

SUBMISSION

I provide my submission on rejection of the changes proposed in the Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018 ("the Bill").

This constant change in legislation severely impacts on the ability of farm managers to plan and implement effective long-term property and business management decisions. Ecological processes work in much longer timeframes and can be severely compromised when mismatching regulations are enforced. Farmers have long called for certainty with the vegetation management regulatory framework. I am totally opposed to continued uncertainty and attacks on the viability of myself, the long-term sustainability of my business as well as attacks on fellow farmers.

The impacts of the proposed changes to the Vegetation Management Act include;

- The purpose for High Value Agriculture and Irrigated High Value Agriculture will be removed.
- Extends Category B areas (remnant vegetation) and Category C (regrowth vegetation) to freehold land, and indigenous freehold land. Additional 862 000ha High Value Regrowth and water course buffers to all reef catchment, Burnett Mary, Fitzroy, Eastern Cape York.
- Thinning will require Development Application to be lodged for approval.
- The purpose for High Value Agriculture and Irrigated High Value Agriculture will be removed.

My submission concentrates on the broad principles of land management as I believe if you can agree on the broad principles then the rest should fall into place as you have guidelines to fall back to.

The broad principle we should aim for is: **'We aim for a Healthy Landscape which is sustainable, promotes Bio-diversity and Productivity in the long term'**.

We have to get away from this obsession with Trees, a Landscape consists of 3 components:

Soil Condition

Ground cover condition

Woodland condition

The QLD Government runs 'Grazing Land Management Courses in rural Qld. In these courses Landholders are encouraged to aim to have their land in 'A' Class condition. A landscape is considered in this condition if:

- (a) It has good coverage of Perennial Grasses dominated by those considered to be 3 'P' grasses, Palatable, Perennial & Productive, these should make up 80% of the yield.
- (b) Few Weeds
- (c) No Erosion
- (d) Good Soil condition

(e) No sign of Woodland thickening

So here we have one arm of Government promoting what I believe is a sensible sustainable approach while another arm of Government, driven by political ambitions imposes a set of laws that will lead to Landscape degradation & unsustainable rural enterprises.

The Vegetation legislation has been the most poorly thought out politically affected legislation we have had to deal with in rural QLD. It affects landholders mainly on two fronts, their productivity and their asset value.

PRODUCTIVITY:

On one hand the people of QLD (the consumers) demand we produce top quality Food & Fibre at a reasonable price, and on the other hand are demanding we leave large tracts of the country in a state that is impossible to achieve this outcome. Our District is rated as 1 sheep to 3 acres we have country mapped as remnant that sheep would die at 1:10acs. Photos



Figure 1 Land in poor condition - erosion evident



Figure 2 Flood country in poor condition - Lippia evident

Lippia established after the 2012 flood in this country because there was zero groundcover.



Figure 3 Sensibly developed country in A class condition

The second area is Asset Value:

Agents in our area tell me that properties with greater than 30% Remnant vegetation can incur a discount of between 30-50%. In our case we own a small property nearly on the NSW border it is mapped 69% remnant, the reason being at the time we had 3 boys away at boarding school and drought on our hands, we poisoned 2500 ac., but could not afford to do the remaining 5500 ac. Through no fault of our own we are left with a property that cannot be fully developed, there is a further 2000 ac that could be developed into top quality cultivation worth \$300/ac, as it is it will remain valued as grazing land at \$150/ac. My biggest regret is we did not just borrow the money and flatten the 5500ac. The Government would have rewarded us with Cat X mapping. Yet as we had left areas as remnant vegetation we have been crucified, the very people you should be encouraging on the land. I know others in our area who had a 20-30 year development plan, they developed country as funds became available, they did it in a sensible and sustainable manner, the result was a healthy landscape. Again, these people, the very ones who should be held up as an example of how to sustainably develop country have been left out to dry.

THE SOLUTION

First, we need to harden up and accept that the views of the far left green groups and the far right landholder groups need to be put aside. There will need to be compromise from all those involved, the solution is sensible long term sustainable development that encourages bio-diversity and can support a viable Agricultural Sector.

“Our aim is to have a healthy Landscape which is sustainable, supports a rich bio-diversity and a viable Agriculture Sector.”

“A Healthy Landscape is one in which the tree density is such that it allows the growth of good groundcover, this results in good moisture penetration, no erosion, very few weeds, no woodland

thickening as described above, it is in 'A' Class condition. Everyone is a winner here, the Landscape is healthy, and **all** those who depend on this are healthy."

Every property should have the right to be developed, so we achieve this by each Landholder has a property management plan showing corridors & or clumps agreed to by the Dept.(as we did back in the early 2000's). If for example we want to achieve a 20% remnant status then those properties with less are encouraged to let 20% of their country go back to remnant status. This could be achieved by incentives for fencing & water or you could have a scheme similar to water buy back, where the Government buys back the trees. A precedent has been set with the water buy back, here the Government is buying back an asset that it originally **gave** to landholders, here we have at least purchased the land and later had the earning capacity and asset value taken away from us by the Government.

The minimum is we must be allowed to maintain and thin our country so as to have good ground cover, it will be impossible to carry on a Livestock Enterprise if large areas are unproductive. Everyone wins in a healthy landscape. If these laws come as is it will have a serious effect on the wellbeing of rural people and their communities.

We need long term stable laws that allow for 20yr plans to be put in place.

We cannot continue to have a situation where one group of Landholders are carrying the burden of the Vegetation Laws for the benefit of the remaining Landholders and the broader community, this is not sustainable!!!!

"Remember we cannot be **green** if we are in the **red**"

Signed:	Don Perkins
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