

Beyond tenure, beyond business as usual

Actively shaping forests for multiple outcomes



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The Natural Resources Commission is an independent body set up to help the NSW Government find evidence-based solutions to complex natural resource problems. The Commission provides advice on managing natural resources and related issues to improve production, biodiversity and community well-being across the state.

The Natural Resources Commission has conducted forest assessments for the river red-gum and south western cypress State Forests in NSW, and a review to develop options for active management of cypress forests in the NSW Brigalow and Nandewar State Conservation Areas.

The Commission has identified common findings across these investigations for improving forest management and enhancing the resilience of forest-dependent social and ecological systems.



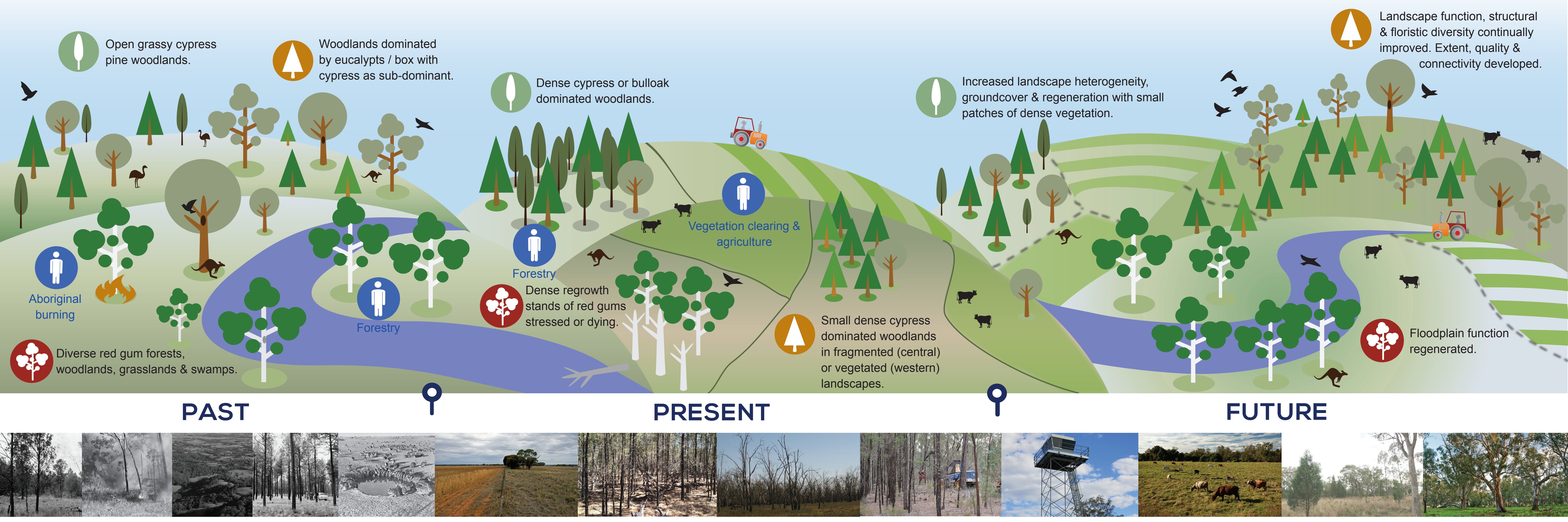
Things we typically do now

- We use centralised, prescriptive rules.
- We try to create perfect knowledge before we act.
- We use hindsight & trial & error to learn.
- We plan for a steady-state world.
- We try to preserve things in their historic locations.
- We focus on process rather than outcomes.

Where to from here?



New ways of thinking and managing?
Business as usual?



New ways of thinking and managing

<p>01 ACTIVE & ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT</p>	<p>02 MANAGING ACROSS TENURES</p>	<p>03 DEVOLVED DECISION-MAKING</p>	<p>04 NEW FUNDING MODELS</p>
<p>Landscapes should be actively and adaptively managed to deliver improved environmental, social and economic outcomes and manage uncertainty and risk.</p> <p>Land managers need the flexibility to apply a range of active management tools such as ecological thinning, targeted grazing and prescribed fire within an adaptive management framework, irrespective of tenure.</p> <p>Active management can deliver a range of social and economic benefits such as increasing landscape heterogeneity, promoting regeneration and growth of trees, improving habitat for fauna, promoting viable populations of native fauna and flora and reducing fuel loads and the impact of weeds.</p>	<p>We need to rethink the approach to managing public land. There should be a focus on funding effective mechanisms to manage land more efficiently across all tenures, rather than managing in silos based on spatial configuration, tenure, ownership or governance arrangements.</p> <p>Management should take place in a governance framework that allows for more rapid development of innovative responses and novel management strategies.</p> <p>Collaboration between conservation and forestry agencies should be improved to facilitate cross-tenure operations.</p> <p>Over time, collaboration and partnerships between agencies can ensure natural resource and environmental policies actively respond to changing community values, increased knowledge from all sources, and feedback on lessons learned from past projects and activities.</p>	<p>Governance arrangements should devolve decision making to the scale where natural resource and environmental management issues are best understood by government and communities, and where collaborative solutions can be found through innovation, co-learning and adaptation.</p> <p>This is because natural resource and environmental management problems are diffuse, and successful landscape management often requires a great number of small decisions across a wide range of unique circumstances. Centralised command and control measures that are characterised by prescriptive rules and standardisation cannot adequately deal with complex and dynamic social and ecological landscapes.</p> <p>Focusing on building collaboration and trust between different public and private land managers helps to bring increased understanding and behavioural change, without government needing to actively prescribe and enforce a myriad of rules for different circumstances.</p> <p>Governance arrangements for devolved decision making should include strong accountability mechanisms, such as independent audits and public reporting.</p>	<p>New funding models for public land management are needed to reflect the diversity of ecosystems and the broad range of private and public values and benefits that different landscapes in NSW can sustain.</p> <p>Given the finite resources available to manage public lands, land managers should explore alternative cost recovery and cost sharing models to actively manage landscapes.</p> <p>For example, land managers in conservation areas could seek secondary commercial benefits where appropriate to offset ecological thinning costs. This can improve long-term sustainability of programs being undertaken to enhance environmental outcomes and deliver social and economic benefits to local industries and communities.</p>