



Environment Council of  
Central Queensland Inc.  
ABN 56 740 735 001

Committee Secretary  
State Development, Natural Resources  
and Agricultural Industry Development Committee  
Parliament House  
George Street  
Brisbane Qld 4000

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

Dear Committee members,

Queensland is suffering excessive tree clearing. Farmers' and agriculturalists' reasons for tree clearing are misguided, believing that more 'exposed' land gives them greater access to run cattle or plant crops. This is a practise imported from English and European cultures that is inappropriate in our Queensland conditions of 'drought and flooding rains'.

Excessive tree clearing exposes the soil to erosion and run off which then requires pesticides and fertilisers in extraordinary quantities to produce crops or pasture. Pesticides and fertilisers come with their own particular problems both on the soil biota, and effect of run off to the Great Barrier Reef and river systems in between.

Excessive tree clearing, 700,000 hectares of bushland bulldozed in the last 2 years, establishes a vicious cycle of destruction, loss of biodiversity of native species, including the iconic koala and other threatened animals and plants.

The Environment Council of Central Queensland holds a long term interest in the protection of our natural environment and our native species for now and the future. We hope that the committee supports the following elements of the VMOLA Bill as they are a step to help reduce excessive tree clearing in Queensland:

1. Removal of the ability to obtain permits for high value agriculture and high value irrigated agriculture.
2. Reintroduction of the requirement to obtain Riverine Protection Permits to better regulate damaging clearing in watercourses.
3. Phasing out existing Area Management Plans which have allowed significant clearing across Queensland.

4. Extended protections of regrowth vegetation near watercourses across Great Barrier Reef catchments, to reduce damaging runoff, including catchments which were not protected under the Vegetation Management Act.

We generally support the following amendments but it is essential that they are strengthened to truly reduce excessive clearing of wildlife habitat, protect the Great Barrier Reef and minimise climate change emissions:

1. I support improved protection of 'high value regrowth vegetation' that hasn't been cleared for 15 years and re-extending regulation to freehold, indigenous land and occupational licences. However it must be extended to protect high conservation value regrowth vegetation especially endangered vegetation species and communities, vegetation in reef catchments, riparian areas, threatened species habitat and areas where landscape integrity is at risk.

2. I support tightening of the definition of 'thinning' but significant clearing to reduce the significant area allowed for 'thinning' it should no longer be an allowable activity by permit or code, particularly not for mature and high value regrowth vegetation and under existing Area Management Plans. 'Thinning' can include clearing up to 75% of a forest under current laws and has been responsible for significant clearing across Queensland without scientific justification that this is a necessary activity at all.

3. I support the Bill clarifies that landholders may seek to amend their Property Map of Assessable Vegetation (PMAV) to re-regulate clearing in areas which were locked in across Queensland as not needing assessment under Newman Government laws. This clarification is helpful. However, the Bill needs to be changed to require amendment of maps that lock in unregulated clearing of all high value vegetation. Under the Newman Government, significant areas of Queensland were locked in under property level maps which allowed the clearing of unregulated 'Category X' even though the clearing would impact mature, high value vegetation. Leaving map amendment up to the land owner will leave significant areas of Queensland where clearing is unregulated.

4. The Bill does not tighten excessive clearing allowed under fodder harvesting codes so amendments are needed. Fodder harvesting should be limited to where there is an official drought declaration.

Yours sincerely,

Christine Carlisle  
President  
Environment Council of Central Queensland

21<sup>st</sup> March 2018