

18/03/2017
Jeanette Kemp

Committee Secretary

State Development, Natural Resources
and Agricultural Industry Development Committee
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To the Committee,

I am very pleased to support most of the changes in the proposed Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018. The changes made to the Vegetation Management Act 1999 by Campbell Newman in 2013 were devastating to our State. Throughout the last 23 years I have worked both for the Queensland Government (including for the Queensland Herbarium when I was responsible for creating Regional Ecosystem maps) and in private enterprise as a Wildlife Ecologist and Botanist in a not-for-profit ecological organisation. My work has taken me to nearly all parts of Queensland, and I have seen the rapid degradation that continues to take place, even in remote areas, as a result of clearing and other inappropriate management activities.

I am pleased to support the following:

- Removal of the provision to clear for high value agriculture and irrigated high-value agriculture. This provision was a criminal act, condemning several very large areas of fully intact native vegetation.
- Re-instatement of protection for high value regrowth good (definition changed to - cleared 15 years ago). This is clearly a sounder definition.
- Near-threatened species now included for protection.
- Expansion of GBR catchments included in protection to regrowth in watercourse areas (though I have some issues - see below).
- Revising of the thinning codes, making it much less likely that landowners can legally almost completely clear vegetation under the guise of thinning. I do have some minor reservations (see below).
- Enabling landowners to apply to reclassify category X areas to category A areas.
- Revising of the fodder harvesting codes (though I have some issues - see below).
- Strengthening enforcement of land clearing offences (though I have some issues - see below).

Further to the above points:

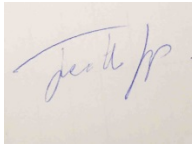
- In regards to the strengthening of enforcement of land clearing offences as mentioned above - I disagree that enforceable outcomes, such as the re-planting of an illegally cleared area, should be used as an alternative to a fine. In many parts of Queensland, the soil disturbance created by clearing often results in a significant increase in herbaceous weed cover which is unlikely to decline once the area is revegetated. Offenders should be forced to admit to the irreversible consequences of clearing, by paying the full penalty, as well as revegetating the area. Also, to clarify - in many cases, physically re-vegetating by planting is not appropriate, rather it is better to protect it from further disturbance so that it can re-grow naturally, as well as regularly hand-spraying or pulling all weeds that emerge. The area that has been cleared should be assessed by the Queensland Herbarium, and they should provide recommendations which can be passed on to accredited consultancies which must carry out the re-planting and/or management of weeds amongst natural regrowth, at the expense of the offender. This weed management should be carried out indefinitely, including if the land is sold on to another owner.
- I strongly believe that protection of vegetation (including both regrowth and remnant) should be expanded from 50 m to 200 m from a watercourse.
- Proving that an area has thickened by comparison with average tree density for the relevant regional ecosystems is fraught with difficulty due to the natural variation in vegetation. This should be used as a first step, however owners should also be made to provide clearer evidence that their property has thickened using an analysis of aerial photography of different ages. The method of thinning (if to be carried out) should be carried out in a way that minimises soil disturbance (to avoid rapid weed establishment).
- Changes to fodder harvesting provisions. Fodder harvesting should not be allowed just to provide more feed for over-stocked properties. It should possibly be allowed during declared drought periods.

In addition there are some areas of the proposed Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018 for which I have concerns due to the lack of clarity or for which consequences may be unclear. These include

- Possible creation of new self-assessable codes (Clause 4)
- Creation of new Area Management Plans (Clause 14)
- Reversion of protected woodlands to category X (Clause 13)

Thank you very much for attempting to reverse the damage done by the Newman LNP, and thanks for the opportunity for me to comment on the new proposed amendments,

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jeanette Kemp', on a light-colored background.

Jeanette Kemp