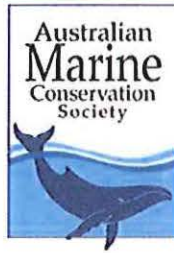


Submission No 34



State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee  
Parliament House  
George Street  
BRISBANE QLD 4000  
[sdiic@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:sdiic@parliament.qld.gov.au)

10<sup>th</sup> April 2013

Dear Sir/Madam

**Re: *Vegetation Management Framework Amendment Bill 2013***

The protection of Australia's unique and diverse marine environment is vital to the Australian Marine Conservation Society (AMCS) and our 20,000 supporters across the country. As an organisation that has been working towards the protection of Queensland's marine wildlife and their habitats for almost five decades, AMCS welcomes the opportunity to comment.

AMCS is of the opinion that the proposed changes to vegetation management under the *Vegetation Management Amendment Bill 2013* would result in one of the largest and most significant backwards steps for environmental protection by a government in Australia's history. AMCS is extremely concerned that this legislation will significantly weaken vegetation protection and seriously threaten the health of Queensland's catchments and marine ecosystems. Land clearing is a major driver of ecosystem damage and leads to salinity, declining water quality, species extinction and substantial greenhouse gas emissions. Clearing, particularly of riparian vegetation, has been identified as a significant cause of land borne sediments affecting the health of marine ecosystems including the World Heritage listed Great Barrier Reef.

AMCS is strongly opposed to the following proposed legislative changes:

1. Changes that now allow clearing applications for additional relevant purposes of high value agricultural clearing and irrigated high value agricultural clearing under section 22A VMA. While there are criteria that must be met for those purposes, overall this means large areas are now vulnerable to extensive clearing for agricultural purposes. This would have adverse impacts on catchment health and Queensland's valuable marine environments such as the Great Barrier Reef.
2. The new mapping system - *regulated vegetation management map* that locks in areas of vegetation as non-assessable Category X. AMCS is also strongly opposed to the movement of high value regrowth vegetation on freehold and indigenous land which has not been cleared since 1989 into Category X.
3. The removal of wild rivers provisions from the VMA which means that clearing on those wild rivers high preservation areas will be assessed against codes under the VMA rather than the more stringent wild river declared area codes.

**Australian Marine Conservation Society**

Become a Sea Guardian today: [www.marineconservation.org.au](http://www.marineconservation.org.au)

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4. Weakening of the compliance, offences and enforcement provisions under the VMA. For example the defences are expanded to include “mistaken belief” (*Vegetation Management Framework Amendment Bill 2013* cl 56). AMCS is also opposed to the removal of penalty provisions that allow for forfeiture of lease if the lessee has more than one conviction for a vegetation clearing offence (*Vegetation Management Framework Amendment Bill 2013* cl 67 cl 68).

AMCS would like to thank you for considering our comments. Should clarification of any issues be required, initial contact should be with me.

Yours sincerely



Darren Kindleysides  
Director, Australian Marine Conservation Society

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