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## Bringing Back the Commons

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*Can the traditional commons help graziers manage their land resources better, as well as being more profitable? This is the question that Professor David Brunckhorst is investigating with a group of graziers, in an Institute for Rural Futures research project recently approved for funding by the Land and Water Resources R&D Corporation.*

### The Tilbuster Project

David Brunckhorst is working with a group of landowners at Tilbuster, a small valley north of Armidale, to trial the development of a common property regime under Australian conditions.

Participating landowners will pool their livestock enterprises, which are then grazed across properties and collectively managed as a single grazing enterprise. Landowners retain title to their individual properties, but jointly manage the entire farming resource. This allows for the more efficient use of land as well as the ability to allocate areas for conservation and restore the creeklands, thereby providing an overall improvement in the sustainability of the group.

If European experience is any guide, there should be many benefits for the landowners taking part.



*The pooling of land and livestock opens up many possibilities for improved management and profit.*

### Benefits of the Commons

European experience has shown that the pooling of land and livestock in a commons can bring a range of benefits, including:

- economies of scale;
- management efficiencies;
- market opportunities;
- resilience against climatic variability.

The development of new institutional arrangements necessary to operate the commons builds social and community cohesion, and provides a supportive environment for farmers to acquire new skills. As landowner Phil Coop claims, 'Building Aussie-style commons will put the heart back into our rural communities.'

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### Project Details

**Project Title:** "Creating a Contemporary Common Property Resource Management Institution"

**Funding Organisation:** Land and Water Resources R&D Corporation

**Budget:** \$208,000

**Completion Date:** August 2008

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