

Vegetation Management Framework Amendment Bill 2013

Submission

State Development , Infrastructure and Industry Committee

Parliament House

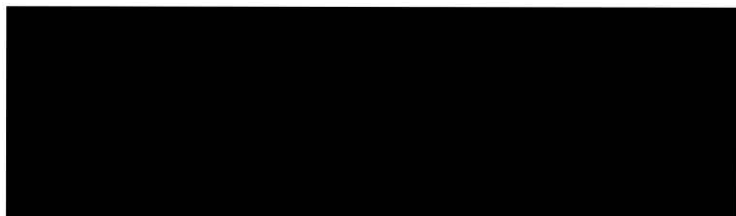
Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Sir / madam



I wish to make for your consideration a formal submission to the committee on the subject Bill in my capacity as an affected landholder myself in grazing and native forestry practice , and my other daily occupation as a Real Estate Agent having to deal with other affected land holders , many who I may add have little knowledge of these matters.

Des Edmonds



First I wish to commend the new Queensland Government for this long overdue review of this Vegetation Management Act 1999 (VMA) and including agriculture (cropping & grazing) as one of the four pillars of economy. I support all of the Amendment Bill contents but please consider the following as a suggested furthering of process and improvements to the VMA and the Amendment Bill (the Bill).

Topics of Concern

Area Management Plans (AMP) ; Routine Management Self Assessable Clearing Codes and their definitions ; Relevant Clearing purposes ; Remnant & Regrowth definitions & terminology ; Sections 20AH & 20AI ; Land Subject to the VMA.

Area Management Plans

Queensland is a very large & diverse vegetated & climate variance state , and lawmakers must avoid the easy road of one size fits all which leads to inequities.

It would seem the AMP's on a district basis will be taking into account Qld's diversity. If I have got that wrong then **that's what they should be for**. Most importantly the groups / persons creating the AMP's for the Chief Executive should be representative of all interested stakeholders for a balanced & practical result and also be required to allow general public input AND a fair method of appointing one or more stakeholders from the public in the district to the group preparing the AMP. ie the district AMP group should not be all bureaucrats . The public appointees should be able to claim out of pocket expenses. These AMP groups would have a very busy first couple of years and then a steady reviewing / amending task.

Self Assessable ClearingCodes

It is disappointing the definition and the self assessment criteria for each of these codes are not available at this stage for comment / input. For example thinning in wet tropics rainforest and savannah and eucalypt open forest just to name three , could be quite different definitions and also lead to different self assessment. To be fair the VMA or its Regulations must provide meaningful flexibility for this.

Relevant Clearing Purpose

The Bill reads that clearing for irrigated agriculture for grazing pasture will require irrigation. That may be the case in some parts ; but in high rainfall wet tropics areas there is enough natural irrigation from the heavens to have sustainable pasture without needing to pump water from somewhere. The Bill needs to provide flexibility for these different climate zones / districts.

Definitions and Terminology

To use the terms “high value” and “endangered” regrowth of once cleared areas of the wet tropics land is misleading to distort the perception and any following assessments. Any landholder will tell you that this first regrowth is the rubbish vegetation and a far cry from high value or endangered. Regardless of what some science will say it would be more in the vicinity of 300 years before species of the virgin rainforest type would dominate again over cleared areas. Some with their agenda to push , say 100 years. Long time landholders will advise differently. This supports the previous recommendation that local representation needs to be on AMP groups to have balance.

Regrowth is regrowth , and to use the 70% height and coverage etc existing VMA definition , to say it is now to be classified remnant, doesn't make it remnant species ; it is still regrowth. 300 years is a long way from todays productive needs. Many landholders would be thankful to have locked up regrowth returned to them for productive use to be cleared for pasture again OR selling as offsets or future carbon credits ; it would be something back for the landholder that has had to bear the brunt in land devaluation and less production that has not cost the rest of the community anything to have vegetation management. The original clearing lines from early settlement days are shown on the current veg maps.

Sections 20AH and 20AI

These sections are difficult to understand and one has to rely on the new “sustainable land use” purpose of the act to be confident we are still heading in the direction of being constructively ‘solution based’ to a fair go vegetation management framework for landholders.

Land Subject to the VGA

Small rural residential landholdings up to at least 4 hectares should not be subject to the act. Even though the existing set back exemptions from infrastructure are a help, there can still be a lot of

unnecessary VMA heartache associated with people's lifestyle dreams on these small acreages.

Also rural landholders would like to see the fenceline setbacks changed to 10 metres OR 150% surrounding tree height which ever is the greater ; as for other infrastructure.

I do hope my submission here becomes helpful for everyone affected by the VMA and I am available to discuss further if required.

Yours Faithfully

Des Edmonds