

Committee Secretary
State Development, Natural Resources and Agricultural Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane 4000

March 20, 2018

Carolyn Bussey

Submission on Vegetation Management Act and Other Legislation Bill 2018.

I support the provisions in the draft amendment proposed by Anthony Lymon on March 8, 2018.

Personal experience:

In 1999, we were farming in the Brisbane Valley. In 1991, we had founded the Brisbane Valley Branch of the Koala Preservation Society of Queensland. We mapped vegetation, visited as many schools as we could, surveyed koalas, spoke to council, planted trees.

However, we felt helpless because there was no restriction on tree clearing. Koalas were listed as “common” at that time. We all knew their numbers were on a downward trajectory. We had hoped that Esk Shire Council would introduce clearing restrictions but the the logging and development lobby groups were too strong.

In the late 90s, the Queensland Government organised meetings of stakeholders to discuss a VMA. Of course this led to much preemptive clearing.

My concern led me and others to march in Brisbane with other concerned demonstrators to support the Beattie government's action to protect Queensland's bush.

Even though the koala is now listed as vulnerable, according to WWF's Dr. Martin Taylor, as estimate of 180 koalas perished as a result of bulldozing bushland in Southeast Queensland between 2013 and 2015.

How many more koalas lost their lives in regional areas outside SEQ where the level of clearing is greater and the monitoring of koala deaths is less rigorous?

Reasons to support the amendments:

- The provisions are retrospective to March 8 to limit preemptive clearing.
- “Near threatened” has been added as a category of wild species to be given protection which hopefully will help species falling into more at risk categories..
- *Euc. tereticornis* grows along watercourses and should be specifically protected along all watercourses in koala habitat areas.

Personal experience:

We retired to the Fraser Coast Region. The group I was with received a 'Caring for Country” grant to monitor bleaching of the coral in Hervey Bay over the years 2009-2010. There are in shore reefs in Hervey Bay that can be accessed from the shore. In the big floods of 2010 and 2011, thousands of tons of silt poured out of the Mary River as can be seen in aerial photographs taken at the time. Prevailing currents here carry the silt northwards towards the reefs at Torquay, Scarness and Pt Vernon. The corals were covered in silt and there was massive overgrowth of algae.

Reasons to support the provisions in the amendments:

- River and stream banks need to be stabilised by riparian vegetation. The Mary Valley is a

fertile area and the site of many farms. In these amendments, it is stated that a 50 metre buffer of native vegetation should be left on the rivers in the catchment area for the Great Barrier Reef. It is my belief having read another waterways protection strategy for the old Maroochy Shire that large waterways should have a buffer of 100 – 200 metres and creeks a buffer of 50 metres. Cattle should be watered via troughs.

- As is stated in the rationale for the amendments, Queensland made a major contribution to controlling Australia's greenhouse emissions during the Howard years. The Great Barrier Reef is a source of tourism income and a source of reef fish for the domestic and overseas market. We are all aware of the back to back bleaching events that have occurred recently and that the health of the northern section especially of the reef is very poor. However, since 2009, land clearing has increased our damaging emissions. Apologists for Australia will say that we only produce 1-2% of the world's greenhouse emissions. However, we are a wealthy country with lots of resources and should be a world leader in renewable energy generation. We should be setting an example and taking advantage of the next stage of the energy production by the human race.
- Sea level rise has caused the extinction of the Bramble Cay Melomys and islanders are already being relocated to New Zealand and Australia. Excess land clearing will exacerbate this.

Personal experience:

We lived in the Brisbane Valley but were involved with groups in the Lockyer Valley. In the Lockyer Valley in areas like Minden, clearing had caused the water table to rise. Land became saline and only salt tolerant crops such as lucerne could be grown. There were moves to plant some salt tolerant plants such as casuarinas to help combat salinity.

We own a bushblock in the Helidon Hills. Adjacent to Ravensbourne National Park, we noticed a very poor practice – a very steep slope was completely cleared! It will be interesting to see how the land fared in the recent heavy rain.

Suggested extra protection for vegetation in areas at risk of salinity:

- In the reasons for restricting clearing, areas that are likely to become saline need to be protected from clearing. There needs to be provision for this regardless of the category of vegetation that is protecting the landscape.

Suggested extra protection for any type of vegetation on a steep slope.

- I was under the impression it was illegal to clear slopes that were over a certain angle.

I support:

- extra protection for high value regrowth.
- Removal of agricultural reasons to clear high value remnant vegetation
- Use of CSIRO and Herbarium data to support vegetation classification.
- Stricter penalties for illegal clearing and for removing lack of knowledge of vegetation type as an excuse to avoid a penalty.
- Extension to freehold and indigenous land.

Compliance:

Even in the early 2000's the DNR were overwhelmed with compliance offences and quite serious offences went uninvestigated. 40 hectares of coastal land were cleared without a permit and as far as I am aware the Queensland Government has never charged him with illegal clearing.

Thinning:

Thinning does need to occur when saplings restrict growth of their neighbours. It seems that paperbarks can become large trees or remain a couple of inches in diameter for decades if too crowded.

Submitted by Carolyn Bussey

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