

Response to Submission from the Local Land Services Board of Chairs Submission

from the

Serrated Tussock Working Party for NSW and the ACT

The STWP strongly supports the proposal that there be no inhibition on integration of LLS funds from multiple income streams to deliver its broad suite of services.

The STWP supports the adequate addressing of intensive agriculture as proposed. It also believes that the same approach should be applied to other intensive industries on rural land, eg, restaurants, accommodation services, and construction or similar depots and offices. These activities commonly involve biosecurity risks, even if only from increased movement of people and vehicles.

It follows that we support the proposal that all landholders contribute, and that this should include commercial and industrial land. There should be no exemptions. As previously recommended, the preferable outcome would be that all rates are collected by local government, which should be properly recompensed for this. Education programs aimed at the smaller scale and urban rate payers are desirable.

If local government is not used to collect rates on a universal basis, a different system will need to be developed to overcome the gross unfairness involved if only rural interests are paying for LLS services that benefit the whole community. Such systems would inevitably be more complex and usually produce more uncertain outcomes. This is already evident from the establishment of a new voting roll for LLS elections, when use of the local government roll is available as an option.

There should be no exemptions. Defining LLS services for industries is necessary. This cannot normally be done by dealing with 'key industry groups'. Often there is no real industry, eg, there is not a 'horse' industry, but rather a great number of horse owners with differing interests, resources and motivations. Similarly in horticulture there are many tree owners unconnected with an 'industry'. In addition, in Australian farming most enterprises involve more than one activity, eg, livestock and cropping or horticulture. With others, there are critical links, eg beekeeping and many plant industries. Therefore while involvement of industry groups is important, it will be equally important to take an integrative and comprehensive approach and involve all elements of an issue and all parties in determining risk creation obligations and contributions.

We agree with the need for flexibility to allow for regional variations, provided there are safeguards to prevent flexibility being used to favour any particular interests or to frustrate successful achievement of broader regional or State-wide goals.

The STWP agrees with the need for all land managers to deal responsibly with their risk management and biosecurity obligations. There is, however, a great variety of these land managers, and so no simple 'one size fits all' approach is available. We agree with the need for the LLS to engage with these land managers to determine how they will contribute to the overall effort. In some cases, a rating approach may be appropriate, while in others, eg, local government, it would not. In some cases, the State government would need to be involved, eg, it controls national parks budgets, and some commercial operations will be constrained by legislation. The Commonwealth government is a substantial land manager in New South Wales. The State government will need to seek appropriate undertakings from the Commonwealth to fit in with the State-wide system.

While the STWP agrees with the need to educate small landholders about LLS functions, it would be a mistake to assume that larger landholders do not still require education about the issues.