

## Submission to the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018

Organisation: Central Highlands Regional Resources Use Planning Cooperative (CHRRUP)

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CHRRUP is an independent community-owned organisation dedicated to increasing the sustainability of natural resources through improving practices of use and management. The Central Highlands region encompasses the southernmost area of the NQ Dry Tropics and westernmost area of the Fitzroy Basin NRM regions.

Membership of the CHRRUP Board, led by an Independent Chair, comprises nominees from the following sectors: grazing, irrigation, cropping, landcare, integrated catchment management, economic development, human services, indigenous people, environment, local government, higher education, resources. Economic Development and the QLD Government agencies hold positions as observers.

The changes outlined in the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018 (the Bill) have the potential to significantly impact on several the sectors which CHRRUP represents and we provide this submission in response.

Formed in 1997, CHRRUP's framework and structure was developed to allow identified stakeholders, to respond on behalf of the whole community, considering all impacts including economic, environmental and social, to changes in use of the natural resources of the Central Highlands. The region is one of the state's key agricultural producers, generating over \$740 million per annum in economic value and having the largest beef herd size in Australia by Local Government area. (Central Highlands Agribusiness Capability Statement, Central Highlands Development Corporation, 2018)

### Uncertainty

The changes outlined in this Bill and previous changes made to the *Vegetation Management Act 1999* impact on our agricultural stakeholder's ability to undertake long term planning and provide little certainty about their future operating environment. There are no assurances that plans and processes that have a substantial effect on their businesses will not change on an ad hoc basis

Farming as a business is a long-term prospect and as an industry is a significant contributor to the Queensland economy and regional community. We need to support the long-term viability of agriculture and part of this is providing certainty, the ability to implement long term plans and develop profitable, sustainable businesses.

The details about important legislative changes have been confusing and difficult for those operating agricultural business to keep up with the most recent requirements, and this has been brought to our attention by our key stakeholder groups, who may be significantly impacted.

### Consultation process

There has been a distinct lack of time and meaningful consultation around changes that significantly impact industries, communities and businesses across the entire state. More locally, CHRRUP would have liked the time to examine impacts and consult widely to prepare a more detailed submission, but this has not been possible.

The Bill contains, and is based on, complex information with significant potential ramifications for a substantial group of our stakeholders. The process and the short timeframes involved have meant that there is very little opportunity to communicate or consult in any meaningful way.

Ongoing and broad consultation will ensure that all relevant parties, including landholders and those supporting their efforts to achieve best practice outcomes are kept informed and able to provide input.

### **Future extension and support**

Regardless of the outcomes of this Bill or future changes to clearing legislation, there must be ongoing extension, training and support for landholders to understand their rights and responsibilities and to promote sustainable agricultural practices. In our experience, there are very few landholders who do not wish to be excellent custodians of the land on which they operate.

Consultation and extension efforts need to be focussed on enabling most landholders to do the right thing and work within the legislation rather than being a mechanism for catching the minority who do the wrong thing within a changing legislative framework.

If the outcome of the proposed changes are indeed more sustainable landscapes, there must also be an acknowledgement that the changed practices to support this take time, and in many cases some form of ongoing extension to implement.