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21st March 2018

Committee Secretary
State Development , Natural Resources and Agricultural Industry Development Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000
Email: sdnraidc@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Committee,

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

I am making this submission for many reasons that directly affect my life and livelihood. I work in the far north tropics of Queensland, I am a wildlife artists and both my husband and I work in our art business that supports our lives. This business is based on the rich wildlife diversity and natural environments of this part of Australia. We have lived in the north for 25years and we are involved with conservation of native wildlife, endangered ecosystems and specifically the recovery on one of Australia's most endangered mammals the Mahogany Glider (*Petaurus gracilis*). I am an active member of the National Mahogany Glider Recovery Team and have been a member for over a decade. The survival of this species and many others are directly linked to habitat loss. The dramatic weakening of Vegetation Management Act protections during the Newman government's brief time in power has not only allowed further clearing of this species habitat but has also restored the 'frontier mindset' of the past that said it was OK to destroy the habitat of endangered species. I have been devastated to hear and see further loss of crucial habitat for the endangered Mahogany Glider. This is happening while government, communities and NGO's continue to spend money to try and restore landscape linkages and manage the little remaining damaged habitat – we are desperate to see protection restored and illegal clearing prosecuted. Our situation is like many throughout Queensland where work is continuing to recover species that are listed in Queensland, federally and in the case of the Mahogany Glider also on the IUCN Red List. The red list sites the continuing decline in area, extent and quality of habitat as the primary threat to this species. The loss of VMA protection has only made the situation worse and is pushing this species ever closer to extinction.

I strongly support:

- The reintroduction of the requirement to obtain Riverine Protection Permits to better regulate damaging clearing in watercourses – watercourses and riparian vegetation are often the only wildlife corridors still remaining in the wet tropics and in many areas of QLD. They provide many of the remaining landscape linkages for the Mahogany Glider
- The protection of regrowth vegetation near watercourses across Great Barrier Reef catchments, to reduce damaging runoff and protect wildlife corridors. This should include Eastern Cape York, Fitzroy and Burnett-Mary catchments.
- Removal of the ability to obtain permits for high value agriculture and high value irrigated agriculture. The Statewide Landcover and Trees Study found that 10% of mature bushland

clearing from 2013-2016 happened under these permit types. It would appear that little verification has taken place to say that the land to be cleared was high value agricultural land, was needed for agriculture, and was actually utilised for the agricultural activity applied for.

- Phasing out existing Area Management Plans which have allowed significant clearing under lower regulation across Queensland.

Other changes that I support as a step in the right direction, but many of them do not go far enough to restore the protection that was given previously or do not give sufficient protection given the diminished situation we now have. If the government is truly serious about trying to recover and protect what little is left, if it really means to give our eco-systems the best chance for adaptation to climate change and also to protect the Great Barrier Reef further strengthening will be essential.

Comment:

- Improved protection of high value regrowth vegetation is great but it must include the protection of threatened species habitat, riparian areas, endangered vegetation species and communities, vegetation in reef catchments and areas where landscape connectivity is at risk. To fully meet the government's election commitment high value regrowth vegetation must be extended by protecting high conservation value regrowth vegetation.
- Managing thickened vegetation (thinning) is supported only if it is required that it be demonstrated prior to approval that the action will maintain ecological processes and prevent loss of diversity. If this is not demonstrated thinning should not occur.
- No thinning should be allowed by permit or code. This is particularly important in mature, high value regrowth or in existing Area Management Plans. Clearing of up to 75% of a forest under current thinning laws should not be allowed – that is clearing not thinning and it is happening without any scientific evaluation.
- The property level maps which at present allowed the clearing of unregulated 'category X' even though the clearing would impact mature, high value vegetation must be amended. Leaving map amendment up to the land owner will leave significant areas of Queensland where clearing is unregulated – this is not acceptable.
- Fodder harvesting codes need to be tightened, it should be limited and managed in areas where an official drought has been declared.

Yours sincerely

Daryl Dickson

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