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*The Australian Rangeland Society*

# **Range management Newsletter**

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# RANGELAND POLICY ISSUES

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One of the action plans from the Visions Workshop held last September (RMN 93/3) was to develop policy statements on the use and management of rangelands. It was anticipated that this would proceed by defining issues that the Society should develop policy on and then allocating subject areas to 'volunteers' who would act as conveners to coordinate policy development. This course of action was diverted by the immediacy of the National Rangeland Strategy and the Society's desire to influence the direction of the strategy (RMN94/1). The Society has now developed a comprehensive response to the *Rangelands Issues Paper* which follows as the lead article in this Newsletter. We now need to focus on the major issues of importance to members of the Society and develop our position on these issues.

Two crucial questions were raised in the response:

1. What value does our largely urbanised society place on retaining people as permanent residents in Australia's rangeland? and,
2. What does society expect from the rangelands and the people that live there and manage them?.

Development of Society policy will form one of the topics for the Workshop session at the Katherine conference and we propose to explore and develop our response to these interrelated questions in this workshop. We will be firming up on this over the coming few weeks so if members have any suggestions on the development of these questions, or alternative questions, for discussion at the conference please contact any of the policy working party listed below. We ask all members attending the conference to please read the Society's response to the *Issues Paper* and to come along to the workshop with your thoughts on these questions.

Those members unable to attend the Katherine conference are also encouraged to participate by forwarding any comments you may have on policy to Council or the policy working group.

Finally, on behalf of Society members, we would like to thank the members of the Policy Working Party who, at short notice, assembled the information for our response to the *Issues Paper*. These hard working people were:

Piet Filet and Tony Grice from Queensland  
Ron Hacker and Bill Tatnell from NSW  
Greg Campbell - South Australia  
Margaret Friedel and Gary Bastin - Northern Territory  
David Beurle and Alec Holm - Western Australia.

The Northern Territory and Western Australian contributions were developed in workshops and we thank all who participated.

**Postscript** Please remember to bring this Newsletter and your thoughts regarding policy development along to the Katherine conference.

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## THE AUSTRALIAN RANGELAND SOCIETY

### Response to the National Rangeland Management Working Group *Rangeland Issues Paper 2 February 1994*

#### KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Australia's rangelands, its people and history, are of paramount importance to the Australian image. The vast outback, Aboriginal people, the cattle and sheep properties and "larger than life" pastoralists, the arid environment and its wildlife are all elements of what is uniquely Australian. A Rangeland Strategy **must** pay due consideration to this **essential** part of Australia's heritage.

We support and wish to highlight the importance of integration of conservation and production oriented management. The greatest area of conservation will be on pastoral holdings, but it must be recognised that some conservation ideals are not compatible with the operational needs of a pastoral holding.

Pastoralism will continue to be the major industry for much of the pastoral lands however the Strategy must recognise that other forms of land use may be more appropriate in some areas than the traditional single purpose land use of the past. The existing land tenure facilities and regulations may no longer be appropriate and may indeed hinder, rather than facilitate change in land use that must happen if we are to maintain the outback as a central pillar of our culture and to enhance it's contribution to the nation.

The Society believes the *Issues Paper* has identified most of the important considerations in developing a strategy for the nation's rangelands and we are happy with the general thrust of the Paper. We believe it is important that the Paper encompasses the aspirations of all Australia for its rangelands, but primarily recognises and gives emphasis to the needs and opportunities for the people who will continue to live and work in these lands.

The Paper has listed the many issues that are a feature of rangelands and its management. Not yet clearly developed is the interaction between the various issues, such that they can be viewed together as a whole system rather than as components in isolation.

Specific comments dealing with each section follow.

### 3.1 RANGELAND USERS

It is the general belief in all quarters of rural Australia and rangeland areas in particular, that the quality and availability of services is declining. Populations in rangeland areas are both declining and ageing and these trends are increasing. The principal question to be asked is *What value does our largely urbanised society place on retaining people as permanent residents in Australia's rangelands?* The strategy needs to look carefully at these values and then address the mechanisms and costs involved in supporting and retaining people and enterprises in rangeland Australia. The issue needs to be assessed in relation to the social and other costs which would be associated with the urbanisation of these peoples.

#### 3.1.1 Infrastructure

- \* The potential for integrating solar technology with diesel generated power supplies is huge. The benefits of much private solar research remain poorly shared and adopted. Consultation is required with the Solar Energy Industries Association of Australia and the potential for government support for solar power research should be investigated and encouraged.
- \* Local availability of medical and ancillary support services has declined and has been replaced by fly-in clinics provided by the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS). The ability of the RFDS to replace local medical care and provide ancillary support services should be explored.
- \* The health and well-being of all rangeland people and the specific problems of living in these environments should be addressed.
- \* School of the Air and Distance Education remain the norm for Primary School and Boarding School for secondary education. Many parents are inadequately equipped to teach the modern range of subjects which can include foreign languages and computing. Aboriginal people are particularly disadvantaged by the education system. The Strategy should address the education needs of all rangeland peoples and in particular the requirement to provide education relevant to people who will spend their lifetime in the bush.
- \* Communication is the only service to remote areas which has improved and the availability of a 24 hour telephone system and television service have significantly improved the quality of life. Opportunities to build on these developments (e.g. in education) should be explored.
- \* Banks continue to close outback branches and with them goes the only source of financial advice. The implications on these closures should be explored.

- \* Financial support from government for rangeland people is considerable. Opportunities for more effective targeting and application of this support should be investigated.

#### 3.1.2 Planning management and tools

- \* The National Landcare Program is a strong force in bridging gaps between State agencies focusing on conservation and production. Mechanisms for coordinating projects and funding from various sources should be developed.
- \* Western Australia has a significant area of Vacant Crown Land (VCL) that is not readily accounted for in the Issues Paper, which generally considers land under some existing use. Management of this VCL should be explored.
- \* Common policies on public access in the rangelands areas in all States, which accommodates regional differences, is required.
- \* Government resources to assist management of natural resources in rangelands is declining as the economic importance of the agricultural industries declines. The strategy must explore mechanisms for providing an integrated and effective government service for these lands.

#### 3.1.3 Tenure

- \* Land use within the rangelands will change markedly over the coming years. The Strategy **must** address the requirement for land tenure arrangements and regulations to facilitate and not impede these changes. Policy should address the balance required between the rights and responsibilities of land users.
- \* Is multiple land use an ideal or a reality? In certain instances a single land use option may only be possible. Associated with this issue is a need for mechanisms to deal with conflict resolution, particularly those pertaining to differences in the rights of who is the legitimate land user.

### 3.2 ECOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES

This section provides a reasonably comprehensive account of the subject area and appropriately gives emphasis to alternative land use opportunities. We have listed additional points to be considered as issues requiring additional consideration and support.

#### 3.2.1 Economic

##### 3.2.1.1 Terms of Trade, Productivity and Profitability

- \* Although pastoralists have attempted to increase productivity, the increase in the pastoral zone has been

slower than in the wheat-sheep or high rainfall zones, and the rate of decline in the terms of trade faster. Pastoralists have thus been caught in a particularly vicious cost-price squeeze. This has significant implication for the future viability of pastoralism in the less productive parts of the rangelands, and emphasises the need to exploit diversification options.

- \* While mechanical/agronomic regeneration of rangeland is generally agreed to be uneconomic, attempts to restore degraded land by means of grazing management may also be sub-optimal for private economic benefit. Some studies indicate that a conservative management approach is optimal, in terms of private economic benefit, for land in good "condition". This may not be the case for land which is already degraded (in terms of pastoral productivity). In this situation public investment in land reclamation is justified if public opinion requires the restoration of degraded pastoral land.
- \* In view of the above, there is a need to reconsider the guide-lines for funding under the National Landcare Program in order to support works in rangeland areas, in addition to demonstrations or education programs, and to consider other funding programs or financial incentives specifically targeted at the rangelands. The alternatives of accepting exploitative management of degraded land as socially optimal, or permitting the abandonment of large tracts of degraded land, are not considered consistent with any reasonable concept of inter-generational equity.

### 3.2.1.2 *Labour force/unemployment*

- \* Considerable opportunity exists for utilising modern communications technology to improve the skill levels of workers and managers in the pastoral industry. Satellite broadcasts, for example, can be used to provide home study courses through TAFE with a minimum requirement for on-campus time.

### 3.2.1.3 *Alternative resource use*

- \* Moves to develop an industry based on sustainable utilisation of those kangaroo species currently subject to commercial harvesting will require:
  - an initial major thrust to develop overseas markets;
  - a clear recognition of property rights in the live animal if this is required by commercial developers. (Property rights already exist with respect to dead animals under the tagging system. However landholders wishing to invest in development of a kangaroo harvesting operation on their property may wish to be assured of rights to the live animal.)
- \* Development of this industry should be driven by the private sector with government assistance as required for development of overseas markets. The justification for the current degree of regulation in the industry should be re-considered.

- \* The possibility of pastoralists playing a key role in off-reserve conservation, in return for financial remuneration, should be considered seriously in industry restructuring proposals.

## 3.2.2 *Environmental*

### *Issues deserving commendation and support*

- \* We support and wish to highlight the importance of integration of conservation and production oriented management. The greatest area of conservation will be on pastoral holdings, but it must be recognised that some conservation ideals are not compatible with the operational needs of a pastoral holding.
- \* Resolving the different views on what are the outcomes of seasonal and human intervention on aspects of degradation is required. A policy that ensures long-term monitoring and research needs to be implemented.
- \* Continued support needs to be given to current groundwater management activities.

### *Issues that require greater development*

- \* To ensure a better focus for the Issues Paper, improved definitions are required for the following:

*rangelands*      the terms of reference acknowledges rangelands as having a major activity of grazing, whereas the Issues Paper takes a more diverse view of land use;

*degradation*    no definition is presented and this absence will not assist policy development;

*woody weeds*    the presence of native and exotic woody species needs to be considered in both the context of 1. major problem species that need to be dealt with urgently, and 2. an ecological component that has a necessary role in rangeland systems.

- \* The notion of "regional management" of rangeland resources needs to have both ecological and socio-economic considerations.
- \* The measures of sustainability need to be broadened to include a focus on appropriate management actions. If certain management results in a loss of future opportunities for that land type or a reduction in the potential of that land for alternative land uses then that management action must be deemed inappropriate. If one waits to measure only a decline in productivity or increase in degradation then the negative impacts of management may have become entrenched. This policy needs to address the cause of loss in sustainability, not the symptoms.

- \* Monitoring requires a higher profile in this section. To ensure that the outcomes from monitoring are targeted to environmental issues, the purpose of monitoring needs to be clearly defined. For example, how does it deal with measuring biodiversity when the objective of management is to maximise sustainable production, how does it best contrast the effects of different land-uses?
- \* The Paper mentions change of understorey vegetation with the possibility that “canopy composition may be essentially unchanged”. However, consideration of the issue of long term change in plant community as a result of curtailment of recruitment of overstorey species needs to be included.
- \* The emphasis of rangeland biodiversity needs to be on the integrity of communities and ecosystems rather than individual species.
- \* The strategy must address the costs and benefits of achieving biodiversity objectives, and how these will be distributed equitably between users.
- \* A guiding principle proposed is that we “should maintain and enhance the international competitiveness of industries in an environmentally sound manner”. But what do we do when environmental soundness is costly in terms of competitiveness?
- \* Fire is an integral tool in rangeland management and requires a much higher profile than that portrayed in this Issues Paper.
- \* The belief that landusers need to value the wide range of worths that the rangeland offers is endorsed. The proposed ways of ensuring this focuses too much in this paper on user-pay and penalty based schemes. Alternative approaches need to be considered such as:
  - (i) awareness activities;
  - (ii) educational and understanding enhancement; and
  - (iii) proactive support for change.
- \* Water management policy must also address the impacts of activities outside the rangelands on water and other resources of the rangelands.

### **3.2.3 Social**

#### **3.2.3.1 Structural adjustment**

- \* The need for structural adjustment arises, in addition to the issues raised, from major changes in the resource base which have resulted in a pastoral industry less able to withstand seasonal variation, and dependent on annual rainfall.
- \* The comments on terms of trade and productivity made in relation to 3.2.1.1 apply also here.
- \* We endorse the proposition that the strategy should examine opportunities to facilitate structural adjustment in rangelands. In doing so it should:

- recognise and encourage alternative forms of land use;
- seek to ensure that practical management skills are retained to the maximum possible extent;
- suggest innovative policies for the financing of adjustment which aim at minimising the principal of the debt incurred rather than reducing the interest payable. Such policies may be much more attractive to prospective purchasers and place no additional strain on the public purse.
- \* The strategy will need to address the need for a much closer linkage between ‘rangeland’ and ‘non-rangeland’ people (e.g. pastoralists and financiers). The purpose will be to achieve policies in each sphere that are in harmony rather than in conflict.

#### **3.2.3.2 Cultural environment**

- \* The Society endorses the comments regarding Aboriginal heritage but considers that the significance of the rangelands in terms of European cultural heritage deserves further emphasis especially in view of the significance of “the bush” in the development of the Australian ideotype. The maintenance of a viable pastoral industry and its associated lifestyle is of considerable cultural significance.

## **3.3 INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND MONITORING**

- \* Development of information systems and monitoring must be appropriate to regional objectives, allowing for a wide variety of potential land uses. Priorities must be set for information gathering, and the most critical information identified, in order to maximise finite resources for the task.
- \* Information must be gathered at a regional level. There is a need for definition of appropriate regions. The most effective boundaries will be biophysical but other boundaries must also be taken into account. Consideration should be given to distance from “markets” e.g. for tourism, Aboriginal needs, or pastoral products, and to socio-cultural differences e.g. Aboriginal custodial groupings of land, and existing statistical / administrative / legislative boundaries.
- \* Land resource survey information should be broadly based for land use planning and management and not be single-use oriented. Methods should be standardised. Due recognition should be given to landscape processes - information is required on landscape and soil, not just flora or fauna. Natural landscape processes must be distinguishable from degradation processes.
- \* Multiple levels or different intensities of collecting and reporting information will be required, depending on circumstances. These will be related to productivity and resilience of land under particular uses. For example, for pastoral use, little information will be required about

spinifex country but more detailed monitoring of productive and/or fragile country will be necessary.

- \* Financial and human resources for data gathering, analysis and interpretation will always be limited - the most critical information must be identified. Key indicators of landscape change and key times at which to monitor need to be defined. Ways of sharing data, of extrapolating from point-source information to the region and of effectively using remotely-sensed data are needed. Data bases should not be allowed to accumulate without regular critical examination.
- \* Confidentiality of information is demanded by some groups. This conflicts with the need to share information, noted above, and will have to be resolved. A partial solution is to aggregate data for reporting at a larger (regional) scale.
- \* Two types of monitoring are required. One should be performed by the rangeland user(s) over both the short and long term, providing information on the impact of specific land use(s) directly to the user(s). The other should be conducted on society's behalf, to ensure that society's goals are being met.
- \* It is difficult to achieve increased knowledge within the constraints of the short-term research projects forwarded by R & D bodies. The strategy should address the need for long-term research in the rangelands.
- \* Aboriginal people are multiple land users; uses can include pastoralism, tourism, bush tucker, wood harvesting and more. Much of the land now occupied by Aboriginals is marginal for conventional pastoralism. It must be recognised that skills and aspirations of Aboriginal people are different to those of other rangeland users.

Information in its present form is not reaching Aboriginal people. Cross cultural information exchange will help to put information in a context that is relevant to Aboriginal perceptions of, and aspirations for, their land.

Presentation according to conventional landscape units is not necessarily relevant and should be linked to custodial groupings of land. Weight should be given to Aboriginal knowledge of land although it is not scientifically quantified; the value of qualitative knowledge should be recognised, just as it is in the broader pastoral community.

Information exchange between other agencies and Aboriginal organisations is needed, but effective ways of communicating information to Aboriginal people must be devised, including local language texts and pictures.

Aboriginal people should be involved in making decisions about what they need, rather than having answers provided. Some identified needs are for region-specific information on sustainability of overlapping land uses, but the regions must be relevant to Aboriginal perceptions of land groupings.

### 3.4 INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

- \* The section on taxation is too narrowly focused on pastoral use. Taxation policy may be used to assist a desired change in rangeland use. In particular, there is the opportunity for taxation incentives to assist the phasing out of an existing but inappropriate use, and the phasing in of a new use.
- \* The strategy should consider the return (monetary and non-monetary) that the wider community receives for its investment in rangeland people and their activity. Further, the strategy can then address what the return **should** be, and how much the community **should** pay for that return.
- \* An issue of importance is real or perceived conflicts between State and Federal policies and objectives for the rangelands.
- \* The issue of separate agencies having responsibility for different uses needs to be addressed. This leads to inefficiencies in administration and imparts rigidity to the system.
- \* Where is the money provided in direct support to the pastoral industry going? Is it a benefit for the lessee or the community at large. The Issues Paper does not consider this point.
- \* As an addition to the above point, the Issues Paper does not raise the opportunity cost of the management of rangelands, in the absence of the established uses. The opportunity cost needs to be established so that it can be compared to the existing cost in direct support for specific uses (e.g. \$8,000-\$15,000 for a pastoral enterprise in Western Australia). It may be that the existing costs are less than the opportunity costs. For instance, long-term rangeland dwellers provide a wide range of social services to travellers and short term users that would not otherwise be provided.
- \* An issue identified is the flow of costs and benefits resulting from the various uses to comply with international agreements. A mechanism needs to be available to distribute these costs and benefits equitably. The practicality of meeting some of international agreements given that it is the States who have most authority over land management needs to be considered.
- \* Institutional changes will be required to allow different 'layers' of use to achieve complimentary objectives.
- \* The Issues Paper should identify who 'owns' the Institutional Issues, and how they were chosen.
- \* The differing tenure arrangements between States is not referred to adequately.
- \* There is an inadequate commitment in the Issues Paper to establishing a workable means of strategy implementation (e.g. strategy > policy > action plan > land management).

- \* A fundamental question not considered is 'What does society expect from the rangelands and the people that live there and manage them?'
- \* A description of the 'wider' community - who are they, and how are their views represented. The Issues Paper provides 'general views' in a number of places without saying how these views are known.
- \* The Paper needs a greater commitment to the reality of multiple uses, rather than alternative uses. In this respect users in a land area should be considered as a group. In particular, attention needs to be given to the processes for phasing in and out various uses in a particular area.
- \* The issues of the nature and support for Aboriginal use need to be carefully thought through within the context of achieving biophysical, economic and social sustainability of rangeland use.
- \* Landcare groups are not mentioned in the text. What is their role in strategy formulation and implementation?

## THE NEED FOR A COMPANY LANDCARE INITIATIVE FOR THE NORTHERN AUSTRALIAN PASTORAL ZONE

*Darryl Clift, Conservation Commission of the NT, PO Box 496, Darwin NT 0831*

### Background

Since the establishment of the National Soil Conservation Program (NSCP), significant resources have been directed towards combating land degradation throughout Australia. With the emergence of Landcare in 1986, the NSCP (now the National Landcare Program) subsequently re-organised its funding arrangements to include a Community Landcare Support sub-program. This re-allocation of funds back into the community represented a profound change in thinking as to how best to deal with the problem of land degradation. It was based on the recognition that "ownership" of land degradation problems and solutions was a key ingredient to the continued growth and success of community involvement in combating land degradation across rural Australia.

Landcare group formation and development since the late 1980's has been reported as progressing in leaps and bounds across the nation. The bulk of this progress has however been restricted to the more intensively settled southern areas of Australia. Across much of the semi-arid rangelands of northern Australia group activity, by comparison, is at a relative standstill. In some areas such as the NT it is regarded as being still in its infancy (Campbell 1992).

### What's Different about Northern Australia

In his final report to the National Landcare Program (NLP) on the growth of the landcare movement, Campbell suggested that a major constraint to landcare group effectiveness across northern Australia was the ownership structure of pastoral leases.

Throughout southern Australia, the ownership structure of rural land is predominantly family based. Here, all the key ingredients to successful community involvement and action, (i.e. lifestyle and family goals, financial goals, and most importantly "ownership of decision making") exist where it counts,... "with the man on the land", and consequently within the farming community.

By comparison, the ownership structure of pastoral land across northern Australia is such that a large proportion is owned by both private and public investment companies. In the NT alone, more than half of the pastoral leases north of Tennant Creek are owned by both private and public companies of which, approximately 20% are wholly or partly foreign owned (Brown 1991).

Under this arrangement, few of the key ingredients to successful community landcare exist where it counts. The

### CONFERENCE WORKING PAPERS

The organisers of the 8th Biennial Rangeland Conference have printed copies of the Working Papers surplus to the number required for those registering for the conference. These Working Papers will be available after the conference to any person or institution requiring a copy. Details on costs (including handling and postage) will not be finalised until after the conference (June 21-23).

Anyone requiring a copy of the Working Papers should contact Neil MacDonald after the conference.

#### Neil's Address:

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man on the land generally does not own the lease and is somewhat remote from any land degradation problems and solutions. Consequently, the family and lifestyle ties to the land normally associated with the land owner are largely non-existent or at best, are overshadowed by financial goals.

In the absence of family and lifestyle ties to the land, decision-making by absentee owners will largely be driven by financial goals. Under these circumstances there is a higher rate of turnover in the ownership of leases as well as the managers of leases (Campbell 1992). Further, the large size of leases across northern Australia means a reduced level of interaction between landcare group members and reduced effectiveness of community landcare compared with southern Australia (Jansen 1990). Across northern Australia it is not a question of how many farms occur within a particular catchment, but more a question of how many catchments occur on any given station.

## Objectives of a Company Landcare Initiative

The aim of this initiative would be to pilot a program to provide assistance with landcare coordination and promotion within large pastoral companies rather than within the pastoral communities. The objectives of introducing a company-based landcare initiative would therefore be;

- \* to overcome the constraints to landcare development across northern Australian rangelands by providing landcare support to pastoral companies where it will be most effective.
- \* to demonstrate the benefits to be gained from having land conservation expertise to assist company decision-making along side the more traditional business, financial and production based areas of expertise.
- \* to increase the level of awareness within the larger pastoral companies of the benefits to management of developing a land conservation ethic, and of adopting sustainable land management practices.
- \* to ultimately see land conservation included as part of the overall business ethic within both the private and public pastoral company management/decision-making structure.
- \* to improve the flow of information and working relationship between government conservation agencies and rural companies. To provide feedback to government on aspects that would improve land conservation extension to private and public pastoral companies.

Within any particular pastoral company, the land conservationist (or landcare manager) would report to the company's upper management in much the same manner as a community landcare group coordinator should be answerable to a particular community landcare group. The land conservationist would be responsible for advising upper

management as to the land conservation issues and needs relevant to their holdings, and then servicing these needs as directed by upper management. This may include for example:

- liaising on behalf of the company on all environmental and landcare matters,
- coordinating the development of Property Management Plans on company stations,
- the establishment of a rangeland monitoring system, or
- designing and implementing soil conservation and land rehabilitation works.

The position would also be responsible for promoting the landcare ethic to both upper management and station management, and act as a bridge for improving communications and the flow of information between the company and its various levels of management, and relevant government agencies.

## Putting Company Landcare into Practice

Essentially the aims and objectives of a company landcare initiative, as outlined, have been adopted by the Adelaide based S. Kidman & Company. In 1993 this pastoral company engaged a landcare manager whose duties (as stated by the company at that time) were to include;

*"the development and implementation of efficient and effective land care programs on the Company's extensive pastoral holdings, to act as the Company spokesperson on environmental and landcare matters, and to liaise with relevant Government and non-Government agencies"* (Weekend Australian 1992).

More recently, the North Australian Pastoral Company Pty Ltd (NAPCO), in keeping with the company's policy of being a responsible land manager, have also adopted a similar approach to Kidman's with the addition of a Whole Property Planning Officer to the head office team. The Officer is responsible for assessing current land use and management practices on all NAPCO holdings, and for developing programs to raise awareness and improve understanding of the natural resources and their sustainable management by station managers and staff (Weekend Australian 1993).

In promoting a company-based landcare ethic, there are several options available. One is the do-nothing option and hope that other pastoral companies take up the example set by S. Kidman and Company, and NAPCO.

It is worth noting that the Kidman and NAPCO pastoral companies, both of which are family-owned, have stated that the landcare initiatives being undertaken are based on a recognition that they are in for the "long haul" for the family (or families) involved. The same however may not be said of public investment companies, and perhaps of other privately owned companies. Recognition of a need to sustain the land resource for future generations may exist within other companies, but it does not on its own ensure that they would see a sufficient need to commit the resources required to follow suite.

To encourage other companies to follow suite, one option is to provide short term assistance to enable large pastoral companies the opportunity to determine the benefits of having a Landcare Manager within the organisation. With the objective in mind of improving communication between government and industry, it may be appropriate that such an initiative involve some form of secondment from government of experienced land conservationists. Choosing this option will yield a number of benefits. For the company, having a Landcare Manager within the organisation who has considerable experience working within government would greatly assist the company to avoid much of the bureaucratic run-around and red tape that can so frequently occur when dealing with government. Knowing the structure of government and who to contact on what issues to access information, is half the battle to improving communication between the private and public sector. Conversely, those seconded to companies would gain an invaluable insight into the needs of a pastoral enterprise, and therefore would be better equipped as advisory officers should they return to the public sector.

## Performance Indicators

Success of the program would be measurable by whether the company identifies a need to maintain such a position when the assistance expires. It may also be measured by tangible results such as the production of Property Management Plans for various company properties, the establishment of a monitoring program on all properties to assist pasture management and further planning, and by the interest that such a program generates within other companies with pastoral or agricultural holdings.

In further justifying such an initiative, it is worth noting that much of the land area controlled by any one of Australia's larger pastoral companies is comparable in area to any of the larger community landcare districts in Australia currently being serviced by NLP funded coordinators or facilitators. In 1991, Australia's Top Ten private and public companies controlled approximately 580,000 sq kms which is roughly equivalent to 8.0% of the entire Australian continent (7.5 million sq kms). At that time it was also suggested that the trend towards investment companies acquiring land was increasing (Brown 1991).

## Conclusions

Merely extending the community landcare ethic which has emerged in southern Australia directly to northern Australia has resulted in problems which should have been anticipated. In many ways it has been a textbook case of inadequate market research. Governments, in trying to promote or foster the landcare ethic, have done so using a "standardised" approach Australia-wide rather than looking at the varying circumstances or conditions which prevail within different parts of the country, and "adapting" the program accordingly.

As a great proportion of the effective ownership and decision-making regarding the management of the north Australian rangelands resides within the company boardroom and not so much out on the property itself, promoting the landcare (or land conservation) message to much of northern Australia would be better achieved through the development of a company landcare initiative. Such a program would provide the necessary expertise to large pastoral companies to enable them to recognise problems and implement their own solutions, in much the same manner in which coordination/facilitation assistance is currently provided to Community Landcare groups.

In highlighting these similarities with the community-based landcare program, it is important to point out that such an initiative does not seek to detract from the existing community-based landcare effort across northern Australia. It merely seeks to complement and further enhance the community-based effort by providing land conservation support to where the greatest proportion of the ownership (or decision-making) resides.

By servicing the landcare needs of Australia's larger pastoral companies in such a manner (which is synonymous with the bottom-up spirit of landcare), much of the constraint to the growth of landcare across northern Australia will be removed.

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## INTERNATIONAL RANGELANDS CONGRESS

### Second Circular for Vth IRC

Included with this Newsletter is the Second Circular for the Vth International Rangeland Congress to be held in Salt Lake City, Utah in 1995. This circular contains registration, housing and abstract instructions.

Anyone requiring further information about the Vth IRC can contact the organising committee:

**Vth International Rangeland Congress**  
PO Box 11637, Salt Lake City, Utah 84147 USA  
Fax: (801) 524-4403

# A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## Land Tenure For The Rangelands

*David Wilcox, Acting Chairman, Pastoral Land Board of the Northern Territory, GPO Box 1680, Darwin NT 0801*

The conditions of pastoral tenure have been an issue with pastoral lease holders for decades. Many hold the view that pastoral leases should be freeholded in order that lessees may have access to additional sources of finance. Most administrations give lessees permanent leases or long term, rolling leases in which landcare is assured through covenants or conditions relating to the use of the land, and the tenure security needs of financiers are satisfied.

Michael Young in a number of papers (1983, 1985, 1986 etc.) has drawn attention to the central role of leasing arrangements in achieving the sustainable use of land for pastoral purposes. More recently, John Holmes (1994) has discussed the changing perceptions of what is appropriate land use in the rangelands and the need to change leasehold conditions in relation to the currently perceived uses and needs of the rangeland environment.

Some State Governments in response to the dictates of complementary legislation affecting land use such as Environmental Protection Acts have in some cases enacted new pastoral legislation, for example in South Australia and the Northern Territory. Others, Queensland and New South Wales, have responded by re-organising either their approach to land administration or have amalgamated those departments or authorities which have the prime responsibility for rangeland administration. In Western Australia new legislation for the pastoral lands prepared some years ago still has to be debated in Parliament.

Richard Ledger's recent paper (Ledgar 1994) is relevant to the discussion because it reviews all the current rangeland legislation and provides an accurate summary of the provisions they contain. Unfortunately, his interpretation of the effectiveness of legislation in achieving sustainable land use in respect of Northern Territory legislation is incomplete and sometimes inaccurate. Perhaps this is so as it was undertaken without discussion either with the Pastoral Land Board or relevant Government officers. This letter serves to put the record straight and, in a sense, supports the efforts of the dedicated officers of Government who are engaged in pursuing the objectives of the recent legislation in quite difficult environmental circumstances.

Land management in its presently accepted sense goes beyond the covenants and conditions set down in lease documents. Leaseholders and administrators alike are bound by the requirements of complementary legislation included in Soil and Land Conservation and Environmental Protection Acts. To comment upon the ability of the Crown to administer pastoral lands properly without a consideration of the associated Acts seems to me to be an inadequate coverage of this important topic. Yet this is what Richard has done and

in so doing has presented an unbalanced view of Government actions in achieving sustainable landuse.

Even without the associated Acts the Pastoral Land Board of the Northern Territory has a firm commitment to the proper management of leasehold land. Its duties and responsibilities and those of the Minister are clearly laid out in section 4, requiring them, inter alia, to prevent or minimise degradation or damage, and to rehabilitate land. Lessees have duties under section 6 to prevent the degradation of the land. Certain aspects of landcare such as the implementation of remedial plans (for the rehabilitation of land) are endorsed upon the title and are administered solely by the Board. Richard has expressed a concern that landcare must suffer under these provisions, as ultimate enforcement may be at the discretion of the Minister. It is equally correct to state that Ministerial discretion can be used aggressively to diminish land degradation.

Richard suggests that the Crown is seeking to pass off its responsibility to protect Crown land. One may well ask to whom. There is no intention on the part of the Pastoral Land Board to put off any action which can prevent land degradation. The Act does provide, however, for due process to be observed. Action which may be taken by a Board may well not be precipitate and it is right that it should not. In our system of government the rights of the individual must be protected from, possibly, unprincipled officials. I would not like to see it change to one where rulings and directions may be given by anonymous public servants without provision for notice and appeal. There is therefore provision in the Act for appeals against decisions made by the Board. However, the Board's thrust towards land conservation in its broadest sense, instead, is based upon voluntary cooperation in the hope that it will not be necessary to impose rehabilitation programs.

It was a pity that Richard did not discuss with the Board its monitoring proposals. If he had he would not have labelled it as useless. His critique is incomplete and does not include a consideration of the second, essential, regional tier of monitoring being implemented by Territory organisations and CSIRO in association with the Board. The Board has been signally successful in achieving a high degree of cooperation between government departments in the creation of its monitoring program and we are, I feel, rightly proud of the progress we have made.

Monitoring systems will be an effective agent in effecting change in land management in the Territory. The Board's decision to take Tier One into the realm of the pastoral lessee can only increase the understanding of land holders into the nature of change in rangelands and will promote changes in management practices.

One of the first tasks of the Board after it was established in June 1992 was to develop clearing guidelines. I rather felt that those formulated were restrictive and strong. Richard suggests that they are weak. In fact, they absolutely prohibit the clearing of land, other than for fencelines or other

developments without there being a detailed report on the proposal prepared by qualified professionals in landcare.

I have written in this vein in order to point out that administrators do care about the conditions of land under their care and also to emphasise that the *Pastoral Land Act* in the Northern Territory is well framed to achieve proper landcare. I am convinced that it will achieve its objectives in an acceptably short time, given goodwill on all sides; from lessees, administrators and the community.

## References

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## AUSTRALIAN RANGELAND SOCIETY AWARDS

The Society has two awards to assist members with either:

- \* studies related to the rangelands, or
- \* with travel expenses associated with attending a conference (or some other activity).

Applications for each award close in November and any member of the Society interested in either award is invited to apply. Any member seeking travel assistance to attend the 1995 International Rangeland Congress should note that this will be the last opportunity to apply for funding through the ARS Travel Grant.

### Australian Rangeland Society Travel Grant

This grant is intended to assist eligible persons to attend a meeting, conference or congress related to the rangelands; or to assist eligible persons with travel or transport costs to

investigate a topic connected with range management or to implement a program of rangeland investigation not already being undertaken. The grant is available for overseas travel and/or travel within Australia. It is not intended for subsistence expenses.

### Australian Rangeland Society Scholarship

This scholarship has the purpose of assisting eligible members with formal study of a subject or course related to the rangelands and which will further the aims of the Australian Rangeland Society. The scholarship is available for study assistance either overseas or within Australia. It is not intended to defray travel expenses.

### How to Apply

Members interested in either grant are urged to apply by submitting a written outline of their proposed activity. Applications should clearly address how the intended activity (i.e. travel or study) meets the aims of the Society. Applications should be brief (less than 1000 words) and should be submitted to Council before November 30.

### Conditions

Applications can be made at any time but will not be considered until the first Council meeting after the November 30 closing date. The intended activity must therefore be for the following calendar year.

More than one travel grant and/or scholarship can be awarded but the maximum amount available for distribution with each award is \$2000.

Applications for the **Travel Grant** should include details of the costs and describe how the grant is to be spent. Details of any other sources of funding should be given. Those applying for the **Scholarship** should include details of the program of study or course being undertaken and the institution under whose auspices it will be conducted. Information on how the scholarship money will be spent is required as are details on any other sources of funding.

Applicants for either award should include the names of at least two referees.

Finally, on completing the travel or study, recipients are required to fully acquit their grant or scholarship. They are also expected to write an article on their activities or experiences for the *Range Management Newsletter*.

### Eligibility

No formal qualifications are required for either award. There are no age restrictions and all members of the Society are eligible to apply. Applications are encouraged from persons who do not have organisational support.

Travel or study assistance can be made available to a non-member where Council considers that the application meets the aims of the Society, and is of sufficient merit.

#### *Overseas Travel or Study*

There is a restriction on both awards for overseas travel or study assistance in that applicants must have been members of the Society for at least 12 months. Overseas travel can be to Australia, or study within Australia, by overseas members.

So, if you need assistance with travel or study expenses next year in relation to a topic connected with the rangelands, think about applying for a Society grant.

- \* Improving public and political understanding of science and technology. FASTS supports increased efforts, especially with the media and schools.
- \* Simplifying the government rules that industry has to contend with in becoming more innovative. Johnston cites the recent revelation that the high cost of patenting is not accepted as a legitimate, tax-deductible expenditure in R&D.
- \* Focusing scientists' minds on the social and economic impact of their work by requiring them to answer questions on these points in applications to research funding bodies. In their applications, applied scientists should also be asked to specify their dependence on basic research.

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## NEW BROOM FOR FASTS

*(Ed. The following information has been edited from an article in the January/February issue of Search.. The Australian Rangeland Society is a member of the Federation of Australian Scientific and Technological Societies Inc. [FASTS].)*

The new President of the Federation of Australian Scientific and Technological Societies (FASTS), Professor Graham Johnston, is planning a shift in emphasis from a largely reactive to a predominantly proactive organisation. His mission for Australian science, in a nutshell, is 'to help make it part of the real world and to establish a broader base for the science and technology agenda'.

Prominent on Johnston's agenda are:

- \* Making FASTS 'a more responsible, apolitical body, generating its own policies and not just criticising government'.
- \* Focusing political attention on 'big picture items'.
- \* Promoting the Science Ministry to Cabinet level, as in the UK, USA and France.
- \* Supporting FASTS' existing lobbying activities with the Federal Government and forming strategic alliances with State Governments and major representative bodies such as the ACTU, the National Farmers Federation, the Business Council of Australia and the Australian Conservation Foundation.
- \* Challenging the 70 member societies comprising FASTS (total individual membership about 70,000) to nominate issues in their discipline areas that, if supported, would have a high likelihood of producing export income for the nation.
- \* Getting more practising scientists on to science policy and advisory bodies like ASTEC and the Prime Minister's Science and Engineering Council.

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## NEW MEMBERS

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## AUSTRALIAN RANGELAND SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

Please complete and return to the Subscription Secretary, Anne Stammers, PO Box 718, Victoria Park WA 6100.

I, [name] .....

of [address] .....

.....

..... Postcode .....

apply for membership of the Australian Rangeland Society and agree to be bound by the regulations of the Society as stated in the Articles of Association and Memorandum.

I enclose \$..... for full/part\* membership for an individual/institution\* for the calendar year 1994.

\* delete as appropriate

Signature..... Date.....

**Membership Rates:**

	Australia	Overseas
<b>Individual or Family -</b>		
Full (Journal + Newsletter)	\$40.00	\$50.00
Part (Newsletter only)	\$20.00	\$25.00
<b>Institution or Company -</b>		
Full (Journal + Newsletter)	\$55.00	\$65.00
Part (Newsletter only)	\$25.00	\$30.00

**Note -**

Membership is for the calendar year 1 January to 31 December. For overseas airmail delivery, add \$10 for full membership and \$5 for part membership. All rates are quoted in Australian dollars.

For Office Use Only:

Membership Number.....

Date Entered in Member Register.....

Date Ratified by Council.....