

Visit to Barrow and Thevenard Islands

March 1989

(NPNCA)

DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION  
AND LAND MANAGEMENT

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I was able to visit these islands from the afternoon of March 14 to the afternoon of March 17. I believe that this time was reasonable to make an assessment. A little more than half of one day was taken by the visit to Thevenard Island.

Arrangements for the visit were excellent and I do not think the company could have done more. However this is in the context of an operation where all working conditions appear to be very good.

The discussions during the visit with Mr H. Butler and Mr Langdon on behalf of WAPET, Professor Bradshaw of UWA, Dr Burbidge and Mr Chevis of CALM and Dr Wilson of CALM and the Authority were very useful.

My personal conclusions which I would like to report to the Authority are as follows:-

1. My general conclusion is that WAPET has been a conscientious occupier of Barrow Island and at least to a considerable extent has been responsible for the fact that, in my opinion, the long term value of the island as a nature reserve has been retained completely.
2. The amount of ground disturbance on the island has been massive (perhaps 45 per cent of the surface disturbed on nearly half the island). However this has been offset by a continuous and successful regeneration programme.
3. If it is ever decided to use Barrow Island as a site for people to see some of Australia's now rare small marsupial fauna this could be done for limited numbers after the oil extraction is completed. The company's experience would be valuable for future management.
4. I believe that a management plan should be prepared for Barrow Island. This should describe its present occupancy and use and refer to a publication which we would hope the company would prepare on its environmental management experience on the island.

The management plan could describe the particular values of the island and set out the principles which should guide its management (in order to retain the particular values). It could say that currently the island was being managed by the company according to the agreed principles and a system of monitoring had been agreed with CALM.

If the Authority agrees with this approach it would need to be negotiated with the company.

5. Thevenard Island is a depressing sight. The company (again WAPET) is endeavouring to build an oil storage facility and drill some production wells on an area which is really too small. The disturbance on the leased area to the company is total and some facilities are obstrusive on to the beaches. It was argued that these beaches had not been used for turtle nesting prior to the establishment of lights in the area for the construction camp and a drilling rig.
6. A landing pier has been built on the island and this is changing the shape of the beach and thus the island. A jetty on piles appears to be the proper remedy.
7. A general conclusion from the visit was that oil production in the area should be subject to more government rationalization of facilities. The oil storage tanks on Varanus and on Airlie Island would have been more logically located on Barrow Island. The lack of will to negotiate and establish facilities-in-common is resulting in more disturbance to the area than is warranted. This requires discussion with EPA and government departments such as Resources Development and Mines.

(Norman Halse)  
CHAIRMAN

April 7, 1989  
PJA