

As a primary producer that purchased farming property in Queensland with the intention of developing the property and adding value, only to be caught up in the Qld. Vegetation Management Act, I feel I have a personal interest in this inquiry. The tree clearing moratorium that preceded the legislation meant that all my plans had to be shelved. Fortunately, I was one of the lucky few that received permission to partially clear under the ballot.

I would like to make the following points;

1. One of the effects of the pending legislation was that unnecessary widespread clearing took place before the moratorium was put in place.
2. The 'one size fits all' approach by the clearing guidelines means that very diverse environments are all treated the same, without regard for their peculiarities. The legislation has made it difficult to manage some systems. In many instances, continued degradation of the land is ensured.
3. Vegetation classed as 'remnant' is not necessarily representative of pre-European settlement. Much of it has been caused by tree thickening due to changed land use since settlement.
4. Because of the ballot conditions and the sunset clause, a severe financial burden was created by the need to clear immediately instead of progressively to a plan. Also some environmental damage was caused by having to clear under drought conditions, instead of at the optimum time.
5. Clearing guidelines and conditions were based on grossly inaccurate soil salinity and vegetation mapping. This resulted in extra time being spent by producers and Departmental staff ground-truthing the mapping.
6. Locking land up is not 'management'. Good management needs constant interaction with the landscape not proscriptive legislation.
7. Properties that were already cleared and developed carry no cost burden, while those properties with undeveloped areas carry all the cost burden of the legislation.
8. Under the Qld. legislation farmers are considered guilty if accused of wrongful clearing, and must prove their innocence. This is in opposition to the legal principle of 'innocent until proven guilty'.
9. Under this legislation clearing for urban development is acceptable, however farmers are unable to further develop their properties. This creates a unfair division between types of businesses in the state.
10. Although the legislation provides for tree thinning, this can not be done on a broad scale, but must be done singly, making tree control uneconomic.
11. Changed land use since European settlement has resulted in extensive tree thickening over many areas. This has resulted in a variety of environmental problems (soil erosion, increased water loss, loss of grass species and groundcover) and the current legislation makes it almost impossible to correct these problems.