

Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018

22nd March 2018

State Development, Natural Resources
and Agricultural Industry Development Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000
Email: sdnraide@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary,

The very premise of the Vegetation Management Act (VMA) is at fault to the point that it is not amendments that should be under consideration but a journey to replacement legislation that aims to achieve genuine consultation with the people most subject to the current Act's apparent tyranny.

The Regional Vegetation Management Plans (RVMP's) was the last time there was genuine consultation and two-way communication between government and rural landowners. This process was designed to initiate a cooperative and consultative approach on how to best to manage the balance of vegetation management and farming. As history has shown, common sense did not prevail and these were discarded in act of duplicity by the then Premier and government and the VMA introduced.

The approach taken in the VMA was also repeated in changes across the board to how government interacted with agricultural producers. The core of the VMA champions coercion and discards cooperation. It saw the change of agency staff working with farmers in an atmosphere of goodwill and mutual respect to that of policing, prosecution and distrust. Previous important practical and common-sense "in the field conservation measures" were abandoned to remote, austere and antagonistic direction based on a political imperative and bending to the whims of the green movement.

Such methodology creates distrust, division and resentment. It creates minimal adherence to an alien constraint to the realities that agricultural producers live, work and know. Loss of hope prevails to a level where farming families see no future for the young adults to come back to the farm and continue with agriculture as a career path. The urban politician who make these types of laws and the public servant who administers the law appear oblivious to how they, through these legislative instruments, indifference and ignorance, cripple the farming community and all those other levels of the community reliant on farmers being able to continue effective and profitable farming.

Some of us have been in the debate about vegetation management for over three decades now. Even though we work, live in and have a long intimate relationship with the land, there is a sense of being treated as only a minor stakeholder whose views are consistently overridden by more powerful interests. It has been a degrading and humiliating experience being used as a political yo-yo during the many changes over the years to the VMA and legislation of its ilk.

One is left more than just a little cynical on why should we continue to play the game of perpetual submission writing, detailing a view on each provision being amended. We, the real custodians of the land, are left with the feeling of being ignored and treated with contempt.

There are those like myself who absorbed the original ethos of the Landcare movement when it first emerged. We, who are interested in practical, hands-on conservation, who know there is a beneficial tree/ grass relationship aiding both environmental and agriculture production criteria, who understand each bio-region is very different and cannot be administered by State-wide blanket legislation, we who do NOT want to knock down every tree but know that vegetation management can be as beneficial to farming as it is to the environment. Simply put, tree clearing itself is not bad, rather it's a matter of where and how development is conducted. There are those of us who live assuredly in a role of both the steward for our patch of land and as a provider of food for our society.

We could be prevailed upon to work together to a better legislative future, but until there is genuine demonstrated pathway of goodwill, respect, empathy, understanding and certainty of agreed negotiations be fully honoured, why should we bother? There needs to be a reversal of the current near certainty that we will be completely ignored - Ignored in favour of green groups who have no interest, or knowledge, in the successful integration of farming development and the environment.

This current Bill should be voted down for its ambiguous provisions, the possibility of increasing oppressive outcome, the continued enlarging upon flawed negative counterproductive laws and a total disregard for the opinions of the real stewards of the land.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dale Stiller', with a stylized, cursive script.

Dale Stiller