



20 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](mailto:sdnraidc@parliament.qld.gov.au)

Dear Committee,

**Submission to Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018 ('VMOLA Bill') inquiry**

**Fauna Rescue Whitsunday (FRW) is a non-profit, voluntary group who rescue, care for and rehabilitate sick, injured and orphaned native wildlife. We provide a 24 hour wildlife hotline service; give informative talks to schools and other interested community organizations; and we encourage the valuable participation of community members in all our activities.**

**FRW requests that the new bill is amended to take into account that going forward, no vegetation clearing is approved during breeding season for birds and microbats.**

**Urgent: our wildlife is dying – we need better protections from clearing impacts that is in step with current knowledge.**

We thank Minister Lynham for his actions to provide better protections under the vegetation management framework for endangered, vulnerable and also near-threatened species. It is very timely with the international news in the last 2 days of the death of Sudan, the last male Northern White Rhino. That species' extinction is now probably inevitable. While Australia's native fauna may not be as spectacularly large and attention getting, our record of extinctions is also nothing to be proud of. We can do much better. And to this end, offer the following recommendations:

Our endangered, vulnerable and near-threatened species are all in need of better protection than under current regulations. We know this because Fauna Rescue volunteers are at the front line receiving injured or dead animals due to poorly regulated vegetation/tree clearing.

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**"Caring for our wildlife"**



In a recent example in our region, the Collinsville Solar Farm clearing permit allowed for broadscale clearing in a region of high biodiversity at peak breeding season for our birds and micro bats. Over 200 animals were taken into care (by NQWC) and who knows how many were killed.

The Collinsville area is quite possibly home to at least 14 listed threatened fauna species. To date studies have found 3 listed threatened fauna species - the Koala, Squatter Pigeon and Ornamental Snake. It is also known to have 3 listed threatened flora species and 3 listed threatened ecological communities within the footprint and surrounding area.

Many animals (Attachment 1) did not survive the approved clearing, and further did not survive the relocation to carers. Many of the microbats aborted their young or young were abandoned when their roosting sites were cleared.

Unfortunately, we will never know the exact numbers. And this was only ONE site out of so many in Queensland. (We note that in Queensland clearing rates of remnant native vegetation increased from 59,800 hectares in 2012-13 to 138,000 in 2015-16).

Luckily a stop work hold of 2 weeks on active nest sites was declared on around the 6<sup>th</sup> October. Too late for the animals who had already died or been affected and taken into care. One can only speculate on the number of animals that would of still come in should this not of happened as it is a region of high biodiversity.

Wildlife carers in this region have been expected to provide a place of refuge for those animals that survived, but we do not have the capacity to assist in rehabilitating this significant amount of wildlife. Animals had to be sent as far away as Brisbane.

Fauna Rescue Whitsunday asks the Committee to commit to the following to ensure that our wildlife has a future:

- 1. Legislative prohibition on clearing being undertaken in wildlife breeding seasons** - Large scale land clearing is being allowed in peak bat, bird and other animals breeding seasons, which for the majority happens in spring. This is irresponsible and unnecessary.
- 2. Overhaul of our development assessment and Environmental Offsets Framework** – Particularly in irreplaceable remnant areas of high biodiversity and ecological connectivity as well as high-value regrowth. Wildlife does not differentiate.



3. **Requirements introduced to improve impact assessment on species, to ensure it is conducted throughout longer meaningful periods, including breeding seasons, days and nights** - Surveys of proposed areas must be conducted over a longer period of time, including breeding seasons and days and nights to ensure a better picture of the inhabitants is obtained.
4. **Requirements that companies and/or persons conducting the initial EIAs must be suitably qualified** – those undertaking impact assessment must have qualifications in the identification of not only our flora and fauna species but also of the requirements such as habitat including nesting hollows, roosting sites and dietary requirements. This is vital to ensure something of the above scale does not occur again.
5. **Review and enforcement of the Code of Practice for Spotter Catchers** – This code must be addressed again and must be enforced to ensure that all acting under this code have the appropriate training to do the job. This Code of Practice was looked at a few years ago but has not gone any further.

If required, I would be available to provide additional advice to the Committee

Kind regards,

*J Webb*

Jacqui Webb

President

Bird & Echidna Species Liaison Officer

Fauna Rescue Whitsundays Association Inc

Home

Mobile

Email

Attachment1: Casualties from broadscale land clearing Collinsville solar project 2017



Attachment 1:

NQWC wildlife casualty statistics gathered from Collinsville Solar Farm clearing activity:

### **May 2017 clearing activities**

#### ***Insectivorous bats***

- 18 Gould's wattled bats - most injured with severe fractures and bruising
- 4 yellow bellied sheath tail bats - all with bruising

#### ***Birds***

- 7 nestling pale headed rosellas
- 4 nestling cockatiels

### **October 2017 clearing activities**

#### ***Insectivorous bats***

- Gould's wattled bats
  - 53 adult females from maternity colonies, including 4 injured - severe bruising, degloving of skin on the wrist, fractures and lacerations. A proportion of them were pregnant with twins
  - 62 babies - including 14 which were orphans or rejected by mothers, 2 aborted babies, and 7 babies, dead during or shortly after transit
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- Broad-nosed bats
  - 15 females - most pregnant - including 2 injured adults
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- Chocolate wattled bats
  - 5 adults
- Northern freetail bats
  - 2 males, injured
- Beccarri's freetail bats
  - 1 adult male, injured
- Yellow bellied sheath tail bats
  - 1 adult male, injured