

Queenslanders must ensure end to LNP deforestation and species extinction

By Gemma Plesman

23 November 2017



*A mine on bulldozed land in Cape York Peninsula, Queensland
(image by Glenn Walker via wilderness.org.au).*

Queenslanders have a fantastic opportunity to write a happy ending to the tragic deforestation crisis set in motion by the Newman-Nicholls Government.

In this choose-your-own-adventure called an election, Queenslanders can choose the continuing devastation of an approaching tsunami of deforestation, or the other path, finally, towards an end to Queensland's greatest hidden environmental crisis.

Let's hope this is the final chapter and we witness the end of deforestation in Queensland and a step towards repairing the damage done to its amazing environment over many decades.

There's no way to undersell the enormous

opportunity that Queenslanders have this week to save millions of native animals, help the Great Barrier Reef and our ticking climate crisis.

Australia is the second worst country for species loss, according to a recent study [published in Nature](#). Deforestation right across Australia has been spiralling out of control, led by Queensland.

It is a national disgrace. Queensland now ranks alongside the Amazon, Borneo and the Congo as a world top-10 deforestation hotspot. Yes, deforestation – an act we usually associate with developing countries – is happening at internationally significant rates right in our backyard.

More than 1.2 million hectares of forest and bushland have been razed in just four years since the [Newman-Nicholls](#) Liberal National Party (LNP) Government let loose the bulldozers on Queensland. An area the size of the [Gabba](#) is now being bulldozed every three minutes.

Deforestation in Queensland has increased 250 per cent since the [laws that protected native forests and bushland were gutted](#) to 395,000 hectares in 2015-2016 — and that rate could possibly double in 2016-17.

Debate over land clearing laws set to reignite at Qld election as current system cut down by all stakeholders
<https://t.co/zQSASn8ZeQ>

— NewsHitterTeam (@N_H_Australia)
[August 31, 2017](#)

Now it looks like another 1 million hectares has been targeted for clearing, or already bulldozed.

New analysis of Queensland Government clearing notification shows that 945,755 hectares have been targeted for clearing from 20 July 2016, to 30 September 2017 – or has already been cleared – under the self-assessable regime. Plus, there are another 80,200 hectares already approved for so-called “high-value agriculture” clearing, making a total of 1.02 million hectares.

Two-thirds of the proposed clearing is under the contentious ["thinning" rules](#) that allow a property to clear 75 per cent of the trees off the site without needing an approval. No oversight for threatened species like koalas, greater gliders or black-throated finches. No checks, no balances.

More than 99 per cent of the proposed clearing is of untouched, old growth, forest and woodlands, which destroys lobby group [AgForce's claims](#) that most clearing is of regrowth vegetation.

With 1 million hectares targeted for clearing from July 2016 to September 2017, or perhaps already cleared, that's more than double the record 395,000ha cleared in 2015-16.

If all of this proposed clearing takes place, Queensland will likely move further up the unwanted ladder of international deforestation hotspots. This means certain death for millions of native wildlife – such as the koala – more muddy waters flowing into the Great Barrier Reef and tens of millions of greenhouse gas emissions pouring into the atmosphere from deforestation.

When you think of devastating deforestation and extinction you usually think of the Amazon, Borneo

and the Congo but eastern Australia ranks alongside these in the top 10 of the world's major deforestation fronts. <https://t.co/MpjU2TW1US>

— Brisbane Times
(@brisbanetimes) [November 20, 2017](#)

The deforestation of 395,000ha in 2015-16 had a [devastating impact on wildlife](#), with nearly 45 million animals killed, according to WWF-Australia — that's one animal killed every second.

Animals such as the koala, which is now [vulnerable to extinction](#) in Queensland, are losing their habitat to deforestation and right across the State; numbers are down by 50 per cent. When the bulldozers plough through their homes, some are killed instantly, while others are left homeless, wandering to find shelter and vulnerable to dog attacks or car strikes.

This new analysis of Queensland Government clearing notifications also shows that 332,7100 hectares of forest and bushland has been targeted for clearing in Reef catchments from 20 July 2016 to 30 September 2017, or has already been cleared.

Deforestation in Reef catchments is therefore set to double from the 158,000 hectares of forest and bushland that was bulldozed in 2015-16 — which was already double the 74,000ha cleared in 2011-12.

Pacific Highway koala
holocaust

<https://t.co/BPyqX4R85Q>
[@IndependentAus](#)
[@koalacrisis](#)

— Michelle Pini (@vmp9)
[October 10, 2017](#)

This deforestation frenzy in Great Barrier Reef catchments means more erosion, and more muddy and polluted water smothering coral and seagrass.

[UNESCO's World Heritage Committee](#) continues to keep an eye on Queensland's actions on the Reef, stating in July:

'Important legislation regulating land clearing has not been passed yet, and that increased efforts are needed to ensure that all important legislation necessary to deliver the 2050 LTSP outcomes is put in place.'

Deforestation has a double impact on climate change. Cleared trees can no longer suck carbon pollution out of the air and they also release greenhouse gases into the atmosphere as they are burnt or left to rot, as most of the forest and bushland cleared is.

The deforestation in Queensland alone in 2015-2016 created 45

million tonnes of carbon emissions; that's like adding more than 10 million cars to Australia's already crowded roads.

The [LNP](#), who started this free for all, wants this madness to continue while [One Nation's](#) policy is even worse. It's only the Labor Party and the Greens that want to stop this lunacy. The deforestation frenzy is accelerating, with notifications jumping dramatically this year.

Queensland will be hit by a wave of deforestation this year, with clearing rates possibly doubling from last year's post-Newman-Nicholls LNP Government high of 395,000 hectares. It's now up to all Queenslanders to decide what happens next, and whether or not we seize the opportunity we have before us.

[Gemma Plesman](#) is the **Queensland Campaign Manager for the Wilderness Society.**

Unregulated vegetation 'thinning' adds up to land clearing on a huge scale

<https://t.co/eciYzZA3u9>

— Guardian Environment

(@guardianeco)
[June 20, 2017](#)



Biggest loser-
Australia:
World leader
in
deforestation
and species
extinction
[https://t.co/m
Syua56yxQ](https://t.co/mSyua56yxQ)
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— Lyn
Bender
(@Lynestel)
[June 4, 2015](#)

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