

**NICK DAMETTO**

**Member for Hinchinbrook**

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## MEDIA RELEASE

7/3/2019

### Veg regrowth a 'ticking time bomb': Dametto

VEGETATION regrowth in the aftermath of North Queensland's floods is a "disaster waiting to happen" unless the State Labor Government takes action to reduce it, says Hinchinbrook MP Nick Dametto.

"The restrictions placed on landowners in Queensland are not practical and do not provide adequate room to clear land to make substantial firebreaks on their properties," the Katter's Australian Party (KAP) MP said.

"There's no doubt there's been significant vegetation regrowth since the floods and I believe the State Government needs to review their guidelines on firebreaks before we have another disaster like we saw in Victoria and Central Queensland last year.

"Federal Environment Minister Melissa Price's recent comments blaming climate change for the Victorian bushfires do not help anyone when there is already a practical solution to mitigate this issue – give landowners the freedom they need to protect their properties."

Mr Dametto added that the State Government should also be properly maintaining their State Forests and National Parks by conducting regular cold burning of high fuel loads to minimise the impact of future bushfires in the region.

"Unless this is done, I fear there could be a repeat of the disastrous situation in Victoria, where a refusal by the government to do fuel reduction burns on public lands is now being blamed for exacerbating the bushfires," he said.

"The last thing we want is overgrown and neglected State Forests and National Parks becoming tinderboxes during fire season.

"Neighbouring landowners and those with leasehold arrangements on State land should be rightly concerned about the future impact this could have in the event of a bushfire."

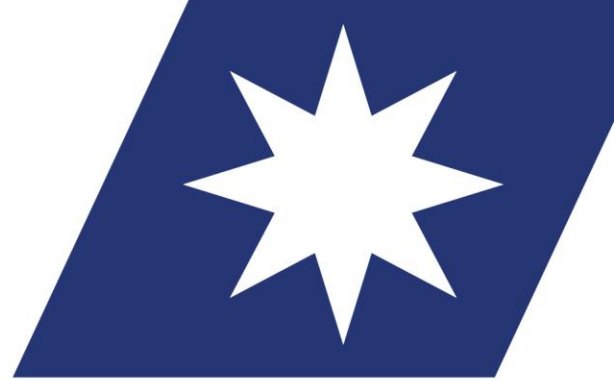
Currently, those who have freehold land, Indigenous land and leasehold land for agriculture and grazing purposes can clear a "fire management line" of a maximum width up to 10m. Clearing to establish or maintain a necessary firebreak in coastal areas to protect infrastructure other than fences, roads and tracks is also permitted to a maximum width of 20m or 1.5 times the height of the tallest adjacent tree, whichever is the greater.

If clearing within regulated vegetation for a firebreak is greater than the essential management limitations, or covered by another exemption under the regulation, a development application is required.

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While those restrictions have been in place since before Labor passed their Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill last year, Mr Dametto said the situation was untenable in light of recent events.

“The least the State Government could do is give landholders more flexibility to construct firebreaks suitable for their properties without getting bogged down in red and green tape through permits or needing to conform to some pre-determined bureaucratic restriction,” he said.

“The new vegetation laws make it even worse by hampering a landholder’s ability to clear remnant vegetation on their property.”

KAP State leader and Traeger MP Robbie Katter currently has the Vegetation Management (Clearing for Relevant Purposes) Amendment Bill before parliament, which aims to address gaps within the existing legislative framework that constrain the ability of primary producers to clear land for legitimate purposes and enable access to a reasonable appeals process.

“At the end of the day, landholders are our best conservationists. They know their property back to front and the last thing they would want to do is destroy it,” Mr Dametto said.

“Recently, Labor voted down a motion in parliament to hold an enquiry in to the 2018 Queensland bushfires. The State Government might not want to acknowledge their past failings but this is an opportunity to act now before we are faced with a catastrophe once again.”

—ENDS—

*Photo caption: Hinchinbrook MP Nick Dametto is calling on the State Government to take action to reduce vegetation regrowth in order to minimise the impact of potential bushfires.*

### **Media Enquiries**

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