

From: Hannah Jackson
Sent: Friday, 23 February 2018 8:56 AM
To: Tina Langford
Subject: 180224 Veg Management - The Economist - WWF.docx
Attachments: 180224 Veg Management - The Economist - WWF.docx

Tina, are you able to include this document with the Minister's documents for her meeting on Wednesday at 3:30 with the Conservation Council and WWF?

Thanks
Hannah

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Queensland is one of the world's worst places for deforestation

1,000 rugby pitches' worth of forest disappear every day

Feb 24th 2018 | Sydney

MOST deforestation takes place in poor countries. In richer places, trees tend to multiply. Australia is an unhappy exception. Land clearance is rampant along its eastern coast, as farmers take advantage of lax laws to make room for cattle to feed Asia. WWF, a charity, now ranks Australia alongside Borneo and the Congo Basin as one of the world's 11 worst "fronts" for deforestation.

The worst damage occurs in the north-eastern state of Queensland, which has more trees left to fell than places to the south, where agriculture is more established. It has been responsible for over half of Australia's land clearance since the 1970s. Its bulldozers are at present busier than they have been for a decade. They erased 395,000 hectares of forest, including huge tracts of ancient vegetation, between 2015 and 2016—the equivalent of 1,000 rugby pitches a day. As a share of its forested area, Queensland is mowing down trees twice as fast as Brazil.

Australia has lost almost half its native forest since British colonialists arrived, and much of what remains is degraded. For a time, it seemed that the clear-cutting might come to an end: in the early 2000s several state governments passed bills to reduce deforestation. But in the past decade these have been wound back in every state. Queensland's land clearance has more than doubled since conservatives loosened its forestry law in 2013, allowing farmers to "thin" trees by up to 75% without a permit. Neighbouring New South Wales recently enacted a similar rule.

Conservationists blame powerful agricultural lobbies. These retort that controls on land clearance push up food prices and cost jobs. Family farmers lament that trees obstruct the big machinery needed to keep their land productive. They know that empty fields are worth perhaps five times more than those peppered with vegetation. In 2014 a landowner in New South Wales murdered an environment officer who was investigating illegal bulldozing. (Authorities in the state are examining at least 300 cases of illegal tree-clearing.)

Yet clearing land eventually hurts farmers too because, without trees, soil erodes and grows saltier. Deforestation releases carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, spurring global warming, and reduces regional rainfall. Perhaps 45m animals were killed in Queensland's bushland bulldozing between 2015 and 2016. Loss of habitat has brought many species, including the koala, to the brink of extinction. The Great Barrier Reef, which is already suffering from climate change, is also harmed by the extra sediment washed into the ocean, which can prevent coral from photosynthesising.

Permissive forestry laws seem especially odd given the billions of dollars the government spends planting trees, fighting climate change and conserving native species. In 2016 Queensland's minority Labor government tried to pass a bill to strengthen controls on land clearance once again. It was defeated by a hair. But Labor, which won a state election late last year, has promised to reintroduce the legislation. This time, it holds a majority.

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Thanks Hannah...will do ☺



Tina Langford

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Office of Hon Leeanne Enoch MP

Minister for Environment and the Great Barrier Reef

Minister for Science and Minister for the Arts

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