

Elizabeth Ballment

21-March-2018

Committee Secretary,
State Development, Natural Resources
and Agricultural Industry Development Committee,
Parliament House,
George Street,
Brisbane, Qld 4000.
Email: sdnraidc@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Committee Chairperson,

***Submission to the Inquiry into the Vegetation Management & Other
Legislation Amendment Bill 2018***

I've been a Townsville resident for more than 60 years and have seen the changes wrought locally, and more broadly across Queensland, as the natural vegetation I knew from my childhood has been destroyed in the name of 'development'.

I was appalled when the Newman government rolled back what regulations there were against broad-scale clearing and I attended the committee hearing in Townsville in 2016 when the first Palaszczuk government attempted to re-introduce some control over the calamitous damage encouraged by Newman. I understand that the 2016 government was hamstrung by its parliamentary numbers and I look forward to a much better, environmentally-sensible result from the new legislation.

I particularly support the following measures in the new legislation:

- Re-establishment of a permit system for riverine protection, to control destructive clearing of vegetation in watercourses,
- Inclusion of areas uncleared for 15 years in the 'high conservation value regrowth' category,
- Redefinition of 'thinning' as 'managing thickened vegetation' and the concomitant requirement to consider maintenance of ecological processes and biological diversity,
- Removal of 'high-value agriculture' and 'irrigated high-value agriculture' categories from reasons to allow clearing,
- Protection, again, for 'high-value regrowth' on freehold property and Indigenous land,
- Addition of watercourses in the eastern Cape York, Fitzroy and Mary-Burnett catchments to riparian vegetation that will be protected to reduce reef-damaging run-off,

- Addition of 'near-threatened wildlife' to the 'endangered' and 'vulnerable' categories already protected in 'essential habitat', and
- Allowing unregulated, 'Category X' vegetation to be re-classified, if land-holders agree.

I note that many interested groups have commented on this proposed legislation, but I ask the Committee to consider the points made by the Environment Defenders Office, especially those indicating where the legislation has potential loopholes and/or requires strengthening.

In my nearly 70 years, I've seen many cycles of governments allowing vegetation clearing for the financial benefit of a few (who seem to have the ear of influential politicians, media etc) and then spending millions of tax-payers' dollars on revegetation schemes supposedly for the benefit of the nation. The stupidity of this is never highlighted in government or in the mainstream media and it beggars belief that the money spent revegetating would not be better spent minimising the clearing in the first place, perhaps by subsidising those landholders who are prepared to preserve and protect their environmentally-significant stands of vegetation, undisturbed or re-growth.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elizabeth Ballment', written in a cursive style.

Elizabeth Ballment