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## **ALL STATES MUST FOLLOW QUEENSLAND AND END NATIVE VEGETATION CLEARING PROSECUTIONS**

“The Campbell Newman government’s decision to suspend investigations and prosecution under their Queensland Vegetation Management Act should be repeated around the country,” said Simon Breheny, director of the Rule of Law Project at the free market think tank the Institute of Public Affairs.

On April 19 2012, Queensland Minister for Natural Resources and Mines Andrew Cripps announced investigation and enforcement of these controversial laws would cease pending a review of the Act.

Each state has introduced native vegetation laws which extensively limit the ability for land-owners – particularly farmers – to use their property as they see fit. Land use restrictions place strict limits on how much vegetation land-owners can clear.

“All states should review their native vegetation clearing laws to review the penalties, consider requiring compensation for land-owners who can no longer use their land, and restore legal rights to individuals affected by these laws.

“Native vegetation laws deprive people of their property rights, and constrain economic development.

“Native vegetation laws also breach fundamental principles of the rule of law,” said Mr Breheny.

- Native vegetation laws give extremely broad enforcement powers to bureaucrats.
- Decisions made under native vegetation laws have limited judicial review.
- The laws are not transparent and therefore difficult to comply with.
- Landowners charged with native vegetation clearing offences have few defences.

For more than two decades the Institute of Public Affairs has been calling for governments to cease prosecutions of farmers under native vegetation laws.

Problems with native vegetation laws are Australia-wide. Last month, a farmer in Indigo Valley, Victoria, was fined \$600 and ordered to plant 800 trees, simply because a contractor pushed over four dead trees on her property.

“Both Julia Gillard and Tony Abbott have recently announced that they want Australia to become the food bowl of Asia. Queensland’s suspension of native vegetation prosecutions shows how that could be achieved”, said Mr Breheny.

**For media and comment:**

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