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| I, as a Queensland primary producer, | support the changes you have proposed, however, have suggested some further recommendations with the Bill. |
| My production type is | Grazing - Stud cattle |
| The land tenure on my property is | Freehold |
| I have Remnant Vegetation found on my property | Yes |
| I have High Value Regrowth Vegetation found on my property | No |
| My main issue/s with the current vegetation management framework is: | <p>Overly complex process to obtain a development application/permit for vegetation management</p> <p>The length of time taken to obtain a development approval/permit for vegetation management</p> <p>The length of time to utilise a permit/development approval is too short (currently 5 years) and doesn't allow for long-term property planning</p> <p>Incorrect mapping</p> <p>Overregulation of activities that are routine and essential to the management of my property (for example clearing for fence lines, firebreaks, roads, or infrastructure)</p> <p>Over-administration or administration of vegetation management by inexperienced departmental staff</p> |
| If this Bill is passed it will mean the following for my property in terms of improved productive, environmental and/or social aspects: | <p>Ease of management. Less regulatory burden. Ability to develop further areas to high value agriculture. Minimise bureaucratic red tape.</p> <p>Unable to Broadscale clear or even achieve "Parkland-style" clearing. Scale of operation is a major contributor towards profitability in the Beef industry and effects are amplifying. Major issues facing the Beef Industry include inadequate scale in more closely settled areas, significant cost escalations, doubling of debt over last decade and return on assets have declined to very low levels (0.3% to 2.0% average). The northern beef industry is generally in a very unprofitable and unsustainable state. Legislation around vegetation management has impacted both development and maintenance options for producers in affected regions. Farmers must be allowed to manage their vegetation in a practical, environmentally sustainable way.</p> |
| If I could propose further changes to the legislation these changes would include: | <p>If the LNP are to achieve their goals & election commitment to grow a Four Pillar Economy, double food production by year 2040 and minimise bureaucratic red tape they need to amend the VMA and make changes to the codes, particularly if they want to achieve Economic Sustainable Agricultural Development for the Far North's Leasehold, Freehold and Indigenous agricultural and pastoral lands (i.e. Bananas at Hopevale, Gilbert and Flinders irrigation). Many Northern Bioregions have over 96% remnant vegetation and there is untapped potential. The Commonwealth Coalition</p> |

has mooted a plan to create an "economic zone" in the North and develop a food bowl in Northern Australia to double Australia's agricultural output.

The Act needs to change and reflect the ability for agricultural development in target areas of North Queensland. This change in the Act needs to be supported by community based land use planning that addresses fair and reasonable environmental and economic tradeoffs and biodiversity offsets. If the Act delegates authority to robust processes involving communities of the areas in question and science networks that provides back to government robust and supported advice, then government is demonstrating good governance and logic and strongly defensible decisions. These processes occurred prior to 2003 through the Regional Vegetation Management Planning (RVMP) process.

Legislation around vegetation management has impacted both development and maintenance options for remote area communities further creating social and economic disadvantage. The Act and Western Bioregions code require substantial rewording and amendment to achieve a level of ecologically sustainable development. Farmers must be allowed to manage their vegetation in a practical, environmentally sustainable way and communities in the North Queensland should have equal social and economic opportunity as exists in SEQ.

* The Regional Vegetation management Planning process had taken place prior to 2003. The plans are in existence and require no reinvention or resourcing. Consensus between Environmental and Landholder groups occurred at the near finalisation of these plans. We would need to look at how we can implement as such through Policy changes with the view of repealing/modifying such legislation at next election. Implementation of changes to the Vegetation Management Act 1999 would be through the Department of Natural Resources and Mines (NRM). Applications to clear Vegetation should be assessed by VM officers with suitable knowledge and underpinning skills recruiting officers with Agricultural and Land Management degrees, rather than Environmental. This would also stimulate jobs for rural graduates.

* Current fenceline clearing widths are restricted to 10 metres wide or less and there are some impractical aspects of the Vegetation Management Act 1999, for example thinning and encroachment. Clearing widths along fencelines should be 1.5X the height of standing vegetation (so if a tree was 20m tall then clearing widths should be 30m either side of fenceline). This is particularly needed in Cape York and in Gulf Savannah where wildfires present risk to Livestock, infrastructure and Vegetation itself and Cyclone-prone areas.

* Scale has shown to be a major contributor towards profitability in the Beef industry and the effects are amplifying. The Queensland data indicates that at the beginning of the decade, 1,123 LSU were needed to maintain overheads at \$80/LSU. At the end of the decade, the corresponding number was 2,405 LSU (MLA Northern beef situation analysis 2009). If the LNP is to meet its goal to DOUBLE Queensland's food production by 2040 it will need

to review what areas can be sustainably developed.

* In some instances High-value regrowth must be allowed to be cleared on Leasehold land, particularly in Central Qld's Brigalow belt... to maintain current productivity.

* Workable thinning and encroachment guidelines. A large number of studies have shown that woody plants are generally very competitive with pasture and this competition could be quite pronounced even at low tree basal area. So if woody plant populations were increasing this would pose a threat to potential livestock carrying capacity. Consequently any increases in woody plant cover could cause concern to pastoralists. In fact there have been very many historical & anecdotal reports of increases in tree/shrub cover in uncleared areas since livestock grazing commenced (Bill Burrows work - Burrows et. al.)

There is now a widespread consensus that it results from changed fire regimes brought about by the introduction and management of domestic livestock in areas of the world previously managed by hunter-gatherer societies. This expansion seems to parallel the reduced burning activity over the past century & especially since WWII which led to the increased availability of graders, 4WD fire trucks, portable petrol pumps etc. i.e. the ability to control & suppress fires on grazing land.

* Conclusion from Burrows research:-

- Grazed woodlands are a very important agricultural and natural resource base in Australia and particularly in Queensland - > 1/3 of that State's land mass.
- Considerable scientific evidence that woody plants are proliferating and/or standing carbon stock is increasing over much of the 'intact' woodland area.
- This change in tree/shrub stocks is generally associated with a decline in potential pasture production – implications for future management of retained woodland areas.
- There are demonstrable huge errors in present NGGI calculations, while 90 + % of Australia's and Queensland's 'forest' estate is ignored in the inventory
- Correcting these errors should lead to Australia's LUC&F sector being identified as a net sink, not a net source of emissions when this country's 1990 Greenhouse Gas Inventory ("Baseline") is subject to international audit
- Australia would therefore:-
- be ineligible to avail itself of Article 3.7 of the Kyoto Protocol
- have much lower net per capita emissions than is currently portrayed
- have a huge carbon sink (hitherto unheralded) available for carbon offset trading should such trading be endorsed

I would like to see the LNP adopt the policy that the former QDPI recommence investigations and recognised work into tree/grass interactions and carbon sequestration. This is essential to protect our grazing industries and for true carbon accounting as we move into a world of potential carbon trading.

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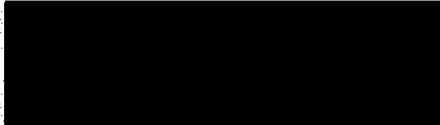
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