

Local Government (Empowering Councils) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

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SUBMISSION (General + Farmer/Property Owner)

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1. Introduction

I make this submission as a Queensland ratepayer, farmer, and property owner who is directly affected by local government decisions. The land I manage is my livelihood, my workplace, and my responsibility. I am deeply concerned that this Bill expands council powers without providing any protections for the people who must live with those decisions — especially rural families, farmers, and landholders.

The Bill is described as "empowering councils."

But the community — particularly rural communities — want the opposite:

Councils must be scaled back to essential services and prevented from overreaching into private property and land management.

2. Councils Already Overreach Into Private Land

Local government powers have crept further and further into areas never intended for council control. Farmers and property owners face increasing interference in:

- vegetation management
- firebreak creation
- regrowth clearing
- basic on-farm improvements
- building sheds or infrastructure
- daily land-management practices

Yet roads are deteriorating, waste services are unreliable, disaster response is lacking, and rates continue to rise at unsustainable levels.

Expanding council authority, without any limits or checks, will make these problems worse — not better.

3. Property Rights Are Being Eroded

Our land is not local government property.

But year by year, councils behave as though our freehold titles grant them unlimited authority to dictate how we must use our own land.

Farmers and property owners regularly face:

- approvals taking months for routine tasks
- unclear or unreasonable vegetation restrictions
- increased fire risks because of bureaucratic rules
- expanding regulatory obligations
- rising rates with no improvement in services

Empowering councils further, without balancing protections for ratepayers, directly erodes fundamental property rights.

4. Weaknesses and Dangers in the Bill

4.1 Greater internal political power for councils

Shifting senior staff appointments to a council panel may increase political consolidation rather than improve accountability. The public gains nothing from this, but councils gain more internal influence.

4.2 Expanded rating frameworks, including for Indigenous councils

Any change enabling new rating categories or expanded rating powers risks placing further financial pressure on rural families and farmers who already pay disproportionately high rates per hectare.

4.3 Strengthening mayoral authority

Reinforcing the mayor as spokesperson and meeting chair may be reasonable, but without safeguards this can silence dissent, consolidate control, and reduce public influence in decision-making.

A mayor is elected to represent the public, not bureaucracy.

4.4 Claims of "reducing red tape" with no real reform

Nothing in this Bill addresses the issues rural Queenslanders actually struggle with:

- excessive vegetation rules
- burdensome approvals
- lack of transparency on rates spending
- bureaucratic delays
- unnecessary compliance costs

The Bill expands council structure and power, but does not reduce practical barriers for property owners.

5. What the Community Actually Wants

Queenslanders — especially farmers and rural landholders — overwhelmingly want:

councils restricted to core functions: roads, waste, water, disaster support
strong property rights
affordable rates
transparent spending
less interference with how we manage our farms and properties
regulations based on practical experience, not bureaucracy

Empowering councils without empowering the people is completely inconsistent with community expectations.

6. Recommendations for Amendments

I urge the Committee to amend the Bill to include:

Protection of Property Rights

A statutory limit on council interference with lawful use of private rural land.

A requirement that vegetation and land-management rules must support — not hinder — fire safety and farm productivity.

A community-led review mechanism to challenge unreasonable council directives.

Improved Accountability

Mandatory transparency on how rural rates are calculated and spent.

Caps or guidelines to prevent unreasonable rate increases on agricultural or rural land.

Re-focusing Councils on Core Services

A legal definition of "core local government services" to stop bureaucratic expansion.

A requirement that essential services (roads, waste, water, disaster readiness) take priority over non-essential programs.

Strengthening Representation, Not Bureaucracy

Clear safeguards ensuring the mayor's role strengthens public representation, not council control.

Greater accountability for councils failing to consult meaningfully with rural communities.

7. Conclusion

Farmers and property owners already carry a heavy burden. Councils are increasingly overstepping into property rights, land management, vegetation decisions, and rural livelihoods — often without practical understanding of the land they regulate.

This Bill empowers councils further, but provides no protections for the people who pay rates, manage the land, and feed the nation.

Queensland needs councils that serve their communities — not control them.

Councils must be brought back to basics, not elevated into more powerful regulators of private property.

I ask the Committee to amend the Bill to protect landholders, respect property rights, and ensure councils remain accountable to the people they are meant to serve.

Signed,

Raymond Seres

Farmer & Property Owner

Queensland