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22 March 2018

Dr Jacqui Dewar  
Committee Secretary  
State Development, Natural Resources and Agricultural Industry Development Committee  
Parliament House  
George Street  
Brisbane QLD 4000

Submitted via: [sdnraiddc@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:sdnraiddc@parliament.qld.gov.au)

Dear Dr Dewar,

**Submission – Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018**

This submission is made on behalf of the Queensland Bulk Water Supply Authority (trading as Seqwater) in response to the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018 (the Amendment).

**About Seqwater**

Seqwater is a Statutory Authority of the Queensland Government established under the *South East Queensland Water (Restructuring) Act 2007*. Seqwater is one of Australia's largest water businesses with the most geographically spread and diverse asset base of any capital city water authority in Australia. Our operations extend from the New South Wales border, to the Toowoomba ranges and north to Gympie.

Seqwater has a legislative obligation to provide safe, secure, resilient and reliable bulk drinking water supply for South East Queensland. Seqwater also provides essential flood mitigation services, water for irrigation, manages catchment health and offers community recreation facilities. The provision of a safe and reliable drinking water supply is critical for the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders. A cost effective bulk water supply is also essential for strong economic development.

**Submission**

Seqwater supports the Queensland Government's objective to strengthen vegetation management laws, recognising the important role of vegetation to manage the health of the catchment.

A high quality and affordable water supply begins at the source – SEQ catchments. Unlike many other water authorities in Australia, much of SEQ's catchments are open catchments, which contain a variety of land uses including rural and urban development. SEQ catchments cover more than 1.7 million hectares of land, with Seqwater only owning around 69,000 hectares of this land. Protecting the quality of our source water supply is one of Seqwater's most important activities, and this requires a whole of catchment approach to minimise and manage risk.





The protection of vegetation, and in particular riparian vegetation, plays a critical role in improving water quality and ecosystem health and maintaining the stability of watercourses. The impacts of which can result in increased sediment, pathogens and nutrients entering waterways, which may result in the interruption and/or loss of water supply, require higher levels of treatment (and therefore more expensive), cause nuisance and/or harm to public health, and impact environmental values. Seqwater welcomes the government's pursuit of vegetation and biodiversity outcomes which align with the delivery of a safe, reliable and affordable water supply.

Seqwater's detailed submission in relation to the Amendment is identified in Appendix A. We also refer to Seqwater's previously submitted submission relating to the Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015.

If you require further information or wish to discuss any aspect of Seqwater's submission, please contact Seqwater's Senior Policy Advisor, Mr David Brown via email to [David.Brown@seqwater.com.au](mailto:David.Brown@seqwater.com.au) or by phone on (07) 5599 1111.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Watkinson  
**Manager – Policy, Strategy, Research and Innovation**

## Appendix A - Seqwater's submission on Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018

Matter	Seqwater's Position	Recommendation
<b>General Comments</b>		
Extend protections to high value regrowth vegetation, reintroduce provisions for riverine protection permits, and remove the ability to clear for the purpose of high value and irrigated high value agriculture.	<p>Seqwater is supportive of extending protections to regrowth vegetation, riparian vegetation and removing the ability to clear for the purpose of high value and irrigated high value agriculture.</p> <p>These new protections will serve to protect important vegetation along watercourses, in particular the mid-Brisbane River, which is the conduit for 40% of the SEQ water supply. Such vegetation is essential to protect source water quality, by stabilising stream banks, filtering overland flow and preventing the transport and delivery of sediment and nutrients downstream.</p>	<b>Seqwater Supports the proposed changes</b>
<b>Category R Protections</b>		
Extending category R protections to include regrowth in three additional GBR catchments.	<p>Seqwater recognises the important role of vegetation buffers to watercourses to protect water quality. The proposed 50 metre vegetation buffer to watercourses in the three additional Great Barrier Reef (GBR) catchments plays a critical role in reducing sediment run-off and improving the health of the GBR.</p> <p>Seqwater considers that similar protections are required in SEQ to protect drinking water catchments and the health of the Ramsar listed Moreton Bay. As previously discussed,</p>	<b>Recommendation No. 1 – Include similar protections for waterways in SEQ as those proposed in GBR catchments.</b>

overland run-off from agricultural activities and urban development results in increased sediment and nutrient loads in the catchment. This increases operational costs and risk to drinking water supply, particularly during flood events. High turbidity events such as those during the 2013 floods resulted in large volumes of sediment entering the mid-Brisbane river, forcing the shutdown of Mt Crosby Water Treatment Plant for a period. These events not only compromise the ability to deliver water to the region, but result in significant expenditure in increased chemical costs of treatment.

The protection of vegetation is critical to improving the health of the catchment, with areas in SEQ with more remnant vegetation having proportionally lower sediment and nutrient loads. Where vegetation communities have been lost, Seqwater is actively investing in revegetation projects. This includes Seqwater's planned investment of ~\$10 million in source water protection for 2018/19.

Seqwater recognises that investing in revegetation of the catchment is compromised where vegetation is lost by clearing. Seqwater requests consideration of similar protections proposed in GBR catchments to apply in SEQ to ensure the quality of our source water and health of Moreton Bay.