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Reflections on the future use of rural land in Australia.

It is clear that Queensland pastoral lands, in spite of the best efforts of pastoralists, are deteriorating. There are natural resource, climatic, economics, social and management reasons for this. My experience within the then Queensland Department Industries (soil conservation, extension services, land resource and Strategic Policy Unit) and the then Queensland Department of Natural Resources and Mines (Land Planning) indicates that there is a mismatch between the economics of pastoral use and how such lands need to be managed.. An example being the failure to recognise the potential economic use of eastern grey kangaroos for food and leather.

The following reflections of Professor Miles have merit:

- That drought is part of our normal operating environment.
- The productivity of cropping lands and pastoral lands will continue to decline largely due to inappropriate management by all landholders including Governments.
- The need to lower grazing pressure even though this might require property amalgamations

The long-term viability of pastoral land will be difficult while:

- There is a major divide between the perspectives of rural and urban people on the importance of primary industries to the national economy.
- Long term planning for achieving duty of care for land is expected of rural producers and industries but not for the three levels of Government.
- Competition rather than cooperation exists between the three levels of Government and rural industries and rural landholders.
- Governments fail to support and encourage rural industries to undertake an appropriate role in meeting both community and private interests.
- The extension support to rural producers is primarily based on the efforts of volunteers involved in Landcare and NRM Catchment Committees.

It is beholden on the 3 levels of Government to provide a lead in seeking a way forward.

While Geoff Edwards paper suggests the use of funding that recognises eco-services unless the community and hence politicians recognise this the existing situation is unlikely to change.

Bio:

Extensive experience in natural resource management at a regional planning; impact assessment; research; communication; policy and operational levels with the Queensland and Commonwealth Governments. From August 2001 to March 2013 was a consultant in policy and planning particularly relating to the use and management of rural lands. Experience includes involvement in the development and application of land use planning and management legislation (Queensland *Integrated Planning Act 1997*; State Planning Policy 1/92 on *Development and Conservation of Agricultural Land*; and, State planning policy guidelines for the separation of rural and residential land uses). Now fully retired. Fellow of the Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand and a member of Soil Science Australia.