

**PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS TO THE 24TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
OF THE TROPICAL GRASSLAND SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA—1986.**

**THE TROPICAL GRASSLAND SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA: NEW
DIRECTIONS**

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The Tropical Grassland Society is an organic structure that varies in size and activity according to the nourishment it receives and the competition from predatory forces. As President, one of my functions has been to examine the present health of the Society and to make suggestions as to how it may be improved. I present these suggestions in this presidential address; some of these have been adopted by the outgoing committee and some I hope, will be implemented by the incoming committee. Tonight I am able to report not only on the present state of the Society but also on the many decisions taken by this year's committee to halt the decline in both membership and journal subscriptions. To place these decisions in perspective I will consider both the present situation and the past history of the Society.

FORMATION OF THE SOCIETY

In March 1962 Dr. E. F. Henzell circulated to pasture workers a proposal for the formation of a "Queensland Grassland Society" with the objective "to promote the science of grassland farming". Following a favourable response to this circular an Inaugural Committee was formed consisting of W. W. Bryan, L. R. Humphreys, R. J. Jones, J. S. Pulsford and E. F. Henzell for the purpose of arranging an inaugural meeting, preparing a draft constitution and making "general recommendations on the name, membership fees, number, type and location of meetings, etc. of the Society".

The inaugural meeting of the Society was held at the CSIRO Cunningham Laboratory on Tuesday 13th November 1962 and was attended by 40 persons with 25 apologies. Of these 65 persons, 54 became members in the first year of the Society and 27 are still financial members (Table 1). At this meeting J. Griffith Davies suggested that the new organisation should be called the "Tropical Grassland Society". On 12th February 1963 the name "The Tropical Grassland Society of Australia" was adopted together with a constitution and an Executive Committee elected with J. S. Pulsford as the first President. Office holders since 1963 are shown in Table 2.

TABLE 1

Members who attended the formation meeting of the Society held at the Cunningham Laboratory on Tuesday 13 November 1962 (members in 1986).*

G. I. Alexander*	T. W. Elich	D. H. Mackenzie	J. S. Pulsford*
G. H. Allan	T. R. Evans*	S. Marriott*	R. Roc*
C. S. Andrew	F. R. From*	W. O. McCarthy	N. H. Shaw*
A. C. Arvier	J. C. Galletly	K. S. McWhirter	P. J. Skerman*
F. Autry Hall	S. G. Gray	C. H. Middleton*	W. A. T. Summerville
W. W. Bryan	E. F. Henzell*	R. Milford*	F. G. Swain*
N. Cassidy	W. J. C. Hudson	J. K. Murray	G. A. Taylor
A. L. Clothier	L. R. Humphreys*	G. J. Murtagh*	A. Teekman
R. L. Colman*	E. M. Hutton *	D. O. Norris	J. C. Tothill*
J. E. Coaldrake*	R. J. Jones*	H. Ostrowski	L. 't Manneltje*
R. F. de Vis	H. J. Kiers	D. J. Oxenham*	R. J. Williams*
J. Griffith Davies	F. H. Kleinschmidt*	R. Panitz*	J. J. Yates
N. J. Douglas	G. R. Lee*	D. E. Poulsen	
D. F. Dowling	P. E. Luck*	A. J. Pritchard*	

TABLE 2
Office bearers of the Society: 1963-1986.

Year	President	Secretary	Treasurer	Editor
1963	J. S. Pulsford	E. F. Henzell	R. J. Jones	N. H. Shaw
1964	W. W. Bryan	R. J. Jones	G. J. Cassidy	N. H. Shaw
1965	D. E. Poulsen	J. S. Pulsford	G. J. Cassidy	J. C. Tohill
1966	L. R. Humphreys	J. S. Pulsford	C. H. Middleton	J. C. Tohill
1967	E. F. Henzell	J. S. Pulsford	R. L. Hall	J. C. Tohill
1968	J. P. Ebersohn	J. S. Pulsford	R. L. Hall	J. C. Tohill
1969	R. E. Harrison	T. R. Evans	R. L. Hall	J. C. Tohill
1970	N. H. Shaw	T. R. Evans	R. L. Hall	L. 't. Mannetje
1971	P. E. Luck	D. J. Oxenham	K. F. Lowe	L. 't. Mannetje
1972	I. B. Hart	D. J. Oxenham	K. F. Lowe	T. H. Stobbs
1973	N. D. Young	D. J. Oxenham	K. F. Lowe	T. H. Stobbs
1974	J. C. Tohill	M. W. Silvey	R. N. Hassall	D. F. Cameron
1975	B. D. Paulsen	M. W. Silvey	R. N. Hassall	D. F. Cameron
1976	D. G. Cameron	V. G. Corry	R. N. Hassall	L. R. Humphreys
1977	L. 't. Mannetje	V. G. Corry	V. R. Catchpoole	J. B. Hacker
1978	P. C. Whiteman	T. W. Elich	V. R. Catchpoole	J. B. Hacker
1979	W. R. Pechey	T. W. Elich	V. R. Catchpoole	R. M. Jones
1980	W. J. Scattini	T. W. Elich	V. R. Catchpoole	R. M. Jones
1981	T. R. Evans	C. H. L. Nicholson	V. R. Catchpoole	R. A. Date
1982	B. H. Ford	M. H. Shelton	V. R. Catchpoole	R. A. Date
1983	F. H. Kleinschmidt	M. H. Shelton	V. R. Catchpoole	D. G. Cameron
1984	M. B. Joyce	M. H. Shelton	V. R. Catchpoole	D. G. Cameron
1985	B. Walker	M. H. Shelton	V. R. Catchpoole	J. R. Wilson
1986	D. J. Minson	R. C. Gutteridge	V. R. Catchpoole	J. R. Wilson

MEMBERSHIP

In the first year 209 members were enrolled and over the following 10 years there was a uniform increase until a maximum membership of 657 was reached in 1973 (Figure 1). Between 1967 and 1973 membership in Queensland, other than the

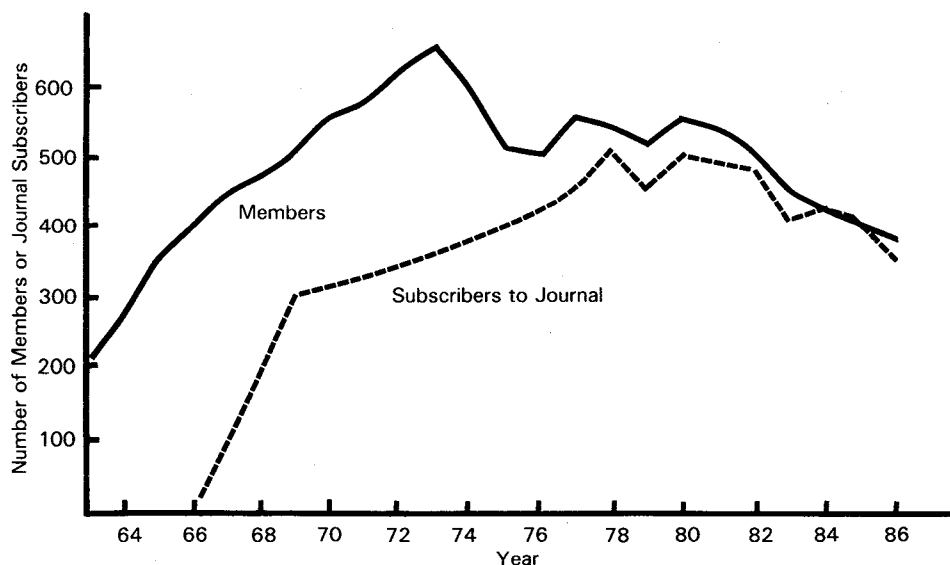


FIGURE 1
Rise and fall in the number of members and subscribers to the journal.

Brisbane area (within 175 km of the GPO), rose by 77% while overseas memberships increased by 620% (Table 3). At this time developments in tropical pastures were occurring rapidly. New forage species and varieties were being released, pasture management systems were being developed and the economic climate in both the beef and dairy industries favoured the sowing of improved tropical pasture species. In the dairy industry the sowing of pastures was encouraged by a subsidy scheme introduced in 1966 by the Queensland Government. Interest in tropical pastures was heightened in 1970 when the XIth International Grassland Congress was held at Surfers Paradise.

TABLE 3
Regional distribution of members of the Society.

Year	Brisbane area (175km)	Other parts Queensland	Other parts Australia	Overseas	Total
	Number (%)	Number (%)	Number (%)	Number (%)	
1967	248 (55)	108 (24)	77 (17)	18 (4)	451
1970	283 (50)	125 (22)	85 (15)	73 (13)	566
1973	269 (41)	191 (29)	85 (13)	112 (17)	657
1976	214 (43)	148 (30)	59 (12)	74 (15)	495
1980	217 (39)	177 (32)	55 (10)	105 (19)	554
1984	181 (43)	90 (21)	62 (15)	89 (21)	422
1986	171 (46)	79 (21)	52 (14)	71 (19)	373

In 1974 there was a crash in world beef prices and economic survival became more important than sowing tropical pastures or applying maintenance fertilizer. Profitability in the dairy industry was increasing but with the recognition of the major contribution of sown temperate species in the sub-tropical areas where most dairy farming is practised, interest by producers in tropical pastures declined. This led to a rapid fall in membership of the Society and by 1976 it had reached 495. The following year membership recovered to 560 but from 1980 onwards there has been a steady fall. By 1986 there were only 373 members, an equivalent number to that 20 years earlier.

Membership of the Society has fallen by 43% since 1973 but is there any pattern in these losses? The membership figures in Table 3 indicate a relatively uniform loss of members in all geographic regions between 1973 and 1984. Half the overseas members come from countries with exchange difficulties and often find it difficult to renew their subscriptions; even so this has not affected the proportion of overseas members (Table 3). A major cause of the drop in membership is the loss of primary producer support. In 1967 there were 207 producer members but by 1986 this had fallen to 63. Over the same period professional membership increased from 244 to 310 (Table 4). Even this level of professional support is lower than it was in 1981.

TABLE 4
Number of primary producers and professionals who were members of the Society.

Year	Primary Producers	Professionals*	Proportion of Primary Producers %	Reference
1967	207	244	46	AGM 1970
1970	192	374	34	Shaw 1971
1980	150	404	27	Evans 1982
1986	63	310	17	Records

*Advisors, Educators, Research workers, Trade etc.

Each year many members leave the Society while others join. The difference between these two figures leads to the changes in membership seen in Figure 1. Members leave the Society at a rate of approximately 50 per year due to death, retirement, change of job, failure to pay subscriptions, etc. The records show they very

rarely rejoin, and from my knowledge of many of these people, I know there is little chance of their renewing membership. Against this background of a fairly uniform loss of members, the main factor influencing total membership will be the number of new members enrolled each year (Table 5). Rate of enrolment was very high in the first 10 years while the Society was expanding and at replacement rate between 1976 and 1980. In the last 5 years the rate of enrolment has been about half the natural wastage rate.

TABLE 5
Numbers of new members enrolled by the Society.

Year	New members	Growth rate
1963	209	
1967	66	EXPANSION
1970	74	
1973	95	
1976	45	
1980	52	MAINTENANCE
1982	34	CONTRACTION
1983	23	
1984	25	
1985	33	
1986	24	

A major aim of the Society has been “to provide members with opportunities for the interchange of ideas and experiences”. To achieve this aim, membership of the Society is open to both primary producers and professional members. In his 1971 Presidential address Mr. N. H. Shaw expressed concern that the loss of producer members from the Society was higher than that of professionals and “that the Society needs to examine what it is doing for farmers”. The problem of the decline in primary producer support was also considered by Mr. T. R. Evans (1982) in his Presidential address. One possible cause he mentioned was the “lack of relevance of many of the papers published in the journal to the particular environments in which farmers operate”. Since his address, primary producer membership has dropped from 27% to 17%, mainly due to the resignation of most primary producer members in the Mackay district. These members wanted a lower subscription rate for producers who did not wish to receive the journal and this was not accepted by the committee at that time.

The reduction in primary producer membership demonstrates that the Society has failed to provide what primary producers want. Many ways have been tried to encourage primary producer membership (Shaw 1971, Evans 1982) but none of these has been sufficient to prevent support from dwindling. A new image might help bring primary producers back to the Society but only if they can see some social or financial benefit in membership. To me this means good field days, an easily read popular newsletter filled with information of economic relevance and a low subscription rate.

In 1986 a subcommittee consisting of D. J. Minson (President), K. Rickert (Vice-President), V. R. Catchpoole (Treasurer), K. Lowe (Acting Editor) and G. T. Adams (Publications Officer) was established to examine the membership fees of the Society. This committee made the following recommendations which were subsequently endorsed by the society.

1. “That the fee for membership of the Society which includes full membership rights, activities and the newsletter but *excluding* “Tropical Grasslands” should be \$15 per annum; membership of the society including full membership rights, activities, the newsletter *plus* “Tropical Grasslands” should be \$30 per annum”.
2. “That the subscription for “Tropical Grasslands” should be sufficient to cover the total cost of printing without the need for a subsidy from members of the Society”.

THE JOURNAL

In 1967 the first issue of "Tropical Grasslands" was published and the Journal now appears 4 times each year. In 1986 the Journal had a circulation of 717 (373 members and 344 subscriptions). The Journal goes to 60 countries, with 78% of the subscriptions coming from overseas libraries. Although the subscription rate for "Tropical Grasslands" is very low compared with that of other journals (Table 6) it is sufficient to cover most of the cost of printing and distribution. Peak circulation occurred in 1980 when the journal was received by 502 members and 555 subscribers (Figure 1).

TABLE 6
Annual subscription for scientific journals in 1986.

	<i>US dollars</i>
Tropical Grasslands	28
Journal of Range Management	74
Grass and Forage Science	96
Japanese J. Grassland Science	110

The journal has aimed at communicating to members of the society and agricultural community the results of original research, activities of the society and the general views of members on developments in tropical pastures. The first issue of the journal contained a delightful mixture of readable practical reviews and descriptions of pastures seen at field meetings. There were no reports on overseas work. Today the journal is mainly an avenue for publishing scientific papers written in the style required by the scientific community. Over 30% of the papers come from overseas and few have immediate economic relevance to practical farming. The reports on field days are of practical interest but their presence may detract from the scientific standing of the journal. In the past 5 years circulation of the journal to both members and libraries has dropped and there is an urgent need for improvements if it is to survive.

In 1986 a subcommittee was appointed to make recommendations on the future of the journal. The committee represented many facets of the society; D. F. Cameron (Editor 1974–75), L. R. Humphreys (President 1966), D. J. Minson (President 1986), J. S. Pulsford (President 1963), K. G. Rickert (Vice President 1986) and W. J. Scattini (President 1980). This committee made the following recommendations and these were adopted by the Society:

1. That submission of papers to the journal be encouraged by the appointment of an Editorial Advisory Board consisting of Australian and overseas scientists.
2. That a manager be appointed to assist the Editor with all aspects of the production and distribution of the journal.
3. That action be taken to increase the number of subscribers to a level which would create interest by international publishers in publishing and distributing the journal on behalf of the Tropical Grassland Society.
4. That speakers at field days should be encouraged to publish their talks as *papers* in the journal. Editorial assistance, perhaps by way of joint authorship, should be made available in cases where a speaker is unable to meet editorial standards as a contributor. In future, *reports* on field days should be published in the newsletter.
5. That the name of the journal remain unchanged for the time being.

THE NEWSLETTER

The Society has produced a newsletter 4 or more times each year. Initially this took the form of reneued sheets of A4 but in 1985 a new format was introduced with a 15 × 21 cm booklet. This has contained topical news and comments, details of

forthcoming meetings and developments of possible economic importance to the industry. The reports on field days will now be included in the Newsletter. This should make it more useful and interesting to primary producer members of the Society.

BOOKS

Many books are now available describing the practical and scientific aspects of tropical pastures. The Society encouraged Dr. J. C. Tothill and Dr. J. B. Hacker to write the book "Grasses of Southern Queensland" published in 1973. It proved very popular and in 1983 an expanded and updated edition was printed. The Society is now encouraging J. B. Hacker to produce a companion book entitled "A guide to the Herbaceous and Shrub Legumes of Southern Queensland". In 1984 the Society started an Occasional Publication Series aimed at helping producers. The first book, "Pastures and Pasture Management in the Tropics and Sub-Tropics" by R. M. Jones, J. C. Tothill and R. J. Jones proved very successful and has recently been reprinted. More recently, I. J. Partridge and G. T. Adams wrote a very popular booklet "Leucaena, the shrub legume for cattle feed". Over half the sales of this series have been to primary producers. Proceedings of the Third Australian Conference on Tropical Pastures was published as the third book in this series.

To promote information on tropical pastures the Society in 1984 decided to market a number of the key books which cover relevant topics. This move has proved very popular with 24 titles currently listed. The Society now has a video on Leucaena which is included as No. 25 on this book list. Most sales are by mail order and these come from many overseas countries as well as from within Australia. These books are made available for purchase at society field days, at major agricultural shows and at selected conferences. The number and total value of books sold continues to rise (Table 7), illustrating the importance of this new venture which is under the control of G. T. Adams and Ann Smith.

TABLE 7
Number and value of books sold by the Society.

Year	Number of books	Gross value (\$)
1984-1985	334	6,326
1985-1986	916	10,235
1986 (6 months)	657	11,863

FIELD MEETING

The society has always placed emphasis on field meetings which are the main forum for contact of primary producers with professional members. In the first 17 years of the society, visits were made to 65 commercial properties and 16 research centres or agricultural companies (Evans 1982). A feature of these meetings has always been a high attendance by farmers and graziers, many of whom are not members of the society. Most of these field days have been held within easy driving distance from Brisbane. In 1977 a symposium entitled "Siratro in Tropical Pastures" was held at St. Lucia as a tribute to Dr. E. M. Hutton's most important contribution to agriculture.

There is an urgent need to increase the number of members of the society, particularly primary producers. These are generally attracted by an active program of field days. Country members of the Society must be helped and encouraged to form local sub-branches of the society which can act as the focal point for organising field-days, with the main branch of the society responsible for publishing the proceedings in the newsletter. Only in this way can the society return to a more desirable balance between producer and professional members.

CONCLUSION

The Tropical Grassland Society of Australia is at a crossroads. Membership has dropped by 43%, subscriptions to the journal by 32%. The one successful innovation is the sale of books on tropical pastures.

To reverse this decline major changes have been implemented in the subscription rate, newsletter and journal. More field days away from Brisbane are proposed to encourage primary producers to join the society. Much of the decline in membership is associated with the decline in profitability of the grazing industries since their heyday when the Society was established. Similarly, the early enthusiasm for the tropical pasture legumes, mostly released around the 1950s–1960s has not been fully justified as their deficiencies have become apparent and pests and diseases have taken their toll. Nevertheless these legumes will continue to play an important role on the farm and it is now, more than ever, important to increase communication between research workers and graziers—and also between graziers—so that the maximum benefit may be reaped from the available cultivars.

For this reason, the Society is looking to its Newsletter, occasional publications and field days as a means of encouraging communication between those working on, or deriving their livelihood from, improved pastures. The evolution of the journal has resulted in a publication which is now of little value to most farmers and it is therefore appropriate that the Society channel its major efforts in other directions. The Journal will continue to be of value to the research community and the Society will work towards ensuring its survival and development.

It is anticipated that these changes will bring new life into our Society through encouraging the interchange of ideas of interest and value to the grazing community who are, after all, the basis for the existence of the Society.

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PERSISTENCE AND PRODUCTIVITY OF *CENTROSEMA VIRGINIANUM* AND *VIGNA PARKERI* CV. SHAW UNDER GRAZING ON THE COASTAL LOWLANDS OF SOUTH-EAST QUEENSLAND

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ABSTRACT

Two introductions and 7 bred lines of *Centrosema virginianum* were grown with *Setaria sphacelata* var. *sericea* cv. *Nandi* and evaluated under common grazing at Beerwah in coastal south-east Queensland. *Macroptilium atropurpureum* cv. *Siratro*, *Desmodium intortum* cv. *Greenleaf*, *Centrosema* sp. aff. *pubescens* cv. *Belalto* and the recently released creeping vigna (*Vigna parkeri*) cv. *Shaw* were included in the experiment. From 1978 to 1982 the experiment was grazed for 4 days every 3 weeks, equivalent to a stocking rate of 1.5 beasts/ha on a full-year basis. From 1982 to 1986 this stocking rate was maintained on half the experiment and the other half was grazed at 2.3 beasts/ha (6 days every 3 weeks).

Siratro produced the highest yield in the first year but by the end of the experiment all *C. virginianum* lines outyielded *Siratro* at the lighter stocking rate. The best *C. virginianum* line at the end of the experiment, a composite cross based on 7 parents,