

## SUBMISSION

In providing this submission I refer directly to the key provisions of the legislation which may be amended.

<b>1. Removing High Value Agriculture and Irrigated High Value Agriculture from the Vegetation Management Framework</b>
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**1. 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.**

**By limiting our ability to control as necessary, the continual regrowth of vegetation on our property, when seasons dictate and funds allow, this will directly affect our carrying capacity and our ability to make a viable living, not only for us as the present generation, but for generations to come.**

**Restricting our cattle numbers, not by our considered stocking rates based on our knowledge of our country and the feed available, but by having to accept the restrictions imposed by government, makes no sense to any cattleman or farmer. We are 3<sup>rd</sup> generation farmers in partnership with 4<sup>th</sup> generation, and with hopes that the 5<sup>th</sup> generation will continue to love the land and continue to feed the world with good clean, traceable and sustainably raised cattle.**

**We have always been focussed on looking after our land and our stock and we realise that the decisions we make today will impact on the ability our grandchildren will have to continue to farm, providing top quality protein for the world, while they too regard their role as custodians of our precious land continues. We have always been dependant on the vagaries of the weather. We have strived to look after our land in flood and drought. We accept the lean times with little available feed and water, reducing stock numbers as necessary. We also enjoy the good times when feed and water is plentiful. Our knowledge of how to manage our land is an ongoing concern to us that we take seriously and with great care. What care is the government taking to ensure that we are able to continue our business, and to use our knowledge and expertise? The laws you are about to change again will bring our viability into question. The ramifications of these changes will echo down the following generations and with that, reduce Australia's ability to be seen as the wonderful pastoral country a reputation developed over the history of our land.**

**As the urban sprawl takes over more of our good farming land around cities, along the much desired river alluvial flats and on top productive soils, farms are pushed further and further out. But now, with no ability to clear further land and with so many barriers to developing new farming lands, where will the replacement of original farming lands be located? Overseas perhaps? Where there is little or no work health and safety controls? Wouldn't Australians be**

better of encouraging farmers to continue to do what we do best? Australians surely want total confidence in the fact their food and fibre has been produced with all the clean, green and sustainable standards Australian farmers are proud of.

Historically much of the best cropping land has been on the alluvial flats along watercourses. With the change to the laws preventing use of land adjacent to watercourses, this will prevent a good proportion of crops grown in these areas. Our Lucerne for hay production is in this area and we would not be able to produce the quality or quantity we do now under the proposed restrictions. These same requirements are not imposed on the urban dweller with these properties being highly sort after and receiving high value as real estate.

The preference given to urban and also to mining is disproportionate to the continual squeeze put onto the farmer. Public opinion has been affected greatly by the media who have relished in portraying the farmer as an environmental vandal rather than to encourage a link of respect between the city and the country. Often the poorly informed urban environmentalist is swayed by misinformation and politically motivated stories aimed at creating this negative image.

Surely our government should be celebrating the success that Australian agriculture has achieved and to encourage all to do the same rather than denigrate our livelihood by introducing more and more restrictive laws. Other states have been successful in encouraging development and enterprise in the agricultural industry. These stories are often highlighted in coverage such as the ABC program "Landline". These states see the benefit of a prosperous rural sector. Queensland Government seems to be blind to the potential of the agricultural sector to provide employment, export opportunities and world first production of food and fibre. The provision of employment opportunities ranges widely from the farm and small rural towns, to the connections of supporting industries based more widely in regional centres and cities. Restrict our farmers and their ability to farm and you are restricting Australia's growth and prosperity. Common sense seems to have been totally evaded when the suggestion of the Vegetation Management laws were written!

## 2. Retaining Self-Assessable Codes

The Amendment Bill seeks to deliver on the Government's 2017 election commitments to protect remnant and high conservation value non-remnant vegetation; amend the accepted development vegetation clearing codes to ensure they are

providing appropriate protections based on Queensland Herbarium advice; and align the definition of high value regrowth vegetation with the international definition of High Conservation Value.

Science-based self-assessable codes help farmers carry out the routine vegetation management practices necessary to sustainably produce food and fibre.

The self-assessable codes help farmers ensure trees and grass stay in balance, avoid soil erosion and feed animals in drought. Farmers are not required to obtain permits for work done under the self-assessable codes, but they are required to notify the Queensland Government.

We have tried to keep up with all the recently introduced laws and restrictions. We have locked in our PMAV to guarantee our future management of our property. We are concerned as the government is still trying to once again restrict our management and decision making on the use and control of our land. Unfortunately there are other farmers who, for whatever reason, did not take this opportunity. Perhaps they held on to the faith in the government to show common sense and were not expecting that their rights as land owners would be constantly under threat. Now they find themselves in a vulnerable state and are feeling foolish to have trusted the government. We have been approached by neighbours in this situation who are now wondering how to manage this serious threat.

3. Including High Value Regrowth as an additional layer of regulation under the Vegetation Management Framework on leasehold, freehold and indigenous land

**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.**

**Think of what a farmer does as a bigger version of the home gardener. We need to weed and keep our gardens in good condition. Do we need to ask the government's permission every time we need to weed (or control our regrowth)? Depending on our state of finances, weather and personal situation, we have areas we have not been able to treat for some years. Now the regrowth needs to be removed to reinstate the paddock to a productive state. Why would the government now decide we can no longer farm this paddock as we used to?**

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.**

**Technology has advanced remarkably over the past decades. The ability to farm and develop the once ignored northern land as being hostile and unsuitable for development is becoming a modern reality and the potential is astonishing. The Government could be known for being a leader in development and an encouragement to those who are willing and able to make these unproductive lands a showpiece for the world. Instead we are being led into an abyss of ignorance and closed mindedness as decisions are trying to close down this potential.**

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?**

**Decisions farmers make based on the situation and laws of the present will be impacted by these new laws. Borrowings from banks, based on sound projections and budgets will be made defunct. Decisions on the management and development of many farming enterprises will be hollow as the circumstances change with the passing of these damaging laws. Changing the goal posts mid game is totally unfair and will contribute to financial hardship and emotional distress.**

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.**

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

- **Farmers/producers will develop sustainably if given the appropriate frameworks.**
- **We need legislation not to change every 5 seconds otherwise we cannot plan for the future,**
- **We cannot get investment from banks or private investments due to constant change when governments change**
- **We want the opportunity to drought proof our business for a sustainable future**
- **Self-Assessable Codes have been very useful and more cost effective than lodging applications**

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