

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*

- High value agriculture and irrigated high value agriculture refers to cropping.
- This change will take away the ability of land holders to clear small areas of land to develop farms.
- 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. This takes the pressure off the natural environment which will protect the biodiversity (flora and fauna).
- From our experience when droughts occur there can be a rapid decline in stock condition and if producers are unable to provide adequate supplementation in a timely manner, stock can basically become too weak to transport over the long distances of northern Australia. This leaves them stranded, thus creating a huge animal welfare issue and placing additional mental and financial stress on the producers. The ability to use HVA and IHVA to produce fodder for livestock on their property would help alleviate this stress and save huge costs involved with bringing fodder in from elsewhere.
- The net result of removing the HVA and IHVA from Queensland vegetation management act, will lead to less stock being turned off annually, less employment being generated in the regions and the major cities, less food for the future growing population driving the cost of food and fibre up, less money being spent in the local community, less income being generating for farmers and less taxes being paid to governments.

2. *Retaining Self-Assessable Codes*

- The Amendment Bill seeks to deliver on the Government's 2017 election commitments to protect remnant and high conservation value non-remnant vegetation; amend the accepted development vegetation clearing codes to ensure they are providing appropriate protections based on Queensland Herbarium advice; and align the definition of high value regrowth vegetation with the international definition of High Conservation Value.
- Science-based self-assessable codes help farmers carry out the routine vegetation management practices necessary to sustainably produce food and fibre.
- The self-assessable codes help farmers ensure trees and grass stay in balance, avoid soil erosion and feed animals in drought. Farmers are not required to obtain permits for work done under the self-assessable codes, but they are required to notify the Queensland Government.

- Our enterprise has previously used the self-assessable code and notification system. We found the system to be straight forward and relatively easy to use. It has saved us time and money by not having to complete a more complex application process. A big advantage particularly with fodder harvesting in times of drought was the ability to notify and start the harvesting process all on the same day. In our experience prior to the self-assessable codes this would not happen. There could be at least a 2 week wait for the department to process the application. This is on top of the time taken to complete the lengthy application prior to lodging.
- Under the self-assessable codes, we could notify once to cover the whole property. This provided flexibility for us in the fact that we were able to conduct our grazing without any limitations on where we could or could not harvest fodder so long as those fodder species were present. This led to better outcomes for the stock and the environment as stock were able to be shifted when needed and not limited to a small permitted area. The new proposed system limits the area covered under that permit which means lost time and money and reduced flexibility and the need for the reapplication process. In our family business structure our time is our most limiting resource.

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.

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.

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 addition of these layers where is the recompense for Queensland farmers and what is the estimated dollar value of these layers?
- The fact that there is no compensation for farmers effected by these current changes is an utter disgrace! However, in my opinion the Qld government would not be able to afford to pay farmers the real value for the lost production and loss of land value moving forward. We have received compensation in the past from the Beattie Labour Government for changes in vegetation management in 2002. The small amount of compensation paid has in no way

remunerated us for the restrictions placed on our business. These changes have meant we have been unable to properly utilize 30% of our property which is remnant vegetation protected by those laws. This has significantly and detrimentally impacted the quality of a diverse range of fodder species in these specific areas.


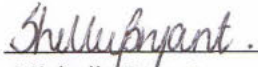
6. *Increasing compliance measures and penalties under vegetation management laws.*

- 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.
- We believe that the proposed penalties are for too steep!
- People are trying to do the best that they can to manage the environment and their businesses and their lives. Sometimes operating in very trying weather conditions. If a more complex and restrictive vegetation management act is imposed on land managers, businesses could easily go broke and lose everything they have paying these severe penalties. A simple human or technical error occurring maybe no fault of their own, as sometimes contractors are employed to do the work.

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*

- Our family enterprise is based in the mulga lands of south-west Queensland. We use this valuable mulga fodder resource as the backbone of our business. It is imperative for us to be able to manage our land sustainably to stay productive and viable for our future and for future generations.
- To sustainably manage our environment, we need to be able to treat regrowth and thickening vegetation economically and in a timely manner with the least amount of red tape and restrictions imposed upon us.
- The continual changes to the vegetation management act are creating uncertainty in people's minds. In some instances, the constant changes to the acts has led to panic clearing. This leads to unfavourable outcomes that are not good for the environment, business and the people involved. Producers need certainty in the act to be able to work with a long-term plan to maintain their environment and productive capacity.
- In our case, this long- term plan involves us having regrowth mulga at various stages of its lifecycle and being able to utilise younger regrowth and grasses for grazing in the better seasons, and fodder harvest areas of older trees in the drought times. The most economical method of fodder harvesting for us is using 2 bulldozers and a length of chain between them to selectively bring the leaf reserve down to a level where stock can utilise it. The process of pulling instigates a huge regeneration of native grasses and tree species when favourable soil moisture conditions arrive. This leads to enhanced biodiversity in the natural environment that would not happen if it was left as a monoculture of larger vegetation.

- The method of pulling with 2 machines and a piece of chain also has other benefits for our business and family as it only requires minimal man hours to get the work done and therefore leading to less physical and mental stress on the people involved. This allows human resources to be deployed elsewhere to overcome other issues arising within the business and the family.
- Sometimes the forgotten impact of these laws is the huge human costs! Our family has chosen to produce food for people everywhere. Yes, that does include the city areas! We love what we do and where we live however we are disadvantaged in some areas that city people take for granted. While trying to work within all the regulations we are trying to educate our children. My wife is teaching 2 of our children on a full-time basis via distance education. She receives no financial remuneration for her time spent which happens to be about 40 hours per week. We have also had to send one of our children away to boarding school to complete her secondary education. These education costs are another additional cost for our business and our family to absorb. If we are going to be able to afford some of these things that city people take for granted, we need to have good viable businesses and sustainable landscapes.
- The long-term viability of our beef production business rests heavily on our freedom to effectively and strategically manage all our fodder species. As food producers, we must be given the opportunity to responsibly manage all fodder species on our property for the benefit of both the environment and our animals. My family has managed to maintain our consistently high beef production capacity despite the prolonged drought conditions we have been experiencing for the past 5 years. This provides proof of our skill capacity and our motivation to responsibly and sustainably manage our fodder systems, our animals and our environment. Vegetation Management and Other Legislation must support our ability to continue these effective and mindful management practices in order for the benefits to continue to positively impact our business, our family, our community, our industry and our consumers into the future.
- We have children that love agriculture and want to produce food and fibre for people worldwide in the future. Will they have the chance to fulfil their dreams and follow in the footsteps of previous generations? We all need to stand together now and reject the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018 before it is too late.

Signed:	 Bill Bryant  Michelle Bryant
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Date:	20 th March, 2018