

SUBMISSION

In providing this submission I refer directly to the key provisions of the legislation which may be amended.

1. Removing High Value Agriculture and Irrigated High Value Agriculture from the Vegetation Management Framework
<p>This change will take away the ability of land holders to clear small areas of land to develop farms and eventually affect the food and fibre production for a growing nation. The removal of High Value Agriculture (HVA) and irrigated HVA (IHVA) affects farmers in regions differently, with those in the north particularly hard hit. Throughout northern Queensland energy and protein become limiting in cattle diets during the dry season and this can cause farmers issues with stock survival and welfare through years of drought. HVA and IHVA permits have provided farmers in northern Queensland with the opportunity to grow fodder and grain for supplementing in the dry season and finishing off stock for market.</p>
2. Retaining Self-Assessable Codes
<p>Science-based self-assessable codes have been able to allow us to carry out the routine vegetation management practices necessary to sustainably produce food and fibre.</p> <p>The self-assessable codes help us ensure trees and grass stay in balance, avoid soil erosion and feed animals in drought. Although we not required to obtain permits for work done under the self-assessable codes, we are required to notify the Queensland Government and we keep records and photographs of the areas applying for.</p> <p>In drought time when feeding fodder [which we have been doing for the past 18 months] the codes have allowed us to be flexible as we move from paddock to paddock with tractors. Removing the codes will be restrictive and time consuming.</p> <p>Many of us have been to numerous workshops over the years where vegetation officers from DNRM explained the codes in a practical sense. If these codes change there will be a huge cost involved in providing assistance to implement new codes. This of course will be provided by the vegetation officers at taxpayers expense. We as landholders get no compensation for the hours of work that go into attending workshops, travel expenses, extra office and paper work involved so we are able again to come to terms with more change. We are all trying to run a business and do not have the time or resources to employ people to assist with this extra pressure due to legislation change yet again. Another cost that will be incurred is obtaining permits.</p>

3. Including High Value Regrowth as an additional layer of regulation under the Vegetation Management Framework on leasehold, freehold and indigenous land
<p>The re-inclusion of High Value Regrowth (HVR) as an additional layer of regulation on leasehold, freehold and indigenous land is an overt grab by Queensland Government in search of targets for meeting international treaties such as the Paris Protocol.</p> <p>This category leaves uncertainty over the category of our land and effectively adding an extra regulation over our FREEHOLD land. On our property, the impact of the continual change in vegetation management regulation is having a detrimental effect on our grazing enterprise. In the last two and a half years we have purchased another grazing property which will be affected by the proposed changes. Before we could organise finance with our bank we did extensive budgets for the next 3-4 years with projected carrying capacity and income. This was based on maintaining the current productivity level and with controlling of regrowth, an increase in production was factored in to the future budgets. This proposed bill has caused not only uncertainty for our business, but the bank will have no certainty of our future production. The banks do not look favourably on the lack of a secure prospect for effective development.</p>
4. Increasing Category R regrowth watercourse vegetation to include additional catchments in the Burnett Mary, Eastern Cape York and Fitzroy Great Barrier Reef Catchments.
<p>In addition to the high value regrowth layer being added back onto freehold and indigenous land, landholders will also be impacted by overnight changes to the regrowth watercourse mapping and the extent of essential habitat mapping. There is currently a strong focus on developing Northern Australia. The Queensland State Government Vegetation Management Framework is preventing these farmers from developing agriculture projects.</p>

5. That no compensation will be payable to landholders subject to added layers of regulation – high value regrowth, regrowth watercourses and essential habitat during transitional arrangements

The issue of compensation arises with the addition of these layers. Queensland farmers should be compensated for land that is no longer able to be productive or used as part of your property development.

6. Increasing compliance measures and penalties under vegetation management laws.

This Bill potentially breaches fundamental legislative principles (FLPs) as outlined in section 4 of the Legislative Standards Act 1992.

Legislation should have sufficient regard to the rights and liberties of individuals and consequently should not adversely affect rights and liberties, or impose obligations, retrospectively.

Penalties have effectively been tripled indicating there is a sense the Government does not think farmers who mistakenly clear vegetation are being penalised enough.

7. Other matters relevant to the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018 that the review committee should consider appropriate and worth some consideration

Last year, Queensland was the nation's most valuable agricultural state. (Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics Agricultural Census) For Queensland agriculture to maintain our number one status and reach our full potential, we need governments to adopt balanced policy settings that help us move forward, not hold us back.

As a beef producer we need certainty within legislation to overcome change every election cycle so we can plan for the future and ensure investment availability and opportunities. These proposed laws will take away our property rights, particularly those of us who own freehold land, and stifle development.

For over 85 years our family have been managing our property and producing beef, mutton and wool for our nation. We have controlled weeds and pests at our expense, fenced and piped water to help rejuvenate pastures, cleared and developed some of our land to maintain more sustainable agricultural production. It is not cheap to develop country and clearing is not undertaken without serious investment. We are not going to clear and develop our land if it is not financially and environmentally worthwhile. Self-Assessable Codes have been very useful and cost effective when lodging applications and we need to be able to continue using them. Our ability to manage thickening vegetation has been greatly reduced

We are in an area in Queensland that has been drought declared for more than 5 years. We need to have the opportunity to drought proof our business for a sustainable future and this new legislation will jeopardise this greatly.

Farmers have proven to be the best land managers regarding weeds and feral animal control, whereas various Governments have not invested in their own land to manage the weeds and pests (e.g. National Parks) This is evident in our area and now we are in a situation where the Queensland Government is not listening to our agricultural industry leaders and they think they know best. This is a blatant disregard for the years of experience that farmers and graziers have, producing food and fibre for this nation, and to export.

Signed:	<i>G. R. Buchton</i>
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