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voice for livestock producers

LIVESTOCK SA...

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Draft Outback Bushfire Management Area Plan

Livestock SA was formed in 2013 to represent the interests of beef cattle, sheep and goat producers across South Australia, including the pastoral region. Currently Livestock SA has 3,500 members.

On behalf of its pastoral members, Livestock SA wishes to raise a couple of issues in relation to the draft Outback Bushfire Management Area Plan.

- **Terms of reference:**

While appreciating that the terms of reference outlining the role and responsibility of the Outback Bushfire Management Committee primarily needs to be related to bushfire management, Livestock SA believes that in addition to considering the environment and land management, that part f) needs to be expanded with an addition point about also “having due regard to property viability.” Maintaining viable grazing/livestock businesses needs to part of the land and fire management in this part of the State.

- **Buffel grass:**

It is concerning that the Outback Bushfire Management Committee wants buffel grass recognised as a declared weed in Western Australia and Northern Territory.

Earlier this year, Livestock SA made a submission on the draft South Australia Buffel Grass Strategic Plan 2018 – 2023. This includes the following from a survey of pastoralists:

Some of the points that have been made by producers to Livestock SA that need to be considered in revising the draft Strategic Plan include:

- *Buffel grass has become a very important feed resource, and it is so endemic in the north, removal is out of question.*

- *To attack selected sections of buffel grass is a waste of resources and money. To create control, attention needs to be given to the outer perimeter,*
- *Although landholders are required to eliminate buffel grass, there is a low number of people who have huge areas to manage and little financial assistance to make an impact.*
- *The number of plants missed while spraying in areas between Port Augusta, Port Pirie and Port Neil is disappointing. Roads and rail corridors are the main vector for spreading seed, if eradication is not 100% effective, the whole exercise is futile.*
- *There should be a different control requirement above Port Augusta, as against south of Port Augusta, to recognise the feasibility of successful eradication.*
- *At the end of the day it is good stock feed. It also does not affect the quality of wool in sheep as the seed does not penetrate.*

Buffel grass is a very palatable feed resource for many operators and particularly in this extremely dry time, producers are not going to eradicate a grass that is maintaining their livestock's condition and reducing soil erosion. "It's ability to reshoot before any of the native species means that it will be grazed first, often allowing native grasses to grow and set seed before being grazed by livestock. As it prefers to colonise disturbed ground it is very helpful in stabilising areas where earthworks have been carried out to prevent erosion and further degradation." Buffel grass is a drought tolerant, reliable feed source that "turns poor value land into high value grazing land and keeps core breeders alive in drought conditions."

[For the full Livestock SA submission, see <https://livestocksa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/9L007a-Buffel-grass-strategic-review.pdf>.]

While there must be management of buffel grass where considered a high fire risk (such as around key assets), it should not be in the Committee's remit to try and influence what happens in other jurisdictions.

Please let me know if any further detail is required to clarify these points.

Your faithfully



Andrew Curtis