



Our Ref: GR SL
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Shire of **DUNDAS**

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ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO BE
ADDRESSED TO THE
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



Standing Committee on Public Administration
Parliament House Perth
Western Australia 6000

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: Inquiry into pastoral leases in Western Australia

Thank you for giving the Shire of Dundas the opportunity to provide a written submission to the Committee on the matters referred to in the inquiries terms of reference.

The matter of tenure, native title, feral animals, mining and leases for pastoral properties have been raised and discussed by the Shire on many occasions.

You will be aware that the Shire has a number of pastoralists with properties along the Eyre Highway from Fraser Range station near Norseman to Mundrabilla Station near Eucla on the SA border. These pastoral leases extend to the transcontinental railway line in the Municipality of the City of Kalgoorlie Boulder and cover a large portion of the south east of the state.

Please note the following comments in relation to the draft lease arrangements:

It is acknowledged that the "old" lease agreements were drafted many years ago and the wording and terminology need to be brought up to date, however the draft lease introduces measures that reduce security of tenure.

In the proposed lease there is no mention of a notification system for any perceived breaches, just termination. The 1st four points under the heading TERMINATION are related to a lessee coming into financial difficulty, it removes any ability of the pastoralist to utilise an asset that they have invested heavily in. As in any business situation, to go into receivership, involves selling assets to pay creditors. This lease proposal removes that right from the lessee and places them in far more precarious financial situation.

It is hard to imagine any sane financial institution that would lend money to a business which cannot guarantee the assets towards the debt.

Without secure tenure and rights of pastoralists it is extremely difficult to secure loans (or at reasonable rates) to enable the operation of a successful business.

The draft lease also removes any right to compensation for any fixed development on the property which devalues, what is often, generations of investment of money, time and dedication.

Other elements of the termination clause leave a lessee open to the whims of the Minister of the day and his attitude toward the pastoral industry. This type of attitude is clearly evidenced by the recent actions of the federal government in stopping beef exports to Indonesia.

Are there any appeal or compensation provisions, or is the pastoralist forced to undertake expensive legal action against the unlimited resources of the government.

To make the lessee responsible for anything that contaminates the land whether they have control of the situation or not is extreme. Pastoralists have enough difficulty with controlling access to the property with mining companies, tourists, native title rights of access and government departments ignoring their rights or over riding them.

The current process for granting and renewing pastoral leases is reasonable at this time.

Management of the increase in the number of stock and environmental damage on pastoral land is an interesting issue. As the stocking rates of a pastoral lease are set by the Pastoral Lands Board (PLB) for the whole property as well as the accepted livestock per water point, it is difficult to see what the point is.

Pastoralists who exceed their stocking of property or water points are and should be monitored by the PLB and it's inspectors and suitably reprimanded and taken to account. The PLB has the mechanisms to control and correct the overstocking of a pastoral lease, and should be expected to carry out their role in this area.

As the rangeland is the asset of a pastoral lease, it is in the interests of a pastoralist to maintain it in the optimum condition as best as the seasons will allow. Overstocking which causes damage to the rangeland is detrimental to the pastoralist and as a business manager, as it will cause a loss of income (at a base level) as well as long term reduction in productivity.

It is in the pastoralists best interest to maintain a strong rangeland and with this maintain strong environmental care practices. With the recent trends in the pastoral environment with wild dogs, poor markets and hard seasons, an increase in stock numbers would not appear to be the case in the southern rangeland.

As for the PLB's management of the pastoral assets, a main contention would be the lack of pastoral knowledge within the fraternity of pastoral inspectors. When an inspector does a course (with no agricultural or pastoral background) to become the "authority" to determine the standard of management of the rangeland, it leaves people with a lifetime of knowledge, shaking their head.

No two rangeland areas have the same characteristics. Plants that are fodder in one area are of no value in another. Knowing what stock will graze on and what they will leave on a particular property, is not something learnt in a book. The Kimberly is different to the Goldfields, is different to the Gascoyne, is different to Pilbara

The gradual withdrawal of government assistance in wild dog, vermin and weed control; an increase in bureaucracy, more legislation and now a reduction of pastoralists rights, makes one wonder whether the government is committed or even interested in keeping a viable pastoral industry.

If you have any enquiries relating to the matters raised or you need further information, please don't hesitate to contact me at the Shire office on phone 9039 1205.

Yours sincerely,



Jacquie Best
Shire President
Shire of Dundas

9th September 2013