

Communication to the World Heritage Committee – 19 February 2016

Why WHC was contacted:

After years of pushback from the Queensland Department of Agriculture (now called DAF) and Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA), regarding modernising extension to the grazing industry, another approach was taken. The World Heritage Committee (Marine) was contacted. It was raised with WHC that maybe a process separate from Government programs could be set up to ensure producers were left with a systems way of thinking.

It was pointed out that the “systems thinking” approach is far superior to the “reductionist science” approach favoured by decision makers in DAF and MLA. Taking a systems thinking approach leads to higher production and profit, reduces the effect of drought more and protects the Great Barrier Reef better.

+

NOTE: Below is a cut and paste of the three emails sent to the World Heritage Committee. The six attachments accompanying these emails, and referred to in the text below can't be linked to this document but are available on the home page under the heading “**Attachments included in emails to the World Heritage Committee:**”

+

FIRST EMAIL TO WHC

Sent: 19 February 2016
To: World Heritage Committee
Subject: Better protection of Great Barrier Reef

Dear xxxxxxxx

There is potential for better protection of the Great Barrier Reef.

Unfortunately, the current Queensland Government extension program to the grazing industry is still promoting 1980's reductionist science. The reality is that graziers manage "systems" and if they don't have a systems understanding, then more nutrients and sediment end up on the Reef.

Might I add that the previous Queensland Government supported the same approach, so the problem is not linked to political ideologies.

It is human nature that how somebody sees the world influences the decisions they make. For this reason, achieving change in the grazing industry relies on helping people see the world differently.

As an aside, the inadequate information is costing the Queensland economy about \$70 million in lost production every year.

I would be happy to forward a recent presentation given to the section of Government responsible for improving land management near the Reef. Then you will know exactly what is being dismissed

as not relevant. The presentation includes a case study of a producer who now impacts the Reef less due to changed management.

Given Governments can be slow to change, maybe you are aware of an alternative method that could be put in place to ensure modern thinking finds its way to producers.

Before I go into any more detail, I need to establish if you are the correct person to be raising the issue with and if not, who you suggest I contact in your organisation.

Finally, I am not aligned with any political party, lobby group or business organisation. I include my CV which details my background and knowledge in the area of grazing land management.

Regards
Alan

For the CV referred to above, go to Appendix (page 6)

REPLY FROM WHC

Reply 19 February 2016

To: Alan Lauder

Subject: RE: Better protection of Great Barrier Reef

Dear Alan,

Thank you for message.

I would appreciate a copy of the presentation you mention for our information.

Kind regards

Xxxxxxx

SECOND EMAIL TO WHC

Sent: 22 February 2016

To: World Heritage Committee

Subject: The talk aimed at broadening Govt extension

1 attachment

Dear xxxxx

Thank you for responding to my email "Better protection of Great Barrier Reef".

I include a recent presentation to the Queensland Government which discusses another approach to engaging producers to help them better understand how their paddocks function. Extension should provide "understanding", not just information.

When I was flown to Hawaii last year to speak to ranchers on the five main islands, my focus was on increasing their understanding. Their feedback was that they had never heard it put this way before but it all made sense.

If extension takes a systems approach - the debate/discussion starts with the basics. Get the basics wrong and nothing else will fall into place. My recent presentation focused on better management of "carbon flows". This is the most fundamental thing a producer has to get right to make money or protect the Reef.

Ten minutes into the enclosed presentation, a government employee interrupted me with the comment, "Maybe I am stupid, but none of this is making any sense to me". Then a second employee commented, "Look, we have been measuring carbon and it is not changing". To which I responded, "Well if you can't measure a change in stocks, all the carbon has to be in the flows. You have just confirmed the thrust of what I am saying".

The comments really highlighted a lack of understanding by those who made them. Of more concern for those interested in Reef protection, their actions and position is supported by people higher up the chain.

It is ironic that I can't engage the process responsible for protecting the Reef and they are frustrated about not being able to engage the producers they most need to. I know this is not the story they are telling you.

Maybe the below comment in response to my decision to give up on the Queensland Government after too many failures, is a better assessment of the true position:

I completely understand.

It is disappointing to see industry professionals sit in a room for days at a time asking how we engage the middle band of disengaged folks – but then not willing to listen and build on new ideas or ideas....

I guess that is exactly why we are in the mess we are today environmentally.

The **attachment** (refer to "Presentation on the carbon flows concept to Grazing BMP Coordinators Queensland" on home page) is the file I prepared for the presentation. It includes a few sections that did not fit into the thirty minutes I was allocated, but would be of interest to you. (Note: the actual talk and not the larger file is supplied on the home page).

The Queensland Government is not starting with the very basics unfortunately. This is not to suggest that their information package is presenting anything that is wrong. The problem is that they are not preparing producer's minds to understand how everything they are telling them fits together in the big picture.

xxxxxx, I accept the Queensland Government has no intention of taking on board any of the points I raise. I have only contacted you in case you can think of an alternative way to achieve the flow of modern thinking to producers.

The next email will provide detail of support I have outside Government.

Regards
Alan

THIRD EMAIL TO WHC

Sent: 23 February 2016
To: World Heritage Committee
Subject: Support for new approach

5 attachments (3 MB)

Dear xxxxxx

The journey of discovery started in 1995 when my ideas were written up in a national journal and the Commonwealth Government decided to link me with the scientific community in a \$272,000 project that was conducted on my sheep and cattle property.

By 1999 I was saying pasture rest is TIMING, not TIME. CSIRO was writing journal articles with me to promote this approach, including a paper for the 1999 International Rangelands Congress.

At this stage I was making no reference to carbon or carbon flows. This is understandable, given that at the time extension to producers was not even using the word carbon.

In 2001, I came up with the term "Carbon Grazing" and registered the term in the category of education. Articles about Carbon Grazing then appeared in the rural press but naturally papers and journals do not like to keep running the same story on a regular basis, unless it is paid advertising.

In 2008, my poster "Is pasture rest TIME or TIMING?" was judged the best poster at the Australian Rangelands Conference. The association between pasture rest and carbon management was clearly explained in the poster. Go to www.carbongrazing.com.au to view the poster.

At the end of 2008, the book "Carbon Grazing - The Missing Link" was launched at Brisbane City Hall. See **first attachment** (refer to "A scientists perspective of the Carbon Grazing book" on the home page) for comments made by a leading Rangelands scientist about the approach taken in the book, including a focus on carbon flows. The scientist also predicted that future graziers would see themselves as "managers of carbon".

In 2010, the CEO of the main rural newspaper in Queensland approached me to write a column on carbon, see **second attachment** (refer to "Carbon Corner" on home page). He wanted carbon information that producers would be able to relate to. He was of the opinion that the Queensland Government was not covering the subject adequately. You will note that the first Carbon Corner linked protection of the Reef to discussion of carbon processes.

The **third attachment** (refer to "The cover of the Grazing Land Management (GLM) workshop notes" on the home page) is the cover of the Grazing Land Management (GLM) workshop notes the

Queensland Government relies on and helped write. I have a copy and it is 205 pages. You will note I wrote in the first Carbon Corner, "*The last time I looked at the GLM course, the word carbon wasn't even mentioned*".

In March 2011, I was invited to give a presentation to the Reef Policy Unit because they liked the approach being taken in the Carbon Corner column. "*We are all interested in your ideas which seem to push the envelope forward from the current best practice GLM approach*". After my presentation, the unit wanted to work with me as part of developing four education modules for producers. Unfortunately, the idea was rejected by those higher up.

When the new Queensland Government was elected in 2012, I thought my ideas were going to be progressed. Andrew Powell the new Environment Minister was aware of my work prior to the election. Andrew is an honest and genuine person who has an open mind. He met with me at Parliament House on the first day of Parliament. He informed me protocol was that I had to deal with the Agriculture (DAFF) Minister. A meeting was organised with the Agriculture Minister in August but he was not remotely interested in the inclusion of carbon flows in extension.

By 2014, the Queensland Government had joined the carbon tax debate on the side that portrayed carbon as a dirty word. They didn't want anything to do with my message that said positive things about carbon. Around this time the word carbon was being removed from some Government documents so I was informed.

During 2014, I decided to put pressure on the Premier (who I knew) in the public domain, with the wording - "*Carbon flows*" *underpin food production, profit & protect the Reef*. There was also a reference to recognising 21st century knowledge.

The **fourth attachment** (*refer to "Improving extension to landholders on carbon" on the home page*) was the Government response to get me off their case. The scientists who attended the workshop quickly woke up that it was not structured to produce an outcome. Absolutely nothing eventuated from this workshop. During my presentation at the workshop, I made reference to GLM, "***To demonstrate my point about the past dominating the present, this is the current GLM workshop manual and it is a cut and paste of what was taught at University in the past. The word carbon is not in the 205 pages***".

This workshop is clear evidence that the Queensland Government is fully aware of the carbon flows concept but have no intention of running with it.

I am informed that the main problem now is the low skills base in the Departments. When the decision was eventually made to rewrite GLM (not completed), they had to outsource a person to do the rewrite.

The rewrite of GLM identified an issue holding back Reef protection. The Agriculture Department (now shortened to DAF) accidentally admitted to me that they had stopped the AgForce (industry organisation) BMP person from having any input into the document. He was not even allowed to have a look at the first draft, yet the Government claims to be working closely with industry.

The **fifth attachment** (*refer to "Key insight is speed of flows" on the home page*) reinforces the point: has extension to the grazing industry focused on the wrong aspect of carbon when discussing on farm decision making?

People outside Government do publicly support my work.

Associate Professor Allan Dale of the Cairns Institute in James Cook University says that “Alan Lauder’s clear ideas about the central role of carbon stocks and flows in the paddock cut through several complex cross-cutting debates between soil scientists, carbon traders and agronomists in ways that can make practical sense to cattle producers”.

Associate Professor Dale said “Alan understands that securing profitability is the key to good grazing management, and that the management of carbon stocks and flows in the paddock over time drives enterprise profitability. From this, pasture and soil health, animal health, erosion management, water retention and tradeable greenhouse gas emission avoidance and sequestration all follow. He takes some very complex system principles and turns those into the pragmatic actions needed for producers to stay in the grazing business for the long term”. (Beef Central article 19 October 2012)

On a positive note, my ideas have been included in the strategy document of a NRM Group and they will slowly filter from here into Government processes.

xxxxxxx, my current position is to just leave the Carbon Grazing web site up as part of maintaining awareness. I have already wasted enough personal energy trying to find a way to promote modern thinking. The way forward lies with people like yourself.

Regards
Alan

Appendix

CV of Alan Lauder

Alan was a grazier in South West Queensland. During this time he achieved the highest cattle price in Queensland over a twelve month period. He won numerous State Finals in the flock ewe competition. He was nominated for the McKell National Landcare Award by QRAA.

He is author of the book Carbon Grazing – The Missing Link. This book was one of two books that were required reading for a course at the Colorado State University in America. He spoke at the Deakin Lecture Series in Melbourne when carbon was the topic. He reached the last 30 out of 200 for a Churchill Fellowship.

In 1997, following interest from the Commonwealth Government, he was funded to conduct a \$272,000 Drought Regional Initiative project on his property. The project perfected a method of building the health and resilience of grazing landscapes.

While a woolgrower, he produced the world’s first guaranteed prickle free jumper, supplying David Jones and Country Road. While still on the property, the Queensland

Government used him as one of ten case studies in their publication, “Graziers’ experiences in managing mulga country” (2000).

He spoke at the 1999 International Rangeland Congress. ABC Landline went to his property to report on the role of saltbush in grazing systems. The National Team of the 7-30 Report went to his property as part of reporting on drought policy. Alan was invited to speak at the Grootfontein Research Institute in South Africa on wool attributes and manufacturing.

He is lead author of the peer reviewed paper “ Offsetting methane emissions – An alternative to emission equivalence metrics” published in the International Journal of Greenhouse Gas Control; other authors included Melbourne University, CSIRO, QUT, Qld SITIA and University of New England.

His work is referenced in the Queensland Government publication, “Pasture Degradation And Recovery In Australia’s Rangelands – Learning from History” (2004).

END