
From: Peter Burke
Sent: Tuesday, 20 March 2018 11:05 AM
To: SDNRAIDC
Subject: Vegetation Management Bill

SUBMISSION VEGETATION MANAGEMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2018

Dear Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the above Bill.

BACKGROUND

For the past eight years my wife and I have been placing much of our energies and resources into maintaining and revegetating a partially cleared property we purchased on the Sunshine Coast Hinterland. During this period we have joined with two of our neighbours to create over 280 acres of Voluntary Conservation Agreement lands which are managed in partnership with Noosa Council under an agreed Environment Management Plan.

On our particular property we have planted approximately 2000 (native endemic species) trees which cover the previously cleared area. The oldest plantings are now 5 years old and range in height from 10 – 12 metres and already are supporting a variety of wildlife. Vegetation management has encouraged a resurgence in native regeneration. Koalas have returned to the area and we are now recognised by Australia Zoo and others as a safe release area for koalas and other wildlife previously injured or ill.

SUPPORT FOR THE CURRENT BILL

Consequently, as you would expect, we clearly support the main provisions of the Bill and applaud the Government for its endeavours to halt the appalling clearing and destruction of wildlife that the previous Government actively encouraged. In particular, we support the reintroduction of protection provisions over freehold land and the extension of protection to “near threatened species”.

WEAKNESS AND MISSED OPPORTUNITY

However, in our view, there is a weakness in the Bill provisions that relates to the limiting of recognition of “high value remnant” lands to those where revegetation is more than 15 years old. As an illustration, while our property and surrounding lands are recognised as Koala Habitat Areas and Environmental Protection Lands under Noosa Council planning, the Proposed Vegetation Management Maps show the now heavily forested previously cleared land, as “exempt” simply because the plantings are less than 15 years old.

I’m sure there are many Land for Wildlife, Landcare members and individual property owners around Queensland pursuing revegetation of their properties who would welcome encouragement of their efforts if they knew the results of those efforts would be protected from day one, not after 15 years.

At a time when insufficient is being done to halt the impacts of climate change, when much more remnant vegetation is being destroyed around Australia than being created, it is incumbent on all levels of government to seek out and support all efforts to reduce carbon emissions.

Most remnant lands both actual and potential around Queensland are held by private landowners, who given the right motivation, encouragement and support can and should, play a major role in both protecting and creating remnant vegetation.

The proposed provision that lands where vegetation is less than 15 years old are exempt from land clearing protection, provides a real disincentive to deter effort and investment in creating the future remnant vegetation that we will all so desperately need.

It may be a complex problem for Government to develop a mechanism that enables private owners to protect both existing remnant vegetation, while at the same time providing protection for newly planted native vegetation.

In my view it is a problem that must be solved and the Government has the opportunity to do so with the further processing of this Bill.

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MOB