

**NORTHERN TERRITORY**  
**CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION**

**COMMENTS ON**

**PASTORAL LAND ACT**

**FOR THE**

**NORTHERN TERRITORY**



## **INTRODUCTION**

### **The Pastoral Land Act**

The Pastoral Land Act is the key piece of legislation affecting the Northern Territory Pastoral Industry. The Act has serviced the Industry and the people of the NT well over the years.

The NTCA believes that the Act is sound. It has promoted and enhanced sustainable development. It has adequately served both the industry and the Northern Territory's needs over the past 12 years. It is a single piece of legislation which deals with a major Northern Territory industry. As such the Act, and its operation through the Pastoral Land Board is generally efficient. The NTCA would be strongly opposed to any fragmentation of this operation through reduction in the powers of the Pastoral Land Board and dispersal of functions to other legislation.

Any changes to the Act should be approached with extreme care in order not to undermine investor confidence in the industry.

### **Contribution of the Pastoral Industry to the Economy of the NT**

The pastoral industry is a major, confident and continuing growth area of the Northern Territory's economy.

The Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association (NTCA) is the peak primary industry lobby group in the Northern Territory (NT). The NTCA represent over 97% of the NT cattle producers from small family operations to the large corporate organisations. Our members manage 620,000 sq kms producing over 510,000 quality animals per year.

NT producers supply cattle to all States and Territories within Australia and produce quality animals suited for the growing live export trade to South East Asia.

The pastoral industry in the NT is estimated to generate over \$300 million dollars directly and \$880 million indirectly into the economy, contributing over 65% of the primary production in the NT.

An analysis of the financial impact of the cattle industry on the NT economy carried out by the economists of the Office of Resource Development, indicated that over the period 1993-94 to 1997-98, the cattle industry was reinvesting in itself to the extent of \$20 to 30 million each year. Over the same period, the annual operational expenditure for the Northern Territory cattle industry was \$100 million per annum, over two-thirds of which was spent in the Territory, significantly higher than any other resource industry. It is unlikely that this pattern will have altered over the ensuing years.

The Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics latest survey predicts total cash receipts per farm in the NT of \$1.295 million and by extrapolation, an industry-wide estimate of \$256 million. The same survey estimates average farm capital investment at \$8.3 million per farm, giving an industry-wide estimate of capital investment in excess of \$1.6 billion.

In 2001-2002, 234,000 Northern Territory cattle were exported live across the Darwin Wharf, with a value of \$143 million and representing 49 percent of exports of Territory rural and fisheries produce. The industry makes a significant contribution to port infrastructure, with the majority of commercial international vessel movements in and out of Darwin being live cattle shipping. Similarly the pastoral industry is a major support for the road transport industry in the Territory.

Based on ABARE data, the industry directly provides in excess of 1600 jobs, mainly in rural areas of the Northern Territory. The industry believes that total employment in the industry is about 2000 to 3000 jobs, including part-time and seasonal workers.

#### Sustainable Pastoral Industry Growth

The industry has contributed to the growth of the Territory for over 150 years. It continues to increase in size, productivity and efficiency. Cattle numbers have increased from 1.4 million in 1974-75 to 1.7 million in 2000-01, and to 1.9 million in 2002-03. Over the same period, the percentage of turnoff to population, as an indicator of productivity, has increased from 11 percent to 24 percent as a consequence of the adoption of improved management practices. In terms of efficiency, some producers advise that costs of production per kg of beef produced has decreased by 20 percent in the past ten years.

The Pastoral Land Board Annual Report for 2002/2003 reports that rangelands in the Darwin, Katherine, Roper, VRD, Sturt Plateau, Gulf, Tennant Creek, Plenty, Northern and Southern Alice Springs Pastoral Districts are in good condition.

The Pastoral Land Board Annual Report for 2003/2004 (in preparation) reports that rangelands in all regions are in good condition.

The overwhelming evidence is of an industry which is achieving sustainable economic growth, based on ecologically sustainable use of its land and water resources.

NTCA believes that over the next decade, there is potential for the total Territory cattle herd to increase by a further 30 percent and for productivity measured by the percentage of turnoff to population to also increase significantly. This increase in the total herd can be achieved by more efficient use of rangelands, without adversely impacting on sustainable use of the rangelands. Effective monitoring systems will demonstrate this continued

sustainability. Improved productivity will result from continued adoption of improved management practices including mineral supplementation and early weaning.

Increased production of cattle from the Northern Territory industry will come as a result of more efficient use of rangelands through better distribution of waters and more effective fencing; more intensive management through subdivision into smaller environmentally sustainable holdings where land conditions are appropriate, and significant increase in production from improved pastures. Increased pastoral production from Aboriginal land will also contribute and is an initiative strongly supported by the NTCA.

The continued development of effective rangeland monitoring systems including the extension of Tier 2 monitoring to all pastoral districts will ensure that rangeland use is sustainable, within the assessed capability of land and water resources.

Growth in the pastoral industry will be market driven and dependent on continued investor confidence in government support for the industry. The demand for meat in Southeast Asia will increase over the medium-term. The Northern Territory cattle industry with its vertical integration into the feedlot industry in Southeast Asia, is well situated to take advantage of this increase in demand.

Any revision of the Pastoral Land Act should allow for more productive and more efficient development of the industry. It should not adversely impact on market and investor confidence in the industry.

### Environmental Issues

NTCA strongly supports continued implementation of Tier 1 monitoring programs and the extension of scientifically based Tier 2 monitoring through all Pastoral Districts. The ability to demonstrate that the industry is based on sustainable use of its rangelands is of vital importance. While NTCA recognises that there are financial limitations on Government resourcing of Tier 2 monitoring, sound data on rangelands condition is essential to objective and informed property management decision-making.

Establishment of rangeland monitoring sites, with strong producer involvement and effective communication of monitoring results from government officers, ensures improved decision-making by producers and continued sustainable use of the rangelands.

NTCA believes that industry management will achieve healthy grazing land and will also achieve significant biodiversity conservation. This is the level of management to which our members aspire and to which all evidence would suggest, we are reasonably attaining. If a higher level of biodiversity conservation is required for example to meet particular species, habitat or legislative requirements, then provisions in addition to those expected by

pastoral lessees for sustainable commercial production would need to be implemented.

***This will require incentives and cost sharing for those areas where biodiversity conservation results in reduction of ecologically sustainable cattle production. NTCA would be prepared to discuss further with Government opportunities to include such provisions within a revision of the Pastoral Land Act.***

By area, employment and economic contribution, the pastoral industry is the dominant industry in land management in the NT, with a predominant focus on long term sustainable production.

Over 75% of all NTCA members are active participants in Conservation, Environmental and Landcare groups throughout the Northern Territory and the Association continues to encourage members to join local groups in all corners of the Northern Territory

The Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association (NTCA) has a strategic approach for conservation management on pastoral lands in the Northern Territory. This is the basis for NTCA leadership in pastoral land conservation activities and their participation in the development of policies and mechanisms to foster beneficial outcomes for conservation and the pastoral industry.

***The Government has established the pastoral estate and tenures for the development of a sustainable and economic pastoral industry. This needs to be understood by the community. The Pastoral Land Act requires pastoralists to manage sustainably, ensuring conservation of natural resources and biodiversity.***

***The Act also requires that pastoral leases be monitored to ensure that natural resource conditions remain healthy. Pastoralists need to manage their resources well to meet the requirements of the Act.***

***Pastoral leasehold land is managed and monitored to maintain healthy condition more than any other land tenure in the Northern Territory.***

Many pastoralists are implementing management practices which provide biodiversity conservation benefits through the National Landcare Program in addition to those required to meet the *Pastoral Land Act*. These include the introduction of Environmental Management Systems (EMS), pasture spelling, fencing of particular locations e.g. riparian zones.

***The pastoral industry over the past few years has significantly improved the condition of pastoral lands in the Northern Territory, as documented in annual Pastoral Land Condition Reports. The vast majority of pastoral land is in good condition and this proportion has consistently increased in recent years.***

The pastoral industry has a long term sustainable strategic approach to ensure conservation of the pastoral estate. The pastoral industry is the third-largest driver of the Northern Territory economy and the major significant landholder delivering both conservation and production outcomes.

## **REVIEW OF PASTORAL LAND ACT -- DRAFT COMMENTS**

### **COMMENTS ON SPECIFIC ISSUES IN KEY ISSUES PAPER DECEMBER 2004**

#### **Issue 1 -- Non Pastoral Use of Pastoral Land and Diversification**

NTCA strongly holds that the definition of "pastoral purposes" should remain as broad as possible in order to ensure continued development of the industry. Any move to further prescribe the definition should continue to allow the development of ancillary and support activities including, but not limited to, pasturing of stock on native pastures; development of improved pastures; rain fed hay and fodder production; irrigated agriculture production where agriculture includes fodder within the rotation; infrastructure development including dams, stock waters, fencing, stockyards, machinery sheds, housing and ancillary infrastructure; commercially based transport and heli- mustering operations ancillary to the pastoral industry; slaughterhouses, abattoirs, depot operations, feedlots, station stores, and pastoral based tourist activities such as farm holidays. NTCA believes that the current definition allows for all these uses.

NTCA notes that there have been few applications for "non pastoral use" of pastoral land as evidenced from the Pastoral Land Board Annual Report (5 applications 2000/2001, 4 applications 2001/2002, 4 applications 2002/2003). NTCA also notes that cumbersome and protracted processes, together with concerns in relation to the resolution of native title issues, prevents many pastoral lessees from applying for approval for non pastoral use.

NTCA strongly supports rural development and believes that existing pastoral lessees who have already made significant existing investments and demonstrated commitment to rural development in the Territory, should be encouraged to broaden the base of their commercial operations and diversify cash flow through developing new and innovative rural enterprises. Whilst this does not preclude the Territory continuing to attempt to attract new investors, it is a much more efficient targeting of an existing and experienced investment sector. Legislative and administrative processes of government should be streamlined in order to encourage this investment. These processes are currently bureaucratic and inefficient in relation to non pastoral use of pastoral leases. They are clearly based on a philosophy of "ancillary

use" of pastoral leases, rather than promoting sound new commercial development in rural areas.

## Issue 2 -- Access to Pastoral Land (waterways and features of public interest)

The NTCA position continues to be that public access to pastoral leases for recreational fishing, tourism and other purposes, to waterways and features of public interest, should be by way of public road reserves, acquired by Government; fenced and maintained by Government with provision of appropriate and required public facilities. Provision for fire management, litter control and weed control should be made through government contractual arrangements. Adjoining pastoral lessees may wish to participate in these contractual arrangements on a commercial basis.

NTCA strongly opposes access arrangements that are imposed on pastoral lessees, with lessees expected to bear responsibility for road construction and maintenance, fire and weed management, litter control on access roads, and no compensatory provisions for impacts on the commercial operations of the surrounding pastoral lease. NTCA strongly opposes uncontrolled boat access from rivers and waterways, which also leads to fire, weed and litter management problems, together with uncontrolled shooting. NTCA has concerns that the existing provisions of section 85, limiting pastoralists' liability, are inadequate.

NTCA supports negotiated access arrangements where pastoral lessees engage in commercial tourism activities and as a consequence, provide controlled access to waterways and features of public interest within and through their leases.

## Issue 3 -- Effectiveness of Remedial Provisions

There is no evidence from Pastoral Land Board Annual Reports of any substantive failure on the part of pastoral lessees to comply with requirements from the Pastoral Land Board in relation to remedial provisions. Nevertheless, NTCA would support amendments where a failure to comply with remedial provisions should be an offence, rather than a breach of lease conditions. NTCA would wish to be on any working party considering such amendments.

## Issue 4 -- Major Development Works on Pastoral Leases

Major Development Works need to be defined. However, in keeping with the NTCA position that pastoral development should be controlled under the Pastoral Land Act, approvals for major development works on pastoral leases, for pastoral purposes, should continue to be provided through the Pastoral Land Board.

Approvals for major development works for non pastoral purposes on pastoral leases should be dealt with through other appropriate legislation.

#### Issue 5 -- Clearing on Pastoral Land and Consistency with Native Vegetation Clearing Controls.

This issue needs to be placed in perspective. From the Pastoral Land Board Annual Report 2002/2003 it would appear that since 1998/99 only 38.34 square kilometres of land has been approved for clearing on pastoral leases. It would appear that only 170 hectares has in fact been cleared. Pastoral Land Board Clearing Guidelines have been prepared with the best information available from Government officers. The process is working well through the existing provisions of the Pastoral Land Act.

Control of clearing for pastoral land should continue to be managed by the Pastoral Land Board through the Pastoral Land Act.

NTCA believes that where section 76 of the Act is not or cannot be complied with, e.g. a failure to comply with clearing provisions, should be an offence subject to a fine, rather than a breach of lease conditions. NTCA would wish to be on any working party considering such amendments.

#### Issue 6 -- Review of Offences and Penalties

A review of offences included in the Pastoral Land Act in keeping with the Penalty Units Act 1999 would appear sensible.

#### Issue 7 -- Powers of the Minister to Consent to the Transfer of Pastoral Leases

NTCA believes that the existing provisions of section 68 and 69 of the Act are adequate. Land condition issues pertaining to the lessee who intends to sell, should be addressed by the Pastoral Land Board; remedial action should be the responsibility of the seller.

NTCA opposes any requirement for a purchaser to demonstrate financial capability to develop the lease. This will preclude young families entering the pastoral industry. Many of the existing pastoral leases have been progressively developed by lessees reinvesting the proceeds of their labor.

#### Issue 8 -- Minimum Requirements for Grant of a Pastoral Lease and Provisions Relating to Subdivision

NTCA position is that the existing provisions of section 61 of the Act are adequate. Consideration by the Pastoral Land Board of subdivision for purposes of intensification of pastoral development, should be on the basis of ecological sustainability. ***The issue of commercial viability should be left to market forces to decide.***

- o Ecological issues other than assessment of the capability of land and water resources i.e. biodiversity conservation, can and should be addressed by Government identifying areas which it believes have significant biodiversity conservation value, and then either acquiring these to the public estate or making conservation management arrangements with existing landholders.

Issue 9-- Establishment of Pastoral Land Board -- Powers and Functions, Composition, Qualifications for Membership.

NTCA believes that the Pastoral Land Board as currently constituted (under Sections 12 and 13 of the Act) has functioned well. It does not believe that there should be any changes to the existing provisions of the Act establishing the Board, determining its composition, qualifications for membership and powers and functions.

Issue 10 -- Pastoral Land Appeal Tribunal

It would appear that the Pastoral Land Appeal Tribunal has never yet been constituted. Nevertheless, NTCA believes that the existing provisions which allow for the establishment of such a Tribunal should remain.

Issue 11 -- Pastoral Land Regulations

NTCA believes the existing Regulations are adequate. No case has been made for amendments.

Issue 12 -- Access through Pastoral Land To Aboriginal Land.

NTCA believes that the existing provisions of section 113 are adequate.

Issue 13 -- Aboriginal Community Living Areas

NTCA believes there should be a sunset clause on the granting of further Aboriginal Community Living Areas. These provisions should remain within the Pastoral Land Act. NTCA believes that community living areas should not be used for enterprise development, especially not for cattle production.

Issue 14 -- Technical Corrections to Existing Provisions

NTCA supports the proposals in the discussion paper of July 2004 to the amendments identified in respect of

- Appointment of Acting Chairman of the Pastoral Land Board
- Exceptions to requirement that pastoral land may only be used for pastoral purposes
- Taking of timber etc
- Extension of term pastoral leases

- Subleases for prescribed purposes and non pastoral uses to be excluded from consideration of UCV
- Fee for subleases for non pastoral purposes
- Exclusion of public camping rights
- Right to appeal against a decision of the Minister relating to payment of value of improvements

NTCA does not support proposed amendments to

- Licensing to take plant material etc, by repealing section 84 and thereby leaving exclusive powers for the granting of licences to take plant material, stone, sand, gravel or soil from pastoral land to existing provisions within the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act
- Appeals against decisions of the Valuer- General and the proposal to amend sections 119 and 121 by omitting all references to the Valuer General.

## OTHER ISSUES RAISED AS A CONSEQUENCE OF SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

Issue 15 -- Aboriginal Access to Pastoral Land/Indigenous Rights and Interests

Aboriginal cultural heritage and sacred sites, traditional use of pastoral leases and native title interests are already protected on pastoral leases by other legislation.

The Pastoral Land Act provides for Aboriginal Community Living Areas and access to other areas of Aboriginal Land.

Submissions made by respondents in respect of these matters should be required to justify their concerns that there is currently inadequate provision.

Issue 16 -- Annual Stock Returns

NTCA continues to maintain that Annual Stock Returns are unnecessary and misleading. Rangeland condition should be monitored by effective and proactive monitoring systems. Stock figures are provided through the Tier 1 monitoring process.

Issue 17 -- Biodiversity Conservation;  
 Issue 26 -- Incentives and Conservation Agreements, and  
 Issue 37 -- Protection of Areas of High Conservation Value/Rivers, Wetlands and Coasts/Threatened Species.

As previously stated, NTCA believes that industry best practice management will achieve healthy grazing land and will also achieve significant biodiversity conservation.

Where Government believes that there are additional biodiversity conservation values, then provisions providing for incentives to landholders and cost sharing of additional management costs, together with compensation for value of cattle production lost, should be made by way of appropriate conservation management agreements.

Areas of land which Government believes have high conservation value should be acquired on a commercial basis by Government, by negotiation with the existing landowner, and managed and monitored appropriately.

#### Issue 18 -- Compliance with National Agreements and Best Practice

The NT pastoral industry is a best practice industry. Over 75% of all NTCA members are active participants in conservation, environmental and Landcare groups throughout the Northern Territory. Pastoralists are participating in the development of Environmental Management Systems within the industry.

#### Issue 19 -- Definitions

The NTCA does not support any of the proposals for definition changes made through the public consultation process. The authors of the submissions do not appear to have justified the need for the definitions they propose.

#### Issue 20 -- Duration/Term of Pastoral Leases

The comment made in the submissions is nonsense. Conversion of Northern Territory Term Pastoral Leases to Perpetual Pastoral Leases has resulted in a more stable industry, an industry which is reinvesting in its own future, and an industry where individual landholders have a vested interest in the sustainability of their enterprises.

#### Issue 21 -- Duty of Care

This is already spelled out in the long title of the Act and in the Objects and Duties. The proponents need to justify their positions and demonstrate tangible benefits.

#### Issue 22 -- Effectiveness of the Existing Pastoral Land Act

NTCA believes that the Pastoral Land Act has served both the industry and the people of the Territory well. It continues to support a viable, growing industry, which makes a significant contribution to the NT economy and is based on ecologically sustainable use of rangeland resources.

#### Issue 23 -- Environmental Management Plans

Pastoralists are members of land care groups. Trials are underway on the development of Environmental Management Systems for pastoral lands. Members of the NTCA are actively participating in trials and await the results

of the studies. The importance of sound monitoring processes are recognised and strongly supported. The two submissions are impractical.

Issue 24 -- Feral Animals (covered by other legislation);  
Issue 25 -- Fire (covered by other legislation), and  
Issue 43 -- Weeds (covered by other legislation)

Pastoral lessees make a major contribution to management of feral animals, fire and weeds over 48 percent of the Territory. Other industries such as tourism, mining, transport and recreational fishing contribute to the problems, especially uncontrolled fire and spread of weeds, with little or no contribution to management of the problems.

These issues are adequately addressed by provisions of the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act, Bushfires Act and Weeds Act. NTCA does not believe that there is a requirement for legislative amendment.

Issue 27 -- Intensification of Pastoral Use

NTCA strongly supports intensification of pastoral use and the further development of the cattle industry and its contribution to the economy of Northern Territory.

As previously advised, NTCA believes that increased production of cattle from the Northern Territory pastoral industry will come as a result of

- more efficient use of rangelands through better distribution of waters and more effective fencing
- more intensive management through subdivision into smaller environmentally sustainable holdings where land conditions are appropriate
- significant increase in production from improved pastures
- increased pastoral production from Aboriginal land.

NTCA believes that existing processes through the Pastoral Land Board and Pastoral Land Act are adequate to allow for this development to continue while still ensuring sustainable use of the rangelands. The Biodiversity Unit of DIPE have made unsubstantiated allegations of increased land degradation without any supporting evidence. They imply that existing processes are inadequate without the provision of any evidence.

Issue 28 -- Introduced Pastures

NTCA supports the responsible development of improved pastures and believes that the existing processes through the Pastoral Land Board are adequate to allow for this.

Buffel grass, gamba grass and mission grass were introduced by CSIRO scientists. Buffel grass, gamba grass, para and olive hymenachne have all been encouraged by Government departments. With the exception of olive

hymenachne, the other grasses are all well established and it is impractical to require that they should be managed as weeds under the Weeds Act. Olive hymenachne was introduced on the advice of government to stabilize areas of mimosa control works. Buffel and para are valuable pasture species and it has yet to be demonstrated that they are spreading beyond defined ecological niches.

Emotive and unsubstantiated comments serve little purpose in conservation management and impede sustainable development and use of the Territory's resources.

#### Issue 29 -- Local Government Rates

NTCA has yet to be convinced that the extension of local government to pastoral areas in the Northern Territory is of any substantial benefit. The issue raised is not relevant to a review of the Pastoral Land Act.

#### Issue 30 -- Mining and Petroleum

The submission from the Minerals and Energy Group, DBIRD appears to be more of a comment. No justification is provided for any amendment to the Pastoral Land Act.

#### Issue 31 -- Monitoring of Pastoral Land

As already advised, NTCA strongly supports an effective pastoral monitoring system and the extension of Tier 2 monitoring into all Pastoral Districts. NTCA recognises the importance of monitoring to improve general management decision-making on pastoral lands for enhanced biodiversity and conservation outcomes.

NTCA believes that with adequate resourcing, existing monitoring provisions of the Pastoral Land Act are adequate.

NTCA supports a comprehensive monitoring system being developed across all NT lands, including parks, Aboriginal Land, and public lands.

#### Issue 32 -- Objects of the Pastoral Land Act

As already advised, NTCA believes the existing Objects of the Pastoral Land Act are adequate.

#### Issue 33 -- Powers of Forfeiture (For Perpetual Pastoral Leases)

The authors of the submissions have obviously not read the provisions of section 40 (7) of the Pastoral Land Act. Nor do they appear to be aware that Government can move to compulsory acquisition of any pastoral lease or part of any pastoral lease in the public interest.

NTCA would support amendments where a failure to comply with remedial or clearing provisions should be an offence, rather than a breach of lease conditions. NTCA would wish to be on any working party considering such amendments.

#### Issue 34 -- Property and Regional Planning

NTCA strongly supports regional planning. Its members should be part of the regional planning processes affecting pastoral areas.

NTCA members already participate in training and property planning through industry workshops and courses.

Many pastoral lessees already have property plans. NTCA does not support compulsory Property Management Plans nor compulsory Environmental Management Plans.

#### Issue 35 -- Public Benefit of Pastoral Lease Arrangements/Public Interest

As already advised, the pastoral industry makes a substantial contribution to the economic and social development of the Territory.

Pastoral lessees effectively manage land and water resources, including fire, feral animals and weeds over 48 percent of the Territory. Without this contribution, the cost to the taxpayer would be immense.

#### Issue 36 -- Public Notification/Transparency and Reporting/Full Cost Recovery/Enforcement

This is a grab bag of comments, largely unsubstantiated. Government needs to consult with industry on any amendments which Government proposes and on the justification for same.

#### Issue 38 -- Rents

The Biodiversity Unit of DIPE appears to be suggesting that pastoral lessees should meet unspecified biodiversity conservation costs which should be more properly the responsibility of the community at large. 52 percent of the Northern Territory is not the subject of pastoral leases and given the biodiversity conservation issues in these non-pastoral areas, it would appear that biodiversity conservation issues are not unique to pastoral lands. The Biodiversity Unit should more usefully investigate the impact of changed fire regimes, introduced predators and pests, and introduced diseases on native flora and fauna throughout the Territory.

NTCA does not support the extension of local government to pastoral areas.

#### Issue 39 -- Safe Carrying Capacities/Stocking Rates/Total Grazing Pressure

As evidenced by the annual reports of the Pastoral Land Board, the existing processes of the Pastoral Land Act are adequate to ensure sustainable use of pastoral lands. It is imperative, as previously advised, that the scientifically based monitoring system should be extended throughout the pastoral districts of the Territory.

#### Issue 40 -- Suitability of Land for Pastoral Properties

The Government has established the pastoral estate and tenures for the development of a sustainable and economic pastoral industry. This needs to be understood by the community. The Pastoral Land Act requires pastoralists to manage sustainably, ensuring conservation of natural resources and biodiversity. The Act also requires that pastoral leases be monitored to ensure that natural resource conditions remain healthy.

Pastoral leasehold land is, and is required to be, more rigorously managed and monitored to maintain a healthy condition than any other land tenure in the Northern Territory. Many pastoralists are implementing management practices which provide biodiversity conservation benefits in addition to those required to meet the Pastoral Land Act. These include the introduction of Environmental Management Systems, pasture spelling, fencing of particular locations e.g. riparian zones, and participation in Landcare and Bushcare programs.

#### Issue 41 -- Sustainability of the Pastoral Industry/Economic Viability and Proper Accounting of Cost

The Northern Territory pastoral industry is a sustainable industry, which is economically viable and makes a substantial contribution to the economic and social development of the Northern Territory. There is no evidence that the industry is not ecologically sustainable. There is no evidence of degradation, nor of significant environmental cost directly attributable to the industry.

#### Issue 42 -- Watering Points and Management of Natural Waters

The comments are theoretical. The development of further water points eases grazing pressure and protects the land and vegetation resources. Industry best practice management achieves healthy grazing land and achieves significant biodiversity conservation. If a higher-level of conservation is required then alternative provisions such as appropriate conservation management agreements should be negotiated .

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## CONCLUSIONS

The Pastoral Land Act is the key piece of legislation affecting the Northern Territory Pastoral Industry. The Act has serviced the Industry and the people of the NT well over the years.

The Act is sound. It has promoted and enhanced sustainable development. It has adequately served both the industry and the Northern Territory's needs over the past 12 years. It is a single piece of legislation which deals with a major Northern Territory industry. As such the Act, and its operation through the Pastoral Land Board is generally efficient. The NTCA would be strongly opposed to any fragmentation of this operation through reduction in the powers of the Pastoral Land Board and dispersal of functions to other legislation.

Any changes to the Act should be approached with extreme care in order not to undermine investor and market confidence in the industry. Any revision of the Pastoral Land Act should allow for more productive and more efficient development of the industry.

***The Government has established the pastoral estate and tenures for the development of a sustainable and economic pastoral industry. This needs to be understood by the community. The Pastoral Land Act requires pastoralists to manage sustainably, ensuring conservation of natural resources and biodiversity in keeping with a well-managed and profitable pastoral enterprise.***

The pastoral industry has a long term sustainable strategic approach to ensure conservation of the pastoral estate. The pastoral industry is the third-largest driver of the Northern Territory economy and the major significant landholder delivering both conservation and production outcomes.

The overwhelming evidence is of an industry which is achieving sustainable economic growth, based on ecologically sustainable use of its land and water resources.

In order to ensure continued sustainable development of the industry, NTCA strongly supports continued implementation of Tier 1 monitoring programs and the extension of scientifically based Tier 2 monitoring through all pastoral districts of the Northern Territory. The ability to continue to demonstrate that the industry is based on sustainable use of its rangelands is of vital importance.