

SUBMISSION TO:**Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation
Amendment Bill 2016****SUBMISSION COVER SHEET**

Closing date for submissions is 29 April 2016.

Please complete and submit this form with your submission to:

Email:
vminquiry@parliament.qld.gov.au**Post:** **Fax:** 07 3553 6699Research Director
Agriculture and Environment
Committee
Parliament House
BRISBANE QLD 4000**Organisation or individual:** Justin and Pauline MacDonnell trading as Brigalow Beef Company**Principal contact:** Justin MacDonnell**Position:****Telephone:****Mobile:****Email address:****Street address:****Suburb/City:** INJUNE**State:** QLD**Postcode:** 4454**Postal address:** As Above**Suburb/City:****State:****Postcode:****Is all or part of your
submission confidential?**

Yes, all

☐

Yes, part

☐

No

☒**If part, please identify
which sections are
confidential:****Reason for confidentiality:**

Brigalow Beef Company

INJUNE QLD 4454



29 April 2016

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

I completely oppose the proposed changes in the Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 ("the Bill").

My wife and I operate a beef breeding, backgrounding, and fattening operation across two properties, totalling 31,651 hectares in Central Queensland. We are a young couple, 37 and 35 years of age, with two young children and are expecting a third in August of this year. We are proud of what we do, proud to operate our own business and stand on our own two feet, and proud to be owners of our property [REDACTED]

We purchased [REDACTED] in 2013, it was a very big step for us and our business, up until this point we only operated on a leased property. We operate nearly entirely on borrowed capital and hold a very small equity position. We purchased a property with enormous amounts of potential, but it was in a poor condition when we purchased it. We knew we were buying a lifetime of hard work but we also knew it was our best opportunity to ever purchase a property of our own and provide an opportunity for our children to also have a future in agriculture if they should wish.

Should the proposed changes in the Bill be adopted, our families operation will be significantly affected in a negative way, potentially jeopardising our ability to remain financially viable. When the Beattie Government first introduced restrictive Vegetation Management legislation, it significantly reduced [REDACTED] potential productivity. Everyone who visits our property comments about the potential and what could have been had previous owners been more consciences at managing regrowth and timber encroachment. As much as we find it disappointing and frustrating, we knew this when we purchased the property in 2013. For the properties potential to be further reduced by the changes proposed in the amendment Bill is shattering.

We do not have a PMAV on [REDACTED] When we purchased [REDACTED] in 2013 we investigated locking one in, however the proposed map was not acceptable to us. There were many, many locations where the map was inaccurate and large areas were incorrectly mapped. It was suggested to us by the relevant Government department that we needed to lodge an application for a "Detailed PMAV" and "provide data to demonstrate the errors in the current mapping and provide suggested new mapping". All of this was acceptable to us, until I was informed as to the level of detail that the department would require us to provide. I was told I would need a consultant with relative skills and experience to put together the application. I approached multiple contractors to discuss the process and likely costs. Costs ranged from a best case scenario of \$20,000 to in excess of \$100,000 to put the application together. At the time we could not afford such a cost and hence no detailed PMAV application was progressed. We took confidence from the then Governments' assurance that Category X areas on vegetation maps had been locked in and would not change into the future. We always intended to lodge a detailed PMAV but needed to wait until our business was in a sound financial position before we could incur such an outlay. Now with the proposed changes in the amendment bill, our Category X areas have been massively reduced, and with no option of compensation for the impacts on our productivity, the inability for our business to afford the potential \$100,000 cost is one we shall regret forever.

When we first purchased [REDACTED] we made a significant investment during the first twelve months on regrowth control. We did this to improve productivity. We mechanically cleared in excess of 6,600 hectares. We retained large areas of timber as shade clumps and wildlife habitats and corridors. Under the proposed bill and the subsequent proposed Regulated Vegetation Management Map these areas that we voluntarily retained have now been captured and mapped as proposed Category C areas. From the attached maps you will notice the large amount of area captured. You will also notice the extensive areas (in excess of 70%) of remnant vegetation that we already have on [REDACTED] The capturing of these areas on the map is a direct penalty to my family. There is no doubt that the market value of our property will have been reduced by this change in mapping. Prospective buyers look for Category X areas and place a much greater value on them. The reduction in Category X area and subsequent reduction in market value will reduce our equity position in our property. Our business is in its infancy, we are heavily borrowed, and in our position equity is everything. When dealing with banks and financiers you can negotiate little without equity. EQUITY IS KING. All of our business plans are based on improving market value and subsequently improving our equity position. Reducing our equity position makes dealing with our financiers more difficult and makes our business more vulnerable.

We voluntarily chose to preserve areas of timber. We made voluntary decisions that are consistent with supposed outcomes desired by Government, and yet we are penalised for making them. The proposed bill penalises people who have done the right thing, while rewarding people who may have done the reverse. That surely can't be good policy.

The most frustrating part of our situation is that we feel completely vilified by the current State Government. Many of the supposed justifications for the legislation are based on inaccuracies and ill-informed or blatantly dishonest assertions. We derive our income from the productivity of the land. My ability to meet the financial needs of my family hinge on my ability to successfully manage the environment in which I live. I am motivated every day to ensure that my property is the best land condition possible to ensure my long term viability. My wife and I borrowed in excess of \$3.5 million to purchase [REDACTED] and the suggestion that I would let or want the top soil to run-off my property and damage the Great Barrier Reef is absurd and insulting. I can't afford to loose soil, and in fact we manage our land with the intention of increasing ground cover and building soil.

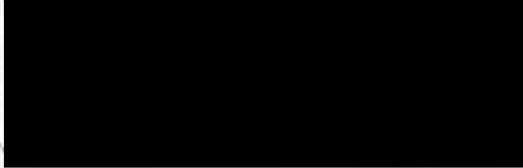
There is a lot that Governments can, should and could do to reduce run-off to the Great Barrier Reef or reduce atmospheric carbon levels, however it requires WORKING WITH farmers not persecuting them. Farmers are land managers, that's what we do every day. We don't charge anyone for doing it, we invest our own money and in fact, we borrow more money at our expense to invest in land management practices. Farmers are the greatest and most powerful tool available to decision makers if they are genuinely concerned with land management or seeking environmental outcomes. You can't achieve environmental outcomes if you work against, persecute, alienate and vilify the majority of land managers.

The inclusion of Reserve Onus of Proof in the legislation only further vilifies land managers. Why my wife and I shouldn't be afforded the same rights as any constituent accused of an offense is offensive. A rapist or murder is presumed innocent until proven guilty, yet as a food producer I am not.

I strongly encourage all members of the Queensland Parliament to oppose the proposed bill. To do so doesn't mean you don't support the supposed environmental outcomes, it just means you don't support or have confidence in the bills effectiveness in achieving them. Queenslanders hear a lot about; "improving food security", "promoting development in rural and regional Queensland", and "developing Northern Australia" and yet the proposed bill is inconsistent with all of these statements. Each and every member of Queensland Legislative Assembly has pledged "that they will well and truly serve the people of Queensland and faithfully perform their duties and responsibilities to the best of their ability and according to law". I would urge members to consider their promise when voting on this piece of legislation.

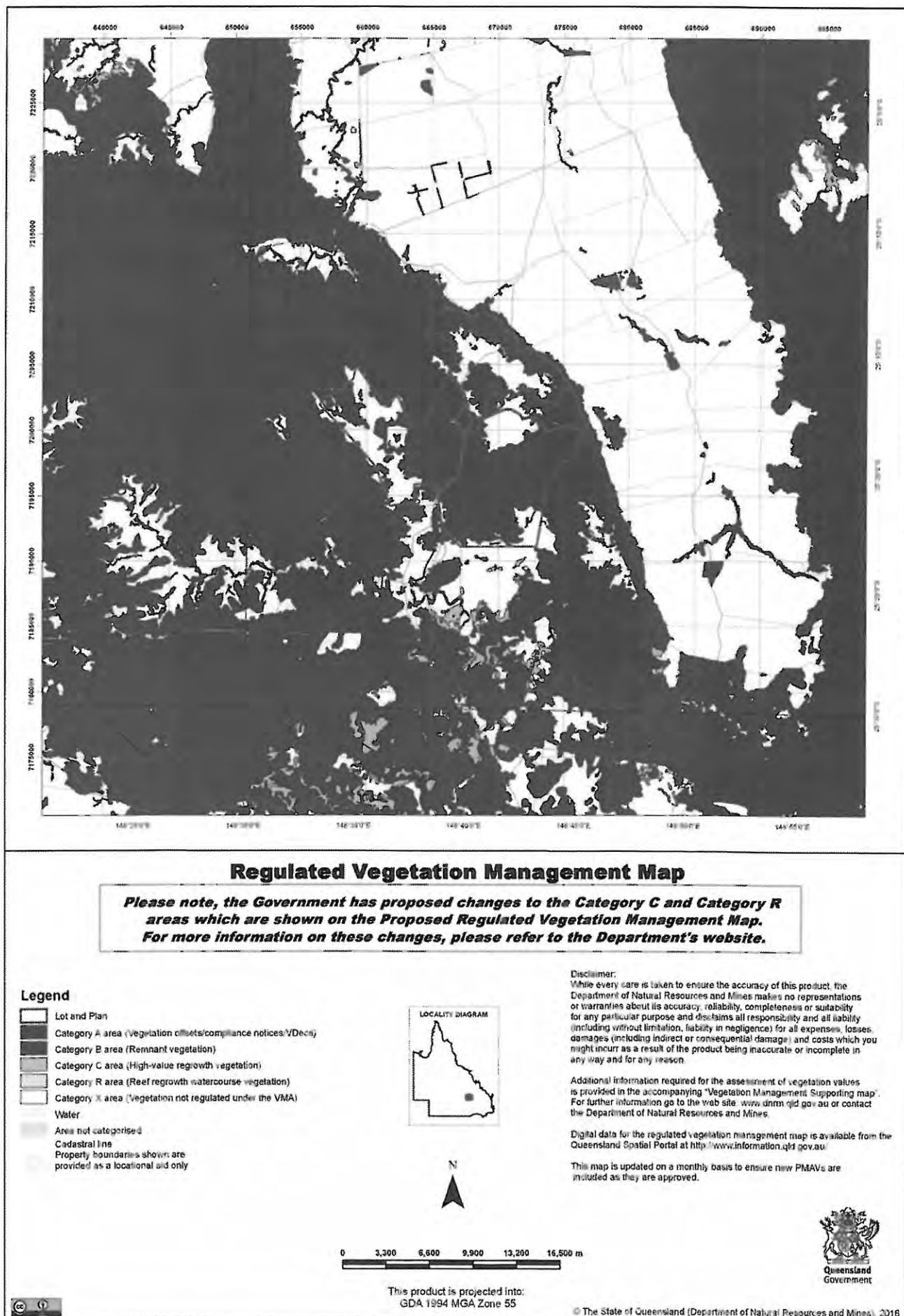
My family would welcome the opportunity to discuss any aspects of the proposed bill, the impacts on our operation, demonstrate how limiting it is on our productivity, and how floored it is in achieving the desired outcomes. We would welcome any visitors to [REDACTED] to see firsthand the potential impacts.

Yours faithfully

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

Justin MacDonnell

5.1 Regulated vegetation management map



5.3 Proposed regulated vegetation management map

