

From: [REDACTED]
 To: ymingui@environment.gov.au
 Subject: Submission to the The Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016
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(Apologies for unfinished state)

Submission re the Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016

“50% of the world’s wildlife has gone in just two human generations” (‘Living Planet Report’ 2014)

I have read this proposed Bill and explanatory notes provided by the government, the WWF and others. I fully understand the issues and would like to add my assessment of it to this commission.

I have been following Queensland’s vegetation laws very closely for over 20 years, have undertaken decades of research into Queensland’s (and in fact the entire continent’s) native vegetation and have had extensive personal experience of both land clearing and land restoration in Queensland since 1978, so I feel I am qualified to comment.

I am particularly concerned about the catastrophic collapse of koala and flying fox populations, which need every last old-growth habitat that remains to survive - in particular housing and industrial estates expanding into last remnants are major threats.

Koalas are now extinct in some local government districts and endangered just about everywhere else – using a koala as an emblem of the Commonwealth Games is blatantly shameful while these lax laws are in place that place so little value on their remaining habitat.

Flying Fox are now threatened everywhere – future rainforests are entirely dependent on them. Moreover, there has been a spike in native animals injuries from land-clearing –(*) <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-04-05/spike-in-native-animal-injuries-land-clearing-habitat/7301942> At the beginning of 2014 Queensland experienced a severe heatwave that decimated the flying fox population, wiping out entire roosts across the state (and in NSW) – tens of thousands of these vitally important apex pollinators, without whom rainforests will inevitably die, dropped from their roosts and died from heat exhaustion. More than 45,000 of the animals died on just one of those hot days in January in south-east Queensland. For example, in most of the towns of the Central and North Burnett, flying fox roosts have completely disappeared. In Gayndah, flying fox numbers have plummeted from 102,500 in 2013 to 15,500 in September 2014. They are now at extreme risk of local extinction in the Central and North Burnett – a few more such heatwaves could wipe them out completely, not just in this district but all over South East Queensland. To anyone who understands how essential this species is to maintaining biodiversity, it is a tragedy beyond comprehension. But even more beyond belief is the criminal ignorance of many people who regard this vitally important native animal as a “pest” and continue to persecute them, now in their final strongholds, into extinction. Not happy with having relentlessly cleared Queensland’s vast mega-biodiverse closed-canopy forests; 98% of Qld’s pre-settlement lowland rainforest, 75% of tableland forests, 90% of dry vine forest and brigalow... not content with the mass destruction and degradation of these natural systems that once provided us with regular rain cycles and moist understory that inhibited fire; not content with flying fox populations now having been virtually wiped out, the LNP were pushing for the ‘sustainable culling’ of fruit bats. This neatly encapsulates why I am terrified that the LNP will regain power in Queensland – our native animals will not survive any more of their profound ignorance.

Speaking more broadly, this issue cannot be approached without taking an all-inclusive perspective of land-clearing in the context of the current viability of many diverse habitats...land clearing seems impenetrably complex but really it can be effectively addressed when dealt with at a local level. I address this in my Continental Connectivity Collaboration, reference below.

Rather than the simplistic way graziers like Grant Maudslay allude to the subject (*) it is not about the extent of tree cover per se, but what the threatened status of particular ecosystems are or the importance of maintaining riparian tree cover preventing erosion and silt ending up both behind dam walls and out onto the reef with every downpour of rain.

The run-off from agriculture, predominantly sugar cane and bananas, clearly makes any recovery of corals from bleaching so much harder. There is a very good documentary on this, focusing on banana crops: <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/backgroundbriefing/rivers-of-red-threaten-great-barrier-reefs-future/6723280>

I worked for years in the cane industry and can verify that a great many cane farmers have cleared the native vegetation right up to the creek or river’s edge. After watching this documentary I went into Google Earth and followed the course of the Johnston River along its entire length, from source to estuary, and easily identified exactly where agriculture has cleared native vegetation right up to the water’s edge - sheer madness, probably illegal and completely unacceptable – punitive measures are not appropriate though. It will be a relatively easy exercise to identify the owners all those properties, then the local, state and federal governments can jointly fund URGENT REVEGETATION – it is just a matter of coordinating the Green Army and other government agencies, with Landcare, SGAP and all the other local conservation & wildlife groups, volunteers and native plant nurseries etc, and hold working bees on every property until both banks are revegetated in a very wide swathe along the denuded sections - that will capture a large percentage of the soil run off after rain. This must be done on every river system flowing into the GBR (which is why Labor’s additional protection of GBR rivers is so imperative). I did the same close-up satellite scan for the Hull, Tully, Murray, Russell and Mulgrave rivers – all have riparian clearing to some extent. This is a matter of top priority and extreme urgency, before the next deluge smother not only the reef but kills all the coastal seagrass again and consequently the turtles and dugong. There are now no more excuses for not acting immediately on this....should there be another catastrophic result from flood run-off, litigation should be pursued against the culpable individuals in government who had the authority and power to take the appropriate action, but willfully neglected to.

A further broadening of the definition is also needed; it is not just the felling of trees we need to address, or even the wholesale clearing of all the plants over a significant area... ‘land-clearing’ is in truth the killing of the land’s ecological foundation, of the myriad creatures great and small who live in that habitat from micro bacteria’s to apex creatures, of the life and very spirit of the land itself, something that has never been discussed other than with Aboriginal senior land custodians who have a far deeper understanding of the metaphysical as well as the physical attributes of country. (*)

Where these native habitats are threatened with extinction, the removal of trees especially veteran habitat trees, and shrubs and native undercover plants, can be legally defined as ‘environmental vandalism’ and/or ‘ecocide’ as it is knowingly pushing that entire ecosystem into extinction and qualifies for indictment in International Criminal Courts.

We must also consider this matter in the context of the federal coalition’s proposed cuts to CSIRO’s ecology division...clearly they do not care much about biodiversity which means the states must ‘take up the slack’ and care more. (*) The Labor opposition on the other hand is 100% behind these law changes that protect biodiversity. (*)

I am also interested in the LNP law changes that greatly facilitated transfer of leasehold properties to free hold and the easy rolling over of leaseholds...are these still in place? It appeared to me at the time that this was politically-motivated LNP cronyism at work, reinforcing their rural base support by allowing freehold ownership by a few individuals of vast properties that no other Queenslander would be privileged to own outright, making them instant millionaires. It can be demonstrated that cattle grazing in arid regions is totally unsustainable – moreover it is cruel to thousands of beasts slowly starved to death over these vast properties in times of drought, which is increasing with global warming, climate and seasonal disruptions.

I'm also interested in the current status of stranded LNP legislation regarding mining and property rights (*). Although this is not directly linked to vegetation management, mining does involve a great deal of native habitat removal, case in point Moreton Resources proposed Kingaroy mine that will further eat into an extremely rare remnant of intact rainforest, of which there is less than 2% or original cover left in the South Burnett.

So to encapsulate why I support this bill;

...it removes the ability to get a permit to clear for so-called 'High-value Agriculture' and thus stop large-scale clearing of remnant woodlands – in these perilous times, there is no excuse to clear native habitat over vast distances;

... it restores protections for ecologically important regrowing woodlands ('High Value Regrowth') on freehold and Aboriginal land;

.... it restores protections for trees next to riverbanks ('riparian areas') and extending provisions from some to all Great Barrier Reef catchments – this is particularly important as mentioned before – to allow clearing of riverbanks right up to the edge of the river is criminally insane;

...it removes the claimed 'mistaken clearing' defence, and restores the *starting* presumption that a landholder is responsible for clearing that takes place on their property, which should go without saying;

...it makes much of the prospective legislation retrospective to 17 March, in an attempt to deter panic clearing and panic applications, which we know is unbelievably still happening.

I believe it is absolutely essential that the government pass this Bill even though it is just one small step towards a *truly* sustainable ecological future. It is imperative that we reverse the LNP's degradation of protection of our precious planetary habitat that all living creatures are entirely dependent on, including us, which was highly egregious of them in my opinion, and led to a further devaluing and disrespect for biodiverse native habitats, and more unnecessary cavalier clearing where a more intelligent and creative approach can always be applied to any situation.

In fact not only do I (and it appears every single professional and scientists in Australia) believe it must be passed, it has become very clear to me that all three tiers of Australian governments must do far, far more to protect last remnants of native biome and set policies that "identify/protect/augment and connect" last remnants thus restoring thousands of square kilometers of degraded landscapes – these policies do not need to be punitive in any way - incentive works much better. I have been working on this for many years, and currently preparing to make a more comprehensive submission to the Prime Minister and Environment Minister, with copies to the Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Environment Minister, based on my Continental Connectivity Collaboration Initiative.

Maureen Brannan [REDACTED] CLOYNA via MURGON Q 4605 [REDACTED]

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(*) <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-04-05/spike-in-native-animal-injuries-land-clearing-habitat/7301942>

Spike in native animal injuries caused by land clearing and habitat destruction, RSPCA says

By [Stephanie Smail](#) 5 Apr 2016

The number of native animals injured in south-east Queensland has almost tripled in the past four years, the RSPCA has said. The animal protection agency said wildlife rescues had spiked from about 8,000 in 2011 to 22,000 over the past year. Veterinarian Rebecca Millers from the RSPCA's wildlife hospital at Wacol, in Brisbane's south west, said it was evidence of the struggle between development and conservation. "We're seeing a lot of animals coming through because humans are encroaching on their environment," Dr Millers said. "Animals are being hit by cars, dog attacks, cat attacks, just because they're on the move, moving through people's backyards, crossing busy roads." On average, 40 to 50 sick and injured native animals are being admitted to the wildlife hospital every day. "The injuries range from minor grazes all the way through to severe head traumas and severe fractures," Dr Millers said. Dr Martin Taylor from the World Wildlife Fund said a recent survey of carers showed a similar trend occurring across Queensland. "We were surprised to find the same message coming back over and over again — habitat loss, land clearing, more rescues," he said. Dr Taylor said it showed the Queensland Government needed to tighten land-clearing laws. "Our native wildlife are always the forgotten victims of the land-clearing debate," he said. A spokeswoman for State Environment Minister Steven Miles said broad-scale land clearing had had an obvious impact on wildlife. She said planned changes to the Vegetation Management Act would help address the issue.

(*) Grant Maudsley and 'the usual suspects' constantly call people who want more protection of our precious native habitat "extreme greens", and a lot worse, and spread fear mongering about what Labor's amendments will do to farmers – this comment on that perfectly reflects my own views:

SteveB • 2 days ago If people who care about wild nature and native plant & animal species are to be labelled as "extreme green", then the National Party and groups like Agforce are "extreme brown" as far as I'm concerned. The only species they care about are their precious domestic livestock. And the only things the Property Council (who represents developers) cares about are their fat wallets, their luxury mansions and their flash cars. Since the British set foot upon this country 238 years ago we've been engaged in an endless quest to clear the land of its natural vegetation. Almost 1 million square kilometres of this continent have been cleared, mostly for agriculture. The cost to the native wildlife of this land has been enormous with dozens of species driven to extinction. When will it stop? Every hectare of forest & woodland cleared results in the death of hundreds of animals and birds. Who will stand up for them? If my caring about native wildlife and natural ecosystems makes me "extreme green" then I'm proud to wear that mantle. I happen to believe that wild plant & animal species and indeed whole ecosystems have the right to exist independent of their usefulness or otherwise to man. And we DON'T have the right to drive them into extinction. A million square kms... and 80% of Queensland given over to livestock grazing... is that not enough? I think it is.

This comment in The Conversation also bears a hearing and resonates with my own work:

[Peter Ormonde, Leaner](#) A starting point - what do we want the rural landscape to look like - even better, what can we reasonably expect it to look like? How's this: It's got people in it - not empty, not endless paddocks. People who work locally. Because the cities are too big, if for no other reason. But also because the country needs people to look after it - otherwise we rely on chains, and chemicals and the great rural emptying continues. It's got trees and scrub in it - thickets, networks, a web of corridors and refuges - waterholes. Big enough to maintain a viable "overlay" of biodiversity and service a viable rural landscape. Parks too - yes, on potentially profitable agricultural land! Especially on watercourses. It's an investment. For something like that simple vision to work requires a few significant changes in policy settings - but not much more. Decentralisation - built around an NBN that works. A price on carbon - also one that works - that sees energy costs reflected in prices. Regional renewable power planning (provides jobs and lowers carbon input costs). Few bits and pieces like that. The harder part comes with paying for it. I can see a role for some sort of perpetual trust that pays landowners (of all sorts) for allocating part of their land - or part of the landscape (if done at a community scale) - to a relevant conservation zoning. Need some planning and a lot of fencing probably. Again, not much more. A means of funding landowners to establish zones for biodiversity could use the tax system... we could negatively gear Nature... provide tax credits for investment in agreed projects - including labour, but also some estimate of the value of foregone production, at least initially. Anyway, there's gotta be a way to do it or we're totes bugged. It's not about looks, it's about being sustainable in the long term, for all creatures, including us. Seems that no matter what they do, whose advice they follow, what market trends they ride, farmers are destined to bugger up the very thing we live here for - the community and how the place looks and sounds and smells. I think there's something really fundamental wrong... that we are still doing what our grandfathers did - of trying to impose an agricultural production system that owes more to Europe or the USA than the peculiarities and variability of this place. You'd think we'd learn. But we go on pretending that we have regular rainfall - being surprised and unprepared when there's another drought... leaving stock on too long ... gambling on the weather. We should learn

from our successful co-tenants - our plants and odd critters. We need an opportunist agriculture - one that can expand and contract, switch and diversify - in response to a variable climate (and changing market conditions) - particularly on the margins. Nimble and agile, I think the current parlance puts it.

We can learn from <http://www.soilsforlife.org.au/index.html>.

This talk by Prof. David Lindenmayer highlights how farmers and everyone else can benefit from a healthy ecosystem:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4sdTuA-F9Sg&list=LLcbO7ID5tQXSTfZcqwwGfw&index=5>

You may enjoy this Radio National program "Future Tense" on robotic farming. <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/futuretense/a-swarm-of-agbots/6968940>

(*) Grant Maudsley: "Green groups do not acknowledge data contained in the Statewide Landcover and Trees Study (SLATS) showing that despite the clearing, tree coverage across Queensland increased by 437,000ha as identified by AgForce." ["Tree coverage" is a very broad term – does 'trees' also refer to woody regrowth a couple of years old? Even if this is correct, and there are 437,000 hectares more trees, THAT'S NOT THE POINT – the point is, it's the loss of OLD GROWTH VETERAN TREES, the loss and degradation of intact closed canopy forests, but mainly, the loss, degradation and fragmentation of THREATENED ECOSYSTEMS that is the cause of major concern, and hopefully that is what new tree clearing laws can prevent.]

"Land clearing reforms [climate change, global warming, drying landscapes due to broad-scale land-clearing and degradation of native habitats, hard-hoofed soil impactation, inherent cruelty of live export and inevitable cases of starvation, a global movement replacing red meat with healthier more ethical choices, etc...] a threat to cattle sector..." Grant Maudsley, from farm lobby group Agforce,

It's not about 'the Premier keeping her job', it's about not returning to the LNP's far worse ecocidal policies... Queensland is now responsible for 90 per cent of Australia's emissions from land use, some 36 million tonnes of emissions every year.

"To paraphrase Albert Einstein, Policy insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results!" Grant Maudsley

Indeed, ie continuing the seven-decades-long rampant land clearing in Queensland that has already led directly to multiple species extinctions and pushed many entire eco-communities to the very brink of extinction, disrupted and extinguished local rain cycles, added tons of CO2 into the atmosphere while taking away the ability of intact native forests to sequester it, contributed to the death of reefs with all the major rivers' riparian zones cleared and bleeding tons of sediment into the ocean with every flooding rain and multiple other eco-catastrophes and not expecting more devastation, is certainly the definition of insanity.

(*) [Queensland land clearing is undermining Australia's environmental progress](#)

Martine Maron, The University of Queensland; Bill Laurance, James Cook University; Bob Pressey, James Cook University; Carla P. Catterall, Griffith University; Clive McAlpine, The University of Queensland; Hugh Possingham, The University of Queensland; James Watson, The University of Queensland; Jonathan Rhodes, The University of Queensland; Kerrie Wilson, The University of Queensland; Marc Hockings, The University of Queensland

Land clearing in Queensland has tripled in the past five years.

"There's nothing wrong with being a greenie – it just means you care..." Mason Crane, sheep farmer

Mason Crane: Biography Mason is a graduate of Charles Sturt University in Albury. He grew up in Gundagai and is still a local in the Western Slopes area of NSW and is committed to bettering environmental conditions in this highly degraded and fragmented area. After graduating, Mason did several stints of paid and volunteer work with National Parks (as a ranger and discovery ranger) and with David Lindenmayer's team of researchers at ANU. Mason was employed full time by David in 2000, and has been primarily involved in the [Tumut](#), [Riverina](#) and [Jervis Bay](#) projects. He is a highly experienced field ecologist with extensive experience in working on forest and woodland vertebrates. He is also keen on botany and revegetation. Over the next few years, Mason will be conducting an experiment looking at the conservation and habitat use of the threatened Squirrel Glider, an arboreal marsupial, for a Masters Degree. Woodland degradation and fragmentation in the Western Slopes has reduced the habitat for Squirrel Gliders. Mason will look at the 3 main types of Squirrel Glider habitat: linear strips (roadside corridors), blocks (Travelling Stock Reserves) and mixed habitats made up of scattered paddock trees, tree plantings and small farm remnants. Specifically, he will examine how habitat shape and make-up affects density, demographics, home range, behaviour and foraging with a view to finding out how to conserve Squirrel Gliders in the Western Slopes area. Mason is actively involved in conservation in his local area with the Gundagai Bushcare Group, Riverina Highlands Landcare network. He has been involved in a number of vegetation restoration projects including restoration work in degraded grassy white-box remnants. Mason brings exceptional local knowledge to David's research team as well as an interest in restoration, exceptional abilities as a field naturalist and an understanding of local farming practices and farmers.

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Lindenmayer, D.B., Crane, M., and Michael D.R., with illustrations by Beaton E. (2005) Woodlands: A Disappearing Landscape. CSIRO Publishing. Collingwood, Melbourne

Mason Crane challenges orthodox grazing methods in: **Can a sheep farm be a biodiversity haven?**

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/offtrack/can-a-sheep-farm-be-a-biodiversity-haven/5658898> Monday 11 August 2014

– "After more than 100 years of this treatment, the landscape that is left near Gundagai is a mixture of introduced and native grasses with a smattering of large trees and some new plantings, mostly along roads or fence lines. Now there is less than half a percent of that sort of environment left intact, and most of that is in cemeteries. Even though it's highly cleared now, there is still a lot of value in these scattered paddock trees and sometimes small remnant patches that still exist"... "Every farmer has got a shade of green in them..." "People used to say to me: We know you're a conservationist but you're not a greenie, are ya? and I'd say; Nahhh... But now I say: Yes I am a greenie! There's nothing wrong with being a greenie – it just means you care..."

Mason Crane steers a middle path between the 'right' and 'left' factions in his community and is able to bring everyone together in a mutually agreed stewardship plan to sustain and enhance the land's biodiversity – as indeed the Landcare movement has always aspired to do, with a great deal of success. This is the ideal that I strive for. The reason why I made a point of the 'obligation free' approach to farmers and land holders who may have old-growth habitat trees or remnants of threatened native vegetation on their land in my Identify/Protect/Connect/Augment/Connect initiative, is specifically to address the all too common mindset behind the very sad killing of a Department of Environment compliance officer in Moree in 2014, and the response by the Mayor that it was somehow justified because the landholder who committed the murder had been "pushed and pushed" by the tree clearing laws! So this approach is education first, ie explain clearly *why* it is so important in fact imperative to keep and restore these habitats and veteran trees, then provide ample incentives for them to do so.

(*) <https://theconversation.com/wvf-fires-a-warning-shot-over-australias-land-clearing-record-40952>

Maureen Brannan Just looking at the location of Moree (where that environmental office was shot by a farmer for illegal clearing), the schematic on google maps seems to highlight the extent of land clearing which has taken place up and down eastern Australia (WA is no different). To me this highlights the damage done to our environment by farming is far in excess of any other industry. The current Western concept of 'wilderness', covering numerous diverse ecosystems, is far too broad a description to have any real value – many remote regions were not left in a wild state by Aborigines, but intensively managed, often utilising fire regimes. In its literal sense however, 'wilderness' can be an accurate descriptor of those dense, closed-canopy ecologies, such as tropical and temperate rainforests, dry vine scrub, mangrove forests, montane ash forests and monsoon thickets, which Aborigines universally left unmodified in their wild state, therefore as wilderness, and protected from fire by burning regularly around their perimeters. <https://au.news.yahoo.com/thewest/a/15632568/rangers-share-vine-knowledge-far-afield/> - "Aboriginal people, including the Bardi Jawi people, are known traditionally to have kept fire away from MVT's to protect important fruit, water and cultural resources") Large clearings were made in such biomes though, for ceremonial purposes, for access to certain sites and for trade route thoroughfares. The constant precipitation generated by the vast area of dense vegetation also helped to keep undergrowth damp and inhibit fires. It is appropriate that Aboriginal science, fine-tuned over many millennia, informs today's management of these 'wild' ecologies and it is appropriate that human activity is restricted.

Alice Gorman Ecologies have been shaped by Indigenous land management and cultural practices, so what is often perceived as a 'natural' environment is equally a 'cultural landscape'.

Maureen Brannan Our understanding of the highly evolved Aboriginal management of many of this continent's ecosystems (an integration with Nature beyond the capacity of Western civilisation at present) has been increasing greatly in recent years, but my own research reveals a pan-Aboriginal practice of never interfering in any way with dense, closed-canopy systems, such as rainforests, vine forests and monsoon thickets – such ecologies were left intact, ie left wild so such areas can accurately be termed 'wilderness', and as still practiced with the monsoon thickets protected from fire by routinely burning around the perimeters to prevent the fire from entering them. Wide corridors were sometimes burnt through closed-canopy rainforests though, which enabled easy walking, kept snakes away and provided fresh grazing for prey animals to feed people on their long stretches of journeying. The nature of the high density biomass of these zones generated regular rain cycles... clearing and fragmentation has broken down these local cycles.

I have spent many, many hours on Google Earth, surveying landscapes all over Australia. The extent of cleared land (Broadacre agriculture and human development) with zero native remnants over hundreds of square kilometers is shocking, as is the extent of degraded grazing land. Relatively intact native vegetation remnants especially closed-canopy forests, are few and far between and still being eaten into in every state and territory to this day. (Butterfly Cave housing development...) The entire east coast (up to the Daintree), up to too-steep-to-clear hills, mountains and ranges, the entire inland, ETC ETC around Perth, around Adelaide, Tasmania etc. The entire continent appears to be drying faster than ever before – Tasmania's no electricity due to low dams – 85% Qld still in drought.

John Cassidy It seems that most land clearing is to grow grain and pasture and because of urbanisation. http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@_nsf/0/1C36C09104A4765ACA256BDC001223FE?opendocument About 70% to 80% of land clearing is occurring in QLD <https://theconversation.com/clearing-more-land-we-all-lose-14601> Cattle would have to be the worst introduced species in Australia apart from humans. There are 1000's upon 1000's of square miles of land cleared for cattle in QLD, yet the cattle industry is barely viable.

Farming carbon can be a win for wildlife, if the price is right Eastern Australia's forests could be a hotspot for deforestation in the future - just like these forests in south east Asia. William Laurance

WWF fires a warning shot over Australia's land-clearing record Australia is already clearing land at world-leading rates. Ray Christie/Indigo Skies Photography

Clearing more land: we all lose Brigalow trees are vital for soil health and erosion control. They're only just recovering from 19th century clearing. Why does the Queensland Government have it in for them? Arthur Chapman (This one in particular is vital reading)

Queensland land-clearing changes threaten trees farmers need

Land clearing in Queensland triples after policy ping pong

Farming carbon can be a win for wildlife, if the price is right

Unique Australian wildlife risks vanishing as ecosystems suffer death by a thousand cuts

(This one too is excellent information)

There is another entire layer to add on to all of this, which will be included in my more comprehensive submission to the PM, and that is Indigenous collaborations in land management. I note that 'Aboriginal Land' has been included in this Bill – I will be sourcing more details of this for my thesis.

Monaro dieback brings science and Aboriginal knowledge ...

www.abc.net.au/.. /monaro-dieback-brings-science-and-aboriginal-know...

Feb 10, 2016 - Aboriginal custodians believe a massive dieback of Manna Gum in ... **Monaro dieback brings science and Aboriginal knowledge together.**

Its spirit needs saving. Let's get some soul back into this country. Aileen Blackburn, Ngarigo traditional custodian

Aboriginal fire management – part of the solution to destructive bushfires

David Bowman, University of Tasmania

European invasion completely disrupted the way aboriginal Australians managed fire. Learning from Australia's first people could help us fight fires in the future.

"It's death by a thousand cuts, the ability for the people of the Cape - including Indigenous people who now have vast areas of land back on our title - to do anything on that land is severely restricted." Noel Pearson hitting out against the proposed tightening of Queensland's tree clearing laws, arguing the changes could hurt Indigenous people trying to break out of poverty (below)

Coincidentally, Noel Pearson uses the same phrase as these highly-professional experts, describing the ecological catastrophe that wide-scale land clearing has already wrought on this continent and warning of the disastrous impacts of continued land clearing: <https://theconversation.com/unique-australian-wildlife-risks-vanishing-as-ecosystems-suffer-death-by-a-thousand-cuts-52499>.

It's not the inability to clear more land that is murdering Indigenous peoples Noel, it's the genocidal assimilationist policies of all Australia's governments who have never valued the immense knowledge and wisdom of these longest, most successful and enduring of all human cultures, evolved in a continuous aggregated stream over a minimum of 80 millennia, that kept each and every animal and plant species on the continent thriving in stable ecologies.

Innumerable scientific papers and articles in recent years all concur that our ecological life-support systems are in *serious* trouble*, with many entire eco-communities on the brink of total collapse (eg the grassy whiteboxgum forests with the last one-thousandth percent remaining, the Leard Forest, currently being cleared for two coal mines) almost entirely due to the legacy of wide-spread land clearing and degradation and its

continuation into last remnants. All of Australia's governments are culpable of Ecocide of extreme criminality that is threatening life on this planet, and will inevitably one day face national and international courts.

I am submitting to all governments a proposal for a continental-wide conservation and eco-restoration program, encapsulated here:

<http://worldatpolarity.blogspot.com.au/2015/01/continental-connectivity-co-operative.html> background here:
<http://worldatpolarity.blogspot.com.au/2011/08/biodiversity-submission.htm> <http://worldatpolarity.blogspot.com.au/2014/08/amended-singapore-haze-environmental.html>

...that brings together in an economically viable, socially cohesive and demonstrably achievable plan, all the prominent experts and scientists in the field, the traditional Aboriginal land owners and local environmental workers and volunteers. It is the work of many decades of academic and on-ground research and development, and is itself a part of a broader and as yet confidential submission to the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition.

*References:

<https://theconversation.com/wwf-fires-a-warning-shot-over-australias-land-clearing-record-40952>

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-03-08/wide-shot-of-land-clearing-on-central-queensland-property/7231002>

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<https://theconversation.com/clearing-more-land-we-all-lose-14601>

<https://theconversation.com/queensland-land-clearing-is-undermining-australias-environmental-progress-54882>

<https://jappliedecologyblog.wordpress.com/2015/11/30/the-importance-of-small-patches-of-habitat-for-conservation/>

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/backgroundbriefing/rivers-of-red-threaten-great-barrier-reefs-future/6723280>

Farming carbon can be a win for wildlife, if the price is right

Eastern Australia's forests could be a hotspot for deforestation in the future - just like these forests in south east Asia. William Laurance

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Australia is already clearing land at world-leading rates. Ray Christie/Indigo Skies Photography

Clearing more land: we all lose

Brigalow trees are vital for soil health and erosion control. They're only just recovering from 19th century clearing. Why does the Queensland Government have it in for them? Arthur Chapman

Queensland land-clearing changes threaten trees farmers need

LEARD STATE FOREST deserves a special mention: One of the many activities of Greenpeace has been to help the Laird State Forest blockade, which with the Aboriginal custodians has been striving to stop the destruction of the last significant grassy white-box woodland remnant *in the world* from two unnecessary, unwanted coal mines – a 94 year old war veteran, grandmothers and a large number of professional people who have protested here would be labelled 'terrorists' by the Liberal government. If you go to google maps and search: Laird State Forest, you can only be utterly shocked at the huge gouge already taken out of this unique and invaluable last remnant, surrounded by an ocean of cleared land. The Gomerioi people are currently desperately trying to save a very important site in this forest known as Lawlers Well. If this google image does *not* shock members of this Committee into understanding why caring people are fighting so hard to save this tiny last patch of unique ecology from destruction - which can be correctly termed 'ecocide' and taken to the International Court for Crimes Against Nature - if you believe that it's perfectly OK to clear this forest for more coal, then I believe your morality, or even your very humanity can be brought into question.

Maureen Brannan Hundreds of ppl have been trying to stop this unnecessary destruction for years - the Leard state forest represents the last 0.01% -one thousandth of original cover of grassy whitebox gum woodland left in Australia - the govts 'offsets' that allowed it are bogus - it's hardly believable that govt can eradicate critically endangered ecosystems for coal that can be mined anywhere -also destroying a number of significant aboriginal sites esp lawlors well - clear evidence they are psychopathic ecocidal maniacs... the only hope is for International law to intervene

Nature is neglected in this election campaign – at its and our own peril

Don Driscoll, Deakin University; Euan Ritchie, Deakin University

We're set to hear very little about nature conservation in Australia's upcoming election campaign. Here's why that's a huge oversight.

(*) CSIRO plan to cut "one in four" ecology jobs will add to nation's biodiversity crisis

Posted on April 24, 2016 by rosslynbeeby

Australia's top science agency, the CSIRO, is planning to cut one in four jobs specializing in biodiversity conservation research, a Senate inquiry has been told.

The [Royal Zoological Society of New South Wales](#) has warned the cuts will undermine wildlife management and conservation at a time when Australia is struggling to halt "an ongoing loss and decline of biodiversity."

The organisation is Australia's oldest, and largest, zoological society with around 1,100 members and publishes the scientific journal *Australian Zoologist*.

In its submission to a Senate inquiry hearing evidence on the potential impact of plans to cut around 350 jobs at the CSIRO, the society says it is "incongruous to be cutting staff with specialist expertise in biodiversity conservation at such a critical time."

The cuts were announced by CSIRO chief executive Larry Marshall in February in an email to staff. They include around 110 jobs from climate research, and 100 full-time positions from agency's Land and Water division.

According to the society's submission, this represents around 25 per cent of ecologists employed by the division.

"This is a major loss of critical scientific knowledge to environmental science in Australia," says the submission, which is signed by the society's president [Dr Martin Predavec](#).

"My understanding is that while budget cuts are widespread across CSIRO, biodiversity staff are suffering significant cuts," he writes.

"These cuts compound the widespread loss of environmental science jobs in all state agencies in Australia and the recent demise of the world-leading CSIRO Division of Wildlife and Ecology. Such a loss of scientific capacity is not sustainable and the impact on wildlife management will be felt for many decades."

Predavec is currently editor of *Australian Zoologist* and has been researching changes in NSW koala populations over the past three years.

"Expertise in wildlife conservation takes time to develop and cannot be easily replaced once the balance sheet improves. The staff at risk of losing their jobs are world leaders in biodiversity research and conservation," his submission says.

"Their expertise is critical in the scientific assessment of decisions that will impact on biodiversity conservation Australia-wide. This

expertise is relied upon by everyone making decisions about managing Australian wildlife and ecosystems, and their research publications and expert advice underpin informed conservation decisions both in Australia and overseas."

And yes, Australian ecologists are world leaders and (federal government policy buzzword du jour) innovators. That why New York-based global big cat conservation organisation Panthera, has an Australian ecologist, [Dr Luke Hunter](#), as its president and chief conservation officer. His research areas include lion conservation in Africa, Persian leopards in Iran and jaguars in Brazil.

These are the kind of influential, international jobs that are available to talented ecologists. And given the need to develop more effective conservation management in most countries, it's not as if CSIRO managers can argue that ecology is a "sunset" area of research.

Or a "diminishing investment envelope"(yes, that envelope and its varying dimensions featured in CSIRO management's jargon-larded evidence to a Senate hearing in Canberra in early April).

In the society's submission, Predavec says the federal government's most recent Australian State of the Environment Report (2011) highlighted an ongoing loss and decline of biodiversity. So why cut biodiversity research jobs?

"The loss of productive and well-respected researchers will set back the management of Australia's iconic wildlife and ecosystems by decades. It will severely undermine Australia's ability to comply with its international obligations for biodiversity conservation," he says.

Predavec also argues that wildlife research cannot be left to universities and state agencies.

Universities cannot do this because of the three-year funding cycle and uncertainty in long-term secure funding. Over the last 5 years, State agencies have also cut their environmental science divisions revealing a distinct unwillingness to undertake any environmental science research," he says.

"Only CSIRO has the capacity to undertake the long large-scale research needed to tackle the big environmental issues facing a rapidly changing Australia.....

"Surely there can be less damaging ways to cut costs in CSIRO than to squander decades of experience in wildlife management – an asset which can never be replaced and serves such a vital and extremely effective public role in Australia's research community."

(The submission can be [accessed here](#) – it's number 98)

http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Scrutiny_of_Government/Budget_Measures/Budget_Measures/Submissions

(*) <http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/tableOffice/BillMaterial/160317/Vegetation.pdf>

Hon. JA TRAD (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade and Investment) (8.13 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Environmental Offsets Act 2014, the Sustainable Planning Act 2009, the Vegetation Management Act 1999 and the Water Act 2000 for particular purposes. I table the bill and the explanatory notes. I nominate the Agriculture and Environment Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016.

Tabled paper: Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016, explanatory notes.

Today is an important day for Queensland. Today we begin the process of bringing back Queensland's nation-leading tree-clearing laws. From the outset, I wish to place on record my deep appreciation to the Minister for State Development and Minister for Natural Resources and Mines and the Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef for their deep engagement and extensive work in relation to bringing these bills before the House.

The introduction of this bill into parliament has not been a secret. So it should not come as a surprise to anyone. It was a very clear election commitment of the Palaszczuk government. In November 2015, I announced that our government would introduce a bill into parliament in the first quarter of 2016. Today, we fulfil this promise to the people of Queensland. After a few short years in charge of this state, the LNP wreaked havoc. The slash-and-burn mentality of the LNP set Queensland back 15 years and under its watch tree-clearing rates in Queensland escalated. What did the LNP do about the increase in clearing rates? It made it easier to clear. The Palaszczuk Labor government today takes an important step in redressing the balance to ensure that responsible landholders can still make a living from the land while, importantly, our native vegetation is protected for future generations. **(Our native vegetation needs to be protected for many reasons, not the least being the impending collapse of hundreds of entire ecosystems, but in essence for the continuation of our planetary life support system)** This bill will reinstate key components to the Vegetation Management Act that were trashed by the Newman government. The bill will reinstate the regulation of clearing of 1.18 million hectares of **high-value regrowth** on freehold and Indigenous land. **High-value regrowth is mature regrowth that has not been cleared since 31 December 1989.** That is regrowth that has had 25 years to grow and form regional ecosystems that contribute to the biodiversity of this state, regrowth that prevents sediment from being washed out into our reef and regrowth that absorbs carbon dioxide from our atmosphere. Late last year we saw the Commonwealth government go to Paris and sign up to an agreement aimed at significantly cutting greenhouse gas emissions. The question now is: will the LNP here in Queensland sign up and agree to this bill, or will it continue to go against the rest of the world, against the wishes of the Turnbull federal government, and deny that global warming is happening? This bill also removes the ability to apply for high-value and irrigated high-value agricultural clearing. Broadscale clearing of remnant vegetation has been prevented by previous Labor governments since 2006. Despite the doom and gloom pedalled by the Liberal National Party here in Queensland, agricultural production did not stop. Landholders continued to produce high-quality produce for us and the rest of the world that Queensland is renowned for and our biodiversity, our reef and our climate were much better off.

This changed in 2013, when the Liberal National Party let the bulldozers run free again. One permit alone allowed for clearing of 300 square kilometres of remnant vegetation on Cape York Peninsula in a Great Barrier Reef catchment for untested crops. **(Olive Vale?)** To give members an idea of the scale of this destruction, the clearing area would be three kilometres wide, stretching from Brisbane to the New South Wales border. At the same time as clearing was escalating, the requirements to offset cleared vegetation were reduced. Another component of reinstating a responsible vegetation management framework is meaningful environmental offset requirements to compensate for the loss of significant values, such as **threatened regional ecosystems**. This bill will, therefore, introduce amendments to the Environmental Offsets Act 2014 to commence reinstatement of offset requirements and ensure adequate conservation outcomes for all impacts on our state's significant environmental values. In response to the needs of industry, the bill and amendments to the Environmental Offsets Regulation will enable standardisation of offset delivery by enabling use of the Queensland offset account and legal scrutiny mechanisms for Commonwealth offset requirements.

(*) **MINING RELATED BILLS:** On January 6 when the election was called the Minerals and Energy Resources (Common Provisions) Act, including hundreds of related amendments of various Acts, plus the Water Reform Act, had all been assented to by Parliament but not proclaimed into force by the Governor in Council. I would like to know the fate of that reform package under the Labor government. The stranded legislation contained some radical changes which, if proclaimed, will have far-reaching effects on landholders' rights. For example:

>Ending the advertising of mining applications;

>Eliminating formal notice to affected landowners of a mining application over their Land;

>Banning members of the public from objecting to any mining applications;

>Limiting objection to mining by affected landholders to a few, almost meaningless grounds;

>Stripping the Land Court of much of its independent assessment function;

>Pulling the teeth of the restricted land system so it no longer protects sensitive sites;

>Empowering the Coordinator-General to block all environmental objections to big mines;

>Eliminating all environmental objections to small mines.

And, one part of the unproclaimed Water Reform Act has major implications for landholders who rely on water bores. Dewatering of mines no longer requires a water licence, nor any alternative authorisation. Consequently, impacts of dewatering on private bores will be excluded from environmental objections. Unlimited volumes can be pumped for dewatering.

George Houn, Landholder Services Pty www.landholderservices.com.au

(*) [Old investigates 'panic clearing' of thousands of hectares of ...](#) [www.brisbanetimes.com.au > News > Queensland](#) Aug 11, 2015 - **Qld investigates 'panic clearing' of thousands of hectares of ...** 354 hectares of **endangered** brigalow forest, WWF conservation scientist ... WWF analysis of the aerial photography

shows 2600 hectares of the **bushland** was "of ...

(*) Labor's plans for Commonwealth takeover of Queensland land clearing laws 'unfair', farmers say <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-04-28/queensland-land-clear-laws-commonwealth-takeover-unfair/7365286>

External Link: [Tree clearing debate to be key political battle as parliament resumes in 2016](#)

Related Story: [New vegetation laws to stop land clearing in Queensland](#)

Related Story: [Only one QLD prosecution for illegal land clearing despite 200 complaints: figures](#)

Queensland farmers are calling foul on Labor's plans for a Commonwealth takeover of land clearing laws, saying tighter controls are needed to reduce emissions and stem climate change. But farmers said the takeover would result in rural poverty and economic decline. The ability to clear trees is essential for cattle graziers like Grant Maudsley, from Mitchell in southern inland Queensland. "If you change what people can do on their individual properties, you make it a lot harder for them to actually make a living," he said. "I'd probably argue that rural poverty would probably lead to more environmental degradation than any little bit of land clearing to grow a crop would, so the discussion is really totally out of whack." Opposition environment spokesman Mark Butler said Queensland's land clearing laws were jeopardising Australia's commitment to the [Paris Agreement](#) and other treaties. "The fact that Campbell Newman came into government and tore up those laws, tore up those reforms, and we've seen a very significant return to broad scale land clearing poses a significant national interest challenge for the Commonwealth," he said. Leaked figures [obtained by the ABC last year showed land clearing had increased](#) from 78,000 hectares a year in 2009-10 under Queensland's Labor Government, to at least 280,000 hectares in 2013-14 under the LNP. But Mr Maudsley — who is also the AgForce Queensland president — said the figures were misleading, and Labor's promise of a Commonwealth takeover of state land clearing powers were unfair and unnecessary. "We have had a lot of regeneration of vegetation in Queensland and we've also had some mulgas harvested for fodder for drought purposes to feed livestock," he said. "Even those that's happened in the last few years we've still got more trees in Queensland based on everyone's accepted measure of foliage protective cover." "If Labor did win and bring in these powers, would you be looking to join any legal challenge, constitutional challenge?" "We haven't thought about legal challenges yet, just heard about it today. I think the best thing we can do is get Mark Butler up here and come and see for himself." A renewed stoush over land clearing has been underway for months in Queensland, with the minority Labor Government trying to overturn the LNP's laws. The Wilderness Society's Lyndon Schneider said Federal Labor's plan were essential in meeting [Australia's commitments to keep global warming below 2 degrees Celsius](#). "Tree clearing contributes some 10 per cent of Australia's overall emissions, some 55 million tonnes," he said. "Right now we've got the national government committing to deep emissions cuts but we've got state governments like in Queensland and New South Wales actually increasing emissions by weakening tree clearing laws — that doesn't make sense."

Labor's land clearing takeover would lead to rural poverty: farmers 28/04/2016

MY TRANSCRIPT - MB

AM: Farmers are angry about Labor's plans for a Commonwealth takeover of land clearing laws. Labor says tighter controls are needed to reduce emissions and stem climate change but farmers say it would result in rural poverty and economic decline. Labor says tighter controls are needed to reduce emissions and stem climate change. [This argument, that if we curb emission we will be able to limit the Earth's temperature is simply ridiculous and too easily disputed by people with an opposing agenda — clearly *nothing on this Earth* can stop global warming, or global cooling for that matter - they are forces of Nature beyond any human control, especially as the numerous feed-back loops kick in — the climate is already changing rapidly, seasons are seriously disrupted and plants flowering out of synch with insect and animal breeding cycles ... cropping is also being badly disrupted. Entire landscapes have dried out in this global warming phase, causing more bushfires all over the planet. The main reason to tighten tree clearing laws is to save whatever intact remnants of biodiverse ecosystems remain so they have the greatest resilience possible and chance of survival. There has been *so much* destroyed, innumerable species and entire eco-communities are so cleared, degraded and fragmented they are close to extinction — and re that, only regional ie local government boundaries should be used to determine whether species or entire eco-communities need to be protected — by the time they become threatened at a state or continent level, it's far too late to save them. My Continental Connectivity Collaboration Initiative addresses this issue: (<http://worldatpolarity.blogspot.com.au/2015/01/continental-connectivity-co-operative.html>) but farmers argue it would result in rural poverty and economic decline [Further degradation and destruction of what little intact ecology remains will result in poverty and economic decline as entire regions become unsustainable due to drying out/fires/floods washing topsoil away — we desperately need a paradigm change — it can be demonstrated that protecting and restoring native biodiversity will result in the opposite that farmers are suggesting, ie rural revitalisation and resilience and economic/social gain.]

AM: The ability to clear trees is essential for cattle graziers like Grant Maudsley [Again demonstrably, his views are extremist and misleading — his rhetoric is also abusive and inflammatory — I can give numerous examples...] — he's from Mitchell in Southern inland Queensland [Mitchell is one of those regions that is entirely unsuited to cattle grazing — it has little remnant native vegetation left and numerous environmental problems] "If you change what people can do on their individual properties you're making it a lot harder for them to actually make a living [... only if their living is grazing hard-hoofed animals in inappropriate country - constant drought has made his district unsustainable for that purpose — many other lifestyles can thrive in these regions however] — I'd even argue that rural poverty would lead to more environmental degradation than any little bit of land clearing to grow a crop would, say, but this discussion is totally out of whack.

AM: But it is state land clearing laws that are out of whack and jeopardising Australia's commitment to the Paris agreement and other Treaties, according to the opposition's environment spokesman, Mark Butler. "The fact that Campbell Newman came into government and tore up those laws, tore up those reforms which means we have seen a very significant return to broad scale land clearing, poses a significant national interest challenge for the commonwealth." Figures obtained by the ABC last year showed that land clearing had increased from 78,000 hectares a year in 2009-10 under Queensland's Labor government to more than 280,000 hectares in 2014 under the LNP. But grazier Grant Maudsley, who is also the president of Agforce, says the figures are misleading, and Labor's promise of a commonwealth takeover [*promise?*] of state land-clearing powers is unfair and unnecessary. "We have a lot of regeneration of vegetation in Qld and we've also had some mulga been harvested for fodder to feed livestock, [*Big problems of Mulga habitat destruction leading to species being endangered with harvesting for cattle...*] so even though that's happened in the last few years we've still got more trees in Queensland than we've ever had based on everyone's measure of foliage protected cover, so its misinformed." [That argument is ridiculous - even if this was the case, it's not the number of hard shrubs and trees or the foliage cover that is the issue, it is the quality of that native vegetation, its biodiversity richness and whether it is a threatened ecosystem etc **And** re that, this article demonstrates the professionalism of **CHARTS AND MAPS WWF?**]

AM: If Labor did win and bring in these powers, would you be looking to join any legal constitutional challenge?

Grant Maudsley: We haven't thought about legal challenges yet. I think the best thing we can do today is get Mark Butler up here and come and see for himself. [He can already see the state of clearing and degradation of native vegetation on Google Earth where you can see every single tree - as we all can, as I have spent many, many hours doing, poring over thousands of square kilometers of landscape.]

AM: A renewed stoush on land clearing has been underway for months in Queensland with the minority Labor government trying to overturn the LNP's laws. The Wilderness Society Lyndon Schneider says federal Labor's plan is essential in meeting Australia's commitment to keeping global warming below 2 degrees [I wish people would stop using that argument... *nothing on Earth* can stop global warming! It is underway and exacerbating with feed-back loops, it is a force of Nature so profoundly beyond anything we can do to "keep it below 2 degrees" — obviously we must stop land clearing to rein in CO2 but also for myriad *other* reasons, mainly to prevent ecological collapse and further degradation of the GBR.]

Lyndon Schneider: Look we really welcome this promise — tree clearing contributes about 10% of Australia's overall emissions, some 55 million tons - right now we've got the National government committing to deeper emissions cuts and we've got state governments as in Qld and NSW, actually increasing emissions by weakening tree clearing laws — that doesn't make sense [*no, it is clearly insane.*] He says Labor's additional plan to reinvigorate the carbon farming initiative will give farmers more options.

<http://www.abc.net.au/am/content/2016/s4451647.htm>

(*) On January 6 when the election was called the Minerals and Energy Resources (Common Provisions) Act, including hundreds of related amendments of various Acts, plus the Water Reform Act, had all been assented to by Parliament but not proclaimed into force by the Governor in Council. The fate of that reform package will now be decided by the Palaszczuk government. Dr Anthony Lynham, as Minister for NR&M and for State Development, inherits a vast body of unproclaimed legislation and faces the task of deciding whether to proclaim all or parts of it. Such legislation, having been assented to by Parliament, would automatically come into force one year from the date of assent, so it can only be

disposed of by repeal. The stranded legislation contains some radical changes which, if proclaimed, will have far-reaching effects on landholders' rights. For example:

- >Ending the advertising of mining applications;
- >Eliminating formal notice to affected landowners of a mining application over their Land;
- >Banning members of the public from objecting to any mining applications;
- >Limiting objection to mining by affected landholders to a few, almost meaningless grounds;
- >Stripping the Land Court of much of its independent assessment function;
- >Pulling the teeth of the restricted land system so it no longer protects sensitive sites;
- >Empowering the Coordinator-General to block all environmental objections to big mines;
- >Eliminating all environmental objections to small mines.

And, one part of the unproclaimed Water Reform Act has major implications for landholders who rely on water bores. Dewatering of mines no longer requires a water licence, nor any alternative authorisation. Consequently, impacts of dewatering on private bores will be excluded from environmental objections. Unlimited volumes can be pumped for dewatering.

(*) [Monaro dieback brings science and Aboriginal knowledge...](#)

[www.abc.net.au/.../monaro-dieback-brings-science-and-aboriginal-know...](#)

Feb 10, 2016 - Aboriginal custodians believe a massive dieback of Manna Gum in ... **Monaro dieback brings science and Aboriginal knowledge together. Its spirit needs saving** Let's get some soul back into this country Aileen Blackburn, Ngarigo traditional custodian

(*) <http://www.northweststar.com.au/story/3877260/letters-to-the-editor/>

Tree clearing threatens future of clean, green agriculture

Failing to reverse the return to broad-scale land clearing in Queensland risks damaging the international reputation of Australia as a leading exporter of safe, clean and green food.

Since the weakening of land clearing controls in 2012, over 560,000 hectares of Queensland's forest and woodland is known to have been cleared, which is an area nearly twice the size of the Australian Capital Territory. **Despite the greater good, a barrage of misinformation threatens to mislead the public and delay progress. This distortion and fear mongering is irresponsible and unhelpful. [Grant Maudsley being the main offender – he is also maligning and abusive, denigrating people simply for wanting to stop the ongoing unnecessary destruction of our ecosystems – unfortunately he has a strong following in Queensland]** In the two years between 2012 and 2014, land clearing in Queensland has generated over 60 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions. It has also led to the **bulldozing of 200,000 hectares of known threatened species habitat**, as well as increased soil loss and pollution of streams and increased pressure on the already damaged Great Barrier Reef. It is extreme negligence to allow this to continue and damage Australia's natural capital and international reputation. **[The LNP is guilty of wilful negligence of our ecological foundations...they are culpable for a range of offences, including environmental vandalism and gross negligence ecocide]** Although it has taken over 12 months for the Palaszczuk government to introduce the Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill to Parliament, its urgency should not be understated. The Bill restores provisions that were previously accepted by the agricultural sector in 2006. **Again in 2009, the Bligh government moved to regulate, not ban, clearing of high value regrowth. At the time Agforce welcomed the changes, saying; "the new legislation balances productive land management while maintaining biodiversity values."** A generous \$130 million assistance package was also provided for the agricultural sector. **But in 2015, over 112,000 hectares of tropical woodland and forest was slated for clearing under the guise of so-called 'high value agriculture' with nearly half already destroyed.** This occurred almost exclusively on two properties in Queensland's Gulf country and on Cape York Peninsula. The recently introduced reinstatement Bill, will close the loophole for so-called high value agriculture that currently allows broad-scale clearing. Further, high value regrowth will again be regulated unless already exempt. Agricultural projects have always had the ability to apply to the Coordinator General for coordinated project status, providing an exemption to Beattie-Bligh era laws and those proposed for reinstatement under the Palaszczuk government. Claims by Hinchinbrook Liberal National Party MP Andrew Cripps and others that the agricultural sector will come to a screaming halt are simply political scare-mongering and damaging to the sector. There is no correlation between agricultural production and Queensland's vegetation laws. Furthermore, there is growing international consumer demand for deforestation-free products and a number of major suppliers have already committed to eliminating deforestation from their supply chains by 2020. Without it we are doomed to repeat the mistakes made in southern Australia where unregulated land clearing delivered a crisis of salinity, soil loss, river degradation and species extinctions leaving taxpayers with a \$10 billion repair bill. **[And there is even more at stake in Qld – the health of Great Barrier Reef, more vital than ever now to protect it from further degradation from agricultural chemical run-off. No amount of money can restore it once it's dead.]** And our brand as a clean, green and safe home for agriculture could be left in tatters.

Andrew Picone, Northern Australia Program Officer, The Australian Conservation Foundation, Cairns

(*) [LETTER: Support VMR Bill](#)

The Sunshine Coast Daily-20 Apr. 2016

QUEENSLAND land clearing indicates extinction by stealth for our ... a staggering 500,000 ha of wildlife habitat was cleared in Queensland.

QUEENSLAND land clearing indicates extinction by stealth for our wildlife and highlights the need to curb excessive development. Support for the Vegetation Management Reinstatement Bill is vital to sustainably conserve wildlife habitat. WWF reports that the number of native animals injured in south-east Queensland has almost tripled in the past four years. From 2012 to 2014, after restrictions on vegetation clearing were lifted by the Newman Government, a staggering 500,000 ha of wildlife habitat was cleared in Queensland. This figure excludes data for 2015. Much of this was cleared from our south-east corner and provided habitat for our threaten species - over 40,000 of this area was koala habitat. Broad-scale land clearing impacts on diversity and results in unsustainable pockets of habitat and untold dead and injured wildlife. The full impact of this damage is irreversble within this century. We may wake up one day, too late to turn the clock back. Do we really need to wait until we have to fly to Japan to visit our koalas or to see our magnificent black cockatoos and wedge-tailed eagles? Support of this Bill will allow for some reversal of the devastating impacts on Queensland wildlife. Please make a submission through the Queensland Government website by April 25.

CHRISTINE BENNETT, Woombye

[A typical response, demonstrating breathtaking ignorance of the issue]: I believe the holder/owner of freehold land should be permitted to clear his land for cropping or livestock farming. **[Even if that vegetation is on the brink of extinction....WHO CARES? My rights overrule the rights of thousands of species to exist!]** Those who live in a suburban locations should have no input nor authority to interfere on private land management. Want to save vegetation buy the land! **[Unfortunately, most environmental activists, ie people who care deeply about the health of the planet and devote their lives to protect last remnants from mindless destruction, are not wealthy enough to buy land or I'm sure they would buy up every last patch of endangered ecology put up for**

sale.]

(*) Springwood MP stands up to excessive land clearing

[Christine Rossouw](#) 31st Mar 2016 3:11 PM

CLEAR ON LAND CLEARING: Member for Springwood Mick de Brenni is pushing for reforms which will stop indiscriminate land clearing

Christine Rossouw

MEMBER for Springwood Mick de Brenni is calling on the community to work together to ensure laws to end excessive land clearing are passed.

"Over the past three years the levels of land clearing have risen dramatically," Mr de Brenni said. "It is threatening our local environment, the reef and the jobs that rely on it. Our community is one that prides itself on its natural beauty. We have great bushland and forests right on our doorstep that we all love to enjoy, be it for walking, bike riding or just to get some great fresh air. The forest adds value to all our lives. Our government wants to make sure that places like the Daisy Hill forest are around for generations so that our kids and grandkids can continue to experience it. Maintaining our forests will also help to prevent the threat of climate change which, if not addressed, will put at risk the things we value about our community." Mr de Brenni said it was critical that action be taken to end indiscriminate land clearing. "Recent independent modelling released on March 9, 2015, shows that without action, our total carbon emissions will continue to significantly increase by around 35%. Land clearing contributes substantially to Queensland's emissions. Over the past three years land clearing rates sky-rocketed, doubling to nearly 300 000 hectare per year. That's an area twice the size of Brisbane." Deputy Premier Jackie Trad recently presented a Bill for an act to amend the Environmental Offsets Act 2014, the Sustainable Planning Act 2009, the Vegetation Management Act 1999 and the Water Act 2000 to Queensland Parliament. "State Government MPs moved to ensure the legislation was dealt with quickly by the Parliament to prevent panic land clearing, however the Opposition used votes from crossbench MPs to push out the process for several months," Mr de Brenni said. The Bill will now go to a second reading, but in a much more extended time-frame. "The Vegetation Management Act will reinstate protections that controlled land clearing that the Newman Government dumped," he said. "Since the former LNP government removed protections against excessive land clearing, it has risen to extreme levels and is threatening to do serious and irreversible damage. Land clearing is extremely carbon intensive, contributing to Queensland already poor record on climate change, which in turn threatens to destroy the Great Barrier Reef and the 70,000 jobs that directly rely on it. People in our community consistently tell me that protecting our forests, not only here in Logan but right across Queensland is important. I am determined to help locals, who are also being supported by the Wilderness Society and the Logan and Albert Conservation Association, to reach out to our community and ensure everyone knows exactly what is at risk." On March 20 the two local environmental organisations convened a community action event. "I was certainly surprised to see the level of interest from planners, environmentalists, families and community activists at the meeting," Mr de Brenni said. "We must work together to call on all MPs to put the future of community and things we value first and vote to end indiscriminate land clearing." Mr de Brenni will launch a local campaign in the coming weeks to garner support for the proposed Bill. "I look forward to working alongside our community to advance the intertwined cause of jobs, the Queensland economy and our forests," he said. **[This is inspiring... galvanised local activism can do more to stop the environmental vandalism than anything – except I can give numerous examples where 80-90% of the local community were against tree or land clearing but the state government has bulldozed over them, the latest being the avenue of heritage veteran trees along ANZAC Parade for a light rail line that could have easily been placed alongside the racecourse – that was state ecological and cultural vandalism at its worse]**

[Queensland land clearing is undermining Australia's environmental...](#)

The Conversation AU-21 Feb. 2016

Land clearing has returned to **Queensland** in a big way. After we expressed concern that policy changes since 2012 would lead to a ...

[Queensland's land clearance is costing Australia and its wildlife dear](#)

The Ecologist-22 Feb. 2016

[Great Barrier Reef bleaching would be almost impossible without climate change](#)

Andrew King, University of Melbourne; David Karoly, University of Melbourne; Mitchell Black, University of Melbourne; Ove Hoegh-Guldberg, The University of Queensland; Sarah Perkins-Kirkpatrick, UNSW Australia

This summer's record-breaking coral bleaching on the Great Barrier Reef was made 175 times more likely thanks to climate change. **[Exactly why we must end all old growth and old regrowth native vegetation clearing, except new woody regrowth on certain agricultural and grazing properties – even a lot of those properties can be vastly improved with Nature corridors running through them, or full or partial conversion to economically-productive biodiverse native foods and medicines – it is the only way to give the reef the best chance of survival]**

[Federal Labor will use Commonwealth legislation to reinstate land clearing restrictions if elected: Butler](#) ABC Online 26.4.16 ABC

Rural By Anna Vidot

Land clearing in Queensland was made easier under the LNP's Campbell Newman, but Labor wants to change that

[Related Story: Farmers concerned about land clearing reforms to capitalise on Queensland political turmoil \(to follow up\)](#)

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Labor says former Queensland premier Campbell Newman's land clearing laws amount to "vandalism", and it won't hesitate to use Commonwealth power to overrule them if it's elected this year.

The Opposition has unveiled the climate change policy it will take to the election, including a promise to ramp up renewable energy investment and a new emissions trading scheme.

If elected, Labor said it would create a "climate trigger" in Commonwealth environmental legislation, to allow Federal Government intervention to "ensure proper and rigorous investigation of broad-scale land clearing impact on Australia's ability to meet its agreed climate change commitment to keeping global warming well below two degrees Celsius."

It's not yet clear what would constitute "broad-scale land clearing", and the triggering of Commonwealth intervention. Land clearing has been high on the political agenda in Queensland for years, and Labor singled out that state as "particularly problematic" in its policy announcement. The Palaszczuk Labor Government currently has legislation before the Queensland parliament to reintroduce tighter restrictions on land clearing, which were wound back by former LNP premier Campbell Newman. Mr Butler told ABC RN Breakfast that federal Labor won't hesitate to get involved if it wins the election. "We will legislate to restore [Queensland's] restrictions that were in place before Campbell Newman's vandalism," he said. "These were extraordinarily important reforms that [former Queensland Labor premiers] Peter Beattie and Anna Bligh put in place, with, I must say, the support of John Howard, because he understood the importance of those reforms in achieving the Kyoto protocol commitments. We will restore the position using Commonwealth powers. We know the Palaszczuk has been trying to do that in the Queensland parliament, we will use the Commonwealth's powers to do that, and also to prevent [NSW Liberal premier] Mike Baird from unpicking Bob Carr's reforms, which we understand he's now doing under pressure from the NSW Nationals party." Deputy Prime Minister and Agriculture Minister Barnaby Joyce has slammed the proposal, saying it would be an "inherently unfair" Commonwealth overreach that "attacks the right of private ownership, of property ownership". "What they are saying, is that they will override the laws of the states to reinstate Mark Butler's view, and the Labor Party view, and the Green view of how farmers will work their land," he said. **[No, he is saying this issue is of national importance, especially as it impacts so enormously on the Great Barrier Reef – he is saying that wanton environmental vandalism of threatened native habitat will not be tolerated continued broadacre clearing and clearing along riparian zones will not be tolerated]**

Mr Joyce said land clearing legislation should remain the responsibility of the states, and that a Coalition government would "leave well enough alone" rather than move to introduce its own legislation on the issue.