



Goondiwindi Customer Service Centre: (07) 4671 7400  
 Inglewood Customer Service Centre: (07) 4652 0200  
 Texas Customer Service Centre: (07) 4653 2600  
 Facsimile: (07) 4671 7433

Postal: LMB 7, Inglewood QLD 4387  
 Email: [mail@goondiwindirc.qld.gov.au](mailto:mail@goondiwindirc.qld.gov.au)  
 Web: [www.goondiwindirc.qld.gov.au](http://www.goondiwindirc.qld.gov.au)

Author: Jason Quinnell  
 Enquiries: 07 4671 7410  
 File: Government Relations  
 Date: 26 July 2012

The Research Director  
 State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee  
 Parliament House  
 George Street  
**BRISBANE QLD 4000**

**By Email: [sdiic@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:sdiic@parliament.qld.gov.au)**

**Dear Sir / Madam**

**RE: GOONDIWINDI REGIONAL COUNCIL'S SUBMISSION  
 for Inquiry into the Future and Continued Relevance of  
 Government Land Tenure across Queensland**

Council welcomes the opportunity to provide input towards your review of the impact of State Land tenure upon the productivity of Queensland and the protection of many alternative values of our wonderful land.

Council has for some time experienced various frustrations with obstacles to progress caused by inappropriate land tenure in various forms. It is felt that in some circumstances current legislation and state policy is very restrictive in terms of achieving the best possible outcomes for the community and the land itself.

**LONG TERM GRAZING AND PASTORAL LEASES**

Council believes that it is important that long term grazing and pastoral leases are converted to freehold to reward the efforts of those investing in the improvement and maintenance of the lands. The uncertainty surrounding longer term ownership and the ongoing threat of claims for the recognition of alternative ownership no doubt impacts upon the confidence of those wishing to invest in the development of lands to improve the productivity of these areas. With increasing cost pressures and the squeezing of margins for agricultural production, it is vitally important that land managers have access to a full range of options and are not limited by further restrictions of lease conditions. Council is concerned to ensure that such lands are sold to current or adjoining owners as many of these blocks are not viable productive parcels in their own right and are best utilised in conjunction with adjoining lands.

### **Recommendation 1**

- i. That the State implements a process to convert long term grazing and pastoral leases to freehold.***
- ii. That the State reviews the methodology of establishing the offer price for lands to be offered for free-holding to ensure that appropriate discounting of the market value occurs to reflect the lack of improvements to these lands and their limited appeal or viability as going concerns in their own right.***

### **FORESTRY AREAS**

A significant portion of the Goondiwindi Region is also held by the State as various types of forest and national park.

Recent amendments to rules surrounding the management of state forests are encouraging in that they will ensure that these large parcels of land are able to provide some revenue to offset the substantial management costs that they generate. The sustainable logging of all relevant timber varieties and controlled grazing of some of these areas will also provide economic stimulus for the region and provide better environmental outcomes in many cases. The improvements offered by some of these activities will also better support tourism in state forests.

### **Recommendation 2**

- i. That the State continues to review management practices of state forests to ensure that a balance between environmental, cultural, social and financial benefits is better achieved.***

### **RESERVES**

Council believes that there must be a substantial review into the various reserves created throughout the state to ensure that they remain relevant to today's uses of the land and to determine any environmental and cultural values that they may contain.

This Council is the current Trustee of approximately 14,895 hectares of reserves that represent a significant undertaking in terms of the financial resources necessary to properly maintain them. Many of these reserves were established for purposes that are no longer relevant today however there are some that provide significant environmental and cultural benefits to the wider community. Unfortunately, the maintenance costs associated with these reserves are so significant that in many cases it is simply not possible for Council to undertake any meaningful management. These areas are becoming increasingly degraded and subject to pest infestation and inappropriate use.

Goondiwindi Regional Council has completed a preliminary audit of the reserves to better establish the depth of the problem and to attempt to find solutions. The audit has discovered that some of the preferred solutions are however not able to be enacted within the current regulatory and policy framework.

Of the 14,895 hectares Council is responsible for it has been determined that:-

- a) 6,061 hectares remains necessary for its primary purpose.
  - Whilst most of this area remains necessary for its primary purpose, there are parts of even this area that could be better utilised through a lease or authority under some of the legislation being developed for the new Stock Route Management Bill. This legislation is considered very important to improve the flexibility for Council to better manage such areas and to generate some revenue to in some way offset management costs.
  - These areas often possess environmental values that could be better supported with additional revenue generated from more regular grazing of parts of the areas to fund improvement and protection works.

### **Recommendation 3**

- i. That the Stock Route Management Network Bill, as presented to the previous Parliament, be enacted to ensure greater flexibility exists for Councils to more easily manage access to reserves and areas of state land.***
- b) 3,069 hectares requires further investigation to determine if its primary purpose could remain relevant or if other tenure would result in better outcomes.
  - These areas often possess environmental values that could be better supported with additional revenue generated from more regular grazing of parts of the areas.
- c) 2,839 hectares would be best offered to the community on some form of medium to long term lease to generate income to assist in the maintenance of the reserve. In some cases these lands would be best converted to reserves of another type enabling alternative trustees to utilise the area.
  - These reserves are not currently necessary for their primary purpose but are large enough and have sufficient infrastructure so as to be attractive to an adjoining owner to enter a lease to use the land for grazing purposes. There are also options to convert some of these reserves to reserves for other purposes that better reflect the alternative values that these areas may possess. Other trustees would then be sought to manage these areas.
  - Additional revenue from longer term leases would permit the development of some key strategic reserves for tourism and other uses through the construction and maintenance of some amenities and protection works for environmentally sensitive areas.

- The process of requesting that a reserve purpose be amended to an alternative use is quite onerous and falls back upon Council to manage. Some state wide streamlined process to quickly and consistently work through these reserves to bring the current use back into line with current demands would be of benefit.
- The current process of preparing management plans for trustee leases of up to 20 years are quite onerous. This cost along with the costs associated with the preparation and registration of lease documents often outweigh the revenue able to be generated from the leasing activity.

#### **Recommendation 4**

- i. That the State develops and implements a one-off process to more readily change the purpose of multiple reserves across the state to more accurately reflect the current needs of the community.***
  - ii. That the State Policy in relation to the preparation of management plans and conditions for trustee leases be reviewed to recognise the strong and practical land management skills of Councils as the current Trustees and their obligations to manage the lands appropriately. Additional regulation created through the conditions of a trustee lease, add an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy to the process.***
- d) 2,926 hectares is clearly no longer required for its primary purpose and the land is not likely to be attractive to a third party to enter a viable lease. These lands would be best handed back to the State.
- Council's concern is that the land would then revert to Unallocated State Land with even less management resulting in greater pest problems and other nuisances.
  - These blocks are also not viable in their own right and would be best amalgamated with an adjoining owners land to form a productive and viable parcel. Current policy of offering such land provides that adjoining owners do get some preference unless the State can get better outcomes from offering the parcel through an open process. It is important that adjoining owners be given the first opportunity to purchase such lands and that a condition of the contract be to amalgamate the parcel with their adjoining property. Failure to do this will further prolong the fragmentation of good agricultural land which contradicts the strategic intent of Council's Planning Scheme.

- This process is often complicated by the existence of a Native Title Claim over the parcel, which due to the complexity and cost of dealing with the claim often sees the process not commenced. This will see large areas of the state left as Unallocated State Land requiring expensive ongoing management for the State. If longer term cost benefit modelling was undertaken, it may well be the case that the State would benefit from meeting the cost of dealing with the Native Title issues attached to such parcels and then offering the land for sale rather than meeting the ongoing management costs into the future. The additional productivity that would occur from the process would also provide the State with additional opportunities to recover revenue through other forms of taxation.

#### **Recommendation 5**

- i. That the State converts lands to freehold where there is not likely to be any future public use.***
- ii. That the State considers the long term cost of holding land no longer required for its primary purpose when considering the option and cost of converting such lands to freehold.***
- iii. That the State amends the policy of dealing with reserves converted to freehold lands to ensure that priority is afforded to adjoining owners to purchase the lands and adjoin them to their property.***

#### **ROAD RESERVES**

There exists in the Goondiwindi Regional Area approximately 42,200 hectares of road reserves and stock routes. Only 10,000 hectares of this land continues to be utilised for the travelling of stock. Significant parts of the balance could be better utilised for other purposes. Whilst proposed legislation dealing with Stock Route Management will permit the issue of Grazing Authorities over most of these roads, the short term nature of these authorities is not likely to encourage the investment necessary to ensure the long term maintenance of these areas. Current tools such as the granting of permanent and temporary road closures are effective if the resultant valuation and purchase prices are appropriate.

Recent history suggests that the valuation methodologies applied to these lands result in the area the subject of a closure application being valued excessively leading to a poor take up once the state offer is made. Lands are therefore not being utilised as readily as they may otherwise be. Small strips of undeveloped land cannot be valued the same as adjoining parcels providing productive capacity. This is also the case for other reserves discussed earlier.

**Recommendation 6**

- i. That the State reviews the methodology of establishing the offer price for lands to be offered to adjoining owners to ensure that appropriate discounting of the market value occurs to reflect the lack of improvements to these lands and their limited appeal or viability as parcels in their own right.***

**CONCLUSION**

Council is appreciative of the opportunity to provide input into the Review of State Land Ownership. Council is encouraged by recent amendments to some policy and practices that have seen better utilisation of state resources.

Yours faithfully



Of Graeme Scheu  
**MAYOR**