

From: [REDACTED]
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Subject: submission Environmental and Other Legislation (reversal of Great Barrier Reef Protection Measures) Amentment Bill 2021

Categories: Submission

From Peter and Margaret Hunt
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In regards to "The Environmental and Other Legislation (Reversal of Great Barrier Reef Protection Measures) Amendment Bill 2021", we would like to make the following submission:
Firstly, the Science is questionable.

The South Burnett and likely other areas should not be subject to the Reef Regulations for the following reasons:- Despite claims of contributing sediment, scientists have recently confirmed that no baseline data has been established, and no water quality testing has been undertaken in the South Burnett area. The closest, and only monitoring station for data is located at Mount Lawless, north east of Gayndah. The inclusion of the South Burnett is justified by modelling, for which scientists acknowledge there has been no ground truthing undertaken.

There are multiple cross stream structures between the South Burnett, the monitoring station and the subsequent river mouth, which are acknowledged by scientists to trap sediment.

Much of the South Burnett incorporates contour banks and grassed waterways installed by farmers in the 1940's to protect valuable top-soils and reduce run-off.

The South Burnett has been included because of the claimed contribution of the Burnett-Mary catchment to sediment on the seagrass and mangrove areas on the near coast. If that is the case why don't the restrictions also extend to the Brisbane River Catchment which has it's origins in the same district and empties into an important seagrass area.

Nature has moved soil through the catchments for millions of years with many of our most productive food bowls the result. Scientists claim the main contributor to sediment in the catchment is bank erosion. In this case then the natural events such as the recent 2013 floods, over which producers have no control, could be considered the main contributor.

Secondly, for economic and social reasons the South Burnett should be excluded.

A large number of properties have been opportunity cropped for generations to remain viable. The floods of 2010/11 and 2013 combined with continuing drought since have meant the cropping history test to prove and continue land use cannot necessarily be met. The transitional arrangements for cropping from 1 June 2018 to 31 May 2021 to meet the cropping history test have been periods of constant drought. Producers who have not removed ground cover when weather conditions would have made replacement cropping difficult, if not impossible, will be penalized by these regulations.

The imposition of paid permit requirements and environmentally regulated activities to commercial cropping (crops for sale) will compromise good environmental crop rotation practices, and place an unjust financial burden on producers already facing difficult circumstances. This is particularly relevant in the South Burnett where largely dryland production is undertaken on properties which, because of their limited size, will be adversely affected by some of the regulations.

Adjoining properties will be subject to widely varying valuations and sale prospects with on subject to permits and ERA restrictions, while the other is unaffected. There has been no compensation for the restrictions on land us, and resultant decrease in value.

Additionally the unimproved valuation of the land based on highest and best use could be affected with resultant reductions in local government rate revenues.

The regulations are based around cropping for profit but will also affect a producer who wants to sell excess pasture hay when there has been no disturbance to the soil.

Land equates to a farmers superannuation fund. A landholder is therefore going to make the best effort he can to maintain the capacity of the land to produce a sustainable future. Decrease the value by government regulations and as well as the impact of weather conditions that are beyond human control and the government is eroding our future sustainability. Who will succeed today's farmer to produce the food Australia needs to survive?

Producers throughout the state have been overwhelmed by regulations and restrictions, many of which are contradictory. Farmers are finding it difficult to cope both financially and emotionally. Spending on education and mental health are acknowledged by Government but they are adding to the problem by issuing regulations that create duress to farmers. We understand that recent figures show this area as being identified as having mental health and self-harm issues well above the Australian average.

Farmers need government support not regulations to stifle their creativity in producing food for the nation.

Yours sincerely,

Peter and Margaret Hunt