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NSW Travelling Stock Reserves Draft State Planning Framework 2016-19 Committee

c/o Mr Ken Flower

General Manager

North West Local Land Services

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Many Hands, One Voice

4th December 2015

Submission to NSW Travelling Stock Reserves Draft State Planning Framework 2016-19

Landcare NSW is the peak body for the landcare community in NSW. Landcare NSW is made up of representatives from the volunteer groups and networks (Landcare, Bushcare, Coastcare, Rivercare, and others) across the state. Landcare NSW works to facilitate the efforts of landcare on the ground by advocating for recognition and support, by supporting groups to improve their capacity and by working with state level partners such as government agencies, producer groups and Local Land Services.

Landcare NSW appreciates the opportunity to provide the following input to the Travelling Stock Reserves Draft State Planning Framework 2016-19 as part of its role in supporting these groups and networks.

Landcare groups and networks are continually implementing best practice activities throughout the landscape; on farms, in bushland remnants on public lands and on the coast. Landcare groups and networks continue to share knowledge and implement activities that promote sustainability and contribute to agricultural production and environmental conservation in a balanced approach. Landcare is actively involved and interested in the management of Travelling Stock Reserves, with many of our groups actively involved in the management of specific reserves.

Landcare NSW seeks to provide input on the aspects of the planning framework that concern how the community is engaged and recognised as valued and active participants in the current and future management of our TSR system. .

Yours Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rob Dulhunty".

Rob Dulhunty
Chair, Landcare NSW
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Attachment: Submission to the Draft NSW Travelling Stock Reserves State Planning Framework

Submission to the Draft NSW Travelling Stock Reserves State Planning Framework 2016-19

Prepared on behalf of LNSW by
Green Gully Consulting

For further details please contact
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Landcare NSW supports in general the intent to develop locally specific management plans to ensure that production, cultural heritage, recreation and ecological conservation outcomes are taken into consideration for the ongoing management of Travelling Stock Reserves.

However, in order for any management plan to be effective, especially when each TSR is unique in both condition, history of use and community value, a management plan should be developed in close partnership with TSR neighbours and the broader community.

Communities and landholders in NSW have a strong history and connection to Travelling Stock Reserves. They are valuable assets for stock movement, seed collection, apiary, stock watering points, recreational activities and numerous other activities. A number of significant Aboriginal cultural sites are also located in TSRs and TSRs are vital for biodiversity connectivity and wildlife refuge.

Key management aspects that need to be recognised and considered in TSR management plans include but are not limited to;

- General wear and tear and deterioration of infrastructure including fences, flood gates and watering points.
- Increasing issues relating to the effective management of pest animals and weeds and the illegal collection of firewood.
- Fuel loads and associated fire risks.
- Availability of TSRs and sufficient resources during periods of drought and emergency response.
- Management of remnant vegetation and endangered ecological communities (EECs) to allow for natural recruitment.
- Biosecurity risks to neighbouring landholders.
- Short and long term grazing permits that are managed equitably amongst the community and with lease fees that are market derived and contribute to the ongoing management and maintenance of TSRs.
- Management of grazing pressure to allow adequate rest and recovery periods. Balancing short and long term leases across all suitable TSRs instead of leases being concentrated to a few reserves with a strong lease history.

If TSRs are to be retained, how can LLS best manage them, can they pay for their upkeep and/or can the local community and Landcare groups assist?

The draft NSW TSR State Planning Framework identifies in Section 5 that *'passive uses do not have the same potential to generate funds as active uses. It is therefore expected that external funding will be required to support the management of reserves used primarily for passive uses'*.

External funding will never be sufficient in and of itself. It is the leverage that this funding can achieve that will achieve cost effective results. Therefore to maximise efficiencies ways to engage Landcare groups (including Rural groups, Bushcare, Friends of, Coastcare groups) and community representatives in decision making processes should be determined, and the values and importance of TSRs should be noted and included in Landcare education and on-ground work activities.

Case study 1:

The 'Riverslea Travelling Stock Reserve Regeneration' project is an example of collaborative TSR management that highlights what can be achieved through the leveraging of investment to facilitate local ownership and achieve greater environmental outcomes.

The Riverslea TSR is a 11.5 ha area, at Wyangala in central NSW that was identified as requiring native vegetation enhancement as only 12 trees existed on the reserve.

Hovells Creek Landcare coordinated the revegetation of a 2 ha area (with 425 trees/shrubs) within the TSR in collaboration with the Lachlan LHPA, Wyangala Public School, landholders adjoining the TSR and Lachlan CMA. The revegetation included the establishment of corridors along the eastern and western boundaries of the TSR that adjoined the existing vegetation.

Lachlan CMA provided funding (\$3,423) for local trees and shrubs and fencing materials, Lachlan LHPA undertook site preparation including fencing, weed control and double ripping of the intended tree lines, Wyangala Public School students and staff and adjoining TSR landholders undertook tree planting and Hovells Creek Landcare assisted with site preparation, tree planting and follow up weed control and management.

The Riverslea Travelling Stock Reserve Regeneration project highlights collaboration and shared responsibility by involving stakeholders and leveraging investment through the development of active partnerships that help strengthen local environments.

The draft NSW TSR State Planning Framework identifies 'key agencies' that Local Land Services works with to ensure TSRs are appropriately managed, such as the NSW Department of Primary Industries – Lands, Local government, NSW Office of Environment and Heritage and the NSW Office of Water. Landholders and community organisations can also contribute to the appropriate management of TSRs, through representing community needs and adding value to awareness and landscape outcomes.

There are several options for managing and utilising Travelling Stock Reserves in NSW, a number of these can be developed and implemented in partnership with Landcare. These opportunities include but are not limited to;

- Utilising TSRs as a teaching resource for primary, secondary and tertiary students as well as adult groups. Landcare has developed strong networks with schools, youth groups and universities. Landcare also facilitates the sharing of new knowledge and experiences through 'farmer to farmer' and small group learning activities. People learn by seeing practical examples of issues and contributing to the development and implementation of solutions. TSRs can be utilised as 'outdoor classrooms' for species identification, environmental health checks, seed collection training, supplementing wildlife habitat through the installation of nest boxes and insect hotels, training in best practice monitoring techniques, long term integrated management trials, invasive species management and grazing management.
- The environmental and biodiversity value of TSRs can be leveraged by developing on-ground works programs with adjoining neighbours and community groups. e.g. greater results for wildlife refuge and landscape scale connectivity can be achieved if revegetation projects on private land and/or TSRs join existing remnant vegetation communities. Landcare has a strong network base and a history of supporting community members to design and implement revegetation and remnant/riparian rehabilitation and protection projects at a landscape scale.
- There is significant volunteer time spent by Landcare groups in coordinating and undertaking weed and pest animal control programs. Landcare promotes best practice control principles for the management of these invasive species. The management of invasive species in TSRs can be leveraged through coordinating control and monitoring efforts with TSR neighbours, Landcare and the broader community.
- Landcare networks and groups are often skilled in group facilitation, community engagement and coordination. These skills can be utilised through partnerships with agencies and others to help plan regional TSR management plans and also TSR specific short term operational and works plans. Aspects of these plans may include strategic grazing periods at particular times of year to allow neighbouring graziers to crash graze TSRs to reduce fuel loads and fire risks. Another aspect may be the inclusion of TSRs in landscape scale invasive species programs or biodiversity monitoring programs.
- As identified in the Crown lands review, a number of TSRs are no longer used for their original purpose. A number of these TSRs may have outlived their use by date given the availability of efficient road transport. Landcare and community members can actively contribute to the identification of stakeholder values and opportunities to sustainably manage these areas. In some cases the economic viable option may be to sell a TSR. Organisations such as the Nature Conservation Trust may be willing to purchase these areas as environmental assets, and apply covenant agreements as appropriate to ensure their sustainable management continues.

Case study 2:

The Bundian Way is an ancient Aboriginal pathway that links the Snowy Mountains to the Sea between Mt Kosciusko to Eden in south eastern NSW. The Bundian Way is a 265km route strong in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal history, two thirds of it lies in National Parks and State Forests and the remaining mostly follows Travelling Stock Reserves.

The Eden Local Aboriginal Land Council in partnership with a number of community and agency organisations is leading the way to re-establish the Bundian Way and provide unique heritage experiences along the pathway through the establishment of cultural 'hubs'.

One of the significant cultural and environmental assets of the Bundian Way is the Yamfields.

The Yamfields were a significant food resource and meeting place for Aboriginal people along the route. Through the grazing of sheep, changes in land management and the use of fertilisers many of the Yamfields have disappeared. One of the most abundant remaining sites is the Bondi Springs Yamfields situated in the Mountaintop Travelling Stock Reserve.

*The Aboriginal Women At Yam Fields (AWAY) project aims to train local indigenous women in seed collection, propagation and re-establishment of yam fields using traditional methods as appropriate. The Bondi Springs Yamfields are providing insights into the establishment and management of the Yam Daisies (*Microseris* spp.), survey plots are established on site and a research team is working to find the best ways to sustainably manage the remaining plants.*

The Bondi Springs Yamfields is an educational showpiece, and may be utilised by the community as a teaching site to bring schoolchildren and community members. The site may demonstrate care for country, such as the value of de-compacting the soil, how and when to dig the yam plants, the use of Aboriginal fires techniques etc. This significant site will help boost the understanding of traditional cultural places and give Aboriginal people the opportunity to participate in scientific research.

The Bondi Spring Yamfields (Mountaintop Travelling Stock Reserve) is an example of how the values of community can be acknowledged to inform the management of TSRs. The Bundian Way project also highlights how the enthusiasm and efforts of community members can be leveraged to achieve greater outcomes whilst fostering local ownership and shared responsibility.

One of the objectives of the LLS Act is 'to encourage collaboration and shared responsibility by involving communities, industries and non-government organisations in making the best use of local knowledge and expertise in relation to the provision of Local Land Services', one

way to achieve this objective is to actively involve the community in decision making and review processes and ensure effective two way communication occurs.

Agencies and departments regularly undergo restructures and staff turnover can be frequent, due to these changes local and historical knowledge can be lost. Landcare is a grass-roots community organisation that predominantly consists of volunteers and long standing community members. Landcare has a strong history and has been a voice for the community and changing community needs for over 25 years. Landcare groups realise the importance of TSRs through local and historical knowledge, members have an affinity with the land and are experienced land managers. Landcare realises the importance of TSRs for cultural heritage and agricultural, environmental, economical and community benefits. Landcare groups, members and TSR neighbours can contribute valuable local and historical information to the TSR regional management planning process, including the identification and allocation of primary land-use classifications.

Landcare networks, through partnerships and resourcing, can actively contribute to achieving the five key requirements for the shared and sustainable use of the TSR network as identified at the 2011 TSR conference. Efforts to meet these requirements can be leveraged through;

- The dissemination of information and accessible data to community members through Landcare newsletters, social media and web updates.
- The planning and delivery of educational programs for adults and children, such as school excursions, teaching and rehabilitation sites, school Landcare activities, Landcare field days and site visits that raise awareness of the importance of TSRs and help recognise and protect Aboriginal cultural heritage.
- Landcare and stakeholder representation on regional steering committees to manage TSRs in a manner that brings together various values and interests whilst facilitating network and information sharing.

The review of TSRs and the development of regional TSR management plans are seen as an opportunity to return decision making to the local community and help strengthen local environments. Community involvement in the initial planning and ongoing reviews of TSR management plans through the formation of a region specific steering committee with a number of representatives from key stakeholder groups, including Landcare, is one way to build valuable partnerships between all stakeholders. Creating local management plans for local assets that capture community values and assess the success and adaptation required for TSR management in each region.

It is not only involvement in development of plans that is important. The importance of involving community and landcare groups in the ongoing management and implementation of management plans cannot be overstated. This ensures that locals who are connected to the reserve have a means and mechanism to protect previous works.

Case study 3:

Unfortunately there are also examples where community groups and Landcare have undertaken revegetation works on key Travelling Stock Reserves only to have the plantings destroyed by grazing stock. Two examples of this include;

- 1. A TSR river corridor, Boorowa on the Boorowa River in central NSW was fenced by the former Lachlan LHPA and revegetated by Boorowa Community Landcare with help from North Sydney Bushcare. Stock grazed on the site under an approved grazing permit decimated the plantings.*
- 2. Dangars Lagoon TSR, Uralla in northern NSW was revegetated by Harnham Landcare group with support from Conservation Volunteers Australia. Travelling stock stayed at the site longer than the agreed permit time and decimated the plantings, despite the TSR having an agreed management plan with the then LHPA.*

These two examples highlight the importance of establishing and reviewing regional TSR management plans, and site specific work plans with multiple stakeholders and local input. They also highlight the need to ensure effective two-way communication is maintained so that plans can be adapted to the changing needs and values of the community.

In summary:

Travelling Stock Reserves belong to the State of NSW and are an asset to the whole Community. As such TSRs should be managed as an asset for the community and protected by the community. Involving neighbouring landholders and representatives from community groups such as Landcare in the development and on-going reviews of TSR regional management plans will help strengthen local environments and return decision making to the local community.