

[REDACTED]
Arcadia Qld 4819

[REDACTED]
29 April 2016

Committee Secretary
Agriculture and Environment Committee
Queensland Parliament
vminquiry@parliament.qld.gov.au

Submission to the inquiry into the Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016.

I grew up in Townsville in the 1950-early 70s, and spent a great deal of time travelling throughout the State, and developed a keen knowledge of the state of various landscapes and seascapes.

Since leaving Queensland to work in Western Australia, I have been involved in establishing a program for the management of rangelands landscapes for sustainable pastoralism, the EMU Program, see www.emulandrecovery.org.au This program has been well received in WA, NT and SA, and elements are now being run in the Western Division of NSW.

I recently returned to Queensland to live.

On both my recent trips along the A55, A7 and A7, I was shocked at the levels of land degradation I observed along most of the journey. It was clear to me from my knowledge of landscape processes that the degradation was a consequence of either of, or a combination of, the following factors:

- Overgrazing of rangelands landscapes in particular, especially at times of below-average rainfall leading into declaration of drought; and
- Overgrazing of rivers and streamlines, banks and nearby areas of floodplains;
- Excessive land clearing leaving landscapes inadequately protected from the erosional consequences of the two above factors: sheet erosion and channelization/ gullying.

The erosion and drying out of the rangelands landscapes has led, and will continue to lead, to a loss of productive capacity for pastoral and other purposes. It is a general observation that the degrading processes are now entrained in the landscapes and so the erosion and drying will continue unchecked until specific, directed action is taken to slow the degrading processes.

In summary, the great majority of central and western Queensland, including many portions of catchments draining to the coast (and the Great Barrier Reef) have become seriously degraded as a consequences of the history of land management across these various landscapes and, as a consequence, they have lost a significant proportion of their productive capacity (and profitability) as well as their biodiversity conservation values and potential.

The relevance of the above commentary to the present considerations by the Agriculture and Environment Committee of the *Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016* is that land clearing across the agricultural (including pastoral) landscapes over the past 40 years or so has been, and continues to be, a major driver of the land degradation across these landscapes.

The clearing controls that were legislated by the Queensland Parliament in 1999 in the form of the *Vegetation Management Act 1999* was an appropriate response to the observable impacts of land degradation across the great majority of Queensland agricultural (including pastoral) landscapes, as well as the issues of biodiversity loss and carbon emissions.

I am aware that the amendments to the *Vegetation Management Act* and associated legislation in 2013 have led to widespread land clearing across the agricultural (including pastoral) landscapes of Queensland, with the likely consequences of accelerated land degradation across these landscapes.

I fully support the provisions of the *Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016* presently before the Queensland Parliament, as these provisions will contribute to halting the increase in land degradation and loss of productive capacity across the State's agricultural (including pastoral) landscapes.

I urge the Committee to endorse the provisions, and support the passage of the legislation through the Parliament as soon as possible.

Yours Sincerely

Angas Hopkins