

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

Background

- High value agriculture and irrigated high value agriculture refers to cropping.
- This change will take away the ability of land holders to clear small areas of land to develop farms.

1. 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.

Overall this removal would have a devastating effect on the beef cattle industry in Northern Qld as it would result in large areas needing to be destocked in dry periods to avoid animal losses through not being capable of providing fodder to maintain animals. This then becomes an animal welfare issue as there would most certainly be losses caused due to drought.

This removes the ability of our business to be diverse and have the ability to change back to cropping if commodity prices dictated or there was a change in management direction – thus placing severe limitations on the viability of our business to adapt to changes in markets if that was what was dictated to enable the business to survive.

Removal of this current framework does severely limit the future of the business to have the ability to be diverse. This may therefore influence interest in the business by future generations who may wish to change the enterprise mix of the business and therefore the long-term viability of the business is threatened by the proposed changes.

There is no doubt in my mind these changes will threaten the ability of Qld agriculture to be able to meet the demands of its population, let alone nation by creating limitations to the agricultural sector in what it can viably produce.

Therefore it will limit investment in the State by investors wishing to invest in agriculture. These investors have been an important part of the agricultural sector for well over a century and will be for the next century. By introducing these laws the Government not only threatens Qld Agriculture but also the entire Queensland state economy!!

2. Retaining Self-Assessable Codes

Background

The Amendment Bill seeks to deliver on the Government's 2017 election commitments to protect remnant and high conservation value non-remnant vegetation; amend the accepted development vegetation clearing codes to ensure they are providing appropriate protections based on Queensland Herbarium advice; and align the definition of high value regrowth vegetation with the international definition of High Conservation Value.

Science-based self-assessable codes help farmers carry out the routine vegetation management practices necessary to sustainably produce food and fibre.

The self-assessable codes help farmers ensure trees and grass stay in balance, avoid soil erosion and feed animals in drought. Farmers are not required to obtain permits for work done under the self-assessable codes, but they are required to notify the Queensland Government.

3. Including High Value Regrowth as an additional layer of regulation under the Vegetation Management Framework on leasehold, freehold and indigenous land

Background

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. In 2009 when initially introduced, this HVR layer was prepared hastily in a 'desk-top' mapping exercise with associated errors including areas of non-native vegetation (such as orchards) and bare earth.

It appears that the government has its sights set on the farmer. We are constantly guilty until proven innocent with regard to tree clearing – common law is the reverse!! Government Departments send out letters asking to explain incidences of 'illegal' tree clearing asking us to justify and prove our innocence. This occurred on one of our property's late last year identifying two areas – one was an old gravel pit and the second a riparian area that was untouched. Time was wasted by our manager clarifying that nothing had occurred and along with that of the DNR staff (which is taxpayers money and taxpayers include farmers)!!.

4. Increasing Category R regrowth watercourse vegetation to include additional catchments in the Burnett Mary, Eastern Cape York and Fitzroy Great Barrier Reef Catchments.

Background

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

How will any of the 'developing' the North get off the ground if it is not even a possibility in the first place? The government is happy to allow coal companies to 'rape' the State's resources, not why are they opposed to hindering development of undeveloped country such as Northern

Australia. Shouldn't the Government be focusing on looking at the sustainability of the State's long term future rather than short term gain ie. Term in government???

As farmers we do not need more red tape. To run a business efficiently we are spending enough time in the office as it is, let alone adding another layer of legislation that will be necessary to comply with just to stay in farming.

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

Background

Again, the issue of compensation arises with the addition of these layers where is the recompense for Queensland farmers and what is the estimated dollar value of these layers?

What level of compensation does your government offer to farmers who will be seriously affected by these laws?? No doubt no consideration has been given to this, let alone the cost to the state in the long-term.

This is typical of a Labour Government to introduce legislation without any recourse or compensation offered to those who are affected by the introduction poor policy that has been heavily influenced by minority groups, making reactive decisions without actual facts.

A fine example of reactive politics was the Live Export Ban by your Federal Counterparts – which ended well!!

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

Background

The 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.

In addition, 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

Our business has operated since 1973 and expanded significantly since it began. The business has adopted numerous environmentally sound practices since inception some of which include;

Conversion of cropping land to pasture, rotational grazing, destocking in dry periods to maintain land condition, identification & preservation of wildlife corridors and the adoption of Australian Land Management System – which is now being converted to Grazing Best Management Practices.

The adoption of the above strategies have resulted in increased groundcover, soil carbon, reduced runoff (particularly important in the Fitzroy Basin) and reduced weed infestations.

On every property there are several pasture monitoring sites set up that are assessed bi-annually to gauge pasture condition. Since the implementation of these sites soil carbon levels on average have increased by 1-2%.

Recent rain in the past three months on the Moura district properties delivered up 250mm of rainfall, some of which fell in heavy storms. It wasn't until falls exceeded 75mm of rainfall in a 24 hour period did any of this country have any runoff which filled dams. A vast turn around to that country 15 years ago when a 25mm event would have resulted in significant runoff.

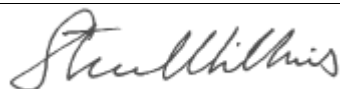
Therefore as a company we do not need the Government to be dictating that we should be better land managers as we already are!! And I'm sure you'll find 98% of farming businesses in Qld are.

Where is the reward from the Government to good land stewardship? No-one knows the lands capability more than a farmer who lives on the land 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 12 months of the year!! A minority group who has extreme political persuasion has no understanding of the actual management of farming land and what it takes to manage it!!

The constant threat of impending changes to Vegetation Management Legislation over the years has placed an enormous amount of pressure on our business over the years through direct and in-direct costs in constantly assessing the business viability. There needs to be a level of security in these laws that doesn't constantly put pressure on farming businesses. When business are under pressure from political circles that is when irrational decisions are made in order to protect the business's future – this was evident when new vegetation laws were introduced in the 1990's that saw panic and confusion lead to thousands of hectares of land cleared prior to the laws introduction that would otherwise have been cleared in a better planned way had the government not threatened farm viability with the introduction of new laws.

Can the Government make public the amount of money it has wasted on introducing changes to Vegetation Management Acts since it has been in power?? This continual idea that changing of these laws to keep at bay the minority groups who are uninformed and have not spent time researching how the majority of farmers operate seems to be ludicrous and if applied to managing a farm business would soon see it bankrupt!!

Signed:



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Date:	21.3.18