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**From:** sootyowl  
**Sent:** Monday, 19 March 2018 4:39 PM  
**To:** SDNRAIDC  
**Subject:** Submission re. tree-clearing laws

Dear Sir/Madam,

My husband and I wish to express our support for the strongest-possible tree-clearing laws, in line with those favoured by the Environmental Defender's Office. As birdwatchers and owners of a Birdwatching Lodge, we continue to see a decline in the number of species and individual birds in our area. From our paying guests who are often on a big trip we hear only sorrow and horror expressed at the destruction they see in their travels, on a par with the worst of Third World countries who may argue poverty as an excuse.

Our unique wildlife is an enormous drawcard to foreign visitors and the impression most leave with is that the majority of Australians really don't care for any of it! We need our big, old, hole-bearing gum trees for our nesting parrots and sleeping possums. We need forests to be linked, not isolated, most easily achieved by protecting wide swathes of riverine vegetation, Nature's roadways, which in turn protect the Great Barrier Reef. We need education and strong laws to stop those who clear trees, convinced it's acceptable because "it's only regrowth". (Where do trees come from, if you don't let them grow?) Planting trees for carbon offsets is insane if we let clearing continue as it has these last several years.

Locally at Bibbohra we've seen hundreds of hectares of beautiful old poplar gums clear-felled and simply burnt to make space for yet more useless sugarcane, while previously-cleared land lies idle, a breeding ground for weeds and feral animals. A local cattle farmer in Julatten has just bulldozed flowering melaleucas and burnt them or pushed them hard up against what remains of the creek-line trees, meaning those last trees will no doubt fall. Urban trees in Mareeba deemed a nuisance because Flying Foxes roosted in them occasionally were knocked over without consultation. If someone complains about a tree dropping leaves or branches, Council is likely to fell it to avoid litigation. These may seem trivial but when added to what is going on in the wider landscape, they become significant. Birds and bats often move into our urban parks where big trees remain because they have nowhere else to nest or roost.

Insect numbers are crashing around the world and currently scientists cannot offer any single answer to why, but habitat destruction is just one known pressure. If we lose our pollinators, food production will plummet. It's not just the big, cuddly icons like Koalas that die when forests fall.

Please ensure that future broad-scale and indiscriminate tree-clearing is halted and land which harbours rare and endangered wildlife is strictly protected from all land use incompatible with its protection. Please give us something we can, at last, be proud of rather than ashamed of when we talk to international guests about this country and particularly Queensland. Do not be deflected from this by the ignorant and greedy ones in our society. Let the next generation thank you.

Yours sincerely,  
Carol and Andrew Iles

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