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Submission:

Stakeholder Reference Panel's consultation outcomes should be used as a guide. Each LLS should be able to apportion cost shares for LLS services. If necessary, they should be able to show why they have departed from the outcomes of the Panel. Care should be used not to spend many resources in apportioning costs. Thought should be given to information obtained on a farm being able to be shared with others. Thus in many cases, there would be no charge for farm visits. Eg, in the past we participated in Weaner Growth Weight Trials with the District Veterinarian. One or two other trials were run, enabling the DV to have current knowledge and give seasonal advice to other graziers.

A base rate, and for larger holdings, notional stock carrying capacity with possible use of crop yield capacity should be used as the rating system.

Land area ratings should not be used. Often larger holdings of not very productive land would pay excessive rates.

Unimproved land value rating should also not be used as holdings in favourable areas, eg., near cities, would pay large amounts of rates. Rates should have some relationship to earning capacity. To adjust land value or area rating to relate to earning capacity would be very subjective.

I believe the rate base should be substantially increased. Smaller holdings are often the greater bio-security risk than those on commercial farms, due to the farmer's knowledge and dependence on the farm for income.

Even though it is enshrined in legislation that those setting aside land for conservation should not be offered decreased rating.

These people make a commercial decision and other ratepayers should not have to support them. I can visualise mines setting up large conservation areas and also using them for carbon offsets and I see no reason why ratepayers should subsidise them.

The Office of Environment and Heritage has, due to an endangered butterfly, closed stock routes north of Moree, thus depriving LHPA's and LLS's of income. I believe that this should be a charge met by the public. There are rumours that what are currently LHPA rates will only be used to fund bio-security measures. I would support this outcome. The use of stock routes by the farming community is so small these days that I believe they should be supported by the public and on those occasions that they are used by stock, then the stock owners should pay for this use.