

Submission to Queensland Parliamentary Inquiry Committee –Vegetation  
Management and Other Legislation Management Bill 2018

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March 26<sup>th</sup> 2018

Thank you for receiving this submission. I write from a background of rural industry that covers experience from farm hand/jackeroo /cattle station manager/group manager/owner over a period of nearly fifty years covering country from Victoria, New South Wales the Northern Territory and Queensland..

Extensive grazing in western Queensland being the predominant experience including 40 years as a grazier/contractor in the Jundah area. We owned 73,000 acres of leasehold country out from Jundah

I represented the Barcoo Shire as councillor ( 9 years ) and mayor ( 8 years ) and chaired the Natural Resource Management group Desert Channels Queensland for 10 years from its inception until 2012.

We ( my wife and I) have sold and moved to the coast to consider our options and to be closer to our elder son and his family.

We believed that the previous Labor government had acted very responsibly when introducing Area Management Plans to allow thinning of thickened vegetation and encroachment onto the Mitchell grass areas.

Thickening is a natural occurrence but with controls on fire added to grazing rotation the natural cycle has been disturbed. This was further exacerbated by many operators switching from sheep to cattle. I observed over time that sheep tend to control gidyea thickening by controlling the seedlings. Cattle do not. Once a seedling reaches 3 or 4 leaf stage it appears to become unpalatable to sheep and is left alone.

Following a marked change in rainfall pattern following the 2 big years of 1999 and 2000 we were virtually destocked for 10 of the next 15 years in an effort to encourage Mitchell grass renewal on our country.

We preferred to make our own way and worked on the roads to keep us afloat

When the lease renewal process rolled around we could demonstrate paddocks that had had no stock for 8 to 10 years. We had not had any Mitchell grass germination rains.( roughly 1 year in 15 ) Yet in that time the gidyea encroachment had changed our coolabah creeks to one lined with young gidyea with no erosion controlling capability left in the creek banks as the trees had choked the grass out.

The greatest threat to the Mitchell grass country of Queensland is the encroachment of gidyea ( add boree as well ) destroying the perennial grass which is the basis of the grazing industry.

The cost of thinning under Area Management plans when originally introduced was around 16 to 20 dollars an acre sometimes on country not worth twice that so it needed careful planning before being put into operation.

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This Area Management process recognised the problem and provided an answer that allowed country to open up to where it was at sometime after grazing regime change had set in.

Without some control measures the vast Mitchell grass pastoral areas of Queensland are in great danger of oblivion along with sustainable grazing and the industry itself.

Thank You.

Peter Douglas