



Department of the Premier and Cabinet

TASK FORCE ON LAND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS MADE IN INTERIM REPORT

November 1983

INTRODUCTION

The Task Force was asked to recommend on "on the most efficient and effective means of co-ordinating the administration and management of land resources in the South West of Western Australia". In carrying out this study the Task Force realised that it was impossible to confine it to the South West region because all the government agencies concerned had responsibilities outside the region. With the approval of the Premier the proposals made in the interim report therefore apply to the whole State.

The proposals in the report are concerned with:-

- Planning - because sound land use planning backed by controls where necessary is the means by which management by private land holders is to be regulated in the public interest.
- Management - Because current management of public land is uneven, and inadequate on many valuable areas.
- Policy & Co-ordination - because many departments, community interests and committees must contribute, and their efforts must be co-ordinated.

PLANNING

The Task Force recognised that local authorities have a role in statutory planning which has been mainly exercised in urban areas in the past, but which is being increasingly applied to country areas. Although this role is a proper one which enables local input and interests to be met, the local authority planning needs technical support and, in some cases, co-ordination. The technical support should come from increased country planning skills to be incorporated into Town Planning to form a new Department of Town and Country Planning. The co-ordination can be provided where needed by the establishment of regional co-ordinating authorities (like the MRPA but for country areas). It is suggested that the need for such authorities would be very limited.

MANAGEMENT OF PRIVATE LAND

The Task Force recognised the predominant role of the private land holder or occupier, including those developing areas on the urban fringes, and in farming and pastoral areas. It suggested that the public interest

in such land could be protected in two ways. Firstly by proper land use planning, involving local authorities. Secondly, within the planning framework, controls on management practises necessary to protect the land resource may be imposed under the Soil and Land Conservation legislation. This provides for Soil Conservation Districts, which can be formed either by local initiatives or on the initiative of the Minister for Agriculture. They provide an opportunity for local government, land owners and government specialists to work towards improved land management practises over the whole of an area such as a particular catchment.

MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC LAND

The Task Force proposed that recognition should be given to the need to manage all public land in an appropriate way. It saw that the various types of public land could be recognised as a single estate but managed with a range of purposes, and requiring different degrees of security.

PUBLIC LAND IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Type of Land	Area in South West (ha)	Total Area (ha)
State Forest	2 m.	2 m.
National Parks	1.1 m.	4.6 m.
Nature Reserves	0.8 m.	9.7 m.
unvested reserves	0.3 m.	not available
vacant Crown land	2.9 m.	108 m.
"estate of public land"	7.1 m.	124.3 m.
Overall area of land in Western Australia	30 m.	250 m.

At present this land is managed by various agencies including the Forests Department, the National Parks Authority, the Fisheries and Wildlife Department and the Lands Department. The Task Force recommended that a single department should be formed to carry out land management over all of this land - at an appropriate level - and to carry out the necessary associated research.

The integrated functions of such a department would give it an excellent opportunity to improve efficiency. In the case of emergencies, such as wildfire, the whole resources of the department could be deployed without wasting time deciding whether interagency co-operation was required - and then arranging the co-operation. Similar benefits in efficiency could arise in smaller regional centres where it may be possible to provide a better range of staff or additional facilities for all land management needs where previously neither forestry, nor national parks nor nature reserves warranted the improvements on their own.

LAND MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

The proposed Department would be formed from the following existing departments or agencies:-

- Forests Department
- Wildlife research & investigations - Department of Fisheries & Wildlife
- National Parks Authority
- Herbarium - Department of Agriculture
- Fauna and feral animal research - Agricultural Protection Board
- Bush Fires Board - Department of Lands & Surveys
- Waterways Commission
- Kings Park Board

Some other existing staff from the Department of Lands and Surveys may also be transferred to the Land Management Department. The new Land Management Department would need additional staff resources in the longer term as this became possible.

A number of staff who are currently permanently employed under various Acts would need to be transferred into the Public Service and consideration would also have to be given to incorporating rangers in the National Parks Service into the Public Service.

The Task Force proposed that a small group be transferred out of Forests Department to establish a "timber bureau" to examine the State's timber resources in

relation to its needs.

The objectives of the Land Management Department would be to manage public land assigned to its care according to its dedicated purposes and to manage in a conservative way unvested reserves and vacant Crown land to preserve options for the future. It would study and manage wildlife on public land or elsewhere in Western Australia. It would carry out research in pursuit of its management responsibilities and it would advise other government agencies and the public on subjects on which it had special knowledge.

PROBLEMS OF AMALGAMATION

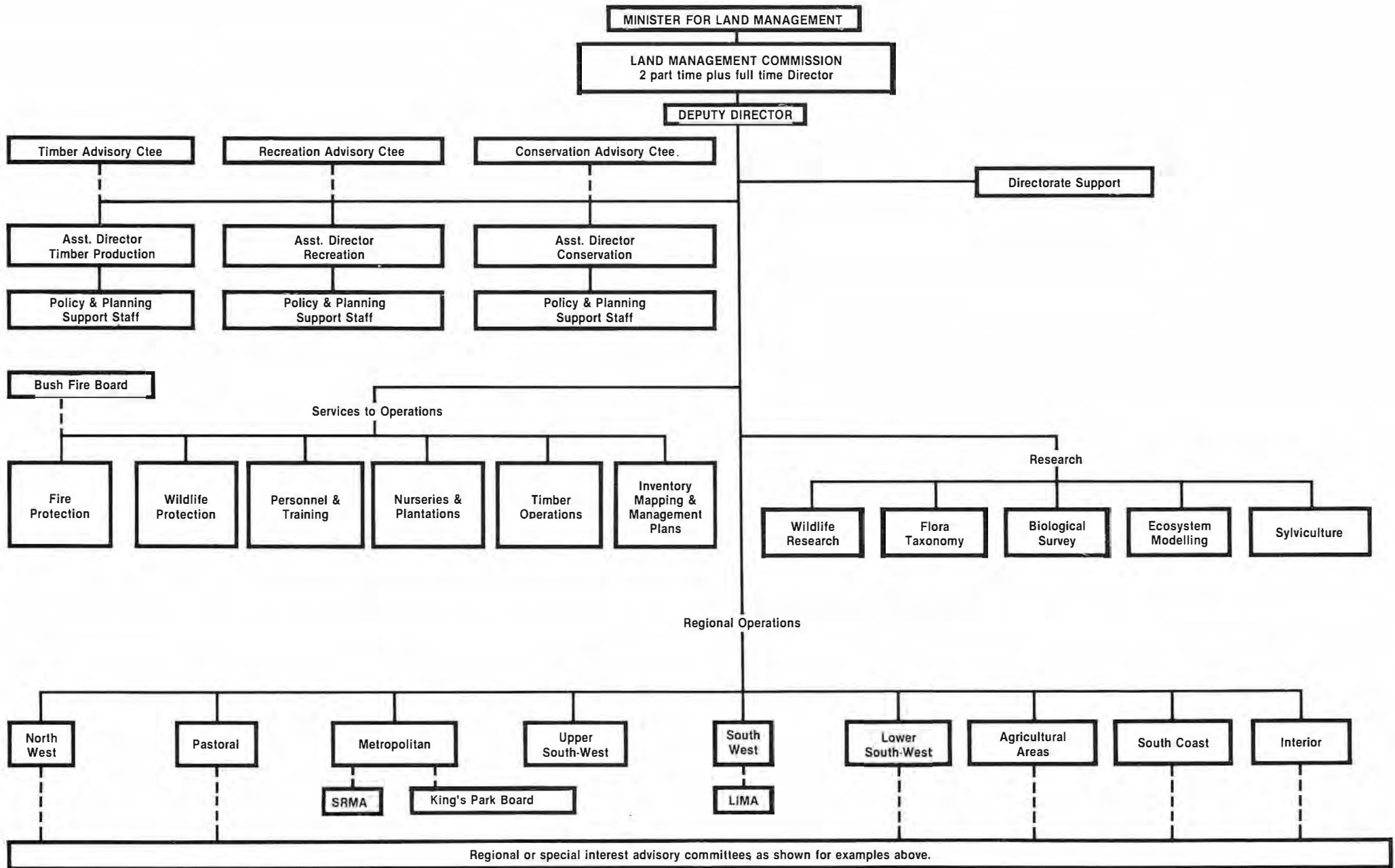
The Task Force recognised that such an amalgamation presented potential problems. One possibility pointed out in a submission was that the history of management of the forest for commercial use would make the Forests Department unsuitable for broader responsibilities such as the sensitive management of wilderness areas in National Parks. It was also suggested that the amalgamation of National Parks with wildlife research could be to the disadvantage of the latter because the demands of tourism and people would always give National Parks an advantage compared to wildlife research.

The Task Force has endeavoured to meet these problems by proposing a structure in the Department in which Conservation, Timber Production and Recreation are each specifically recognised in a small senior Policy Division, each supported by a special interest Advisory Committee. (See attached 'Conceptual outline of proposed structure of Land Management Department'.) These Divisions will provide focal points for public input into these activities. Furthermore, the Department will be headed by a three-man Commission which will have the responsibility of seeing that none of the activities is neglected and that all operations are kept in balance.

It is proposed that all management activities will be according to detailed Management Plans prepared within the Department, but subject to public inspection and comment before a formal procedure for approval by the Government.

This report acknowledges the need to ensure the maintenance of security of tenure and purpose for existing land (for example, National Parks), and stronger security of tenure and purpose for other categories of land (e.g. management priority areas for conservation within State Forest). If the Government accepts the general concept of a single land management department

THE LAND MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT



CONCEPTUAL OUTLINE OF PROPOSED STRUCTURE OF LAND MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

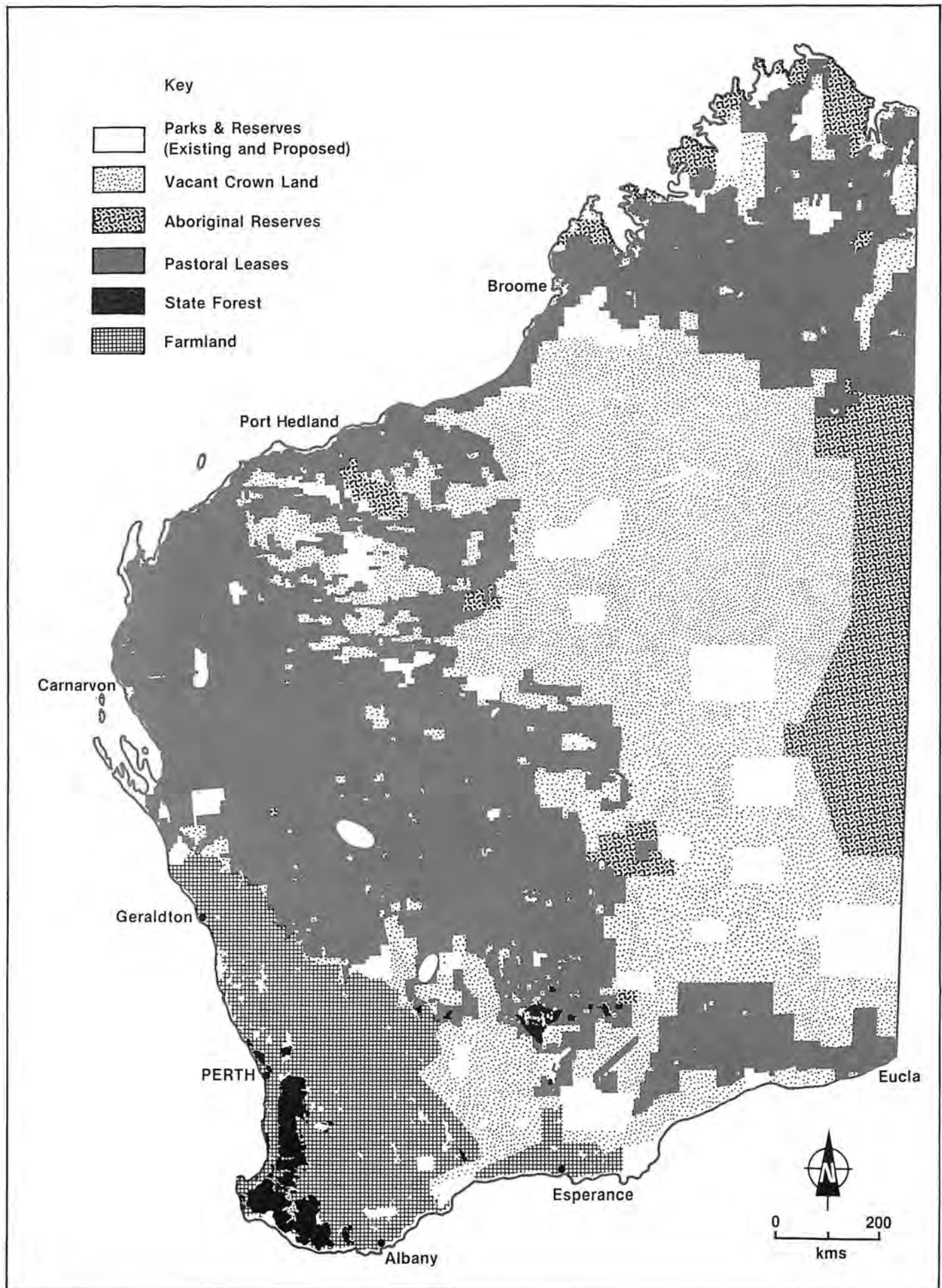
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for management of all public land, the implementation of this recommendation would include provision for appropriate legislation to ensure security of tenure and purpose of these areas.

LAND USE POLICY AND CO-ORDINATION

The Task Force believes that there is a need for a mechanism for the development of advice to the Government on overall land use matters at the policy level. It has proposed a Land Resource Policy Council representative of concerned government departments and community interests. Its functions would be:-

1. To evaluate and make recommendations to the Government on major land use questions.
2. To initiate land use policy for consideration by the Government and to evaluate new proposals for land use referred to it by the Government.
3. To evaluate and make recommendations to the Government on the consequences of land resource management plans developed by individual agencies which impact on other State resources.
4. To review and co-ordinate the activities of Councils, Boards, Authorities and interdepartmental committees formed to deal with specific land use and management issues.
5. To co-ordinate land management research.
6. To review the regional plans prepared by regional planning authorities.



Land tenure and purpose in Western Australia