



## Stock routes at risk under new system

A new system to manage Queensland's stock route network has peak farm group AgForce very concerned for the future of the 'long paddock'.

Natural Resources Minister Rachel Nolan has introduced a Bill to Queensland parliament proposing Local Governments be given stronger powers to manage the state's 72,000-kilometre stock route network.

AgForce recognises the value of stock routes not only to support travelling and grazing livestock, but also as a critical way to protecting environmental, cultural and indigenous values.

However AgForce Cattle director Peter Hall said the governments' proposed changes won't deliver equity across all stakeholder groups.

"We are concerned the Bill makes stock routes a 'cash cow' for local governments, but gives no assurances that revenue raised will be ploughed back into protecting the network," Mr Hall said.

AgForce freely accepts more money needs to be raised to care for stock routes, but questions whether these changes create a more robust and equitable long-term management plan for the system.

Mr Hall said the Bill recommends producers pay for their livestock to regularly graze sections of the stock route under "Grazing Authorities" (GA's), but said the rents charged could be far higher than compatible leasehold land.

"The changes give local councils the right to strike annual grazing fees up to 3% of the stock routes unimproved capital value (UCV) - that is double the land rents charged by the state government on all other leasehold grazing country.

"We don't object to paying more, but we think it's only fair fees are comparable to leasehold land rentals that are charged at 1.5% of UCV."

Mr Hall said AgForce is also disappointed that shire councils have been granted the power to issue Grazing Authorities on state and local government roads and that again, the rates collected could be double leasehold land rents.

"What started out as a review of stock routes, has now opened the door for local councils to derive revenue from local roads that run through cattle properties," Mr Hall said.

AgForce is also concerned that a new three-tiered classification system for stock routes could see substantial sections of the network permanently fenced and shut-down to GA's.

“While some stakeholders might think this protects stock routes, practically speaking it means a critical income stream from stock routes will be lost and the network starved of funds.

“Our intention all along has been to create an efficient, self-funding stock route system that caters for travelling stock, controlled grazing and protection of biodiversity and cultural values.”

AgForce will continue to push for all these important roles to be recognised and hopes to meet with Minister Nolan to explain why the new system won't deliver these objectives.

“We are aware the state government has already tried to dismiss our concerns by suggesting AgForce members simply don't want to pay to use the network. That is an unfair assessment of the constructive and inclusive role we have played in this long-running process.”

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**Who is AgForce?** AgForce represents thousands of Queensland broadacre producers who recognise the value in having a strong voice. AgForce leads the way to ensure agriculture's social, economic and environmental contribution is recognised by all levels of government. AgForce works alongside landholders, encourages and supports the next generation, builds industry partnerships and skills and promotes agriculture - for secure, sustainable, progressive and profitable food and fibre into the future.