

Our Ref: AG/SPC00853



22 March 2018

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

By email: sdnraidc@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam,

Gympie Regional Council Submission regarding the *Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018*

This submission is made by Gympie Regional Council in response to the Parliamentary Committee's current Inquiry. Gympie Regional Council is a Local Government Authority of Queensland situated immediately to the north of the South East Queensland region. We support a primarily rural region with a population of over 50,000 and increasing. Our economy and growth is inextricably linked to the Region's natural values and features, where agriculture and eco-tourism feature strongly, along with manufacturing, and processing of commodities from natural resources. A key feature of the Region is the fertile catchments and valleys of the Mary and Burnett Rivers. The Region is experiencing urban growth and intensification of land use, in part through the migration of new residents into the Region in search of affordable life styles.

General comments

The policy objectives for the Amendment Bill are acknowledged and supported in principle. Specific comments are provided below against headings.

Mapping

Updated vegetation and high value regrowth mapping is supported, provided that historical inaccuracies are removed. The current mapping highlights many semi-rural areas within the Gympie Region as containing high value regrowth, when actually the vegetation is cleared, or is plantations of macadamias or timber trees. A rapid analysis of the impact of the proposed regulated vegetation mapping has revealed an inconsistency in treatment of watercourses and drainage features in our Region with respect to the 50 metre buffer. In particular, watercourses in the vicinity of Lot 2 Plan RP23000 show no Category R areas, despite the presence of numerous watercourses of stream orders 1 and 2 (Attachment 1). A consistent application of this provision to all mapped watercourses is requested.

Category R vegetation

Council applauds the measure to introduce self-regulation of clearing of native vegetation within 50 metres of watercourses and drainage features across Queensland as a measure to provide further protection to the Great Barrier Reef. It is acknowledged that the Burnett and Mary Rivers contribute to the Great Barrier Reef through the conveyance of catchment waters along the East Australia current. The benefits of protecting watercourse vegetation for water quality, water quantity and for flood mitigation in our Region are also acknowledged.

High value agriculture and high value irrigation to be treated as prohibited development.

High value agriculture and high value irrigation will not be relevant purposes for clearing remnant vegetation under the *Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018*. It is understood that this provision is aimed at preventing broad scale clearing of remnant vegetation for extensive farming or for irrigation.

Council requests consideration of the introduction of a provision that allows landholders to register Property Maps of Assessable Vegetation for genuine regrowth to be classified as Category X throughout the entire interim period (8 March 2018 to the date of assent of the *Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2018*). This provides an avenue for natural justice, but keeps the intent of the proposed legislative amendments.

Community Infrastructure

Works to facilitate the construction and operation of community infrastructure by local government must continue to be classified as accepted development, or exempt development. Riverine protection permit exemptions (*Water Act 2000*) must continue to apply to community infrastructure also.

Revision of associated Vegetation Management Codes

Explanatory Notes for the *Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018* state that the suite of applicable Vegetation Management Codes will be revised to reflect the new regulatory regime. As the details of these revisions are not yet revealed, Council seeks full consultation on the proposed revisions to the Codes before they are finalised.

Miscellaneous

The Vegetation management regime in Queensland establishes a type of inequity between rural and urban land uses. Vegetation clearing for urban purposes in an urban area continues to be exempt from regulatory controls, compared with rural uses. This dichotomy only increases with the Bill before the Committee currently. Council requests consideration of the some controls on vegetation clearing for urban purposes in urban areas, thereby demonstrating a consistent approach to vegetation management across the landscape.

In conclusion, Gympie Regional Council appreciates the opportunity to make a submission, and would welcome further opportunity to comment on the revised vegetation management codes that will accompany the regulatory regime.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'AG' with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Amy Gosler
Coordinator Environmental Planning

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Vegetation Management Supporting Map

Legend

- Red: Category 1 areas (high value riparian habitat)
- Green: Category 2 areas (high value riparian habitat)
- White: Category 3 areas (low value riparian habitat)

Map of New Zealand

16033070 163000
Use2 Plan N073000

Proposed Regulated Vegetation Management Map

Legend

- Red: Category 1 areas (high value riparian habitat)
- Green: Category 2 areas (high value riparian habitat)
- White: Category 3 areas (low value riparian habitat)

Map of New Zealand