

Richard C Copeman

18th March '18

Committee Secretary
State Development, Natural Resources
and Agricultural Industry Development Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000
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Dear Committee

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

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the above Inquiry.

I campaigned for an end to large scale land clearing during the Beattie ALP government and was pleased when that government introduced laws that substantially reduced the rate of land clearing. I have been devastated by surge in land clearing since those laws and policies were seriously weakened by the Newman LNP government.

It is now time to ensure our native woodlands and the native wildlife that relies on them for their habitats are afforded much better protection. We need 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, including by:

- 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.

While I would prefer see the total removal of provisions for 'managing thickening', and would strongly endorse changes to the Bill in that regard. However, if these provisions are

retained, including a requirement that thinning activities must ‘maintain ecological processes’, then I ask that the Bill be amended to require that this must be demonstrated before thinning is allowed.

Notwithstanding the above support, I am disappointed that the Bill includes provisions that could be used to allow new self-assessable codes (Clause 4 of the Bill), create new Area Management Plans (Clause 14 of the Bill), delay the removal of existing Area Management Plans for up to two years (Clause 14 of the Bill) and see protected woodlands reverting 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. I ask that the Bill be amended to allow only lopping, not bulldozing, of fodder species and only during periods of 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.

While not a specific focus for this Bill, I look forward to additional specific action under the Planning Act to better protect threatened species habitats in key areas of Queensland, including koalas and their habitats in southern and central parts of the state.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Copeman', with a large, sweeping loop at the top.

Richard Copeman