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STATE DEVELOPMENT, INFRASTRUCTURE
AND INDUSTRY COMMITTEE**National Parks Association of Queensland**Submission to State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee
10th April 2013**Vegetation Management Framework Amendment Bill 2013**

Queensland has one of the most unique and diverse terrestrial environments in Australia and internationally. The National Parks Association of Queensland (NPAQ) is concerned that the proposed changes to vegetation management under the *Vegetation Management Amendment Bill 2013* would result in significant loss of remnant vegetation across the State.

In its current form, this legislation will weaken vegetation protection, enhance fragmentation of the natural landscape, and seriously threaten the health of Queensland's catchments. Land clearing is a major driver of ecosystem damage and leads to salinity, declining water quality, species extinction and substantial greenhouse gas emissions. It is no surprise that clearing, particularly of riparian vegetation, has been identified as a significant cause of land borne sediments affecting the health of marine ecosystems, in particular the World Heritage listed Great Barrier Reef (GBR). Unlike states such as Victoria that have little remaining remnant vegetation, protecting vegetation in Queensland is vital to safeguarding water quality, protecting soils, enhancing air quality, retaining wildlife and sequestering carbon.

NPAQ is particularly concerned the Vegetation Bill will weaken the protection of vegetation in all GBR catchments and other areas of the state. The **regulated vegetation management map** appears to lock in areas of vegetation as non-assessable Category X, removing protection for high value regrowth vegetation on freehold and indigenous land which has not been cleared since 1984.

Furthermore, compliance, offences and enforcement provisions are significantly weakened, and incredibly, defences are expanded to include "mistaken belief". In addition, penalty provisions are removed that allow for forfeiture of a lease if the lessee has more than one conviction for a vegetation clearing offence.

Less than 5% of the Queensland is protected in National Park, a very low statistic considering the progress made in virtually every other State and Territory towards protecting remnant vegetation. This legislation endangers the inheritance of our children and their children, and continues to render the landscape as yet another resource for manipulation and consumption.

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