

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

C789

QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE
(Of which some notice has been given)

Tuesday, 12 August 2014

Hon Robin Chapple to the Parliamentary Secretary representing the Minister for Lands.

Please see letter found at <http://www.robinchapple.com/qdata> in which the Minister advised that an inspection of the Red Bluff area on Quobba Station by the Department of Lands and Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia officers was scheduled to occur in May 2014, and I ask:

1. What was the outcome of the inspection?
 2. Will the Minister table a report from the inspection?
 3. If no to (2), why not?
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I thank the Hon. Member for some notice of this question.

1. The inspection found that no action was necessary.
2. Yes. A site inspection report has been generated and I now table it as requested.
3. Not applicable.

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Station Visit Field Note

Pastoral Land Business Unit

STATION:	<i>Red Bluff Section 79 Lease (Tourism Purposes)</i>		
OFFICER(s):	David Colvin – Senior Project Officer, Department of Lands Emma Bazzana – Rangelands Liaison Officer, Department of Lands John Stretch – Technical Officer, Department of Agriculture and Food		
DATE(s):	21 May 2014	FILE:	03268-1964

PURPOSE OF STATION VISIT:

Multiple complaints regarding possible rangeland degradation on the Red Bluff Section 79 lease have been received by both the Department of Lands and the Minister for Lands.

These complaints have been made by a member of the public, who has frequently utilised the tourism facilities available at Red Bluff. The member of the public is a Carnarvon resident, and due to a breakdown of relationship between himself and the lessee of Quobba / Red Bluff, there appears to be a degree of tension associated with the continued use of the tourism facilities.

Similar complaints have been made by this member of the public for an extended period of time, commencing in approximately 2006 or thereabouts. To this date, no compliance action has been taken against the lessee for the management of the Red Bluff Section 79 lease.

REPRESENTATIVE(S) IN ATTENDANCE:

Tim Meecham, lessee of both Quobba station and Red Bluff Section 79 lease.

LEASE GENERAL CONDITION INSPECTION:

Duration

9:00 – 13:00

Lease Management

The tourism lease is managed by on-site managers appointed by the lessees. The managers are responsible for all booking and charging responsibilities, and for ensuring that all visitors understand their rights and responsibilities regarding rubbish removal and other environmental considerations.

The Red Bluff tourism lease has defined tracks installed for vehicle access, and both the lessee and the managers work to ensure that visitors do not deviate from the specified tracks. This helps to preserve the natural vegetation and ensures that the delicate sand dune ecosystems are not disturbed.

All infrastructure installed on the Section 79 lease is considered to be compliant with both the Department of Planning's *Ningaloo Coastal Strategy 2006* and the Shire of Carnarvon's Local Planning Scheme. Environmental Health officers from the Shire of Carnarvon have visited the lease on a number of occasions for the purposes of investigating reports similar to those received by the Department of Lands and the Minister for Lands. The Environmental Health officers have taken no action against the lessee.

At the time of the inspection, it was noted that the Red Bluff Section 79 lease is not fenced separately from the Quobba pastoral lease. DAFWA Technical Officer John Stretch did request that the lessee consider installing boundary fencing in order to assist with managing the access of grazing animals (goats, kangaroos and sheep).

Due to recent rains, the lease appeared to be reasonably well-vegetated. Some plants had demonstrated typical coastal survival mechanisms and had receded but were showing signs of re-emerging. Spinifex was visible, as were a range of succulents.

DAFWA Technical Officer John Stretch acknowledged that while it was evident that sheep and goats did access the lease to graze, he did not express any particular concerns regarding the vegetation levels at Red Bluff. At the time of the inspection, no grazing animals were sighted.

Section 79 leases have different lease conditions associated with them than a pastoral lease. Under Section 108 (2) and (4) of the *Land Administration Act 1997* (LAA), a pastoral lessee is required to use best practice environmental and pastoral management techniques, as well as maintain indigenous pasture to the satisfaction of the Pastoral Lands Board. There is no such requirement for a Section 79 lease.

The Red Bluff lease conditions do require that the lessee maintain environmental condition to a reasonable level, and through the management actions of the lessee and the on-site managers (combined with recent stock culls on the Quobba pastoral lease, reducing grazing pressures), the Red Bluff lease appears to be in satisfactory condition.

Future management standards may be imposed on the Red Bluff Section 79 lease through the Ningaloo Coastal Exclusions process. Once the exclusions process is finalised, the lessee will be required to manage the lease to the standard of the Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPaW), as this agency will be acquiring the exclusion land immediately surrounding Red Bluff. This change in management standards is to ensure that all tourism operations are managed to a consistent and acceptable standard throughout the Ningaloo Coastal Precinct.

Other Issues

Rainfall has been sporadic in recent seasons, resulting in a decline in plant species (commonly associated with coastal climates). Recent rains have seen a resurgence in green vegetation, at both Quobba Station and the Red Bluff Section 79 lease (held by the same lessee).

Both Quobba Station and Red Bluff Section 79 lease are affected by the Ningaloo Coastal exclusions. The boundary of the exclusions is currently being reviewed by the State Government, although the boundary of the Red Bluff Section 79 lease will remain unchanged.

Recommendations

No further action is required in relation to the Red Bluff Section 79 lease.

ATTACHMENT: PHOTOS RED BLUFF SECTION 79 LEASE









