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TRAVELLING STOCK INC.

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CARRTS submission in response to the:
Draft "NSW Travelling Stock Reserves
State Planning Framework 2016-19"



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The document is also available to the public on CARRTS' Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/carrtsnsw>.

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Front cover image: "The Drover" by Walter Withers (1912). Bendigo Art Gallery.

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1. Executive summary

The Combined Action to Retain Routes for Travelling Stock Incorporated¹ (CARRTS) is a not-for-profit entity that's been formed to deal with the ever increasing bureaucratic difficulties associated with drovers and graziers being able to drive livestock through and onto the Travelling Stock Reserves (TSRs). The increasing use of long term leases in some areas that inhibit use of the TSRs for their proper purpose and aren't conducive to sound environmental outcomes, is a major issue.

We'd like to congratulate the NSW government for attempting to tackle the challenges facing stakeholders of NSW's TSR network. We are pleased to submit this response document as comment on the government's draft "NSW Travelling Stock Reserves State Planning Framework 2016-2019"² with a view to effecting substantial improvement.

Obviously much effort and preparation has gone into the draft framework however we feel it has fundamentally missed the opportunity to represent and demonstrate how the framework will support the major users of the TSRs; that being the state's agriculturalists and specifically drovers and graziers, critically important participants within the \$10+ billion³ agricultural industry in NSW. Also the potential for future revenue from carbon sequestration if the reserves are well managed through periodic grazing enhancing growth of native perennial grasses and dramatically reducing annuals (and the associated catastrophic fire risk) is substantial. The market-based mechanisms for carbon credits, while currently a highly politicised issue, will eventually become mainstream and the NSW government could realise considerable year-on-year carbon sequestration revenue if the TSRs are managed properly.

To that end we've highlighted what we perceive are serious flaws and inadequacies and provided suggestions and ideas on how we, as an effective drover and grazer support group, might have far greater input into the management of the TSR network and provide external performance review services to ensure the more than a century of TSRs being a critical resource available for farmers and the social and heritage values of TSRs are maintained.

We trust our submission will be read in a spirit of cooperation. We have gathered together a substantial number of individuals with strong ties to the TSR network and expertise that Local Land Services (LLS) could use to great benefit for the overall improvement of access to the TSRs, execution of better management techniques for their sustainability and establishment of programs for ongoing TSR Ranger training and continuous improvement.

2. Background

CARRTS was formed early in 2015⁴ in response to many hundreds of drovers and graziers at their wits end in attempting to have reasonable dealings with the various LLS and be able to request and receive permits within workable timeframes without being subject to a burdensome bureaucratic process implemented by various LLS offices and rangers. We are a small but growing not-for-profit organisation that intends to assist in turning around what is becoming a disaster for the livestock industry, likely resulting in the demise of droving (and threats to the industry as a whole) by the dismantling of the TSR system.

We want to tackle the overly complex interactions with the LLS and the need to engage in cumbersome processes in order to receive permits for access to TSRs. The incidents of drovers and graziers being shut-out of many TSRs due to permanent fencing being erected by the LLS in the erroneous belief it's essential for protection of the environment and the fundamental lack of knowledge on basics around livestock and protection & management of flora & fauna within the TSRs that seems to now be at the core of the LLS' culture.

There are clear indications that the proven techniques of managing growth of exotic and non-native grasses through periodic grazing (a practise that has been successfully used for many decades - potentially back to the beginning of the 'Long Paddock's genesis) has been abandoned and the collective knowledge of professional TSR Rangers that have the practical understanding of the environment AND livestock management has been lost. A plethora of stories abound of new rangers with completely inappropriate backgrounds and a total lack of understanding of what's required for stock movement along TSR corridors, now in charge of TSRs and subjecting drovers and graziers to constant poor service, lack of cooperation and overly bureaucratic processes.

The situation is desperate and the industry is suffering as a result. CARRTS has a mandate to go forward and do everything possible to rectify this and attempt to recover some semblance of order and function.

3. TSRs: three aspects of this invaluable, irreplaceable and critical resource

3.1. Drought protection and modern farming practise

Virtually all industries require backup facilities and additional capacity to deal with untoward situations. Electricity companies often have vast amounts of excess capacity in their transmission and distribution networks to deal with times of extraordinary demand and/or failure of key network lines as a result of extreme weather events or ageing infrastructure. Likewise water utilities serving major cities need substantial over capacity to provide redundancy when peak demand threatens to swamp various elements in a water distribution network.

The TSRs are the livestock industry's backup facility and can be categorised as just such a resource that protects farmers in times of drought, fire and flood. To the general public (and many decision makers within government) they appear to be less-than-necessary as "they're not being used for their original purpose" yet many tens of thousands of rural people steeped in the knowledge of the longer-term weather cycles and multi-year drought phenomena, know all too well that if the TSRs were not there, the livestock industry would be severely threatened; maybe not this year, or next year or even the year after that, but at some point a major drought will see the sheep and cattle industry on its knees and the TSRs will save many hundreds or even thousands of farmers from inevitable failure and bankruptcy. Without the TSRs farmers have little backup and lack the resources to deal with the inevitable extreme events Mother Nature throws at us and beef/lamb/mutton and wool exports will suffer accordingly.

As well as in drought, the TSRs are used in a multitude of ways. Drovers and graziers are constantly using the TSRs to move herds between properties, isolate mobs and flocks for management purposes, minimise risk during bushfire, and provide for maximum diversity of feed type and

subsequent herd health. The TSRs are as important to the agricultural industry as security is to aviation or highway maintenance is to road-transport.

The value of TSRs to the agricultural industry is hard to assess using standard economic input/output measurements. We note in the draft framework document it's stating the crown land value of NSW TSRs at approximately \$426 million⁵. If a different valuation methodology was used which recognised the cost to Australia of being impacted by a multi-year drought because TSRs were no longer accessible, we expect their true value to be much higher than what is stated.

3.2. Social, cultural and heritage value

TSRs also have important social, cultural and heritage value that, in a similar vein to their critical importance to agriculture, is hard to assess as a simple financial valuation. The traditions of droving in this country are core to the Australian identity and psyche. "The Long Paddock" has been immortalised in the poetry by Banjo Paterson⁶ and others. Furthermore, they hold major significance for indigenous people and the cultural values of the wider community in protecting indigenous sacred sites and history. It's believed by various academics that some of the routes were originally Aboriginal tracks and may have a history going back 40,000 years⁷.

As a result, the stock route network contains many sites of archaeological and shared cultural significance, including scar trees, indigenous ceremonial grounds, historically important government survey trees, dams, fences and other historic structures, the importance of which is woven into the fabric of our collective history. Easy access to these sites along the routes is essential to indigenous people seeking to maintain cultural connections to their land.

The original NSW declaration of stock routes (approximately in the 1830s) stated their purpose to be well beyond just that of drovers and graziers moving livestock. The words "for the travelling public" is a key phrase. That still holds true today with the flora and fauna that make up much of the stock routes giving the landscape its uniquely Australian character, an essential component of the tourism and recreational value.

The TSR network, as well as being fundamental for the livestock industry facilitates other commercial activities such as apiarists, with many thousands of hives located across the network. TSRs also support social activities such as horse riding, bird watching, camping, mountain bike riding and recreational fishing, whilst providing access corridors linking isolated areas of the state and benefiting rural communities with utilities and other services.

3.3. Biodiversity

There are dozens of published papers and studies on the biodiversity inherent in the TSRs. Again, it's an aspect of this critical resource that cannot be valued with standard land valuation methodologies as noted above. The ecological value of these corridors and the diverse flora and fauna found within them needs to be protected at all cost as they represent a key portion of NSW's environmental assets.

Noted Biodiversity and Wildlife Biologist Ian Davidson has undertaken many reviews and studies of the diverse habitat found within TSRs. Much of the value and worth (and ongoing achievement of sound outcomes through periodic stock grazing) is summarised in this white paper published by Ian back in the Rural Lands Protection Board (RLPB) era. The assessment he's made of the TSR's critical importance hasn't changed and still holds true today (click on the link below).

[Travelling stock reserves: refuges for stock and biodiversity? - Ian Davidson⁸](#)

Ian has also recently stated:

"The reserves making up the TSR network are ecologically healthy when there is well managed periodic grazing, usually by travelling stock passing through under the watchful eye of TSR rangers.

Poor environmental outcomes often occur when grazing is completely excluded leading to greatly increased growth of exotic grasses that supresses native plant regrowth, or set stocked with constant grazing limiting regeneration of native grasses and shrubs. Ideal grazing is provided by travelling stock controlling the exotic grasses and leaving the native plants to prosper.

The droving traditions of the past, where well managed, have demonstrably been shown to provide not only good environmental outcomes but also helped manage the grass fire fuel risk and thereby avoiding catastrophic fires."

Our concern is there appears to be a vast loss of core knowledge about the demonstrated best-practise for environmental aspects of the TSR network with various LLS offices taking actions to close off TSRs without appropriate consideration of the long-term balance that has been achieved between drovers & graziers and their knowledgeable TSR Ranger counterparts over many decades.

In the past decades the Murray-Darling Basin Commission, and the State Council of the then Rural Lands Protection Board, commissioned a report on sustainable management strategies for a number of central-west boards⁹. The author, Alison Nowland, found significant areas of pristine remnant vegetation on many reserves. These were subsequently developed as seed nurseries for critically endangered native vegetation species. This is a further example of the unique biodiversity aspects of the TSR network.

4. Fundamental issues with accessibility, usability, protection & maintenance

There are core issues that we believe are fundamental to the deterioration in sound management and preservation of the TSRs:

4.1. An overall diminishment in TSR Ranger knowledge, skill and capability

Drovers and graziers in many areas are experiencing a stark and dramatic reduction in TSR Ranger knowledge, skill and capability. Where once rangers worked closely with drovers and graziers to effect the most beneficial outcomes by achieving sound TSR maintenance and fire hazard reduction through strategic use of periodic grazing, the new breed of rangers that have come into the LLS post the LHPA/CMA/DPI Extension Services merger are often lacking in the long-term historical knowledge of TSR usage and maintenance practises that have been honed over the past century or more. They're often people with little practical stock knowledge and they seem to be part of a mindset shift that has taken on incorrect notions that the complete closing-off of many reserves protects the environmental aspects far more than the proven processes of periodic grazing.

There's also a very unfortunate confrontational culture that's become entrenched where drovers and graziers are treated with considerable disdain by LLS TSR Rangers, with a culture of "no" being the immediate default response seeping into many interactions so that drovers and graziers are in a constant state of battle trying to get access to the reserves and routes; access they have every right to under the crown land legislation. Undoubtedly there are still some knowledgeable people working within the ranger core of the various LLS but they're either completely stymied by the bureaucracy and unable to effect proper TSR management or they're under overt pressure to conform to the many new (and clearly unproven) notions that have arisen around compete TSR closure through permanent fencing-off or set-stocking. These incorrect notions supposedly "protecting" the environment are, in many cases, resulting in longer-term damage to the reserves' ecosystems through lack of weed control and fire hazard build-up.

Many of these newer TSR Rangers also have no understanding of the misnomer often pedalled that "travelling stock spread disease". Sound droving principles involve managing stock stress levels and ensuring a herd's health and well-being before setting out on the road and routes. Knowledgeable TSR Rangers understand much about stock and common disease issues that may be experienced. They'll work with a drover to ensure their herds are kept in good condition through appropriate speed of movement along the TSRs and avoidance of herd-stress through poor planning for access to water and feed. Drovers often need assistance to ensure their goals for movement of stock are achieved and they're not left high and dry with a mob in transit and unable to access good quality feed as a result of rangers refusing to give ongoing permits. This is particularly important when crossing LLS regional boundaries.

4.2. Local Land Services' bureaucracy

Since the 47 original Rural Lands Protection Boards (RLPB) morphed into the 14 Livestock Health and Pest Authorities (LHPA) and these all merged with the Catchment Management Authorities (CMA) and Department of Primary Industries Extension Services (DPI) to make up the 11 Local Land Services (LLS) regions, much of the historical knowledge, expertise and focus on sound delivery of services to TSR stakeholders has been lost. It would appear many of the fundamental operating principles, such as TSR Rangers managing their allotted TSRs to maximise revenue in order for these funds to then be re-invested in improved fencing and holding yards have not been maintained. There doesn't appear to be any clarity on what happens to TSR permit fee revenue with it most likely just disappearing into the LLS general consolidated revenue. This is potentially being addressed within the draft framework

where it's suggested improved monitoring and reporting via a "Program improvement and adaptive management"¹⁰ methodology may be adopted (what that means exactly and how it would be effective remains to be seen). However, our experience to date is the various LLS have little understanding or focus on ensuring TSR permit fee revenue is used for appropriate TSR enhancement and the process is transparent.

Across the board, communities everywhere are feeling they've lost the local ownership and local responsibility that was part of the culture of the previous RLPB Directors that once held such pride, integrity and a valuing of the TSRs for the whole community. Bureaucracy is now implemented from above resulting in the very opposite of the "local focus - run by local people" mantra and ethos the LLS states it represents.

Where once a TSR Ranger looking after many dozens, if not hundreds, of reserves could plan for improvements and enhancements through allocations of the revenue earned, there doesn't seem to be any clarity on what happens with the inbound TSR fees, nor roadmap/enhancement plans visible to see how the TSR network is being improved. There's a wholesale move away from the TSRs being made available as an ongoing resource for drovers and graziers to use when they need them and for them to be the subject of ever increasing long-term leases.

At a basic level it would appear that the creation of the LLS by the merging of LHPA and CMA was fundamentally about building a government entity that would be well funded via the existing LHPA rates levied on land-holders and the federal-based water funding programs providing large grant payments to the CMA. From our many hundreds of interactions with drovers, graziers, land owners, stock agents, pastoralists and their commercial suppliers, the LLS has a poor reputation and is seen as being inherently unworkable. The diminishment of the TSR Ranger work force's knowledge and skill through attrition and lack of formal programs to ensure new generations of skilled rangers are fostered, is part and parcel of the many problems the TSR network is facing under the challenging management of the LLS.

4.3. A lack of thorough state-wide management of the TSRs

While we appreciate the NSW government's attempt to develop state-wide management processes for TSRs through this draft TSR State Planning Framework, it needs to be noted that for any drover or grazer that's been around for more than a few years, their experience shows TSRs are NOT being managed effectively by the LLS. The requirement for drovers and graziers to get unfettered access and be able to achieve their objectives that have been a tradition for over a century are not only NOT being met, there's a real and distinct possibility the TSRs will be lost forever. A wholesale change in thinking is needed and people with experience and tenure within this realm need to step forward and take up the gauntlet on getting the parlous state of TSR management rectified.

The management of TSRs is now very inefficient, inconsistent across LLS regional borders and impacting the droving profession to the point that the traditional Australian drover will likely be extinct within a generation. And there appears to be almost no understanding as to why TSRs are so critical and what it would mean to society if they were gone. The mere fact that the government's draft "NSW Travelling Stock Reserves State Planning Framework 2016-2019" indicates a 3 year timeframe within the title (if the published 1/Jul/2016 start date then assumes a 30/Jun/2019 finish)

but in the body of the document talks about a 5 year plan when in reality a multi-decade approach is what's truly needed, is indicative of how little understanding there is of the very long term planning requirements for the TSRs. The optimal environmental status of many reserves has been developed/maintained over more than 150 years. A short 3-5 year approach is likely to concentrate on financial aspects rather than long term livestock, environmental and social benefits.

We are also very concerned the regional management plans mentioned in the draft framework that will supposedly feed in to the overall state plan¹¹ will fail to address the vast differences drovers and graziers experience when dealing with different LLS regions. Under the plan being suggested we perceive that each LLS will operate relatively autonomously. This is like having 11 states within a state and adds further to the bureaucratic difficulties drovers and graziers experience though lack of uniform management approach.

4.4. A lack of understanding of the heritage and cultural value of the TSRs

Society as a whole is well served by the farming and agricultural communities of Australia. Our food production and ability to achieve sustainable agricultural practises are the back-bone of healthy communities, successful commerce/industry and the nation's ability to defend itself and achieve year-on-year continuity. As the many millions of people in the cities and major regional areas go about their daily business, most are unaware that Australia's food bowl is producing the base-level fuel that allows the humans on this continent to live.

And most city living folk, while being fully aware of the natural seasons and the coming and going of sunshine and shower, have very little understanding of long-term weather events such as the El Niño that have such vast impact on food production. They're somewhat aware of drought when it's on a large scale and widely reported by the media, but they have next to no understanding of modern agricultural practises, the many commercial challenges faced by farmers and the need to plan years in advance. It would be fair to say that average city living citizens have little comprehension of how the produce they place in their supermarket trolley each week is grown, or reared and raised, and the vast logistics process of getting it to them. And there's certainly little awareness or understanding of TSRs and the incredible importance of ongoing access to this critical resource.

In that light then, it is essential for governments to make decisions about TSRs that recognise the contribution to food production and the rural environment. Decisions about TSRs that fundamentally affect drovers' and graziers' ability to maintain strong healthy herds will eventually be felt at the supermarket check-out, and if those decisions are so lacking in understanding or care for the long-term wellbeing of drovers and graziers (and farmers in general relying on a sound livestock industry), the long-term impact will be dramatic and decades lasting.

And of even greater concern is this paragraph in the draft Framework document:

"It is expected that this state framework will evolve as community needs change. While TSR are currently used primarily for agricultural purposes, this may not be the case for all reserves in the future. This document intends to set out a framework for Local Land Services regions to assess the value of reserves and networks at a local level, and determine the most

appropriate use or range of uses over the planning timeframe. A statewide capability assessment methodology will be developed to support this decision-making process."¹²

This statement has the potential for individual LLS' to make their own assumptions about the financial value of TSRs, the methodology for which we have no clarification or guarantees. For instance a route or reserve may be substantially under-used by drovers and graziers for a host of reasons and the specific LLS may (for example) use this as a reason to permanently lease it with a long-term grazing permit allowing no further access for aught but the lessee (even though lessee's are required to still provide access for travelling stock passing through, they tend to behave like the land is theirs and often deliberately overgraze the TSRs to prevent them from being usable for genuine travelling stock adding further angst to the drovers' job as well as causing significant environmental damage). But, as has been discussed above, this means individual reserves may be subject to a specific region LLS's interpretation of "value" with little consideration of the bigger picture and the subject of one-off rules and regulations unrelated to others; the very concept a state-wide framework is supposed to address.

4.5. Ongoing high risk the TSRs will further deteriorate and be lost forever

The bureaucratic problems inherent in the LLS's tenure and overseeing of the TSR network is likely to see further movement towards long-term leasing, closing-off of key reserves (for supposed environmental reasons) and the potential for this invaluable resource to lose its secure footing under the TSR banner. The remaining reserves and the network of routes will then no doubt be subject to a plethora of self-interested entities who are likely to be highly motivated in converting the land for use on an entirely different basis and for a different purpose.

And with the many difficulties and ongoing problems drovers and graziers face getting permits and using the TSRs for their intended purpose, there'll eventually be what amounts to "less demand" for TSR access, further validating our perceived notions of the government working towards an inevitable self-fulfilled conclusion that "TSRs are not really used much anymore".

The wholesale and wide-spread misunderstanding of the critical need for TSRs to continue to be available for farmers as a primary backup facility in drought (and as an emergency refuge during fire & flood) when times get tough and breeding herds can be significantly impacted without the extra feed and movement TSRs allow, is part of the atypical modern day scourge of bureaucracies not understanding the long-term value of assets and public amenities they're accountable for.

4.6. Lack of a comprehensive national strategy to link all TSRs

The recent severe drought conditions in large parts of western Queensland and northern NSW have seen farmers desperate to find fresh feed and alternative watering holes to maintain their herds. Concurrently there are many TSR reserves in NSW that are very overgrown and at risk of catastrophic fires. Many Queensland farmers would have been substantially benefitted if they could have easily and readily driven their herds into NSW to achieve some respite from the harsh conditions. Substantial revenue would have been forthcoming from TSR permits and fire hazard reduction effected through this most optimum method.

Instead today we have TSRs managed by complex bureaucracies with no sound interstate agreements in place and horrendous difficulties for drovers and graziers attempting to take stock across state borders. The TSRs of Queensland, NSW and Victoria should be well interlinked and open for easy transit of stock with uniform rules and processes that facilitate the ultimate purpose of the TSR network to provide a means of stock to travel seamlessly across borders.

5. CARRTS' suggested actions and programs to recover the situation

Note: in presenting our ideas and suggestions we are very much aware of the revenue shortfalls associated with the TSRs. The reasons for TSR permit revenue not covering the costs of maintaining TSRs is varied and cannot be summarised in a simplistic "Drovers and graziers aren't using the TSRs as much". With the many difficulties drovers and graziers now experience attempting to be issued TSR permits, the overall feeling within the drover and grazer community is that using the TSRs involves substantial angst and bureaucratic difficulty. Consequently TSR usage is being avoided where possible. This then skews the reported revenue and creates further overall perception that the TSRs aren't cost effective and are a burden. **The reality is that the TSRs are being grossly mismanaged.** CARRTS would like to have far more involvement and be able to partake and have greater input into the financial aspects of TSR management.

Our ideas and suggestions to improve the overall TSR management regime are:

- 5.1. Create a state-wide TSR Management Council that develops policy, advises the Minister, the Chair of the LLS Board of Chairs and individual LLS board members, acts as an arbitrator and oversees the development and training of TSR Rangers and/or relevant staff
 - Bring experienced TSR Rangers from different parts of the state together regularly to discuss and co-ordinate on the many issues rangers need to deal with;
 - Have the TSR Management Council bring experts in on driving practise, livestock management, ecology, culture, heritage, habitat and indigenous issues to help guide and foster the TSR Rangers and have them excel in their knowledge;
 - Invite a cross selection of drovers and graziers to interact directly with the TSR Rangers on a regular basis by running bi-annual TSR management conferences where the stakeholders are able to interact, communicate and express their ideas and solutions to issues raised and challenges needing to be overcome;
 - Have the TSR Management Council, develop and publish a field "TSR best practises guide". Make it into a rugged booklet that rangers, drovers and graziers can carry with them as they go about their work. Show examples of key grasses, recommended management techniques, grass heights and goals for perennial coverage at different seasonal points. Explain what has been found to work best for TSRs where stock can no longer graze (e.g. east of the Hume Highway, coastal, etc.) Make this guide into a living breathing document that is updated each year and becomes a focal point for managers and users of the TSR network.
 - Enable far closer ties and cooperation with the Rural Fire Service to deal with the (now) critical situation of many reserves being severely overgrown and likely to be involved in catastrophic fires. Annual grasses grow every year and, without the benefits of periodic grazing, end up in a run-away state. Wet winters can result in tall grasses more than a metre high but with soundly

managed periodic grazing practise, they're taken out, dramatically reducing the likelihood of a catastrophic blaze that puts human life and property in danger.

- Work with the LLS's across the state to assess the value and potential uses of each TSR and develop state-wide policies to facilitate the movement corridors for travelling stock.

5.2. Create a charter for the ongoing enhancement and protection of the TSRs and develop an annual review process run by CARRTS to independently ascertain the LLS's performance in meeting the charter's stated objectives (and concurrently run independent environmental monitoring & audits)

- The TSRs need a charter to help protect them and enshrine their importance;
- The charter needs to become part of LLS' overarching management mind-set;
- External independent reviews MUST be performed on LLS' stewardship of the TSRs. This is standard practice in many organisations and part of modern governance;
- CARRTS can develop a review process and work closely with the LLS to help improve activities in areas that may need more focus;
- The review process needs to cover aspects such as:
 - Accessibility;
 - permits granted versus rejected;
 - Average approval times;
 - Average drover notification time of requirement to use TSR;
 - Metrics around livestock numbers, days it transit, etc.;
 - Environmental protection – techniques used, alignment to past successful practise?
 - Fire hazard reduction –aligned to RFS standards?
 - Drought management – water point replenishment, alternative water;
 - Enhancement projects – execution, outcomes, benefits realisation;
 - Financial performance - individual TSRs, herd pass-through, regions;
 - Incident and exception handling – accidents, wandering stock, etc.;
 - Ranger acceptance – community feedback, issues to be resolved;
 - Success (or otherwise) of programs encouraging TSR use;
 - Opportunities to open TSRs up for other revenue generating activities;
 - TSR rules & regulations that are inappropriate or unworkable
 - Drover and grazier adherence to rules and regulations (and whether we are holding up our end of the need to make this work i.e. reasonable requests from drovers & graziers, ease with which rangers can get in contact/interact and care taken around herd management & diligence with the work at hand).
- Develop a simple but robust environmental monitoring and audit group that operates independently of both CARRTS and the LLS. Use external environmental expertise drawn from a broad cross-section of industry. Pick ten random reserves for two days in various regions once per year for review. Look at the extent of perennality, average grass height, regeneration and renewal. The outcomes showing how well periodic grazing assists the environmental health of the TSRs then gives further support to drovers and graziers for the important role they play and the general public sees the benefits also.

5.3. Restore the depth and substance of the TSR Rangers through formal training and mentoring plus work to improve relations with drovers, graziers and land owners

- Restore the TSR Ranger role back to the professional and knowledgeable "facilitator" it once was where rangers worked closely with elected (by the rate payers) directors, drovers and graziers to achieve combined objectives and outcomes;
- Help the drover and grazier community self-govern and improve their professionalism by facilitating respectful and constructive interactions (and also route out unacceptable drover/grazier behaviour or practises that are not conducive to sustainable TSR usage);
- Establish formal training programs that ensure TSR Rangers out in the field are equipped with appropriate knowledge and skill (both technical knowledge and serving-people knowledge);
- Build a mentoring program to bring new TSR Rangers into the fold;
- Create TSR Ranger achievement levels to denote experience and service rendered. Celebrate rangers' achievements and contribution;
- Provide a community system where stakeholders can submit feedback and score TSR rangers on their knowledge and service. Manage the exceptions and deal with valid complaints;
- Provide opportunities for TSR Rangers to visit other LLS regions outside of their home base and share their knowledge.

5.4. Build processes to enhance TSR revenue and ensure the revenue for TSR periodic grazing permits is used for TSR enhancement programs and facilities development

- Review TSR permit fees and look to provide flexibility dependent upon seasonal conditions (e.g. special pricing for slower travel - lower transit speed 5 klms/day, short term grazing permits, opportunities for drovers and stock owners to exercise heifers and get them used to walking on the reserves which assists their muscle development and subsequent calving). In essence this is about managing supply and demand across the cycles and maximising TSR usage/revenue;
- Review apiary fees and consider whether appropriate given the return apiarists are known to be making on their hives;
- Review forestry/logging potential (and associated legislation). Many TSRs have large volumes of timber that can be removed without environmental degradation and would produce substantial revenue. Create effective and beneficial silviculture programs;
- Reach out to the drovers and graziers and encourage them to use the TSRs! Turn it into a far more successful operation by seeing the potential and realising it financially through making the TSRs a very attractive proposition. Understand who the "customer" is and serve them!
- Help rangers to track and report on their allocated TSRs so the revenue is visible and easily reportable. Bring a greater business focus and turn the notions around that the TSRs are a burden.
- Pursue carbon sequestration fees, a virtually certain income stream for the decades ahead! The market-based mechanisms for carbon credits, while currently a highly politicised issue, will eventually become mainstream and the NSW government could realise considerable year-on-year carbon sequestration revenue if the TSRs are managed properly. Good grazing practise

enhances native plant perenniality and reduces fire intensity and extent (through far less volatile fuel on the ground). These are ideal outcomes for carbon sequestration because annual grasses are kept under control and the perennials thrive. Perennial grass is assisted by grazing at the right time (generally spring through into early summer). Without the periodic grazing that's at the core of the knowledge-base traditional TSR Rangers have previously held, annual grasses get out of control and inhibit growth of the native perennials. However sound periodic grazing will provide many hundreds of thousands of hectares likely to attract considerable fees from the federal government when market-based carbon sequestration mechanisms become the norm.

5.5. Remove the "four government appointed and three hand-picked" LLS board personnel make-up and provide proper elections to ensure the LLS boards are democratically voted for and genuinely represent their local communities (plus resolve the ongoing very small percentage of female board members)

- Boards as important as those of the LLS that have enormous influence over the ability of the agricultural industry to function effectively need to be properly formed under genuine democratic processes. In previous times ALL directors of the RLPBs were voted for by the rate payer. Now most LLS boards are stacked with government appointed/hand-picked individuals and voting appears to be a farce (with way too much red tape and bureaucracy involved in even standing for election). In a modern democracy like Australia this is completely unacceptable and obviously needs to be resolved;
- Ensure proper elections with proper results reported. We know of people that have put themselves forward for an LLS board position and can't even find out the results of the supposed election let alone become an LLS board member representing their local community. This obviously would not stand-up to even the most basic probity and governance assessment;
- Rectify the unbalanced governance. The LLS is supposed to provide local focus and be run by local people. Under a highly centralised, top-down bureaucratic model where more than 50% of the board is government appointed there simply cannot be decision making that appropriately represents local interests nor has input from experienced people with the necessary domain knowledge. The "local focus - run by local people" mantra and ethos the LLS states it represents is simply a façade.
- Rectify the extreme lack of gender-diversity. In the past two years the NSW government has struggled to lift female board representation above 38%¹³, well below the 50% target. At time of publication of this document, there are currently 14 female LLS board members out of a total of 85 board positions across the 11 LLS regions. This is less than 12%, a truly appalling metric in 2015 when there's so much focus on rectifying the problems women have getting access to boards and the known performance improvements organisations with gender balance achieve¹⁴. It was stated by a previous (female) Chair of an LHPA that ministerial staff had advised all LLS board members were chosen on merit¹⁵, which would suggest women are on average on only 12% as capable as men at being an LLS board member! This is a further example of the dysfunction evident within the organisation and an unacceptable situation needing urgent rectification.

5.6. Create a public awareness campaign that highlights "The Long Paddock" and how fundamental this publicly owned crown land is to agriculture, heritage and community use. Execute a change management program within the LLS designed to move the organisation to one that celebrates Australia's droving traditions rather than demonstrates an adversarial culture that diminishes them

- As we've noted above, Australians see droving as steeped in tradition and have a grand affinity with the many droving characters highlighted in poetry and song. The Drover and his or her dependence on the "The Long Paddock" (TSRs) should be celebrated and show-cased.
- The critical nature of the TSRs needs to be made more known and understood by the public at large. CARRTS is helping to do this but government should be highlighting the importance of the TSRs and educating the public as to why they're so critical.
- The LLS appears to now be filled with many individuals who aren't supportive of drovers and graziers and see them as nothing short of a nuisance to be dealt with in a dismissive way by making their jobs harder than ever before (so hopefully they'll go away and just give up). This, frankly, is a travesty. A major cultural change-management program needs to be developed and executed within the LLS to turn these attitudes around. It needs to come from the top and be mandated down throughout the lower levels. The manner in which many people within the LLS deal with drovers and graziers is nothing short of an absolute disgrace. This (probably more than anything) is one of the greatest inhibitors to the TSRs being successfully managed and enhanced.
- Highlight the positive environmental outcomes of good droving on the TSR network so the public can see the benefits this important activity is bringing to bear.

5.7. Develop a working group that can begin discussions with our counterparts in the other states and territories to help formulate a national strategy

- Other states such as Queensland and Victoria are dealing with many of the same issues with the TSRs. Interaction needs to be undertaken to give the TSRs a national focus;
- By taking this action now NSW will circumvent and jump-on the likelihood of a national TSR plan coming in over the top of state-based TSR management (crown land legislation notwithstanding) and causing major upheaval;
- Drovers and graziers need the ability to drive herds long distances to seek fresh feed and pasture;
- TSR stock movements should be seamless, within reason, across state borders (and it goes without saying that they should be absolutely seamless across LLS region borders);

6. Immediate next steps

We wish to engage with the NSW government in the most effective manner possible.

As we've highlighted throughout this document, the situation for drovers and graziers has become critical. However, we believe we have good ideas and solutions to some of the problems highlighted if we're able to participate and have effective external influence on the organisation tasked with managing this essential public resource.

Our suggestion is that a working group is established for us to interact with the Minister and senior LLS personnel. We do not want to become bogged down within the existing fragmented bureaucracy. Our intention is to see the problems and difficulties addressed through focussed programs that are well supported. These have to be instigated at a ministerial level and the outcomes reported to ensure appropriate governance of our undertakings.

We would welcome the opportunity to further develop the framework to address the many issues we've raised and work on a plan to rectify and restore appropriate management and overseeing of the TSRs.

Our recommendations and suggestions are aimed to ensure this invaluable resource will be available for future generations and the critical nature of our requirements for continued access to the TSRs is understood and acknowledged. Our objective is to see appropriate management processes and policies put in place and rectification of the many issues realised.

7. Conclusion

The Travelling Stock Routes and Reserves in NSW are incredibly important. CARRTS has been formed in response to the wholesale deterioration of drovers' and graziers' ability to use the TSRs for their intended purpose. There also appears to be a wholesale lack of awareness on just what a valuable resource the TSRs are for the NSW government (environmentally, socially and in support of the \$10+ billion¹⁶ agricultural industry) and the potential widespread fiscal benefits they'll provide through increased use and future multi-decade carbon sequestration payments IF they're well managed. As we've stated in previous parts of the document, we have access to considerable knowledge and experience. It would be most unfortunate if the NSW government did not capitalise on this and bring us into the planning for implementation of a new management framework.

There are many hurdles to get over and much challenge associated with bureaucracy to overcome. However, we remain very positive and hopeful we'll be able to help rectify the malaise that has set in with regards to the TSRs and the organisation/personnel responsible for them.

Endnotes

- ¹ Incorporated in the state of NSW. Department of Fair Trading incorporation number INC1500835
- ² <http://www.lls.nsw.gov.au/livestock/stock-routes>
- ³ [Australian Bureau of Statistics - NSW total agriculture 2009-2010](#)
- ⁴ [Sally Bryant - Graziers form travelling stock route lobby group to keep their 'long paddock' open - ABC Rural, 27/May/2015](#)
- ⁵ [Draft "NSW Travelling Stock Reserves State Planning Framework 2016-2019" section 1.1 Rationale and scope](#)
- ⁶ [Poem: "Clancy of the Overflow" by Banjo Patterson](#)
- ⁷ [Peter G Spooner - "Origins of Travelling Stock Routes" - the Rangeland Journal 2010](#)
- ⁸ [Ian Davidson - "Travelling stock reserves: refuges for stock and biodiversity?" - Ecological Management and Restoration Vol 6 No 1 April 2005](#)
- ⁹ [Sustainable management strategy for travelling stock routes and reserves in Central Western New South Wales / prepared by Alison Nowland for Condobolin, Coonabarabran, Coonamble, Dubbo, Forbes, Molong and Nyngan Rural Lands Protection Boards](#)
- ¹⁰ [Draft "NSW Travelling Stock Reserves State Planning Framework 2016-2019" section 6 Monitoring and reporting – Figure 3 Program improvement and adaptive management](#)
- ¹¹ [Draft "NSW Travelling Stock Reserves State Planning Framework 2016-2019" section 1.5 The planning cycle \(paragraph 2\)](#)
- ¹² [Draft "NSW Travelling Stock Reserves State Planning Framework 2016-2019" section 1.5 The planning cycle \(paragraph 3\)](#)
- ¹³ [Kirsty Needham - Women remain under-represented on NSW government boards - Sydney Morning Herald, 5/Jan/2014](#)
- ¹⁴ [Women on Boards. Not Just the Right Thing ... But the "Bright" Thing – The Conference Board of Canada report 2002](#)
- ¹⁵ [From 2013 ABC Rural article quoting Ellen Green, Chair of the south east LHPA who suggested ministerial staffers advised LLS board positions were chosen on merit](#)
- ¹⁶ [Australian Bureau of Statistics - NSW total agriculture 2009-2010](#)