

SUBMISSION

We provide our submission with respect to the proposed Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018, to be included in the SDNRAIDC's detailed consideration.

In our opinion the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018 proposed changes are oppressive, restrictive and onerous and do not reflect the expert knowledge and understanding that landholders hold after decades of sustainable land management.

In 2017, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Queensland was Australia's most valuable agricultural state, producing nearly 25% of the nation's food and fibre. This record will not be maintained with the proposed changes to the Vegetation Management Legislation, which will make it very much more difficult for Queensland farmers to do what they do best – produce clean, green, world class food and fibre.

Just 12% of our state's vast land mass has EVER been cleared – and that doesn't cover just agriculture, that statistic includes mining, housing and other infrastructure. And then in 2015/16 a mere 0.23% of Queensland's land area was cleared, according to Departmental data. (However as the data cannot or will not be broken down to detail what is agricultural clearing, ongoing maintenance of existing grazing and farmland or clearing for urban development, it is hard to understand why the Government is tarring agriculture with sole contributor to clearing vegetation)

Our grasslands are under threat from encroachment, thickening and woody weeds. *Trees play a vital role in grazing landscapes by providing shade, shelter and recycling nutrients by using moisture that may 'leak' into groundwater and contribute to salinity problems. They also provide stability to stream banks and prevent landslip on susceptible steep slopes, however, trees provide little protection from erosion caused by raindrop impact and overland flow. However, in the control of erosion, surface cover is essential and bare areas beneath trees are vulnerable. Surface cover (ie grass and other dry matter) is the key to erosion control in grazing lands. It prevents erosion by maintaining the soil in a condition that absorbs rainfall. Any runoff that does result will be impeded by the cover and is less likely to concentrate into an erosive force.* (Source: Qld Gov Publications – Science/Erosion)

On ground observation on our own property proves that a wide, biodiverse array of grasses provide excellent protection against erosion and top soil run off. Thinning of timbered areas and maintaining against encroachment of naturally open grasslands also allow for further biodiversity allowing delicate native grasses to be established (that cannot and will not grow in timbered areas) as well as providing shelter for small animals and birds.

It is also worth noting, that whilst the Great Barrier Reef protection has been noted as one of the main reasons of requiring even tighter Vegetation Management Legislation, that the vast part of the state west of the Great Divide plays no part in the Great Barrier Reef what so ever. Mining and urban development play a greater role in any pollution that may affect the Reef, more so than agriculture.

Farmers across all facets of agriculture have been facing increasing input costs over many years. Farmers have been putting in much work – with the assistance of many Government departments and funded bodies (Landcare, Grazing BMP etc) – to make their farms environmentally sustainable as well as profitable for the long term. This means a balanced approach that requires a common sense approach by those that know their land best – the farmer.

Science-based self-assessable codes help farmers carry out the routine vegetation management practices - such as controlling regrowth and encroachment - necessary to sustainably produce food and fibre. The current common sense self-assessable codes help farmers ensure trees and grass stay in balance, avoid soil erosion and feed animals in drought.

Farmers do not need further legislation or rules to make it harder to control these threats and harder to run an environmentally and financially sustainable farm business. It's in the farmer's best interest to look after their land. Healthy land environments produce healthy food and economic sustainability.

We do not in any way support broad scale land clearing or land degradation however we do not support the agricultural industry being so heavily regulated and debilitated by new oppressive vegetation management laws.

Grasslands have been caught in the crossfire of green politics who seek to uphold the tree as the sole contributor to environmental values and carbon capture.

It's time we were treated with respect instead of as scapegoats and pawns in the game of politics.

In closing, we would like to fully support the more detailed submission tabled by Agforce Queensland and Property Rights Australia.

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