



Western Australia

"The Shire with NO Town"

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DEC / Stations General

30th August 2006

Dr Jacqueline Dewar
Secretary
Senate Environment Communications
Information Technology and the Arts Reference Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Dr Dewar

INQUIRY INTO AUSTRALIAS NATIONAL PARKS, CONSERVATION RESERVES AND MARINE PROTECTION

The Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) have purchased two pastoral stations within the last few years and I understand have expressed interest in several others throughout the Murchison Shire.

We as a council are very concerned that an obvious lack of financial and suitably qualified and experienced staff currently exists. Many Pastoralists will tell you, the easiest part of owning a Station is the actual purchasing, the continual ongoing expenditure required must be taken into account and fully understood when these properties are purchased. It is considered essential and a Government responsibility that this fact is fully understood and ensures that sufficient funds and resources are available.

The Murchison Shire is a physically large council of almost 50,000sq kilometers and a population of approximately 100 people making this one of the most sparsely populated Shires in Western Australia, both Stations sold to DEC were previously active family units and contributed socially towards the small Murchison Community which is considered essential if the community is to survive. Council believes that attempts by DEC should be made to attract family units to these properties to ensure the survival of the small community.

The exemption of DEC from the Dividing Fences Act effectively makes any DEC owned property neighboring an active Pastoral property a very real liability for the

active pastoral Station. The DEC is under no obligation whatsoever to maintain or repair boundary fences and this effectively doubles the responsibility on the active neighboring Station, something very few are able to afford. Council strongly encourage DEC to liaise with neighbors to develop a policy urgently with regards to these very serious fencing issues, which if ignored could see many Stations neighboring a DEC property become financially unsustainable. In developing this policy it is essential that DEC staff understand that a "one size fits all" approach will not work in this situation as the fencing needs of Pastoral land throughout the State is very different to that of no-pastoral areas.

The DEC has a duty of care when purchasing any Pastoral Station and DEC staff must understand the seriousness and both direct and indirect economic and social implications for the region.

I look forward to receiving a response from your office to advise how these problems will be addressed.

Yours faithfully



Dirk J Sellenger
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER