



**Birds Queensland**  
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State Development Infrastructure and Industry Committee  
Parliament House  
George St, Brisbane.



Dear Sir/Madam

I write on behalf of the 700 odd members of Birds Queensland to express our extreme disappointment that the Queensland government is considering this Bill, which dilutes the Vegetation Management Act (VMA) 1999 that was introduced to protect the bush. This flies in the face of several decades of scientific research (largely funded by taxpayers) and many hundreds of scientific papers showing the many detrimental effects of removing vegetation from the Australian landscape. Queensland already has a shameful track record in this regard, having allowed the clearing of Brigalow until 1991, long after other more environmentally-aware states had prohibited such practices. Less than 10% of the unique Brigalow belt remains. Most scientists and conservationists never dreamed that we could see a return to these unenlightened years.

I refer to the Vegetation Management Framework Amendment Bill 2013 introduced to the Queensland Parliament on 20 March 2013. We are very concerned that this Bill threatens hundreds of thousands of hectares of regrowth forests and woodlands near watercourses on freehold and indigenous land that are currently protected because they contain ecosystems and/or species that are endangered, precisely because of clearing and other anthropogenic activities. This effectively overturns the ban on broad-scale land clearing of remnant vegetation for "High Value" Irrigated Agriculture (including cattle pasture) or Horticulture near watercourses. We find it hard to believe that the Minister would be empowered under this Bill to declare such agricultural areas as "High Value" wherever he deems it "necessary", without any process of assessment or consultation with experts or the public.

It also seems that the Wild Rivers provisions are to be removed from the VMA which means that applications to clear vegetation on previously protected areas will be assessed against codes under the VMA rather than under the stricter declared Wild Rivers codes. By allowing for additional clearing of vegetation in the catchment areas of the World Heritage Great Barrier Reef, this Bill threatens the water quality of one of our most treasured tourism assets.

We are also very worried that the penalty provisions that allow for forfeiture of lease if the lessee has more than one conviction for a vegetation clearing offence might be weakened. Mightn't this be a green light to environmentally-irresponsible people to repeatedly break a former law?

As you are undoubtedly aware, a large proportion of the Australian people have little understanding of how the planet maintains life on earth, and of the unfathomably long time (billions of years) it took to get to this stage. Such people do not appreciate how shockingly quickly the planet has changed in the last century, even decade, due to the ever increasing damage caused by an ever-increasing population of our species. Consequently they cannot begin to realise how miserable life will be for ALL grandchildren unless steps are taken to slow down these changes. Coal mining and CSG may be good for a small proportion of people, but will our grandchildren be able to enjoy the proceeds? We, who care about our grandchildren and the planet's state in the future, had expected the Qld Government to protect us from the actions of such people.

Yours sincerely



Richard Noske, PhD, Grad Dip Ed  
President, Birds Queensland

