

# “SUSTAINABLE OUTBACK”

## A FRAMEWORK FOR MANAGING WA RANGELANDS

A new paradigm is proposed for creating a vision and managing Western Australian rangelands and pastoral industry. The paradigm is based on developing a commercially driven, resource-use management framework that links economic, environmental and social outcomes into a transparent and rigorous system.

### ESTABLISHING THE NEED FOR INTEGRATED, HOLISTIC MANAGEMENT

#### **State Government Perspective**

The State Government has a responsibility to establish institutional and administrative arrangements that creates a sustainable outback. This framework needs to build the capacity of individuals, communities and enterprises to contribute to the financial viability and social wellbeing of the regions through effective resource-use and management.

Whilst much has been said and written about such “triple bottom line” approaches, there has been to date, no planned formal endeavours that collectively sets the vision and agenda for creating a “Sustainable Outback”. To this end the State Government needs to work in partnership with the community and industries to develop a systematic framework to manage multiple and sustainable use of the rangelands.

#### **Industry Perspective**

Resource-use industries are under increasing pressure to manage public resources in a manner that is both responsible and transparent. Pastoral producers are already feeling the effects of this pressure: producers are legally required to employ best management practice and the community, markets and regulators are calling for proof of sustainability. To satisfy these demands, whilst remaining economically and socially viable in the long-term, industry must be able to achieve and demonstrate sustainable resource use.

### RANGELAND MANAGEMENT: VISION FOR THE FUTURE

#### **The proposed framework**

For some time now “rangelanders” have been calling for a more focussed and strategic approach to managing the rangelands in order to achieve and demonstrate sustainable habitation. It is proposed that this new paradigm be centred on the development of resource-use industry accreditation models underpinned by contemporary multiple use drivers like appropriate tenure and planning schemes.

The adoption of such an approach would enable the establishment of clearly defined management objectives across a range of themes and scales. These objectives would assist the community, industries and State Government in systematically progressing toward desirable economic, environmental, and social outcomes, in a transparent and accountable manner.

The fundamental principles embodied in the approach would include:

- The major themes of economic, environmental and social sustainability;
- Objectives, targets, benchmarks, best management practices, key performance indicators;
- Drivers for participation and adaptive institutional arrangements, including incentives and disincentives based on performance.

Each of these principles is consistent with the governance arrangements for Natural Resource Management (NRM) programs, proposed by the NRM Ministerial Council. The principles would apply at a range of scales, as interlinked management systems:

- Regional/rangeland management systems and investment plans
- interlinked with industry/enterprise management systems
- which together feed information into an integrated management framework
- whose synthesis informs adaptive institutional frameworks.

## BENEFITS OF THE FRAMEWORK

### **The State Government perspective**

The framework will ensure an accountable and creditable management system is in place to achieve a “Sustainable Outback”. The framework will be built on more contemporary commercial and regulatory incentives and disincentives and allow modern industry self-management and current government planning principles to apply. The framework will consolidate consultation and stakeholder management at local, regional and rangeland-wide scales to perform a number of new and existing roles. For example the peak body will assist government to set agreed community objectives and targets, manage the framework towards implementation, suggest policy requirements and co-ordinate development and investment plans for regions.

The other obvious benefit of putting in place a “quality management” framework is that it will reveal gaps in knowledge and monitoring efforts at all levels/themes, provide a systematic appraisal of the key objectives set, allowing integrative “systems” assessments to inform administrators and policy makers in adaptive loops. The approach will support more focused and effective management at all levels by highlighting areas for improvement and repeated under-performance, thereby enabling holistic appraisals and responses where system dysfunction is obvious.

Government departments and statutory bodies will have a rigorous basis for meeting their statutory responsibilities, more cost effectively.

### **Industry perspective**

Outback industries will benefit in terms of public relations and image. Land managers will find participation improves efficiency, demonstrates lease compliance, improves enterprise/capital value and allows new opportunities for marketing. Implementation of the framework will ensure a rigorous and transparent system is available to link the productive capacity of a property and responsible resource management with:

- lease capital value
- responsible management and measurable environmental outcomes
- market access and product liability requirements
- statutory and common law requirements

## PROPOSED MODEL FOR ACTION

To initiate the development of this management approach, it is proposed that:

REMP seek endorsement of this approach through the Cabinet Standing Committee on Environment (and possibly Regional Development) to establish a “Rangeland Working Group” of industry and government representatives with a TOR to report back to the CSCEnP with an agreed draft management model and implementation schedule for managing the rangelands

# Sustainable Outback – A Framework for Managing the Rangelands

