A GROUP of 450 scientists wants to ban permanent grazing on stock routes - even on disused sections of the routes where such grazing delivers vital revenue to keep the network functional.

The scientists’ call comes despite extensive meetings of the Stock Route Assessment Panel (SRAP) ahead of the release of last month’s Department of Natural Resources and Water report outlining future recommendations for the routes. The report recommended the routes be divided into active and inactive, with the potential for annual grazing agreements on inactive parts.

But in a letter today the scientists called for changes to forthcoming administrative management of the routes in both Queensland and NSW.

“Administrative changes imminent in both NSW and Queensland threaten the future health, functionality and integrity of this vast, 3.2 million ha public network of routes and reserves,” said Professor Hugh Possingham, director of University of Queensland’s Ecology Centre.

The changes were needed to maintain the value of the routes as wildlife corridors, he said.

AgForce Cattle spokesman and Cloncurry producer, Peter Hall, said graziers had an obligation to maintain infrastructure on the routes and control pests and weeds, as well as firebreaks.

“If you lock up those routes and have no one responsible for them, the money has to be there to maintain them, and we all know that doesn’t come from thin air,” Mr Hall said.

He said that the SRAP had worked hard on ensuring an outcome that reflected the people most directly affected: producers, ratepayers and local governments.

“This was about putting a reliable plan in place that looked after the whole system and also maintained the infrastructure necessary for travelling stock, which is its primary purpose.”