

**Submission  
No 170**

## **INQUIRY INTO CROWN LAND IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

**Organisation:** Combined Action to Retain Routes for Travelling Stock  
(CARRTS)

**Date received:** 31 July 2016

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# COMBINED ACTION to RETAIN ROUTES for TRAVELLING STOCK ( C A R R T S )

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President :	Hamish Thompson	Vice President:	Ray Penfold
Secretary :	Ruth Penfold	Treasurer :	John Curley

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31<sup>st</sup> July 2016

General Purpose Standing Committee No.6  
NSW Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Sir/Madam,

## **Submission to the NSW Parliament Crown Land inquiry**

The Combined Action to Retain Routes for Travelling Stock Incorporated<sup>1</sup> (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. Also the daily difficulties drovers and graziers in some areas experience when dealing with Local Land Services TSR Rangers that are obstructive, lacking in knowledge and unaccountable is having a detrimental long-term effect on the livestock industry's crucial dependence and access to these invaluable Crown Land resources.

A detailed and complete summary of the many issues CARRTS has identified, plus recommendations for improvement of the management of the Crown Land TSRs can be found in CARRTS' submission to Local Land Services' request for comment on their "Draft NSW Travelling Stock Reserves State Planning Framework 2016-2019". Copies of this submission will be provided to the committee members at our witness appearance at the hearing. It can also be downloaded from our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/CARRTSNSW/>.

As at the date of this Crown Land inquiry submission we've had no formal response from Local Land Services to our submission, although we have had a number of meetings and interactions with senior LLS personnel that have been positive and indicative that our submission has been read.

To summarise our major concerns for the Crown Land inquiry, they are as follows:

1. Long term leases being granted by Local Land Services (LLS) will likely result in:

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- a. Extensive environmental damage to the TSR reserves because stock are left in place (i.e. "set stocking") for long periods of time resulting in natural vegetation being severely depleted;
  - b. Further deterioration in drovers' and graziers' ability to use the TSR network for its intended purpose. Although leases stipulate that the leasee must provide access for drovers and graziers wishing to move a mob through that part of a TSR, the reality is that access is often very difficult with leasees uncontactable (and unwilling), TSR Rangers disinterested and conditions of the leased reserves often so poor due to the leasee's stock being left in there for long periods, they can't be used;
  - c. Long term detriment to the livestock industry as drovers and graziers are pushed further away from an ability to depend on the TSR network due to the difficulties and issues surrounding use and access to the TSRs.
2. The considerable diversity in management processes, permit charging rates and customer services levels experienced by drovers and graziers in different LLS regions make movement of stock across LLS regional boundaries very difficult and drovers and graziers can be caught out whilst on the road moving a mob due to unforeseen bureaucratic issues and lack of flexibility on behalf of TSR Rangers.
  3. There is now so little understanding within the NSW government of the TSR's essential role for drovers and graziers in times of drought (and flood or fire) the decisions being made are based on short term cycles (3 years) that aren't acknowledging the need for a multi-decade planning and management approach. The TSRs are the livestock industry's backup resource, used in a multitude of ways to manage the health and vitality of sheep and cattle, not just move them from one property to another. Modern agricultural practises rely on constant movement of stock to maintain their fitness and provide respite periods to the natural vegetation so it can recover. And when drought hits, the TSRs provide a critical resource that can make the difference between a farmer surviving the drought or going bankrupt.
  4. Some of the financial modelling and valuation methodologies being suggested for the TSRs are overly simplistic and based solely on a "user pays" mindset. While drovers and graziers are fully aware of the need to pay for mobs to transit the reserves, there seems to be little understanding that much of the TSR network cannot be managed within such a narrow construct. Just the point above alone is indicative of why the TSRs should be valued differently. Their essential and critical use in times of drought (and flood or fire) cannot be easily valued under a user-pays model. Likewise their public amenity, heritage and cultural value cannot be assessed via a simplistic users-pays regime either. CARRTS would like to see further debate and quantifying undertaken to broaden the understanding of the TSRs value

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to the agricultural industry and the other important stakeholders.

5. Poor understanding of the TSRs ecological value and what's required to most effectively maintain biodiversity. A lack of continuity and training within the TSR Ranger ranks of the various LLS regions has resulted in a workforce of Rangers severely depleted in historical knowledge of the TSRs, their ecological aspects and how drovers and graziers move stock through them. Rangers are often denying requests for permits to TSRs stating environmental protection reasons. In many cases CARRTS believes these lack of approvals are not based on a sound understanding of what grass types are present, particularly exotic grasses that suppress native plant regrowth. The long understood practises where grazing provided by travelling stock controlling the exotic grasses and leaving the native plants to prosper seems to have been lost in many areas.
6. Misinformed notions and incorrect assumptions about environmental protection that are resulting in dangerous fire hazard. Some TSR reserves are permanently fenced off for "environmental protection" yet annual grasses that would normally be kept to a manageable length are consequently (in some places) a metre or more high resulting in potentially catastrophic fire fuel loads.
7. TSR Rangers are often now so unknowledgeable about the reserves and routes they're supposedly managing they'll subject drovers and graziers to completely unreasonable and dangerous situations. In the past month alone we've had a Ranger send two different mobs of cattle down a route head-on to each other and, in another situation, a Ranger's specified a drover take his mob through a reserve that he (the Ranger) had never travelled along and which was so badly rain affected it couldn't be driven along by a four wheel drive vehicle.
8. Lack of published detail on the TSRs (and Crown Land in general). The LLS previously published a "The Long Paddock" guide book that drovers and graziers could buy from their local LLS office. That guide book doesn't seem to have been available for some time and it's now very difficult for new drovers and graziers (and likewise TSR Rangers) to get detail on the reserves and routes.
9. An overall reduction in provision and maintenance of TSR infrastructure is impacting drovers' and graziers' use of this Crown Land. The upkeep of fencing for overnight stockyards and watering points has been poor in many areas. It's essential drovers and graziers can keep stock in limited zones overnight and prevent stock accessing areas with pristine vegetation and high biodiversity. Also, minimisation of stock straying onto roads is extremely important for safety of the travelling public. With little investment in this type of infrastructure, the viability of drovers and graziers using the TSRs is constantly being reduced.

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10. Lack of transparency as to where and how the TSR permit fees are being used. There's (currently) no reporting system within the LLS that details how the revenue raised from permit fees is utilised. Consequently, there's no ability for drovers and graziers to determine if their fee revenue could be used to facilitate better TSR infrastructure (as per the point above). Also, fees for other users may or may not be appropriate for the benefit being derived (e.g. apiarists paying per hive).
11. Uncertainty surrounding changes to the Crown Lands act. We are concerned that the problems and difficulties drovers and graziers face in using the Crown Land TSRs will be further exacerbated by potential changes to the land management principles of the act.
12. Further uncertainty with regards to the Local Land Services Amendment Bill 2016. The complexity and minutiae of this bill makes it very difficult for drovers and graziers to comprehend the potential ramifications. That something as important as the livestock industry's continued access and use of the TSRs is subject to such convoluted parliamentary processes and intricacy is of enormous concern to us.

CARRTS has engaged with many hundreds of drovers, graziers, farmers and other key stakeholders of the Crown Land TSRs to gather the feedback, the many examples of poor TSR management and the multi-faceted issues TSR users are facing. Many people in the community are acutely aware of how imperative and critical this 170 year old resource is to Australia's cultural heritage and how easily it could be lost. We wish to impress upon the inquiry committee how fundamentally important the TSRs are now for drovers and graziers, the many other important users and for future generations.

Thank you for the opportunity to put our concerns to the inquiry.

Yours faithfully

Hamish Thompson  
President  
CARRTS Inc.  
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<sup>1</sup> [Incorporated in the state of NSW. Department of Fair Trading incorporation number INC1500835](#)