

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

Removing HVA and IHVA from the VMF will no longer enable graziers wishing to clear small areas of land to develop country. In a state that is prone to long periods of drought and limited supplies of energy and protein available to stock from grass diets only, graziers are required to focus on sustainable grazing practises.

By developing small areas of land and growing fodder and grain crops, graziers are able to supplement their stock through the dry periods, maintaining production. This also allows other grass country to be spelled rather than have it overgrazed.

This is especially important in North Qld where the quality of feed is so poor during the dry season that animal survival and welfare is threatened. Northern Qld is made up of a vast area and includes millions of hectares of grazing land and thousands of cattle. With a growing population, food production is paramount. Limiting food production in such a large area will have a devastating and negative impact on the ability to feed the growing population. .

In many businesses, including our own, the ability to develop small areas of land with fodder and grain crops allows for drought protection and, in turn, increases the sustainability of the business. Furthermore, in an industry with such small profit margins, the capacity to finish off stock for markets on our own property rather than sending stock to a feedlot is a huge advantage. This adds to the sustainability of our business, improving our chances of retaining the business for future generations, ensuring adequate food production continues for a growing nation.

2. Retaining Self-Assessable Codes

Self – Assessable Codes have allowed graziers to control vegetation growth (in particular vegetation thickening) in the most optimal time, both on a land management and a business management level.

By not having to wait lengthy and unnecessary time periods for a permit to carry out routine vegetation management, graziers are able to commence vegetation management with optimal timing in regards to climatic factors such as the wet season. This ensures maximum results of balancing vegetation and grass cover to limit erosion and promote sustainable agricultural practices. Sustainable business decisions are also taken into account when considering vegetation management and the SAC allows graziers to make better business decisions based on their individual business performance.

SAC dramatically reduces the costs of having to apply for permits, both to the producer and to the governing body having to issue them. As it stands the SAC requires graziers to notify the government. Having an official required to inspect every permit for routine vegetation control of not-of-concern timber is not only unnecessary but an added cost to the tax payer. In addition, many officials are inexperienced making the process ineffective as well.

Thinning the thickening scrub on our property has allowed us to better manage heavily timbered country which previously didn't have sufficient grass cover as the timber was too thick to allow sunlight in. This was a major land management issue as, without ground cover, we were unable to stop erosion and were losing top soil each wet season. Thinning is also extremely useful as only a percentage of trees are cleared leaving a healthy stand of timber.

If the Self-assessable codes were taken away and we were required to undertake a development assessment and approval to do the same activity our ability to effectively manage those heavily timbered areas on our property would be significantly limited. In turn, this would have a negative impact on our grazing business as those areas are relatively unusable and the country degraded with heavily timbered areas having no ground cover and, therefore, no way of preventing water run-off and erosion.

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.

Many cases showed that the regulated vegetation management map for proposed Category C was wrong, marking areas of introduced woody weeds or vegetation that didn't meet the definition of high value regrowth.

Already PMAV's have cost many business unnecessary financial costs, taking painstaking hours to rectify.

Now the Government is essentially adding an extra regulation over FREEHOLD/indigenous land. These areas of land the Government has regulated overnight, with no warning, and this is adding costs to businesses and impacting any future productive value, or the ability to expand businesses.

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? The amount of bureaucratic red tape graziers/farmers are subject to in this country is impractical. We are a growing nation, not to mention a growing world, and yet we are restricted in our ability to carry out one of the most essential fundamentals: growing food.

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

Without compensation available to landholders subject to added layers of regulation many businesses are at risk of becoming unviable. It is that simple.

With areas of grazing land becoming unusable as scrubs thicken, restricting grass growth, many businesses will become unsustainable.

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.

Again, the fact that the food producers in this country are the most persecuted by their own government is hard to believe. In most countries around the world the food producers are strongly supported.

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

It seems that the graziers are constantly being used as the political scapegoat and subject to a tireless tirade of legislation change which has nothing but a negative effect on our businesses and continues to decrease our faith that food production in this country is supported. Instead, why can't the governing body form a framework which rewards the graziers who take care of their land, using sustainable land management practises? This is much more likely to promote initiative towards viable land management practises and would aim to establish confidence that food production is a worthy occupation.

As it stands the current situation and unnecessary legislation change at little notice to satisfy the Green vote is drastically limiting the food producers of this country to do their job – produce food. Farmers are unable to develop sustainable practises and, in turn, sustainable businesses, especially through drought proofing.

The Self-Assessable Codes have been very beneficial and much more cost effective than lodging applications.

We, like most producers, are extremely focused on land management. We are grass managers rather than cattle managers as history shows this intent promotes a much more sustainable business. We are committed to caring for our land by promoting grass cover to increase soil health and limit water run-off.

Tree clearing seems to be grossly misunderstood by the environmentalist as meaning wide scale clearing of every tree. This is very far from the truth with adequate tree corridors having a significant impact on grazing herds. Sustainable practise shows that, whilst scrub which is too thick is unproductive and causes land degradation, having no trees is also unproductive.

Signed:	
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Date:	21.3.18