

SUBMISSION

In providing this submission I refer directly to the key provisions of the legislation which may be amended. I provide my submission in support of the continuation of the Current Vegetation Management Act 1999 and rejection of the changes proposed in the Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 ("the Bill").

We are a small farming family in Central Queensland which is all cultivation growing crops such as wheat, chickpea, sorghum and mungbeans etc to feed many Australians and also export to many Asian countries.

Our overriding issue with the Bill is that its introduction in the Queensland Parliament on 17th March represents yet another variation to the Vegetation Management Framework, which has been amended over 18 times since its introduction in 1999. This constant change in legislation severely impacts on the ability of farm managers to plan and implement effective long-term property and business management decisions. Ecological processes work in much longer timeframes and can be severely compromised when mismatching, constantly changing regulations are enforced. Farmers have long called for certainty with the vegetation management regulatory framework. With the Bill being introduced when farmers are on their knees with over 86% of Queensland in drought conditions, it should come as no surprise that we are totally opposed to continued uncertainty and attacks on the viability of our farm, the long-term sustainability of our business as well as attacks on fellow farmers.

1. Removing High Value Agriculture and Irrigated High Value Agriculture from the Vegetation Management Framework

<p>The removal of High Value Agriculture (HVA) and irrigated HVA (IHVA) affects farmers in regions differently, with those in the north particularly hard hit. Throughout northern Queensland energy and protein become limiting in cattle diets during the dry season and this can cause farmers issues with stock survival and welfare through years of drought. HVA and IHVA permits have provided farmers in northern Queensland with the opportunity to grow fodder and grain for supplementing in the dry season and finishing off stock for market.</p>
--

<p>Central Queensland is a major grain growing and cattle region supplying Australian domestic market and exports to India and China through Mackay and Gladstone ports. If we are unable to maintain our current vegetation management Act 1999 many farms will become unviable.</p>

<p>We use zero till farming practices which reduces soil erosion and maintains better soil moisture by keeping crop stubble in the ground which holds the soil together. We have surveyed contour banks that control the runoff water into the waterways. These waterways need to be maintained by clearing noxious weeds and suckers to allow the water to flow without causing erosion.</p>

2. Retaining Self-Assessable Codes

If self assessable codes were taken away and we were required to undertake a development assessment and approval to do the same activity our management practices would be greatly affected.

If we had to wait for a development assessment and approval this would affect when we could do the work on our waterways, which can only be completed in the dry months. By the time the development assessment is approved the window of opportunity may have lapsed. This delay would cause more noxious weeds to germinate invading native grasses and wash further down the waterways and suckers to grow bigger and block water flow.

This year due to the dry weather we were able to clear out waterways by doing our own self assessment without any delays.

3. Including High Value Regrowth as an additional layer of regulation under the Vegetation Management Framework on leasehold, freehold and indigenous land

The re-inclusion of High Value Regrowth (HVR) as an additional layer of regulation on leasehold, freehold and indigenous land is an overt grab by Queensland Government in search of targets for meeting international treaties such as the Paris Protocol. In 2009 when initially introduced, this HVR layer was prepared hastily in a 'desk-top' mapping exercise with associated errors including areas of non-native vegetation (such as orchards) and bare earth.

We have a Certified PMAV which cost our business \$434 to lock in our category X areas which is all our farming area.

Essentially by adding an extra regulation over FREEHOLD/indigenous land, do we tell people who live in the city they cannot remove a tree to put in a pool, a new pavement or shed in their backyard?

4. Increasing Category R regrowth watercourse vegetation to include additional catchments in the Burnett Mary, Eastern Cape York and Fitzroy Great Barrier Reef Catchments.

In addition to the high value regrowth layer being added back onto freehold and indigenous land, landholders will also be impacted by overnight changes to the regrowth watercourse mapping and the extent of essential habitat mapping. There is currently a strong focus on developing Northern Australia. The Queensland State Government Vegetation Management Framework is preventing these farmers from developing agriculture projects.

We have a current PMAV with waterways which allow the water runoff to the Fitzroy Great Barrier Reef catchment which we currently agree with. We are using farming practices to best protect the environment for future generations by using practices to eliminate soil erosion and protect our waterways and creeks.

EG:

- Control traffic when planting and harvesting
- Zero tilling
- Contour banks
- Clean waterways

We don't need more red tape to inform us of Best Management Practice.

5. That no compensation will be payable to landholders subject to added layers of regulation – high value regrowth, regrowth watercourses and essential habitat during transitional arrangements

Again the issue of compensation arises with the recent auction of the Emissions Reduction Fund selling carbon abatement at \$12.25 per tonne. Where the recompense for Queensland farmers and what is the estimated dollar value of "High Value Regrowth"?

If farmer aren't compensated for loss of agricultural production there will be no farmers left which means no food for a growing country. Maybe this country needs to starve before governments realise the value of the farming community.

6. Increasing compliance measures and penalties under vegetation management laws.

The Bill potentially breaches fundamental legislative principles (FLPs) as outlined in section 4 of the Legislative Standards Act 1992.

Legislation should have sufficient regard to the rights and liberties of individuals and consequently should not adversely affect rights and liberties, or impose obligations, retrospectively.

In addition, penalties have effectively been tripled indicating there is a sense the Government does not think farmers who mistakenly clear vegetation are being penalised enough.

Unquestionably, economic development and environmental protection must go together, however the Government must shift from approaches that place economic development and environment at loggerheads. The science now proves that it is ground cover, through grasses and crop stubble, which determines runoff and erosion risk and protects the soil - not tree cover. What we hear from the Environmental groups saying tree clearing affects water quality on the reef is not backed by science. There is generally less ground cover under trees than in cleared areas due to competition for water and nutrient.

7. Other matters relevant to the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018 that the review committee should consider appropriate and worth some consideration

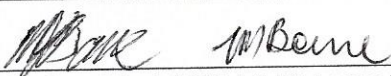
Conclusion

- Farmers/producers will develop sustainably if given the appropriate frameworks.
- We need legislation not to change every 5 seconds otherwise we cannot plan for the future,
- We cannot get investment from banks or private investments due to constant change when governments change
- We want the opportunity to drought proof our business for a sustainable future
- Self-Assessable Codes have been very useful and more cost effective than lodging applications

We currently care for our farming land by following the Best Practice Management where we have attended workshops and completed modules assessing our management of erosion water runoff and groundcover to protect the soil from erosion.

Our current operation is cost effective and we employ up to 3 employees at planting and harvest time. If Self- Assessable Codes are replaced by a development assessment and approval this would greatly affect our management of woody and noxious weeds in our waterways.

Signed:	
Address:	1
Date:	19/03/18

Signed:	
Address:	Undara West 1580 Mt McLaren Road Clermont 4721
Date:	19/03/18