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the STOCK ROUTES COALITION

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Brief Statement on the Queensland Stock Route Network and the New South Wales Travelling Stock Routes

Although their use has decreased, the stock routes of NSW and Qld provide a valuable service to travelling stock, as well as an emergency drought refuge. With steeply **rising fuel prices** their use is likely to increase again.

For over 100 years their managers (Rural Land Protection Boards in NSW and Local Governments in Qld) have maintained their grazing value and incidentally their biodiversity values. The light and intermittent grazing regimen has ensured that the native vegetation is mostly in reasonable condition and that **reservoirs of native seed persist**.

Many cross cleared agricultural and pastoral landscapes and provide **habitat for flora and fauna** lost from the surrounding areas. The only surviving examples of some Regional Ecosystems are on stock routes.

In many places they are the only source of **connectivity** in the landscape, providing corridors for the movement of wildlife and plants. Stock routes incorporate a variety of local landforms, and vegetation types. Stock routes often contain fertile soils and much greater biodiversity than adjoining private grazed or cropped land.

Some flora and fauna are likely to be adversely affected by **climate change**. Stock routes provide east-west and north-south corridors for these species west of the Dividing Range.

The iconic *Long Paddock* also has **cultural values** associated with indigenous trade routes and sites of archaeological significance. Both indigenous and non-indigenous peoples have family and personal connections to certain stock routes. Stock routes have links with exploration and settlement.

Objectives

To maintain the value of the stock routes for travelling stock and for biodiversity, it is important that the NSW and Qld governments

1. recognise and embed the conservation values¹ of the existing stock route networks in policy and protect them in the day-to-day management of the stock routes,
2. create by legislation, Protected Corridors² for Travelling Stock and Biodiversity to encompass the entire remaining Travelling Stock Routes in NSW and the Stock Route Network in Qld and
3. contribute the necessary ongoing financial support from environmental budgetary sources reflecting the public interest conservation component and for enhancement of the stock routes networks through the Regional Funding Component of the Australian Government's NRM Initiative.
4. put an immediate freeze on disposal or lease of any segments of the stock routes until they have taken account of their potential benefits for biodiversity under climate change,

1. For a comprehensive listing of the values embedded in the stock routes, see the Coalition's full policy document at <http://www.basq.org.au/stockroutes/TSR.htm>

2. Definition of Protected Corridors for Travelling Stock and Biodiversity Conservation:

The entire network of stock routes and reserves for travelling stock which are retained permanently in public ownership, and which are:

- (a) managed for the benefit of travelling stock
- (b) managed as habitat and landscape linkages for the long term maintenance of biodiversity (including fauna, flora, ecosystem services and ecological communities generally); and
- (c) maintained to conserve the Australian Heritage values and rural landscapes embedded within the network and
- (d) with policy, management and practices to ensure that the Stock Route Network is maintained to meet all these purposes.

The Stock Routes Coalition is a group of organisations who have come together to have the NSW and Queensland Stock Routes declared 'Protected Corridors for Travelling Stock and Biodiversity', managed by the current managers and adequately resourced with supplements from public funds.

(For more information see www.basq.org.au/stockroutes/TSR.htm)