads have the potential to exceed the water quality objectives of the EPP Water, and relevant ANZECC and Queensland Water Quality Guidelines.
- ) Oxidation of acid sulfate soils where clearing occurs on land that is at or below 5 m AHD. This poses a risk to water quality if discharged in high concentrations. To illustrate how acid sulfate can effect vegetation, refer to the Port Hinchinbrook project in 1997 where acid sulfate was discharged on land and resulted in the mortality of coastal vegetation classified as 'Endangered' under the VM Act.
- ) Creation and exacerbation of edge effects for contiguous native vegetation. For example if clearing extended up to the boundary of a National Heritage property, then this Matter Of National Environmental Significance (MNES) protected under the EPBC Act, will be threatened by edge effects such as weed incursion, changes to microclimate and natural hazards such as cyclonic events. Hence threatening the values of this MNES.

These are a few examples of the types of impacts to environmental values that occur as a result of broad-scale clearing, and poor vegetation management laws. The reinstatement of vegetation protection laws by the Palaszczuk government, including the protection of high value regrowth on freehold and indigenous land, to the VM Act will align with the strategic intention of the environmental and planning laws in Queensland, and the Commonwealth. It is recommended that the riverine protection permit under the Water Act 2000 is also strengthened as this legislation administers additional protection to vegetation growing in riparian areas. The blanket approach to broad-scale clearing negates genuine consideration of offsets for residual impacts resulting from the clearing of any vegetation under the Environmental Offsets Act 2014 (EO Act). There needs to be a much stronger approach to applying the requirements of off-sets under the EO Act to address residual impacts that result from vegetation clearing. These residual impacts should be considered as a risk to the environment, and governed appropriately.

I commend the government for tabling the Queensland Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. The Palaszczuk government is in a strong position to re-introduce these laws and take control of vegetation management in a way that will benefit not only landholders, but also the cultural and environmental values that are the foundation of many of Queensland's environmental and planning laws. The repeal of these laws by the LNP was a poor political decision by the Queensland Government at that time; let's correct this situation and reinstate these laws to the VM Act.

Yours sincerely



Kristin Keane  
BSc