



The Australian Rangeland Society

Ulaan Chultem
Minister for Food, Agriculture and Light Industry of Mongolia
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Enkhtaivnii urgun chuluu 16a Bayanzurkh duureg.
Ulaanbaatar
MONGOLIA.

12 November 2019

Dear Minister

I am writing to confirm that the Australian Rangeland Society (ARS) is a strong supporter of the proposed International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP), and is committed to support the IYRP with events in Australia.

The Australian Rangeland Society

The Australian Rangeland Society (<https://www.austrangesoc.com.au/>) was established in 1974 with the principal objectives being:

- to promote the advancement of the science and art of using Australia's rangeland resources for all purposes commensurate with their continued productivity and stability;
- to encourage and reward the study of rangeland science and improved rangeland management;
- to provide a means for the interchange of ideas and information amongst Society members and with those of allied disciplines concerned with rangelands; and
- to hold periodical meetings of Society members in different parts of Australia.

In 2019, the Australian Rangeland Society has about 300 members, including land managers, scientists, policy makers and extension personnel. Most of the members live and work in Australia, but there are members living and working in all of the world's rangeland regions. The Society is governed by a Council of eight persons, with several honorary appointments assisting in the work of the Society.

The Australian rangelands

Australia could be called the 'rangeland continent' given that 80 per cent of its landmass is rangeland. The rangelands are sparsely populated, with resident people representing less than two per cent of Australia's total population of about 25 million; with 40 per cent of the population living in the cities of Sydney and Melbourne. A relatively high percentage of the rangeland population are Indigenous, being 28 per cent of the total.

Pastoralism – grazing animals on native vegetation across 3.45 million km² – is the dominant land use in the rangelands and supports about 6,000 farm businesses which graze nine million cattle, mainly in the northern rangelands and five million sheep, which are nearly all grazed in the southern rangelands.

The rangelands face challenges such as climate change, a declining population in some areas, lack of good telecommunications, and occasional disasters caused by floods, droughts and fires. The total economic contribution of pastoralism masks the challenges in maintaining profitability, with pastoral enterprises typically providing returns on capital of one to two per cent. On the positive side, the quality of Australian biophysical and socio-economic research in the rangelands is high, and the resourcefulness of rangeland people is legendary.

How the Australian Rangeland Society will support the IYRP

The ARS will highlight the International Year through its publications and will provide tangible support and seek sponsorship funds from within Australia specifically for this purpose. The Society produces *The Rangeland Journal* (<https://www.publish.csiro.au/rj>) a prestigious journal covering rangeland environmental, livestock production and socio-economic topics, with six issues distributed annually. Each year, *The Rangeland Journal* produces two 'special issues' each with a focus on a particular topic or theme. These special issues are very popular, cite well and are funded externally. The ARS commits to a special issue specifically celebrating the IYRP, with papers commissioned or contributed that enhance the profile of the rangelands and the pastoralists that live and work in them. ARS will arrange for all papers in the issue to be Open Access to ensure that a wide range of stakeholders can read this information without any charge. The Society's *Range Management Newsletter*, which is produced three times a year, will also publish articles promoting the IYRP.

The ARS maintains a website, which carries material relevant to the rangelands, and social media including Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Our social media platforms will also build interest in and support for the IYRP amongst stakeholders, with material relevant to Australia, as well as to rangelands in other parts of the world.

The Society commits to holding a major event related to the theme of '*The International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists*' aligned with other activities around the world. This event will highlight the importance of the Australian rangelands and their attributes in a national and international context, the achievements in rangeland management and the challenges facing pastoralists in an increasingly uncertain climatic and socio-economic environment. Typically, Australian Rangeland Society meetings attract between \$50,000 and \$90,000 in sponsorship; the added profile of the IYRP is likely to increase that amount for IYRP activities.

Additional activities that the ARS will organise include a series of seminars in major population centres promoting the IYRP, with the objective of encouraging public and private stakeholders to increase their investment in rangelands research, development and extension, and increase community awareness of rangeland issues. Key targets for involvement will include universities, research and development corporations, the National Farmers Federation and affiliates, peak Indigenous organisations and private conservation bodies.

In summary, the Australian Rangeland Society is firmly committed to the proposed International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists. The society will align its activities and the resources to the IYRP thus building the profile of the world's rangelands and the people who rely upon them.

Yours faithfully,



David Phelps, President and Director,
Australian Rangeland Society