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1st Session, 52nd Parliament**

10 Nov 2010

PASTORAL BOARD OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Annual Report 2009-10

September 2010



Government of South Australia

September 2010

Department of Environment and Natural Resources
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10 September 2010

Hon Paul Caica MP
Minister for Environment and Conservation
9th Floor, Chesser House
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Dear Minister

As Presiding Member of the Pastoral Board of South Australia, appointed pursuant to section 12 (4) of the *Pastoral Land Management and Conservation Act 1989*, I have pleasure in presenting the annual report of the Board for the year ended 30 June 2010, as required by section 18(A) of that Act and section 12 of the *Public Sector Act 2009*.



Michael McBride
Presiding Member
Pastoral Board of South Australia

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1. Presiding Member's Foreword

The seventh Pastoral Board was established on 5 July 2007. During 2009-10 the Pastoral Board met six times including meetings at Burra and Port Augusta.

In the words of Dorothy MacKellar 'From drought to flooding rain' our prolonged drought has been followed by an exceptional season and is being enjoyed by a large area of the State, whilst there are pockets of country still experiencing below average conditions. With the Pastoral area comprising of 80% of the State, seasonal variations over such a large area are to be expected.

Public Access Routes routes (PAR's) allow access to and through pastoral lease land to places of interest without the need to obtain the permission of the lessee. During 2009-10 three new PARs were gazetted, joint funding was negotiated to repair Halligan Bay PAR to Lake Eyre and two PARs were closed for safety reasons. One of the benefits for pastoralists to be involved in a PAR was to absolve liability of the lessee. PAR's created in areas near parks, are now basically tourist's roads, and the Pastoral Board does not have the resources to maintain them to a 'road' condition. The lessee on whose country these 'roads' pass, cannot, and should not be expected to maintain these roads which are basically the lessees access tracks to their improvements and now used by tourists.

The Rangelands Drought Taskforce achieved its objectives well under adverse conditions. The Board is keen to see steady restocking of what were formally drought areas, to allow the country to respond and recover from the extreme drought experienced. Measured restocking will allow better land regeneration in the longer term.

During the 1990's the SA Pastoral Board received requests from pastoralists to allow goats to be run as managed units on their properties. Following lengthy consultation and monitoring of the domestic goat grazing case study on Lilydale, goat permit conditions have been approved by the South Australia Arid Lands NRM Board and the Pastoral Board. We are now in discussions with the Native Vegetation Council. We know that the standard of fencing specified under the permit conditions contains the animals and with applying these permit conditions we should be able to set a regime under which domestic goat grazing can proceed.

During the year work commenced on the conversion of pastoral lease stocking maximums. This comprised the existing merino sheep (sheep equivalents) stocking maximums being converted to an industry accepted dry sheep equivalent (DSE) due to the advent of varying breeds (meat sheep) currently being grazed in the rangelands. This work will continue and be completed over the next 12 months.

Priorities and resourcing have impacted on the ability to complete the re-assessment of pastoral leases in the time prescribed by the *Pastoral Land Management and Conservation Act 1989*. In the interim a targeted approach will be taken to the process.

I would like to thank fellow Board Members and Pastoral Program Staff for their continued enthusiasm and dedication to administering the *Pastoral Land Management and Conservation Act 1989*

Michael McBride
Presiding Member
Pastoral Board of South Australia

2. Achievements and Highlights in 2009-10

During 2009-10 the Board:

- Considered reports associated with the 63 lease assessments for the Kingoonya and Gawler Ranges districts.
- Completed 40 pastoral inspections, encompassing 55 individual pastoral leases.
- Established three new Public Access Routes.
- Negotiated joint funding arrangement for repairs to the Halligan Bay Public Access Route to Lake Eyre.
- Consultations with other agencies regarding the management arrangements and joint funding for major Public Access Routes.
- Building strong relationships with the South Australian Arid Lands (SAAL) and the South Australian Murray Darling Basin (SAMDB) and Natural Resources Management (NRM) Board's through joint meetings and developing partnership arrangements in policy, program and project development and delivery.
- Developed draft policies and conditions for waterpoint development and the keeping of domestic goats on pastoral leases in consultation with NRM Boards and the Native Vegetation Council.
- Partnership with the University of Adelaide on two projects for land condition monitoring using remote sensing and on the impacts of grazing on biodiversity.
- Evaluation of grazing impacts of managed domesticated goat herds on the Lillydale pastoral lease.
- Conducted open forums with pastoral lessees at Burra and Pt Augusta.
- Contributed to the Rangelands Drought Taskforce.

3. Historical and Regional Context

History

The Pastoral Board has been in operation in South Australia for 115 years. It is one of the oldest continually active statutory authorities in Australia.

The first Board, chaired by the Acting Surveyor-General William Strawbridge, was appointed in 1894 to help administer the *Pastoral Act of 1893*. The 1894 Board was given the power to determine lease areas, boundaries, rents and the duration of tenured occupancies.

In the 1930s the sustainability of the current grazing practices began to be widely and openly questioned. Short-term tenures, poor stocking practices and a run of bad seasons had all contributed to the malaise that was giving rise to these questions. *The Pastoral Act of 1936* introduced stocking controls on leases for the first time.

Today the sustainable management of pastoral lands subject to grazing, and the monitoring of the condition of these lands, are pivotal components of the work of the Pastoral Board and its support staff.

The Region

The rangelands of South Australia lie beyond the agricultural districts and occupy some 741 000 sq km. Rangelands encompass just over 80% of the State's land area. Within this area the Pastoral Board is mandated to administer and monitor 328 pastoral leases that collectively occupy 410 000 sq km. The balance of the rangelands is set aside as Aboriginal lands and parks and reserves.

The pastoral lands are divided into two zones by the 2250 km Dog Fence. Cattle leases outside the fence collectively occupy 230 000 sq km while sheep leases inside the fence occupy 180 000 sq km.

The individual leases that define the Pastoral Board's area of responsibility range in size from 20 sq km to over 14 000 sq km. These leases are operated as 220 stations, runs, or management units.

Sustainable pastoral land use relies heavily on the availability of water. Rainfall is low and unreliable over most of the region. Averages vary from 275 mm in parts of the Flinders Ranges and in the Musgrave Ranges against the Northern Territory border, to less than 150 mm in the vicinity of Lake Eyre. In all areas extreme summer conditions contribute to evaporation rates greater than rainfall. This is a major issue with surface storage of stock water throughout the region. Stock water distribution on most pastoral leases comes from dams, earth tanks, bores (some into the Great Artesian Basin) and troughs along pipelines.

The more northerly and westerly country receives most of its rainfall in the summer months from storms and occasionally monsoonal rains from the north and northwest. It is only the southern rangelands fringing the agricultural areas that receive any significant precipitation from major southwest weather fronts.

The characteristic saltbush and bluebush shrublands on leases south of the Dog Fence are indicative of the region's aridity. A diverse range of plants has adapted to these harsh conditions. Some are edible and provide a perennial fodder base for sheep.

The northern cattle country is more temporary in nature. Annual forage species respond quickly to rainfall events in the lighter sand dune and swale country – and in the stony tablelands that together comprise what is colloquially referred to as 'soft' and 'hard' country away from the watercourses.

4. Seasonal Conditions 2009-10

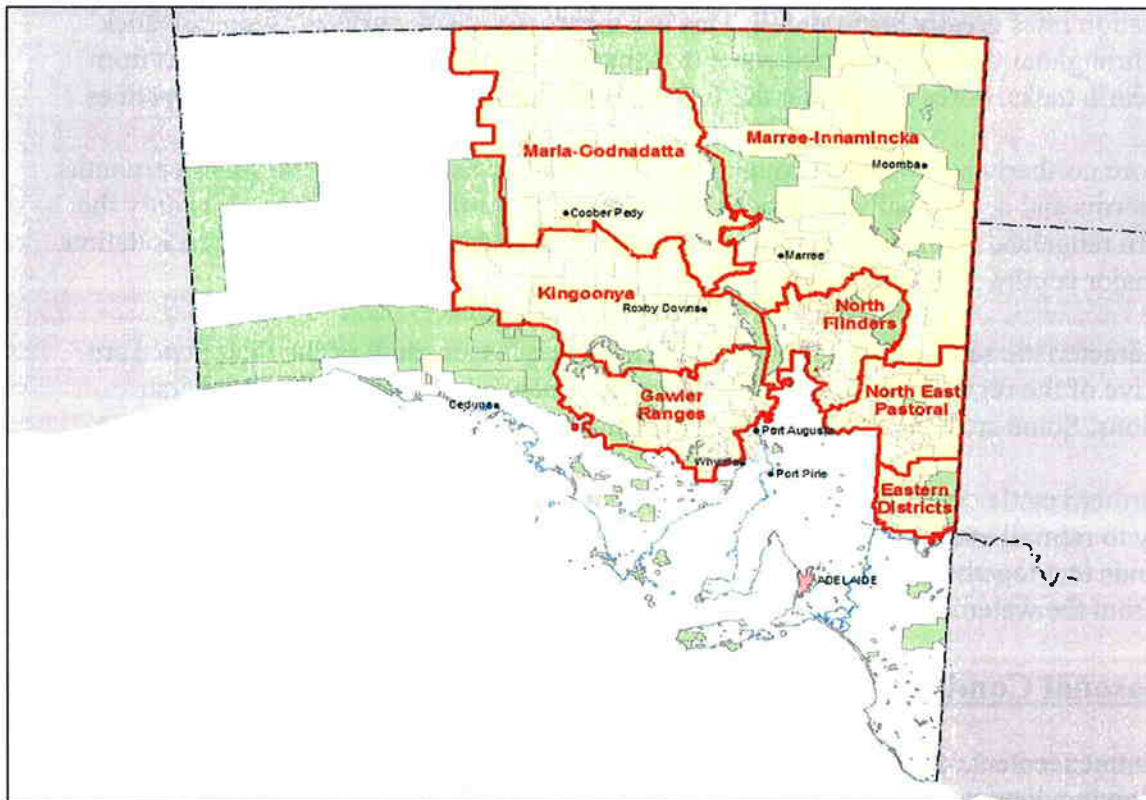
The commencement of the 2009-10 financial year saw at least average seasonal conditions in the following districts: Gawler Ranges, Kingoonya, North West, North East and far North East. However the areas of the far North West, east of Coober Pedy towards William Creek, most of the Marree district, the Northern Flinders, east of the Flinders and parts of the eastern districts commenced the financial year in a very dry condition.

Dust storms occurred over much of the region in late winter and spring in combination with high temperatures and strong winds. The most severe storms occurred in the week beginning 21 September, lasting 15 hours or more and with winds of up to 100 km per hour. Vast areas of the rangelands were affected, with the worst damage occurring east of the Flinders Ranges, including the North East district. The storm caused serious damage to the condition of the land and the vegetation and the loss of feed as well as damage to roads, troughs, fences, buildings and other infrastructure. The dust storms were a major blow, coming on top of several years of drought conditions.

The storms were of national significance with soil from South Australia and western New South Wales causing major problems to towns, cities and rural communities from SA to Sydney.

In November 2009, the beginning of beneficial rains in the majority of the rangelands commenced. Good rainfall events occurred between January and March 2010. All districts, except for the parts in the Eastern District, have experienced average to above average seasonal conditions. The Eastern Districts has received rainfall but some properties still require more. This is despite having already received more annual rainfall than in the previous 10 years.

The general rain has continued throughout most areas in autumn with the rangelands currently experiencing one of the best seasons in 20 years. Coupled with the extensive flooding of the Cooper and Diamantina Rivers many cattle properties are experiencing over abundance of feed conditions.



5. Board Functions and Objectives

Board Status

The Pastoral Board of South Australia is established under section 12 of the *Pastoral Land Management and Conservation Act 1989* (the Act). The Board is required under section 18A of the Act to make an annual report of its operations during the preceding financial year to the Minister for Environment and Conservation.

The Pastoral Board is established by section 12 of the Act. The Governor, with consideration of advice from the Minister for Environment and Conservation, appoints six members with appropriate skills, experience and knowledge to the Pastoral Board. The Governor appoints the Presiding Member and a deputy to each Board member.

The Pastoral Board is a statutory body; it is not a corporate entity and has no funds of its own. As such any reporting on financial performance, contractual arrangements, employment of consultants and fraud, relevant to the Board's activities, will be included in the 2009-10 DWLBC Annual Report.

This reporting arrangement also applies in relation to equal opportunity, occupational health, safety, and injury management, overseas travel, disability action plans, asbestos management in government buildings, urban design charter and energy efficiency action plans.

Reporting requirements against the *Whistleblowers Protection Act 1993* require the Pastoral Board to report on the number of occasions on which public interest information has been disclosed to a Responsible Officer of the agency. There were no disclosures made during the 2009-10 financial year.

The Board as an entity however can receive enquiries under the State's Freedom of Information legislation. No enquiries were received during the period under review.

Functions of the Board

Section 17(1) of the Act says that the Board is responsible to the Minister for the administration of the Act, and in discharging that responsibility is subject to the control and direction of the Minister. Subsection (2) describes the other functions of the Board as:

- (a) to advise the Minister on policies that should govern the administration of pastoral land;
- (b) to advise the Minister on other matters referred to the Board by the Minister; and
- (c) to perform any other function assigned to the Board by or under this Act by the Minister.

Legislative Objectives

The Pastoral Board's overriding goals and objectives are set out in section 4 of the Act. The Board may develop its own strategic planning goals and operational policies, within the framework of resource sustainability outlined in the Act.

The Objects of the Act (section 4) are:

- (a) to ensure that all pastoral land in the State is well managed and utilised prudently so that its renewable resources are maintained and its yield sustained; and

- (b) to provide for –
- (i) the effective monitoring of the condition of pastoral land; and
 - (ii) the prevention of degradation of the land and its indigenous plant and animal life; and
 - (iii) the rehabilitation of the land in cases of damage; and
- (c) to provide a form of tenure of Crown land for pastoral purposes that is conducive to the economic viability of the pastoral industry; and
- (d) to recognise the right of Aboriginal persons to follow traditional pursuits on pastoral land; and
- (e) to provide the community with a system of access to and through pastoral land that finds a proper balance between the interests of the pastoral industry and the interests of the community in enjoying the unique environment of the land.

To focus the Minister and the Board on the coordination of its activities with other statutory groups operating in the pastoral lands, section 5 of the Act requires the Minister and the Board to act consistently with, and have regard to, plans and guidelines established by government agencies, resource conservation authorities and planning authorities. They must also have regard to the terms of any relevant ILUA.

6. Current Board Membership

The membership of the seventh Pastoral Board appointed under the Act for a three-year period expiring on 4 July 2010 is:

Presiding Member

Michael McBride Nominee of the SA Farmers Federation (SAFF)

Members

Vicki Linton	Nominee of the Minister for Environment and Conservation
Brian Bartsch	Nominee of the Minister for Primary Industries
Douglas Lillecrapp	Nominee of SAFF
Iris Iwanicki	Nominee of the Conservation Council of SA
Roger Wickes	Ministerial appointment having experience in administration of pastoral leases

Deputy Members

Julie-Ann Mould	Deputy to McBride
Lisien Loan	Deputy to Linton
Helen Lamont	Deputy to Bartsch
Ann Oldfield	Deputy to Lillecrapp
Fraser Vickery	Deputy to Iris Iwanicki
Brenda Anderson	Deputy to Wickes

Gender balance

Section 12(3) of the Act requires at least one Member of the Board must be a woman and one a man. The gender balance of the Pastoral Board is four male and two female Board Members and one male and five female Deputy Members.

7. Board Achievements against South Australia's Strategic Plan Targets

The Board's responsibilities and activities relate to two targets under the 'Attaining Sustainability' objective of South Australia's Strategic Plan:

- Target 3.1: Lose no species: Lose no known native species as a result of human impacts.
- Target 3.2: Land biodiversity: By 2010 have five well-established biodiversity corridors aimed at maximising ecological outcomes particularly in the face of climate change.

The Board contributes to these targets through its lease inspection, assessment and land condition monitoring processes. It also contributes to the targets by managing the application for clearing of native vegetation on land held under a pastoral lease under the *Native Vegetation Act 1991*, with respect to the development of new permanent water points.

8. Relationships with Natural Resource Management Boards

The Board continued to build strong relationship with the South Australian Arid Lands (SAAL) and the South Australian Murray Darling Basin (AMDB) Natural Resources Management (NRM) Boards during the year.

Most of the pastoral land in the state is on the SAAL NRM region. Relationships with the SAAL NRM Board were strengthened through joint meetings and partnership arrangements in policy, program and project development and delivery.

The Pastoral Board and SAAL NRM Board aim to have at least one joint meeting per year to discuss common issues, align policies and actions, share project information and build closer working relationships.

Pastoral Board support staff from the Pastoral Program, DWLBC, collaborated with staff from the SAAL NRM region on a range of issues, including dingo management, control of large feral herbivores, and the management of rockholes in the Gawler Ranges.

A senior Pastoral Program staff member sits on the SAAL NRM Board's Pest Advisory Committee. This ensures that there is a collaborative relationship in the development and implementation of policies and management strategies by the two Boards' towards pest management, particularly feral herbivores

To further strengthen links between the two Boards regular meetings were held between the Manager of the Pastoral Program in DWLBC and the General Manager of the SAAL NRM Board.

The Board has also strengthened its relationship with the South Australian Murray Darling Basin NRM Board during the year by involvement in the planning and development of NRM programs and projects.

9. Relationships with Other Groups

Program Support

During 2009-10 DWLBC supported the Pastoral Board through the provision of 11.5 full-time equivalent positions. This included support for pastoral lease assessments, lease inspections, lease tenure management, database management and mapping, policy development and administration. Two Pastoral Inspectors are located at Port Augusta and all other support staff are based in Adelaide.

During the year DWLBC also contracted Rural Solutions South Australia to provide the equivalent of one full-time pastoral lease assessment officer.

Other groups within DWLBC, particularly the Biosecurity Unit, also provided support to the Pastoral Board and its objectives.

Statutory Authorities and Agency Groups

The Native Vegetation Council has delegated certain powers and functions of the Council to the Pastoral Board in relation to clearance of native vegetation by grazing of domestic stock. Specifically:

- Section 25 of the *Native Vegetation Act 1991* in relation to the development of guidelines for the management of native vegetation with respect to clearance of native vegetation by grazing on lands held under a pastoral lease, and
- Division 1 of Part 5 of the *Native Vegetation Act 1991* in relation to application to clear native vegetation by grazing on land held under a pastoral lease.

The Pastoral Board applies the delegated powers in relation to the extension of stock water supplies into areas of pastoral country not previously provided with a permanent water supply and any proposals to change the species of grazing animal. In carrying out this responsibility the Board actively consults with the Native Vegetation Council and the SAAL NRM Board.

Representation on Other Bodies

In addition to its involvement with statutory and agency groups, the Board is also represented on the Rangelands Drought Taskforce and the state Kangaroo Management Reference Group. Through its membership the Board also has a close relationship with the SA Farmers Federation and the Conservation Council of SA.

Collaborations

The Board has supported research in collaboration with Adelaide University for studies titled Watering Points in the Rangelands and the Grazing Impacts on Native Vegetation/Biodiversity and Rangeland monitoring using remotely-sensed cross-fence comparisons. Findings from the later project should assist the Board in making objective comparisons on land condition over the vast areas under Pastoral Lease.

10. Reconciliation Statement and Indigenous Issues

In carrying out its functions, the Pastoral Board is fully aware of the cultural and natural heritage connections of the many traditional owners of the extensive pastoral lands in which it operates. As a matter of strategic policy the Board strives to achieve positive outcomes whenever addressing issues concerning the aspirations of the traditional owners.

The Board continues to strongly support and participate in processes that lead to the development of Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs) over lands held under pastoral lease, recognising the advantages to all parties of an agreed outcome over protracted and expensive litigation where land is subject to native title claim.

11. Key Activities for the Pastoral Board 2009-10

Meetings

During 2009-10 the Board met six times. It held a regional meeting and open forum with lessees at Burra and Port Augusta and also had a formal joint meeting with the SAAL NRM Board in Port Augusta.

The two open forums were attended by approximately 50 lessees. These forums provide an opportunity for pastoralist to discuss issues of concern directly with Board members, staff and other lessees.

In 2009-10 a joint meeting was held in Port Augusta on 7 April 2010. The meeting was very successful and included discussion on a range of issues of mutual concern including, the management of feral goats, the Arid Lands Information System, Public Access Routes, waterpoint planning, lease assessments and inspections, the development of the SAAL NRM plan and recovery from drought.

In June 2010 the Presiding Member of the Board accompanied the Minister for Environment and Conservation on a tour of the South Australian Arid Lands region.

Domestic Goat Grazing Case Study

Since May 2003 the Board has been conducting a long-term case study to provide information on the grazing impacts of managed herds of domesticated goats and their management. Observations and trends from the case study are contributing to the knowledge base on the impacts of domestic goat grazing and are informing the Board's development of a domestic goat grazing policy. The study is being conducted on Lilydale Station in the Eastern Districts and involves the annual monitoring of 13 vegetation monitoring sites and 37 individual indicator shrub sites. During 2009-10 monitoring was conducted in July, December and June.

The case study has shown that fencing specifications in the Board's policy on keeping domestic goats in the rangelands are appropriate for containing domestic goats. Since the trial began no goats have escaped from the case study area.

Drawing on the results of the case study and other information, during the year the Board developed a risk assessment process as the final component of the policy on the keeping of domestic goats in the rangelands.

Monitoring Land Condition

Second Round of Assessments

The Pastoral Board, under section 25 of the Act, is required to assess the condition of the land comprised in each pastoral lease at intervals of not more than 14 years and, given a satisfactory assessment, restore the lease to a 42 year term with variations to the lease conditions as appropriate. The first round of lease assessments was completed in 2000. The

second assessment program began in 2005 with the aim of completing 212 assessments by 2014.

Due to competing priorities and resourcing the average rate of completing assessments is 14 runs per year. However, only eight runs were completed in 2009-10. At present the completion of the second assessment program has extended beyond 2014. At this rate some leases will be outside the 14 year statutory requirement to have a lease assessment performed. A rate of 31 runs per year will be required to complete the program within the statutory timeframe

The Board is pursuing a strategy to improve the rate at which the lease assessments can be completed; including the development of a field based electronic data recording system. This system will save considerable time in the data entry and vetting process. Depending on resourcing it is hoped that the second assessment program can be delivered by 2016.

All fieldwork and reporting associated with the 63 lease assessments for the Kingoonya and Gawler Ranges districts have been completed and assessments continued in the North East Pastoral region.

General trends have shown the effects of extended dry periods over the last 10 years, with some reduction in land condition with loss of palatable perennial species. Despite this, long term improvements have been seen with recruitment of perennial species that have established and survived the dry conditions, particularly in areas with historical degradation.

Under the Act, an assessment of the condition of the land must include an assessment of the capacity of the land to carry stock. This involves the determination of the maximum number of stock that can be carried on the lease. The current stock maximums specified in pastoral leases are expressed in sheep equivalents. During the year the Board examined ways to objectively and equitably convert these to the industry accepted standard of dry sheep equivalents. The Board also examined methods for refining the process to determine stock maximums, and expects to conclude this process for the above districts early in the 2010-11 year.

Lease Inspection

Pastoral leases are inspected for compliance with lease conditions and to effectively monitor and address any land management issues on individual leases. The inspection process involves land condition monitoring in conjunction with assessing impacts of the current grazing practices. Where grazing pressure is assessed to be excessive, inspectors develop strategies with the lessee to rectify the problem.

During the 2009 –10 year, 40 pastoral inspections (encompassing 55 individual pastoral leases) were conducted, with four of those properties being the subject of a dust storm monitoring exercise immediately after the September 2009 storms and again in June 2010.

One property was inspected twice as it is the subject of a domestic goat case study monitoring project.

Four of the properties inspected in 2009-10 will require reinspection in 2010-11 as the initial inspections of three of these was cut short due to rain and one has ongoing grazing management issues.

Public Access to Pastoral Lands

New gazettals

Section 45 of the Act provides for the establishment of Public Access Routes (PAR) across lands held under pastoral lease. Public Access Routes provide public access over pastoral lease land to specific places of interest without the need to obtain the permission of the lessee. These routes link with the public road system in the pastoral areas.

Three new PARs were gazetted during 2009-10 to improve public access in the region. Googs Track (Par No. 22) in the west of the state links Ceduna with Tarcoola to the north and has been popular with visitors to the region for many years. Most of Googs Track lies within the Yellabinna Regional Reserve and a PAR No. 22 was established to provide access through the pastoral lands between the northern boundary of the reserve and the transcontinental rail line where it joins the formal road network.

PAR No. 23 (Nonning) was established to link Kimba on Eyre Peninsula with the Gawler Ranges via Nonning Station. This route has been informally used by travellers for many years to access the mail road from Iron Knob through to Kingoonya in the north.

PAR No. 24 (Secret Rocks) was established to provide access to the historical monument to explorer Edward John Eyre. This PAR is less than 500 metres in length and joins the Kimba to Whyalla road approximately 44 km east of Kimba on the upper Eyre Peninsula.

Halligan Bay

An increase in visitation to Lake Eyre has placed significant pressure on PARs in the region. PAR No 2 (Level Post Bay) and PAR No. 13 (Halligan Bay) provide the only public access to Lake Eyre. Vehicle traffic along these two routes has been significantly higher than the long term average but at similar levels to 2009 (fig1).

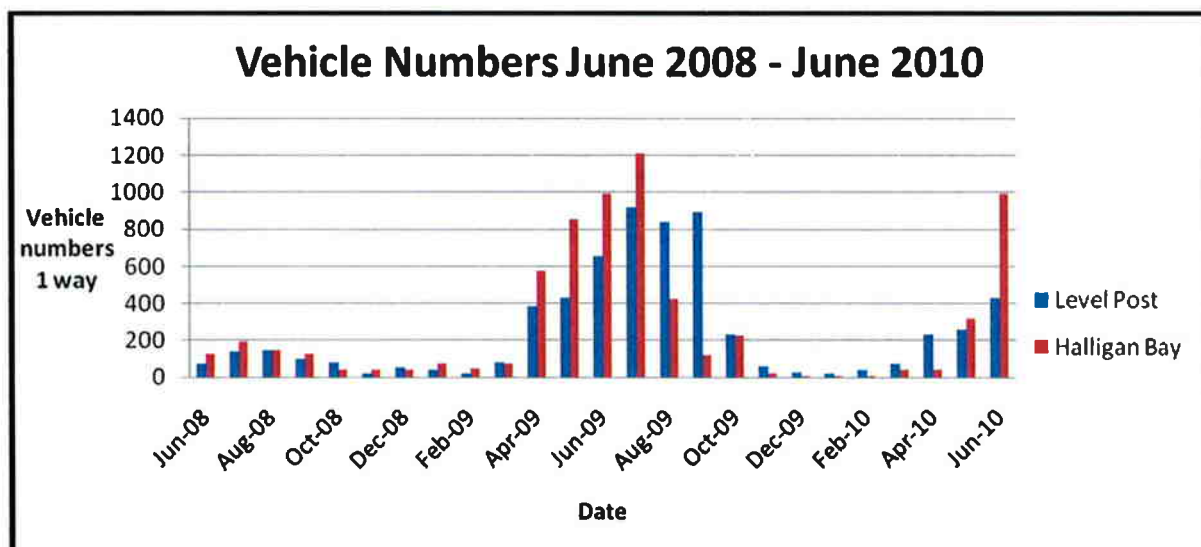


Figure 1 Vehicle numbers on the Level Post Bay and Halligan Bay PARs, June 2008 to June 2010.

Heavy rainfall in the north of the state during late 2009 and early 2010 has resulted in many PARs being rendered unsafe for vehicle traffic from time to time. The Pedirka PAR, Halligan Bay and Level Post PARs have all been closed on several separate occasions due to either wet weather conditions or damage caused by the rainfall.

By June 2010 the Halligan Bay PAR was in very poor condition and in need to urgent repairs. Special funding was sourced from the DWLBC, Department for Environment and Heritage (DEH) and the South Australian Tourist Commission (SATC) to carry out repairs to this PAR in June 2010, ahead of the peak tourist season in the July school holidays. Additionally, the lessee, S Kidman and Co, provided in-kind support and access to water and the Department of Transport Energy and Infrastructure (DTEI) assisted with planning of the repairs. The total cost for the work was \$90 425. The costs were met through \$36 000 provided by SATC, \$44 425 from DWLBC and \$10 000 from DEH.

Public Access Closures

The PAR No. 15 - Warburton K1 and PAR No. 16 - Walkers Crossing, were both closed during summer for public safety. Flooding in the Cooper Creek and Warburton River areas has resulted in both of these PARs remaining closed due to flooding.

An audit of the Walkers Crossing PAR was carried out in November 2009 with several track junctions found to be missing signage. Track conditions through this area vary considerably with sand drifts commonly being blown across the track in the dune fields. Flooding along the length of the Cooper Creek and the subsequent closure of this PAR has precluded any rehabilitation work being undertaken before the end of June 2010.

The Board received an application to permanently close PAR No. 8 - Pedirka PAR from the lessee on whose property this PAR lies. At the June 2010 Pastoral Board meeting a decision to keep this route open was taken with the view to reviewing this decision within six months in consultation with stakeholders.

Mining Development

The Board has continued to be consulted in the expansion of mining, both exploration and development of actual mine sites, in its statutory role of managing pastoral leases. The Board's interest in this activity extends into change of land use applications, commenting on specific proposals and ensuring proposed developments do not impair the ability of lessees to conduct their pastoral enterprises. Issues of particular interest to the Board are the impact of developments on local water resources, installation of haul roads and other infrastructure, and working with Primary Industries and Resources South Australia (PIRSA) to ensure that mining companies are acting responsibly in their interactions with pastoral lessees and their managers.

Arid Lands Information System

The Arid Lands Information System (ALIS) is an innovative system that combines spatial and textual data into a seamless web-based interface. It replaces the Pastoral Management Information System (PMIS) developed for the initial assessment and inspection program in the early 1990's. Information has been migrated from PMIS to ALIS, enabling staff to access the information from a web-based interface.

ALIS can capture, consolidate and report on rangelands assets including biological, physical, cadastral, tenure and other related information, with users able to create, edit and save data in real time over the web. Issues have been encountered with the system as it has moved from a developmental to an operational phase.

Further enhancements and development have refined the operation of the system to meet the requirements of the pastoral lease assessment and inspection program and to support the

Board with the administration of the Act. In addition work on the ability to capture data electronically in the field for later transfer to ALIS has progressed with the aim of assisting with the efficiency of pastoral lease assessments.

Lease Transactions Considered

Section 10 and 18 of the Act allow the Minister and the Pastoral Board respectively to delegate a number of their powers under that Act. The power to approve transfers and sub-leases of pastoral leases provided they are being transferred and sub-leased for pastoral or associated purposes has been delegated to the Program Manager or, in his or her absence, the Senior Pastoral Inspector and/ or the Senior Scientific Officer.

During the 2009-10 year the following lease transfers were approved:

- | | |
|--|-------------------|
| • Lake Eyre (sibling lease of Muloorina) | Private agreement |
| • Mulgaria | Private agreement |
| • Etadunna | Private agreement |
| • Yankaninna | Open market |
| • De Rose Hill | Open market |
| • Witchelina | Open market |
| • Gilles Downs | Open market |
| • Shaggy Ridge | Open market |
| • Pernatty | Open market |
| • Kondoolka | Open market |

Pastoral Rents

Under section 22 of the Act the Board is responsible for issuing and sending to lessees annual rent accounts. These funds assist with the Board operations and pastoral lease administration.

Pastoral lease rentals are payable annually in arrears. Rents collected in the 2009-10 year totalled \$1 015 331. Outstanding rents at 30 June 2009 totalled \$135 000 and debt recovery processes have been instigated.

Determination of Rents

Under section 23 of the Act, the Valuer-General determines pastoral rents as a percentage of the unimproved value of the land – the percentage to represent an appropriate rate of return relative to the purpose for which the land is used.

Section 23(4) obliges the Valuer-General to determine rents at least every five (5) years. After examining recent comparable sales across the pastoral areas of the State, the Valuer-General determined the rents for 2009-10 to be paid on all pastoral leases in South Australia.

Under section 56 of the Act lessees dissatisfied with their rent determination can write to the Valuer-General for an informal resolution or, alternatively, can apply to the Valuer-General for a review of the determination by a listed independent valuer. A final right of appeal from both processes lies with the Land and Valuation Court and the Act allows a lessee to appeal directly to the Land and Valuation Court from the outset if he or she wishes. In 2009-10 two lessees lodged objections with the Valuer-General.

Rent Relief

The Board can and does consider applications for rent relief on a case-by-case basis. As a matter of general policy the Board recognises that the joint Federal / State Drought Exceptional Circumstances declaration process and Farm Help as the most appropriate mechanism for Government assistance to pastoralists in hardship due to prolonged drought. The Board will consider applications for rent deferral where Exceptional Circumstances support is not available due to non-viability of the lessee. No application where considered in 2009-10.

Pastoral Land Appeal Tribunal

Since the Act came into force in 1989 no matters have been referred to the Pastoral Land Appeal Tribunal.

Assistance to Lessees via a 'Pool of Persons'

Section 25(A) of the Act provides for the establishment of a 'pool of persons' available to assist lessees with their dealings with the Board in relation to their lease assessments. No lessees have sought assistance through this process.