

From:
To: [SDNRAIDC](#)
Subject: Submission on the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018
Date: Monday, 19 March 2018 3:58:50 PM

writes:

To: Queensland Parliamentary Committee Members

Dear Committee members,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018.

Queensland is in the midst of an escalating deforestation and land clearing crisis, with a Gabba-sized area of forests and bushlands destroyed every three minutes. It is critically important that this new law ends this crisis and protects our beautiful forests and bushland, as well as our native wildlife. Already over the 18 years from 1996 to 2014, the Koala Coast (QLD's Bayside, Logan and Redlands areas) has had an 80% decline in the koala population, according to the World Wildlife Fund's report (<http://www.wwf.org.au/ArticleDocuments/353/pub-tree-clearing-hidden-crisis-of-animal-welfare-queensland-7sep17.pdf.aspx?Embed=Y>).

This law has statewide, nationwide and global significance. Deforestation impacts climate change, flood and bushfire mitigation, water quality, biodiversity and the Great Barrier Reef.

1. Global deforestation hotspot - Queensland is now within the Top 11 Deforestation Hotspots, as per the report conducted by the Worldwide Life Fund (<https://www.worldwildlife.org/stories/11-of-the-world-s-most-threatened-forests>). As the nation's major land-clearing state, this is a national and international disgrace.
2. Biodiversity - according to the State's own Statewide Landcover and Trees Study 2015-2016, the highest woody vegetation clearing rate was in the Brigalow Belt (207 000 ha/year), one of the nation's most important biodiversity zones.
3. Failure to stop deforestation comes at a high cost. According to the Actuaries Institute, Natural Disasters Working Group's 2016 draft discussion paper, the annual estimated cost of natural disasters is \$11 billion per annum.
<https://www.actuaries.asn.au/Library/Events/GIS/2016/NaturalDisastersWorkingGroup2016.pdf>
4. Allowing degradation of Great Barrier Reef-related catchment areas jeopardises Queensland's internationally-renowned tourism industry, which contributes \$25 billion/annum, approximately 7.9% of QLD's GSP.
<https://www.business.qld.gov.au/industries/invest/tourism-investment/market-profile>

Ending deforestation is also critical to ensuring the state and the nation's future sustainability. As mentioned in the renowned book, "The Natural Advantage of Nations (Vol. I): Business Opportunities, Innovation and Governance in the 21st Century" (<https://research.qut.edu.au/tnep/books/the-natural-advantage-of-nations/>), both Queensland and Australia have an opportunity to become a 'sustainability superpower', depending upon how it addresses sustainable development, including its vegetation management.

I welcome the improvements that are in this law: the end of permits for so-called High Value Agriculture, the removal of the main self-assessable code for thinning, the modification of the fodder self-assessable code, and the redefinition of High Value Regrowth to include regrowing forest and bushland that is 15 years of age and within 50

metres of watercourses in Great Barrier Reef catchments.

However, the test for these laws is: will they bring down the out-of-control rate of bulldozing in Queensland? Will they protect the state's wildlife? Almost 2/3 of land cleared in QLD between 2013 and 2016 was under Category X. However, since the Bill will continue to provide an exemption for Category X-designated land, I am particularly concerned that the proposed legislation be insufficient for stopping broadscale clearing.

These laws must end broadscale clearing and protect all remnant and High Conservation Value regrowth forest and bushland in Queensland, as outlined in the election commitment. I call on the government to make publicly available data that shows that these laws will achieve those commitments.

In addition, the following improvements to the law must be made:

- Ensure that no threatened species habitat is able to be bulldozed, and no “of concern” regional ecosystems are able to be bulldozed.
- End all bulldozing of mature forest and bushland for ‘thinning’ (which will still be allowed under a Development Approval, existing Area Management Plans and self-assessable regrowth codes).
- End bulldozing of mature forest and bushland for so-called ‘fodder harvesting’ unless it is lopping individual branches. At the very least, it should be proven to be necessary due to being a drought, and proven to be ‘low ecological impact.’
- Protect all regrowing forest and bushland that is threatened species habitat and that surrounds watercourses (riparian areas)—as was promised in the election commitment.
- Protect the regrown remnant and High Conservation Value Regrowth that is currently marked ‘exempt’ and is not protected in Category X on PMAVs.

Regards,

– Ilan Ivory

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