

Submission on the Travelling Stock Reserves Plan of Management

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Opening

Local Government NSW (LGNSW) is the peak body for local government in NSW, representing NSW general purpose councils and related entities. LGNSW facilitates the development of an effective community based system of local government in the State.

LGNSW welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Draft NSW Travelling Stock Reserves Plan of Management prepared by Local Land Services (LLS).

Purpose

The draft plan of management establishes a state-wide framework to provide all stakeholders with a shared vision and common mission to manage the Travelling Stock Reserves (TSR) network as a single resource meeting social, environmental, economic and cultural goals.

The plan ensures that economic values through grazing continues where appropriate, and conservation values are recognised and maintained. The plan proposes a collaborative funding model to attract funding from a range of sources to contribute to the management of these areas.

Issues

The draft plan of management identifies the importance of travelling stock reserves, their values and the range of stakeholders who use these areas. It establishes a 'four point plan' including:

- Consistent classification
- Collaborative action and funding
- Working with the community
- Quality management system

Councils across NSW have an interest in the TSRs in their local government area. As the state-wide plan identifies, the management of sites at a local and regional level should be in collaboration with local communities, which includes local councils. LGNSW supports the engagement of councils as key stakeholders at the local level in the development of local operational plans which are a component of the state-wide framework.

The proposed approach will ensure a **consistent classification system** is used to categorise the type of TSR and the features and activities of that particular reserve. They are then mapped to enable local planning processes to be undertaken.

The plan proposes a collaborative funding model to attract funding from a range of sources to contribute to the management of these areas. Local government supports the need to establish a broader funding base to invest in the management of these sites. Identifying opportunities offered through grants and other sources will be needed to manage the range of benefits including environmental and cultural outcomes.

Local operational plans

The proposed local operation plans will provide the detail on all TSR activities for the next financial year and will be based on a template used by LLS across all TSRs. The plan will also include an annual operating budget and activities such as permits and compliance, biosecurity duty and other statutory responsibilities, routine management activities and public benefit actions such as active regeneration or other biodiversity enhancement actions.

Councils seek engagement in the development of the local operational plan as the management actions may impact on neighbouring tenures, including land that councils' manage such as roadside reserves. Coordination of management actions across land tenures is supported, including activities such as weed management. Managing weeds and other invasive species are key issues for which both LLS and local councils play an active role and coordinating actions will lead to better outcomes.

Environmental values

The TSR network has high conservation value as one of the few remaining corridors of vegetation in landscapes degraded by agricultural practices and development. As remnants of previous ecosystems they are renowned for their high biodiversity value. The conservation assessment undertaken across the TSR network using the Rapid Assessment Method, is the same conservation assessment tool recently being used by councils to undertake roadside reserve assessments. There are opportunities for biodiversity values to be recognised across TSRs and the roadside reserve and for councils and LLS to work together on the management of these ecologically important areas.

An issue which has arisen in relation to the colours used to indicate conservation value on the TSR state classification map and those used by councils and the TSR on the SEED database. The TSR state classification map identifies high conservation value as green, medium as yellow and low as orange, whereas councils use red to indicate high conservation value, orange as medium and green as low, as does the TSR mapping in SEED. It would be good to see consistency between these approaches. The rationale for high conservation value being denoted as red is to express caution for actions or activities in these areas due to their ecological value and sensitivities, also referred to as the 'traffic light' approach.

Local government has an interest in the management of TSRs including those which have no active management or grazing, due to the weed threat they pose. In these instances weed spread may create an additional burden for councils who are actively managing these incursions along roadsides and on other land they manage. Local operational plans need to include weed management actions which are coordinated across land tenures.

The classification system will ensure that the conservation values of the TSRs are known and can be managed accordingly.

Social values

Councils have important local knowledge to contribute to local operational plans. An example shared by Gunnedah Council is their desire to see some of the TSRs used for recreational purposes including camping and access for recreational vehicles. Many reserves are immediately adjacent to natural areas including rivers, wetlands, mountains and areas high in biodiversity which are attractive to travellers and campers. Economic benefits may also result

from opening some of these areas to tourism activities. These opportunities should be further explored at the local level and with the local council.

Economic values

LGNSW is pleased the review recognises that TSRs have significant direct economic value, in supporting a range of industries, including farming, grazing and apiary industries, as well as supporting environmental and cultural tourism. The role of TSRs in biosecurity, emergency management and drought proofing help protect these economic activities. It is important that the full economic value is considered when assessing the future of TSR.

Cultural values

LGNSW acknowledges that a large number of TSRs are subject to Aboriginal land claims under the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983* and supports the need to consider these interests in any decision on the future use and management of these TSRs. LGNSW supports strong engagement with Aboriginal communities in determining the on-going management of these areas including with the relevant Local Aboriginal Land Councils.

We also support TSR local operations plans including actions that protect and conserve Aboriginal artefacts, provide for access arrangements for continued cultural activities and the negotiation of co-management arrangements. Consultation with Aboriginal communities should therefore be a high priority.

Conclusion

Local government supports the state-wide plan framework providing all stakeholders involved in the management of this important asset the opportunity to work towards a shared vision and common goals for these reserves. This collaborative approach aims to improve social, economic, environmental and cultural outcomes for all travelling stock reserves across NSW. Local decision making and planning is necessary given the diversity of TSRs across the state.

The plan ensures that economic values through grazing continues where appropriate, and conservation values are recognised and maintained. With the state-wide assessment and classification of TSRs completed there are now clear categories of all TSRs based on their uses and values which will inform the appropriate development of local operation plans. LGNSW welcomes the further engagement with all NSW councils on local operational plans in their local government area.

We would be pleased to discuss the issues raised in this submission further. Please contact Kirsty McIntyre at LGNSW on 9242 4055 or kirsty.mcintyre@lgnsw.org.au.