

## SUBMISSION

I provide my submission on rejection of the changes proposed in the Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018 (“the Bill”).

This constant change in legislation severely impacts on the ability of farm managers to plan and implement effective long-term property and business management decisions. Ecological processes work in much longer timeframes and can be severely compromised when mismatching regulations are enforced. Farmers have long called for certainty with the vegetation management regulatory framework. I am totally opposed to continued uncertainty and attacks on the viability of myself, the long-term sustainability of my business as well as attacks on fellow farmers.

The impacts of the proposed changes to the Vegetation Management Act include;

- The purpose for High Value Agriculture and Irrigated High Value Agriculture will be removed.
- Extends Category B areas (remnant vegetation) and Category C (regrowth vegetation) to freehold land, and indigenous freehold land. Additional 862 000ha High Value Regrowth and water course buffers to all reef catchment, Burnett Mary, Fitzroy, Eastern Cape York.
- Thinning will require Development Application to be lodged for approval.

Describe the impacts the changes will make to stall agriculture, discourage investment, and increase costs and time to manage vegetation.

**At a time when Agriculture has been identified as the fastest growing sector of the economy worth in excess of \$16b, and up to one in seven Queenslanders employed in the sector, the removal of the ability to develop more land for High Value and Irrigated High Value Agriculture could not come at a worse time with many proposed projects across the state that will now have to be abandoned.**

**There have been many potential new developments identified as well as existing activities that would like to expand, these developments/expansions would have enormous benefits to the State’s economy.**

**The proposed changes to High Value Regrowth that remove the ability to clear regrowth that is more than 15 years old will result in many areas thickening, causing a loss of ground cover and consequently an increase in run off and erosion and more sedimentation on the Great Barrier Reef.**

**We have examples where there are areas that have been locked up in an Environmental Offset for a Coal mine where the regrowth is so thick it has choked out the grass causing a total loss of ground cover and resulting in extensive erosion. Please see the attached photos.**

**Another consequence will be regrowth that will have to be recleared a lot more often than would otherwise be normal practice just to keep it under 15 years old. Some fast growing regrowth needs to be recleared at shorter intervals while some of the slower growing regrowth**

may only need to be recleared every 20 to 30 years to achieve a good sustainable environment. Having to reclear at shorter intervals just to ensure it doesn't revert to remnant is not good practice, is bad for biodiversity and removes the ability to manage the regrowth in a manner that is more suitable to that particular land type. Many Landholders left alone to manage their property and timber will allow some regrowth to return to remnant and then reclear the areas that are more suitable for clearing, however this will not happen if there is a threat that the whole area could be declared remnant.

The proposed changes to the Self Assessable Codes places another unnecessary burden on Landholders, and will eventually result in a loss of biodiversity as dominant species take over and choke out the rest of the habitat. This will lead to a loss of production at a time when the world population is increasing and crying out for more food. Another impact of not being able to manage the thickening by mechanical methods will be an increase in Bushfires with the devastating consequences that have been witnessed in Victoria and New South Wales this past week.

AgForce has put forward a proposal that is fair and reasonable for Farmers and the Environment. This alternative is based on Science and many years of experience managing the Land and the Environment. Certainly mistakes have been made in the past, everyone acknowledges that, but until you try something no one knows if it is right or wrong, these same mistakes and the successes are the foundation upon which our Best Practice recommendations are based.

Landholders need certainty and long time frames when making important decisions on land management and are sick and tired of being treated as pawns in the grubby game of politics.



**Thick Brigalow regrowth showing no ground cover and extensive erosion. Above and below.**





**Left side shows area of less regrowth and more ground cover, NO erosion. Right side shows thick Brigalow suckers, no ground cover, extensive erosion. Shows grass protects the soil.**



**Blackbutt suckers approximately 18 years old. No ground cover. No biodiversity.**

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| Signed:  | <i>J J Baker</i> |
| Address: |                  |
| Date:    | 20/03/2018       |