

SUBMISSION

In providing this submission I refer directly to the key provisions of the legislation which may be amended.

1. Removing High Value Agriculture and Irrigated High Value Agriculture from the Vegetation Management Framework
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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.
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2. Retaining Self-Assessable Codes

The self-assessable codes have allowed us to manage the regrowth on our property in a timely and efficient manner. Timing for thinning is important. It relies on the weather and the seasons, not an office timetable. To think we would have the whole process delayed with seeking permission from a government department beggars belief.
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Our Management of our beef cattle herd involves us ensuring that there is sufficient vegetation cover (this includes grass and not just trees) to ensure not only productivity of our herd but ensure we are managing the property for the long term, minimising erosion.

The Codes that exist have been based on science and we see no reason to change them again – unless it is for political gain and not a gain for the environment. We have already notified the Government of our use of the current Code and this leaves us free to make clearing decisions in conjunction with the myriad of other decisions that must be made in managing a property.

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

I object to the urban areas not facing the same restrictions as us. I would like to see them cope with percentages of their front or back yards having prescribed management rules – just as we do. To say those yards are too small is a nonsense.

For too long, we have paid the price for the urban majorities preference for trees. In fact, trees in our landscape are often the cause of erosion, and need to be removed for a good environmental outcome. Much of our country was originally sparsely treed, but the introduction of livestock has changed the landscape. We need to deal with what we have, not what someone, who lives all their life in an urban environment, would like.

We paid hundreds of thousands of dollars to freehold most of our country. The Government now seeks to remove our ability to manage that land. If the rights are to be taken away, we should be compensated.

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

We are within the Burnett Mary Catchment. In fact we are the headwaters of the Auburn River that flows into the Burnett. We have always been aware of the condition of our land and our pasture. We have removed trees from certain gullies as they have posed an erosion problem – not a solution. We see “prescriptive” rules about stream banks to be totally ignorant of the science and the practical issues. Certain soil types – yes; other soil types -no.

The Government shows its ignorance of the “real world” by proceeding with this process.

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

As already stated, we believe that the introduction of more rules and regulations will defeat any goodwill that may have existed. This is an infringement of our rights as landowners. If this is to be introduced – then compensate us.

Taking away landowner rights is another cost and impost that we as producers can not recover. We are price takers, not price makers. The profitability margin is low. Certainly, the cost of land is prohibitive for young people to acquire. Reducing profitability reduces their chances further.

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

The rhetoric about land clearing far outweighs the reality. If real – then are penalties that will apply – just like rules for living in the rest of society. Why should rural landowners be discriminated against?

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

Running a property can sometimes be compared with steering a very large ship. It takes long time for a change in direction to put into effect. The chopping and changing of vegetation laws is silly in light of the time it takes to vegetate land.

Our property has been in one ownership for 50 years. During that time my husband was initially required (by law) to clear and fence the land for production. Now we are told to restrict that clearing. Unless we had our land cleared, we would not be productive. We would not be here, nor would we be turning off some 650 head per year. This translates to food on the table but also to jobs for urban dwellers.

We employ one other person and their job would be in jeopardy.

Signed: A.W. O’Neill

Address:

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