

# Caring for Land in Western NSW

Greg Curran, Animal and Climate  
Investigations, Broken hill

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# Where have we come from?

## “The Biggest Estate on Earth” (2011)

- Pre-European
  - A mix of open and timbered country
  - Perennials dominated, particularly grasses
  - Soil deep loamy absorbent “springy”
  - A managed landscape

- “The Simple Fleece” (1962)
- - peak of 14 million sheep in 1890s
- - lowest: 4 million in early 1900s
  - rabbits
  - overgrazing
  - drought
- - then 8 million to 1960s
- - major change in pasture
- - loss of soil

# Where are we now?

- - **Improvements** in
  - Fencing
  - Waters
  - Transport
  - Markets
  - Welfare & health of stock & people
  - Communications
  - Knowledge
  - Experience
- **THE WESTERN DIVISION IS IN BETTER CONDITION NOW THAN AT ANY TIME SINCE 1890s.**
- \* REDUCTION IN RABBIT NUMBERS
- \* MANAGEMENT BY GRAZIERS
- \* BETTER PRICES
- \* BITTER EXPERIENCE OF DRY TIMES IN EARLY 1990S AND (2000 TO 2010)
- \* RAINS OF 2010 TO 2012, AND SINCE
- \* IMPROVEMENTS due to BETTER PRICES

# Where are we heading?

- **\* locking in better pasture**
  - diverse mix of plants
    - more perennials, grass
  - ground cover
    - better seeding, growth
    - better stock nutrition
    - keeping cool
  - improving soil
- **\* managing stock vs other herbivores**
  - kangaroos, rabbits, uncontrolled goats, pigs
- **\* managing predators**
  - dingoes, foxes, pigs, others
- **\* managing effects of increased temperatures and evaporation on**
  - waters
  - pasture
  - stock
  - people

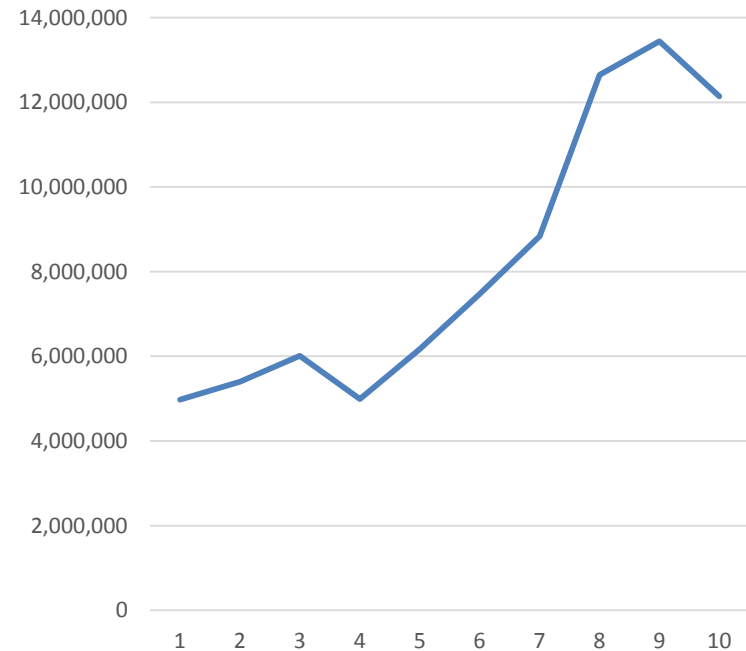
# How do we get there? Pastures

- 1. Retain 30+% of pasture produced/present
- 2. Predicting pasture to manage it
- 3. Getting the right mix of plants
  - Keeping the cover you want:
  - **Work out how to get the right mix of plants**
  - Good years bring opportunities; dry years test how you've used opportunities
  - **Make sure plants you want can seed**
  - ? with a big germination of the right plants, move stock to sacrifice paddocks

# Barriers to getting pastures right

- **Barriers:**
- ? Rabbits - biological control
- ? Goats – becoming controlled
- **Kangaroos** – uncontrolled

Estimates of Reds and Greys in Western Plains  
2006 to 2015



# How do we get there: managing kangaroos

- Kangaroos are affecting our ecology & ability to care for the land
  - No effective predator
    - *dingoes, indigenous hunting*
  - Man-made waters
    - *water no longer a limit on roo populations*
  - Roo populations not under control
    - *unlike sheep, cattle, goats, rabbits*
  - **Current numbers of kangaroos, & their intake of pasture, prevent efforts to maintain & improve ground cover, & the ecology of Western Division**

# Managing kangaroos – what can be done

- **Controlling populations**
- **1. shooting**
  - populations now too high to rely on shooting
- **2. essential to put value on kangaroo meat and skin**
  - example: goat control with good prices
- **3. fencing**
  - costly but part of control
- **4. control of waters???**
  - engineer access to water to exclude macropods & allow sheep, cattle, goats ?



**Caring for lands of western NSW  
means returning to a managed  
landscape**