

From: [REDACTED]
To: [SDNRAIDC](#)
Subject: Submission on VMOLA Bill
Date: Wednesday, 21 March 2018 3:44:03 PM

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,

I have been involved with the land clearing issue for many years – starting in 1990 when it first came to light how much land was actually being cleared in Queensland. During those years I had a job as a Rural Liaison Officer with the Queensland Conservation Foundation (QCC). I traveled extensively throughout Queensland meeting with farmers, farmers groups and land care groups. I went to massive properties and very occasionally hobby farms and ones in between. Mostly were cattle properties; cane farms; crops, and dairy. My work was mainly focused in Central, North and Far North Queensland. My sole purpose was to talk about the problem of land clearing, what was the common ground we had; and mostly to get farmers to meet a “greenie”. It was an extraordinary job and I met some amazing people. Most met with resistance and anger at first – and always ended with good humor and respect.

It was amazing when I actually sat down with farmers and had the conversation about why we wanted to slow the rate of land clearing down, how many farmers agreed with me and QCC's policies. Many of the farmers I met freely admitted that they had over cleared and had suffered the consequences of erosion, loss of production, invasion of weeds, and impact on the water sources. They also freely admitted that they panic cleared, because they didn't want the government tell them what to do – again with negative consequences.

The point I am trying to make – apart from a few individuals who will always over clear and complain about the government whenever they try to do something like land clearing legislation. Most farmers do care and do know the impacts that over clearing has. The way the world is shifting, its easy to talk to your big lobby groups – who usually are the ones making the most noise, but not necessarily representing the grass roots of the farming community – who say that the sky will fall in if they don't have the right to clear everything. I want to say that I strongly support 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.

I 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 protected 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.

Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely, Nichola Hungerford

[Redacted signature block]