

Destruction of Queensland's threatened forests gathers pace

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Land being cleared for a coal seam gas line. Credit: Flickr

Laws intended to protect Queensland's most-threatened forests are failing, with the most vulnerable forests falling even faster than other forests.

University of Queensland researchers say despite regulation intended to protect the state's most threatened forests, they are being cleared at almost three times the rate of other forests.

Associate Professor Jonathan Rhodes at the Australian Research Council

Centre of Excellence for Environmental Decisions and the School of Earth and Environmental Sciences said the regulation to protect forests is flawed.

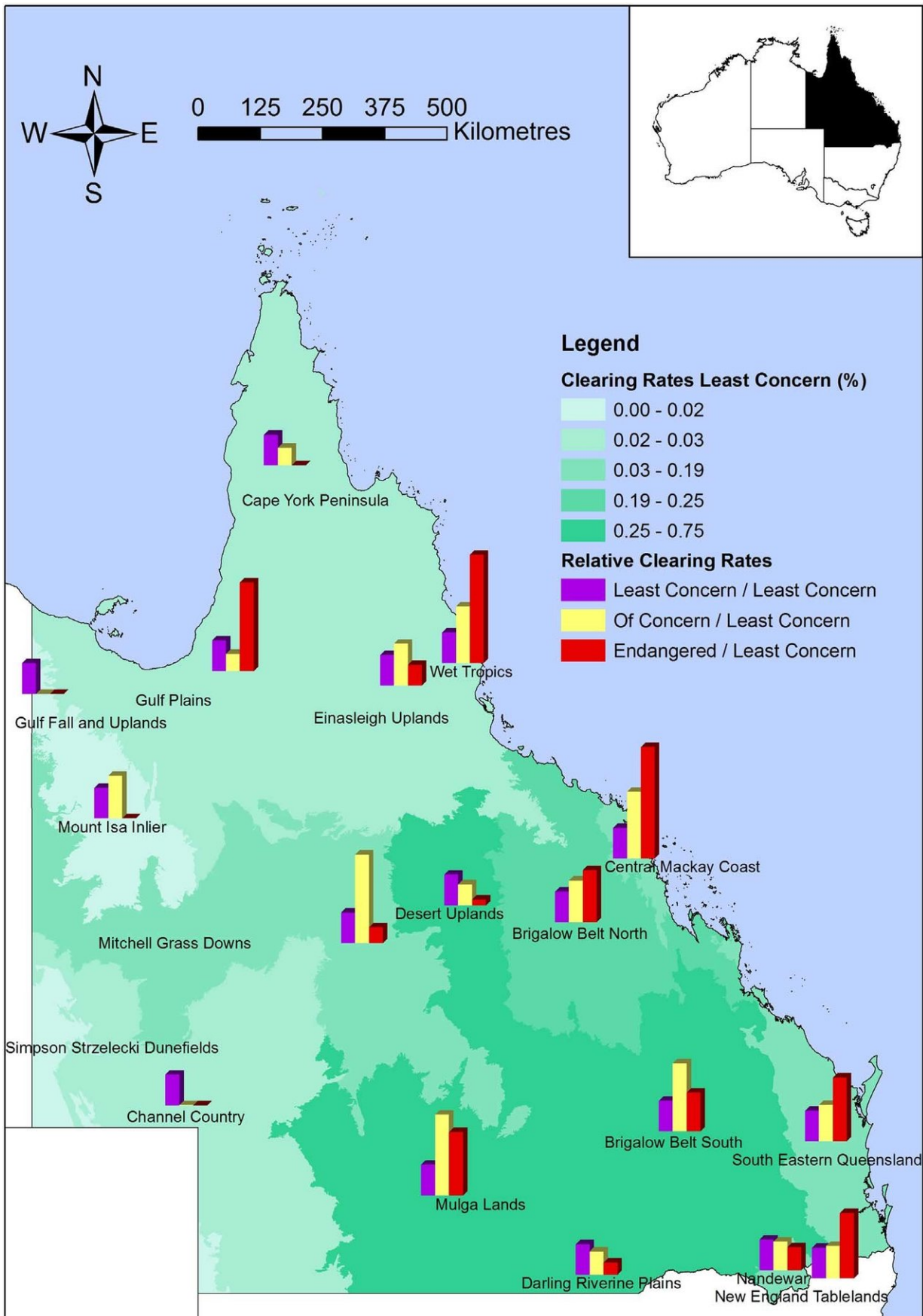
"Our study found forests that have already lost 70 per cent or more of their original extent are being cleared 2.7 to 2.9 times faster than less-depleted forests," he said.

"There is evidence government [regulation](#) helped lower clearing rates between 2000 and 2012, but the most at-risk forests are still not well protected."

"The change of [government](#) in Queensland in 2012 made this worse, when regulations were eased and clearing increased dramatically."

Dr. Rhodes said a potential solution was to build explicit [forest](#) retention targets into state land-clearing laws.

"If the Queensland Government is serious about effective land-clearing laws, they should introduce targets for our most-threatened forests, beyond which no further forest loss is permitted," he said.



Credit: University of Queensland

"This has been implemented in other countries and could be combined with spatially targeted enforcement and incentive strategies.

"Negotiating environmental targets is difficult, but the alternative really is unthinkable."

The study is published in *Biological Conservation*. Dr. Rhodes is a researcher at UQ's School of Earth and Environmental Science.

More information: Jonathan R. Rhodes et al. Assessing the effectiveness of regulation to protect threatened forests, *Biological Conservation* (2017). [DOI: 10.1016/j.biocon.2017.09.020](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2017.09.020)

Provided by University of Queensland

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