

- Since 1999 Bruce has closely followed the development of the Queensland Vegetation Management Framework as a concerned bulldozer contractor and self-professed 'Greenie'.
- Bruce owns a large property in south-east Queensland which contains a large proportion of old-growth vegetation or White Mahogany, Stringy Bark, Ironbark, Grey Gum, Pink Bloodwood.

Values

- Bruce has never dozed remnant vegetation (intentionally)
- "I do not want to destroy good timber and habitat."
- "On Mt French I have preserved large original Tallow Wood and Spotted Gum trees because they are great trees."
- "The country on Mt French is pristine and I want to keep it that way."

Issues with the VMA

1. Contact with Ministers, DNRM staff and Agriculture and Vegetation Committee

- "I have had a large interest in the VMA and have had considerable contact with Departmental staff and political figures to express concerns. Recently I have been in contact with Ministers Rob Pyne, Peter Wellington and Billy Gordon along with Rob Hansen from the Parliamentary Committee and previously with Minister Rod Welford to convey issues with regrowth mapping and regional ecosystem mapping generally. While they express interest, the results are poor."
- "At the operational level I have travelled around areas in the Scenic Rim with Peter Lazzarini from DNRM to demonstrate the errors with mapping and he agreed with many of the errors."
- "My aim is to show the Agriculture and Vegetation Committee that the mapping and administration of the VMA is really wrong."

2. Competency of VMOs

- "Competency of the Vegetation Management Officers (VMOs) is hopeless, with particular examples when visiting Ipswich DNRM office and when contacting VMOs on the phone."
- "When I have invited VMOs to accompany me on the bulldozer to identify RE boundaries 'in-action' but they have all refused. Who can help me?"

3. Queensland Government Offices Do Not Help

- "When I walk into the Ipswich office of EHP there is no counter staff and we have to call a number."
- "Then when I speak with the person, I get bounced around several people before I am handed a telephone to speak with someone in Burleigh office."

4. Fair Laws for Operators

- "The major issues for me as a dozer operator are that there has been no communication with contractors to help us know about how to read the maps and how to use the technology."
- "From my knowledge of other operators regionally, they do not have and are not able to use GPS technologies for vegetation management and they find the maps are poor and misleading."
- "Recently I purchased a GPS but do not know how to input the map data, or how to use it to find the boundaries between REs."

5. Virgin Scrub is not Virgin Scrub

- "We have examples of Brigalow vine scrub on our property that was never cleared and has been in our family for 4 generations from 1876."
- "That area now has no grass and is covered by asparagus vine and cats-claw creeper."
- "Europeans have changed the landscape and we need to manage vegetation."

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CELEBRATING A TWIN BLESSING P2



DO REAL MEN USE MOISTURISER? P5



Where's the Hoop and Bunya Pines ask Mount French residents Suzanne Ramsden and Dr Abdullah Akram? All they can see in this direction is lantana and wattle yet the recently released Regulated Vegetation Management Map for their property shows the area as remnant vegetation - Hoop and Bunya Pines.

'HOPELESSLY FLAWED'

Proposed land clearing laws a threat not a solution

by DON ROBINSON

SCENIC Rim landholders and MP Jon Krause have made a scathing attack on the Labor State Government's land clearing laws which were re-introduced to Parliament, this month.

The most significant points of contention are:

- The maximum penalty for illegal clearing has been increased to more than half-a-million dollars;
- The proposed amendments to the Vegetation Management Act could take effect from March 8;

- The Regulated Vegetation Management Maps, on which the land clearing laws are based, remain "hopelessly flawed";
- If vegetation on a property is incorrectly categorised, the landholder will have to engage a consultant to undertake a survey to prove their case;

- The government's claim that 400,000 hectares of land was cleared in 2015-2016 is "grossly misleading";
- Landholders have been given too little time to make submissions concerning the proposed changes.

STORY PAGES 3-4

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The vegetation mapping indicates stands of Bunya Pine and Kauri Pine in the localities of Mount French and Mount Alford. This indicates that no one with any knowledge of native vegetation communities in South East Queensland has even perused the maps.

The natural habitat of Bunya Pine (*Araucaria bidwillii*) is only found north of Nambour.

The natural habitat of Kauri Pine (*Agathis robusta*) is only found north of Noosa.

'Hopelessly Flawed'

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STORY PAGES 3-4

STORY PAGE 3 & 4

Up to \$500,000 penalties in flawed Vegetation Management Laws

by DON ROBINSON

THE Vegetation Management laws reintroduced into the Queensland Parliament two weeks ago propose to almost treble the maximum penalty for illegal clearing to more than half-a-million-dollars.

And landholders need to be aware some of the changes that could affect the clearing they can undertake on their property, are effective from March 8.

"Stunned!" is how Mt French property owners Suzanne Ramsden and Abdullah Akram describe their reaction when they realised the full implications the proposed new laws will have on them and their property.

"We are members of Greening Australia and Land for Wildlife," Suzanne said.

"These organisations have had their experts come here to document virtually everything and set us up with a management plan. They told us what to keep and what to remove - weeds and lantana, and we've been working to that plan.

"It's been quite a process but we want to do the best for the country and the wildlife. The Scenic Rim Regional Council has been very supportive and provided native trees to supplement the existing native bush.

"But now, out of the blue, we find our block has been mapped and that proposed new vegetation management laws will tie our hands behind our backs.

"We had no idea all this was happening until a neighbour dropped in and told us.

"The map for here is quite wrong. It shows a large area as remnant Hoop and Bunya Pine. But there are no pines growing there, just weeds like lantana.

"The proposed regulations will limit our eradication of lantana and other weeds and make maintenance of the good work we have already done here more difficult with red-tape and compliance.

"Why haven't the various departments been out here to see what we have achieved under the scrutiny of the experts from Greening Australia and Land for Wildlife? We've got extraordinary wildlife here."

Suzanne and Abdullah called on the departments to run some field days and seminars.

"Most importantly I invite officers of these departments to come and see what we have achieved and work with us instead of overriding us with faulty maps and the threat of \$500,000 penalties," Suzanne appealed.

"What the new laws are proposing casts a dark shadow over what we see as our lifetime's work – looking after our country and wildlife."

In a joint statement announcing the reintroduced tree-clearing reforms, Ministers Dr Anthony Lynham (Natural Resources, Mines and Energy) and Leeanne Enoch, (Great Barrier Reef, Science, and the Arts) said the new tree clearing laws would protect the Great Barrier Reef. They said 400,000 hectares had been cleared in 2015/16.

Member for Scenic Rim Jon Krause slammed the Ministers' statement.

"That figure [400,000 hectares] is grossly misleading, overstated, and blatant scaremongering," he said.

"The Statewide Landcover and Trees Study maps (SLATS maps) use satellite imagery to monitor changes in Queensland's native vegetation - everything cleared since the previous flyover shows as new clearing.

"But this includes residential sub divisions, new roads, new approved clearing and maintenance of previously approved clearing - lantana cleared in 2015/16 will eventually grow back unless its eradication is maintained.

"So when the farmer re-clears the same patch of lantana and weeds in the future, it will show as new clearing which it isn't.

"Also, their figure is one sided. It doesn't take into account increases in vegetation which are significant. I know plenty of Scenic Rim farmers who, through careful management, have increased the vegetation on their properties.

"Clearing has to be kept in perspective.

"The actual figure cleared per year is much less than one percent. The fact is that over the last three years, since the LNP's balanced vegetation management laws were passed, the clearance rate has been 17 percent lower than the long run average."

Mr Krause said it was wrong for the Ministers to say the new laws would help protect the Great Barrier Reef.

"The Scenic Rim is not in the Barrier Reef catchment so the Ministers should not be trying to justify the new laws here in the Scenic Rim by claiming that the new regulations will help save the reef."

He said the government was trying to apply a one-size-fits-all policy across Queensland.

"They're trying to apply regulations to control broad acre 'ball and chain' clearing in Western Queensland to the vastly different vegetation and topography in the Scenic Rim."

Scenic Rim beef breeder Tracy Finnegan also said the extent of clearing was overstated.

"The Government's claim of 400,000 hectares is absolute nonsense," she said.

Fodder harvesting not clearing

"Approximately 50 percent of the so called clearing is in fact fodder harvesting – high protein Mulga is pushed to feed cattle, particularly in dry times, and it shows up as new clearing, yet it is defined as non clearing in various Vegetation Management Acts.

"But Mulga is only pushed not bulldozed out. It soon shoots out new growth and grows quite fast. It's about a seven year cycle before the Mulga can be pushed again.

"Fodder harvesting has been approved for years and still is. It shouldn't be categorised as wrecking the environment.

"Large scale control of Prickly Pear, where a spikey roller is driven over thousands of hectares of Prickly Pear, shows as new clearing, whereas it is maintenance required to keep the land productive. The mulched Prickly Pear decomposes and adds value to the soil.

"It's very disappointing. We are faced with an adversarial system rather than a collaborative one," she said.

"I've established three nature refuges covering 168 hectares here, [on her Kerry Valley property south of Beaudesert].

"They're the only privately owned nature refuges in Queensland. It took a lot of negotiation with the state government but it shows what can be done with constructive collaboration. The refuges have been cleared of lantana and weeds and replanted with native species.

Call for collaboration

"I'm on AgForce's vegetation management committee. AgForce has proposed a Healthy Environment, Healthy Agriculture policy advocating collaboration and focused on achieving best practice agricultural and environmental outcomes, but so far it has fallen on deaf ears.

"Where's the co-operation? Where's the acknowledgement that most property owners want to do the right thing? Why do they threaten half-million-dollar fines when we are already responsible custodians?

"We can't sit by and watch our land go feral we need to be able to manage and maintain our tree densities and weed control on a regular basis not be tied up in red tape.

"We are having to deal with several departments and two quite different mapping systems. There has been virtually no ground truthing where field surveys confirm what the maps show is correct.

"The remnant species nominated on the maps is based on soil types not actual field surveys that's why we are getting maps showing remnant species such as Hoop Pine and Bunya Pine when in fact there are none growing there. It's very frustrating.

"To have the maps corrected we, the landholder, have to engage a vegetation consultant to survey our property and point out where the government map is wrong. I have a quote of \$35,000 for a survey of just part of our property. This is a huge cost we don't need and can't afford.

"The Government is forcibly imposing their obligations onto us landholders. The Department should come and survey the area, make the corrections and engage with property owners."

Maps remain inaccurate

Mount French landholder, Bruce Wagner said the Regulated Vegetation Management Maps were still hopelessly inaccurate.

"The Ministers' claim that new, more accurate vegetation maps, following the first major update in five years, had been released, doesn't stack up."

He showed the Guardian several maps he claimed were wrong.

"So far I've looked at 40 property maps, there are still far too many anomalies - areas of black wattle and lantana are now shown as remnant Hoop Pine and Bunya Pine – areas shown as high value re-growth nominate the wrong species."

Commenting on the SLATS maps and the Ministers' claim that 400,000 hectares had been cleared, he said the 400,000 figure was absurd.

He showed the Guardian numerous SLATS maps from large tracts of land across Queensland, which showed areas as cleared, where in fact the vegetation has not been cleared.

Potential negative outcomes

Scenic Rim MP, Jon Krause said the laws, unless amended, would be counter productive.

"Owners will see too much compliance red-tape which, together with impractical limitations on mechanical weed control and thinning, will deter owners from maintaining their properties.

"We'll see more and more landholders do nothing. Weeds and lantana will soon take over, productive grazing country will be lost, and future fires will destroy the vegetation the Laws are supposedly trying to protect."

What should land-holders do?

Mr Krause advised all landholders to log on and get the Proposed Regulated Vegetation Management map for their property.

"I invite them to contact my office if they need assistance.

"I'm calling for a longer consultation period. The current consultation period expires tomorrow, March 22. It shows the arrogance of this government. They have given landholders only 13 days to make a submission."

He said he was also calling for a regional consultation and public hearing to be held in the Scenic Rim.