



# Mackay Conservation Group

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22 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 Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018 ('VMOLA Bill') inquiry**

I am authorised by Mackay Conservation Group to make this submission on behalf of the group. Thankyou very much for the opportunity to comment.

Across Queensland, but particularly here in Central Queensland, the rate of land clearing has increased rapidly over the past five years. Over that time, we have had a number of reports made by neighbouring landholders to our organisation of tree clearing by bulldozer and by aerial distribution of herbicide. We have also heard devastating stories of wildlife escaping the bulldozers but left with nowhere to go and starving. The anecdotes are truly heartbreaking.

The evidence that has been provided by government shows that the rate of landclearing is increasing very rapidly. The most recent SLATS report showed more than 30% increase on the previous reported year. The area being cleared is now approaching the levels that we saw prior to the introduction of the Vegetation Management Act. It is crucial that the Queensland government brings land clearing back under control and resists pressure from agricultural organisations to provide exemptions.

Mackay Conservation Group strongly supports the VMOLA Bill's removal of the ability to obtain permits to clear for high value agriculture and high value irrigated agriculture. Those two categories account for about 10% of bushland clearing that occurred between 2013 and 2016.

We also strongly support the phasing out of Area Management Plans and extending protection to protect vegetation in watercourses particularly those that flow into the Great Barrier Reef lagoon.

Mackay Conservation Group supports the bill's protection of high value regrowth vegetation by broadening the definition to include vegetation that has not been cleared for 15 years. We also support the reintroduction of regulation of regrowth on freehold, indigenous land and occupational licences. However, we understood the government's election commitment to mean that all high conservation value regrowth would be protected. Amendments must be

made to the bill to provide more protection to vegetation that includes endangered species and communities, Great Barrier Reef catchments and threatened species habitats.

Mackay Conservation Group supports the stricter of the definition of thinning in the bill to ensure that ecological processes are maintained, and that biodiversity is not diminished. There should also be limited under Area Management Plans or by permit or code.

We welcome the clarification in the bill regarding landholders' ability to have PMAVs amended so that areas that have been inaccurately classified as Category X can be re-regulated. However, we believe that there is a strong need for this section of the bill to include a requirement that all PMAVs are re-assessed to ensure that the classification of Category X is accurate.

Mackay Conservation Group also believes that fodder harvesting should be limited to areas where there is an official drought declaration.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Peter McCallum', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Peter McCallum  
Coordinator  
Mackay Conservation Group