

Submission to the Queensland Parliament in relation to the Environmental Protection (Great Barrier Reef Protection Measures) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019.

Genevieve Hawkins

"Taree" Aramac Qld 4726

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I wish to make a submission regarding the above mentioned Bill and the impacts that it will have on my industry, Agriculture, and particularly that of our business, Beef Cattle.

Whilst I am not geographically located within a Reef Catchment, one of the properties my Family operates is located within the Fitzroy catchment, and hence will be affected by the implementation of this Bill.

My concerns with the Amendments made to the Bill are the Following:

- Classifying **Grazing as an Environmentally Relevant Activity**, with the same restrictions and costs for applications through the Planning Act, as high input and even Industrial operations, such as Mining. Grazing is generally a low input activity, especially in relation to fertiliser use, and large portions of the catchments in question, do not use fertiliser on grazed pastures at all.
- **Costs of Accreditation** – it will cost people money and time particularly, something that is in short supply in today's business environment, to become accredited. It is just another layer of red tape in an industry that is already over-burdened with bureaucratic administration in relation to land management and environment. We truly are the land stewards in this situation, so helping us to achieve better outcomes is not accomplished by slugging us with more red tape and penalties. It breeds an environment of fear and distrust with those we need to be working with to achieve these outcomes.
- **Auditing** –who will be conducting the auditing, how will we know that it is independent and who bears the costs of these compulsory auditing requirements? In the last decade there has been a significant shift in funding levels to government bodies such as DPI&F, DAFF etc, and as such there has been an extensive loss not only of the on-ground people to do the work and conduct the training, but also a loss of the expertise that was accumulated by staff who were working to promote best practise. Who else is there to fill this gap? Private industry, who must incur significant costs to the landholders, or other agencies not related to Agriculture, who also do not have the on-ground knowledge that is vital in the successful implementation and monitoring of BMPs?
- That **BMPs are only slowly being adopted with the grazing community**, and I feel that this is due to the lack of advice and on-ground support that many Beef Producers have access to, as well as the highly variable nature of our businesses and the Environments which we operate within. Many landholders do not understand what is required and feel that there is a lot of red tape for very little result within their business / environment. We are generally talking about downstream effects, so not something that we see the results for.

- The BMP approach is of course preferable to a mandatory Minimum Standards approach which people do not understand and the penalties that are applied, however **in order to get more people on-board with BMPs there needs to be “more carrot and less stick”**. For example, those that have a BMP, may be able to access rebates on rates or land rental (as the adherence to a BMP benefits the state and shires as well), whereas those that do not have a BMP cannot access the rebates. This gives people a real tangible reason to jump on board.
- **Consideration of the environment, or more specifically the variability of our climate.** The last few months have been testimony to the extremities that we experience here in Queensland – massive floods with unprecedented rainfall in the North, Crippling drought throughout the interior, Central and Southern parts, and bushfires through the Central and coastal areas. All of these extremes affect the nature of our ecosystems, and their capacity to retain soil / sediment. A bushfire denudes the landscape of vegetation (often caused by an increase in fuel load in vegetation), which if followed by heavy rain, causes massive sediment load to be lost into streams and rivers. A drought, due to its ongoing nature, causes a loss in vegetation (whether it is through grazing by domestic animals, native animals or death of plants due to prolonged dry seasons) which if followed by heavy rainfall events, can cause a massive loss in topsoil. The floods which have all but wiped out areas of the North West of our state, whilst not flowing to the Great Barrier Reef, are a great example of an extreme flood event which has caused catastrophic damage, and a massive loss topsoil, which was washed away regardless of the amount of groundcover present or the land management techniques employed by the property managers. The sheer volume of rain which fell there, and similarly in the Townsville region at the same time, creates a force of nature that we cannot stop, an erosion event that we cannot control. How does the Bill account for such events, or events that may cause similar damage and similar environmental problems on a smaller scale in smaller catchments? How does this Bill make accountable to an individual landholder that which is caused by an Act of God, for lack of a better term?
- **Finally, at what point does the government seek to stop regulating the way we manage our land and penalising those who do not follow their desktop analyses?** On ground experience is not something you can truly fit into a desktop situation, and much of our BMP guidelines has been concurrently developed by people on the ground in conjunction with scientific advise, trying to do the right thing by their environment and their business. I understand the general point of this Bill, but perhaps there are better and more constructive ways to achieve these outcomes than more regulation? Perhaps the concept of a lack of trust is one that is reciprocated both ways today between our current Government and Agriculture. Bring back the trust.

Genevieve Hawkins

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