ACTION PLAN
FOR THE CONSERVATION OF THE STOCKROUTE NETWORK WITH ITS VEGETATION AND WILDLIFE.

- **Introduction**

Reserves for travelling stock incorporating access to water, were created by custom and legislation as land was made available for commercial occupation and officially surveyed. Stock routes have always been associated with water points and logical pathways between water; consequently, they have often coincided with traditional Aboriginal pathways. In both NSW and Qld, most stock routes were established within a few years either side of the 1860's decade and have remained largely intact since then. Major vegetation clearance commenced only slightly later (estimated between 1893 and 1921, 25.7 million ha was cleared for agriculture in NSW) but with the fortunate result that the already set aside stock routes retained their original vegetation. From their time of establishment, stockroutes and their associated camp reserves were managed to preserve the best possible conditions for walking livestock. This ensured an intermittent grazing regime of periods of light use alternating with occasional heavy grazing which persisted for something more than100 years. Fortuitously, the regime suited the vegetation which retained original characteristics. During the first century of use stock routes were maintained by regional bodies at the cost of the beneficiaries, local landowning ratepayers and the droving users.

Over the same period, generally, other factors have operated on the rest of the countryside changing it far from original condition to a productive but alien landscape. The flora and much of the dependant fauna and biodiversity now have refuge across the landscape only on the SRN. If the stockroute vegetation were to be removed or degraded the Australian characteristic we enjoy will be lost and the landscape itself will be degraded.

Over the last 40 years, road transport has replaced droving as the preferred means of moving livestock and the need for the Stock Route Network has diminished to the point where local authorities and ratepayers are reluctant to bear the cost of its maintenance and there is pressure for alternative revenue generation and dispersal. One means of improving revenue is by leasing sections of stock route for permanent grazing by adjacent landholders. This grazing regime change and dispersal both lead to reversing the factors that have preserved the vegetation values for 140 years and leads to degeneration of both pasture and remnant.

- **The Need**

Those now responsible for the SRN need wide community support for the maintenance of the values it retains and particularly, they need to be adequately financed for their task.

- **The Objective**

The Stock Route Network evolves into a nationally maintained network that preserves its biodiversity and conserves the deep Aboriginal and Australian heritage values in perpetuity.

- **How to achieve the Objective**
  - Generate common objectives between NSW RLPB's and QLD Shires
    - Gather data on nearby TSRs (Waggamba, Inglewood, Stanthorpe current management and problems; use; biodiversity, tourism, cultural, history; etc
  - Establish a coalition of interests in the SRN
    - Stakeholders
      - RLPB's & Shires
      - QMDC and other landcare groups
      - NPA, WWF, WPSQ; other environmental organisations
      - Ratepaying landholders
      - Heritage interests
      - Tourism promoters
      - Natural history interests
    - Potential promotional identities
      - Stockmans' Hall of Fame
      - Bruce Simpson (Drovers' Memorial)
      - John Williamson (True Blue etc)
      - BA, BA regionals, BOCA etc
      - Associations representing RLPBs & Shires (Local Government Association of Queensland Inc.)
  - Promote the values of the SRN
    - One ecological evaluation group is required for each RLPB & Shire
      - When requested, an evaluation needs to be conducted and reported to the RLPB/Shire
    - Disseminate ideas for heritage & tourism projects
  - Develop a long term SRN conservation and management plan.
    - quantify long term finance for the maintenance and conservation of the SRN.
      - Finance:
        - 100% of SRN revenue retained by shire/RLPB for SRN maintenance
        - State financed fund for Capital SRN works
      - Management of grazing regime
        - Control grazing to achieve an average moderate stock rate
        - Intermittent stocking – avoid constant grazing.
      - Vegetation management
        - Weed (and pest) control
        - Reduction of undue shrub and tree thickening
        - Restoration of sand soil and gravel quarry sites
      - Maintenance of installed assets
        - Effective fencing
        - Stock water assets
  - Develop ideas for a sustainable SRN future
      - UQ, USQ, Griffiths for students to carry out research projects (at all levels)

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- **Implement a co-ordinated, national campaign.**