

## SUBMISSION

In providing this submission I refer directly to the key provisions of the legislation which may be amended.

### 1. Removing High Value Agriculture and Irrigated High Value Agriculture from the Vegetation Management Framework

Removing High Value Agriculture and Irrigated High Value Agriculture from the Vegetation Management Framework is not fair. Whilst the other states and territories of Australia have been able to develop their key agricultural regions through clearing and development provisions and prosper from doing so, northern Queensland will now be left out. This is even though the Australian White Paper on the Development of Northern Australia sets out the extreme potential for developing Agriculture in this region.

The Australian Government was so sure of the potential returns on investment in Northern Queensland that they were willing to spend \$220 million to upgrade roads to communities across Cape York. However, it appears that the Queensland Government does not want indigenous and non-indigenous landholders in this area to develop agricultural projects that would capitalise on these better roads.

Sustainable clearing for relatively small pockets of high value agriculture is also required to enable agricultural production to improve continuity of supply to food processors and meet the increasing requirements of international markets and Australia's Free Trade Agreements.

### 2. Retaining Self-Assessable Codes

This Amendment Bill seeks to amend the accepted development vegetation clearing codes to protect remnant and high conservation value non-remnant vegetation.

The Self Assessable Codes have been very clear and concise documents that have done a great job to inform us farmers and graziers of our obligations under the Vegetation Management Act. They have been a terrific reference for what is allowable when it comes to vegetation management practices such as thinning remnant vegetation, harvesting fodder, harvesting commercial timber, removing encroachment into native grassland areas and clearing for routine management practices such as fencing in remnant vegetation areas. I do not support any changes to the Self Assessable Codes.

These codes are now reasonably well understood by landholders, especially after the extension work that AgForce has delivered in partnership with Vegetation Officers from DNRME.

We have many patches of Remnant, Of-Concern timber on our property and I often refer to the Self Assessable Code for Management Practices prior to notifying DNRME and planning any new works on roads, fences or pipelines through these patches of timber.

I was also planning to use the Self Assessable Code for Thinning to plan a thinning project in a paddock that still has large areas of Remnant vegetation in it. This vegetation mainly comprises



gidyea scrub. The scrub areas in this particular paddock are old growth scrubs with full canopy cover and little or no grass on the ground. Thinning would have improved biodiversity by slowing water runoff, improving water infiltration into the soil and encouraging the growth of grasses, forbs and other species. However, with the proposed change to remove the Thinning Code and force people wanting to conduct this activity to have to take out a Development Application, there is no way that my thinning project is a viable option. With the costs involved with Development Applications and the fact that only 10% of a Lot or 400ha (whichever is the lesser) can now be thinned it is simply not worth it.

I have read that the CSIRO justification for moving thinning towards a Development Application process is that farmers only want to thin to produce more pasture and their intentions are not strictly for ecological purposes. I believe that this argument is nonsensical and both purposes can be achieved through thinning. Yes we thin to produce more grass, forbs and herbage on the ground but there is plenty of science around which shows that grass is better at reducing water runoff than small shrubs and leaf litter, including a study in the Mulga lands in 1990 by R.L. Miles titled, "The Land Degradation Situation of the Mulga Lands". A greater range of species on the ground, rather than a monoculture of trees, is obviously better for biodiversity and a better habitat for insects and wildlife habitat.

I am also against the proposed changes to the Fodder Harvesting self-assessable code. Once again, the main justification for the proposed changes by the CSIRO is that it was too hard to keep remnant vegetation accurately mapped under the old SAC. Surely some improvements could be made at departmental level rather than instead of hitting graziers in the Mulga Lands, who are still battling one of the worst droughts in history, with more layers of red tape?

### 3. Including High Value Regrowth as an additional layer of regulation under the Vegetation Management Framework on leasehold, freehold and indigenous land

Including High Value Regrowth (HVR) as an additional layer is a further erosion of our right to manage our land in the best way we see fit. We are not managing national parks here but the way the Queensland Government keeps changing the laws under the Vegetation Management Act, you could be excused for thinking so. We are trying to run productive and profitable farming operations that can sustainably produce high quality food and fibre products for our domestic and export market consumers. We need fair laws that enable farmers to do that, now and into the future.

I have consulted the Queensland Globe mapping data to see if this additional layer is now appearing on our PMAV. I was somewhat relieved to realise that we were unaffected by this change, however I noticed that many of my neighbours have got small patches of HVR now appearing over their properties. I am concerned what this may do to our land values and my equity.

Are people going to be compensated for the land they have lost to HVR? They should be, just as people living in a city would be compensated if a law change meant that they could no longer build a swimming pool in their back yards.

I also have grave doubts about the accuracy of the HVR mapping. Where is the ground truthing to check the legitimacy of these maps?



4. Increasing Category R regrowth watercourse vegetation to include additional catchments in the Burnett Mary, Eastern Cape York and Fitzroy Great Barrier Reef Catchments.

**Where is the science behind Category R Regrowth watercourse vegetation restrictions? A study was conducted in Queensland and published in 2016 that proved that grass was a far better assimilator for nitrogen to prevent leaching into waterways than trees ever will be. I do not believe that there is any proof that the Great Barrier Reef bleaching can be directly linked to high nutrient runoff from agricultural lands so what is the reason for Category R Regrowth restrictions and why should these catchments be included?**

5. That no compensation will be payable to landholders subject to added layers of regulation – high value regrowth, regrowth watercourses and essential habitat during transitional arrangements

**Why will no compensation be payable to landholders subject to the additional layers of regulation for HVR, Regrowth watercourses and essential habitat during the transitional arrangements? In 2004 when broad-scale tree clearing was ceased by the Beattie Government there was some compensation offered of \$150 million over 5 years. However, the most any individual producer could claim at that time, if all conditions of the payment could be met, was \$100,000. Surely that sets some precedent that producers who are affected by these extra layers of restrictions should be paid some compensation for lost productivity and income from the land that is affected?**

**Producers will not only lose income from producing less products in the areas under greater regulation, but they will also lose the right to claim carbon credits from any carbon projects they may have chosen to conduct in these areas. This is another reason for proper compensation.**

6. Increasing compliance measures and penalties under vegetation management laws.

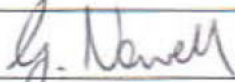
**This Bill potentially breaches fundamental legislative principles (FLPs) as outlined in S4 of the Legislative Standards Act 1992. This section states that legislation should have sufficient regard to the rights and liberties of individuals and consequently should not adversely affect rights and liberties, or impose obligations, retrospectively. I believe that the proposed amendments go too far and do infringe on the rights and liberties of individuals to manage the vegetation thickening and regrowth on their properties. Farmers and graziers should be allowed to increase their profitability by becoming more productive with every hectare of the land that they own. Unless we can do that we cannot remain viable in a marketplace where the law of diminishing returns is a reality.**

**I cannot understand the reasoning why the Government feels the need to effectively triple the penalties for vegetation law infringements. Where is the evidence that illegal tree clearing is growing? In south west Queensland, my discussions that I have had with our local NRME Vegetation Management Officer indicate that 99% of producers are abiding by the existing laws.**

**This is just one of the many reasons why farmers feel that these proposed law changes are just another case of farmer bashing by the Labor Government.**

7. Other matters relevant to the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018 that the review committee should consider appropriate and worth some consideration

The Queensland government states that these laws are necessary to stop the huge increases in tree clearing since the LNP government were last in power. Once again I ask, where is the evidence of this? Yes the government is able to tell us how much vegetation has been cleared but is it remnant vegetation clearing or is it the destruction of woody weeds such as Parkinsonia and Prickly Acacia or is it farmers wanting to sustain their livestock through the drought under the Fodder Harvesting SAC? Unfortunately, the SLATS report that is used by the government to tell us tree clearing is alarmingly escalating cannot differentiate between these things. It also cannot tell us the other side of the equation; how much regrowth has been occurring in Queensland annually. This is a major oversight because I believe that the rate of regrowth has probably been well in excess of any clearing that has occurred. In 2016 there was a global carbon report which showed that due to the regrowth which had been occurring, Queensland was actually a net carbon sink.

Signed:	
Address:	
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