

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
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Our family has been managing “The Peaks” for 107 years. We are working on long term plans to allow our son the 5th generation, and his family, to take over. In order for this property to viably sustain 2 families we have been developing a programme of breeding and finishing cattle to be able to turn them off quicker. We grow our steers and sell them as Jap Ox to value add.

We had future plans to clear small areas to plant improved pasture and fodder crops as part of this programme- this would aid in drought proofing our breeding stock, , allow us to move cattle between blocks, finish cattle earlier and spell paddocks. Getting our cattle to the right weight to sell quickly is imperative as a management strategy. Removing High Value Agriculture and Irrigated High Value Agriculture from the Vegetation Management Framework will take away that option, our flexibility of management and damage our viability.

2. Retaining Self-Assessable Codes

Taking away self-assessable codes will make property management more difficult. We already spend large amounts of time on bookwork and this adds to it.

In our plan for succession we purchased another property “Araluen” where we run our breeders. There are approximately 400 ha there incorrectly marked as remnant This country was cleared in the 70s- the trees, including Mulga, are under the prescribed size. Developing this area is part of our future plans. Without self- assessable codes we will have to compile a report, make an application and have this assessed by someone all at considerable cost and time. This land could be sustainably cleared to improve pasture and increase our carrying capacity. The mulga could be used to feed stock in drought in a timely way- waiting to have a plan approved when you have hungry stock is ridiculous. Extra stress and cost in a drought is unnecessary.

3. Including High Value Regrowth as an additional layer of regulation under the Vegetation Management Framework on leasehold, freehold and indigenous land
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We have had several experiences where Government maps were incorrect – this takes time, effort and money to fix. Having to pay large fees to prove those maps are incorrect, is morally wrong and no other members of our society would accept this impost.

We had approximately 200 ha in one of our paddocks at “The Peaks” marked as remnant when it had been cleared only 2 years previously. We were fortunate we had aerial photos to prove our case but it still cost us app \$400, plus time and effort.

In other instances we were able to produce historical photos to prove that land had been cleared many years ago when it was incorrectly labelled “naturally open”. Not all people have access to these.

We still have an area at “The Peaks” that is incorrectly labelled but there is a limit to how much red tape and bookwork you can fit into your management time- it stays on the To Do List.

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

Managing vegetation and complying with regulations is complex and difficult. Trying to follow a GPS and put it into action on the ground to follow a map is not a simple task; thick regrowth such as pine can interfere with the signal of the GPS. Imposing exorbitant penalties on landholders for mistakes – when they are often employing contractors is stressful and unrealistic. When repulling, it can be incredible difficult to tell the difference between country marked remnant and regrowth. Regrowth grows so much more quickly than older trees .

A neighbour of ours – an elderly woman who had employed contractors to clear, had the Tree Police arrive at her property accusing her of illegal land clearing. She was understandably distressed – when the maps were checked they were referring to the wrong property. Imagine the distress caused by tripled penalties.

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

The proposed amendments will have a large impact on our family farm -both our economic viability and succession planning for our son and his family to join us in the family business. Our family has been sustainably managing this land for 107 years. We work hard to control the weeds, pests and erosion. We want our land to be productive and healthy. We understand our land better than anyone else.

We try to plan for the future but constant change in legislation removes our security and confidence.

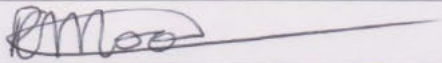
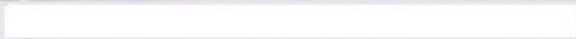
If we are viable we employ others and spend money at local businesses – we build infrastructure and this creates jobs. Being sustainable includes being economically sustainable.

Land clearing is a very expensive tool that is not undertaken lightly. Changing the timeframe to 15 years for regrowth will increase management costs considerably placing undue financial pressure on family farms. Land that may have taken longer to regrow will have to be cleared in less than 15 years to fit the new Vegetation Management Laws. Trees grow in accordance with rain – several drought years in a row, as we saw in the 1990’s, will result in very little growth. Different varieties, geographical location etc. are all variable factors. The proposed laws are a one sized approach.

To reiterate – we don’t do regrowth pulling for fun, it is a very expensive management tool. Minimum figures would be \$30 per hectare. On our operation we may need to do 1000 ha per year – that is \$30 000 per year. Shortening the time frame will increase costs and if the regrowth isn’t big enough the results are unsuccessful (the trees bend over and spring back) making it even more expensive. We have other plans we would prefer to spend our money on.

An elderly neighbour once said to me ... "I don't know why you are bothering to clear that paddock – your Grandfather and Father both did it and it just grows back!"

We think of it as maintenance.

Signed:	
Address:	
Date:	22 March 2018