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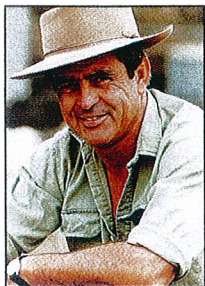
INTRODUCTION

The Coalition Government's policy on Managing the Rangelands is aimed at bringing together community, industry and Government interests to plan for the long-term future of this vast area of rural Western Australia.

The policy sets a framework within which communities can develop strategies to promote long-term economic and social viability over an area covering 85 per cent of the State. This area produces most of the State's mineral and energy wealth and supports the pastoral beef and wool industries.

Clearly, there are many decisions required on land use options and new ways of living and working in the rangelands. By supporting community and industry decisions, the Government's aim is to help secure a more sustainable and a profitable future for the region.

Directions must be clearly defined if the rangelands are to effectively address major challenges and embrace change to protect the resource base and to capitalise on new industry opportunities. The Government policy sets the framework in which these decisions can be made.



Monty House MLA
Minister for Primary Industry; Fisheries

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Monty House".

THE RANGELANDS

The Rangelands of Western Australia are those vast areas of land north and east of the agricultural area.

The Rangelands include:

- the State's pastoral areas which comprise land made available by lease to pastoral and mining interests (often concurrently), and to a much lesser extent, agricultural interests. Pastoral leases cover 98 million hectares which stretch from the Great Australian Bight to the Kimberley;
- national parks, conservation reserves and special leases;
- large tracts of Crown Land; and
- Aboriginal Reserves.

The importance of the Rangelands are that they:

- occupy 85 per cent of the State;
- produce most of the State's mineral and energy wealth;
- are of special significance to the Aboriginal population;
- support important segments of the beef and wool industry;
- offer major tourism potential;
- contain essential elements of the State's biological diversity;
- offer opportunities to produce horticultural and other products for niche markets.

CHALLENGES

The Rangelands face many challenges including:

- the beef and wool industries are based on natural vegetation which has a limited, and seasonal carrying capacity - declining terms of trade are also an issue for these industries;
- uncertainty with respect to current land tenure arrangements, flexibility of land use and the requirements for developing alternative industries;
- communities are isolated;
- the need to plan and manage a range of alternative land uses, including tourism, in an environmentally acceptable manner;
- the need to establish a framework for the conservation of biological diversity and environmentally sound sustainable development;
- building on the landcare efforts of the last decade to improve the rangelands.

A number of reports have drawn attention to the need for Government to address these challenges, especially with respect to the pastoral areas.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

This policy statement will assist the community and Government to develop and implement long-term arrangements for the future of the Rangelands. The emphasis in the early stages will be on the Southern Pastoral area which stretches from south of Kalgoorlie to the Pilbara.

The Government, in conjunction with land managers, are responsible for the sustainable management of the Rangelands. This policy statement is consistent with the national "Guiding Principles for Rangeland Management" and will meet the obligations set out in the National Strategy for the Conservation of Australia's Biological Diversity. The Government is committed to:

- conserving native flora and fauna, establishing and maintaining a comprehensive, adequate and representative nature conservation reserve system and developing environmental objectives for broad-scale land use;
- ensuring that economic and social development opportunities are realised while conserving the rangelands;
- maintaining viable communities throughout the rangelands;
- developing and maintaining commercial activities in accordance with the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) which:
 - sustain and enhance productivity over the long term;
 - ameliorate adverse impacts on the natural resource base and associated ecosystems;
 - maximise the social benefit; and
 - manage the production systems to cater for the risks associated with climate and markets.

ACTION

1 *Economic development and structural change will be supported by:*

1.1 Developing programs which:

- provide secure tenure over pastoral lands to the extent possible under the Commonwealth Native Title Act;
- gain community, and Commonwealth Government support;
- develop regional land use strategies in accordance with natural resource capability; and,
- promote adoption of ESD principles by all participants in the rangelands.

1.2 Ensuring legislation:

- encourages development of multiple land use and opportunities to augment or replace the existing pastoral use consistent with the provisions of the Commonwealth Native Title Act;
- matches property rights and rentals with the designated land use;
- establishes a process that encourages alternative land use that enhances ecologically sustainable development of pastoral businesses;
- provides a mechanism to ensure that land is used according to its capability; and
- enables mining and petroleum industries to carry out exploratory and extractive operations on pastoral land on fair and equitable terms with other land users.



- 1.3 Providing a land administration structure that integrates best practice management of the rangelands. This will require wide representation and increased responsibility for sustainable land use.
- 1.4 Considering the establishment of an Aboriginal Commercial Land Corporation which will provide financial advice and assistance for economic development and commercial enterprises on Aboriginal lands.

2. Sustainable land use will be supported by:

- 2.1 Encouraging industry and individuals to develop economically and ecologically sustainable businesses based on strategic planning principles.
- 2.2 Environmentally sound management practices based on the capability and value of the resource.
- 2.3 Monitoring the achievement of sustainable land use through appropriate environmental, financial and social indicators and public reporting on a regular basis.
- 2.4 Identifying and managing threats to sustainable land use posed by specific animals, plants and diseases.
- 2.4 Ensuring that public funding and support measures, including guidelines from existing sources, are provided to implement sustainable resource management practices and biodiversity conservation.
- 2.5 Ensuring that severely degraded and eroded land is suitably managed.
- 2.6 Considering the opportunities arising from the Guiding Principles for Rangeland Management.

3. Business activities will be supported by:

- 3.1 Maintaining the five Regional Development Commissions in the rangelands.
- 3.2 Ensuring that economic planning is integrated into regional development programs.
- 3.3 Encouraging rural based businesses to adopt an ongoing planning ethos.
- 3.4 Providing mechanisms which encourage regional development.
- 3.5 Providing information and referral centres for small business (Business Enterprise Centres).
- 3.6 Providing assistance for tourism and other business development in remote areas.
- 3.7 Ensuring that economic issues and natural resource management are recognised and integrated into regional land use planning strategies.

4. Social considerations will be supported by:

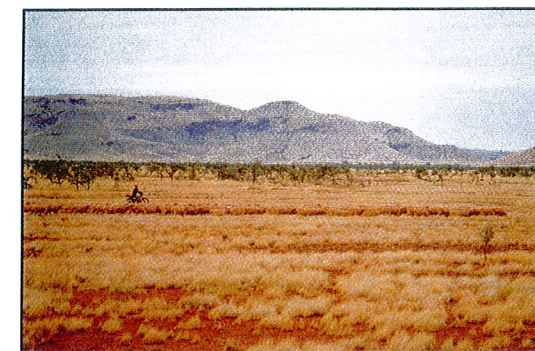
- 4.1 Providing support for social adjustment where appropriate.
- 4.2 Providing support to ensure that isolated families are not unduly disadvantaged.
- 4.3 Providing local government with increased flexibility to act in the best interests of the local community, including the introduction of differential rating.

5. The environment will be protected by:

- 5.1 Identifying and establishing a comprehensive, adequate and representative conservation reserve system, representing the full range of land forms and biological communities.
- 5.2 Supporting the conservation of biological diversity through the strategic protection of native flora and fauna and representative habitats.
- 5.3 Establishing, and the monitoring of, environmental objectives for broad scale land use.
- 5.4 Developing multiple land use models that integrate nature conservation and other land uses while ensuring that public land is managed to best practice.
- 5.5 Facilitating Aboriginal involvement in the management of rangelands, including conservation reserves and Aboriginal lands, for conservation and/or cultural purposes.
- 5.6 Providing the community with further opportunities to enjoy the natural values of conservation reserves.



MANAGING THE RANGELANDS



Managing the Rangelands

Supported by the Western Australian Government through:

- Agriculture Western Australia
- Department of Aboriginal Affairs
- Department of Commerce and Trade
- Department of Conservation and Land Management
- Department of Environmental Protection
- Department of Land Administration
- Department of Local Government
- Ministry for Planning

COALITION
GOVERNMENT POLICY ON
THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN
RANGELANDS

MARCH 1999

