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25 April 2016

Research Director
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*

We are an animal welfare organisation. Part of our objectives is the rehabilitation of orphaned, sick or injured animals and the enhancement of Australia's natural environment. We believe that biodiversity is crucial for human wellbeing.

We support the passing of the Bill to protect Queensland's ecosystems and wildlife. This Bill is particularly important to us because it reinstates the protection of high value regrowth and it removes the provisions which permit clearing applications for high value agriculture and irrigated agriculture.

Broad scale land clearing has a very negative impact on biodiversity. It creates biodiversity loss which causes:

- Negative effect on human health, including mental health
- Increase in vulnerability to fires and flooding
- Salt-blighted farm lands
- Increase in greenhouse gas pollution
- Increase in the risk of diseases in animals
- Increase in the number of sick, injured and orphaned animals
- Decrease in the potential of fauna and flora to adapt to the changing climate.

Essentially it limits our freedom of choice: in the long term the value lost will greatly exceed the short-term economic benefits gained from transforming ecosystems through broad scale land clearing (International Union for Conservation of Nature).

In two years (2012-2014) land clearing in Queensland has:

- Bulldozed 200,000 hectares which was the habitat for 200 threatened species: an area nearly twice the size of the Australian Capital Territory
- Destroyed both remnant and regrowth vegetation
- Generated over 60 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions
- Increased soil loss

- Contributed to the damage of the Great Barrier Reef due to polluted streams (SBS News report, 22/04/16).

In undertaking our work, our carers have found the number of wildlife requiring care has dramatically increased. Carers are having difficulties coping with this increase: some carers are now rehabilitating over 2,000 birds per year.

Other animal welfare organisations have also witnessed this increase in injured and orphaned animals:

- RSPCA - Veterinarian Rebecca Millers: the number of native animals injured in south-east Queensland, and brought to RSPCA, has almost tripled in the past four years, from about 8,000 in 2011 to 22,000 over the past year
- World Wildlife Fund - Dr Martin Taylor: a recent survey of carers showed a similar trend occurring across Queensland.

We believe that the increase in injured and orphaned animals is directly related to the extreme increase in land clearing that is occurring across Queensland: 77,590 hectares in 2009/10 to ~278,000 hectares in 2013/14 (ABC News, 16/06/15). The numbers of native animals, surviving in the wild, in south-east Queensland is dramatically decreasing: e.g. in 2012 Queensland's Department of Environment and Resource Management reported a 68% decline in the koala population south-east of Brisbane. The Australian Koala Foundation estimates that there is possibly as few as 43,000 koalas left in the wild throughout all of Australia.

We recommend the passing of this Bill.

Yours sincerely

Jan Marie Brooks

Secretary (*authorised to write submissions on behalf of the association*)

Paws & Brooks Nature Sanctuary Inc