

SUBMISSION

I provide my submission in respect of the proposed Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018 to be included in the SDNRAIDC's detailed consideration.

In providing this submission I refer directly to the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018, the Introductory Speech of the Hon Dr Anthony Lynham MP, Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy, of 8 March 2018, and the Explanatory Notes that encompass the proposed changes to the above Acts and a range of commentary and issues.

In my 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.

I do not in any way support broad scale land clearing or land degradation however I do not support and cannot operate with our industry being heavily regulated and debilitated by new oppressive vegetation management laws.

I also do not believe that adequate time was provided for submissions to be made. A longer timeframe (of say 4 weeks) would have been a much more reasonable allowance – most people were not even aware they could make a submission until early this week.

My opinion is set out below:-

HIGH-VALUE REGROWTH

Clause 38 of the Bill (proposed new definition of 'high-value regrowth' (a) and (b) in Schedule (Dictionary) of the *Vegetation Management Act 1999*) and Clause 16 (omission of s22A(2)(k) and (l) to delete *high-value agriculture clearing* and *irrigated high-value agriculture clearing* as relevant purposes).

- **Changing the definition of *high-value regrowth* vegetation - this term will now apply to vegetation not cleared in the last 15 years – rather than since 31 December 1989 (28 year old trees).**
- **Regulating regrowth on freehold land, Indigenous land and occupational licences in addition to leasehold land for agriculture and grazing.**
- **Removal of high value agriculture and irrigated high value agriculture as a relevant purpose under the *Vegetation Management Act 1999*. This will remove the ability to apply for a development approval for clearing for high-value and irrigated high value agriculture.**

Introductory Speech - Dr LYNHAM: *"I would like to draw the attention of the House specifically to the removal of provisions that allowed for clearing for high-value agriculture and irrigated high-value agriculture.....The bill will reinstate the protection of high-value regrowth vegetation on freehold and Indigenous land. The bill will change the definition of 'high-value regrowth' to ensure that additional vegetation that has significant environmental value is protected.....it is proposed to change the 'high-value regrowth' definition that currently exists from woody vegetation that has not been cleared since 31 December 1989 and forms an endangered, of concern or least concern regional ecosystem vegetation to high-value regrowth vegetation that has not been cleared for 15 years.....Under the new definition, high-value regrowth will continue to be mapped as category C on freehold and Indigenous land, as well as on leasehold land, that is, agriculture and grazing leases. Restoring the pre-2013 mapping of high-value regrowth on freehold and Indigenous land protects approximately 630,000 hectares on freehold and Indigenous land.....With the changes I am*

proposing to the definition of 'high-value regrowth', our government will protect an additional 232,275 hectares. These two measures will protect an additional 862,506 hectares of high-value regrowth. Importantly for the environment, approximately 405,000 hectares or 47 per cent of this is within the Great Barrier Reef catchments."

*NB: A landholder could previously apply for a development approval to broadscale clear remnant vegetation for high value agriculture (clearing carried out to establish, cultivate and harvest crops) or irrigated high value agriculture (clearing carried out to establish, cultivate and harvest crops, or pasture, that will be supplied with water by artificial means).

DISCUSSION

• HIGH VALUE REGROWTH

Reinstating the classification of High Value Regrowth On Freehold & Indigenous lands is a desperate land grab for Green votes. Currently, a high proportion of Qld is Leasehold land (*Department of Natural Resources and Mines. {2016} Queensland Automated Titling System Lease Data*) of various types, 64% according to DNR&M website . "High Value regrowth" is already adequately protected on Leasehold titles. Including both Freehold & Indigenous Lands gives no thought to the difference in titles, monies that have been paid to secure Freeholding rights, or to the ability of Indigenous Landholders to manage their land in ways which may benefit their whole communities by creating jobs.

Additionally, the inaccuracy of the mapping has been a concern for a long time (since the Vegetation Management Bill was introduced in 1999). On maps that I have seen, including some of our own maps in the past, many of the areas that have been deemed High Value regrowth have been areas that have been continuously maintained since the 1980s, areas that have been cleared and where no regrowth has occurred, that is, still cleared. I have also seen maps of areas where the vegetation that has grown back has been woody and invasive species such as prickly acacia and Chinese Apple. The ground trothing of such mapping is something that needs addressing, on a property by property level if it is to be followed practically.

Areas of supposed High Value regrowth may also be areas where weeds have taken hold, usually due to the competitive nature of the woody regrowth layer in choking out grass growth, and also areas of erosion, through the lack of ground cover. Being able to control regrowth through appropriate methods has enabled landholders to better manage weeds, and better control and eliminate erosion. Methods such as Blade ploughing, break up and remove "breakaway" gullies that have developed, allowing overland water flow time to sink in.

Introducing this layer of regulation onto freehold and Indigenous lands will be a nightmare for land managers in the increase in red tape allowing them to conduct weed control, erosion control, thinning of thickened ecosystems and maintaining a profitable, production farm.

The implication of changing the definition of regrowth that has not been cleared since 1 December 1989 to the new definition which makes it not cleared for 15 years is that you are inaccurately reflecting many of the Bioregions and tree communities that are found throughout Qld, particularly those in Western and low rainfall Bioregions.

A trees' rate of growth is primarily determined by its' access to water and nutrients. Under low rainfall conditions tree species have evolved to suit the environment and will grow slowly. Under high rainfall conditions, the tree species have adapted to a faster growth curve. Therefore a Ironbark tree in the higher rainfall bioregion of The SE Qld Bioregion will grow significantly faster than a Gidyea tree in the Mitchell Grass Bioregion over a 15 year period of time. A landholder within the MGD Bioregion who has Gidyea regrowth of 14 years, is probably not in a great hurry to re-pull the regrowth as it could be detrimental to their land condition, and their financial status.

Putting a 15 year timeframe on "high value regrowth" does not account for the varying timeframes of woody vegetation in different Bioregions. It does not allow landholders to be judicious in the financial decisions in relation to land management. Further, It does not encourage good land stewardship, as landholders will be in a reactive state of mind to the legislation, and rather than controlling their regrowth at the most appropriate time from a financial and land condition perspective, they will be scared into woody regrowth control with a "before the time is up" mindset.

HIGH VALUE AGRICULTURE AND IRRIGATED HIGH VALUE AGRICULTURE AS A RELEVANT PURPOSE

-Removing high value agriculture and irrigated high value agriculture as a relevant purpose under the VEGETATION MANAGEMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2018 also appears to be another way that the Labour Government is undermining the ability of Queenslanders to develop and grow our agricultural industries in the appropriate areas. As they currently stand, these applications were only allowed in very limited areas already, and were put into place to enable some small areas to be developed, to provide self-sufficiency and drought proofing of grazing lands, growth of new and emerging industries, and to enable indigenous people to build economic and employment opportunities within their communities.

Through these HVA and IHVA areas, landholders are provided with the ability to drought-proof their businesses and provide some production stability in a time of highly variable climatic and Market conditions within the Agriculture sector. It provides better Market access through allowing farmers to finish livestock on fodder crops and meet Market specifications rather than flooding the saleyards in dry times with unfinished stock. It enables farmers to grow and conserve fodder to feed in dry times rather than selling everything, or going broke trying to freight the feed in for perishing stock. It would enable Indigenous landholders with options for better beef production, cropping and horticulture, and hence better employment and self-sufficiency within their communities.

The lack of the ability for farm businesses to further sustainably develop their land and businesses in all parts of the state has no doubt been an issue for many a farm that has suffered financially, or indeed been foreclosed. Banks will not lend money to companies and family businesses alike where

they cannot see a financial return from their investment, regardless of the environmental and “feel good” outcomes.

Providing landholders with the ability to develop small select areas for irrigation and more intensive development (such as those permits under the HVA and IHVA guidelines) was a great boon to Agriculture and the Queensland economy, and showed an investment in the future of farming in our Great State by our Political leaders. And whilst it was not available to all, It went some small way to providing some assurance to a farm’s future, and hence some confidence in the Agriculture sector, and providing a “shot in the arm” investment for Rural Communities through new employment and new industry.

NEAR-THREATENED SPECIES

Clause 37 of the Bill (new Part 6, Division 13 – s141 ‘Proposed map showing essential habitat’ and s142 ‘Provision about essential habitat’).

- **A map showing areas of proposed essential habitat for protected wildlife and near threatened wildlife will be published and land will be covered by an area management plan.**

Introductory Speech - Dr LYNHAM: *“Importantly, our government will be providing better protections under the vegetation management framework for near-threatened species. These are species that are listed under the Nature Conservation Act 1994, where our scientists have evidence that the population size or distribution of the wildlife is small, may become smaller or has declined and there is concern for their survival. Our near-threatened plants and animals were dismissed by the LNP government as not worthy of protection. On the other hand, the Labor party is of the firm belief that these species need our protection, otherwise we face the regretful prospect of their decline. Near-threatened species were removed from the essential habitat mapping layer in 2013. When we compared the high conservation values’ methodology to the existing statutory framework, it showed that near-threatened species have limited regulatory protection. The essential habitat mapping layer used in the Vegetation Management Act will be updated, protecting endangered, vulnerable and near-threatened species. The essential habitat of our valued animals and plants will be protected in both remnant and high-value regrowth vegetation. Offsets will apply to approvals for any significant residual impact on near-threatened species where the clearing of remnant vegetation cannot be reasonably avoided and minimised.”*

DISCUSSION

Species that are threatened, near threatened or protected are already covered under the Nature Conservation Act, as Dr Lynham has mentioned. Landholders must comply with this act, as well as the VMA whenever they are undertaking **any** clearing activities. Whilst I freely admit that many landholders know little about the Nature Conservation Act, or where to find the appropriate information regarding how it affects them, I do not believe that this needs to therefore be covered within the Regulated Vegetation maps. Instead, I believe the DNR&M and EPA need to do more to make this info clearly and easily available to anyone who needs to know.

REGROWTH VEGETATION IN WATERCOURSE AREAS

Clause 37 of the Bill (new Part 6, Division 13 – s133 ‘How definition regrowth watercourse and drainage feature area applies during and after the interim period’) and addition to *regrowth watercourse and drainage feature area* definition in the Schedule (Dictionary) of the *Vegetation Management Act 1999*

- **Extension of Category R areas (from the Burdekin, Mackay Whitsunday and Wet Tropics Great Barrier Reef catchments) to include new catchments to encompass all Great Barrier Reef catchments**
- **Addition of three catchments – the Burnett-Mary, eastern Cape York and Fitzroy catchments – affecting regrowth vegetation in areas located within 50m of a watercourse or drainage feature located in these additional catchments.**
- **This regulation applies across freehold, indigenous and leasehold land.**

Introductory Speech - Dr LYNHAM: *“This bill will also extend protection to regrowth vegetation in watercourse areas for the Burnett-Mary, eastern Cape York and Fitzroy catchments, providing consistent protection to regrowth vegetation in all Great Barrier Reef catchments. This builds on the measures introduced in 2009 which regulate the clearing of vegetation within 50 meters of a watercourse in the Burdekin, Mackay-Whitsunday and Wet Tropics. The bill will also amend the Water Act to re-regulate the removal of vegetation in a watercourse under a riverine protection permit.”*

Explanatory Notes: Expanding the regulation of riverine regrowth to include these catchments will increase the protection for the Great Barrier Reef from sediment run-off and other impacts of clearing.

DISCUSSION

Careful and wise land management is called for in streamline zones to prevent issues such as weeds, erosion and woody thickening, and I believe that selective thinning and mechanical removal of weeds has proven to be a great tool (following guidelines under the Water Act & Current VMA). These proposed regulations will further strip Landholders of their ability to manage their streams and creek areas well, and I believe may even lead to detrimental effects on the Great Barrier Reef’s health.

Whilst it is important to preserve some trees in riverine and stream areas for soil stability and habitat, the inability of landholders to control woody thickening in streamline areas will result in severe consequences in relation to weed and pest animal control. Leaving an untouchable buffer zone of at least 50m from any mapped stream is a very large area, and provides the perfect environment for weed species such as Parkinsonia, Rubber vine, Lantana, Castor Oil Plant and Chinee Apple to thrive. When these weeds become dense stands, mechanical intervention can be a most successful tool to assist in their eradication, where chemical means alone is not having the desired outcome.

Woody thickening of native species also occurs when the ability to control them is suddenly removed, resulting in less grass and ground cover, which then results in higher erosion, as it is the grass which is holding the topsoil, not the tree roots. These dense stands of vegetation become havens for pest species such as pigs, which are in themselves a danger to the stream health due to their rooting and wallowing behaviours.

I believe that the Government would be better involved by investing more time and money in assisting with better land management practices through the BMP programs that are being developed and implemented by many of the industry groups such as Cotton, Cane, Beef & Horticulture, and that look to better address Reef outcomes rather than simply “locking up” more waterways.

LOW-RISK ACTIVITIES

Clause 17 of the Bill (new s22B 'Requirements for vegetation clearing application for managing thickened vegetation' of the *Vegetation Management Act 1999*) and Clause 37 (new Part 6, Division 13 – s136 'Area management plans that are to remain in force for 2 years').

- Thinning redefined as '*managing thickened vegetation*' – s22A(2)(g).
- Withdrawal of Code for clearing of vegetation for thinning. *Managing thickened vegetation* now requires notification under the new interim Code until the Bill has passed when a development application will be required.
- Requirements to be demonstrated in a development application for managing thickened vegetation – location and extent of clearing, clearing methods, evidence restricted to prescribed regional ecosystems and restrictions and evidence that the regional ecosystem has thickened in comparison to the same regional ecosystem in the bioregion.
- New s136 phases out landholder-driven area management plans as a mechanism for managing low-risk clearing that is or may be managed by the accepted development vegetation clearing codes. This new section provides that an area management plan relating to the clearing for encroachment or thinning continues but only remains in force until 8 March 2020.
- Notification of an intention to clear vegetation made under the plan before 8 March 2018 may continue while the plan remains in force however an entity may not give notification under the plan after 8 March 2018.

Introductory Speech - Dr LYNHAM: *"The government is committed to retaining accepted development codes for low-risk activities, while ensuring they deliver appropriate protections.....Following a review by the Queensland Herbarium, and subsequent review by the CSIRO, a decision was reached that thinning is not a low-risk activity. Therefore I intend to withdraw this accepted development code from the regulation once this bill commences. In the interim, I am remaking the code to include the best scientific advice on how to minimise the risks until the code can be withdrawn. I will retain an assessment pathway in the legislation for those landholders who need to manage thickened vegetation. It will remain a relevant purpose in the Vegetation Management Act for which development applications can be made."*

DISCUSSION

I am afraid that the practical and workable guidelines (including the self-assessable codes which allow for the thinning of thickened ecosystems and clearing of encroachment in grassland communities, two major issues here in the Central West of Qld) will be thrown out the window, and we will again be burdened with the red tape of permits, and little or no help to assist landholders to do the right thing provided by government agencies is cold comfort to those of us already weighed down with the burden of Drought and odious amounts of Red Tape in every aspect of our business.

The current Area Management Plans that were put into place were an excellent way to simplify the process for both DNR&M and landholders in enabling Clearing for Thinning, Encroachment, Weeds and Fodder Harvesting. They were clear, understandable, and made Landholders aware of what was required to conduct the clearing, and led to a better relationship between Landholders and DNR&M. Landholders were not subjected to the cost each time they wished to submit an application, nor unworkable timeframes as they were under Development Applications.

Being within the Desert Channels, we have a current Area Management Plan over us, for the purposes of Thinning & Encroachment. It has been easy to follow, workable, and gives us the timeframe that best suits our purposes, being in the middle of our 5th year of Drought. Removing this

or putting a 2 year time limit on it now, means that we are likely to have to rush in and do this work, when financially this is not a good time, nor is it a good time from the point of view of land condition, the country is suffering badly from the drought also with much bare earth and no rain to regenerate the pastures.

FODDER CODE

Clause 37 (new Part 6, Division 13 – s139 ‘Revocation of particular area management plan’)

- **s139(1) – the ‘Managing Fodder Harvesting Mulga Lands Fodder Area Management Plan’ is revoked. A new revised Code is in place – ‘Managing fodder harvesting accepted development clearing code’.**
- **s139(2) - A notice of intended clearing under the Plan ceases to have effect on 8 March 2018, and no further clearing can be carried out under the Plan from 8 March 2018. Landholders need to lodge a new notification under the new Code and follow the requirements of the new Code.**
- **New s136 phases out landholder-driven area management plans as a mechanism for managing low-risk clearing that is or may be managed by the accepted development vegetation clearing codes. This new section provides that an area management plan relating to the clearing for fodder harvesting continues but only remains in force until 8 March 2020.**
- **Landholders need to lodge a new notification under the new Code.**

Introductory Speech - Dr LYNHAM: *“In conjunction with this bill, I asked my department to progress the review of the revised fodder code on which we consulted in 2016 and commence a rolling program to revise and implement the other acceptable development codes throughout 2018. The revised managing fodder harvesting code has been developed by my department based on scientific input from the Queensland Herbarium and the CSIRO. The immediate remake of the managing fodder harvesting and the managing thickened vegetation codes will invalidate all previous clearing notifications and introduce for the first time size and time limits on the areas able to be notified for clearing under an accepted development code. My department will be consulting throughout 2018 with stakeholders to finalise the remaining codes.”*

Explanatory Notes: Revoking the Mulga Lands Fodder Area Management Plan reinforces the role and function of the accepted development vegetation clearing code for fodder harvesting being the supported mechanism in which low-risk clearing activities are undertaken. Landholders can continue to undertake self-assessable clearing under the accepted development vegetation clearing code for fodder harvesting, or alternatively, apply for a development permit under the Planning Act 2016.

The two year period recognises that, in some instances, the clearing requirements for encroachment, thinning and fodder harvesting under current area management plans may not be consistent with the best available science.

DISCUSSION

The ability to harvest Mulga and other tree species in times of drought is the one, and I believe most critical thing that has enabled the Mulga Lands Bioregions to remain within the realms of productivity in the Agricultural world. That particular part of the world is subject to extremely variable and generally low rainfall, and hence pasture growth would be the limiting factor, were it not for the Mulga. Enabling landholders to undertake Fodder Harvesting enables them to maintain their core breeder herds, thus enabling a solid level for Industry in the South West.

During times of drought, when most of us are so busy trying to keep our heads above water, and our stock alive, the last thing we need is more complicated red tape. Fodder Harvesting, as it has stood under the VMA is a fairly Low Risk development activity. You cannot re-pull Mulga until it is of a good size, which takes many years. It is NOT broad scale clearing, it is selective and limited. And whilst I do believe that providing landholders with some workable guidelines as to how these clearing practices can be conducted has been useful, I do not believe that it needs to be further restricted. That could spell the death of the pastoral industry for many of these areas, leading instead to an influx of weed species and introduced pest animal species such as Goats and pigs which thrive in these Mulga communities.

Without the grazing industry, there is little else in the way of economic development in these regions, many of the already struggling towns would die.... What Tourist would want to visit an area full of weeds, pigs and feral goats? The only other industry is Oil and Gas, which are only ever a short-term solution, they are not in it for the long-term. The economic viability of the South West depends on Agriculture, and I believe for a majority, the ability to harvest Fodder in a reasonable and practical manner.

PENALTY UNIT INCREASES

Clauses 19, 22-23 and 25-33

- **Various amendments to Penalty Units for Maximum Penalty. Eg. s54B(5) 'Non-compliance with Restoration notice' - penalty increasing from 1665 to 4500 penalty units and s58(1) (false or misleading statement) – increasing from 50 to 500 penalty points.**

DISCUSSION

Inaccuracies in the mapping is the primary reason that most landholders make mistakes when trying to follow guidelines under the VMA. The inaccuracy of the mapping has been a concern for a long time (since the Vegetation Management Bill was introduced in 1999). The ability of landholders to get access to up-to-date and accurate maps and information is impeded by the lack of on ground staffing and support from DNRM in regional areas. The reliance is on on-line access to mapping and information, which is not always easily accessible due to data and Internet restrictions in the bush. When the maps are deemed to be inaccurate, the process that is required to correct them is time consuming and at times costly, as the DNRM has limited resources to assist landholders on the ground. When wishing to amend maps to truly reflect the situation on the ground, nearly all of the costs of providing this information (usually through aerial photography or satellite imagery) now expected to be borne by the landholders.

The harshness of the penalties seems disproportionate compared to the seriousness of the crime, they appear to have roughly tripled. We are not criminals, we are people going about our business, trying to run profitable businesses, feeding the nation and benefiting the Queensland economy in the process.

OTHER RELEVANT MATTERS

Introductory Speech - Dr LYNHAM: *"I believe this bill and the complementary measures that I have outlined will deliver on the election commitment to deliver a more sustainable vegetation management framework for Queensland. This government will continue to work with our vital agricultural sector so that together we can*

care for the environment and ensure that their farms can pass, in good condition and in safe hands, from generation to generation."

"The amendments that I bring into the parliament are necessary to protect Queensland's remnant and high-value regrowth vegetation. It is all about restoring a sustainable vegetation management framework for managing a valuable resource on behalf of the people of Queensland."

"Within three years in Queensland clearing rates of remnant native vegetation increased from 59,800 hectares in 2012-13 to 138,000 in 2015-16. This amendment bill seeks to end the levels of broadscale clearing that the LNP legislation created."

DISCUSSION

• COMPENSATION

There seems to me to be a distinct lack of compensation for changes which will unduly and negatively affect landholders, particularly those in Northern Parts of Qld where industry is in need of innovation and development to grow and procure jobs. Under the Australian Constitution, and the protection of rights, we have the "right to compensation on just terms for acquisition of property". Whilst this Bill is not asking to acquire property **it IS** taking away the ability of Landholders to make fair and sustainable economic developments within their businesses. The Government should be taking the time to discuss and debate Compensation with those landholders negatively affected by the introduction of this Bill.

And FINALLY....

I find that in the tabling of this Bill, without any proper consultation from Groups representing our Industries, Indigenous parties or indeed Farmers and Landholders themselves, the Labour Government seems to be treating us, the above mentioned parties, with utter contempt and disrespect. It does look like this has been done entirely to push through trying to win Green Votes, without proper "Concern" and I do not believe it does as Dr Lynham says, and I will quote him, "... *deliver on the election commitment to deliver a more sustainable vegetation management framework for Queensland. This government will continue to work with our vital agricultural sector so that together we can care for the environment and ensure that their farms can pass, in good condition and in safe hands, from generation to generation.*"

I am concerned that by the government introducing these amendments to the VMA, that a very poor picture is being painted of the Agricultural sector within Queensland by our current Government, and that they are demonising and demonstrating that the Qld economy would be better off without Farmers.

We do not clear every tree – we are already following the strict guidelines - and we don't just 'broad scale' clear as Labour is seemingly alleging. Woody vegetation control is extremely expensive and time consuming, so it is not something we undertake lightly. Much of the clearing that is covered under the SLATS reports includes mining, and housing developments in peri-urban areas. I do not know the exact breakdown, I could not find it anywhere in the Landcover Change in Qld 2015-2016 report from SLATS, the same report the Labour is using to accuse farmers of clearing 395 000 ha/year of woody vegetation. It would be nice to see some figures on that breakdown, then perhaps we could have decent discussion about this issue, instead of the very one-sided one we are getting from the current government.

The rural sector and Agriculture particularly, will be hardest hit by the Re-introduction of these regulations, and as the ones at the forefront of most of our environmental issues (weeds, pest animals,

erosion, extreme bushfire events and water quality issues), the Government should rather be encouraging and supporting of the important Land management and Protection services that we provide to the greater Australian Community, and Economy, all the while trying to maintain productive and profitable farm businesses.

Here on our farm we have fenced out areas that are deemed to be of high environmental importance (Natural springs) in order to protect the areas and provide better water quality for our stock by pumping and piping from those Springs. We invest a very significant amount of time, labour and money spraying weeds (Prickly Acacia, Parkinsonia and Rubber vine) to the enhancement of our environment here in the Cooper Creek Catchment. We carefully manage our stock numbers in accordance with our seasonal conditions, and still have retained relatively good land condition and pasture recovery after small rainfall events, even despite this horrendously drawn-out drought we are currently experiencing. We carefully manage encroaching woody vegetation in our grassland communities, and control pest animal species. We spend a significant amount of money trucking in weed-seed free fodder to feed to our stock in dry times, but believe that if we were able to develop a small area to carefully managed irrigation of our own fodder crops, that this would be a better outcome for us financially, and the environment. That it would be drought-proofing our business and adding value to our farm. The current self-assessable codes have been easy to use and practical to follow, and are a good example of how the Government should be working with Landholders to address woody vegetation issues.

We are MANAGING our land to grow grass to feed our stock or crops to grow FOOD for our NATION. We are MANAGING weeds, erosion and land condition, so that the land that we pass onto future generations will be productive and profitable. It is not in our best interest to clear all of the trees – our stock need trees, our waterways need trees, our wildlife need trees, we need trees.... but we also need grass and ground cover, not a solid forest, most of these Regional ecosystems within which Agriculture occurs are open Savannah, Savannah Woodlands or Grasslands. We need balance, and that is what we as farmers do on a daily basis, trying to get the balance right. We are MANAGING the balance between productive land that feeds the nation, and weed infested country that the Government has no time or money to put into. WE ARE MANAGERS. WE ARE LAND STEWARDS. We want to be treated as such, with respect, and the ability to “come to the table” to discuss these issues, with honesty, with science, with a Government that truly wants to “...work with our vital agricultural sector so that together we can care for the environment and ensure that their farms can pass, in good condition and in safe hands, from generation to generation”... not just grab Green votes.

Good land management should be rewarded and encouraged, not penalised as it will be through the re-instatement of this Bill.

Signed:



Date:

22/03/18