

Kathy Faldt

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State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee
Parliament House
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Dear Committee

RE VEGETATION MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK AMENDMENT BILL 2013 (QLD)

The objectives of the Bill are to amend the vegetation management framework, *Land Act 1994*, *Sustainable Planning Act 2009* and *Wild Rivers Act 2005* to:-

- reduce red tape and regulatory burden on landholders, business and government
- support the four pillar economy - construction, resources, agriculture and tourism
- maintain protection and management of Queensland's native vegetation resources.

I wish to lodge my objection to any reduction in the current legislative powers of the Vegetation Management Act 1999. Sustainable land use including protection and management of Queensland's native vegetation resources is critical to the well being of both human and wildlife and also for the long-term sustainability of the industries and businesses government supports with the four pillar economy - construction, resources, agriculture and tourism. To have ecological sustainable land use there must be legislative protection for critical biodiversity and ecosystems.

Globally there is recognition of the value natural capital and the value of the ecosystem services the natural environment provides. In an attempt to balance the books the loss of those services has been given a dollar value. This process is being led by economists and bankers not environmentalists. Queensland has not yet engaged in such a process at a state level.

Many tourists looking to come to Queensland come for a unique Queensland experience - one that is based around our natural and unique resources - both places and species. A sustainable statewide tourist industry needs to recognize that.

There is no comprehensive data for South East Queensland and no process to date to recognize the contribution our natural capital provides for Queensland's economy and well being of its citizens. Clean air and water and healthy food are dependent on functioning healthy ecosystems.

Much of the region of Mt Lindesay North Beaudesert is regrowth vegetation – with endangered and of concern regrowth. If regrowth vegetation is not protected, then much of this vegetation will not mature to reach remnant vegetation status in the future. Currently regrowth vegetation is supporting endemic species like koalas (vulnerable EPBC), spotted tail quolls (endangered EPBC) e.g. Chambers Flat , Jimboomba, Logan Village, Munruben, Greenbank . Any proposed loss of protection for remnant or regrowth vegetation threatens these Matters of National significance in this MLNBA Region. Koalas and other native species do utilise regrowth vegetation areas. Local wildlife carers particularly utilise the new young growth for food for koalas in care. Personal communication with wildlife carers indicates that koalas prefer this new growth as a food source.

As a property owner of 6 hectares in this region some of which is remnant vegetation of concern I have allocated 5 hectares to the state's Koala Nature Refuge. I am concerned about the impact of further clearing. With 4 ULDA approved developments in the area Greater Flagstone, Yarrabilba, Ripley Valley and Teviot Estate and much is cleared or approved for clearing already. Clearing exemptions are allowed for infrastructure, farming, mining. Mining exploration has occurred and is still proposed for CSG in the Scenic Rim Region area. Large areas of land will collectively needed to provide infrastructure to support these developing communities.

Sustainable grazing and other agriculture can occur with vegetation on a property. Removal of vegetation alters the water table level often causing salinity and thus the ability of the farmer to continue without huge inputs and costs. In an agricultural region that has already experienced vegetation clearing, the remaining regrowth and remnant vegetation is of great significance for biodiversity, water quality and ecosystem values. In the region of the Logan and Albert Rivers, past land uses practices have removed most of the lowland vegetation and has threatened habitat connectivity from lowland to upland areas which helps to protect the resilience of biodiversity and ecosystems. The vegetation that remains in the Logan and Albert River Catchment needs to be retained and protected.

Much of the riparian vegetation along the waterways in Logan as well as the surrounding vegetation has been removed by past land use practices. More protection and retaining of native vegetation is required e.g. along waterways. Housing developments with hard surface areas will cause an increased amount of runoff and increased potential risk of flooding. Erosion impacts during flooding are greater when vegetation has been removed.

Changes to mapping and Act will not protect regrowth vegetation and proposes to remove essential habitat mapping.

Changes propose to provide less detailed mapping which will disadvantage the community and government decision makers

(1) currently the VMA 1999 has remnant vegetation mapping that includes endangered, of concern, and not of concern vegetation areas. These areas are also identified with their RE vegetation code . Essential habitat mapping is also mapped which indicates habitat that is essential for endangered, vulnerable and threatened species like the koala and rare frogs e.g. wallum froglet. The current mapping places some value on regrowth vegetation and has provided mapping of regrowth vegetation. These maps are based on scientific assessment by the Queensland Herbarium and so have a scientific basis.

(2) the changes propose are to remove the classification of endangered and of concern and have 2 categories called category B and category C. It will not protect regrowth vegetation.

More areas will be locked in as Category X vegetation. Some areas in Queensland have high value regrowth vegetation on Freehold and indigenous land (not cleared since 1989) that could be moved into this Category X and would no longer be protected. Only vegetation on leasehold land for agricultural or grazing purposes that satisfies the definition of high value regrowth vegetation will be mapped as a category C area on the new regulated vegetation management map.

These changes will make it more difficult for those who wish to manage their land in the most ecologically sustainable way.

Changes would mean that vegetation (remnant and regrowth) in coastal areas, and along waterways will not be protected from clearing or development. For example, vegetation in all catchment of the Great Barrier Reef. Mangroves globally play an important role in mitigating impacts of natural hazards and extreme weather events. To place these in a self accessible code category opens the gate to mistakes being made that challenge our ability to repair.

May I recommend to the committee that community consultation and engagement be undertaken before changes as put to the committee be agreed. Furthermore I am concerned under this Bill, the Minister has the sole authority (without any process of assessment, public consultation or even consulting experts or other government departments) to declare areas High Value Agricultural areas wherever he determines it "necessary"

Yours respectfully



Kathy Faldt