

February 2010

# Pilbara NRM



*"To be the leading natural resource management organisation empowering rangelands users to sustainably manage the unique resources of the region"* Rangelands NRM WA vision statement

**Welcome to the second edition the Pilbara NRM newsletter and the start of 2010**



Looking from the Western Hamersley Ranges. (photo courtesy of Alison MacGilvray)

## CARING FOR OUR COUNTRY PROJECTS APPROVED

Rangelands NRM WA received confirmation in September 2009 that four of its project proposals relevant to the Pilbara region were approved for the next two years under the Commonwealth Government's 'Caring for our Country' Initiative. The proposals were designed to meet the targets and priorities set out by the Commonwealth and included: Improving the management of High Conservation Aquatic Ecosystems (HCVAE) through targeting invasive species; Community engagement and participation in NRM; Reducing the threats of soil erosion by improved land management practices; and managing biodiversity. Confirmation of these and negotiation with suitable organisations to deliver the projects will see them commence in early January 2010.

Under the 'Caring for our Country' Initiative, Rangelands NRM WA received funding across its region for:

- Pilbara (four projects with three projects being focused on priority wetlands in the Pilbara bioregion and the fourth managing biodiversity in the Western Desert),
- Gascoyne (one project focussed on land management of priority wetlands),
- Kimberly (six projects focused on priority wetlands).

Rangelands NRM WA also applied for funding to deliver a number of additional projects in the Pilbara under the 'Caring for our Country' competitive grants section. These included feral animal control focussing on camels encroaching from the Sandy Desert, land management in the Ashburton River catchment, and fire management in the Hamersley Ranges. Unfortunately these proposals were not funded.



Eastern Pilbara Landscape recovering from fire, awaiting rain. (photo courtesy of Alison MacGilvray)

## What is Natural Resource Management (NRM) ?

Our natural resources are everywhere. They are in our bush, around our coast, along our rivers, on our farms and in our cities and towns. In essence our natural resources are our water, soil, plants and animals. Importantly, people are a resource too – our farmers, our landowners and our remote, rural and urban communities.

Natural resource management is about striking a balance between caring for our environment and paying heed to the needs of those who make a living from these resources or use them for cultural pursuits, leisure and recreation.

### Caring for our Country Project Approved cont. (from page 1)

The four projects to be delivered in the Pilbara over the next two years will be across two programs. The first program, '*Partnerships in protecting priority Pilbara wetlands*' will be comprised of three projects.

#### 1. ESRM in the Fortescue Catchment

Pastoral lease tenure covers a significant proportion of the Fortescue River catchment, thus pastoral property managers are well positioned to positively influence the catchment's condition. The Ecological Sustainable Rangeland Management (ESRM) program will be delivered by Dept of Food and Agriculture WA and will work with landholders in environmental evaluation and planning for properties. The project aims to:

- Facilitate effective stakeholder planning and management of the Fortescue River catchment, associated with the Hamersley Ranges, to enhance biodiversity values, control invasive species (including weeds and feral animal) and reduce the impacts of soil erosion;
- Facilitate Pilbara community engagement and participation in natural resource management.

#### 2. Ngurrawaana NRM Rangers in the Lower Fortescue River

The project is designed to facilitate the development of an Indigenous Ranger Service to deliver positive environmental outcomes to priority wetlands associated with the Gregory and Dogger Gorges on the Lower Fortescue River. Juluwarlu Aboriginal Corporation will be the delivery organisation and develop organisational capacity to coordinate and manage Ngurrawaana Ranger activities. Traditional Owners and Ngurrawaana Community members will be engaged in a participatory planning activity to protect the environmental high conservation value aquatic ecosystem assets. This in turn will form the basis of developing a project plan which will involve delivering on the ground NRM activities. The project aims to:

- Engage Indigenous stakeholders in planning, coordinating and delivery of NRM investment on the lower Fortescue River,
- Provide training and employment opportunities for Ranger positions,
- Control Parkinsonia and other threatening processes on the Lower Fortescue River.

#### 3. Pilbara Weeds of National Significance (WoNS) in priority wetlands

This project directly addresses the on-ground management and control of each WoNS (Parkinsonia and Mesquite) infestation in priority wetlands and floodplains associated with the Ashburton, Robe, Cane, Yannerie, Fortescue, Maitland, Harding, Yule and DeGrey catchments. The project will be delivered by Pilbara Mesquite Management Committee. It will progress the containment and control of these two WoNS over a regional area of 175,000 square kilometres. Aerial and ground surveys before and after the project will provide an estimate of riparian and alluvial reclamation from these WoNS, and photographic monitoring sites will provide detail of the natural regeneration of vegetation following the removal of weeds. This project will link in with the ESRM and Ngurrawaana Rangers project. It aims to:

- Develop a baseline of WoNS infestations across the Pilbara,
- Engage stakeholders in planning, implementing and evaluating WoNS control.

The second program, '*Managing Biodiversity on Martu Lands in the Western Desert*' will be made of a single project of the same name

#### 1. Managing Biodiversity on Martu lands in the Western Desert

The project will include on-ground activities by Martu people, transfer of traditional ecological knowledge and development of community skills and capability in managing assets in the Western Desert region. It will be delivered by Western Desert Land Aboriginal Corporation (WDLAC). The project aims to:

- Manage biodiversity values including threatened species management,
- Engage Indigenous stakeholders in the planning, coordination and delivery of NRM investment in the Western Desert region;
- Controlling feral animals and minor weeds.

Rangelands NRM WA plan to offer a round of small grants later in 2010. These will be open to community groups to apply for support for small scale NRM projects in the Pilbara that meet Caring for our Country priorities.

# PILBARA SEA COUNTRY PLAN

In June 2009 Rangelands NRM WA contracted Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC) to deliver a Pilbara Sea Country Plan. This recognised need to undertake Indigenous sea country planning for the Pilbara coast, following the Department of Environment and Conservation's (DEC) development of a proposal for Marine Park zoning and planning in the region. The project involved inviting all Traditional Owner groups from between Mandora and Anna Plains from Eighty Mile Beach to the mouth of the Ashburton River near Onslow to participate in workshops to provide a framework for implementation to assist Traditional Owners, other Aboriginal organisations, government agencies, industry and Rangelands NRM WA in caring for sea country along the Pilbara coast.

The development of the plan was facilitated by Dr Guy Wright from Big Island Research Pty Ltd, Teri O'Neill and Nyaparu Rose from YMAC, and Bevan Gray from Rangelands NRM WA.

Four workshops have been delivered to date. The initial two involved Traditional Owner groups identifying the range of sea country issues that they wished to address, and exploring the objectives, constraints and strategies for each issue identified. It also involved working through the vision, strategies and priorities as key elements of the Pilbara Sea Country Plan. There was agreement on the need to achieve improved coordination and communication between stakeholders at various levels. Relevant agencies and other stakeholders were invited to attend the third workshop where issues and initiatives were presented to the Traditional Owners. The final meeting summarised all aspirations identified by the Traditional Owners, tying in ideas from other successful sea country plans from around Australia. The successful implementation, expected to commence in 2010, will assist in achieving the Pilbara Traditional Owner's vision of **"having one voice to achieve a clean and healthy coastal and marine environment, for the use and benefit of current and future generations"**.

For further information, please contact Teri O'Neill or Nyaparu Rose at YMAC. For contact details, please see [www.ymac.org.au](http://www.ymac.org.au).

## NRM Indigenous Engagement in the Pilbara-How can we do it better ?

An Indigenous Engagement Strategy was developed in 2009 between Rangelands NRM WA and Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC). It highlighted some very important protocols to keep in mind when respectfully engaging with Aboriginal communities to ensure the best possible outcomes for all parties. When commencing initial discussions with communities regarding a particular project, be mindful that there is a clear understanding that as much as your project may be limited in its aims and objectives, Aboriginal interests are not only limited to their sites and places but will include all aspects of the land in question and its management.

It is essential that an organisation allows as much time as possible for consultation prior to the project's commencement. To avoid confusion, mistrust or conflict, try to consult in the early stages of the project. This will also aid in ensuring that the organisation is consulting with the appropriate people to speak for the project area. It must be understood that certain Aboriginal people cannot generally speak about and/or on behalf of another person's country unless given permission by the traditional custodian.

Aboriginal people are not just 'stakeholders' in a consultation process but the Traditional Owners of the land.

Organisations must also be conscious that it may not be acceptable or appropriate for all the suitable Aboriginal people to meet at the one-time due to cultural reasons. Another issue to be aware of is the aspect of time. It is important to ensure that consultations with communities are well thought out and planned with plenty of notice given to community members. Key Aboriginal community members can be very busy with multiple roles and responsibilities, even in regional and remote towns which may seem isolated and quiet to a visitor. As well as their day-to-day business, cultural duties and personal lives, many community leaders are tied up in meetings and commitments relating to negotiations and consultations with government agencies and other organisations.

For further information regarding appropriate engagement of Aboriginal communities in the Murchison, Gascoyne and Pilbara regions of Western Australia, contact Bevan Gray, Indigenous facilitator with Rangelands NRM WA [www.rangelandswa.com.au](http://www.rangelandswa.com.au) or Teri O'Neill, Projects Coordinator, at YMAC, [www.ymac.org.au](http://www.ymac.org.au)

OTHER NEWS	ROYALTIES FOR REGIONS	COMMUNITY NRM PROJECTS	RANGELANDS ANNUAL REPORT	GRANTS AVAILABLE
 <p>The Lower Fortescue River, courtesy of Bevan Gray</p>	<p>Applications for the latest round of Royalties for regions are welcome. See the Pilbara Development Commission website. <a href="http://www.pdc.wa.gov.au">www.pdc.wa.gov.au</a></p>	<p>A number of small scale NRM projects were successfully approved to community groups across the Rangelands. <a href="http://www.nrm.gov.au/cag/cag-projects/cag-successful-wa.html">www.nrm.gov.au/cag/cag-projects/cag-successful-wa.html</a></p>	<p>The annual report will shortly be available. Contact the office for copies or go to the Rangelands NRM WA website. <a href="http://www.rangelands.wa.com.au">www.rangelands.wa.com.au</a></p>	<p>A range of grants supporting community projects are available. <a href="http://www.grant.slink.gov.au">www.grant.slink.gov.au</a></p>

# Current Pilbara Project Update

Rangelands NRM WA funded a number of projects in the Pilbara in 2009 utilising funds from the Commonwealth Governments National Heritage Trust and interim Caring for our Country programs. These projects have been completed or are due to be completed shortly.

## Northern Biodiversity

DEC completed this project in November 2009, made up of three components:

- Threatened fauna species in Little and Great Sandy Deserts- Tracking of threatened and predator species and fire management,
- Community weed project-Development of community education and engagement tools to raise awareness and change practices relating to weed control. Included was the promotion of native Pilbara vegetation alternatives to gardeners in the Pilbara,
- Feral Animal Control-Focus on control of feral herbivores in the Fortescue Marshes and south eastern Pilbara.

Contact Alison McGilvray  
[alison.mcgilvray@dec.wa.gov.au](mailto:alison.mcgilvray@dec.wa.gov.au)

## Addressing human use threats to the Rangelands Coast

The University of Western Australia completed this project in June 2009. The Pilbara coast covering the Ashburton, Roebourne and Port Hedland statistical local areas was analysed. Each of these localities was considered in terms of:

- The major human activities occurring,
- The concerns related to these,
- Actions and recommendations.

An investigation into 'Coastal camping along the Rangelands coast' was also delivered identifying recommendations and opportunities for facilitating environmental stewardship by recreational users. The project has developed a website where all this information is available at <http://www.rangelandswa.info>.

## Carbon abatement

During the 2009 dry season the *Carbon Capture Project* launched a major research effort to survey the existing carbon storage levels of the soil and vegetation on three pastoral stations in the Kimberley-Pilbara. The stations were Cheela Plains (120 km west of Tom Price), Roebuck Plains (30 km east of Broome) and Mt Barnett (310 km east of Derby) The final round of field surveys was completed in August. Over 700 soil samples were collected, more than 9000 individual trees and shrubs were measured and grass and litter was removed from 1500 quadrants. The soil samples are currently being analysed for carbon and nitrogen levels. Preliminary results aim to be available in December and the project will run until March 2010.

Contact Mark Alchin  
[mark.alchin@agric.wa.gov.au](mailto:mark.alchin@agric.wa.gov.au)

## Indigenous Engagement and Biodiversity Program Development in the Western Desert

The project engaged with Martu people to build capacity to undertake land management activities in the Western Desert Region. This progressed utilising traditional ecological knowledge and development of community skills and capability in managing assets in the Western Desert region. The project is linked with the Northern Biodiversity project delivered by DEC and has:

- Monitored 77 plots within a 100km radius of the Punmu and Parnngurr communities which are both located on the fringe of the Karlamilyi National Park (formerly Rudall River) in the Western Desert of WA.,
- Involved the transfer of knowledge between elders and younger Martu to facilitate continuing traditional

land management including the use of fire in land management,

- Developed a program for threatened fauna management on Martu lands.

These outcomes have been instrumental in encouraging additional funding from both the World Wildlife Fund Threatened Species Network (TSN) and 'Caring for our Country' Open Grants round. Funding from both of these sources will allow WDLAC to continue the monitoring program until late 2009. Contact Peter See

[peter.see@reddirtconsultants.com.au](mailto:peter.see@reddirtconsultants.com.au)

## Building on Opportunities in the Pilbara IBRA

This program will be completed in March 2009 and aims to develop a plan to manage the impacts on natural resources in WA's most intensive region for mining development. Planning is focused on the Pilbara IBRA region and within that on the key catchments of the Fortescue and DeGrey Rivers. Deliverables are to:

- Initiate development of investment plan to protect priority assets and manage threats,
- Begin engagement process with Indigenous stakeholders and mining companies,
- Coordinate and facilitate communications and capacity building for Rangelands community support groups and steering committee.

Contact Luke Wilkinson  
[lukew@rangelandswa.com.au](mailto:lukew@rangelandswa.com.au)

## Remote sensing of Weeds

CSIRO is delivering a pilot study to explore how remote sensing (RS) and spatial analysis (SA) tools may be used for monitoring target weeds of national significance in the Kimberley and Pilbara. The project has been extended to May 2010.

## Upcoming release of the Pilbara NRM strategic investment plan

The *Rangelands NRM WA Pilbara Investment Strategy* is due for release in February 2010. It is an integrated approach to realise a healthy and diverse bioregion for current and future generations. Its purpose is to identify investment for the Rangelands NRM WA and other stakeholders to pursue over the next five years, and promote the means to make those investments successful.

In the Pilbara there are a large number of community groups, agencies and industry bodies who are actively involved in natural resource management in their everyday operations. Rangelands NRM WA aims to avoid duplicating what are already valued actions by many or lie within the scope of state agencies. Instead it strives to identify gaps in current investment and activity, and add value to existing or potential and programs.

The Investment Strategy adopts an asset-based approach which provides the framework for protecting, enhancing and managing natural resources in the Pilbara bioregion that stakeholders agree are important. Rangelands NRM WA developed a process involving Pilbara stakeholders to achieve a shortlist of priority assets for the

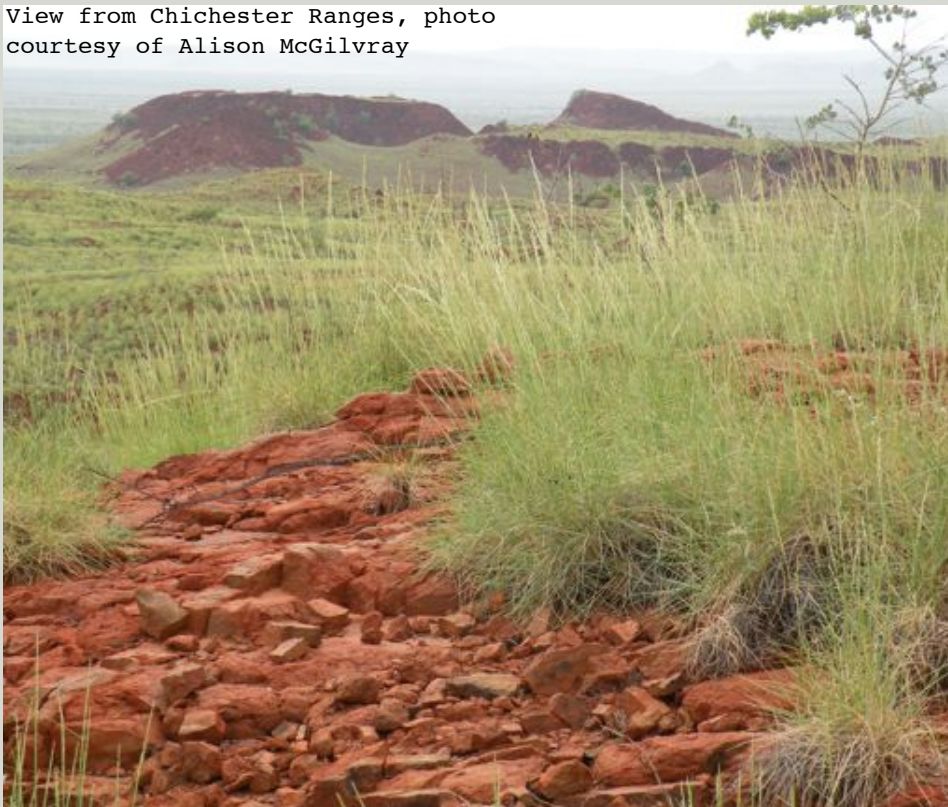
strategic investment plan. Stakeholders represented a wide range of views and interests including community, Indigenous, Industry (pastoral and resources) and the three tiers of government. This process relied on a combination of research data, local knowledge and community consultation. This resulted in the following assets being listed:

- Dampier Archipelago,
- Coastal Zone from Ashburton River to Mouth of DeGrey River,
- Montebello Islands,
- Barrow Island Marine Management Area,
- Hamersley Ranges,
- Fortescue River Catchment,
- DeGrey River Catchment,
- Port Hedland Coast Drainage Basin,
- Onslow Coast Drainage Basin,
- Ashburton River Catchment.

Each of these assets will be accompanied by a range of strategies to consider for future investment including:

- Supporting Indigenous NRM Rangers;
- A landscape approach to fire management;
- Supporting environmental stewardship by land managers;
- Communication and community education;
- Minimising the impact of industry on wildlife
- Invasive species control

View from Chichester Ranges, photo courtesy of Alison McGilvray



## THE ROLE OF THE PILBARA NRM REFERENCE GROUP

The Pilbara NRM Reference Group is a collection of stakeholders interested in the management of natural resources in the Pilbara.

The group aims to meet quarterly at a location in the Pilbara. The Independent chair also sits on the Rangelands NRM WA Board of Management. Rangelands NRM WA staff provide administrative support. There is representation from: local Government; Pastoral and Mining industries; state government via DEC, DPI, DAFWA, DoW, Fisheries; the Commonwealth Govt; Indigenous groups; and not for profit community groups.

The group's role is to communicate local Pilbara information, priorities and discussion to Rangelands NRM WA. It also brings local NRM issues and actions to the table for discussion and facilitates collaborations between Pilbara stakeholders

The group can:

- Act as an advisory body and community engagement link for Rangelands NRM WA;
- Identify, plan and prioritise projects for the Pilbara region;
- Develop project targets; coordinate reporting to Rangelands NRM;
- Review on-going and completed projects;
- Mentor project delivery organisation where necessary;
- Provide oversight on Pilbara region projects;
- Promote and communicate Rangelands NRM and Pilbara reference group in NRM outcomes.

# PLEASE RESPECT OUR COAST



You may see the odd bumper sticker below on your travels along the Rangelands Coast encouraging users to take ownership of the positive ways we can look after the Rangelands coast. Rangelands NRM WA sponsored the message as a result of one of the conclusions from the completed *'Addressing Human Use threats to Priority Coastal and marine Values from Carnarvon to Broome'*. A website containing the project report, recommendations and extensive coastal data can be found at [http:// www.rangelandswa.info](http://www.rangelandswa.info)

One strategy recommended from the project was to communicate simple messages,

- staying on designated roads and tracks
- taking rubbish home rather than leaving it
- putting out camp fires
- following fish bag limits,

about promoting and encouraging environmental stewardship of the coast by those that use it. The four key statements are aimed at prompting recreational users to consider some positive behaviours which have a protective effect on the Pilbara coast, and sustain how we can enjoy it.

## The new 'Caring for our Country' Business Plan

On the 7th of January 2010, the 2010-11 Business Plan for the Commonwealth Government's 'Caring for our Country' program was released. The program will provide \$175 million for NRM in Australia in 2010-2011

The Australian Government has identified priorities for investment:

[National Reserve System](#)

[Biodiversity and natural icons](#)

[Coastal environments and critical aquatic habitats](#)

[Sustainable farm practices](#)

[Natural resource management in northern and remote Australia](#)

[Community skills, knowledge and engagement](#)

The government has developed a set of five-year outcomes for each of these priority areas, which set out what it aims to achieve in each by 2013. Proposals must show how they will meet the targets identified in the business plan.

Reducing the impact of pest animals, improving the health of the Great Barrier Reef and protecting Australia's coastline from the effects of climate change are among the key priorities for investment in the second annual business plan for the Australian Government's 'Caring for our Country' initiative. Announcing the launch of the 2010-11 'Caring for our Country' business plan, Environment Minister, Peter Garrett, and Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Minister, Tony Burke, said more than \$300 million would be invested in environmental protection and sustainable resource management. "Rural and urban community groups, landholders and organisations can now apply to share in up to \$171 million of 'Caring for our Country' funding for single and multi-year projects ranging in value from \$20,000 to \$1.5 million under this year's business plan," Mr Garrett said. This is in addition to the annual base-level funding of \$138 million for 56 regional natural resource management organisations around Australia.

Applications will be able to be lodged on line from January 2010 and the closing date for the majority of categories is the 15th of April. Information sessions for business plan applicants will be held in late January and early February across WA. Venue information and session times are also available on the 'Caring for our Country' website. For more information on applying for funding under the 'Caring for our Country' 2010-11 Business Plan. -Visit [www.nrm.gov.au](http://www.nrm.gov.au) or call 1 800 552 008

-Contact Kevin Walley, Caring for our Country Facilitator ph 08 91402536

-Contact Bevan Grey at Rangelands NRM WA ph 08 99419743.

The \$5 million [Caring for Our Country Community Action Grants](http://www.nrm.gov.au/cag/index.html) <http://www.nrm.gov.au/cag/index.html> program provides small grants of between \$5000 and \$20 000 to environmental, Indigenous and sustainable agriculture community groups. The call for 2010-11 Community Action Grants applications is likely to occur in July 2010 and is designed for those groups which are not successful through the 2010-11 business plan.



## PLEASE RESPECT OUR COAST

- Stay on the designated roads & tracks
- Take your rubbish home
- Put out your camp fires
- Fish for the future

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# REVIEW: TEN COMMITMENTS TO RESHAPING THE APPROACH TO RANGELANDS MANAGEMENT

In 2008, CSIRO Publishing released *Ten Commitments-Reshaping the Lucky Country's Environment*. In it, leading environmental thinkers deliver chapters on environmental and natural resource management issues facing the country. Topics include: deserts, rangelands, woodlands, tropical savannas, urban settlements, forestry, tropical and temperate marine ecosystems, tropical rainforest, alpine and aquatic ecosystems, coasts, fisheries, agriculture, mining, grazing, tourism, climate change, earth systems, water, biodiversity, policy and institutional reforms, private sector, human population, health, fire, emergency management, Indigenous land management, and energy.

A chapter is devoted to Australia's Rangelands and is written by Mark Stafford Smith, formally of Desert Knowledge CRC and now with CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems. Stafford Smith identifies and briefly discusses ten key issues he recognises as opportunities to address in the Rangelands.

1. *Protect and manage water in remote areas, especially in the more densely settled pastoral areas.* The author advocates for the protection of these vital assets through a form of stewardship that engages the land managers and leasees to protect and manage these areas.

2. *Create large-scale meta reserves to protect diffuse evolutionary processes.* The author acknowledges the strength of the rangelands as being a relatively unmodified natural laboratory to observe evolutionary processes such as rain and fire on the landscape, and the biodiversity within it.

3. *Ban any further flow controls on arid river systems.* This suggestion considers lessons learnt from river management elsewhere in Australia. It advocates no major flow control actions be adopted across the Rangelands as way of protecting the biodiversity of arid river systems.

4. *Resource a truly national rangelands monitoring scheme, encompassing biodiversity and other land values properly.* The author wants to unify the range of monitoring information across Australia into a single system the considers the indicators of the health of the environmental, social, human, cultural, institutional and built capital of the rangelands.

5. *Establish a regionally integrated systems of tourism and conservation management.* This suggestion looks at the need to integrate planning of the conservation estate according to its many uses such as tourism.

6. *Resource local (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) stewardship of public natural and cultural heritage values with proper jobs with well defined goals.* This point acknowledges that fire, invasive species, endangered species, carbon stocks and water all require managing and local stakeholders are often best placed deliver this public benefit. The presence of people carrying these out contributes to regional and national priorities of security, safety and sustainability.

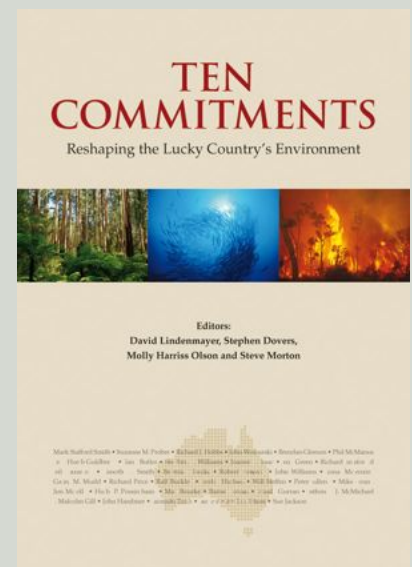
7. *Replace all drought-related subsidies and tax provisions for grazing with incentives supporting ecological responses to climate variability.* This issue considers that subsidies would be better at targeting industry transformation and preparedness for extreme events like drought and climate change as way of strengthening local community capacity and managing biodiversity.

8. *Define a new concept of rangelands multiple use and have its implications flow through all institutions.* This suggestion promotes the move towards approving multiple land uses on properties in the future for land managers, with overriding obligations to maintain natural and cultural heritage.

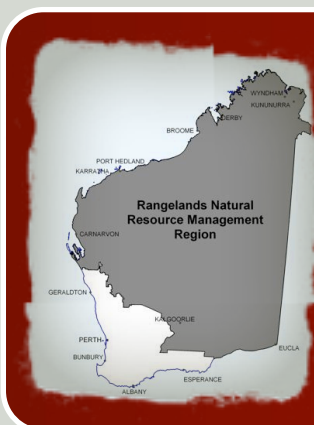
9. *Establish formal regional learning systems that develop persistent community*

*local knowledge.* The author wants to see a strengthening of local and regional capacity to link policy and research to local knowledge and practice. Underpinning this a strengthening of the governance of organisations.

10. *Establish an Outback Capital Trust with powers to set and receive natural resource use rents, modeled on the Alaska Permanent Fund.* This suggestion considers one way to rectify the leakage of recurrent government spending from the rangelands. It would involve states, territories and the commonwealth collaboratively establishing an outback trust. This would levy rents on the use of the rangelands which would be reinvested into environmental, social, human and physical infrastructure of the rangelands.



For further information on the chapter and other relevant themes in the book cutting across the Rangelands including agriculture, mining, tourism, climate change amongst others, see <http://www.csiro.au/resources/Ten-Commitments.html> or your local library.



**Rangelands NRM WA is the regional NRM organisation for 90% of the WA land mass and almost 75% of its coastline.**

**From 2003 to 2009 it had delivered 94 different projects and 50% of these have been delivered by community based organisations.**

**For further information or comment please Contact;**

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