

SUBMISSION ON THE “VEGETATION MANAGEMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2018”

DATE DUE: 22 MARCH 2018

I wish to make a submission and raise objections which my family have regarding the impacts of these changes will have on the operation of the family property at [REDACTED], South-East Queensland.

[REDACTED], established in 1883, has been in continuous freehold ownership of the one family. Firstly, my great-grandfather and his family, and then my mother (his grand-daughter) and her family. With that in mind we have continuous records for all operations on this property. From the first State Government policies which required selectors/farmers to clear all vegetation (timber and undergrowth) in the 1880's, 1890's and 1900's (leading to widespread erosion/ slips and loss of soil) to the introduction of the 1997 Vegetation Act. We have in place a Property Management Plan (1995) as well as historical and oral records. This Plan allows [REDACTED] (1029ha.) to maintain Native Forestry Operations, Cattle and Cropping Activities.

[REDACTED] being on the Logan River, has a river frontage of approximately 4kms which is carefully managed to prevent erosion and degradation.

The concerns which my parents and the family have are as follows:

1. Timeframe of Submissions is undemocratically short.
2. No clear or exact explanation of the changes or impact which are based on flawed maps.
3. Certainty of the Definitions of the new Category areas.
4. Retrospect to March 8 2018 with minimal time to review and assess the changes in regard to both the proposed new maps and the existing older PMAV's.
5. Impacts on Property Income, no compensation clause.
6. Weed impacts on the Riparian Zone.
7. Impacts on the Selective Timber Harvesting and the “Right to Harvest”

With all due respect to those who have tabled these amendments to give such a short time to submit a response when it is a person or families livelihood, future at stake is appalling. These changes are impacting people's livelihood. Imposing an indirect monetary strain or tax on farmers who are doing what they love, growing the food that feeds this country and management the properties and homes which they are deeply connected to. I watched on the news when the announcement was made and my first thoughts was has the government truly weighed up the cost of imposing more restrictions on rural landholder verses the impacts of farmers no restricted by these new amendment not proceeding with regrowth land clearing or weed control.

We live in the Scenic Rim and are on the Logan River the weed impact from upstream which include large tracks of National Parks is enormous. The cost of weed removal in the Riparian zones is a considerable cost. If we are hindered by the Vegetation Acts further, we are “damned if we do and damned if we don't”. If we are not allowed to remove woody weeds from the Riparian Zone, and we leave them there under the mapping restrictions, then we receive a legal notification from our local Council to remove the vegetation. It is not a clear and cut definition to decipher in the Vegetation Act. These new amendment are based on maps that are already recognised as inaccurate and flawed.

The proposal does not quantify in its descriptions exactly what Categories (both endangered and of concern) will entail. No explanation of restrictions and usage have been given. Also in reading the changes to Act associated with the documents it states that these criteria could be changed at the discretion of the supervisor with no consultation with the owners who are impacted. The new fawn and pink coloured areas which now lie upon [REDACTED] effectively impacts all of the beef operations at the front of the property adjoining the Logan River. By not knowing the criteria's we presume that no control on regrowth will be allowed where our cattle graze. The new proposed areas (now coloured) impacted 50% of the area where our beef operations occur. Although these changes are perceived to have negligible or no financial impact to farmers, these changes on [REDACTED] will lower the carrying capacity of beef herd, reducing our numbers, therefore reducing the number of cattle breed, and hence the number we sell.

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Moreover, the areas that have been left white in the PMAV will have to carry a higher density of cattle to maintain the production, to maintain the profit and operating costs. This on the alluvial flats and slopes will mean more mechanical intrusion, higher fertilizer and chemical applications and more than the current 1-2 crop rotation planted each year. Realistically we will have to go to a 4 crop rotation.

The historical evidence and oral family knowledge clearly shows that the degradation/erosion/ lowering of soil quality and soil compaction will be the result. This occurred with the Queensland State Government policy which enacted clearing in the 1880's -1900's. The owner, my mother, wishes to maintain the careful balance the lessons well learned. For example we have a large track of historically open and cleared land to the northern boundary of [REDACTED] however since 2000, and periods of drought, financial and resources for the property were used on keeping the cattle alive and the farm operating. This meant that the Mountain Paddock had become overgrown with lantana and other undergrowth weeds, with minimal maintenance. In the last three years the 4th round of selective timber harvesting has been active, and the native forest has been responding well to the maintenance it has received. However large tracks of lantana are still choking the undergrowth areas. A healthy forest keeping a healthy ecosystem for both flora and fauna. Also there are concerns regarding "Right to Harvest" on the native forest and how this allows both management and weed control to move forward if current PMAV are already flawed.

Since 2010 it has been a constant battle against weeds and this will still need to be maintained. Many weeds can grow in a short space of time from small to medium shrubs and trees. Castor Oil Tree, Camphor Laurel, Green Cestrum, Soda Pear and Groundsil can all grow quite tall in these riparian zones. There is no flexibility in the description to allow for these to be addressed.

Also if weed control occurs (which it must) and the remaining stalks and trunks are mistaken for native shrubs and trees then there no recourse for the owners if they haven't taken (at their cost) proper preventative measures. The only action for a landholder, whether freehold or indigenous, is at their own expense to document before and after photographs and to get a third party independent report to verify the above actions. These documents must be able to stand up in court. Not to mention the additional financial costs place on the owners of the land.

The projected loss of income, increased mechanical and higher density will impact [REDACTED] to a projected loss of 40-45%. This does not include any percentage given to possible third party reports or legal costs. Added to the environmental impacts to the land available, unhindered by the Categories on the PMAV, and to maintain current production of beef higher levels of cattle density

and over cultivation of the land, will lead (as we know from our historical records and oral knowledge) to sinkholes, compacted/ poor soil and possible salt impacts. Also unlike our beef and cropping production which my parents rely on for income each, the Native Forestry operation only generates an income once every 40 years or so. Over the last 135 years the property forestry has only been harvested 3 times before, with the 4th round of selective timber harvesting occurring now in its third year. Also the new amendment ruling out any compensation to the landholders means the owners of the land bear all the cost of this Governments changes. We object to 'no compensation' clause if this Government wishes to impose higher costs and legal guilt onto all landholders, with triple the penalties imposed on the landholder. If the government wishes to remove the farmers rights questions have been posed as to how these laws can operate under the Australian Constitution.

Of concern are the amendment to the Water Act 2000. The [REDACTED] has extremely healthy Riparian zones not because the Government told them to do it, but because of the lessons learnt in the 135 years of operation of [REDACTED].

My mother has all of the flood records for [REDACTED], both written and in some case oral history handed down from my Great Grandfather. They know the heights and impacts that the flood did to [REDACTED] including the 1893. One major benefit of this is that it has become apparent of the 135 years that the Riparian Zone left in the Logan River needed to be carefully managed. The careful and meticulous weed control and small woody removal has kept the riverbank at [REDACTED] from eroding. [REDACTED]

Under the 1997 Act by not removing some vegetation and weed, when the flood water impacted [REDACTED] whole sections of riverbanks including native, both large trees and small, low shrubs, weeds and grass, were eroded leaving large portions of riverbank on our property eroded -which can still be seen today. By selectively opening high water areas, which doesn't allow for buildup of debris again the shrubs and small plants it reducing the erosion and loss of soil. We as a family would never abuse or destroy our land, but we manage it with care to minimize the destruction cause by swift, fast rising flood waters. This leaves our riverbanks, as can be seen of any aerial, to be tree and grass belts, stable and with minimal erosion.

As a family who is connected to this property for this length of time, the emotional cost of seeing [REDACTED] slowly degrade is a painful path we as a family envisage under these new laws. We see no need to change the previous Vegetation Act is currently stands.

Kathy Turner (daughter of Kathleen Panitz)

On behalf of the Panitz Family

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Contact details:

Kathy Turner, [REDACTED]

Ph: [REDACTED] or M: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED] u