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A NATURE CONSERVATION STRATEGY

FOR WESTERN AUSTRALIA

BY

THE PASTORALISTS AND GRAZIERS

ASSOCIATION OF WESTERN

AUSTRALIA (INCORPORATED)

JULY 1992

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INTRODUCTION

51.1 The Pastoralists and Graziers Association of Western Australia are in full agreeance with conserving a diversity of indigenous landscapes, ecosystems and species, in natural habitats in Western Australia.

51.2 It is unfortunate, but inevitable that from time to time there is conflict between pastoralism/farming and conservation. Although this can be a problem there are two valid reasons why pastoralism and agriculture must continue.

Firstly, agriculture and pastoralism are major income earners for the Australian economy. Without this industry it would be almost impossible for the Australian people to maintain a high standard of living as a result of a smaller economy. Everyone and everything would suffer, even the conservation movement would feel the blow as there would be less taxpayers' money to spend.

Secondly, current day pastoralists and farmers are one of the most effective caretakers of Australian lands. Although there have been some problems in the past, they are now being rectified and landholders are working hard to conserve their land and what grows and lives upon it.

With this in mind, it is possible to understand the terrific importance of our submission and we presume that our following comments are seriously considered and acted upon.

COMMENTS ON PROPOSED ACTIONS

CALM PROPOSED ACTION 1

To complete the conservation reserve system by selecting, reserving and managing viable protected areas broadly representative of the natural ecosystems and species of Western Australia and including areas with special landscape, cultural and educational values.

Response

51.3 It is of great concern to our Association that if more conservation reserves are going to be created, there will not be the resources available to adequately manage these areas. Evidence is continuing to mount that indicates when land has been converted to a conservation reserve or national park, that they have not had the funds to implement effective management. Control of such animals as feral cats and the european red fox (and not to mention the herbivorous feral animals) has evidently been a problem in national parks in the past and present.

It is the landholder who generally works (sometimes in conjunction with the Agricultural Protection Board) hard to remove feral animals from particular areas. It has been reported that some pastoral leases that have been purchased for conversion to national parks have increased their feral species numbers, which in turn has led to a decrease in the number of native animals and plant species.

~~51.4~~ It is therefore essential that before any more land is resumed for National Parks that the resources are available for it to be managed properly. It seems increasingly clear that Australia's biodiversity would be better maintained if there were less national parks and that these were managed better rather than a large number of national parks with only a minority being managed satisfactorily.

51.4 The undertaking to carry out ecological surveys of little known areas of the state would be beneficial to many parties. The fact that some animals have been declared a threatened species and have since been found in many areas simply highlights the need for more ecological surveys..

CALM PROPOSED ACTION II

To promote, encourage and assist nature conservation on private and other lands and waters outside the conservation estate.

Response

This is an area that the PGA has been working hard on for a number of years. The implementation of, and representation on Land Conservation District Committees are evidence of this.

51.5 It is essential that conservation on private and leasehold lands remains on a "from the ground up" approach. This means that the landholder and the district committee ultimately decide what conservation measures are to be implemented.

Suggestions from CALM are more than welcome but the final say must stay with the landholder, otherwise the "Big Stick" approach will only create animosity between CALM and landholders which would lead to the destruction of a currently good working relationship.

CALM PROPOSED ACTION III

To protect, conserve and manage threatened species, ecosystems and communities by conducting and applying research and protecting and managing key areas and critically endangered species.

Response

51.6 The Pastoralists and Graziers Association endorses fully that threatened species and ecosystems should be protected. It is an Association policy that no Australian resident shall be allowed to remove endangered and/or threatened species.

51.7 This means that the rules have to apply to everyone. It is not acceptable to have one group of Australian residents allowed to remove threatened species while other groups are prosecuted and publicly denounced for doing so.

It is a concern of ours that the pastoral and farming industries are seen as the "bad people" when it comes to species disappearance, but it is commonly the case that farmers and pastoralists are very concerned and actively involved with preservation of endangered species. On the other end of the scale, there are minority groups, (with the public sympathy) which are allowed to threaten Australia's biological diversity with full endorsement of the government and the community as a whole by hunting threatened and/or specially protected species. This is not acceptable.

CALM PROPOSED ACTION IV

To control processes that are threatening large areas of habitat and/or many species.

Response

51.8 The Pastoralists and Graziers Association endorses further research into combating plant diseases such as dieback caused by the phytophthora species.

51.9 The proposed research into control measures of vermin animals is in both the interests of nature conservationists and pastoralists/farmers. It would be of great economic and environmental significance to both parties to remove feral animals from Australian soils.

51.10 The development of new fire regimes would be acceptable, but with more people accessing forest areas and being possible fire lighters (both intentional and unintentional), it would not be advisable to let forests get to the state whereby they are a "bomb ready to go off".

There would be huge risks in leaving a forest until it was in an extremely combustible state before burning if, for no other reason than that is how the original occupiers used to do it.

CALM PROPOSED ACTION V

To promote and assist the integration of nature conservation with economic activity according to the principles of ecologically sustainable development.

Response

It is acceptable for CALM to provide impact studies and statements on any particular piece of land and make it available to interested and relevant parties.

This of course, is on the understanding that any work CALM does is well balanced and unbiased.

51.11 The proposal that CALM will ensure that national resource managers do not degrade the biological assets of the State is of concern to this Association. If this were to be enforced by further legislation it would only go to damage the current relationship between land holders and CALM.

CALM PROPOSED ACTION VI

To promote the appreciation and awareness of the natural environment and the role of effective nature conservation in the well-being of human society.

Response

The Pastoralists and Graziers Association believes that some sort of education campaign would be beneficial, but it must be well balanced and not biased one way or another.

51.12

Pastoralists and farmers are fed up with criticism for past practices (which were acceptable and recommended practices at the time) and the lack of commendation they receive for the work being carried out to address any and varied conservation problems.

It is also of concern that if the whole community gets involved in conservation then a misinformed vocal minority group (say from Perth) could offer opinions on a problem a particular pastoralist and CALM were trying to address. It is our concern that the views of such a minority group could affect the program being carried out, and not necessarily for the better.

CALM PROPOSED ACTION VII

To develop new ways of attracting resources to nature conservation.

Response

51.13 Although the Pastoralists and Graziers Association agrees that more resources need to be directed to conservation if it is going to be successful, the implementation of a user pay system would be questionable, but if it included the value of the pastoralist as a 24 hr day/7 day a week land caretaker, then it could be worthy of consideration.

C O N C L U S I O N

The Pastoralists and Graziers Association of Western Australia trusts that the comments made in this submission will be taken into account when the final Nature Conservation Strategy is compiled.
