

SUBMISSION TO THE COMMITTEE FOR STATE DEVELOPMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES & AGRICULTURAL  
INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT  
REGARDING THE VEGETATION MANAGEMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2018

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This submission is made on behalf of our group at the request of our executive,  
by Marion Denholm (Secretary).

### Introduction

Our group was formed in the mid 1908's by local farmers with the purpose of finding ways to better integrate sustainable farming practices with care for the natural environment. This is still our main objective. Since formation, we have carried out a large number of on-ground trials & demonstrations of a large variety of sustainable farming & conservation projects. We have also invited experts in these fields to share their knowledge of the best & most innovative practices available. We have extended the skills & information we have gained to our regional community and have had a significant impact on farming practices and environmental conservation in our area.

### The proposed legislation

- This bill will take away rights from legal owners & lessees of land, without compensation. This goes against the fundamental principles of fairness & justice that our legal system is built upon.
- This bill will contribute to poor land management practices by removing any flexibility of the landowner to make considered decisions about the best way to develop and manage their own land. Every farm is different, with combinations of soils, vegetation types, climate, rainfall, stream & underground water availability etc. Management needs to be able to respond quickly and positively to changes & differences and not be hampered by restrictive legislation that assumes every farm to be the same.
- This bill seeks to pander to short-term political expediency, not to long-term environmentally sound decisions & outcomes.
- This bill ends the possibility of developing new areas of land for high value and irrigated crops. In a world where the human population is increasing massively, we should be supporting farmers to responsibly open new land for food & fibre production.
- This bill proposes to end clearing within 50m of watercourses in 3 new regions of the State, including our own Burnett River Catchment. This will impact negatively on many farming enterprises, that rely on creek & river flats land for their best agricultural production. In particular the sugarcane industry and horticultural industries will be severely affected.

### Assumptions

This proposed legislation appears to be based on a number of assumptions which are incorrect;

1. That trees & shrubs, once removed, do not regrow and that ground is forever bare. In fact trees regrow quite vigorously. As the current Statewide Land & Tree Survey for 2015-2016 notes, 34% of the woody vegetation cleared in that year had been cleared at least once previously since 1988. Re-clearing areas is a large part of the annual practice of many farms.
2. That trees & shrubs prevent erosion. We have proven through our own projects that thick tree & shrub cover promotes erosion by drying out & overshadowing the soil so that no grass cover can grow, the surface is made bare, and therefore erosion is much more likely.
3. That trees & shrubs once covered the landscape completely and this was the natural state of the landscape before European settlement. Accounts of the first white explorers & settlers compared the landscape to a park – trees & shrubs were sparsely distributed, with an abundance of grasses &

groundcovers. The indigenous population used fire to manage the landscape and keep it in this condition.

#### Further Objections

We would like to register our disappointment that this proposed legislation is being rushed through the consultative & parliamentary process, without enough time to give due consideration to such an important & complex matter.

We feel also that there is an undue bias, born of political pressure, to mask some facts, such as the rate of woody vegetation regrowth in our State.

#### In Conclusion

We believe the existing laws (Vegetation Management Act 1999, Water Act 2000, Planning Act 2017) regulate broadscale clearing in our State sensibly, while allowing development to proceed.

Agriculture is the second largest export earning sector in our economy and deserves the support of our governments at all levels.

We respectfully ask the committee to carefully consider our submission.