

Research Director  
Agriculture and Environment Committee  
Parliament House, Brisbane, 4000.

**Re: *Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016***

Dear Committee

I write to support the Government's Bill, which delivers on promises to reinstate vegetation protection laws repealed by the previous government.

I support the provisions of the Bill that seek to:

reinstate the protection of high value regrowth on freehold and indigenous land; remove provisions which permit clearing applications for high value agriculture and irrigated high value agriculture; restores protection for riparian vegetation in catchments leading to Great Barrier Reef i.e. watercourse areas to the Burnett-Mary, Eastern Cape York and Fitzroy Great Barrier Reef catchments; and reinstate compliance provisions for the reverse onus of proof and remove the 'mistake of fact' defence for vegetation clearing offences.

Vegetation clearing is a problem and reached 296,000 hectares in 2013-14 (Explanatory notes). It's important the provision to prevent panic clearing remains in the Bill.

Whilst I consider much more needs to be done to save the Great Barrier Reef, this Bill takes crucial and important steps towards trying to achieve that goal. In particular the Bill will help curtail sediment run-off to the Reef by controlling vegetation clearing in catchments and along water-ways feeding into the Reef. Sediments are lethal to corals.

By curtailing land clearing the amount of carbon entering the atmosphere is also curtailed which benefits the Reef in a number of ways. Reducing carbon emissions helps reduce climate change. Climate change is damaging to the Reef through rising temperature that causes bleaching and through the increased frequency and severity of storms and cyclones. Rising carbon emissions also cause ocean acidification, which will, in time, weaken and kill coral.

The recent devastating bleaching on our iconic Reef is immensely sad to witness. Queensland is known to the world for this amazing natural wonder. Not only is the Reef important in its own right, it brings great economic benefit to the state. The importance of this Bill to the Reef's survival should be more than enough reason to ensure its passage. It would be irresponsible to water down this Bill in any way.


Climate change is not just damaging to the Reef, it's damaging to our whole economy and way of life. This is another compelling reason for reducing carbon emissions by curtailing land clearing.

The Bill is also important for the protection it provides for our native vegetation, which is habitat for the states flora and fauna including threatened species like koalas. Native vegetation also provides us with a range of ecosystem services. Queensland is fortunate to have a very high biodiversity with habitats that range from rainforest to heathlands to desert. But with that diversity comes a responsibility to ensure it survives for the long term.

I urge the Committee to recommend enactment of this very important Bill.

Yours sincerely

  
Glen Carruthers

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