

A shared purpose: increasing environmental, community and industry resilience in the Australian rangelands through improved natural resource management

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Introduction

Almost 80% of the Australian continent is rangelands, spanning 3500 km (2200 miles) east to west and 2200 km (1400 miles) north to south. This vast region, equating broadly with the ‘outback’, contains diverse landscapes including savannas, woodlands, shrublands, grasslands and wetlands.

The Australian Rangeland Society has been promoting the science and art of rangeland management, both nationally and internationally, for almost 50 years. As part of its commitment to foster dialogue, the Society hosts a national conference every 2 years. These conferences are typically held in remote or regional towns within the Australian rangelands and are keenly attended by researchers, natural resource managers, primary producers, industry service providers and policy makers. In October 2021, the Australian Rangeland Society jointly hosted its biennial conference with Desert Channels Queensland in Longreach, Queensland.

Desert Channels Queensland is the Natural Resource Management group carrying responsibilities for delivering on-property support to land managers, on-ground noxious weed control, partnering with landholders in landscape level pasture and environmental rehabilitation and executing government projects across the huge Queensland section of the Lake Eyre Basin.

With the theme ‘NRM in the Rangelands – Shaping our Future’, this conference broke new ground, with planning occurring during a time of unpredictable travel restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. This led the Organising Committee to offer a hybrid model that successfully accommodated both in-person and virtual attendance.

Held over 3 days, the conference program showcased spoken papers, posters and panel sessions related to several themes including natural resource management, traditional knowledge systems, livestock production, applied technology, rangeland health, conservation and climate variability. Presenters were encouraged to highlight opportunities and innovations to increase the resilience of the environment, communities and industries of the rangelands. All abstracts, papers, posters and recordings from the 2021 conference can be found at www.austrangesoc.com.au or <http://www.desertchannels.com.au>.

After each conference, a Special Issue of *The Rangeland Journal* is dedicated to showcasing notable papers presented during the conference. In this Special Issue, the paper by [Ezzy \(2023\)](#), and the two papers by [Leys *et al.* \(2023a, 2023b\)](#) demonstrate how long-term changes in land management practices have led to improved environmental outcomes. A strong theme from the three papers by [Than Myint Swe *et al.* \(2023\)](#), [Bradburn *et al.* \(2023\)](#) and [Beutel and Graz \(2023\)](#) is the use of emerging technologies to monitor and manage land management activities. The importance of the human factor in shaping the future of the rangelands is highlighted in the two papers by [Ham \(2023\)](#), and by [Walsh and Holmes \(2023\)](#).

We trust that you enjoy reading the diverse range of papers in this Special Issue, and acknowledge the leading role taken by the Editor-in-Chief (Dr Paul Novelty) to deliver it, together with the support provided to him by Dr Peter O’Reagain, Mr Paul Jones and Dr Nicole Spiegel in their roles as Guest Editors. Such support to both *The Rangeland Journal* and this Special Issue in particular, is most appreciated. Members of the Australian

Rangeland Society can access all current and past (1976-) papers from *The Rangeland Journal* free of charge. You can become a member of the Society at www.austrangesoc.com.au.

We also wish to acknowledge the generous support of GreenCollar™, the naming sponsor of the conference, together with all the businesses and agencies who made the 2021 conference possible.

The Australian Rangeland Society and Desert Channels Queensland were proud to co-host the 2021 conference and showcase, both in person with participants and through digital communication for those who couldn't travel, the wonderful rangelands in which we work and live.

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Conflicts of interest. The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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