

Local Land Services Review

Serrated Tussock Working Party (STWP) Perspectives

Boundaries

1. The current proposal is a reasonable compromise, subject to any marginal or relatively small changes based on bioregions and community of interest (including production and land use areas), and to ensure that LLS boundaries align directly with local government boundaries.
2. Many issues will extend beyond the boundaries of a single LLS area (eg, serrated tussock is an issue in at least nine of them), and so there needs to be:
 - a means of compelling interaction among neighbouring LLS bodies on matters of common interest, and
 - a requirement for each area planning process to explicitly have regard to neighbor and Statewide interests and priorities.
3. There also needs to be a mechanism for developing and enforcing State-wide and multi region strategies and plans; simply saying that New South Wales agencies will achieve this is not good enough.

Governance

1. Greatest community acceptance and cooperation will occur if a majority of LLS Board members are elected. This would be consistent with the stated aim of local emphasis, the payment of 'rates' by landholders, and the need to avoid any semblance of top down control (subject to LLS boards being bound by any framework rules based on point 2. and 3. under 'Boundaries' above).
2. Regardless of the outcome of 1., the Chair should be one of the elected members.
3. There should be no Ministerial role in Chair appointments – this should be for each Board only.
4. Acceptance of 1. and 2. eliminates the need to consider the idea of someone appointing selection committees to consider Board nominations - if such committees were appointed by the Minister, or a State LLS body, the concept of local control would immediately be lost, costs would increase, avenues for disputation would open up, and the credibility of the whole system would suffer.

5. Continuous consultation systems, eg as used by the Commonwealth and ACT governments, should be adopted, preferably required by legislation, rather than establishment of standing consultative committees, as the former allows participation by all while the latter is top down and exclusive.
6. The proposal for Local Community Advisory Groups is inconsistent with the concepts of election of Board members, accountability to all the community and continuing consultation and involvement of the whole community.
7. The framework legislation needs to cover points 2. and 3. under 'Boundaries' above.
8. The machinery for determining neighbor and State-wide interests and priorities needs to involve positive interaction between State agencies, including the Natural Resource Commission, and the LLSs.
9. The machinery for determining and enforcing neighbour and State-wide issues is not to be confused with the separate Council of LLS Chairs.
10. A continuing forum should be established to ensure positive interaction between the LLSs and the many interested parties, eg, State, ACT and Commonwealth agencies, service easement and similar managers, water managers, local government, voluntary and service organisations, rural industries, rural suppliers, the real estate and land development industry, the nursery and garden industry and the mining industry. This is consistent with the pre election statement that effective weed control requires a coordinated approach, and cooperation and collaboration by all parties.
11. The Natural Resource Commission provides a basis for performance like audits, but will be effective for the purpose only if its resources are increased and its mode of operation change.

Funding

1. The LLS budgets need to include sufficient Government sourced funds to cover 'public good' investments.
2. The public land and local government budgets need to be increased sufficiently to enable public land managers to accept the same level of obligations as private land managers, as effectively promised before the last election.
3. The Commonwealth needs to be convinced to contribute sufficient funds to the management of its activities that affect land in the State and the ACT so that it meets equivalent obligations.

4. As everyone benefits from better land management, urban dwellers should contribute to LLS financing, even if indirectly, eg, through a component from the State budget identified as such.
5. The issue of financing would be greatly simplified by introduction of a general land tax system with universal application.
6. IPART should not be involved in LLS financing arrangements until there is greater clarity about the principles to underlie those arrangements.

Services

1. Weeds management should be included in the LLS jurisdiction, consistent with the pre election statements about the need for coordination, cooperation and collaboration.
2. Arrangements to ease the transition from the current weed management system to LLS management should be developed through consultation among the affected parties, eg, the State government, local government and interested parties such as STWP.
3. As soon as possible, County Councils should be established to cover all parts of the State, with boundaries all within or contiguous with LLS boundaries.
4. The LLS functions should be based on a new Biosecurity Act.
5. For this purpose, biosecurity involves preventing or minimising the impact of risks of adverse effects on human health, social amenity, the economy and the environment, including from weeds.
6. Success with biosecurity requires continuous improvement of the natural landscape in the interests of restoring degraded landscapes and managing landscapes to avoid new degeneration. Pre election commitments included improved regeneration of degraded bushland.
7. Points 5. and 6. above involve a mixture of existing CMA, LHPA and weeds management functions, that need to be integrated or managed in ways that respect production and other land use values and practices while minimising their potential adverse landscape impacts; this approach was foreshadowed in pre election statements linking agriculture, the natural environment and weeds management.
8. The LLS functions could include advice, assistance (practical and financial), data collection, monitoring and reporting, inspection and

regulation, consistent with current CMA and LHPA responsibilities, but formal compliance arrangements, eg, initiation of prosecutions, should be separate, eg, with a State Government agency.

Note: See summary and structure on next page

Revised LLS Summary

- **Regional Local Land Services** run by majority and locally elected people on Boards, with some appointed members
- The **Chair** of each Local Land service Board will be one of the elected members, elected by the Board
- Each Local Land Service Board will have **operational autonomy** and be at arms length from the State Government, subject to compliance with State-wide plans and priorities and regard for impacts for neighbouring Local Land Services areas
- A **Council of Chairs** will consider common issues and cooperation mechanisms, including governance issues
- The **Chair** of each Local Land Services Board will sit on the Council of Chairs
- Local Land Services Boards will work **closely and openly** with landholders, local communities, government agencies and local government to identify and **deliver services** that are relevant to **local needs**, subject to compliance with State-wide plans and priorities and regard for impacts for neighbouring Local Land Services areas
- Land Service Boards will **involve their communities** and affected parties in developing strategic plans that have regard to community values and expectations, and will be subject to annual reporting and audit processes.
- Each Local Land Services Board will establish **open and continuous community consultation** processes, and may arrange as needed **specialised consultation and advisory processes**
- The State Government will establish machinery involving Local Land Service Boards and other interested parties to develop and oversee **State-wide policies and programs** for biosecurity, agricultural productivity, emergency response, natural resource management, weeds management and any relevant research and development
- A **forum** will be established to enable **continuing positive interaction** between Local Land Service Boards and the many parties to facilitate successful achievement of Local Land Services goals

- An adequately resourced and staffed independent body to **audit**, regularly or as required, the **performance** and **results** of the Local Land Services Boards
- The Local Land Services system will be incorporated in a **new Biosecurity Act**

Proposed structure for Local Land Services system

