



SUBMISSION to

HOUSE of REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE

on

ENVIRONMENT and HERITAGE

INQUIRY INTO

CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT

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The Pastoralists and Graziers Association of Western Australia (PGA) welcomes the opportunity to provide input into the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage Inquiry on Catchment Management.

Development of Catchment Management

The development of catchment management has been implemented in WA through the Focus Catchment scheme initiated by AgWest (a state government agency). This scheme allows selected catchments to benefit from generous allocations of resources to develop a catchment plan for the area and commence on the ground works to implement this plan.

There has been mixed reaction from both the community and agency staff to this move. In some areas the community and the staff identified different catchments as being worthy of designation as a focus catchment and this has caused some problems.

This program has not been delivered to the community in what would be considered an acceptable manner.

This program has only been in place in the South West Land Division of the State.

It is felt that any development of an integrated catchment management plan should be carried out at a local level with landholder input to ensure that the plan is both relevant and will be implemented.

The value of a catchment approach to the management of the environment

An integrated approach to catchment management would ensure the best use of resources and that a consistent method would be applied over the entire waterway, not a series of different and perhaps conflicting programs from the headwaters to the base of the stream.

An integrated catchment management approach could establish a set of community endorsed water quality objectives for the catchment, together with an integrated strategy to achieve the desired standard of water quality identified by the community, consistent with the National Water Quality Management Strategy. This approach was taken in NSW in the "Streamly Clean" project.



Best practice methods of preventing, halting and reversing environmental degradation in catchments and achieving environmental sustainability

A system of best practice methods for achieving environmental sustainability should be developed for each region across the state. These strategies need to be formulated by local landholders in consultation with government agencies and adequately resourced. An example of this approach can be seen in the Southern Rangelands area of WA.

The Gascoyne Murchison Regional Strategy suggested the development of a "RangeCare" program, which incorporates best practice methods. The principles behind RangeCare are based on using regional landuse plans by the use of controlled grazing, promotion of feral animal control programs, eradication of weeds, encouragement of community involvement and development of a sense of responsibility for wind erosion, maintenance of biodiversity and regeneration of degraded areas.

The role of different levels of government, the private sector and the community in the management of catchment areas

A partnership between all levels of government, the private sector and the community is necessary for the effective management of catchments. The approach should be integrated so that the landholders feel that the program is of benefit to the environment and also has an economic benefit to their enterprise.

All programs require a "bottom up" direction to ensure that they will be carried out but this must be balanced with the need for continuity across the region and effective management of resources.

The various levels of government have differing roles to play in the integrated management of catchments.

The Federal Government's role is in the provision of a set of broad based strategies such as the National Water Quality Management Strategy and the provision of funding under programs such as Natural Heritage Trust.

State Government's role is to make linkages between the different departments which are concerned in this aspect of resource management eg AgWest, Waters and Rivers Commission and CALM ,so that a focussed message is delivered to the community. State Government should ensure that the on ground approach is coordinated so that the interests of all stakeholders are protected.



The community needs to be consulted before any major changes of policy are made and this consultation should be broad based not limited to committees which are comprised of people appointed by the relevant Minister.

The community has the most important role in catchment management as it is at this level that the actions necessary for the implementation of the program will be taken. If the community feel that they have not been adequately consulted or that the program has a negative cost benefit analysis, the program will fail.

The best regional approach, with a regional committee in place, will not succeed when the community do not perceive this to be representative of community views or aspirations. This resistance is compounded when the regional committee is consulted by state level committees on aspects of natural resource management without the knowledge of the community they purport to represent.

Planning, resourcing, implementation, coordination and cooperation in catchment management

A problem which arises with catchment management plans in the pastoral areas is that a catchment in the rangelands may cover only part of one property and be the responsibility of an individual leaseholder. Given the interpretation of the guidelines for Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) funding of projects to be "community" based it makes access to funding from this source in the rangelands difficult. If a project is put up for funding that will increase production using fewer animals, thus contributing to landcare in the long term, that project is perceived as being "production" oriented and therefore ineligible.

The main objective of the community component of the NHT is to assist community groups to improve the management of the nation's land, water and vegetation resources, and the native animals which rely on these resources. The funding assistance for community landcare aims to encourage rural community groups to develop a self-help attitude and capacity in planning, promoting and using sustainable land, water and vegetation management practices. The guidelines also state that projects should encourage local ownership of environment and natural resource management projects and their solutions and to encourage the adoption of techniques.

There appears to be no reason why this objective cannot apply to individuals in the pastoral areas. Pastoralists essentially manage a public asset and it is important to encourage improved management practices.



Mechanisms for monitoring, evaluating and reporting on catchment management programs, including the use of these reports for state of the environment reporting and opportunities for review and improvement

Any mechanisms for the monitoring or evaluation of the success of catchment management programs should be developed in consultation with landholders. The landholders have specific knowledge of the conditions and the required outcomes of the program in their particular areas.

An other requirement of the proper monitoring of the program is the employment of an accurate data collection system which is sensitive to the local conditions.

Some reports which have been compiled by government agencies are inaccurate and do not portray the conditions as they really are in situ. This causes enormous problems when these reports are taken as the basis of future reports on conditions in this areas and the setting up of programs to correct the imagined faults in the management of the waterways. One such report is "The State of the Northern Rivers" put out by the Waters and Rivers Commission of WA.

The Association is in favour of the concept of integrated catchment management programs provided that the landholders are fully consulted and their views taken into account before any policy decisions are made which could affect their use of the land or compel them to expend large sums of money to correct a perceived problem.

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