

The Tropical Grassland Society of Australia Incorporated

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Introduction The Tropical Grassland Society of Australia was formed in 1962 and became incorporated in 1987 and has the following aims:

- To publicise information of interest to primary producers and scientists
- To improve the relevance of research and adoption of technology through the flow of ideas between scientists and producers
- To publicise the findings of Australian pasture research and development to overseas workers, and to draw on their experience for application in Australia

Membership The Society currently provides two types of members – journal membership (\$75 per annum) and Newsletter membership (\$25). Journal membership is aimed primarily at research and extension staff who receive both the journal and the newsletter, whereas Newsletter membership is aimed principally at commercial producers and those other members who require less technical information. Currently, the Society has 270 members. Numbers were boosted in 2000 when 40 members of the newly formed Leucaena Network joined as newsletter members. A review of Society membership and activities between 1962 and 1995 (McDonald, 1996) has highlighted the changing nature of the Society. To address the issue of declining membership, the current executive is exploring closer association with other Grassland Societies in southern Australia.

Executive committee The Executive committee comprises a President, Vice President, Past President, Secretary, Treasurer together with the Journal Editor and Newsletter Editor and meets at 2-monthly intervals. Executive positions are usually held for one term, however, the Constitution allows for these positions to be held for more than one term, as is often the case for Secretary and Treasurer. The President usually serves for three years, initially as Vice President, moving to President in the second year and then as Past President in the third year. The Society attempts to rotate the President's position between Producer and Scientist/Extension members.

Journal and newsletter The Society publishes *Tropical Grasslands* quarterly comprising contributed papers, conference proceedings and book reviews. An average of 30 contributed papers have been published annually between 1994-2004: 40% from Australian authors and the remainder from 40 other countries – mainly Africa, South America and south east Asia. Manuscripts are managed by a Society funded, part-time Journal Editor who is assisted by a panel of Associate Editors and an Editorial Advisory Board. For a charge of \$50, authors have been provided with hard copy reprints although, from 2005, reprints will be available only in Adobe Portable Document File format. *Tropical Grasslands* is indexed in *Current Contents*. The quarterly newsletter provides articles of interest, highlights research findings and acts as a forum for exchanging views between members.

Conferences and field days The Society has traditionally held a Tropical Pasture Conference each five years. These conferences have been highly successful and have provided a major financial boost to the Society's funding. The next conference is due in 2005 but has been delayed due to overlap with the International Grassland Congress and the Society is considering a joint conference in 2006 with the New South Wales and Victorian Grasslands Societies. The Society conducts field days on commercial properties and on research stations around themes of topical interest and reports from these field days are published in the Newsletter.

Website The Society maintains a web site www.tropicalgrasslands.asn.au which lists information about the Society. A feature of this site is "Pasture Picker" which provides information about the useful characteristics of a range of grass and legume species and a selection tool, based on climate and soil criteria, that allows users to select species suitable for their particular conditions.

Future The Society faces an uncertain future with declining membership due primarily to the greatly reduced number of professionally-trained pasture scientists in northern Australia. From the 1970's peak, the number in government employment has declined substantially. This has occurred despite a buoyant pastoral industry and a strong demand for pasture technology. Survival may require collaboration or amalgamation with other societies.

Reference

McDonald, C. K. (1996). The Tropical Grassland Society of Australia Inc. – our current status. *Tropical Grasslands*, 30, 341-344.