

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.

Describe the impacts the changes will make to stall agriculture, discourage investment, and increase costs and time to manage vegetation.

The current Queensland Government has already stalled agriculture and discouraged investment by announcing changes will be made to the vegetation laws. This stalling cost the Flinders River water application process to take over 12 months to release. More than the water that was available was tendered for. Less than half of the water available ended up being allocated. The remainder that was not allocated were rejected largely because of vegetation management. On a number of these applications, there was no vegetation to be cleared for the farm design. Neither did the applicants receive any communication regarding the very small areas that were areas of concern, the applicants would have modified (for example) their 100 ha plan around 1 ha of concern. This was purposely used as an excuse to stall development – before changes were made. Serious investors were interested in the region and pursuing opportunities, but the deliberate slow allocation process that the Government rolled out, saw them come and go, investing elsewhere, the looming vegetation laws changing providing additional uncertainty for these parties.

The FRAP group represents the Flinders River catchment which covers approx. 109,000 km². To see the Queensland Government use this resource for political power has enraged the local landholders who have been managing their properties for generations. Politicians do not visit the area to discuss these changes with them or see how these changes may affect them, and then the Government tries to rush them through parliament – there was no “rushing” the allocations through the “system” last year to the people of this area.

The current Queensland Government is severely out of touch with modern agriculture, it is

allowing minority groups manipulate the mainstream population with old stigmas that do not exist. Every landholder manages the environment for the future, because that is their livelihood. They would spend more time with the elements of nature than any politician has. Every person sitting in government wears fibres grown in Australia, eats food grown and processed in Australia – but they are [REDACTED] by making changes to something they do not understand or have real knowledge about.

There are better solutions to work through than changing vegetation management laws.

We have invited politicians to our area to discuss these but have constantly been ignored.

It can only be concluded that our area and people are insignificant to the current Queensland Government and rushing this through the system clarifies that.

Please give the people and region the freedom to continue to best manage their land for the future of the whole of Queensland by leaving the laws as they were.

Signed:	Sara Westaway
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