

“Barbara Plains”

Phone:

Email:

**Committee Secretary
State Development, Natural Resources
and Agricultural Industry Development Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000**

21st March 2018

Dear Sir/Madam

We wish to lodge our extreme opposition to the Vegetation Management Amendment Act 2018.

These latest amendments will seriously damage the ability of the agricultural industries in Queensland to remain productive. This latest bill will cause a great many farmers and graziers to exit primary production, as overnight, the restrictiveness of these new laws will cause a great many producers to become unviable.

It is worth pointing out that there is fewer than 87,000 registered Primary Producers left in Australia. That equates to 1 primary producer for every 275 Australian citizens. We believe that the numbers of Primary Producers are at critical levels. Australia will be in danger of not having enough people who have the necessary skills or desire to be farmers left in our agricultural sector, to grow the food and fibre necessary to keep Australia independent, and free from needing overseas food imports to feed the population.

We are constantly being told that Australia needs to lift food production to meet the growing Asian market. We have been told by politicians for many years that Australia is to be the “food bowl” of Asia. How is this possibly going to be achieved if the farm land and grasslands, available for growing the food and fibre is now filling up with trees and shrubs that cannot be touched, due to unfounded fears of the destruction of the environment by agriculture? Under these amended laws, no new country will be available for High Value Agriculture, which will severely hamper any increases in crop production or horticulture.

Trees by nature are very virulent and will quickly take over any areas of grassland unless they are kept in check. The vegetation that is danger of becoming extinct is not trees, but rather grass! Grass is the substance of life for all creatures, and thick wooded tree scrubs do not allow grass to grow underneath them. This is a fact of nature and has been backed up by many, many scientific studies.

The proposed new laws are designed to cleanse rural and regional Queensland of people. The flow on effect from these further restrictions will cause the populations of rural Queensland into economic distress, with the loss of jobs resulting in the demise of rural communities.

The ongoing drought in Queensland where 86% of the State is currently drought declared, is having an enormous impact on our rural communities. Many bush towns are in their death-throws, barely able to keep viable with drought causing loss of money flowing into these rural and regional hubs, causing shrinking of the local economies resulting in loss of population into the already bulging and stressed cities. This amended VMA will be the final nail in the coffin of a great many rural and regional communities.

By restricting the farmer and grazier from being able to manage their land, will cause longer droughts. By imposing unjust and punitive fines upon the farmer and grazier via on the spot fines, with no ability to challenge or recourse through the courts, will send many to the wall.

For instance: A Stop Work Notice being issued by an Authorised Officer and based entirely upon his decision, a primary producer can face fines up to \$576,675. Fodder Harvesting to keep stock alive, is now a criminal offence under this new regime, if every rule is not followed to the letter of the law. Failure to produce a document on request by Authorised Officer can mean a fine up to \$25,230.

Who would want to be a farmer or grazier when at the say so of one person, the farmer or grazier can be issued with fines such as this, just because you are trying to grow the food that rest of the population need to keep from starving?

The Mulga lands will become an impenetrable monoculture unable to even support the native animals or primary production. Many people will be forced off their generational family properties unable to sustain production of food and fibre, forced into insolvency all because of the whim of the extreme conservation movement, who wish to rid our land of farmers and graziers. As has been proven around the world, land that is no longer managed by people, dies.

As of 2010, 11.75 million square miles of land around the world has been locked up under conservation, which equals a landmass larger than the size of Africa. Well over 20,000,000 indigenous peoples have been removed from their native lands and forced into severe distress with no future and no hope. Is this what we are wanting to achieve in Queensland? A state that is "conserved" but with no future?

There will be an economic breakdown in rural and regional Queensland. The rural banks are already signaling a collapse of property prices and suddenly viable businesses will lose their equity, and the banks will be forced to call loans into default. The flow-on effect will be catastrophic. Food prices will increase to unheard of prices. All of this will all happen as a matter of time, but once these draconian laws start to bite, it may well too late to turn back the clock, as rural Queensland will have turned into a wasteland.

Who will be left growing the food and fibre once the farmers are gone? Are we content that we will always have an open supply lines from overseas to feed our population? In the event of war, who will be left to farm for our nation?

We believe that the food security of our nation is in jeopardy with these latest VMA laws and this proposed legislation should be scrapped in its entirety.

Yours faithfully

Jeffrey & Tricia Agar