

Submission No. 17

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STATE DEVELOPMENT, INFRASTRUCTURE
AND INDUSTRY COMMITTEE

State Development, Infrastructure & Industry Committee
Vegetation Management Framework Amendment Bill
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

RE: Vegetation Management Framework Amendment Bill 2013

The aim of improving the value of Queensland's food production is commendable.

The reduction of vegetation clearing restrictions to do so is not.

Other than what we already have, there are very few locations that would be suitable for irrigated high value agriculture.

Better management of our current food production systems would give us much better outcomes in the short to medium terms.

To encourage optimum use of agricultural land, several important issues must be confronted before any clearing of vegetation is considered.

1. Continue to educate landowners to avoid wasteful use of fertilizers (supplies of phosphorus and potash are likely to become critical within several decades).
2. Develop improved technologies to harvest nutrients from waste streams.
3. Remove or heavily reduce the waste of food throughout the food chain from farm to consumer.
4. Be totally committed to protecting groundwater supplies (recent CSG issues demonstrate the potential of lax government scrutiny to endanger and reduce the output of farmland).
5. Most towns and cities occupy (for the most part) fertile land near a water source. Encroachment upon farmland by expanding urban areas has to be addressed.
6. Erosion and land degradation (including salinity) need to be dealt with consistently and sensibly, eg in recent times, it is believed that unnecessary clearing of riparian vegetation in upstream areas contributed to the partial shutdown of Brisbane's Mt Crosby Water Treatment Plant (silt overload). The increased flow velocity in those upstream areas also meant the loss of soil and nutrients from farms there.
7. Much of the state's marginal land has this summer been subjected to very high temperatures with the result that the country wide maximum average temperature for January 2013 was 2.28 degrees C higher than the previous record. Heat waves are predicted to continue.

Any large scale removal of vegetation will have a bearing on the temperature in that locality and on the

crops that might be grown or the animals grazed.

When a body of vegetation is removed land degradation and erosion will occur since the protective cover has been removed. Most of the ecological processes that were there will disappear or be radically altered and biodiversity severely reduced.

Prevention of land degradation, ecological processes and biodiversity are clearly key parts of the Vegetation Management Act 1999 (page 13, Part 1 Preliminary, 3(1), (c), (d) and (e) and also page 17).

Self-assessable clearing codes will be a problem unless there is some form of assessment to ensure that code requirements have been followed. How can every single land holder have a detailed knowledge of a regions vegetation needs?

I am nonplussed by a particular statement in the summary of your proposed framework changes - "It will allow proactive clearing of vegetation in preparation for natural disasters."

Is there someone on staff who is able to predict exactly where a tornado or other storm event is going to occur? Will people living in windy locations be removing trees only to find that a season is storm-free?

In summary, I would have to say that any decisions taken by politicians or staff should be made only by those who understand the values of vegetation and diversity, not by any who operate from a narrow perspective only.

Yours sincerely

Tim Stumer