

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
2. Retaining Self-Assessable Codes
Our company operates a cattle station west of Rockhampton and we have been granted a self-assessable thinning code for the Brigalow Belt – low value vegetation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Self Assessable Codes provide us with certainty and clarity on where we can thin affected areas. These are science based and assist us carry our routine vegetation management that is necessary for us to sustainably produce food for consumption.• The codes allow us to quickly and carefully thin areas that improve the grasses on the land whilst retaining the mature trees and habitat trees. We can do this while we are in the local area of the paddock for other purposes and this is a timely and efficient process. The thinning is always done responsibly to encourage grasses and mature and habitat trees to survive and thrive instead of being replaced by low value wattle trees or other woody weeds.• Our workers are provided with maps and given clear instructions, which are easy to follow and relatively easy to get right. These processes are very valuable for our business.• If the Self-assessable codes were taken away this would impact our ability to manage the land responsibly in many ways.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ If the self-assessable codes are withdrawn and replaced with a highly regulated system this will require significantly more work with a higher potential to get it wrong and with penalties. The work required will be like putting a legal brief together – very time consuming and difficult and risky.○ The new changes require complex understanding of the vegetation act and regulations and create a fearful and limiting environment for us. It is so easy to make mistakes with highly regulated systems or to spend days putting the submissions together and still get it wrong.○ A change to thin only 10% of each Lot will severely limit our land (that we pay for) and ability to sustainably manage our stock as so much land will simply become unviable and filled with woods weeds and rubbish. This will disadvantage our business and also

<p>result in more low value vegetation. There is no compensation offered for reducing the productivity of the productive land.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A system without self-assessable codes but permits and regulations will become an administrative nightmare. What will be the waiting times, and what about appeals etc. Will the government hire 50 new employees to assess (from a distance looking at computer screens) farmers decisions regarding their livelihoods? What guarantee will there be that these people understand sustainable agriculture? ○ Right now the thinning codes are relatively easy to understand and to follow and allow our farm to retain grass for stock and our workers to operate sensibly out in the paddock. ○ We are in a generational business and looking after the land responsibly is our first priority. We spend time restoring healthy grasses and mature trees constantly. We are charged with responsible custodianship of the land and we are accountable for effectively sustaining the current area we have for producing beef for markets and consumers. We need more support in this area and do not need additional regulations that are compliance based but not science based.
<p>3. Including High Value Regrowth as an additional layer of regulation under the Vegetation Management Framework on leasehold, freehold and indigenous land</p>
<p>4. Increasing Category R regrowth watercourse vegetation to include additional catchments in the Burnett Mary, Eastern Cape York and Fitzroy Great Barrier Reef Catchments.</p>
<p>We have not seen any of the maps released by the government</p> <p>We do not know if they apply to our property that we have paid for and continue to pay for</p> <p>We do not know if the essential habitat had appeared on our property</p> <p>How do we know if we are impacted? And what opportunity is there to give our opinion about this?</p>
<p>5. That no compensation will be payable to landholders subject to added layers of regulation – high value regrowth, regrowth watercourses and essential habitat during transitional arrangements</p>
<p>The additional layers of regulation, administration and communication will impact us as a family business. We will struggle to understand what is frankly very difficult to understand as the new codes are not written with sustainable farming in mind. I don't believe there is any genuine understanding of the benefits farmers make to the land now. There is no compensation awarded to farmers when vegetation management changes to limit sustainable agriculture, unfairly.</p>
<p>6. Increasing compliance measures and penalties under vegetation management laws.</p>
<p>Legislation should have sufficient regard to the rights and liberties of individuals and consequently should not adversely affect rights and liberties, or impose obligations, retrospectively.</p>

In addition, penalties have effectively been tripled indicating there is a sense the Government does not think farmers who mistakenly clear vegetation are being penalised enough. The maps and rules change and there is little acknowledgement that farmers are regular people. This isn't fair and the purpose of the new legislation hasn't been explained. For example HOW will the changes make improvements? There is no logic communicated we can understand.

Increasing penalties just creates more fear and fuels the power imbalance between farmers who create food and the people who run the politics of vegetation very hard. Frankly, farmers do more to sustain the planet by growing grasses and trees than people who have no touch points with the planet. Somehow the penalties send the message that we are wrong constantly and need to be punished. This makes farmers very vulnerable and defensive and we do know that green groups have already worked very hard to demonise farmers and target them.

How is this all fair? Farmers have created the conditions for the human race to thrive for generations and generations and we have always protected viable and productive agricultural land. Additional penalties applied to farmers would erode our ability to continue the good work we already do.

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

Farmers/producers already develop sustainably if given the appropriate frameworks.

We need legislation not to change every 5 seconds otherwise we cannot plan for the future,

We will continually find it more difficult to get investment from banks or private investments due to constant change when governments change.

We want the opportunity to drought proof our business for a sustainable future

We want to be acknowledged that farmers are already actively protecting the planet right now and are integral to the planet's future, we already apply sustainable agriculture creating the food security we need now.

Self-Assessable Codes have been very useful and more cost effective than lodging applications and preparing applications for limited areas, with increased potential penalties simply creating a fearful industry.

We currently have above average management processes on our property, we are careful with stock, with water, with vegetation, with our workers and currently work responsibly on all aspects of vegetation including spraying weeds and introducing the best grasses we can for the land and the cattle. We currently apply very high standards of environmental care and intend to continue.

The amendments if passed will impact our business negatively, our ability to work effectively on our land will be diminished and we may need to seriously alter what we can achieve on the land we have paid for over the generations. Overall there is a feeling that we are not trusted by people who actually don't know us or what we do.

I note there is no compensation and no acknowledgement of the high environmental standards farmers already use and apply.

Signed:	Elizabeth Thorby
Address:	
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