



Thursday 22 March 2018

Committee Secretary

State Development, Natural Resources  
and Agricultural Industry Development Committee

Parliament House

## **Submission on the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018**

Dear Committee,

The Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Vegetation Management and other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018 (the Bill).

ACF is Australia's peak environmental organisation. We represent a community of more than 400,000 Australians. For more than 50 years we have been a strong advocate for our rivers, reefs, forests and wildlife. ACF is proudly independent, non-partisan and funded by community donations.

Queensland's deforestation crisis requires urgent and effective action. While ACF welcomes the Queensland government's swift action, we are concerned that the proposed legislative amendments within the Bill will be inadequate to provide immediate protection to a significant amount of remnant and high conservation value regrowth vegetation.

### **Support for the Bill**

ACF supports the intent of the Bill and its passing within the Queensland Parliament provided there are further amendments that address deficiencies.

We support the increased protection of high value regrowth vegetation, the removal of high value agriculture as a relevant purpose to clear and increased and consistent protection to remnant and regrowth riparian vegetation in catchments of the Great Barrier Reef. We also support more effective habitat protection for near-threatened species and improvements in compliance and enforcement.

However, the proposed changes to thinning and fodder self-assessable codes are welcomed but there are areas for improvement. We are also concerned about the remnant and regrowth vegetation that may be exempt.

### **Improvements**

The Bill could be improved to ensure a higher level of protection is provided to Queensland's native vegetation. The following points highlight our concerns.

- Thinning: this type of clearing can still occur under the Development Approval and the existing Area Management Plans. The amount of remnant vegetation already approved for clearing under these provisions is unclear but may be substantial.
- Fodder harvesting: remaining under a self-assessable code and not linked to necessity under drought circumstances and allowable in some of-concern regional ecosystems establishes a poor regulatory framework. This approach will likely see a continuation of practices detrimental to the extent and quality of remnant native vegetation in Queensland.
- High Conservation Value Regrowth: the current Bill allows for the clearing of riparian vegetation and some threatened species habitat under some circumstance. Therefore, the intent and objectives of the Bill may not be fully met, and the loss of important habitat will continue in Queensland.
- Category X: the exemptions granted to Category X may see similar rates of deforestation experienced between 2013-2016 continue to occur. This will likely have a significant impact on a range of threatened species habitat and other landscape value functions of native vegetation.

There are also a range of other concerns with the legislation beyond the scope of this submission highlighted by other environmental non-government organisations. These should also be addressed.

## Recommendations

ACF recommends that the committee consider the above areas for improvement and the tightening of provisions to ensure there is better protection of native vegetation within Queensland and the deforestation crises can be effectively and swiftly halted.

Without addressing the above issues, the intent of the Bill and the proposed objectives of the amendments may not be met, and this would also be a departure from the Palaszczuk government's election commitments.

Regards



Andrew Picone

Nature Campaigner | P: | E:

*The ACF community speaks out for a healthy environment, Australia's special places, climate action and for lasting social and economic change.*