



ABOUT THIS WORKSHOP

Why, where and how the workshop was run.

Why hold this workshop

Native grasslands hold value for many people: farmers, urban and rural developers, governments and the public. The values of these people sometimes differ, but are often similar. In the past where developments in their various forms (rural and urban) have been proposed, those differences have generated conflict amongst us.

Unfortunately, the way we address development proposals magnifies this conflict. As individuals and as organisations we may be forced to deal with these situations in a “knee jerk” or unplanned way. Worse still is the need to take sides in an attempt to protect our values and interests. This is a recipe for mistrust and entrenched positions. It increases the level of conflict we experience and inhibits constructive outcomes.

Friends of Grasslands would like to see this change. We want stakeholders to share their values and explore solutions that provide good outcomes for all of us. To help this along we hosted a workshop where representatives of stakeholders and scientists gave short presentations on past and future developments in native grasslands. Audience participation was encouraged through question time, brainstorming sessions and also providing considerable time for free conversation and experience sharing over lunch and tea breaks.

Science offers information and services that can support stakeholders and governments in their efforts to make sensible decisions on how to proceed with development. Organisations such as CSIRO, resource agencies and local universities all contribute to this science. As well as invited speakers, relevant science was presented in the form of poster displays.

Workshop venue

Held in the seminar rooms of CSIRO Wildlife & Ecology, the workshop took place on the 26th May, 1998. The workshop was attended by 119 people, with a total of 138 people subscribing to receive a copy of the proceedings. The composition of the participants included members of Friends of Grasslands, graziers, land holder representative groups, land carers, a range of Federal and State agency representatives (conservation, agriculture and urban development), as well as representatives from building industries, transport industries and councils.

Workshop process

The workshop was opened by a group of speakers who provided the context and scope within which the day proceeded. Following this, in each of four theme sessions, speakers presented their ideas and values. The themes were “Science, providing information for decisions”, “Stakeholders one, low intensity land use”, “Stakeholders two, high intensity land use”, and “Governments, managing the community’s resources”. Each speaker was allocated ten minutes, eight for their presentation and two for items of clarification from the audience.

The presentations seeded many ideas amongst the audience and it was important that all participants were given a chance to voice their ideas and viewpoints. Therefore, twenty minutes were allocated in each session where audience ideas were captured by facilitators. Participants were given three ways to give their ideas exposure. First, ideas could be raised verbally during the forum times. Secondly, ideas could be written down on sheets that were provided on the back of the workshop handouts. These were left in a box provided in the seminar room. Ideas that showed common trends among the audience were raised by facilitators in the final session of the day. Thirdly, participants were encouraged to use refreshment breaks to talk about grasslands with other participants.

Throughout the day there were many shared ideas and values on which most participants agreed. Although the workshop focused on resolving conflict, it was important that we acknowledged the common ground that existed. This can be used as a starting position from which we move forward. These areas of agreement as well as examples of what doesn't work, what does work and what we need to try in the future were recorded by facilitators throughout the day.

In the final session the group used the ideas raised during the day to build a set of actions that need to be taken in the future. We included those ideas expressed in the theme sessions, those left as notes, and any new ideas that were raised in this session. The actions were designed to minimise conflict and achieve acceptable outcomes for all of us who value native grasslands or the land where they exist.

Throughout the day posters of research and information on grasslands were on display. This display area provided a focal point for ad hoc discussions about development conflict and grassland conservation in general. Displays were varied and included paintings and drawings, live plant specimens, pictures from field days and books for sale. Our aim was to show that grasslands are valued in a range of ways by different stakeholders. Understanding those differing values is a key step in resolving conflict between stakeholders.

