

**Jasmine Vink**

**21/3/2018**

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

**Submission to Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018  
(‘VMOLA Bill’) inquiry**

*I have been working as a fauna spotter catcher and ecologist for close to five years. I work on the front line, with the bulldozers, with the excavators doing my absolute best to try and rescue wildlife during clearing activities. I have lost count of the animals I have been forced to euthanize with my crowbar. I have lost count of the animals I have seen in immense pain and experiencing incomprehensible suffering. This is the reality of land clearing in Queensland. It is truly sickening that this continues to occur with relaxed and detrimental laws. It is very easy to forget the impact land clearing has on our wildlife. You measure the effect through hectares, not through the number of animals killed and left to die truly horrendous deaths. We need stricter protections in place for areas of high value regrowth. I have first hand experience of the value of these areas having found EPBC threatened species through many of them. Property owners should not continue to be exempt from the same permit and reporting system that projects are expected to follow. This is a bare minimum. Queensland has a shocking extinction and deforestation rate and quite frankly at the moment I am embarrassed to call myself a Queenslander. Australia is an intelligent and progressive country, it's about time our legislation caught up to global standards.*

The following elements of the VMOLA Bill are strongly supported as they are a step to help reduce excessive clearing in Queensland:

1. **Removal of the ability to obtain permits for high value agriculture and high value irrigated agriculture.** The Statewide Landcover and Trees Study found that 10% of mature bushland clearing from 2013-2016 happened under these permit types, with generally insufficient verification that the land was high value agricultural land, was needed for agriculture, and was actually utilised for the agricultural activity applied for; **(see clause 16)**
2. **Reintroduction of the requirement to obtain Riverine Protection Permits** to better regulate damaging clearing in watercourses **(see clauses 51 and 52);**
3. **Phasing out existing Area Management Plans** which have allowed significant clearing under lower regulation across Queensland; **(see clause 14)**
4. **Extended protections of regrowth vegetation near watercourses across Great Barrier Reef catchments, to reduce damaging runoff**, including Eastern Cape York, Fitzroy and Burnett-Mary catchments which were not protected under the VM Act currently. **(see clauses 133 and 38)**

We generally support the following amendments, however it is essential that they are strengthened by our proposed amendments to truly reduce excessive clearing of wildlife habitat, impacts to the Great Barrier Reef and climate change emissions:

1. **Improved protected of 'high value regrowth vegetation'**, being vegetation that has grown back well after being cleared. The Bill creates a broader definition, including vegetation that hasn't been cleared for 15 years and re-extending regulation to freehold, indigenous land and occupational licences (**see clause 38**). This is supported.
2. **However, 'high value regrowth vegetation' must be extended to fully meet the government's election commitment by protecting high conservation value regrowth vegetation.** Extra amendments are needed to allow much more extensive protection including endangered vegetation species and communities, vegetation in reef catchments, riparian areas, threatened species habitat and areas where landscape integrity is at risk.<sup>1</sup>
3. **Tightening of the definition of 'thinning' (now known as 'managing thickened vegetation') is supported.** The Bill now requires that thinning activities must 'maintain ecological processes and prevent loss of diversity'. To ensure this definition is given effect there must be a requirement that it be demonstrated prior to clearing being allowed. (**See clauses 4 and 38**)
4. **However, to truly reduce the significant clearing allowed for 'thinning' it should no longer be an allowable activity by permit or code, particularly not for mature and high value regrowth vegetation and under existing Area Management Plans.** 'Thinning' can include clearing up to 75% of a forest under current laws and has been responsible for significant clearing across Queensland without scientific justification that this is a necessary activity at all.
5. **The Bill clarifies that landholders may seek to amend their property map of assessable vegetation (PMAV) to re-regulate clearing in areas which were locked in across Queensland as not needing assessment under Newman Government laws.** This clarification is supported as helpful.
6. **However, the Bill needs to be changed to require amendment of maps that lock in unregulated clearing of all high value vegetation.** Under the Newman Government, significant areas of Queensland were locked in under property level maps which allowed the clearing of unregulated 'category X' even though the clearing would impact mature, high value vegetation. Leaving map amendment up to the land owner will leave significant areas of Queensland where clearing is unregulated.
7. **The Bill does not tighten excessive clearing allowed under fodder harvesting codes so amendments are needed.** Fodder harvesting should be limited to where there is an official drought declaration.

Yours sincerely,  
Jasmine Vink

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<sup>1</sup> Queensland Labor, 2017 'Saving Habitat, Protecting Wildlife and Restoring Land' Policy Document, <https://www.queenslandlabor.org/media/20226/alpq-saving-habitat-policy-document-v3.pdf>