

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

Background

- High value agriculture and irrigated high value agriculture refers to cropping.
- This change will take away the ability of land holders to clear small areas of land to develop farms.

1. The removal of High Value Agriculture (HVA) and irrigated HVA (IHVA) 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 and IHVA 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.

Suggested questions/points you could cover

-Your knowledge/understanding and facts and figures relating to the removal of high Value Agriculture (HVA) and irrigated HVA

High value agricultural land should be the domain of the farmer of each private property. Unfair restrictions placed on these individuals through these draconian through bubbles coming from Brisbane almost 2000km away have no real positive impact nor commercial viability in mind.

-How this removal will or could affect your business or future business - for example did you have plans for future development or expansion that have now been completely removed? What impact will this have on your businesses survivability into the future (include impacts on your family, succession plans, etc).

Individuals now have another regulatory body to answer to which will create increased stress and pressure on an already challenging industry. This will affect the ability for farmers to effectively manage their properties in a profitable manner, thereby also impacting surrounding communities and their viability as farmers may abandon their properties.

This impact will fundamentally effect the communities ability to sustain and function in a manner that is conducive to empowering locals and growing economic prosperity outside of south east Queensland.

As we see capital expenditure in inner cities is exponentially growing and so to the pressures on

communities in these areas, we must seek to support and grow the regions rather than constrict and hamper them with ideological regulation that will fundamentally destroy both the regional way of life and its commercial viability.

-How removing these limits your capability to drought proof your business for the future and future generations

We believe in the farmer being the go to person for farm management on their own properties, they have a vested interest in ensuring that the property has on going viability in relation to commercial, community and environmental impacts.

The best environmentalist is the Farmer themselves and far too often they are painted as the pseudo villain scape goat, which is both an unfair and inaccurate analysis.

-How this could affect food and fibre production for a growing nation, and a growing world population

We have been told time and time again that Australia will grow its population significantly either through increased birthing rates and/or immigration policy. Ensuring that we may source the necessities of food and fibre locally should be the focus of all Governments and their legislation, thus ensuring that those employed in these industries are paid a living wage under Australia regulatory standards.

2. Retaining Self-Assessable Codes

Background

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.

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

Information you might include:

- If you have notified or used a self-assessable code on your property?
- Any positive benefits you can highlight as a result- both to your properties environmental values and productive values
- If the Self-assessable codes were taken away and you were required to undertake a development assessment and approval to do the same activity would this limit your

ability to effectively manage your property/impact your business? Give specific examples of these impacts.

As we have seen with Farmers who have implemented self-assessable codes they have decreased farm runoff into rivers and estuaries, the land has managed to be continually utilised with little to no degradation of soils.

Whereas further regulatory burden in this space will affect the farmer's ability to comply and effectively carry out responsible land management practices on his or her own property?

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

Background

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.

Suggested questions/points you could cover to

-do you have knowledge (have you seen?) of your current "Proposed Regulated Vegetation Management Maps"

If your proposed regulated vegetation management map for proposed Category C is wrong, collate evidence of the area, for example it may be introduced woody weeds or vegetation that does not meet the definition of high value regrowth

Add photo's to your submission or maps to provide visual evidence if possible.

Have you had issue with mapping by the department before? If so what were they and was it an easy task to fix. Did it cost you money?

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? If the regrowth layer has been added to your property, provide information on the direct impact (without compensation) this will have:

- Area of land the Government has regulated overnight, with no warning (for example can include as a percentage of your total property, or area in hectares)?
- Added costs to your business due to this regulation (be as specific as possible)?
- Will this impact any future productive value, or your ability to expand your business?
- Reasons why you may not have cleared this area of land previously- for example did you have future plans for it that have now been taken away? Was it an area set aside for drought proofing?

As we have seen in the past the proposed vegetation maps that have been superimposed on properties have been done on an ad-hoc basis. Quite often areas are marked as virgin forest have actually been cleared blocks with only non-native regrowth being mis-classified.

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

Background

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 these farmers from developing agriculture projects.

Suggested questions/points you could cover

- Have you seen/requested the new maps released by the Government?
- Do these additional catchment areas apply to your property?
- Has an area of essential habitat expanded or appeared on your property?
- Area of land the Government has regulated overnight, with no warning (for example can include as a percentage of your total property, or area in hectares)?
- Added costs to your business due to this regulation (be as specific as possible)?
- Will this impact any future productive value, or your ability to expand your business?
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How will any of the 'developing' the North get off the ground if it is not even a possibility in the first place

-How do you feel about being subjected to more red tape?

Any new changes to existing maps only increases the heavy burden that farmers have to face, if the government is serious about managing farmers land, then they should buy the farmers out and allow the farmers to have a dignified exit.

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

Background

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?

Suggested questions/points you could cover:

- What is your opinion about the dollar value of High Value regrowth, regrowth watercourses or essential habitat? And will farmers ever see money (compensation?) for this?
- Include all knowledge that you have that relates to these key provisions to clearly explain from a producer's point of view your opinion and expertise.

First major cost on farms is rates paid on land – whole land and not just the arable land the farmer is able to utilise, this is an unfair burden on the farmer.

Second major cost is the increase fuel cost as the farmer will have to drive further to access the land that is eligible to be farmed under these new restrictions.

Third major cost, is the time it will take the farmer to understand all the new regulations that he or she is now subject to, this will cause the farmer to take time off work to study increasingly draconian regulatory frame works.

Fourth major cost, is the emotional, psychological cost associated with the potential breach and or compliance of these new regulations.

Fifth is the actual cost associated with violating these new regulations which could force a farmer into bankruptcy, as we have seen in the past the fines can be so exorbitant.

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

Background

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.

Consider your history and knowledge of managing vegetation under the Vegetation Management Act, what are your views on the fairness of these proposed laws?

These penalties are completely unfair, unjust and out of step with community expectations. A farmer who has been on the land for 50 years barely able to scrape by, who's industry has helped to support the communities, schools, hospitals and retail network is now made out to be the villain and is prosecuted as such.

If a teacher makes an error, they are generally protected or re-educated, not fined into oblivion, these types of protections are afforded to many other industries and their employees.

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

This is your chance to outline the effects that these amendments may have on you, your family, your region, Queensland, Australia

We suggest that you be factual but include real life examples to convey to the reviewer how we as producers operate and care about the land;

- Farmers/producers will develop sustainably if given the appropriate frameworks.
- We need legislation not to change every 5 seconds otherwise we cannot plan for the future,
- We cannot get investment from banks or private investments due to constant change when governments change
- 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

Innovative or above standard practices/ways you manage currently manage the vegetation on

your property and outcomes of this, as well as how changes in legislation may affect this? How you incorporate into your operation the level of care and high standard of environmental standards you apply to your land.

You could also outline if these amendments are passed, how it will affect your business and possibly the number of people you employ.

We have seen farmers in our community being victimised and held to ransom, their anxiety and depression levels have driven many of their land and indeed driven many to suicide and/or self-abuse practices such as substance abuse etc.

We have seen banks refuse to provide loans in specific postcodes, which have had a detrimental effect on housing values and renders interested parties unable to enter the market.

These are our thoughts in relation to your request for submission hereby the undersigned

Signed:	<i>Bruce Henry</i>
Address:	[REDACTED]
Date:	20-3-2018