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22nd March 2018

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

Dear Sir/Madam

Submission to State Development, Natural Resources and Agricultural Industry
Development Committee re: Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment
Bill 2018

Thank you for the opportunity to make submission to the SDNRAID Committee on this proposed Amendment Bill before the House.

Coming from outside the paddock so to speak (so, am not in agriculture myself, but as a rural resident I see the impact of government policy, both good and bad, reflected in our local economy and community in general), there are a number of questions that must be asked of the Committee considering this Bill.

- Has the department provided scientific data that this proposed system of land 'management' results in superior ecological outcomes than the current system? Surely for such drastic measures to be implemented, the onus of proof rests with Government to support their claim that current agricultural practices are detrimental to the environment?
- Has the department consulted widely and gathered field data from existing landholders, some whose lived experience spans 4 or 5 generations of land management practices, which have been modified over time through periods of drought, flood and 'good times' to create the current healthy grasslands of our wider grazing regions of Queensland? (which also contribute to carbon-sinking and soil structure protection...these ecology-preserving properties are not unique to trees and shrubs.) Given the loud voices of opposition on this matter from the agricultural sector, it appears these measures are being implemented with little regard to what methods currently achieve positive environmental benefits out in the paddock.
- More significantly, has the Department and its advisors consulted with indigenous land managers with millennia of on-the-ground understanding of the Australian environment, to document historic land management practices in each of the regions, which differ greatly in soil structure and vegetation cover across Queensland, to determine the long-term effectiveness of these proposals?
- Will the Department be compensating primary producers for the inevitable loss of income if this law is passed, as admitted in the Explanatory notes:

Consistency with fundamental legislative principles...

"Does the legislation adversely affect rights and liberties, or impose obligations, retrospectively - Legislative Standards Act 1992, section 4(3)(g)?"

"...There may be some detrimental effects on individual rights in relation to these applications; however the impacts on individual rights are outweighed by the public interest in protecting the long-term health of our biologically diverse State and our world heritage listed Great Barrier Reef, and reducing carbon emissions from vegetation clearing."

So, should this Bill be passed, could the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy be exposed to liability for loss of income if all affected primary producers undertook a class action for compensation due to reduced productivity, reduced capacity for return on investment and the resulting devaluation of both land and business enterprise as a result of these proposed amendments? What about the export markets government is so keen to be seen supporting – how will our farmers be able to meet this need to feed the world's ever-expanding population if they are prevented from achieving the required productivity of their land?

- Which entity determines the weight of public interest vs the rights of agricultural land managers to properly manage their country and by restricting the active management of native vegetation on productive country, where is the evidence supporting the nett gain to the environment from allowing the inevitable spread of monoculture vegetation? eg thickening of mulga scrub
- Could these impossibly restrictive laws, which will so greatly reduce the viability of agriculture for the family-run business, be viewed as the catalyst for the inevitable demise of our food and fibre producers from this State to open the door for 'voluntary' handover of Queensland native grass and bushland areas to the proposed 'Special Wildlife Reserves', currently before the House, just so the incumbent government can meet their 'election commitments'?

There seem to be many unsupported premises upon which this proposed Bill is based.

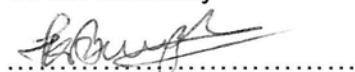
Government and public servants ought to be reminded, as individuals they are elected and employed to represent the interests of the people whom they serve, not the corporate environmentalist interests of disassociated entities of questionable political or financial motivation. Policy decisions made by government, the elected representatives and their public servants, whom the people entrust to keep the State financially and structurally viable, must take into account both the economic and societal impact over and above these ideological agendas.

Why does our Government seek to destroy the reputation and livelihood of so many of our State's hard-working primary producers?

I therefore strongly request the Committee carefully considers all matters outlined in this and the many submissions from the current active land-managers, Queensland's primary producers, when deliberating if this Bill, which will adversely impact our farmers' ability to effectively manage native vegetation on their land (such practices having been through the thrasher countless times over the last decades) is in the best interests of our State's economy, the true overall health of the environment and the regional communities who, through their support of agricultural endeavours, contribute to the food and fibre needs of our State, the country and many other nations of the world.

Thank you for your time in reading my submission.

Yours faithfully



Frieda Berry-Porter