

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
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We are the owner of high value agriculture land used for cropping. This change will take away our ability as land holders to clear small areas of land to develop farms, to diversify, to expand as business opportunities arise or become financially viable particularly during periods of drought.

The removal of High Value Agriculture (HVA) affects farmers in regions differently, with those in the north particularly hard hit. Throughout northern Queensland energy and protein become limiting in cattle diets during the dry season and this can cause farmers issues with stock survival and welfare through years of drought. HVA permits have provided farmers in northern Queensland with the opportunity to grow fodder and grain for supplementing in the dry season and finishing off stock for market.

We as grain growers have future plans to diversify into cattle to improve the sustainability of our property during years of challenging conditions. This would require the development of land to plant fodder. We also have long term plans to establish dams and better drought proof our land which would also require the development land. Our sustainability, as farmers, will be greatly affected by the elimination and restriction of land development. Through succession planning we have recognised that the expansion & diversification of our business is essential to provide for the future of this property and our future generation.

Removing these limits would improve our capability to drought proof our business for the future and future generations. Ultimately, it would improve a nations capability to provide for its future and its future generations. Food and fibre production for a growing nation, and a growing world population is not something anyone can afford to limit.

2. Retaining Self-Assessable Codes

The Amendment Bill seeks to deliver on the Government's 2017 election commitments to protect remnant and high conservation value non-remnant vegetation; amend the accepted development vegetation clearing codes to ensure they are providing appropriate protections based on Queensland Herbarium advice; and align the definition of high value regrowth vegetation with the international definition of High Conservation Value.

Science-based self-assessable codes help farmers carry out the routine vegetation management practices necessary to sustainably produce food and fibre.

The self-assessable codes help farmers ensure trees and grass stay in balance, avoid soil erosion and feed animals in drought. Farmers are not required to obtain permits for work done under the self-assessable codes, but they are required to notify the Queensland Government.

Self-Assessable codes have reduced the cost and time taken to make applications for managing vegetation on our property.

Self-Assessable codes:

- Enable property owners, who have a vested interest in their land, to manage it for sustainability, after all they have the most to lose by not managing this resource.
- Enable the professional, the farmer, to first hand manage the needs of their land. To manage soil nutrition, land composition, land rejuvenation, weed management, pest management, contour management, waterway management, positively impacting both the properties environmental values and productive values
- If the Self-assessable codes were taken away and we were required to undertake a development assessment and approval to do the same activity, it would limit our ability to effectively manage our property and it would impact our business. The workload and time required for this process to occur would be counterproductive for the farmer and costly and ineffective for the state.
- To take away the self-assessable codes would be creating an unnecessary cost to state, again centralising decision making (quite often inexperienced decision makers) and taking away the rights of land owners to care for their land.

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

The re-inclusion of High Value Regrowth (HVR) as an additional layer of regulation on leasehold, freehold and indigenous land is an overt grab by Queensland Government in search of targets for meeting international treaties such as the Paris Protocol. In 2009 when initially introduced, this HVR layer was prepared hastily in a 'desk-top' mapping exercise with associated errors including areas of non-native vegetation (such as orchards) and bare earth.

Our regulated vegetation management map for proposed Category C is wrong, the area is not what it is stated to be. The composition of vegetation changes over time. We have occupied our property for over 45 years and the changes we have seen have been remarkable. Yet, vegetation maps are the same. Woody weeds or vegetation that does not meet the definition of high value regrowth.

The Government is essentially adding an extra regulation over FREEHOLD/indigenous land, do we tell people who live in the city they cannot remove a tree to put in a pool, a new pavement or shed in their backyard? These decisions will impact our future productive value, and our ability to expand our business. We have not cleared this area of land previously as it has not been affordable within our budget to do so, however it is within our business plan once it is affordable.

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

In addition to the high value regrowth layer being added back onto freehold and indigenous land, landholders will also be impacted by overnight changes to the regrowth watercourse

mapping and the extent of essential habitat mapping. There is currently a strong focus on developing Northern Australia. The Queensland State Government Vegetation Management Framework is preventing farmers from developing agriculture projects without fair warning.

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

Again, the issue of compensation arises with the addition of these layers where is the recompense for Queensland farmers and what is the estimated dollar value of these layers?

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

The Bill potentially breaches fundamental legislative principles (FLPs) as outlined in section 4 of the Legislative Standards Act 1992.

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.

In addition, penalties have effectively been tripled indicating there is a sense the Government does not think farmers who mistakenly clear vegetation are being penalised enough.

While managing vegetation under the Vegetation Management Act can be difficult at times, it is done with the full intent to protect our land and abide by these guidelines and rules. The view that farmers do not act in the best interest of their land is both fairness and unjust.

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 effects that these amendments may have on our family, our region, Queensland, Australia

- **Farmers/producers will develop sustainably if given the appropriate frameworks. Not only for the sustainability of their land, but their families**
- **We need legislation not to change every 5 seconds, for the goal posts to stay moving so to enable all involved parties to have time to be educated on these issues and rulings, and on the same page.**
- **We cannot plan for the future, we can not plan to meet the demands of operating and managing property/land, families, finances, business planning when the guidelines keep changing, when vital decisions about our future are out of our hands**
- **We cannot get investment from banks or private investments due to the constant change of government guidelines**
- **We want the opportunity to drought proof our business for a sustainable future**
- **Self-Assessable Codes have been very useful and more cost effective than lodging applications. Less consuming for all involved and more cost effective for all involved.**

Signed:	Phillip & Janelle Otto
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