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19 March 2018

Committee Secretary  
State Development, Natural Resources  
and Agricultural Industry Development Committee  
Parliament House  
George Street  
Brisbane Qld 4000  
Email: [sdnraidc@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:sdnraidc@parliament.qld.gov.au)

Dear Committee

**Submission to the Inquiry into the *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 on behalf of the Wide Bay Burnett Environment Council Inc (WBEC). WBEC is an A-Political, Not-for-Profit Environmental Advocacy Organisation, based in Maryborough, Queensland. Our motto is 'Protecting the region's biodiversity for the future' and we aim to achieve that via a range of advocacy based approaches including community education campaigns; providing expert advice to all levels of government; responding to community requests to initiate investigations into potential impacts to the environment from unlawful activities and facilitating communication between multiple local community/landcare/catchment care/wildlife protection groups, the Environment Council and the broader Conservation Sector across Queensland.

Queensland has witnessed a surge in land clearing since laws and policies were seriously weakened by the Newman LNP government. It is now time to ensure our native woodlands, the native wildlife that relies on them for their habitats, and the iconic Great Barrier Reef are afforded much better protection. Over time, the community needs to see reforms leading to land clearing rates falling significantly.

WBEC 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;

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- The reinstatement of Riverine Protection Permits; and
- The termination of current Area Management Plans.

While WBBEC would prefer see the total removal of provisions for 'managing thickening', and would strongly endorse changes to the Bill in that regard, we 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, WBBEC is 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 reverting of protected woodlands to unprotected Category X (Clause 13 of the Bill).

WBBEC is also disappointed that the Government is not proposing to substantially tighten up fodder harvesting provisions, including major restrictions and linking any clearing to official drought declaration.

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

Finally, WBBEC is 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, WBBEC looks 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 'M. W. M.', on a light blue background.

Mike Moller  
Regional Engagement Coordinator  
WBBEC