

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 impacts on our business will be subtle. We have invested a lot of time money and energy into our education and implementation of sustainable land management practices. Because of this, we have noticed increased populations of native species, both grasslands and timbers. I believe, because of our management, we are seeing increased native timber thickening and encroachment. We have lodged plans for thinning and managing encroachment, however being in drought for the last 6 years, we have chosen not to conduct any proposed activities because of limited cash available.

The proposed changes for thinning and encroachment will limit our ability to control encroachment especially into the future. The proposed 400ha limit for a 18000ha property is significantly limiting. Encroachment seems to be compounding, a couple of trees this year, half a dozen next year, two dozen the next. If we are to progress with our businesses, we need the opportunity and respect that we can see what is happening on the ground and manage accordingly. Land systems within one property cannot be managed with a one size fits all approach, therefore to apply that strategy to a regional ecosystem or a state will be very limiting for agriculture.

We have a good model for vegetation management for our area, please don't mess with it.

Signed:

Geoffrey A. Mearns

Address:

Date:

21/3/2018