

SUBMISSION TO THE VEGETATION MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK AMMENDMENT BILL 2013

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STATE DEVELOPMENT, INFRASTRUCTURE
AND INDUSTRY COMMITTEE

We appreciate the opportunity to forward a submission on the above.

Since the introduction of the Vegetation Management Act 1999 a group of landholders have borne an unfair burden of this complicated, ill thought out political document. These are the landholders who have greater than 20% of their land mapped as Remnant Vegetation. They have copped it on two fronts, (a) their productivity is reduced and the opportunity to increase production is severely reduced (we have to increase production by approx. 4%pa just to maintain our earnings in real terms). (b) They have seen the value of their asset reduce by between 30-50%. Well respected local real estate agents inform me that land for sale with greater than 20% remnant vegetation mapped on it will result in a reduction in value of between 30-50% depending on the percentage of Remnant Vegetation and RE map type. **This situation is unsustainable, unfair and in many cases penalising the very people we should be encouraging as land managers.** These are the people who were developing their properties steadily in an environmentally sustainable manner and were caught up in the legislation. Under the current VMA the purpose of the Act states that it is to regulate clearing of vegetation that ensures clearing does not cause land degradation, loss of biodiversity and maintains ecological processes. It is the thickening of the vegetation and the difficulty to manage this thickening under the current complicated codes that is actually causing all of the above to happen at a rapid rate.

Prior the VMA being introduced those who could afford it developed a majority of their land, some pulled every acre, the Government of the day then rewarded them with mapping their developed areas as CatX, to do what- ever they like on that land for ever. On the other hand those landholders who for what- ever reason be it financial, a desire to develop in a steadier more sustainable manner, had greater than 20% remnant vegetation were caught by the provisions of the VMA. This is the group of Landholders whose situation needs to be addressed. We live in the Southern Brigalow Belt Bioregion and therefore were not eligible for any compensation, another unfair act. This region consists of mainly more intensive areas except for the south west and North West areas. These small largely undeveloped areas largely carried the can for the whole region, again not fair.

Scientific data will show that with good planning we can achieve improved productivity and protect the environment. Our aim is to have a healthy landscape where the tree population is such that it allows good pasture growth, this leads to maximum water penetration and minimum soil erosion, and a win for all those who rely on the environment for a living. This is not rocket science and could be achieved with some common sense changes to the VMA. Deciding on what is a 'healthy landscape' would be the main challenge.

We welcome the introduction of "Self Assessable Codes" however we need to be assessing against sensible and workable codes, this will need some changes to the existing Codes. For example the codes for thinning are too complicated and un-workable. We need to be able to thin back to a tree density that is suitable to each location that results in a healthy landscape.

Those with greater than 20% remnant vegetation need to be able to develop these categories under a sensible and balanced development plan down to where they have 20% remnant vegetation

remaining. Landholders have a deep affinity with the land and only desire to see it in a healthy condition, the healthier the landscape the healthier the landholders Bank balance will be and the healthier and more sustainable the Environment will be in the long term.

We also welcome that introduction of 'High Value Agriculture', however leading on from the above this needs to be extended to include the development for improvement in pasture for livestock in the more extensive areas. Having high quality pastures in these more extensive areas is very much 'High Valuable Agriculture' for these regions.

Those landholders who have resources (Surplus Cash) to invest in the landscape are those who are in the best position to manage the Environment.

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From.

Don & Belinda Perkins

