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Committee Secretary
State Development, Natural Resources and
Agricultural Industry Development Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane, QLD 4000
by email; sdnraidc@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam

Re. Submission on *Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018*

I have been directed by the State Council of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland (Wildlife Queensland) to forward a submission on the *Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018* for consideration by the Committee.

Wildlife Queensland is one of the longest established and most respected wildlife-focused conservation groups in Queensland. With over 6500 supporters spread across branches throughout the State, Wildlife Queensland is a strong voice for our wildlife and its habitat.

Wildlife Queensland is apolitical. Our aims include;

- **Preserve** the flora and fauna of Australia by all lawful means
- **Educate** the community in an understanding of the principles of conservation and preservation of the natural environment
- **Discourage** by all legal means, the possible destruction, exploitation and unnecessary development of any part of the natural environment.
- **Encourage** rational land use and proper land planning of existing and future development, and the use of the natural environment and its management.

Our aims reflect a strong interest in conserving our biodiversity and natural landscape. Wildlife Queensland is not opposed to ecological sustainable development but there needs to be a balance among the needs of the environment, sustainable development and society's needs. Wildlife Queensland suggests this proposed legislation is a positive step towards achieving the desired balance. The Palaszczuk Government is to be commended for this initiative.

Wildlife Queensland takes this opportunity to provide comment on this Bill. Comments will focus on matters of particular interest to Wildlife Queensland. Furthermore because Wildlife

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Submission on Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018

Queensland has elected not to comment on various components of this Bill, it should not be construed necessarily as acceptance.

Wildlife Queensland is of the view that this Bill if enacted will assist in reducing the rate of land clearing in Queensland that had surged in recent years due to a weakening of policy and laws by the former Newman Government. The Bill does not prevent clearing but virtually restricts broad-scale clearing, again protects high conservation regrowth and contributes to the enhancement of water quality of catchments that feed the Great Barrier Reef. Compliance and enforcement criteria have been strengthened. While the Bill addresses many concerns of Wildlife Queensland there are aspects that could be improved. This legislation alone does not meet the ecological challenge Queensland is facing in arresting the ongoing decline in biodiversity let alone reversing this trend. There is much more work to be done.

Wildlife Queensland strongly supports the purpose and aspirations underpinning this legislation. If enacted the Bill will extend the protection afforded to high value regrowth vegetation by amending the definition of high growth regrowth and expanding the land types on which such vegetation is regulated. The ability to clear vegetation for high value agriculture and irrigated high value agriculture has been removed. The protection of regrowth in all Great Barrier Reef catchments will serve to enhance water quality that in turn will assist in the overall health of the Reef. The reinstatement of riverine protection permits will also assist in improving water quality. While Wildlife Queensland prefers educating the community to do the right thing, strengthening compliance measures to assist enforcement is a necessity these days. Wildlife Queensland applauds the strengthening of compliance measures.

It is appreciated that various clauses impact on how 'managing thickening' will be addressed. However a key matter of concern for Wildlife Queensland is a continued reliance on self-assessable codes instead of the need to obtain permits. Clause 4 includes provisions that could be used to create new self assessable codes. The unintentional inappropriate use of self-assessable codes may lead to clearing of significant habitat for wildlife or the destruction of vulnerable or endangered flora with adverse impacts for wildlife that rely on that habitat. If an accurate data base existed at an appropriate scale pinpointing all threatened flora and fauna as well as those species whose conservation status is about to be downgraded then there may be some flawed justification for self assessable codes. Accurate identification of species is not always a simple task. Vegetation maps and current data bases are not always accurate. The reintroduction of permits as opposed to self assessable codes in all situations is strongly advocated. An activity underpinned by a permit provides those undertaking the activity a degree of security in that permission has been granted. Should the permit be issued in error the fault does not rest with those undertaking the activity.

The Bill indicates that proposed new laws will impact what clearing may occur on particular properties. It certainly clarifies the situation with property maps of assessable vegetation (PMAVs) and indicates when a PMAV may be replaced. This is a positive step. On the other hand Wildlife Queensland does have concerns about the powers given to the chief executive under Clause 14 to make area management plans and how they may be used in the future.

Submission on Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018

For this Bill to achieve its full potential resources must be made available not only to educate the relevant sectors about the impact of this legislation but also to ensure maps of regional ecosystems and species data are accurate.

Wildlife Queensland thanks you for the opportunity to provide comment. Wildlife Queensland strongly advocates that the Committee considers the benefits that will flow to our environment, iconic natural wonders such as the Great Barrier Reef and our wildlife during your deliberations and in arriving at your recommendations. Should you require any clarification or further information concerning this submission do not hesitate to contact Wildlife Queensland.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Des Boyland', followed by a large, stylized capital 'D'.

Des Boyland, Policies and Campaigns Manager

21st March 2018