

*John van Grieken*

*19 March 2019*

Committee Secretary  
State Development, Natural Resources  
and Agricultural Industry Development Committee  
Parliament House  
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Dear Committee members

***Submission to the Inquiry into Vegetation Management and Other Legislation  
Amendment Bill 2018***

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the above Inquiry. This submission is made privately by John van Grieken.

Ever since this legislation was changed (weakened) by the Newman government, I have been most concerned that vegetation clearing has increased and areas of valuable and endangered ecosystems destroyed. Vegetation Management legislation as it currently stands is not effectively achieving the conservation and protection outcomes that it should be. I appeal to you to consider the suggested changes listed below and to recommend them to the Government for adoption.

It is now time to ensure our native woodlands, ecosystems and the native wildlife that relies on them for their habitats are afforded much better protection. Also, high value regrowth vegetation must be protected from further clearing and be given a chance to regenerate. Over time, the community needs to see reforms leading to land clearing rates falling significantly.

I strongly support the government's intention to substantially strengthen Queensland's land clearing laws. Overall, we note and endorse the Bill in seeking to achieve:

- The removal of high value agriculture as a relevant clearing purpose and the scrapping of that permit process;
- The re-protection of high conservation value regrowing woodlands, under a broader definition that includes ecologically significant woodlands that are 15 or more years old;
- The scrapping of the Thinning 'self-assessable' accepted development clearing code;
- The extension of riparian area protections to the last three Great Barrier Reef catchments;
- The capacity to reclassify Category X into Category A;
- The reinstatement of Riverine Protection Permits; and
- The termination of current Area Management Plans.

I would prefer to see the total removal of provisions for ‘managing thickening’ and would strongly endorse changes to the Bill in that regard. However, I recognise that a second option is to have the revised processes and tests that would be established under the Bill as a means of delivering a greater level of protection for some native woodlands.

Notwithstanding the above support, I am disappointed that the Bill includes provisions that could be used to:

- a) allow new self-assessable codes (Clause 4 of the Bill);
- b) create new Area Management Plans (Clause 14 of the Bill);
- c) delay the removal of existing Area Management Plans for up to two years (Clause 14 of the Bill);
- d) see reverting protected woodlands to unprotected Category X (Clause 13 of the Bill).

I am also disappointed that government is not proposing to substantially tighten up fodder harvesting provisions, including major restrictions and tying any clearing to official drought declaration.

I wish to see the Bill and associated policies strengthened to address each of these deficiencies, and respectfully ask that the Committee examine options for recommending changes to the Bill and codes accordingly.

Finally, I am anxious to ensure that with the passing of the Bill, protected vegetation, be it Category B (remnant), Category C (high value regrowth), or Category R (Reef riparian), is fully and properly mapped and protected across Queensland.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to raise these matters. Should you require any further information about this submission, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

John van Grieken