

Pastures for protection and production on marginal cropping lands

Proceedings of the Seventh Australian Tropical Pastures Conference held at Dalby, Queensland, in April 2007

A Welcome from the President

As President of the Tropical Grassland Society, I extend a very warm welcome to participants — guests, members and visitors — to this 7th Australian Tropical Pastures Conference and to the field tour here at Dalby. I would like you all to participate actively in the discussions and hopefully take something away that you can use in your work or enterprise. Most importantly, enjoy the company and the networking.

We have tried to focus this conference to suit the region and the changing land use of the area. About half of the Condamine River catchment is still used for grazing, even though there has been large-scale subdivision and many producers do not make their living solely from grazing; their off-farm income allows them to have the best quality of life — rural living and urban income.

The title *Pastures for protection and production on marginal cropping lands* reflects a change in thinking towards pastures. We can no longer look at pastures, native or sown, merely as a resource to use for increasing production. Long-term community needs and standards require that we all have a responsibility to ensure that the land and water resource is used in a sustainable way for the benefit of all and for future generations.

This Conference addresses some of the land use issues that pasture can improve. We will examine the challenges of the variable climate and whether seasonal climate forecasting can reduce the age-old risks in establishing and managing pastures, especially those on heavy clay soils. The run-down of soil fertility after long-term cropping and how it might be slowed or reversed will be examined. We will hear about selecting the most suitable species and about grazing management practices that limit weed

invasion, improve water quality and reduce the threats of salinity.

The Tropical Grassland Society of Australia Inc., that is facilitating this event, was formed in November 1962 with the aim *to promote the science of grassland farming*. It was formed at the time of the 'Pasture Revolution', when there was a major push to augment or replace native pastures with their inherent deficiencies. The Society has evolved over time to a broader base to cater for the development of practical technology out on the 'farm'.

Today, membership of the Society includes graziers and farmers, agri-business, scientists, consultants, extension people, students and industry funding agencies. Now we are attracting new members from natural resource management bodies and Landcare coordinators, who need our technical expertise and support to progress their Natural Resource plans.

We produce a technical journal, *Tropical Grasslands*, as well as a newsletter, *TGS News & Views*. You will also find us on the internet at www.tropicalgrasslands.asn.au. Membership details are available at the Conference. Please look us up.

I thank our sponsors for this year's event. Our financial major sponsors are A.W. Howard Memorial Trust, Condamine Alliance, Queensland Murray Darling Committee, CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems, Meat & Livestock Australia, Heritage Seeds, Progressive Seeds, David Illing Pastures and Southedge Seeds with the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, Queensland contributing time and organisation.

My final thanks go to the team who have worked tirelessly to organise this program, the speakers and the field tours for this Conference in Dalby.

Please enjoy the Conference.

George Lambert
President

Tropical Grassland Society of Australia