



114 Boundary Street  
Railway Estate, Townsville  
Qld, 4810  
PO Box 364, Townsville  
Ph: 0428987535  
[office@nqcc.org.au](mailto:office@nqcc.org.au)  
[www.nqcc.org.au](http://www.nqcc.org.au)

## **MEDIA RELEASE 14 November 2017**

### **Land Clearing in NQ Reef Catchments – highest in 10 years**

Land clearing across Queensland, and in Great Barrier Reef catchments, was one of the key topics for discussion at an election candidates forum last night in Townsville.

The state Government's SLATS (Statewide Landcover and Trees Study) report, which tracks annual rates of land clearing in the state, found that last year 395,000 hectares of land were cleared in Queensland ([report for 2015/16](#)).

The latest figures indicate clearing increased by one-third over the previous year, and the total is higher than any of the previous 10 years and across multiple governments. This puts Queensland on a par with Brazil in terms of rates of land cleared.

Much of this clearing (40%) was in Great Barrier Reef catchments, increasing run-off, erosion and sediment loads, and stressing an already highly threatened reef. This represents a 45% increase over the previous figures for reef catchment clearing.

Russell Kelly, Coordinator of the North Queensland Conservation Council, said "Efforts to manage the reef and reef catchments at the same time as allowing massive land clearing in reef catchments makes no sense".

"The two biggest threats to the reef are water quality and climate change, both of which are exacerbated by land clearing.

"Land clearing increases erosion and sediment and nutrient runoff into the reef. Approximately 10 million tonnes of sediment reaches the reef every year", Mr Kelly added.

Dr Tim Seelig, head of the state peak Conservation Council, said "Land clearing is also bad news for the climate."

"Woodlands destruction contributes tens of millions of tonnes of greenhouse gas emission to the atmosphere every year, as stored carbon is released into the atmosphere and capacity to absorb carbon from the atmosphere is removed", Dr Seelig stated.

A recent WWF study found that [34 million animals die every year](#) as a result of land clearing in Queensland, and that clearing is the greatest near-term threat to native species in Australia today. Australia is in the top seven countries for species extinctions in the world, the only developed country on this list.

NQCC is part of the *Queensland Land Clearing Alliance* and, with our partners, call on all parties and candidates to support stronger land clearing laws and to invest in a forward-looking solution to land protection and regional development.

- Permanently protect all remnant/old-growth and all other high conservation value native vegetation under relevant legislation and regulatory instruments.
- Remove "Self-Assessable Codes" for land clearing.
- Ensure strong monitoring and resourcing for the enforcement of land clearing laws.

- Improve mapping for vegetation and halt exemptions via property maps.
- Allocate at least \$300 million over a three-year period to fund ecological carbon projects that meet the dual objectives of sequestering carbon and restoring biodiversity and landscape health, while providing a substantial economic boost to regional Queensland.
- Commit to prompt, transparent and regular (minimum annual) release of clearing data and reporting on impacts.

**Media Conference: Land Clearing in NQ Reef Catchments – highest in 10 years**

**When: Tuesday 14 November, 9.30am.**

**Where: NQCC Office, 114 Boundary Street, Railway Estate**

**Who: Russell Kelly, NQCC Coordinator  
Dr Tim Seelig, CEO, Queensland Conservation Council**

**Media Contact:** Russell Kelly – [coorindator@nqcc.org.au](mailto:coorindator@nqcc.org.au) - 0428987535