

## SUBMISSION

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

**Having recently spent some time on a drought affected cattle property west of Roma and attended meetings of concerned graziers and farmers, it easy to see that consideration for current vegetation management methods have not been considered. This type of legislation and ridiculous land valuations which have just increase by 100% following a 25% increase the previous year in some areas, are driving them off the land with them selling out to foreign interests who have no interest in the future prosperity of Australia.**

**This whole exercise is a politically motivated attempt to get the green vote at the expense of hard working primary producers who have for years battled droughts and floods and who are committing suicide in record numbers. I have personally witnessed the hardships of our primary producers when doing some work on farms and properties for Aussie Helpers and Blazeaid during droughts and after floods. The last thing these people need is to battle complicated legislation on top of everything else they must deal with.**

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.
- The purpose for High Value Agriculture and Irrigated High Value Agriculture will be removed

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
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<b>Background</b>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>High value agriculture and irrigated high value agriculture refers to cropping.</b></li> <li>• <b>This change will take away the ability of land holders to clear small areas of land to develop farms.</b></li> </ul> |
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<p><b><u>At present 3% population in Queensland are providing food for 97% of the population.</u></b></p>
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It is imperative that we look at the Food Mile and the ability to keep feeding the nation in 10 years time. If the city dwellers rely on a being able to buy fresh milk, or avocados for example, or drink Cappuccinos, it is imperative we can supply fruit, coffee and milk for everyone.

We must be self-sufficient.

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.

## 2. Retaining Self-Assessable Codes

### Background

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.

Families who have owned land in Queensland for generations understand the land and how to look after it, to weather the droughts and floods, commodity price crashes and booms. They should be supported, and recognition given to their knowing how to manage their land.

Whoever has decided that mulga trees, once harvested for stock feed should be left for ten years does not understand mulga country.

It is important that decision makers understand how thick mulga regrowth can be and how it affects the ability of grass to grow. Please look at the science, biodiversity, productivity, landscape, not who votes for who.

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.

Self-Assessable codes have reduced the cost and time taken to make applications for managing vegetation on your property.

We have just had the first Summer/Autumn rain in five years.

Self assessable codes are important in Mulga Country to keep livestock alive and for biodiversity and improvement of the country.

## 3. Including High Value Regrowth as an additional layer of regulation under the Vegetation Management Framework on leasehold, freehold and indigenous land

**Background**

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.

-We have studied our current “Proposed Regulated Vegetation Management Maps”

The Government is essentially adding an extra regulation over FREEHOLD/indigenous land, do we tell people who live in the city they cannot remove a tree to put in a pool, a new pavement or shed in their backyard? What happened to all the strawberry farms in Redland Bay? Now they are housing estates.

- It is of concern that regulations could affect land cleared previously and affect future plans especially areas set aside for drought proofing.

4. Increasing Category R regrowth watercourse vegetation to include additional catchments in the Burnett Mary, Eastern Cape York and Fitzroy Great Barrier Reef Catchments.

**Background**

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

**Background**

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?

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

**Background**

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.**

Those living in the cities who have unrealistic ideologies, should all ground truth areas and see the impact before making decisions. There should be no party politics involved.

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

- **Farmers/producers will develop sustainably if given the appropriate frameworks.**
- **We need legislation not to change every 5 seconds otherwise we cannot plan for the future,**
- **We may not get investment from banks or private investments due to constant change when governments change**
- **We want the opportunity to drought proof our business for a sustainable future**
- **Self-Assessable Codes have been very useful and more cost effective than lodging applications**
- **Generations of families understand their own land – how can a city-based person know the individual areas and their productivity, biodiversity variations with season?**
- **Please keep politics out of it and put the wealth of knowledge from graziers back into it.**

Signed:	<i>Peter J. Wilkinson</i>
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Date:	21.3.2018