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**Submission
to
State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee
Parliament House
George St
BRISBANE**

**Regarding
Proposed Amendments to Vegetation Management Laws.**

Thank you for the opportunity to present this submission in relation to the proposed amendments to the Vegetation Management Legislation. We are a family owned grazing business running merino sheep and beef cattle on leasehold country west of Longreach.

Our country has significant areas of "not of concern" remanent vegetation , predominantly gidgee. We hold a Property Map of Assessable Vegetation over some of that gidgee country.

We wish to make the following points in relation to the Vegetation Management Laws:

- Firstly we approve and support the Governments suggested changes to the Legislation.
- The new legislation should recognise the difference between ongoing property maintenance and property development. As much as possible the need for applications and permits for maintenance and infrastructure replacement should be abolished. It is time consuming and wasteful for both landholders and Departmental staff to go through the application process when it is common knowledge that the permit will be granted. Work such as clearing for new fence lines, pipe lines, fire breaks etc should not require a permit process, particularly as such work is inevitably done to improve management and sustainability of the land.
- Existing PMAV's should be retained but the application process for new PMAV's and amendments to existing PMAV's should be made less onerous. In our own case the application for our PMAV was such a large undertaking that we had to retain a specialist in the field to process the application. The cost of that exercise was in excess of \$3000. A lot of money for an application process!
- The new Area Management Plans for thinning and encroachment control are a step in the right direction and the concept should be expanded to other areas where practical.
- The existing Legislation contains requirements that appear to be nothing short of a

“Tree Grab” by the extreme Green movement. Requirements that stipulate a certain percentage of trees to be left when thinning, regardless of the density of the original tree cover, result in the land being left in an arbitrary “percentage tree cover” state rather than being returned to its natural condition. Further thinning activity in future years will result in a gradual loss of grass land to tree cover as the percentage required to be left is applied at each application cycle.

- The guiding principle for both thinning and encroachment control should be returning the land to the conditions that existed before the thickening/encroachment occurred. Wherever possible the oldest existing aerial photos or other photographic evidence should be accepted to determine the previous level of tree cover. Where photographic evidence is not available, on ground assessment may be necessary.
- Restrictions imposed because of misinformed prejudices should be removed. For example it has been considered inappropriate to clear invasive gidgee out of creek lines because of a mistaken belief that the gidgee limits erosion. In fact the reverse is true the gidgee eliminates the grasses which slow the water and bind the soil so more scouring and channelling occurs. Again the guiding principle should be “What was this land form originally like?” The aim should be to restore the natural land conditions.
- Where permits are required they should be permanent duration. This will allow landholders to carry out land management operations at the most opportune time in both economic and seasonal cycles. Once it has been determined that a certain operation is appropriate, be it thinning or encroachment control, then that determination has been made for that area of land. What is there to be gained by having to reapply a few years later if the permit is not used or if the scrub thickens again later? Where permits are issued they should be to achieve a certain land outcome and landholders should then be able to maintain that condition. Consideration should be given to making such permits function like a PMAV.
- The legislation should be outcome focused. It should enable permits and processes that achieve specified end results. It should not, as the current legislation does, specify how the job should be done. The ridiculous requirement that thinning not be done with two bulldozers and a chain was a political move to keep the extreme Green movement happy but just succeeded in increasing costs. Such specific requirements have no place in legislation that is trying to achieve proper outcomes.
- Lastly the committee should examine the possibility of some vegetation such as gidgee being declared “Invasive Native Species” in areas where it causes significant problems. Such provisions already exist in NSW and have been shown to be workable.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this input to your deliberations and I commend your efforts to ease the administrative workload and cost of managing vegetation on our properties.

Yours sincerely,



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