



## Creating a compassionate world

**P** 07 3255 9572

**A** Suite 3, 478 Ipswich Rd, Annerley

**F** 07 3255 9577

**M** PO Box 463, Annerley QLD 4103

**E** [info@alq.org.au](mailto:info@alq.org.au)

**W** [www.alq.org.au](http://www.alq.org.au)

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State Development, Natural Resources and Agricultural Industry Development Committee

Sent by email: [sdnraidc@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:sdnraidc@parliament.qld.gov.au)

### **Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018 inquiry**

#### **Submission on behalf of Animal Liberation Queensland**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018 ('VMOLA Bill') inquiry.

Animal Liberation Queensland (ALQ) is an independent animal advocacy organisation founded in 1979. ALQ is a not-for-profit organisation in the state of Queensland and a registered charity. ALQ campaigns on a broad range of animal protection issues and represents the interests of all animals. More information is available at [www.alq.org.au](http://www.alq.org.au).

#### **Overview**

Land clearing in Queensland is wiping out native forests and bushlands at an incredible rate, and urgent action is needed if we are to protect habitats for Queensland's precious wildlife, both on land and in freshwater and marine ecosystems.

A [2017 report from WWF](#) estimates that 68 million land animals alone were killed due to clearing between mid-2013 and mid-2015. Recent clearing has also contributed significantly to greenhouse gas emissions, and removed vegetation that otherwise functions as a valuable carbon sink. Almost 300,000 hectares of woodlands in Queensland was cleared in 2013/14 alone, equating to some [36 million tonnes of carbon release](#).

The strengthening of land-clearing protections is vital and long overdue, and ALQ strongly supports the passage of the VMOLA Bill. We also urge the committee to strengthen the Bill through further measures, as set out below.

We would also like to make explicit that animal agriculture is responsible for the majority of our native bushland clearing, primarily to create grazing pasture ([91%](#)), and yet more for the production of feed crops.

### Commentary on specific aspects of the VMOLA Bill

We believe this Bill will significantly enhance delivery of the purposes of the Vegetation Management Act, and we particularly endorse the following provisions, which will help to reinstate effective land clearing controls:

- Clause 16: will remove the ability to obtain permits for 'high value agriculture' and 'high value irrigated agriculture'. We know that 'high value agriculture' was meant to be for cropping, but [clearing has gone way beyond areas mapped as suitable for crops, and we have seen most of it subsequently turned over to grazing or left barren](#). Statewide Landcover and Trees Study [data](#) also reveals that 10% of **mature bushland clearing** from 2013-2016 happened under these permit types.
- Clauses 51 and 52: will reintroduce the requirement to obtain Riverine Protection Permits to better regulate damaging clearing in watercourses. This is an essential measure, as clearing in watercourses results in [soil and chemical runoff](#), at severe cost to the quality of freshwater flowing into the Great Barrier Reef ecosystem.
- Clause 14: will phase out 'Area Management Plans' which have allowed [significant clearing](#) under lower regulation across Queensland through 'self assessable codes'.
- Clauses 133 and 38: these will introduce important measures to protect regrowth vegetation near watercourses across Great Barrier Reef catchments, to reduce damaging runoff. This will include Eastern Cape York, Fitzroy and Burnett-Mary catchments which are not currently protected under the Vegetation Management Act.

However, we would also like to see the Bill strengthened via:

- Ensuring the updated definition of 'high value regrowth vegetation' to include greater protection of endangered vegetation species and communities, threatened species habitat, vegetation in reef catchments and riparian areas, and areas where landscape integrity is at risk. Clause 38 of the Bill does create a broader definition, which we support, but it needs to be strengthened in order to deliver the protections so urgently needed.
- A requirement to demonstrate that proposed thinning activities will 'maintain ecological processes and prevent loss of diversity' before being permitted, in line with the updated definition of thinning (now known as 'managing thickened vegetation') set out in clauses 4 and 38. It is also essential that 'thinning' should no longer be an allowable activity by permit or code, particularly not for mature and high value regrowth vegetation and under existing Area Management Plans. 'Thinning' can include clearing up to 75% of a forest under current laws and has been responsible for significant clearing across Queensland without scientific justification. This loophole must be closed.
- Requiring landholders to amend their property maps of assessable vegetation where these lock in unregulated clearing of high value vegetation. If this is simply left to the landowner's discretion, significant areas of Queensland will be left vulnerable to unregulated clearing, thanks to the Newman government legacy. This damaging deregulation must be reversed if true protection is to be achieved.

- Implementing amendments to stop excessive clearing currently allowed under fodder harvesting codes. On a broader note, ALQ is alarmed that state and federal Government policy continues to prop up the livestock industry, given its well-documented adverse impact on habitat loss, climate change and public health. We look forward to a future where support is in place to help the regional economy diversify away from livestock, especially in areas of drought or where new clearing is undertaken for grazing or to produce feed crops.

Thank you for considering our submission on the VMOLA Bill. We wholeheartedly support its passage and urge the committee to consider additional steps to close remaining loopholes and ensure the purpose of the VM Act is given full effect.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chay Neal', is positioned above the typed name.

Chay Neal  
President, Animal Liberation Queensland