

26 April 2016

Research Director
Agriculture and Environment Committee
Parliament House
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Via email: vminquiry@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Sir / Madam

Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 Inquiry

The Australian Sugar Milling Council (ASMC) is the peak industry organisation for raw sugar milling in Australia. The ASMC represents some 95 per cent of Australian raw sugar production through our 6 member companies owning 20 sugar mills. In total, there are 24 sugar mills in Australia, owned by eight companies.

The proposed reinstatement and strengthening of the *Vegetation Management Act 1999* will likely have a negative impact on the sugar industry and limit the potential for expansion and development of regional areas in north Queensland as prioritised by both Queensland and Federal Governments.

The sugar industry acknowledges the need to protect the Great Barrier Reef and ensure the gains made through the federal government's Emissions Reduction Fund are not offset by excessive land clearing in Queensland. However, strategic and well managed clearing of vegetation can markedly improve farming efficiencies with both economic and environmental benefits. An example would be the clearing of areas to install more efficient irrigation systems or enable effective consolidation of farms so that they run more efficiently as one farm. Improved irrigation systems result in more efficient use of not just water, but also energy and fertilisers.

It will be critically important for departmental staff to provide consistent advice and management of vegetation regulations. There is concern amongst sugarcane farm managers that they are not confident they are compliant with current regulations due to unclear guidelines and inconsistent advice provided by different government departments and government officers.

The 'ebb and flow' of policy direction by successive Governments in Queensland continue to erode the confidence of most agriculture stakeholders. The State Government sees a key component of future growth in Queensland as being built around bioproducts. Without access to land suitable for efficient and economic farming, this growth will be capped.



The Australian Sugar Milling Council and its members urge the Government to ensure that there is appropriate balance in any changes to the current vegetation management laws, such that environmental risk is able to be managed while continuing to provide opportunity for strategic and well managed expansion of agriculture and particularly the sugar industry in Queensland.

Please contact our office (3231 5000) if you wish to discuss any matters raised in this submission.

Yours sincerely

Dominic V Nolan
Chief Executive Officer