

SUBMISSION

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
<p>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.</p> <p>Our agricultural land is located in Central Queensland and HVA and IHVA provides opportunity for us to drought-proof our property and stabilise production and income over variable climatic and market conditions. Sustainable clearing for relatively small pockets of high value agriculture enable agricultural production to improve continuity of supply to food processors and meet increasing requirements of international markets and Australia's Free Trade Agreements.</p>
2. Retaining Self-Assessable Codes
<p>Science-based self-assessable codes help us carry out the routine vegetation management practices necessary to sustainably produce food and fibre. The self-assessable codes help us ensure trees and grass stay in balance, avoid soil erosion and feed animals in drought.</p> <p>The Self-Assessable codes have reduced the cost and time taken to make applications for managing vegetation on our property, allowing us to use our time thoroughly and carefully planning our property management for the appropriate and site-specific course of action. The absence of such self-assessable codes may result in the need to carry out more large scale and blanket improvements on our property in the interest of time, funding and human resources; rather than the careful and methodical small projects we are able to undertake under the current self-assessable codes.</p>
3. Including High Value Regrowth as an additional layer of regulation under the Vegetation Management Framework on leasehold, freehold and indigenous land
<p>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.</p> <p>The uncertainty of such hasty decision-making processes; witnessed again this election with the proposed legislation amendment; places the continued viability of our business at great risk. We do not haphazardly clear regrowth, rather carefully and methodically manage it for the</p>

improvement of the ecosystem in the first instance, and sustainable productivity in the second. The inability to continue such management will place our viability and sustainability at risk, and therefore our ability to make decisions with the needs of the ecosystem in mind.

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

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. How will any of the 'developing' the North get off the ground if it is not even a possibility in the first place?

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

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?

High Value regrowth, regrowth watercourses or essential habitat remain the property and responsibility of the landholder, yet there is no compensation to manage these areas to achieve the perceived increased environmental outcome for the people of Queensland over the known economic decline for the landholder. Rather than celebrating the uniqueness of our property, red tape breeds frustration and contempt for it. As a multi-generational family in this region I am well aware of the habitats I am the custodian of, without the need of a desktop map. We have a long history of managing these areas with their best interest in mind. The ability to maintain sustainable production in other areas of our property have ensured our ability to preserve these areas, however the re-introduction of High Value Regrowth legislation places this at risk. Without appropriate, effective and sufficient compensation farming families such as ours will not be able to maintain viable production in other areas of our property, allowing the ability to maintain and preserve not only the mapped areas of importance but those areas we know from our long histories to also be worthy of preservation.

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

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.

Ignorance is not an excuse and should not be tolerated, however increasing already harsh penalties will do nothing to improve awareness of legislative obligations or increase the adoption of sustainable farming practices. Continued funding of Best Management Practice and extension programs should instead be used to increase adoption of best practice across the

entire enterprise and suite of responsibilities, rather than haphazardly focusing the big stick on one specific area of a rural enterprise.

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

Planning for the future is vital for the long-term sustainability of our enterprise. The production calendar from paddock to plate is longer than the parliamentary term and therefore the parliament of tomorrow greatly affects the success of the product we are producing today. The continued back and forth regarding vegetation management each election over the last decade or more is counterproductive. No one is winning – not the farmers, the green groups, and certainly not the people of Queensland. Queensland is a divided state with South East Queensland and everyone else; vegetation management is but one way in which the Palaszczuk Government promotes this us and them mentality.

Central Queensland where we are located has immense potential for economic growth through agriculture. Under appropriate and consistent frameworks developed in consultation with industry, producers could develop sustainably for a mutually beneficial outcome. Until this occurs producers will not secure investment from banks or private investments due to the constant change and uncertainty that comes with the change of government.

At Bar H Grazing we pride ourselves at being innovators. By putting the land first our animals come first and we are consistently seeking and adopting improved practices. We have an experienced Grazing Land Management Officer on staff and encourage all employees from Station Hands to Managers to seek personal development opportunities across every aspect of the business as it fosters a culture of improvement that is mutually beneficial for employees and the business. We have an established reputation for a premium product produced in an environmentally, economically and socially sustainable manner and are an industry leader in this respect.

We need the opportunity to drought proof our business for a sustainable future. We need the opportunity to diversify to spread the risk of our business and create more jobs. We need the ability to expand to provide more quality product in the sustainable method in which we are known. Continued uncertainty and instability in vegetation management will hinder this growth and discourage innovators such as ourselves from expanding. Self-Assessable Codes have been very useful and successful in promoting conscious decision making and is our preferred method to continue managing our property and those we may manage in future.

Signed:	Que Hornery
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Date:	22/03/2018
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