

## Awards of the Tropical Grassland Society of Australia Inc.

The Society awards Fellowships to those within its membership who have made significant contributions to the understanding, use and improvement of tropical and subtropical pastures.

### Fellow of the Tropical Grassland Society of Australia Inc. 2000

#### WILLIAM HENRY (BILL) BURROWS

Bill Burrows was born at Calliope (the son of a Labor Party politician would you believe) on a grazing property in the heart of central Queensland cattle country. It is here that he developed his great interest in woodland management ... in the early days, on the end of an axe.

Bill graduated with a degree in Agricultural Science from UQ and joined DPI in 1964. His initiation to DPI was under the tutelage of that great South African import, the late Dr Joe Ebersohn, at Charleville. His early time at Charleville was spent in researching the ecology and management of the mulga lands, in particular the management of woody invaders like Turkey bush.

In 1972, Bill obtained his M.Agr.Sc. from UQ, writing his thesis on Turkey bush control. Bill took study leave from DPI during 1973–75 to pursue nutrient cycling studies into mallee and mulga at ANU. He was awarded his Ph.D. in 1976, and returned to Charleville to practise.

Bill and his colleagues can be credited with the foresight to establish the first long-term woodland monitoring sites in Queensland. These have been in existence for 35 years. This initial pioneering work has led to some 150 permanent woodland monitoring sites now in existence (DPI, DNR) in Queensland. This work has been the scientific backbone of vegetation management in Queensland.

In 1980, Bill transferred to Rockhampton where he continued his woodland management work in the 'speargrass' country. He was leader of the team that developed clearing and regrowth management strategies for eucalypt woodland. His group produced and promoted sustainable woodland clearing and management guidelines (based on scientific results and principles) over a decade before legislative controls (non-science based) were imposed on graziers.

In the late 1980s, Bill commenced long-term grazing studies of black speargrass pasture to determine the interaction between pasture, soil and animal and define sustainable management practices. In recent years, Bill has been heavily involved in national and international carbon accounting having accumulated a mass of data from the monitoring sites he established throughout the woodlands of Queensland. Using modern soil

carbon measuring techniques, he has shown that many of today's open woodlands in Queensland in fact were originally grasslands.

Bill achieved the highest practising scientist level in DPI (Senior Principal Scientist) in 1990. He refused many attempts to be moved to higher 'Management' levels so that he could keep his feet on the ground in woodland research. He had little time for those who chose to make important land use decisions on politics and emotion, one of his favourite sayings being: "*politicians come and go but good science will live forever*".

During his career, Bill has been a great communicator with rural industry who have recognised his contribution to their advancement. He has served as Officer in Charge of the Charleville Pastoral Laboratory (1976–1980) and Acting Director of the Tropical Beef Centre at Rockhampton in 1997 as well as serving on innumerable rural and scientific committees.

Bill is a prolific writer having published over 90 scientific papers during his career.

He has received many well-deserved Honours and Awards including:

- Honorary Senior Fellow, School of Applied Science, Central Queensland University, 1992
- Fellow, Australian Institute of Agricultural Science, 1993
- Cattleman's Union of Australia Research Medal, 1996
- Fellow, Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering, 1999.

He has been active in Scientific Organisations including:

- Australian Rangeland Society (Editor 1977–78, Vice President 1977–79 and President 1978–79).
- Australian Institute of Agricultural Science (CQ Sub-branch Treasurer 1991–92).

Bill have been an active Member of the Tropical Grassland Society of Australia since 1964 and served as Vice President in 1991–92 and President in 1992–93.

Bill's significant impact on the understanding, development and management of Queensland's grazed woodlands makes him a worthy recipient of this Award.