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Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Bill 2001

The Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Bill 2001 (Qld) *repeals the Rural Lands Protection Act 1985 and creates a legislative framework for the management of pests on State and private land and for the management of travelling stock routes. The Bill is an acknowledgment that a responsive administrative framework which allocates responsibilities and obligations is essential for the successful management of flora and fauna pests and travelling stock routes across Queensland.*

Wayne Jarred

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CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	1
2	COMMONWEALTH INVOLVEMENT: NATIONAL WEEDS STRATEGY AND THE FERAL ANIMAL CONTROL PROGRAM.....	1
2.1	PLANT PESTS	2
3	A MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK THROUGH LEGISLATION	6
4	HISTORY OF STOCK ROUTES	6
5	THE LAND PROTECTION (PEST AND STOCK ROUTE MANAGEMENT) BILL 2001	9
5.1	STATE PEST MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND GUIDELINES (CLAUSES 10-16)	10
5.2	MANAGEMENT OF PESTS ON STATE-CONTROLLED LAND (CLAUSES 17-20)	10
5.3	PEST MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (CLAUSES 21-24)	11
5.4	LOCAL GOVERNMENT PEST MANAGEMENT PLANS (CLAUSES 25-35)	11
5.5	DECLARED PESTS (CLAUSES 36-46)	13
5.6	PUNITIVE PROVISIONS FOR THE INTRODUCTION, FEEDING, KEEPING AND RELEASING OF DECLARED PESTS (CLAUSES 39-46)	13
5.7	DECLARED PEST FENCES (CLAUSES 47-57)	14
5.8	DECLARED PEST PERMITS (CLAUSES 58-76)	15
5.9	OBLIGATIONS OF LAND OWNERS FOR THE CONTROL OF PESTS (CLAUSES 77-86)	15
5.10	THE EMERGENCY CONTROL OF DECLARED PESTS (CLAUSES 87-93)	16
6	STOCK ROUTE NETWORK MANAGEMENT.....	16
6.1	MANAGEMENT STRATEGY (CLAUSES 98-103)	16
6.2	MANAGEMENT PLANS (CLAUSES 104-115)	17
6.3	STOCK ROUTE AGISTMENT PERMITS AND STOCK ROUTE TRAVEL PERMITS (CLAUSES 116-147)	18

6.4	FENCING OF STOCK ROUTES (CLAUSES 148-154)	19
6.5	STOCK ROUTE NETWORK PASTURE & TRAVELLING STOCK FACILITIES (CLAUSES 160-162)	19
6.6	WATER FACILITY AGREEMENTS (CLAUSES 163-165)	19
6.7	STRAYING STOCK ON STOCK ROUTES (CLAUSES 166-172).....	20
6.8	LAND PROTECTION COUNCIL (CLAUSES 189-208).....	21
6.9	PEST OPERATIONAL BOARDS (CLAUSES 213-240).....	21
7	AUTHORISED PERSONS AND THEIR POWERS (CLAUSES 244-283).....	22
8	SERVICES AVAILABLE TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND LAND OWNERS	23
8.1	PEST MANAGEMENT PILOT TRIAL.....	24
9	LEGISLATION IN NEW SOUTH WALES FOR TRAVELLING STOCK ROUTES	24
9.1	FIRE HAZARD MANAGEMENT	25
10	FUNDING UNDER THE NATURAL HERITAGE TRUST.....	25
10.1	STOCK ROUTES/FLORA PESTS	25
10.2	FAUNA PESTS	26
11	CONCLUSION	26
	APPENDIX.....	29
	RECENT QPL RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS 2002	31

1 INTRODUCTION

The Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Bill 2001 (Qld) was introduced into the Legislative Assembly on 11 December 2001. The *Rural Lands Protection Act 1985* is to be repealed with the enactment of the Bill. The objectives of the Bill are:

- the protection of land and water from the adverse effects of recognised flora and fauna pests; and
- the management of the estimated 74,000 kilometres of travelling stock routes (commonly referred to as long paddocks) that form a network across the State.

2 COMMONWEALTH INVOLVEMENT: NATIONAL WEEDS STRATEGY AND THE FERAL ANIMAL CONTROL PROGRAM

The National Weeds Strategy is the product of a joint consultative effort of the Agricultural and Resource Management Council of Australia and New Zealand, the Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council, and Ministers responsible for forests in both countries. The Strategy was first published in June 1997. A revised Strategy was released in March 1999.

The implementation of the National Weeds Strategy is being undertaken by the National Weeds Strategy Executive Committee which was established with joint funding from the Commonwealth and the States. The Executive Committee has established a work program that includes identifying weeds of national significance and devising strategies to encourage all States and Territories to develop and implement their own weed strategies and associated management structures.¹

The National Weeds Strategy program seeks to:

- Develop integrated strategic approaches to reduce the impact of weeds of national significance;
- Prevent the introduction of new pest plants through revised quarantine assessment procedures; and
- Assess the potential of existing pest plants to become weeds of national significance.

¹ Weeds Australia, 'The National Weeds Strategy: A Strategic Approach to Weed Problems of National Significance' <http://www.weeds.org.au/nwsec.htm>. Downloaded 14 December 2001.

The States and Territories combined have nominated over 70 weeds for classification as weeds of national significance, 20 of which had been so categorised by June 2000.² Each nationally significant weed will be the subject of strategic management plans aimed at their control. The goal of these plans is to reduce the impact of those weeds to an extent where management by each individual State and Territory is possible.³

The Commonwealth entered into an arrangement with State and Territories whereby it is providing 50% funding for plant pest eradication programs.

The feral animal control program exists alongside the national weeds program, receiving Commonwealth funding under the National Heritage Trust. In 1999-2000 the Commonwealth provided total funding of \$2.4 million to the States and Territories for the National Feral Animal Control program.⁴

In line with the other States and Territories, the Queensland Weeds Strategy satisfies the State's commitment given under the National Weeds Strategy.

The Vertebrate Pest Management Strategy published by the Australian Capital Territory has been heavily influenced or guided by national developments toward a strategic approach to the management of pests for the purpose of minimising damage caused to the environment rather than simply a reduction in pest numbers per se.⁵

2.1 PLANT PESTS

Plant pests or weeds are generally very competitive and adaptive which gives them the ability to threaten the natural ecosystem as well as commercial crops. Weeds are among the most significant threats to sustaining Australia's agriculture and forestry sectors as well as the conservation of biodiversity. Weeds also pose a threat to the viability of farming and forestry operations, and threaten native species, as well as contributing significantly to

² Australia. National Heritage Trust, 'Helping Communities Helping Australia', *Annual Report 1999-2000*, p 35.

³ Australia. Treasury, *1999-2000 Commonwealth Budget*, Feral Animals and Weeds Chapter 4, <http://www.treasury.gov.au/publications/CommonwealthBudget/1999-2000/ministerial/ch4/ch4-FERAL.html>. Downloaded 30 January 2002.

⁴ Australia. Treasury, *1999-2000 Commonwealth Budget*, Feral Animals and Weeds Chapter 4.

⁵ Australian Capital Territory, Department of Urban Services, *The ACT Vertebrate Pest Management Strategy: Draft for Public Comment*, February 2001, <http://www.environment.act.gov.au/files/vertpestmgmtstrategydraft.pdf> Downloaded 30 January 2002, p vii

land degradation across the country. There is no definitive estimate as to the monetary cost of weeds to the agricultural sector but the National Weeds Strategy document makes mention of an estimated cost of over \$3 billion per annum when factors such as control, yield losses in crops and pastures and the contamination and downgrading of grains, fodder and animal products are taken into account. A more specific estimate of the cost of weed control practices can be made with direct expenditure on herbicides totalling \$452 million in 1995.⁶

In Queensland the annual estimate of the cost of weed management extends into the hundreds of millions of dollars. Fifty million dollars per year is spent on the control of parthenium weed, rubber vine, prickly acacia, mesquite and parkinsonia alone. There is also the additional cost associated with negative consequences for conservation and human welfare. Uncontrolled weeds threaten native ecosystems containing plant and animal species. Social impacts may include effects on human health, recreation, safety and aesthetics. Some weeds can cause dermatitis, asthma and rhinitis through direct touch or the spread of pollen through the air.⁷

Herbicides themselves in turn also contribute to indirect costs such as decreased crop and pasture yield due to herbicide damage, losses caused by built up herbicide resistance and the effects on flora and fauna that are not targeted.⁸ Cultivation as a weed control practice also contributes to the indirect costs such as soil erosion and increased carbon emissions.

The economic assessment of agricultural weeds has been identified as an area that has been under-researched whilst there has been a total absence of research on the effects of environmental weeds.⁹

⁶ Agriculture and Resource Management Council of Australia and New Zealand, Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council, Forestry Ministers, *The National Weeds Strategy: A Strategic Approach to Weed Problems of National Significance*, Revised Edition March 1999, http://www.affa.gov.au/corporate_docs/publications/pdf/nrm/nws/nws.pdf. Downloaded 2 January 2002, p 8.

⁷ Queensland. Queensland Government, *Draft Queensland Weed Strategy 2000-2005*, pp 10-11.

⁸ *The National Weeds Strategy: A Strategic Approach to Weed Problems of National Significance*, p 9.

⁹ Cooperative Research Centre for Weed Management Systems, "Recent Incursions of Weeds to Australia 1971-1995", *Technical Series No 3*, January 1998, p 21.

The Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Animal and Vegetable Pests in Queensland (1976) succinctly stated the problem:

A quick glance at [parts of the Report] listing noxious plants and vermin which are currently declared pests will emphasise that not one of the species has to date been eradicated or completely destroyed. This is despite that fact that many of these plants have been declared noxious for longer than 25 years and large sums of private and public monies have from time to time and over a considerable period been spent in attempts at destruction or eradication.

Based on experience it does not seem practical to aspire to a situation where every plant presently declared noxious or animal presently declared vermin will be completely and utterly eradicated.¹⁰

Thus it has been recognised for some time that hopes of pest eradication have been misplaced, that management or control within acceptable limits is more viable and appropriate, and that government strategies should reflect this.

This recognition can be seen in the primary objectives of the Strategic Weed Eradication and Education Program (SWEEP) that is operated by the Queensland Department of Natural Resources with joint funding from the Commonwealth under the National Weeds Program. One of the primary objectives of SWEEP is to contain and reduce areas of infestation of major established weeds where there is a significant strategic benefit to the Queensland economy.¹¹

The 1976 Committee of Inquiry Report also recognised the central role of land owners:

We stress as our basic and considered belief that pest control or management starts and finishes with the landholder.¹²

There are 20 recognised weeds of national significance - all of which originated from outside Australia.¹³ Of those, Queensland currently has infestations of 11 of them. They are cabomba (originating from the United States), hymenachne (originating from South and Central Tropical America), lantana (originating from Central America), mesquite (originating from South America, Central America and Southern United States),

¹⁰ Queensland. *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Animal and Vegetable Pests*, WFG. Smith (Chairman), Government Printer, Brisbane, 1976, p 3.

¹¹ Department of Natural Resources, *Invaders of the North West: An identification guide to the exotic weeds of North West Queensland*, May 1999, p 1.

¹² *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Animals and Vegetable Pests*, 1976, p 6.

¹³ 'Weeds of National Significance' National Weeds Strategy, *Fact Sheet*. <http://www.weeds.org.au/natsig.htm> Downloaded 14 December 2001.

parkinsonia (originating from Southern United States, the Caribbean, Mexico and northern South America), parthenium (originating from the Caribbean), pond apple (originating from North, Central and Southern America and Africa), prickly acacia (originating from Africa and Asia), rubber vine (originating from Madagascar), and salvinia (originating from Brazil). Due to climatic conditions, all of these weeds are recognised as having the potential to increase their presence in Queensland.

Of the remaining nine varieties, there are a further three that have the potential to propagate in Queensland. These are athel pine (originating in Africa, Iran and India), boneseed (originating in South Africa), and mimosa (originating from Tropical America).¹⁴

Parthenium weed is believed to have been brought into Queensland from the United States in the 1960s as an impurity in pasture seed. By the 1970s it dominated thousands of hectares, subsequently spreading into the Northern Territory and New South Wales. It is a weed that aggressively colonises roadsides that may be used as stock routes.¹⁵

Chromolaena odorata is a weed that is thought to have been introduced into Queensland during the 1970s as a contaminant of pasture seed but remained unnoticed until it was found near Tully in 1994. Since then the State and Commonwealth have directly spent approximately half a million dollars to halt its spread and eradication. Prior to its discovery in Queensland, this weed was known to have cemented itself in Papua New Guinea, Indonesia and the Philippines.¹⁶ This weed is considered to be a significant threat to tropical and subtropical areas with potential to cost agriculture, forestry and ecotourism up to \$100 million per annum.¹⁷

The National Weeds Strategy document called for a different approach to the problem of weed management:

Many landholders and resource managers do not understand that weed problems are often the result of human practices which have led to resource degradation. Such practices include overgrazing, cultivation, disturbance of natural vegetation and pollution of water by nutrients. Natural occurrences, including fire and drought, may also contribute to the process of degradation

¹⁴ 'Weeds of National Significance' National Weeds Strategy, *Fact Sheet*.

¹⁵ *The National Weeds Strategy: A Strategic Approach to Weed Problems of National Significance*, p 15.

¹⁶ Cooperative Research Centre for Weed Management Systems, 'Recent Incursions of Weeds to Australia 1971-1995', *Technical Series No 3*, January 1998, p 21.

¹⁷ *The National Weeds Strategy: A Strategic Approach to Weed Problems of National Significance*, p 15.

and may have a significant effect in already disturbed and fragmented landscapes.

In these situations, weeds are a symptom of the degraded state of the land or water resource, rather than the cause of that degradation. This lack of understanding often leads to unsuccessful attempts at weed control, rather than rehabilitation of the resource; the treatment of the symptom rather than the cause. Any direct weed control undertaken in such circumstances will require repeated application and achieve only short-term success.

To address the weed problem properly, grazing pressure may have to be reduced, pastures resown, cultivation reduced, access to bushland restricted, bushland rehabilitated and replanted, or nutrient pollution of water minimised.¹⁸

3 A MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK THROUGH LEGISLATION

An important goal of the National Weed Strategy is the provision of a framework and the capacity for the ongoing management of weed problems that are of national significance. An essential element to the attainment of this goal of ongoing management is the development of strategic plans.¹⁹ Queensland's Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Bill 2001 represents a response to this goal by providing for the establishment of pest management plans on State-controlled land and other land within local government areas.

The National Weeds Strategy specifically acknowledges the significant part that local government and community groups such as Landcare and conservation groups can play in the development and implementation of strategic plans for pest management.²⁰

4 HISTORY OF STOCK ROUTES

Concentration on rail and road (including stock routes) corridors is essential, in order to control the spread of weeds. Stock routes developed from early pastoralists moving stock into newly discovered grazing lands with the consequence that they did not develop

¹⁸ *The National Weeds Strategy: A Strategic Approach to Weed Problems of National Significance*, pp 18-19.

¹⁹ *The National Weeds Strategy: A Strategic Approach to Weed Problems of National Significance*, p 42.

²⁰ *The National Weeds Strategy: A Strategic Approach to Weed Problems of National Significance*, p 46.

in any systematic way. As access to water was essential, the early routes followed rivers such as the Condamine, Maranoa, Warrego, Paroo, McKenzie, Georgina, Diamantina, the Barcoo and Coopers Creeks.

The establishment of rail routes in the 1890s to the townships of Charleville, Barcaldine and Winton resulted in many more stock routes being established to deliver stock to these rail lines. A 1930 Royal Commission recommended that the control and improvement of stock routes be taken from councils and vested in newly established District Improvement Boards to overcome existing problems associated with the management and maintenance of stock routes.

In recommending the establishment of the District Improvement Boards, the Royal Commission reported:

*Stock routes are under the control of the local Shire Council. The provision of water, the clearing of noxious weeds, the prevention of loitering or unauthorised use of the stock routes, all come under Shire Council control. In practice, little control is exercised in most districts. There is no co-ordination of effort in these matters, and each Shire Council goes its own way.*²¹

The *Grazing Districts Improvement Act 1930* established the Improvement Boards which had powers and duties concerning the control and improvement of stock routes and reserves for stock travelling within their respective Districts. However, this administrative responsibility only lasted until 1933 when the *Local Authority (Grazing District Improvement) Transfers of Powers Act* was passed which abolished the District Boards and authorised the return of their functions and powers and the handing over of their assets to local councils.

Local councils continued to be responsible for stock route administration whilst improvements were the responsibility of the Department of Lands and, later, the Irrigation Commission. In 1944, with the passing of the *Stock Routes and Rural Lands Protection Act 1944*, there was a single authority known as the Co-ordinating Board (forerunner of the Rural Lands Protection Board). This Board still co-ordinated its activities regarding the maintenance of stock routes with local councils.

The passing of the *Commonwealth States Grants (Encouragement of Meat Production) Act 1949* resulted in Commonwealth funding for the construction of water facilities, holding paddocks, camping yards and loading ramps on established stock

²¹ Queensland. The Royal Commission Appointed to Enquire into Certain Matters Relating to Rabbit, Dingo, and Stock Route Administration, *Report Together with Appendices and Minutes of Evidence*. Parliamentary Papers Session of 1930, Volume II, p 559.

routes. In the early 1970s, over 1000 watering facilities had been constructed but the number in actual use has since declined to approximately 700.²²

Contemporary use of the State stock route system is characterised by its use as a drought fodder reserve and agistment network. Between 1988 and 1992 over half a million head of stock walked the network each year. This level of use increases when drought conditions take hold as stock may be walked from interstate.²³

The cost of walking large mobs of stock is approximately half the cost of trucking them but this cost advantage diminishes with the smaller size of the mob concerned.²⁴

Local governments are still involved in the administration and management of stock routes along with the Department of Natural Resources through its Land Protection Office. The primary piece of legislation in this regard is the *Rural Lands Protection Act 1985*. **Section 57** of the Act imparts the responsibility for the control, improvement and maintenance of stock routes and reserves on local governments.

Schedule 6 of the *Land Act 1994* defines a ‘stock route’ as being a road or route ordinarily used for travelling stock or declared under an Act to be a stock route. **Section 15** of the *Rural Lands Protection Act 1985* enables the Governor in Council to, by public notice, declare any road to be a stock route for the purposes of the Act. However, there is no record of a road having ever been declared to be a stock route under the authority of that section. Thus, all stock routes in Queensland are roads but not all roads are stock routes, as many (eg urban road systems) are declared closed to all stock that are being driven.²⁵

There is a general or common law right to use dedicated public roads for purposes related to the transport of persons and goods. As far as the movement of stock is concerned, this common law right has been modified by the necessity to obtain a permit to take the animals onto a road (for example, under **s 21C Stock Act 1915**).

The Department of Natural Resources and Mines classifies stock routes, depending upon their annual rate of use, as primary, secondary or minor. There are approximately 2,600

²² RH Edwards (ed), *The Romance and the Reality: A Guide to Managing Queensland's Stock Routes*, Queensland Department of Natural Resources, 1998, p 6.

²³ RH Edwards (ed), p 6.

²⁴ RH Edwards (ed), p 6.

²⁵ RH Edwards (ed), p 12.

km of primary routes and about 5,000 km of secondary routes and 4,000 km of minor routes.²⁶

There are 48 travelling stock route areas across Queensland. The droving of stock within these areas generally requires a permit but there are exceptions such as:

- stock being transported by vehicle;
- sheep and cattle movements of less than 20 km for the purpose of normal husbandry practices such as shearing, dipping and branding;
- movement between two parcels of land in close proximity for normal management practices;
- movement to a saleyard less than 50 km away;
- movement to and from a local show.²⁷

There is a nominal cost of two cents per 20 head of cattle and two cents per 100 head of sheep for a permit to walk stock along a stock route.

A general argument for the selling off of public lands that form part of disused stock routes is that the land can be responsible for weed growth and weed spread and, subsequently, it is better that the land be placed under the control of persons who can keep such areas free of weeds.²⁸

5 THE LAND PROTECTION (PEST AND STOCK ROUTE MANAGEMENT) BILL 2001

In contemporary times environmental management has been a focus of government legislative measures. The Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Bill 2001 (Qld) recognises the importance of pest management in the preservation of natural resources as well as agricultural systems that have been imposed on the natural environment. The principles of pest management contained in **clause 9** recognise the essential element of coordination of effort between State government agencies, local government and the community that is meshed into a long-term commitment to plan for preventative strategies for successful pest containment.

²⁶ RH Edwards (ed), p 12.

²⁷ RH Edwards (ed), p 32.

²⁸ Julie-Ann Ellis, 'Public Assets – A Case Study of South Australia's Travelling Stock Reserves', *The Flinders Journal of History and Politics*, vol 18, 1996, pp 83-101, p 97 <http://www.ssn.flinders.edu.au/POLITICS/JOURNALS/content.htm> Downloaded 10 October 2001.

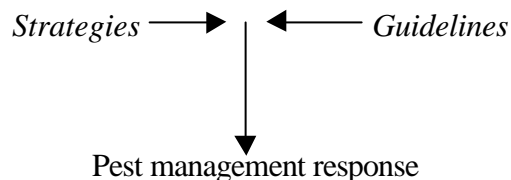
5.1 STATE PEST MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND GUIDELINES (CLAUSES 10-16)

Under the Bill, the chief executive²⁹ will be required to prepare separate State management *strategies* (that will be operative for no more than 5 years) for fauna and flora that encompass the established principles of pest management for the purpose of directing and coordinating pest management activities across the State.

The chief executive may order, at any time, the review or renewal of any operative pest management *strategy* but every strategy must be reviewed no later than 6 months prior to its termination date.

State pest management *strategies* will sit at the top of the response framework where priorities will be established for the management of pests by species and/or geographical location. The monitoring of and research into the impact of specific pests and research into improved management practices will be important elements of State pest management strategies and a fundamental basis for the preparation of *guidelines* for the management of declared pests. State pest management *strategies* will be expected to aim for consistency of effort between the three levels of government when those levels are involved.

The chief executive will be required to prepare *guidelines* for the management of declared pests. These *guidelines* will form the basis of the front line assault on known pests, as their goals will be the prevention of the spread or introduction of a particular pest along with the management of the identifiable adverse impacts of the pest concerned. Combined, the *strategies* and the *guidelines* will constitute a pest management response.



Both the *strategies* and *guidelines* are to be public documents that the chief executive will make available for public inspection at no cost.

5.2 MANAGEMENT OF PESTS ON STATE-CONTROLLED LAND (CLAUSES 17-20)

Land controlled by the State will be subject to the creation of *plans* for the management of declared pests. This responsibility will fall upon the various government entities having

²⁹ The term “chief executive” in the Bill refers to the chief executive, Department of Natural Resources and Mines: Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Bill 2001 (Qld), *Explanatory Notes*, p 10.

control of State-controlled land. All *plans* made by such government entities must be consistent with the principles of pest management, State pest management *strategies*, and *guidelines* for pest management that are operative.

As with State pest management *strategies*, *plans* for the management of declared pests on State-controlled land are to remain in force for no more than 5 years from the time of their introduction. **Clause 17(2)(e)** provides for the monitoring and evaluation of a plan's effectiveness. This provision would equate with the chief executive's power to review a State pest management *strategy* under **clause 14(2)**. However, there is no specific mention of a power to renew an existing *plan*, as is the case with pest management *strategies*.

As with *strategies* and *guidelines* established by the chief executive, *plans* made by each department having control over State land will be available for public inspection.

5.3 PEST MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (CLAUSES 21-24)

A Pest Management Committee is to be established for the purpose of overseeing the implementation of *plans* for the management of declared pests on State-controlled land, to ensure consistency of pest management *plans* through coordination, and to integrate *plans* for managing declared pests on State-controlled land with broader natural resource management strategies and planning processes.

Committee membership is to consist of one representative from each of the following agencies: the Department of Natural Resources and Mines, the Department of Primary Industries, the Environmental Protection Agency, and Queensland Transport. The Committee will have the authority to conduct its business in ways it considers appropriate but must meet at least once a year to consider the implementation and effectiveness of existing *plans*.

5.4 LOCAL GOVERNMENT PEST MANAGEMENT PLANS (CLAUSES 25-35)

Similarly to departments controlling State land, local councils will be required to establish pest management *plans* for declared pests in their areas. Whilst departments controlling State land will be required to do this as soon as practicable after the commencement of the provision, local councils will be required to achieve this within one year.

The issues to be included in the *plans* established by local councils (**clause 25(2)**) are similar to those applying to departments controlling State lands (**clause 17(2)**).

However, for departments, compliance with **clause 17(2)** is mandatory whilst for local councils, the wording of **clause 25(2)** affords a level of discretion.³⁰

As with *plans* made by relevant departments, local council *plans* must have regard to the principles of pest management stated in **clause 9**; any existing State pest management *strategies*; any *guidelines* for pest management; any *plans* for the management of declared pests made for State-controlled land; and the interests of the community generally, including, for example the interests of landholders and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, industry groups and members of the public.

The Bill has incorporated the principle of transparency in relation to the making of pest management *plans* by local councils. In readiness for preparing a *plan*, every local authority will be required to establish a working group for the purpose of advising the council on preparing a draft plan. Such working groups may be made up of representatives from departments controlling State land that the council considers appropriate.

The *plan* must be consistent with the principles of pest management, State pest management *strategies*, and pest management *guidelines*.

The process under which local councils are to prepare their pest management *plans* is depicted in the following flowchart:



Adopted pest management *plans* are to remain in force for no more than four years. Current pest management *plans* are open to review when council considers a review to

³⁰ Section 32CA *Acts Interpretation Act 1954* (Qld) provides a meaning of the terms ‘must’ and ‘may’ when they are used in relation to a power in Queensland legislation.

be appropriate but each council must review its management *plan* at least once in each financial year. There is also a requirement under **clause 33(3)** that a council pest management *plan* must be reviewed and amended (where necessary) if and when a State pest management *strategy* has been amended by the chief executive.

There is no requirement for council pest management *plans* that are amended to be subject to the public notification and submission process, but neither is there a prohibition on councils in this regard. However, amendments to an existing *plan* must be notified to the Minister who then has the same authority to either advise amendment or advise adoption by resolution.

As with *strategies* and *guidelines* at the State level, local *plans* are to be kept available for public inspection.

5.5 DECLARED PESTS (CLAUSES 36-46)

Generally, specific fauna and flora will be declared to be pests under regulation but the chief executive will also have a power of declaration (called an emergency pest notice) if satisfied that urgent action is required to protect a part of the State from a specific animal or plant. Any emergency pest notice that is brought into existence by the chief executive must be withdrawn after the end of the emergency.

The Governor in Council or the chief executive will have authority to declare an animal or plant a pest of either a class 1, 2 or 3 category. Declared class 1 pests are those pests that are not recognised as having established themselves in Queensland but do have the potential to cause adverse economic, environmental or social impacts if they were to become established.

Classes 2 and 3 will be for those pests that have already established themselves in Queensland and have the potential to cause adverse impacts.

5.6 PUNITIVE PROVISIONS FOR THE INTRODUCTION, FEEDING, KEEPING AND RELEASING OF DECLARED PESTS (CLAUSES 39-46)

The Bill provides offence provisions concerning:

- the unlawful introduction of declared pests. The chief executive may issue a declared pest permit to allow a declared pest to be brought into Queensland. The bringing of a pest into Queensland without the authority of a pest permit (and without lawful excuse) will be unlawful and will attract a maximum penalty of \$60,000 for a class 1 pest, \$30,000 for a class 2 pest and \$15,000 for a class 3 pest (**clause 39**);

- feeding declared pest animals. It will be unlawful, without reasonable excuse, to feed a declared pest animal other than under a permit. This offence will attract a maximum penalty of \$3,000. Feeding during a campaign of baiting or trapping for the purpose of number control is exempt under this provision (**clause 40**);
- keeping a declared pest classes 1 and 2 without a permit or reasonable excuse will attract a maximum penalty of \$60,000 for a class 1 pest and \$30,000 for a class 2 pest (**clause 41**);
- releasing a declared pest without a permit or reasonable excuse will attract a maximum penalty of \$60,000 for a class 1 pest, \$30,000 for a class 2 pest, and \$15,000 for a class 3 pest. The release of a declared pest under a biological control program is specifically exempted from the release provision (**clause 42**);
- taking a plant that is a class 2 declared pest for commercial use without the authority of a declared pest permit will attract a maximum penalty of \$30,000 (**clause 43**);
- supplying a declared pest of any class without the authority of a declared pest permit will attract a maximum penalty of \$60,000 for a class 1 pest, \$30,000 for a class 2 pest and \$15,000 for a class 3 pest (**clause 44**).

The Bill also provides for the offences of supplying anything that contains reproductive material of declared pest plants; and the moving or transporting of vehicles or other things on roads if a person knew, or should reasonably have known, that soil or other organic material in or on the vehicle or thing was likely to contain reproductive material of a declared pest plant and the person did not take reasonable steps to restrict the release of the reproductive material during transit or to ensure the vehicle or thing was free of the reproductive material (**clauses 45-46**).

5.7 DECLARED PEST FENCES (CLAUSES 47-57)

The Bill authorises the making of regulations that provide for the building of declared pest fences for specific animal pests. Authority to build and maintain such fences may lie with the chief executive, a pest operational board established to manage the relevant pest animal, or a local government.

For routine construction, inspection and maintenance purposes, the entity responsible for a fence will be expected to inform land owners of the need to enter their land 7 days prior to the intended day of entry. If urgent circumstances exist then the entity will only be required to give notice that is reasonably practicable in the circumstances.

There is provision for a maximum penalty of \$350 for damaging existing declared pest fences (**clause 55**), or obstructing any authorised person wanting to inspect or maintain a declared pest fence (**clause 56**).

5.8 DECLARED PEST PERMITS (CLAUSES 58-76)

The chief executive will be authorised to issue and renew declared pest permits. Such permits may be issued that allow the holders to introduce, keep, feed, release, take for commercial purposes, or supply. The chief executive may only grant such a permit (for a declared pest prescribed under a regulation) allowing the introduction or keeping of a declared pest when the purpose of the proposed introduction or keeping is prescribed by regulation.

Major considerations that the chief executive is to take into account when deciding a permit application are whether or not the pest is likely to endanger public safety, and whether or not its introduction or keeping is likely to lead to the spread of the pest in the State (**clause 60**).

Newly granted permits and renewals of existing permits remain in force for no more than two years from the date of issue. Permits are to be issued with conditions deemed appropriate by the chief executive and may generally be suspended or cancelled for non compliance 28 days after the day the permit holder was notified of the grounds for the proposed suspension or cancellation. The 28 day period allows the permit holder to submit a written representation as to why the permit should not be suspended or cancelled (**clause 66**). In addition to this general procedure, the chief executive will be authorised to immediately suspend a pest permit if the circumstances warrant such action to prevent adverse economic, environmental or social impacts.

5.9 OBLIGATIONS OF LAND OWNERS FOR THE CONTROL OF PESTS (CLAUSES 77-86)

There is a general obligation placed on land owners to take reasonable steps to keep their land free of class 1 and 2 declared pests. Failure to do so may lead to a pest control notice being issued by the chief executive, a pest operational board, or by local government.

Any pest control notice that is issued may require the landowner to take reasonable action within a reasonable time to control the declared pest animal or plant (**clause 78(2)**). Failure to comply with a pest control notice will allow the issuing authority to issue an entry notice under which the land may be entered for the purpose of controlling the declared pest. The cost of such control is to be borne by the landowner (**clause 80**).

5.10 THE EMERGENCY CONTROL OF DECLARED PESTS (CLAUSES 87-93)

When the chief executive reasonably believes that circumstances exist in which urgent action is required to prevent a pest from causing significant adverse economic, environmental or social impact, the chief executive may authorise a pest controller to enter land and take action to eradicate the declared pest.

Where the chief executive or a local government reasonably believes that urgent action is needed to prevent a declared pest from causing a significant economic, environmental or social impact, an emergency quarantine notice may be issued requiring a landowner to take reasonable action to manage, control or eradicate the pest. The emergency quarantine notice may also state that an authorised person has been appointed to monitor compliance of the notice by the landowner.

6 STOCK ROUTE NETWORK MANAGEMENT

6.1 MANAGEMENT STRATEGY (CLAUSES 98-103)

The chief executive will be required to prepare a State stock route network management strategy. The strategy may include:

- recognition of the network's multiple uses
- preservation of land corridor connections
- sustainable management of natural resources on the network
- maintenance and improvement of travel stock facilities on the network
- resolution of competing and conflicting interests in relation to the use of the network; and
- seeking community input into the network's management.

The State stock route network management *strategy* is to be prepared with regard to the principles of stock route network management that are listed in **clause 97**. The *strategy* will remain in force for no more than 5 years. At any time considered appropriate by the chief executive, the *strategy* may be reviewed or renewed but its effectiveness must be reviewed at least 6 months before it ceases to have effect.

The *strategy*, once in force, is to be available for public inspection at places that are considered appropriate by the chief executive.

6.2 MANAGEMENT PLANS (CLAUSES 104-115)

Local government will be required to prepare within one year from the commencement of the Act a stock route network management *plan* that may include provision for the following:

- the establishment of achievable objectives
- the creation of strategies that will achieve the objectives
- communication links to inform the general community about the content of the plan and its objectives
- monitoring the implementation of the *plan* and evaluating its effectiveness.

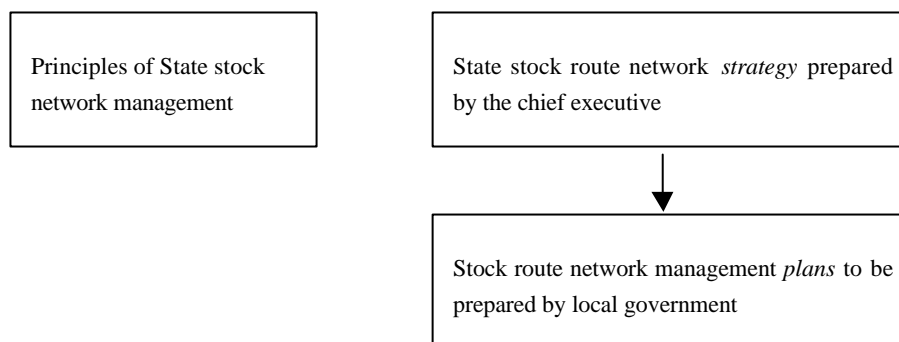
As with their pest management *plans*, each local government preparing a stock route network management *plan* will be required to establish a working group to give advice on the preparation of a draft *plan*.

In preparing a network management *plan*, local government will be required to have regard to the following issues:

- the management *strategy* prepared by the chief executive;
- the principles of stock route network management;
- the maintenance of facilities on stock routes and available pasture;
- the environmental and cultural values and various uses of stock routes;
- the management of important environmental issues relating to stock routes;
- the maintenance of the network's integrity; and
- community interests, including those of land owners and Aboriginals.

Prepared *plans* must be consistent with the principles of stock route network management and the stock route management *strategy*.

The interconnection between the segments is depicted in the following diagram:



Local government will be required to notify the public of the completion of the draft stock route network management *plan* and call for public submissions. After considering public submissions, the draft *plan* must be submitted to the relevant Minister who may then

advise the local government that the Minister is satisfied that the *plan* is consistent with the *principles* of stock route network management and the stock route management *strategy*. If so satisfied, the *plan* may be adopted by the local government. Alternatively, if the Minister is not satisfied that the *plan* is consistent with the *principles* and the *strategy*, then the local government is to be advised as to how to amend the *plan*.

Local government will have authority to review, amend and renew an existing *plan*. There is no provision for local government to publicly advertise an amended plan but neither is there a prohibition on this occurring. However, an amended plan must be submitted to the Minister in the same way as the initial draft *plan*.

6.3 STOCK ROUTE AGISTMENT PERMITS AND STOCK ROUTE TRAVEL PERMITS (CLAUSES 116-147)

Local government will have the authority to grant *stock route agistment permits* to land owners (in the local government's area) whose land is adversely affected by drought, fire or flood. Permits may also be issued to persons travelling stock under a stock route travel permit.

Local government, as part of its management responsibility of stock routes, may also issue permits for agistment on stock route land that contains pasture excess to that needed for the use of travelling stock.

Issues that must be considered in deciding any application for agistment include:

- whether the use of the land for agistment is consistent with the management *plan*;
- whether there is enough pasture and water available for both the stock under agistment and travelling stock; and
- whether the agistment will introduce or spread a declared pest onto the land.

Agistment permits for travelling stock requiring agistment for such things as branding, dipping or drenching are to be valid for a maximum of 7 days. Agistment permits based on other reasons will remain in force for a maximum of 28 days. These latter permits may be renewed for a maximum period of 28 days and once only.

A local government's decision in relation to an agistment application or agistment permit may be reviewed by the chief executive who will have the authority to revoke the local government's decision and replace it with one that the chief executive deems appropriate.

Local government may issue *stock route travelling permits*. The issues to be considered in the issuing of travel permits are similar to those applying to agistment permits (**clause 136**). A refusal to grant a stock travelling permit, a decision to impose

conditions on a permit, or a decision to cancel an existing permit are reviewable decisions. These may be reviewed by the chief executive on request of the unsuccessful applicant or holder of the permit (**clause 145**).

The rate at which the stock must travel along a stock route is a minimum of 10 kilometres per day (**clause 147**). Failure to ensure that stock travelling under a permit travel the minimum 10 kilometres per day will attract a maximum penalty of \$3,750 (**clause 147**).

6.4 FENCING OF STOCK ROUTES (CLAUSES 148-154)

Local government will have the power to issue fencing notices to land owners for the construction of stock-proof fencing to prevent stock from entering a part of the stock route network. Any land owner who fails to comply (without reasonable excuse) with such a notice may be liable to a maximum penalty of \$30,000. A similar level of penalty also applies to an obligation to maintain the fence in a stock-proof condition.

6.5 STOCK ROUTE NETWORK PASTURE & TRAVELLING STOCK FACILITIES (CLAUSES 160-162)

The existing obligation under s 58 *Rural Lands Protection Act 1985* that local government conserve the natural fodder on stock route land has been preserved in **clause 160** of the Bill. However, the current expectation that local government control stock routes to such an extent that they are at all times in a reasonably fit and proper condition (s 57(1)) is to be replaced by a requirement that this be done as far as practicable (**clause 160**).

Generally, the most appropriate weapon available to local government for the conservation of pasture on stock route land is the limiting of the number of stock that use the network for travel or agistment to appropriate levels under the prevailing weather conditions.

The obligation under s 58 of the *Rural Lands Protection Act 1985* that local government must maintain travelling stock facilities on stock routes is to be retained under the Bill (**clause 162**).

6.6 WATER FACILITY AGREEMENTS (CLAUSES 163-165)

Water facility agreements are currently provided for by s 59 of the *Rural Lands Protection Act 1985*. These agreements will now be authorised under **clause 163** of the Bill. The existing reference to the Minister under s 59 of the Act has not been

included in the corresponding **clause 163** of the Bill. Local government will no longer require ministerial approval to enter into water facility agreements with private land owners and the chief executive will be authorised under **clause 163(1)** to be a party to a water facility agreement along with local government and land owners.

Clause 163(2) of the Bill is more specific than **s 59(3)** of the current Act in that any water facility agreement entered into by local government will now have to stipulate (i) which party owns the water facility and which party is responsible for its control, maintenance and management, (ii) the amount of fee that is payable under the agreement, and (iii) that the agreement may be terminated by written notice from one party to the other party or parties in line with a stated period of notice of termination.

There are subsequent changes to the emphasis of the current water facilities agreements by virtue of the new issue of voluntary termination of agreements that is provided for in the Bill. It is a current requirement under **s 60(1)** of the Act that local government ensure that any such agreements relating to private land are registered on the instrument of land title. This registration would then bind all subsequent owners of land covered by such agreements. **Clause 165** of the Bill will provide for registration on the land title instrument only when the facility that is the subject of an agreement has been financed wholly or partly by the State and only where the written consent of the owner of the land under the agreement has been obtained. **Clause 165** further provides that successors in title to the land will be bound by any water facilities agreement that is in force.

6.7 STRAYING STOCK ON STOCK ROUTES (CLAUSES 166-172)

The Bill provides for the new offence of allowing stock to stray onto stock route land without reasonable excuse for doing so. This offence will attract a maximum penalty of \$7,500 when the number of stock concerned is less than ten and \$30,000 when the number of stock involved is greater than ten.

Owners of seized straying stock will have three days from the printing of a notice in a newspaper circulating in the general area to claim their property and pay reasonable costs of seizure before the chief executive officer of the local government either sells the stock by public auction or otherwise disposes of them (**clause 170**).

Currently, monies realised from the sale/disposal of straying stock are paid into the rural lands protection fund under **s 61(4)**. Under **clause 171** of the Bill that will no longer occur as those monies will be used to cover costs incurred through sale, seizing, removal and holding with the remainder due to the owner of the stock.

Clause 172 specifically provides that straying stock that are found and destroyed will not be the subject of compensation claims against local government if it was not practicable

under the circumstances to seize the stock and the destruction was warranted in the interests of public safety.

6.8 LAND PROTECTION COUNCIL (CLAUSES 189-208)

The Bill establishes a ministerial advisory body to be known as the Land Protection Council. The Council's function will be to give strategic response advice to the Minister on issues concerning the management of recognised pests and the stock route network throughout the State. Membership of the Council is to be drawn from stakeholder groups similar to those constituting membership of the existing Rural Lands Protection Board under s 19 of the Rural Lands Protection Act. However, **clause 193(1)(h)** of the Bill does provide for a person to be appointed to the Council on the basis of conservation interests whereas there is no provision for Board membership on the basis of conservation interests under the current Act.

It will be the role of the Council to provide recommendations (pertaining to issues listed in **clause 190** of the Bill) within a framework that establishes a recognisable strategy that is responsive to issues concerning pest management and stock route network management.

Clause 192 of the Bill places a statutory obligation on the Minister to formally consider recommendations received from the Council and to give a formal response to those recommendations. Under the current legislation there is no requirement that the Minister formally respond to recommendations of the Board.

Clause 206 will introduce into the legislation a requirement that existing or proposed Council members disclose any personal interest that they have in relation to an issue being considered by Council that may conflict with the duty held as a Council member. Currently there is no requirement for Board members to declare any personal interests that they may have.

6.9 PEST OPERATIONAL BOARDS (CLAUSES 213-240)

Pest operational boards may be established for the purpose of pest management within a specific geographical area. These Boards could rightly be regarded as the 'engine room' in the implementation of pest strategies and plans as it is a Board's responsibility to ensure that its area is kept free from declared pests (**clause 217(1)**).

The Minister may give any pest operational board a written direction about the performance of its functions and the exercise of its powers, if such a direction is deemed to be in the public interest (**clause 219**).

Directors of pest operational boards must be appointed by the Minister for a period not exceeding three years. As with directors of the land protection council, there will be a requirement for disclosure of interests. **Clause 228** requires any pest operational board director to declare a direct or indirect financial or personal interest that could conflict with the proper performance of his or her duties. Contravention may attract a maximum penalty of \$1,500.

An interest that is disclosed must be recorded in the minutes of the pest operational board meeting (**clause 228(3)**). This is not the case with meetings of the land protection council as there is no requirement that minutes be kept.

7 AUTHORISED PERSONS AND THEIR POWERS (CLAUSES 244-283)

The chief executive, pest operational boards and local government chief executive officers may appoint people with necessary expertise or experience as authorised persons for the purpose of ensuring compliance with provisions of the Act. Authorised persons who are appointed under the Bill will have similar powers as those authorised persons appointed under the *Rural Lands Protection Act 1985*. However, the Bill introduces *pest survey programs* as instruments by which authorised persons may monitor compliance with provisions of the Bill and/or to conduct monitoring activities of declared pests.

The powers of authorised persons are covered in **clauses 251-283**. These include:

- power of entry of a place when the occupier of the land consents;
- power of entry to public places;
- power of entry when such entry is authorised by a warrant issued by a magistrate;
- power of entry where the authorised person reasonably believes that entry is necessary for ensuring or monitoring compliance with either a pest control notice or an emergency quarantine notice that has been issued for the place;
- power of entry where the authorised person is directed to take action due to a land owner's failure to comply with an emergency quarantine notice;
- power of entry to a permit holder's place of business when the business is open or required to be open for inspection under the operating permit (**clause 251(1)**).

In entering a place under the authority of a warrant issued by a magistrate, an authorised officer may only use reasonable help and force that is necessary in the circumstances (**clause 255**).

Authorised persons will have the power to stop and enter vehicles that are reasonably suspected of being used in the commission of declared pest offences but there is an obligation on the part of the authorised person to firstly seek the consent of the person in control or an occupier of the vehicle (**clause 259(2)(c)**).

It will be an offence for a person in charge of a vehicle to, without reasonable excuse, disobey a signal to stop or not to move the vehicle. The maximum penalty applicable will be \$3,750 (**clause 261**).

Along with the power of entry, authorised persons may do such things as search, inspect, measure, photograph, take samples etc.

The occupier of a place that has been entered by an authorised person commits an offence if he or she refuses, without reasonable excuse, to assist the authorised person in the exercise of his or her powers. This offence will attract a maximum penalty of \$3,000 (**clause 264**).

The right of an authorised person to apply for a special warrant by means of phone, fax, or radio for the purpose of entering a place is in keeping with provisions in other Queensland legislation that has been passed in contemporary times.³¹

8 SERVICES AVAILABLE TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND LAND OWNERS

The Department of Natural Resources and Mines is the leading State agency providing services to local government and land owners concerning pest management. The Department, through its Land Protection Branch, provides a state wide network of Land Protection Officers who are responsible for both the development and implementation of pest plant and animal control initiatives encompassed within State and national strategies.

These officers are available to work with local government, community groups and land owners on the development of pest management plans and stock route management plans at the local level.

³¹ *Vegetation Management Act 1999*, s 34; *Charitable and Non-Profit Gaming Act 1999*, s 123; *Radiation Safety Act 1999*, s 115; *Child Protection Act 1999*, s 173; *Coal Mining Safety and Health Act 1999*, s 137; *Interactive Gaming (Player Protection) Act 1998*, s 202; *Tobacco and Other Smoking Products (Prevention of Supply to Children) Act 1998*, s 36A.

8.1 PEST MANAGEMENT PILOT TRIAL

The Department of Natural Resources and Mines, through the Tropical Weeds Research Centre, is working with the Dalrymple Shire, Department of Main Roads, the Parks and Wildlife Service and Queensland Rail on the Dalrymple Shire State land pest management pilot trial. The object of the trial is to identify strategies that can be usefully employed in coordinating pest management plans for State owned land with the Shire's pest management plan.

The Tropical Weeds Research Centre was opened in Charters Towers in 1985. It functions with a staff of approximately 20 (with a further four officers stationed at the South Johnstone research facility) who specialise in pest management research for the Wet Tropics Region. As with a lot of rural research activities, much of the Centre's research requires the cooperation of private land owners for the conduct of field trials.

The Department of Natural Resources and Mines has also issued a series of guidelines in relation to procedures for minimising the spread of seeds:

- guideline for limiting weed seed spread;
- guideline for clean down procedures;
- guideline for inspection procedures; and
- guideline for the construction of vehicle and machinery wash down facilities.

9 LEGISLATION IN NEW SOUTH WALES FOR TRAVELLING STOCK ROUTES

The New South Wales government is implementing a Biodiversity Strategy that recognises the importance of travelling stock routes to the maintenance of biodiversity values and their contribution as wildlife corridors and sources of revegetation seed.³² As with the Queensland Bill, there is recognition that regional and local communities can play a constructive and important part in the management of stock routes in New South Wales.

The New South Wales strategy recognises the importance of management of vegetation clearing, flora and fauna, fire hazard, weed control and alternative uses on travelling stock routes.

³² Christopher Lacey, 'Legislative Frameworks for Conserving Biodiversity on the Travelling Stock Routes of NSW', *Australasian Journal of Natural Resources Law and Policy*, 5(2), 1998, pp 129-152, p 131.

The specific piece of legislation covering the management of travelling stock routes in New South Wales is the *Rural Lands Protection Act 1998*. Similarly to the provision in the Queensland's Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Bill 2001 that provides for the preparation of stock route management plans by local government,³³ there is a requirement under the New South Wales legislation for Rural Lands Protection Boards to prepare function management plans for stock routes under their care and control.³⁴

9.1 FIRE HAZARD MANAGEMENT

The recent bushfire season took a heavy toll on native forest across New South Wales. The *Rural Fires Act 1997* places a general duty on public authorities to prevent bushfires on land that falls under their control and management. Bush Fire Management Committees established under the Act are responsible for the preparation of bush fire risk management plans.³⁵ Consequently, Rural Lands Protection Boards are obligated to carry out fuel reduction work on travelling stock routes. Stock routes running through areas that are not subject to bush fire risk management plans may not be the subject of fuel reduction work without the preparation of an environmental impact assessment under the *Native Vegetation Conservation Act 1997*.

10 FUNDING UNDER THE NATURAL HERITAGE TRUST

10.1 STOCK ROUTES/FLORA PESTS

In 1998-1999 and 1999-2000 the Barcaldine Shire Council received \$129,000 in funding from the Commonwealth under the Natural Heritage Trust for sustainable management of the biodiversity of the Desert Uplands Stock Routes that fall within the Shire's boundaries.³⁶ A community group known as the Mitchell River Watershed Management Group received \$48,000 in funding from the Trust to conduct an

³³ Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Bill 2001, cl 105.

³⁴ *Rural Lands Protection Act 1998* (NSW), s 44(1).

³⁵ *Rural Fires Act 1997* (NSW), s 52.

³⁶ Australia. Natural Heritage Trust, *Annual Report 1999-2000* <http://www.nht.gov.au/publications/annrpt9900/pubs/nht2.pdf>. Downloaded 5 February 2002.

environmental audit of the stock routes/reserves located in the headwaters of the Mitchell River for the 1998-1999 financial year.³⁷

In 1999-2000 the Queensland Department of Natural Resources received \$141,554 in funding from the Trust under the National Weeds Program as part of the coordinated national approach to weeds management awareness.³⁸

10.2 FAUNA PESTS

In the 1999-2000 financial year, the Department of Natural Resources received \$41,000 in funding from the Trust under the National Feral Animal Control Program to test rabbit control methods at Bulloo Downs.³⁹ Over an 11 day period in 2001 nearly 2500 rabbit warrens were ripped up on Bulloo Downs Station, a 10,000 square kilometre grazing property located south west of Thargomindah. The work took place under the supervision of officers from the Department of Natural Resources. Bulloo Downs is estimated as housing approximately 25% of the State's population of rabbits.⁴⁰

In 1999-2000 the Department also received approximately \$120,000 in funding for research into the development of best practice management of wild dogs and monitoring systems for feral pigs.⁴¹

11 CONCLUSION

It is important that appropriate administrative structures are in place to support weed management for the conservation of biodiversity as this conservation goal requires more comprehensive strategies than simply the removal of targeted noxious species.⁴²

The Land Protection (Pest and Stock Routes Management) Bill 2001 contains provisions establishing an administrative framework for the management of plant and animal pests

³⁷ Australia. Natural Heritage Trust, *Annual Report 1998-1999*, <http://www.nht.gov.au/publications/annrpt9899/pubs/app1.pdf>. Downloaded 5 February 2002.

³⁸ Australia. Natural Heritage Trust, *Annual Report 1999-2000*.

³⁹ Australia. Natural Heritage Trust, *Annual Report 1999-2000*.

⁴⁰ 'Rabbit numbers reduced', *Queensland Country Life*, 31 January 2001, p 2.

⁴¹ Australia. Natural Heritage Trust, *Annual Report 1999-2000*.

⁴² Christopher Lacey, p 133.

and stock routes across the State. The administrative framework will enable the development of programs for the identification and management of recognised exotic evasive weeds and exotic pest animals wherever they occur.

APPENDIX

Hon Stephen Robertson MP, Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines

29 October 2001

Qld To Introduce New Pest, Stock Route Management Laws

The State Government will bring Queensland in line with modern pest and stock route management priorities after Cabinet approved preparation of new land protection legislation today.

Natural Resources Minister Stephen Robertson said the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Bill would reflect the interests of stakeholders involved in weed, feral animal, and stock route management throughout Queensland.

“Local governments, industry bodies, community groups, and individuals have contributed to the drafting process, ensuring the new Bill is in line with the needs of rural communities,” he said.

Mr Robertson said the planned changes would improve the standards of pest and stock route management in Queensland.

“The Department of Natural Resources and Mines will develop state-wide strategies for weeds, pest animals and stock routes,” he said.

“Existing legislation will be broadened so the process of declaring a pest takes into account not only their adverse impacts on primary production, but their social and environmental impacts as well. This is a significant move to protect native habitat and native animals.

“The Bill also addresses the prevention of new pest species entering Queensland, the prevention of spread of new and established species through provisions for emergency declaration, control and quarantine, and reducing spread by human actions.

“The complex pest categorisation system will be reduced from the present five categories for plants and eight for animals to three categories.

“Individual landholders and local governments remain responsible for pests on their land, while the largest land-holding state government departments will be required to develop strategies for managing pests on their lands.”

Mr Robertson said the current Rural Lands Protection Board would be replaced with a Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Council with 15 members from around the State.

“The Council will include increased representation from local government, conservation groups and the community and will advise me on pest and stock route issues,” he said.

“Sustainable management and use of Queensland’s Stock Route Network (stock routes, associated reserves and facilities) will be improved, through

monitoring, controlled burning and grazing, rehabilitation of degraded sites, and regeneration of natural pastures.

“Stock routes will also be defined in maps held by the Department of Natural Resources and Mines.”

Mr Robertson said the new Bill continued the long-standing partnership between state and local government on the issue of pest management and stock routes.

“Local Government will continue to have responsibility for enforcing the legislation and ensuring proper management of pests and stock routes in their area,” he said.

“The introduction of local government area pest management planning will ensure community knowledge and participation in the process of tackling important pest management issues.

“The financial precept system on local government will be modified to recognise the introduction of pest and stock route network management planning for local government areas, and there will be a 50/50 revenue share between State and local government on stock route fees.”

The Bill is expected to be introduced in Parliament in late November.

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