

Submission to SDNRAIDC 12 March 2018

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We wish to make a submission in favour of the “the Bill” introduced in parliament in March 2016 and to support the reinstatement of protections under the Vegetation Management Act 1999 (Qld) to be discussed in parliament April 2018 .

The State Government in 2018 needs to abide by the commitment to the reintroduction of the changes drafted in the 2016 (repealed) Bill.

To be concise but not exclusive of many other important points concurred with in the 2016 (repealed) Bill, the main points of this Bill being the reinstatement of restrictions for clearing regrowth on freehold land and to remove the ability of landholders to clear for ‘high value’ agriculture. (*see <http://hwlebsworth.com.au/potential-changes-to-queenslands-land-clearing-laws-and-the-impact-upon-land-owners/> for more detail.*

The two main arguments to support this submission are:

- 1/ that stronger restrictions would play a major role in reducing Australia’s CO2 levels; and
- 2/ that water quality of the GBR would be significantly improved

(in agreement with Hamman, 2016)

As landholders, a scientist and primary producers for 37 years on the Herbert River, we have seen many changes, some big and some creeping. In ignorance or greed many were detrimental to the environment though there were some schemes such as the Dr Joe Baker initiated (Fed, State, local govts plus employment schemes) CRRP (Community Rainforest Reafforestation Program 1990-1998?) that we were fortunate enough to be part of; a voluntary scheme that assisted/enabled landholders to plant rainforest timber trees on freehold regrowth land. Most of the detrimental changes we see are clearing and filling in streams, soil quality deterioration, lack of biodiversity, and many other signs that would be exacerbated if these vegetation management laws put forward in the 2016 Bill are not implemented in 2018.

I (Helen) water sampled in the Herbert River (upstream in Girringun National Park, at Abergowrie Bridge and at John Rowe Bridge for the 14 years (1983 – 1997) I worked at AIMS (Australian Institute of Marine Science). In addition to my main work of larval fish distribution and abundance I collected river water for analysis of mainly nitrates, nitrites, particulate phosphates including low level salts and chlorophyll. A problem data set of phosphates (superphosphate – upstream) nitrates (NH3nitrate, urea, fertilizer) and stream bank degradation in poorly cultivated or overgrazed areas was apparent.

The greatest threat to our biodiversity is the clearing of land, the natural habitat of all living creatures....including humans.

References:

<http://hwlebsworth.com.au/potential-changes-to-queenslands-land-clearing-laws-and-the-impact-upon-land-owners/>

<https://eprints.qut.edu.au/105605/8/105605.pdf> Hamman, Evan (2016) Failed changes to Queensland's vegetation clearing laws: Implications for climate change, the Great Barrier Reef and Australian environmental policy 31(8) *Australian Environment Review* pp 303-308