

Burnett Inland Economic Development Organisation

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27 March 2018

Committee Secretary
State Development , Natural Resources
and Agricultural Industry Development Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Sir/Madam

Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018 Submission

On behalf of the Burnett Inland Economic Development Organisation, I wish to express views regarding the recently introduced Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018.

BIEDO engages with small businesses (including primary producers) and organisations throughout the North Burnett and South Burnett (Burnett inland) regions of Queensland and works to support economic development in those areas. Agriculture is a major industry in the Burnett inland region and of the 4858 small businesses operating throughout the North and South Burnett, more than half of them (2436) are based on agriculture, fishing and forestry (ABS statistics 2015). Accordingly, factors and events which negatively impact agriculture naturally cause flow-on effects into the small business community and the overall economy of the Burnett inland region.

We believe the introduction of the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018 is one such factor that will significantly impact the economic outlook of the North and South Burnett regions. Through discussions with the farming and small business community we would like to note the following concerns:

1. The removal of high value agriculture and irrigated high value agriculture from the Vegetation Management Framework will inhibit the opportunity for landholders to diversify from their current agricultural operation into new, potentially higher value crops. For example, graziers seeking to clear parcels of land to diversify into tree crops such as avocados will now be restricted, thus stagnating future development of the agriculture industry in the Burnett inland, limiting the generation of jobs and growth of the economy.
2. Restrictions to thinning re-growth leads to soil degradation as grasses die out and soil beneath trees erodes and washes away. This also limits the grazing capacity of the land and jeopardises the viability of agricultural operations.
3. Loss of confidence by potential investors and lack of stability for long-term business planning as a result of landholders having reduced ability to manage and care for their land. Many landholders have expressed concerns about the Bill de-valuing property values and agricultural enterprise in general.

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In addition to the economic issues triggered by the introduction of this Bill, we have also observed social and emotional issues and have concerns for the ongoing mental health and wellbeing of landholders and business owners within our region. There has been considerable fear, frustration, anger, disbelief and hopelessness conveyed by landholders as a result of the introduction of this Bill and the stress and anxiety it is causing is unnecessary and unacceptable. Inadequate public consultation and limited submission timeframes has led to further distress and in many cases has also cost people time and money as they travel long distances to attend Committee hearings held beyond the region.

It is in a landholders best interests to sustainably manage vegetation on their property to ensure the ongoing health of their land and to maximise the outputs of their agricultural operation. Farmers are great conservationists and environmental guardians and this Bill disempowers them, removing their ability to manage and care for the land.

We believe the review and reconsideration of the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018 following thorough consultation with all stakeholders is crucial to the stability and growth of not only the Burnett inland region, but the entire state of Queensland. The implementation of a balanced vegetation management framework that will enable landholders to work in partnership with the State Government, protecting the future wellbeing of our land while ensuring a sustainable and thriving agricultural sector in Queensland is of utmost importance.

We would be pleased to meet with the Committee to provide further information and more detailed examples if they would like to visit the Burnett inland at any stage.

Yours faithfully



Kristy Frahm
Chief Executive Officer