

## Delbessie Agreement—land condition assessments

As part of the lease renewal process under the Delbessie Agreement, the Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM) undertakes a land condition assessment for all 'rural leasehold land' with a term of 20 years or more, and covering an area of 100 hectares or more.

Rural leasehold land is land leased for agricultural, grazing or pastoral uses under the *Land Act 1994*, and excludes leases over land within a reserve, state forest, timber reserve, national park, or other tenures held under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*.

The land condition assessment sets a benchmark for land condition and provides DERM with a snapshot of the condition of the lease land at a point in time. The process is not about apportioning blame for past events or actions. The results are used to prepare and negotiate a land management agreement with the leaseholder, and determine eligibility for extended terms of the new lease.

### Assessment guidelines

Guidelines for determining land condition have been developed and tested by experts in scientific disciplines related to rangelands management. The guidelines have been designed to apply state-wide and take into account variable factors such as land types and climatic conditions.

Assessment guidelines have been approved on the recommendation of a Ministerial Advisory Committee (comprising agricultural, pastoral, social science, nature conservation and Indigenous land management experts).

### Assessment method

The land condition assessment method set out in the guidelines is based on the statutory duty-of-care condition outlined in the *Land Act 1994* and clarified under the Delbessie Agreement.

This duty of care obliges the leaseholder to take all reasonable steps to:

- maintain pastures dominated by perennial, preferential and productive species
- maintain native grasslands free of encroachment
- protect riparian vegetation
- manage declared pests
- avoid causing or contributing to salinity that reduces the productivity of the leased land, or causes damage to any other land
- conserve soil, water resources and biodiversity.

The assessment is based around three key elements—pasture, soil and biodiversity. Riparian vegetation, declared pests, salinity and natural water resources are also assessed.

### Preliminary work

When a lease is due for renewal, DERM will contact the leaseholder to begin the lease renewal and land condition assessment processes.

Leaseholders will be asked to provide information on access tracks, watering points and developed areas on the property so that assessment sites can be identified within accessible parts of the lease. DERM will provide a satellite image to the leaseholder for this purpose.

The number and location of assessment sites (Figure 1) are influenced by:

- the size of the property
- the distribution and area of land types
- the location of access tracks and infrastructure
- any recent mechanical disturbance
- other landscape features.

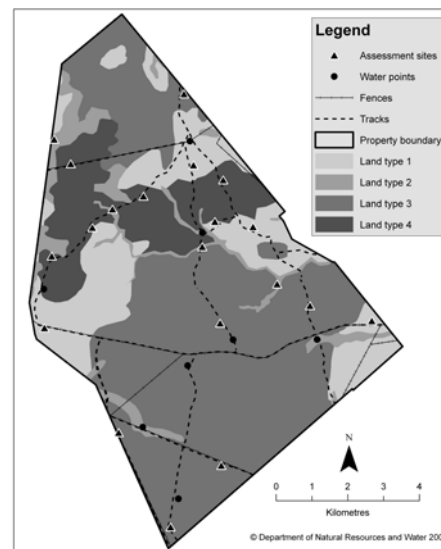


Figure 1: Sample property map showing assessment sites

### Land condition assessment

After the preliminary work is completed, DERM will contact the leaseholder to arrange a time to carry out the land condition assessment on the property.

DERM officers will record land condition at each assessment site (Figure 2) and record observations at other landscape features, and when travelling between sites on the property.

Depending on the size of the lease, assessment officers may take several days to a week to complete the field work. Leaseholders will be invited to accompany the DERM officers during the assessment.



Figure 2: Recording observations at assessment sites

## Land management agreements

Where a new lease is offered for a term of 20 years or more, or where a perpetual lease is offered, the offer is subject to the leaseholder entering into a land management agreement.

DERM staff will work with the leaseholder to develop the agreement, which will be based on the results of the land condition assessment.

## Further information

The *Delbessie Agreement: Guidelines for determining lease land condition* and fact sheets about the key elements of the agreement are available on the DERM website at <[www.derm.qld.gov.au](http://www.derm.qld.gov.au)>, or by contacting your nearest business centre.

The *Land Act 1994* is available online at <[www.legislation.qld.gov.au](http://www.legislation.qld.gov.au)>.

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For general enquiries contact the  
Queensland Government call centre 13 13 04  
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