



Sub No. 57



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Dear Mr Gibson

WWF Australia submission to the Committee of inquiry into the Vegetation Management Framework Amendment Bill 2013 ("this Bill" hereafter)

We thank the Committee through yourself as Chair, for the opportunity to advise them on the environmental implications of this Bill.

Executive Summary

WWF is disappointed in this Bill.

We do not believe it will meet the Government's own stated objectives of environmental protection, doubling farm production or of green tape reduction.

We believe the Bill carries a number of inconsistencies which we note below.

WWF stands ready to assist the government meet these objectives and help resolve these inconsistencies. However this Bill as it stands takes Queensland to a place we feel you will regret in the future. Queenslanders strongly supported the laws this Bill aims to unwind.

We request you delay this Bill so that it can be properly consulted on.

Environmental Impacts

This Bill will lead to the...

- Destruction of endangered forests
- Extinction of endangered species that live in those forests
- Further imperilling Koalas, Cassowaries and other loved wildlife
- Land degradation from loss of vegetation
- Soil erosion to spoil creeks, rivers, estuaries, bays and seas
- Pollution of the Great Barrier Reef
- Increased greenhouse gas emissions
- Increased salinity risks

Failure to address the true opportunities to grow agricultural profitability

There is no doubt the farm sector needs help to fully realise its potential. WWF agrees and has successfully campaigned for over \$200m in funding to help

farmers improve yields, reduce costs and maximise their profitability in ways which also reduce impacts on the environment.

Extending clearing into marginal areas is not the answer. Rather Research, Development, Extension and Innovation are the pathways to farming smarter not harder.

Failure to remove bureaucratic uncertainty

Despite the Bill's proposed removal of protection, potential Commonwealth protection under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act remains. Farmers may confuse this Bill's objectives with new clearing rights and unknowingly breach Federal laws.

There are other opportunities to streamline processes which are more efficient and maintain or enhance environmental protection, and we feel greater consultation will lead to far better outcomes for Queensland's future

Inconsistencies

This Bill implicitly acknowledges the need for retaining 50m stream protection buffers in three of the 6 catchments draining to the Reef, but has removed the stream and wetland protection zones for high value regrowth in other Reef catchments. It is inconsistent to not afford all Reef watercourses and wetlands the same protection.

Likewise any benefit of retention of Reef watercourse protection zones will likely be negated if clearing of high value regrowth on erodible soils above 12% slope as this Bill would allow, or if clearing for allegedly High Value Agriculture is permitted in Reef catchments that may overwhelm the stream protection zones with sediment from inevitable soil erosion that comes from clearing mature forests, as this Bill would allow.

We hope you take the time to consult with all stakeholders prior to voting on this Bill.

WWF SUBMISSION

WWF interest in this Bill

Over 37,000 Queenslanders support WWF and our environmental goals and aspirations in Queensland.

With their support, WWF actively campaigned for the introduction in 2006 of the historic ban on broadscale clearing in Queensland and in 2009 for the extension of clearing restriction to regrowing forests critical for endangered wildlife or vulnerable to degradation. We would appreciate the government's advice on the extent of renewed clearing likely to be made possible by these changes.

WWF's priority interest in Queensland is the abatement of the threats to the future of the Great Barrier Reef from land based agricultural pollution, coastal development and climate change.

Bill if passed would breach a commitment

After assessing the environmental implications to the extent allowed by the limited information available, we can only conclude that this Bill represents a historically unprecedented reversal of environmental protection in Queensland and as a result, one that would clearly breach a written commitment provided to WWF by the then Leader of the Opposition, Campbell Newman dated 14 March 2012, that "The LNP will retain the current level of statutory vegetation protection." That signed letter is attached for the Parliamentary record.

The bill would clearly reduce the current level of statutory protection in at least two major ways detailed below. It would remove protection for over 700,000 ha of regrowing forest habitats of endangered wildlife and on land vulnerable to degradation; and it would overturn the 2006 ban on broadscale clearing of mature forest for a new exemption of "high value agriculture" which could be over one million hectares in extent.

In the areas newly at risk of clearing due to removal of protection of high value regrowth and the new exemption for 'high value agriculture', actual clearing projects may nonetheless constitute a controlled action under the Commonwealth *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* if Commonwealth protected matters are present. We are in the process of estimating areas which may be subject to EPBC jurisdiction but at present we are unable to provide estimates. Since responsibility for EPBC Act referrals lie with the proponent however, many landholders may proceed with clearing thinking that the removal of protections under the VMA now allows them to do so, when in fact clearing may place them in violation of the Commonwealth law.

We believe that this Bill undermines Government's objectives to expand the economic value of two of its economic "pillars": agriculture and tourism¹.

Bill would not support doubling the value of agriculture

Most of the robust and productive lands in Queensland are likely to have been cleared already. Reforms to protect vegetation came well after a century or more of development, and very extensive clearing. Remaining areas are very likely to be of lower productivity, with poorer soils, poorer access to markets and labour and uncertain access to water. Therefore we feel it is economic folly to expect significant contribution to total production from these clearing these marginal areas. In light of this reality, we are left puzzled as to what is the true driver for the reversals of protection proposed.

If government does indeed have a strong interest in doubling the profit of the farm sector, there are many more likely avenues for it to explore, largely relating to inspiring and investing in innovation in already cleared areas which have our best soils, closer proximity to markets, labour and water.

It should not be assumed that these areas are operating at maximum productivity. Alas there are major challenges and indeed opportunities in adopting practices which not only increase profit, but impact far less on the environment.

According to the government's own scientists, at least half of the vast cleared area of Queensland has been degraded well below its potential. As an example,

¹ <https://lnp.org.au/state-election-2012/grow-a-four-pillar-economy/>

the 2009 Federal and State Report card on Great Barrier Reef water quality shows best management or leading edge practices for soil conservation are only used by 19% of cane farmers and 50% of graziers in Reef catchments.² Field experiments by Meat and Livestock Australia³ have shown that major increases in livestock productivity come from recovering good land and soil condition where it has been lost and degraded.

WWF believes that landscape scale adoption of best practice agriculture on areas already cleared and converted, is the surest way to recover lost agricultural productivity, while successfully conserving our natural environment.

This Bill would undermine this vital long term effort to recover lost agricultural productivity. Instead it would promote the outdated approach of clearing marginally productive areas of mature forest or forests protecting endangered wildlife and fragile land, rather than working to recover productivity where it has been lost on long-cleared land.

Bill threatens tourism value

Of special concern to WWF is the increasingly precarious future of our global biodiversity and tourism icon, the Great Barrier Reef, currently under investigation by UNESCO for inclusion on the "in danger" list of World Heritage sites.

According to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, the Reef and its catchments deliver \$5.1 billion a year in tourism value to Australia, and approx. 50,000 jobs.⁴

The renewed tree clearing allowed by this Bill will inevitably lead to increased soil loss, and consequent nearshore marine sediment pollution which in turn threatens the future of the Reef and its enormous economic value.

More broadly, the reversal of protection for the 700,000 hectares of regrowing forests protecting endangered wildlife and fragile land ("high value regrowth") we estimate:

- 26 regional ecosystems currently listed as endangered or of concern, and as a result of the existing protection of high value regrowth forests expected to recover to of-concern or least concern, would now be prevented from doing so by the reversal of protection if this Bill is passed.
- 60 animal and plant species including koalas, cassowaries and quolls have significant numbers of recent occurrence records in the high value regrowth scheduled to lose protection if this Bill is passed.

Much greater impacts can be expected from broadscale clearing of mature forests which would be allowed under the new exemption for "high value agriculture clearing."

Thriving and recovering wildlife and natural areas are fundamental to Queensland's future as a tourism destination. Nature based tourists who visit our national parks, apart from the Reef mentioned above, spend \$4.43 billion a year

² <http://www.reefplan.qld.gov.au/about/assets/gbr.pdf>

³ For example

<https://www.austrangesoc.com.au/userfiles/file/2012%20ARS%20Conference/Paper%204-7%20Peter%20O'Reagain.pdf>

⁴ Table 4.1 in <http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/outlook-for-the-reef/great-barrier-reef-outlook-report>

in Queensland.⁵ This Bill threatens Queensland's tourism industry and the fundamental natural assets of that industry by allowing unregulated destruction of the occupied habitats of endangered wildlife.

In addition to direct damage to our natural tourism assets, this Bill would also damage Queensland's reputation as a responsible nature tourism destination.

Bill would harm Queensland's unique biodiversity

This Bill if passed would increase the extinction risk for wildlife loved by the overwhelming majority of Queenslanders. Koalas and cassowaries are already on the brink and this Bill would only serve to speed their demise.

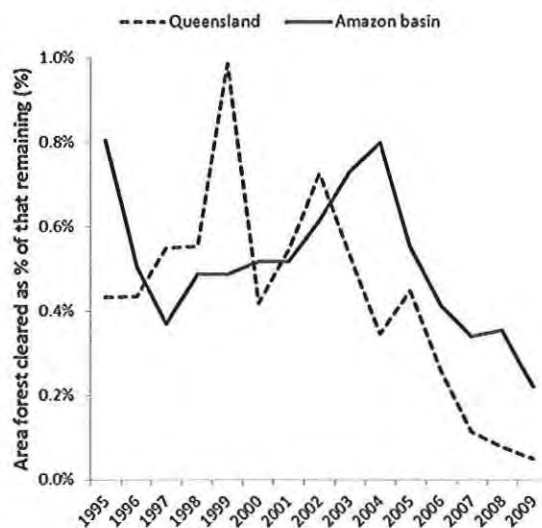
Australia has the world's worst record for mammalian extinctions over the last 200 years and before recent legislation, among the highest rates of tree clearing in the world. Before the Vegetation Management Act, Queensland had annual clearing rates on par with the clearing of the Amazon rainforests (Figure 1).

Wildlife scientists have estimated that broadscale clearing in Queensland between 1997 and 1999 resulted in the deaths of approximately 100 million individual native mammals, birds and reptiles each year including:

- over 2.1 million mammals, including an estimated 342,000 possums and gliders (about a third of which were feathertail gliders), 29,000 bandicoots and 19,000 koalas
- 8.5 million birds, comprising mostly woodland birds such as treecreepers, thornbills, robins and flycatchers
- 89 million reptiles, such as skinks and geckos.

as well as an estimated 190 million individual trees per year including

- 60 million trees per year in the brigalow (*Acacia harpophylla*) and gidgee (*A. cambagei*) open forests and woodlands



⁵ Ballantyne et al 2009 Valuing tourism spend arising from visitation to Queensland national parks. CRC Sustainable Tourism
[http://www.crctourism.com.au/wms/upload/resources/90049BallantyneValuingTourismSpendQP SUM%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.crctourism.com.au/wms/upload/resources/90049BallantyneValuingTourismSpendQP SUM%20(1).pdf)

Figure 1. Proportions of forest cleared in Queensland compared with deforestation in the Amazon Basin.⁶

- 44 million trees per year from remnant areas of poplar box *Eucalyptus populnea* and *E. melanophloia* woodlands.

They dispelled:

"the common belief that when birds and other mobile wildlife lose their habitats they simply fly away or move on to locate new habitat. The reality is starkly different: when native bushland is cleared and burnt, food and shelter habitats are destroyed, and displaced wildlife die immediately or soon after from starvation or by predation. Those that escape to nearby remnant vegetation usually survive only at the expense of other wildlife, which are displaced and die."⁷

Our greatest single biodiversity asset the Great Barrier Reef requires healthy catchments. Tree clearing is a major contributor to sediment and nutrient pollution. Reef catchments have already lost 40% of their tree cover with another 24% disturbed. Due to marine pollution caused by clearing and outdated farm practices, hard coral cover is now down to just 14%, a loss of 50% since 1986.

Bill would make substantive contributions to climate change

Deforestation is a major contributor to climate change globally. Greenhouse gas emissions and areas deforested in Queensland's are still greater than all other states and territories combined.⁸ Deforestation emissions represented 7.8% of national emissions in 2010 and over half of these came from Queensland.

This Bill would put over 700,000 hectares of currently protected regrowing forests and possibly as much as a million hectares of currently protected mature forests at risk of clearing for marginal agricultural gain, while leading to large scale greenhouse gas emissions, and preventing the beneficial effect of these forests soaking up of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Estimates of quantities at risk due to this Bill are still underway, but early estimates are already on the order of 200 megatonnes of carbon dioxide for just the regrowing forests, approaching the scale of Australia's annual emissions of 561 megatonnes.

Queensland has possibly more to lose from accelerating climate change than many other places. As noted above, the Great Barrier Reef and the Wet Tropics world heritage rainforests, fundamental assets of our nature tourism industry, are particularly vulnerable to climate change.⁹

The Bill has implications for the climate change commitments of the Australian government.

⁶ Sources SLATS report 2009-10 for annual clearing rates. Areas of forest remaining, this report. Areas cleared and remaining in the Amazon from sources cited in

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deforestation_of_the_Amazon_Rainforest

⁷ http://www.wwf.org.au/news_resources/resource_library/?1976/Impacts-of-Landclearing-on-Australian-Wildlife-in-Queensland

⁸ Queensland emitted 23.5 megatonnes net of CO₂-e in 2010 due to net deforestation, 53% of national emissions of 43.85 megatonnes <http://ageis.climatechange.gov.au/>. And 80,890 ha cleared for the first time and 154,350 ha recleared in Qld in 2010, compared with 80,870 ha and 154,340 ha respectively in the rest of the country

http://ageis.climatechange.gov.au/Reports/2012_2010_AUSTRALIA_LULUCF.pdf

⁹ "Climate change is becoming a major threat to the biodiversity of the World Heritage Area"

<http://www.wettropics.gov.au/climate-change> and see The Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report cited above

Reduced land clearing in Queensland due to the ban on broadscale clearing in 2006 was a major reason why Australia was able to meet its Kyoto target. The increase in land clearing precipitated by passing this Bill will reduce the number of carbon permits the Australian Government can offer for sale under the emissions trading scheme, reducing federal government revenue and in effect reducing the pool of domestic permits available to liable industries, forcing them to go offshore to buy their permits.

It is also important to note that the reversal of protection of regrowing forests proposed in this Bill would not then make those forests available for carbon farming credits. Since they are protected now and since they are over 23 years old, they would not meet the criteria for the approved human-induced regeneration methodology under the carbon farming scheme.

Bill would degrade water quality

Pollution of the Great Barrier Reef by sediments from soil erosion due to land clearing and subsequent agricultural use represent one of the greatest threats to the Great Barrier Reef.¹⁰

Increasing sediment, fertiliser and pesticide run-off from any "high value agriculture" projects located in Reef catchments would further accelerate the decline of the Reef. These pollutants have been linked with the observed intensified outbreaks of the Crown of Thorns Starfish, which has in turn been a leading contributor to an observed approx. 50% loss of coral in the last 27 years.

The retention of protection for 50 m watercourse buffers in some Reef catchments is of course, welcomed. However, only part of the total Reef catchments area is included. In addition, further reduction on Reef water quality would occur from the reversal of protection for high value regrowth on slopes above 12% or in wetlands and stream protection buffers in other catchments that also flow into the Reef, principally the Fitzroy River catchment.

However, the Bill if passed would open up watercourses and wetlands throughout the state to clearing in the current regrowth protection buffers. In other amendments proposed by Minister Cripps under the Water Act, riverine protection permits would not be needed from high bank to high bank clearing of watercourses and wetlands in Queensland. The justification provided in the Water Act amendment was that protection of riverine vegetation would be guaranteed by the Vegetation Management Act. This is not the case however. Riverine protection permits under the Water Act would not be replaced by this Bill for regrowing riverine forests. Riparian vegetation plays a critical role in protecting drinking water, fisheries and other very important downstream freshwater and marine environments, including the Murray Darling, Moreton Bay and Gulf. Our current estimate is that approx. 100,000 km of streams where vegetation is mapped as non-remnant would be put at risk of clearing by these changes, including the removal of riverine protection permits under the Water Act.

Bill partly overturns the 2006 ban on broadscale clearing of mature forests

In 2006, Queensland instituted a ban on broadscale clearing of mature or remnant forests. This ban followed 15 years of consultation with industry and

¹⁰ The Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report cited above

included a generous \$150 million structural adjustment package for affected agricultural industries.¹¹

This Bill would effectively unwind that historic 2006 ban over an area of poorly understood scale using a new exemption for allegedly "High Value Agriculture".

With the sparse data to hand, we estimate this could result in over one million hectares of currently protected remnant vegetation and endangered wildlife habitat being cleared, with consequent large scale death and endangerment of wildlife, soil loss, salinity and water pollution.

The standard for what is "high value agriculture" seems to be largely at the whim of the Minister in the proposed new section 19D, under which the Minister would be able to directly declare and gazette High Value Agriculture areas without any process of consultation with the public, with experts or with other government departments, as the Minister acting alone deems "necessary".

It is notable that while regrowth along certain Reef watercourses and leasehold land will continue to be regulated under this Bill, the high value agriculture exemption could apply in Reef catchments, allowing for example renewed clearing of lowland paperbark forests for new cane farms.

As noted above, an unknown portion of this area may yet be covered by Commonwealth processes if a Commonwealth protected matter is present.

Bill removes restrictions on clearing of 700,000 ha of high value regrowth forests

In 2009, Queensland enacted new legislative restrictions on the clearing of regrowing forest habitats for endangered ecosystems and species and vulnerable environments known as "High value regrowth".

These regrowth forests are more than 23 years old now and already nearing maturity in many cases. It is important to note that this represents only a small fraction of all regrowth forest in the state, only that portion with endangered ecosystems, with essential habitat for some threatened species, in stream or wetland protection zones and on slopes over 12%. Regrowth cleared after 1989 is not currently protected from repeat clearing.

This Bill would re-open 700,000 ha of high value regrowth forest to clearing once again, with no requirement for a permit, and no code to follow.

The principal industry representative organisation Agforce welcomed the new regrowth restrictions in 2009. In their stated view, "the new legislation balances productive land management while maintaining biodiversity values."¹² Following the logic put forward by Agforce, this Bill would remove that balance to the detriment of biodiversity values.

Restrictions against clearing under the regrowth code would survive only along certain Reef watercourses and on leasehold land. As noted above, an unknown portion of this area may yet be covered by Commonwealth processes if a Commonwealth protected matter is present.

¹¹ Giskes R 2004. *An End to Broadscale Clearing by 2006 under the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2004 (Qld)* Queensland Parliamentary Library Research Brief No 2004/06

<http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/explore/ResearchPublications/ResearchBriefs/2004/200406.pdf>

¹² <http://www.agforceqld.org.au/file.php?id=211&open=yes>

Other issues

WWF also believes that reduced environmental protection is likely to result from other key changes brought in by this Bill:-

- The addition in Clause 4 of "allows for sustainable land use" to the purposes of the VMA without any definition of what is sustainable land use. We conclude from the foregoing analysis that the land use that is being allowed for is anything but sustainable.
- The proposed removal of the requirement to obtain a permit and replacement with self-assessable vegetation clearing codes for pests and weeds; fodder harvesting; encroachment; necessary environmental clearing; relevant infrastructure; a Category C area; a Category R area and clearing for extractive industries.
- The inappropriate inclusion of what appears to be river diversion and flood control works under the definition of "necessary environmental clearing": "d) divert existing natural channels... " and "c) "prepare for the likelihood of a natural disaster; ... Example— removal of silt to mitigate flooding"
- The removal of section 60B sentencing guide from the VMA and the weakening of other compliance provisions in sections 67A and B in particular the introduction of a "mistaken belief" defence which would set the bar unreasonably high for the state to have to prove that the person clearing illegally did so knowingly. This seems to go against a fundamental legal principle that "ignorance of the law is no defence".
- The removal of Wild Rivers Act provisions.

Summary

To be clear, WWF opposes these provisions of the Bill:

- The removal of protection of such high value regrowth as is protected now
- The creation of a new exemption or allowable purpose of high value agriculture and creation of a new power for the minister to declare high value agriculture areas
- The addition of the sustainable land use purpose
- "Necessary environmental clearing", which includes flood mitigation works or river diversions
- Self-assessable codes
- A "mistaken belief" defence for illegal clearing
- Removal of Wild Rivers provisions.

Submission not exhaustive

WWF-Australia has not had sufficient time or information provided by the Government to be able to assess the full impact of this Bill in all its aspects. Hence this submission does not represent the last word from WWF on this Bill and its impacts on Queensland's environment.

We therefore seek the leave of the Committee for an extension of time during which we can could conduct more detailed analysis and supplement the submission made here.

We would also very much appreciate the opportunity to consult properly with the government.

Yours sincerely,



Nick Heath

National Manager



ATTACHMENT: Letter from Campbell Newman to WWF CEO Dermot O'Gorman dated 14 March 2012.

14 March 2012

Mr Dermot O’Gorman
Chief Executive Officer
WWF-Australia
Ground Level, 126 Margaret Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr O’Gorman

Thank you for your letter of 2 February 2012 in which you highlight WWF-Australia’s key election issue of securing policy and funding commitments to advance the health and resilience of The Great Barrier Reef.

The Great Barrier Reef is an important part of Queensland’s extraordinary natural heritage, and in the lead up to the State election the LNP made several announcements that underline the LNP’s commitment to the protection Queensland’s iconic natural areas and Queensland’s precious wildlife.

The LNP is committed to getting Queensland back on track in economic performance, social development and responsible environmental management.

To do this we intend to grow the four pillars of the Queensland economy – construction, resources, agriculture and tourism – that will drive economic growth job creation and prosperity. We have released strategies on each of the four pillars which are part of our plan to get Queensland back on track. In each of the strategies there is a firm commitment to taking these industries forward in an environmentally sustainable way.

1. Cut Pollution with Farm Innovation

- 1.1 In the next term of government, will your government support the current goals, objectives and targets under the *Reef Water Quality Protection Plan 2009* to reduce polluted run-off?

The LNP commits to the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan objectives and targets.

- 1.2 In your first year of the next term of government, will you set targets for reductions in polluted run-off, based on the best available science, to achieve the Reef Plan 2020

Goal for water quality to have no detrimental impact to the health and resilience of the Great Barrier Reef?

The LNP further commits to the Reef Plan goal “to halt and reverse the decline in water quality entering the Reef by 2013”. Further targets for reduction will be set in full consultation with stakeholders, based on the review of the Plan and on reviews of progress achieved, and on available science.

The LNP commits to the long term goal of ensuring “that, by 2020, the quality of water entering the Reef from adjacent catchments has no detrimental impact on the health and resilience of The Great Barrier Reef”.

The LNP will continue support for the Paddock to Reef modelling and monitoring systems.

1.3 In your first year of the next term of government, will you set objectives for the number of sugar and grazing properties that will achieve pre-determined on-farm management standards, and undertake modelling to show that these objectives will be sufficient to meet 2020 water quality targets?

The LNP will invest in research, development and extension to identify farm practices which improve production whilst decreasing pollution so investment can be targeted at ‘win-win’ reforms.

The LNP will supercharge and fast track industry extension with an initial commitment of \$2m over 2 years to help wet and dry tropics producers adopt “A” and “B” class performance. Fund property scale soil mapping and GPS base stations in ‘black spots’ to revolutionise precision fertiliser application and boost soil health and fertility.

1.4 If progress towards water quality or management standard targets is not sufficient will you commit to further actions, including regulation?

The LNP will adopt the water quality targets established by the final report on the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan due in 2013. Again, any further action or setting of targets will be undertaken in full consultation with stakeholders, based on the review of the Plan and on reviews of progress achieved, and on available science.

In stark contrast to the John Howard initiated, \$200 million incentive base Reef Rescue – the Bligh Labor Government, through complex Environmental Risk Management Plans (ERMPs) imposed red tape and paperwork on farmers and graziers in North Queensland in a botched attempt to address farm run-off issues.

The LNP’s preference is to work with farmer groups to reduce run-off.

The LNP will work with Queensland's sugar and beef farmers and other stakeholders to ensure industry wide best management practice (BMP) is achieved resulting in improved production practices and better outcomes for the Reef. These BMP programs will follow the example set by cotton growers whose proven BMP program is that industry's commitment to the world's best practise in cotton production and environmental protection.

Queensland BMPs for the sugar and beef industries will be recognised against international standards, achieve improved outcomes, address public concerns and provide farmers with a brand to sell their product as sustainable grown.

By investing \$8 million in partnership with industry, an LNP Government will make production in beef and sugar the most environmentally responsible in the world and improve farmers' profitability. We will also invest \$2 million in supercharging extension services in the first two years.

The LNP will work with farmers and industry to ensure that minimum protection standards for the Reef are achieved. We will work consultatively with other stakeholders, including WWF, to ensure that Queensland continues to uphold high standards of protection for our outstanding Great Barrier Reef.

The LNP strongly believes that our outstanding natural environment can be protected and still have a strong agricultural sector in Queensland – we are determined to get the balance right.

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- 1.5 Will your government maintain current budgetary allocations (\$35 million per annum) until 2020 to continue the uptake of improved agricultural practices through: incentive, extension, and regulation, as well as the related research, monitoring and modelling?

The LNP will maintain the existing \$35 million annual budget allocation for Reef initiatives.

2. Queensland Fisheries Leading the Way

- 2.1 In the next term of government, will your government improve the standard of fisheries management through increased investment in fisheries science and research? What new annual budget allocation for fisheries science and research will your government make?

The LNP is strongly committed to a science based fisheries management approach. Indeed there have been several marine incidents over the past year where the LNP has been critical of the Labor Government's lack of science.

If elected, an LNP government will establish a stand-alone department for agriculture and fisheries. The LNP will identify any gaps in the capability, skills and existing effort in fisheries management prior to any budget considerations.

Unfortunately this tired, lazy Labor government has ruined the state's financial position and consequently budget allocations across government will be constrained initially.

- 2.2 In the next term of government, will your government increase the protection of dugongs, turtles, dolphins and other priority species by:
- Investing at least \$8 million over the next three years to remove netting in independently identified high conservation value habitats
 - Investing at least \$1 million to restructure the net fishery by introducing regional management and moving to unit-based fishing rights.

The LNP is committed to delivering a strong, viable, healthy and sustainable commercial fishing industry. Under the Bligh Labor government the commercial fishing industry has struggled and many fishermen face an uncertain future.

The LNP has had a number of conversations with your staff about a reduction in the net fishing effort. We have had similar conversations with fishing groups who generally agree that a reduction is required in total effort in Queensland's fisheries as a key element of any future management strategy to produce a viable, profitable and sustainable fishery. A reduction in the number of licenses in a voluntary competitive tendering system will go some way to alleviating fishing pressure and to making commercial fishing more sustainable.

An LNP Government will invest \$10 million to restore sustainability to Queensland's commercial and recreational fisheries. Fishing is one of the most popular pastimes in Queensland, with an estimated 750,000 recreational fishers, and we also have an important commercial fishing industry. Consequently it's vital we get the balance right and have a comprehensive plan to protect our marine environment and sustainably manage both recreational and commercial fishing.

The LNP will deliver a strong, viable and healthy commercial fishing industry by investing \$10 million to restore sustainability in our commercial fisheries. This will include a voluntary buy-back of commercial fishing licences as well as improved monitoring of our fisheries, given the general acknowledgement that a reduction in the total take is needed. This reduction will alleviate pressure on stocks and to make commercial fishing more sustainable and increase the fish stock available for recreational fishers.

The LNP's positive plan will also deliver a real benefit for our dugongs, turtles and dolphins in Queensland waters.

- 2.3 In the next term of government, will your government invest at least \$1.5 million over the next three years to improve satellite monitoring systems, and to assist industry to install satellite tracking devices in all commercial fishing boats operating in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park?

As previously stated the LNP is strongly committed to a science-based fisheries management approach. If elected, the LNP will identify gaps in the capability, skills and existing effort in fisheries management prior to any budget considerations.

Our recent \$10 million announcement on the commercial fishing sector includes a commitment to improved monitoring of our fisheries.

The LNP will work closely with all stakeholders to better monitor our fisheries. I note your interest in satellite monitoring and tracking systems and the LNP looks forward to obtaining a better understanding of your proposal.

- 2.4 In the next term, will your government commit at least \$2 million to improve the management of the East Coast Trawl and Coral Reef Fin Fish Fisheries, through supporting the adoption of independent accreditation by the Marine Stewardship Council?

As previously stated the LNP is strongly committed to a science based fisheries management approach. If elected, the LNP will examine fisheries management practices across all Queensland controlled fisheries.

The LNP has also had a number of conversations with your staff about these fisheries and the long awaited results of the trawl fishery review. An LNP government will examine the status of this review prior to making management decisions on the fishery. We are aware of your support for accreditation by the Marine Stewardship Council and will look forward to further discussions with WWF and other stakeholders on how management practices can best be delivered.

3 Save Turtles and Dugong with Traditional Owner Partnerships

- 3.1 In the next term, will your government provide an additional \$30 million, to manage and protect dugongs, turtles and dolphins, including a commitment to fund at least 30 new Traditional Owner Reef Ranger positions?

In recognition of the importance of Indigenous participation in the management of country - both land and sea - an LNP Government will employ 30 additional Indigenous Rangers in its first term, with 10 new Indigenous Rangers employed each year. These Rangers will have a

particular focus on the protection of our pristine waterways, protected species (specifically turtle and dugong conservation on the Great Barrier Reef) and National Park management

The LNP will also crack down on poachers and bring Queensland into line with other states and territories by getting rid of the current exemption for traditional hunters by making it illegal for anyone to wound, mutilate or torture an animal.

An independent legal expert and the Federal Attorney-General's Department have debunked Bligh Labor and Environment Minister Vicky Darling's claims that over-riding Federal laws prevent them from passing laws to banning cruelty in traditional hunting – particularly for turtles and dugongs.

4 Reef Bank: Development Contributing to Reef Resilience

- 4.1 In the next term, will your government identify 'no-go' areas and address the direct and cumulative impacts of development on the Reef through a comprehensive strategic assessment in partnership with the Federal Government?

The LNP commits to the Commonwealth led Strategic Assessment Process for the Great Barrier Reef, recognising that this does not bind either government to any pre-disposed outcome.

The LNP is committed to ensuring the Great Barrier Reef retains the values for which it was declared a World Heritage Area and that it continues to be one of the best managed marine protected areas in the world.

Through Statutory Regional Planning processes strategic environment assessment will be undertaken to better plan future development near the Reef, and minimise impact on the Reef.

- 4.2 In the next term, will your government work with scientists, the Federal Government, and stakeholders, to develop a Strategic Investment Plan for the Reef, as well as the establishment of a 'Reef Bank' to finance this plan?

The LNP believes in principle that any private sector investment in Reef Resilience needs to be targeted and effective, and must be informed by best available science, and include assistance and recognition of the good work being undertaken by farming, fishing and other reef related industries and communities.

5 Maintain existing policy, planning and legal safeguards

5.1 In the next term, will your government maintain the current level of statutory vegetation protection as well as the *Delbessie* Agreement for leasehold land?

The LNP will retain the current level of statutory vegetation protection. If elected, the LNP will examine ways to reduce the administrative burden upon leaseholders and at the same time enhance the environmental outcomes. We are exploring policy options to protect Queensland's outstanding biodiversity.

The Delbessie Agreement is a framework which supports the environmentally sustainable, productive use of rural leasehold land for agribusiness. The Agreement provides security of tenure through longer lease terms, clarifies duty of care and enables lease land condition to be assessed using scientifically based guidelines.

Importantly the agreement promotes voluntary conservation agreements and Indigenous access to State rural leasehold land for traditional purposes. The LNP supports the underlying principles of the Delbessie Agreement.

Both conservationists and pastoralists agree that the administrative arrangements that give effect to the agreement can be improved upon. The LNP will examine how the outcomes can be delivered more effectively and efficiently and at the same time enhance the environmental outcomes.

5.2 In the next term, will your government maintain the current level of statutory protection of wetlands in Reef catchments?

The LNP will retain the current level of statutory protection of wetlands in Reef catchments. If elected, the LNP will examine ways to reduce the administrative burden upon landholders and leaseholders and at the same time enhance the environmental outcomes.

5.3 In the next term, will your government maintain the current national park growth target of 50% by area by 2020, and of all protected areas to 20 million hectares by 2020, as well as the land acquisition and nature refuge budgets needed to achieve these?

The LNP believes that expanding Queensland's protected area estate is a worthy objective and will look for additions to our protected estate – with emphasis on conserving what needs to be conserved, not to meet arbitrary targets. Importantly, the LNP will ensure that our National Parks are properly managed.

The Labor Government has simply locked the parks up and thrown away the keys, allowing them to be overgrown and overrun with a 2011 Auditor-General report finding only 17 per cent of Queensland's protected areas had management plans. The LNP's plan is simple, but

effective policy: fix the weeds, eradicate the pests, allow greater access to the public and be a good neighbour to surrounding properties.

5.4 In the next term, will your government maintain the current statutory and planning framework for environment protection including: Marine Park Zoning, development impact assessment, Coastal Plan and Act, and fisheries management plans? Please specify any proposed reforms to the current framework and how these will lead to improved environmental outcomes.

The current statutory and planning framework for environment protection will largely remain in place, with the exception of the following notable improvements:

The LNP will replace Labor's controversial Wild Rivers declarations on Cape York and will develop a Cape York Bioregion Management Plan in conjunction with Indigenous communities, Cape York organisations and other stakeholders.

The Bioregion Management Plan will incorporate protected estate management, pristine waterway management and real natural resource management targets to allow for an integrated approach to conservation of our natural heritage.

It is important to note that any major developments will continue to be required to submit an Environmental Impact Statement to be assessed against both State and Commonwealth legislation that has been designed to protect pristine rivers and other areas of high conservation value.

Labor has failed to properly manage our natural heritage. This has resulted in neglected National Parks and widespread pest and weed problems. Appallingly less than a third of Queensland's National Parks have management plans in place.

The LNP's Bioregion Management Plans will inform Statutory Regional Plans where they exist or they are developed. These plans will build on the LNP's existing commitment to improve National Park management.

An LNP Government will revisit the Queensland Coastal Plan and has committed to working in partnership with industry, local government and other stakeholders on a long term vision for the planning, management and sustainable use of land located in the State's coastal areas.

The LNP wants to strike the right balance between environmental protection and ensuring that suitable and sustainable development can occur in coastal areas.

6. Maintain existing agency funding

- 6.1 In the next term, will your government maintain or increase the current budget for the Department of Environment and Resource Management as well as funding for environment programs across the government? Please specify any proposed changed budget allocations and how these will lead to improved environmental outcomes.

In the lead up to the State Election I have announced that under an LNP Government the Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM) will be split into two distinctive parts: a mining, energy and resources part, and an environmental regulator. Further to that, any announcements on the future of individual DERM offices or budget allocations would be premature. However, I am on the record saying that I want strong environmental protection rather than political outcomes.

The LNP understands the damage done by pollution and the importance of improving the Reef's resilience. Our outstanding natural heritage needs to be protected so it can be enjoyed now and by future generations.

However, the LNP believes reef protection goes hand in hand with a strong and innovative agricultural sector and we are determined to get the balance right.

The LNP is committed to protecting the reef but we believe in achieving it through incentive, through working with farmers not through over- regulation. The LNP believes a protected Great Barrier Reef will only come about through working with farmers to improve and modify farm practices and reduce farm run off.

The LNP's approach is about practical, direct green action – with local input and based on science not politics.

We need strong action for our environment now, we need to get Queensland back on track.

The LNP's 5 pledges to get Queensland back on track:

1. **Grow a Four Pillar Economy:** through focusing on tourism, agriculture, resources and construction and by cutting red tape and regulation.
2. **Lower the Cost of Living for Families by Cutting Waste:** we will freeze family car rego for the first term of an LNP Government, reduce water prices and reform electricity tariffs to save families up to \$330 a year.
3. **Deliver Better Infrastructure and Better Planning:** we will share the proceeds of the mining boom to build roads and provide critical local infrastructure, open up National Parks so all Queenslanders can enjoy them and protect prime agriculture land.

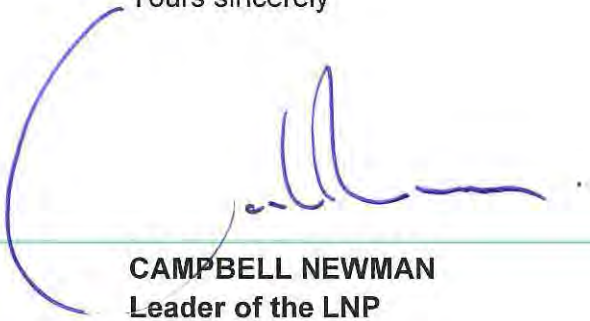
4. **Revitalise Front Line Services for Families:** we will get back to basics and deliver quality services such as health, transport, police and education.

5. **Restore Accountability in Government:** Ministers will be accountable for their Departments and our decisions will be open and transparent. Only an LNP Government will ensure direct action for the protection of Queensland's iconic natural areas and Queensland's precious wildlife.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share some of the LNP's policy directions with your members.

I encourage WWF-Australia members to check our website candoqld.com.au regularly as we continue to roll out our policies in the lead up to the State Election.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Campbell Newman', with a large blue flourish on the left side that loops around the text.

CAMPBELL NEWMAN
Leader of the LNP
