

**HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
LAID ON THE TABLE**

24 September 2013

PP287



**ALINYTJARA WILURARA
APY RANGES SUB-REGION
FACT-FINDING VISIT**

**EIGHTY SIXTH REPORT
OF THE
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

“Camelot”

Tabled in the House of Assembly and ordered to be published, Tuesday 24 September 2013

Second Session, Fifty Second Parliament

PRESIDING MEMBER'S FOREWORD

The Natural Resources Committee fact finding visit to the Alinytjara Wilurara Natural Resources Management Region (North) has been anticipated for a long time. After being forced to reschedule a number of times over the past five years the Natural Resources Committee finally completed the visit to AWNRM region (North) in April 2013.

Our hosts were the staff of the Alinytjara Wilurara NRM Board/DEWNR including (acting) Regional Manager Matthew Ward, Helen Donald, Doug Humann, Justine Graham and Bruce MacPherson. We also met local Anangu members of the APY Executive, the Principal of the Indulkana School, a representative of the Uluru Kata Tjuta National Park, the Chair of the Antakirinja Matu-Yankunytjatjara Aboriginal Corporation, and the Chief Executive of Coober Pedy Council.

There is much interest at present in the APY Lands. Mining companies have recently discovered one of the world's largest nickel deposits, ancient water has been discovered in the deep rocks of the Palaeozoic period, there has been discussion of carbon trading and pastoral projects involving cattle, wild horses, camels and donkeys.

The thing I recall most vividly from our visit was the urgent calls from members of the APY Executive for action. Anangu, we heard, were tired of successive governments promising but not delivering and are very concerned for their young people who have little to do on the lands in the way of employment activities, and so sometimes get into trouble. Anangu are concerned that without support their communities on their traditional lands might be doomed. A possible way forward that is widely supported is getting young people more involved in actively managing the environment and natural resources of their traditional country.

Members were quite shocked at the extent that Buffel grass has spread in the APY Ranges. It is probably too late now to do anything but slow the spread of this pest south and east. What is particularly annoying is that this plant, which forms a monoculture and results in the loss of habitat for native animals, is still being promoted as a pasture grass in Queensland. It has not been declared a weed of national significance, or even listed as a declared plant in South Australia, though efforts are being made to have this happen.

The Committee was enthusiastic about DEWNR and the indigenous community working as partners in NRM activities and projects that are meaningful to Anangu as well as to federal and state government. Suitable projects are manageable in scale like the excellent Warru Recovery Program and may potentially include smaller pastoral or camel harvesting ventures that provide learning opportunities for people working on their traditional lands. Success requires managing expectations, having realistic aims and ensuring room for flexibility around outcomes. It means providing challenges that are interesting and rewarding for people without insisting on a full time nine-to-five work ethic. It means enabling communities to be self-sufficient; generate income, produce food, care for families and look after people in a way that gives a sense of pride and well-being.

I wish to thank all those who gave their time to assist the Committee with this inquiry. I commend the members of the Committee, Mr Geoff Brock MP, Mrs Robyn Geraghty MP, Mr Lee Odenwalder MP, Mr Don Pegler MP, Mr Dan van Holst Pellekaan MP, Hon Robert Brokenshire MLC, Hon John Dawkins MLC, Hon Gerry Kandelaars MLC, and Hon Russell Wortley MLC for their contributions to this report. All members have worked cooperatively on this report. Finally, I thank the Committee staff for their assistance.



Hon Steph Key MP
Presiding Member
24 September 2013

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The APY Lands suffer all the problems of remote Aboriginal Communities that are all too familiar to Australians; lack of opportunities for young people, erosion of traditional knowledge, high cost of living, poor infrastructure and environmental degradation associated with the introduction of feral pests and the loss of traditional fire management techniques. The Alinytjara Wilurara Natural Resources Management Board and the APY Management Authority work closely together to manage, as best they can, an area the size of an average European country¹. This is no easy task given the enormity of social and physical issues they have to deal with.

Governments have attempted in the past to address these problems and the take-home message seems to be that solutions are found from within the communities rather than being imposed from outside. However, it is clear that assistance is needed from the State Government to ‘kick start’ projects and programs. There have been successes and failures, and the important thing is to focus on the successes and learn from both. A major success has been the Warru Recovery Project which has involved community members in the reintroduction of endangered fauna through a team effort with experts from a range of backgrounds. This project also has a strong focus on story-telling and passing down knowledge.

The Committee heard a lot about pastoralism as the solution to many problems faced by the APY communities. Members were understandably cautious about this because of the many reported failures in the past. There are enormous obstacles to pastoral projects succeeding, not least of which is a lack of a market for the animals themselves. For this reason the Committee recommended that a Joint Select Parliamentary Committee be established to further research the topic.

Mining and water related issues were once again major issues raised in the Committee’s fact-finding visit to the northern part of the AW NRM Region. Members heard that there is potential for mining to be a major industry in the APY Land and there is plenty of water available deep down for mineral processing as well as extraction for other purposes, though desalination would be required. Plans are already afoot to improve management of underground water in the AW NRM Region, and the Committee supports full prescription as the best way to do this. Mining may provide major employment opportunities for community members as well as improved roads which could be used to provide access for pastoralism and community development.

Buffel grass is clearly the most pressing issue in the area of invasive species. The Committee has already held a major inquiry into this area and made a range of recommendations. It addressed similar issues in its report on the fact-finding visit it made to the South Australian Arid Lands NRM Region in November 2010. Members were satisfied that the Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation, Hon Ian Hunter MLC, is addressing the challenge faced by this pest plant, but recommended that biological control similar to that used to eradicate Salvation Jane, be explored. This will require Commonwealth support by declaring the pest a Weed of National Significance in order to attract the funding required to find that solution and to stop the weed being promoted as a pasture plant in Queensland.

¹ In fact, the AW NRM Region is larger than the United Kingdom which has a land area of 243,610 square kilometres (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom). The area of the AW NRM Region is more than 250,000 square kilometres (see section 1.1).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Natural Resources Committee recommends that:

1. The Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation provide funding to the AW NRM Board to continue its camel fencing projects and to train local community members in the construction and maintenance of camel proof fencing and related infrastructure (pages 8 and 35);
2. The Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation prescribe underground water resources in the AW NRM Region and support an amendment of the Regional NRM Plan to provide for Water Affecting Activity Permits for waterholes, water courses and other surface water assets in the Region (pages 14 and 34);
3. Parliament establish a Joint House Select Committee to investigate proposals for pastoral projects in the APY Lands with a view to developing a sustainably managed industry and local employment plus improved management of large feral animals (pages 25 and 34);
4. The Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation declare Buffel grass for control under the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004* as a first step towards seeking support for its listing as a Weed of National Significance, Commonwealth funding support to find a biological agent or agents to eradicate the weed and ending promotion of the weed as a pasture plant in Australia (pages 19, 32 and 38).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PRESIDING MEMBER’S FOREWORD	ii
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	iv
RECOMMENDATIONS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
TABLE OF FIGURES	ix
THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE.....	x
FUNCTIONS OF THE COMMITTEE.....	xi
STATUTORY OBLIGATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE.....	xii
REFERRAL PROCESS.....	xiii
ITINERARY	1
1 Introduction.....	2
1.1 Location	2
1.2 Reason for visit	3
2 Board projects and programs	4
2.1 Overview of region, programs and projects.....	4
2.1.1 Overview of region and Board.....	4
2.1.2 Policies	5
2.1.3 Programs and projects being developed under the above priorities	5
2.1.4 APY Land Management Program	6
2.1.5 Working on Country Program.....	8
2.1.6 Enterprise approach to rounding up camels	8
2.1.7 Grazing program and carbon capture opportunity	9
2.1.8 Biodiversity corridor funding.....	9
2.1.9 Tri-State Fire Project.....	9
2.2 Warru (Black-footed Rock-wallaby) Recovery Project.....	10
2.2.1 Decline of Warru.....	10
2.2.2 Staff employed in Warru recovery	11
2.2.3 Warru Recovery Team	11
2.2.4 Monarto Zoo surrogate mother connection	12
2.2.5 Warru colony exclosure	12
2.3 Water resources and mining potential.....	13
2.3.1 Introduction	13
2.3.2 Water resources	13
2.3.3 Nickel mining potential.....	15
2.4 Davies’ Bore Pastoral Project, Indulkana	15
2.4.1 Proposed pastoral projects near Indulkana.....	15

2.4.2	Buffel grass	18
3	APY Executive Board meeting	20
3.1	Introduction	20
3.2	Requests for community infrastructure assistance	21
3.2.1	Improved security in townships	21
3.2.2	Rainwater tanks along roads	21
3.3	Pastoral projects	23
3.3.1	Large feral animal problem	23
3.3.2	Existing pastoralism ventures in the APY Lands	23
3.3.3	Donkeys sold to Queensland	23
3.3.4	Need for seed capital	23
3.3.5	Need for export market and strategically located abattoir	24
3.3.6	Transportation challenge	25
3.3.7	Providing a future for young people on the Lands	25
4	Joint Management of Breakaways Conservation Park	26
4.1	Introduction	26
4.2	Native Title determination	26
4.3	Co-management agreements	26
4.3.1	Breakaways Co-Management Board	27
4.3.2	Breakaways CP	27
4.3.3	Tallaringa CP	28
4.3.4	Visitation risk	28
4.3.5	Aboriginal employment	29
4.3.6	Management Plan	29
4.3.7	Coober Pedy Council responsibility for management and maintenance of park	29
4.3.8	Relationship between Coober Pedy Council and SA Arid Lands NRM Board	30
5	Other Coober Pedy Council issues	31
5.1	Issues with ‘transient’ people and alcohol related problems	31
5.2	Emergency accommodation in Coober Pedy	31
5.3	Buffel grass and other invasive pests	31
5.4	Desalination plant	33
5.5	Rubbish dump	33
5.6	Census	33
6	Conclusions	34
6.1	Self sufficiency	34
6.2	Water management	34
6.3	Camel management	34
6.4	Transport	35
6.5	Requests for State Government assistance to provide community infrastructure and services	35

6.6	Buffel grass	36
7	References.....	39
8	Abbreviations.....	40

TABLE OF FIGURES

<i>Figure 1: Alinytjara Wilurara Natural Resources Management Region and sub-regions (Alinytjara Wilurara NRM Board 2011, p44)</i>	2
<i>Figure 2: Bush camp at Officer Creek, Umuwa, Wednesday 8th May 2013</i>	3
<i>Figure 3: Receiving evidence from AW NRM Board and APY Management staff</i>	4
<i>Figure 4: A Senior Aboriginal Woman leads women staff and Committee Members in a traditional dance at Umuwa, Wednesday 8th April 2013</i>	6
<i>Figure 5: Location of IPAs and proposed grazing area - work done in partnership between APY and AW NRM Board (Ward 2013b)</i>	7
<i>Figure 6: Warru Rangers demonstrate the radio tracking system used to locate Warru at New Well, Tomkinson Ranges, during the Committee visit</i>	10
<i>Figure 7: Rocky hills at New Well, Musgrave Ranges, one of two remaining wild populations of Warru.</i>	11
<i>Figure 8: Warru at Simpsons Gap near Alice Springs, 11th May 2013</i>	12
<i>Figure 9: Warru colony exclosure, as seen by the Committee during its visit to Warru Pintji on 8th May 2013</i>	13
<i>Figure 10: Diagram showing hydro-geological characteristics of APY Lands</i>	14
<i>Figure 11: Davies' Bore – the windmill, water storage tank and timber fencing which will need to be replaced.</i>	16
<i>Figure 12: Metal fencing at Davies' Bore – the holding yards would not need to be replaced</i>	17
<i>Figure 13: Photograph taken 8th May 2013 at the border of NT and APY Lands (in SA). The NT side (left) is grazed by cattle whereas the SA side (right) is not.</i>	18
<i>Figure 14: Buffel grass after drying off (Western MacDonnell Ranges, NT) photographed July 2013</i>	19
<i>Figure 15: Meeting with APY Executive, Umuwa</i>	20
<i>Figure 16: Meeting with APY Executive, Umuwa</i>	21
<i>Figure 17: Location of requested rainwater tanks on the track from Watarru to Umpukulu</i>	22
<i>Figure 18: Map showing portion of APY Lands that was leased for pastoralism in the past (Ward 2013b)</i>	24
<i>Figure 19: The Breakaways Conservation Park, as viewed by Committee Members on Thursday 9th May 2013</i>	26
<i>Figure 20: Map of Maralinga Tjarutja Lands, showing Tallaringa CP and Mamungari CP.</i>	28
<i>Figure 21: Buffel grass management zones and distribution in South Australia (Biosecurity SA 2012, p5).</i>	32

THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

The Natural Resources Committee was established pursuant to the *Parliamentary Committees Act 1991* on 3 December 2003.

Its membership for the duration of this inquiry was:

The Hon Stephanie Key MP, Presiding Member
Mr Geoff Brock MP
Hon Robert Brokenshire MLC
Hon John Dawkins MLC
Mrs Robyn Geraghty MP
Mr Lee Odenwalder MP
Mr Don Pegler MP
Mr Dan van Holst Pellekaan MP
Hon Russell Wortley MLC

Executive Officer to the Committee:

Mr Patrick Dupont

Research Officer to the Committee:

Mr David Trebilcock

FUNCTIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

Pursuant to section 15L of the *Parliamentary Committees Act 1991*, the functions of the Committee are:

- (a) to take an interest in and keep under review—
 - (i) the protection, improvement and enhancement of the natural resources of the State; and
 - (ii) the extent to which it is possible to adopt an integrated approach to the use and management of the natural resources of the State that accords with principles of ecologically sustainable use, development and protection; and
 - (iii) the operation of any Act that is relevant to the use, protection, management or enhancement of the natural resources of the State; and
 - (iv) without limiting the operation of a preceding subparagraph—the extent to which the objects of the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004* are being achieved; and
 - (b) without limiting the operation of paragraph (a), with respect to the River Murray—
 - (i) to consider the extent to which the *Objectives for a Healthy River Murray* are being achieved under the *River Murray Act 2003*; and
 - (ii) to consider and report on each review of the *River Murray Act 2003* undertaken under section 11 of that Act by the Minister to whom the administration of that Act has been committed; and
 - (iii) to consider the interaction between the *River Murray Act 2003* and other Acts and, in particular, to consider the report in each annual report under that Act on the referral of matters under related operational Acts to the Minister under that Act; and
 - (iv) at the end of the second year of operation of the *River Murray Act 2003*, to inquire into and report on—
 - (A) the operation of subsection (5) of section 22 of that Act, insofar as it has applied with respect to any Plan Amendment Report under the *Development Act 1993* referred to the Governor under that subsection; and
 - (B) the operation of section 24(3) of the *Development Act 1993*; and
 - (c) to perform such other functions as are imposed on the Committee under this or any other Act or by resolution of both Houses.
- (2) In this section—
- natural resources* includes—
- (a) soil;
 - (b) water resources;
 - (c) geological features and landscapes;
 - (d) native vegetation, native animals and other native organisms;
 - (e) ecosystems.

STATUTORY OBLIBATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

The Natural Resources Committee has the statutory obligation to examine a Region's Natural Resource Management (NRM) plans that contains a levy proposal.

Sections 80 and 81 of the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004* clearly state the circumstances under which these plans are to be forwarded to the Committee.

80—Submission of plan to Minister

- (8) If a plan provides that the whole or part of the funds required for implementation of the plan should comprise an amount to be raised under Chapter 5 (in this section referred to as a *levy proposal*) the Minister must, within 7 days after adopting the plan, refer the plan to the Natural Resources Committee of Parliament.

Once the initial NRM plan (with levy proposal) has been considered by the Committee then in subsequent years only plans in which the levy proposal is increased by an amount greater than the CPI increase is referred to the Committee. Provisions of s81(10)(b)(ii) NRM Act as follows apply:

81—Review and amendment of plans

- (10) If—
- (b) an amendment proposes—
 - (i) that a levy under Chapter 5 Part 1 Division 1 or Division 2 imposed in one financial year be again imposed in the next financial year; and
 - (ii) that the amount to be raised or recovered by the levy in the next financial year will be an amount that exceeds the amount raised for the last financial year adjusted to take into account increases (if any) in the CPI during the 12 months ending on 30 September in that last financial year,
 the procedures set out in section 80(8) to (16) must be followed when the plan is amended.

The Committee must within 28 days of receipt of a NRM plan, consider the levy proposal in that plan, as required under s80(9) the NRM Act as follows:

80—Submission of plan to Minister

- (9) The Natural Resources Committee must, after receipt of a plan under subsection (8)—
- (a) resolve that it does not object to the levy proposal; or
 - (b) resolve to suggest amendments to the levy proposal; or
 - (c) resolve to object to the levy proposal.

Other provisions of the NRM Act detail the process to be followed should the Committee decide to proceed in accordance with s80(9)(b) or (c) but are not discussed further in this report.

REFERRAL PROCESS

Pursuant to section 16(1) of the Act, any matter that is relevant to the functions of the Committee may be referred to it in the following ways:

- (a) by resolution of the Committee's appointing House or Houses, or either of the Committee's appointing Houses;
- (b) by the Governor, or by notice published in the Gazette; or
- (c) of the Committee's own motion.

ITINERARY

Day One: Tuesday 7th May 2013	
Time	Activity
10.00am	Members depart Adelaide Airport, arrive Ayers Rock Airport 2.50pm. QF723
2.50pm	Members check in Outback Pioneer Hotel.
3.45pm – 4.45pm	Intro to AW Region by Matt Ward. Intro to APY by Doug Humann. (Meeting room booked for 1 hour for 20 people).
7.30pm	Dinner at Outback Pioneer Hotel and Lodge with AW NRM Board Members and representatives Uluru Kata Tjuta National Park.
	Overnight at Outback Pioneer Hotel.
Day Two: Wednesday 8th May 2013	
7.00am	Breakfast meeting at Outback Pioneer Hotel
8.00am	Depart Outback Pioneer Hotel, drive to New Well and Warru Pintji Estimate travel time 3.5 hours including morning tea break
11.30am	Meet Warru Recovery Team project staff and Indigenous Rangers and hear about the project. Meet Warru Minyma (women) and Rangers.
12.00pm	Lunch at Warru Pintji and Visit Warru Recovery Project (in-situ sites) and Warru Pintji (fence) Black footed Rock Wallabies.
2.00pm	Drive to Umuwa (1 hour)
3-5pm	Meet APY Executive Board and Discuss NRM issues on their land: Neil Collins, Paul Dalby there as back-up for Water issues.
6.00pm	BBQ Dinner. Bush camp nearby with Indigenous Ranger group and senior women at Officer Creek.
Day Three: Thursday 9th May 2013	
7.00am	Breakfast at campsite
8.00am	Drive to Indulkana (with breaks along the way) estimated travel time 2.5 hours
11:00 am	Meet Bruce MacPherson (AWNRM Community Engagement Manager) in Indulkana. Visit school.
11.45am	Lunch at Indulkana School
12:30pm	Travel to a Pastoral Site (stockyards close to Indulkana) to discuss Pastoral Management with Traditional Owner Alec Baker.
2.00pm	Afternoon tea break
2.30pm	Depart Pastoral Site
6.30pm	Arrive Coober Pedy and stay overnight
7.00pm	Dinner at Tom and Mary's booked for 15 persons
Day Four: Friday 10th May 2013	
8.00am	Breakfast meeting at Coober Pedy Mud Hut Hotel
9.30am	Meet with Coober Pedy Council CEO Phil Cameron and Antakirinja-Matu Yankunytjatjara (at Council Chambers) 8672 4600 regarding Joint-Management of Breakaways Conservation Park (emerging issue). AWNRM to arrange native title holder attendance.
11.40am	Fly Rex Airlines Coober Pedy – Adelaide, arriving 1.35pm.

1 Introduction

1.1 Location

The Alinytjara Wilurara Natural Resources Management (AW NRM) Region covers the north-west quarter of South Australia (in Pitjantjatjara, *alinytjara* means ‘north’ and *wilurara* means ‘west’). It is one of eight NRM regions formed in South Australia under the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004* (the NRM Act), and incorporates the remote Aboriginal Lands in the north-west and surrounding conservation areas. The AW NRM Region covers over a quarter of a million square kilometres, stretching from the Northern Territory and West Australian borders south to the Great Australian Bight. The regional boundary extends to the edge of the State Waters (three nautical miles off-shore) in the Great Australian Bight and includes the South Australian part of the Great Australian Bight Marine Park.

(Alinytjara Wilurara NRM Board 2011, p12)

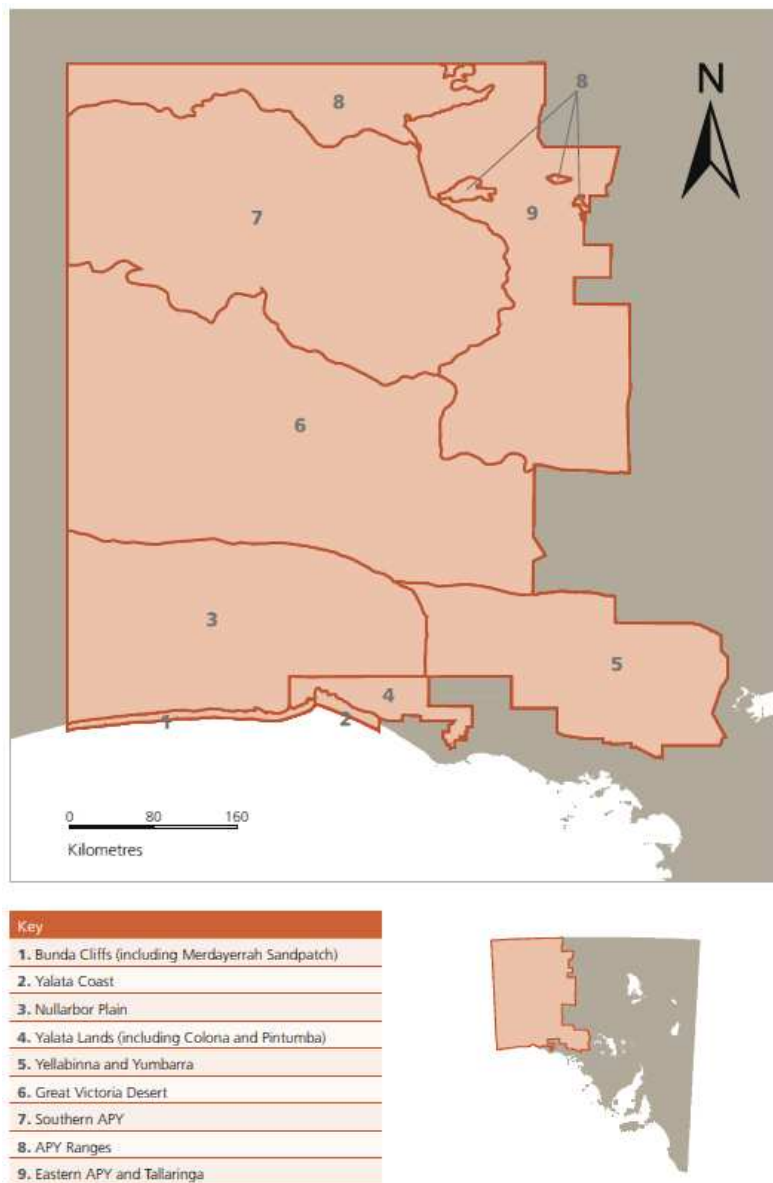


Figure 1: Alinytjara Wilurara Natural Resources Management Region and sub-regions (Alinytjara Wilurara NRM Board 2011, p44)

The Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Ranges sub-region is located in the northern part of the AW NRM Region and includes the Mann and Musgrave Ranges. The Musgrave Ranges are home to Mount Woodroffe, the highest point in South Australia at 1,435 metres above sea level.

(AW NRM Board 2011, p90)

The communities of Kalka, Amata, Ernabella (Pukatja) and Umuwa are located within the sub-region. The communities of Pipalatjara, Watarru, Mimili and Indulkana are located in the neighbouring sub-regions of Southern APY and Eastern APY Tallaringa.

1.2 Reason for visit

The Natural Resources Committee aims to visit at least two natural resources management regions each year to ensure it gets to all eight regions at least once within a four-year Parliamentary term. The Committee has statutory functions to consider natural resources management levies. In the case of the AW NRM Region, which has no such levies,² the Committee has an interest in ensuring that natural resources are managed efficiently in accordance with the NRM Act, the State NRM Plan and South Australia's Strategic Plan.

The Committee visited the South Australian Arid Lands NRM Region in November 2010 and the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges NRM Region in July 2011. During 2011, 2012 and 2013 it visited the South East, SA Murray-Darling Basin and Eyre Peninsula NRM regions to take evidence in relation to Committee inquiries³ and statutory functions⁴.

The Committee is planning a further fact-finding visit to the southern part of the Alinytjara Wilurara NRM Region in November 2013 including the Bunda Cliffs, Yalata Coast, Nullarbor Plain and Yalata Lands sub-regions. Members hope to visit the Kangaroo Island NRM Region and Northern and Yorke NRM Regions in 2014.



Figure 2: Bush camp at Officer Creek, Umuwa, Wednesday 8th May 2013

² Unless the Committee's recommendation regarding prescription of underground water is adopted

³ Murray-Darling Basin Plan and Eyre Peninsula Water Supply inquiries

⁴ Upper South East Dryland Salinity and Flood Management Act 2002 Annual Report

2 Board projects and programs

2.1 Overview of region, programs and projects

Committee Members met with AW NRM Board and APY Management staff on Tuesday 7th May 2013 between 3.45 and 4.45pm. Matthew Ward, Acting Regional Manager for the Board and Doug Humann, Manager, Land Management for the APY Lands spoke to Members about natural resources management projects and programs in their region.



Figure 3: Receiving evidence from AW NRM Board and APY Management staff

2.1.1 Overview of region and Board

The Committee heard that the AW NRM Board is the only NRM board or catchment management authority in Australia where voting members are Aboriginal. The AW NRM Board was established seven and a half years ago and is the youngest NRM Board in South Australia. In accordance with the NRM Integration Project (DENR 2010) responsibility for administration including staff employment devolved to the Department for Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR) in 2012.

The overarching vision under the Regional NRM Plan is ‘working with communities to care for the physical and cultural landscape in the face of a changing climate’. The NRM Plan, which was completed in September 2011, was the last to be adopted in South Australia. It will be due for review in 2016.

Members heard that the AW NRM region covers 28% of South Australia (over 250,000 square kilometres). There are five major landholdings within the region:

- APY Lands, managed under the APY Lands Rights Act;
- Maralinga Tjarutja, managed under the Maralinga Tjarutja Act;
- Yalata Indigenous Protected Area, owned by the Aboriginal Lands Trust (ALT) but managed by the Yalata Council under an indigenous lease;
- Mamungari Conservation Park, managed by the Mamungari Co-Management Board; and
- Public estates held as Native Title (or subject to co-management negotiations) in the Nullarbor, Yellabina, Yumberra and other regions in the South of the AW NRM Region.

The population of the region is approximately 3,000 but fluctuates as people transit in response to seasonal conditions and social factors. There are around fifteen communities within the APY Lands (as opposed to the NRM Region which extends further south and does not cross state and territory boundaries).

2.1.2 Policies

The Committee heard that during the twelve months prior to its visit the Board had prepared policies related to its three main themes: People, Country and Water. For each theme, the following key priorities were agreed by Board Members:

People theme – key priorities

- Aboriginal way and cultural perspective – making sure there is a cultural perspective in everything the Board does;
- MOUs with stakeholders – the Board is currently having discussion with stakeholders to develop these;
- Aboriginal employment social benefit; and
- Co-management of public lands.

Country Theme – key priorities

- Developing enterprise opportunities (particularly mining and pastoral);
- Managing pest species; and
- Managing fire.

Water theme – key priorities

- Healthy water used wisely and sustainably in the future;
- Acknowledging the cultural importance of water;
- Developing a water allocation plan;
- Protecting rockholes from damage by feral animals; and
- Protecting the coastal region including management of coastal conservation parks.

2.1.3 Programs and projects being developed under the above priorities

Cultural perspectives in the Board's work

Members heard that an important part of traditional owners' relationship with their land is expressed through 'song lines':

"We've got a large region – many landscape song lines along water lines in this region. So, there's a huge scope to maintain culture as well as landscape conservation. At the moment we certainly do bits and pieces of work at rockholes around the place here and there, but if we can connect this up somehow culturally I think it can be very powerful in addressing both cultural aspirations and land management projects as well. We have a large project called 'Dreamweaver' funded by the Australian Government which works on rockholes, but a lot of it is to do with encouraging women's involved with natural resource management. We've found that a lot of the women working in the region are quite often very powerful ones and the ones who can make a change."

(Ward 2013a)

Similarly, storytelling is employed in the Warru Recovery Project. A new 'dreaming' is being created using song and dance (see Figure 4). Members heard that if storytelling can be captured in a culturally appropriate way it is very powerful in making the project a major success from both an NRM and Cultural perspective.



Figure 4: A Senior Aboriginal Woman leads women staff and Committee Members in a traditional dance at Umuwa, Wednesday 8th April 2013

Co-management

The Committee heard that a women's trip was organised in Mamungari Conservation Park (see Figure 20) in 2012. The trip took place over four days and involved more than 50 women. The purpose was to re-connect with country and discuss NRM issues. Members heard that this trip was tangible in creating the momentum to get women involved in the management of the park: the Mamungari Co-Management Board has just re-nominated members to its Board and for the first time significant numbers of women have been nominated.

Water planning

The Board is proposing an amendment to the Regional NRM Plan to make provision for the issue of water-affecting activity permits to ensure water is extracted sustainably. The SA Arid Lands NRM Region is undertaking a similar amendment to its plan⁵.

2.1.4 APY Land Management Program

Members heard that approximately half of the approximately ten million hectares comprising the APY Lands is divided into Indigenous Protection Areas, or IPAs (see Figure 5). There are approximately 50 IPAs in Australia at present. Management of these areas is self-determined by the traditional owners in accordance with national policy. The largest IPA in Australia is the Southern Tanami, which was declared in 2012 (eight million hectares or one per cent of Australia).

In most cases each of the IPAs has a program coordinator whose job is to recruit rangers to work in their traditional country. The predominant outcome that the Commonwealth seeks is active work for community members. The APY Land Manager, Doug Humann, explained to Committee Members that the APY Land Management Team works closely with the APY Business Development Team, anthropologists and staff working on camels, mining and pastoralism related programs, but their ability to get projects going is limited by available funding:

⁵ The SA Arid Lands NRM Board has a prescribed wells area within its boundaries that relates to the use of water from the Great Artesian Basin. This is a higher order to water management which works in concert with water-affecting activity permits. It was unclear during the visit whether the AW NRM Board intended also to institute a water licensing regime or whether it intended to administer water resources under a water-affecting activity permit regime.

“The work that the Land Management Team is doing is driven by what Anangu want to try to achieve and also what the funding opportunities are, and the work that is done by Land Management is either funded by the Commonwealth Government’s Environment Department or by the South Australian Government. There is no other funding source at this stage for the work that we do...”

[However], as of 30th June, all the funding for land management on the Lands finishes, so all the Commonwealth programs come to an end. Right now, over the last nearly five months, we’ve been in the business of trying to extend all those programs into another cycle of three, four or five years.”

(Humann, 2013)

Doug Humann was pleased however to inform Members that the Warru Recovery Project (see section 2.2) will be extended for a further five years with an allocation of approximately \$4 million. This successful funding continuation was in recognition of the Project’s success in not only protecting the Warru but employing Anangu people. The South Australian government provided seed funding in 2007 for the project and has been chairing the team since 2007. The project is now in its seventh year.

The Committee heard that both the current Federal Government and Opposition have committed to continuing the IPA programs for a further three to four years (five programs in total). The other Commonwealth program of importance to Aboriginal People is the Working on Country Program.

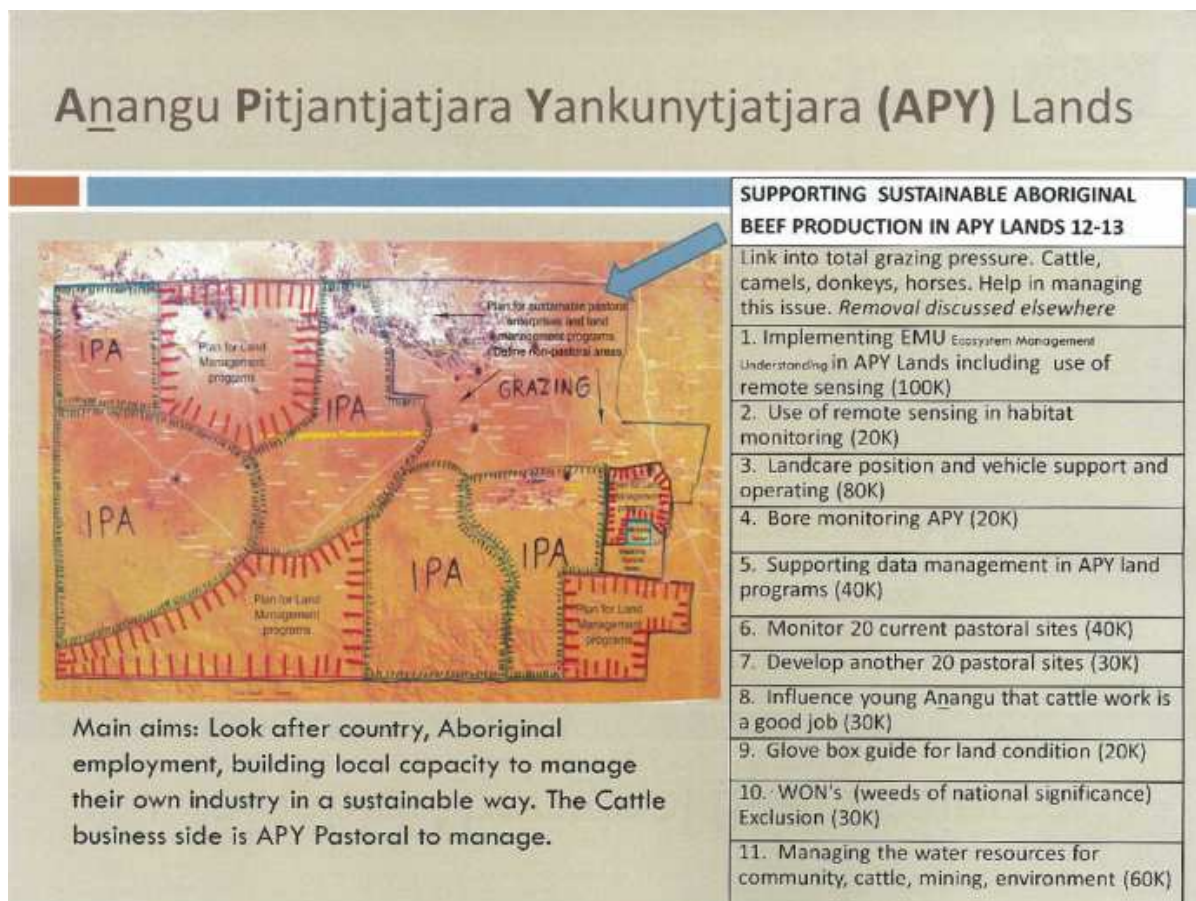


Figure 5: Location of IPAs and proposed grazing area - work done in partnership between APY and AW NRM Board (Ward 2013b)

2.1.5 Working on Country Program

Regional Ranger Project

Two projects are being funded under the Working on Country Program: the Warru Recovery Project and the Regional Ranger Project. The Warru Recovery Project is discussed in section 2.2. The Regional Ranger Project involves the employment of Traditional Owners as parks and wildlife rangers on their country.⁶

Members heard that IPA rangers undertake transect analyses to identify vegetation and fauna (by studying animal tracks). They work with young people and older people to encourage intergenerational interaction. A number of the ranger teams use *Sidetracker*, an electronic device that can store a large number of images and is user-friendly, to identify species.

Mallee Fowl surveys in Watarru IPA

Traditional Owners supported by a team of approximately fifteen people have been working in the Watarru IPA on Mallee Fowl surveys. Mallee Fowl mounds that had previously been identified a number of years ago were revisited over a period of seven to eight days (on foot as well as by air).

Predation of the mounds by cats and foxes is a major concern. The area where the mounds have been identified will be targeted for eradication of the predators. Firstly the abundance of foxes and cats will be determined using remote-sensitive cameras, and then baiting will be undertaken to attempt to reduce their numbers.

Dreamweaver Program

The Committee heard that an important part of the work of rangers is protecting waterholes. Animals commonly get into waterholes (or fall in) and can't get out again. In order to prevent this rangers have been installing grates over the rockholes. The waterholes are critical parts of Tjukurpa⁷ story-telling and their deterioration adversely affects people's well-being. There are many different types of feral-proof fencing being trialled.

One particular project has involved constructing a 2.3 kilometre camel and horse proof fence around a spring just west of Amata, with funding provided by the Commonwealth. The spring is a very important cultural site that was devastated in December 2012 when camels and horses coming through from the west congregated and died in large numbers. The Committee heard that the fence is camel and horse proof but allows native animals to access the spring. The work was supervised by a contractor from the Northern Territory with Anangu People providing the labour; older people working together with younger people telling the stories of the country.

There are many other waterholes requiring similar attention. Members heard there are still carcasses requiring disposal and that the person providing the training had since moved back to the Northern Territory.

Recommendation 1:

That the Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation provide funding to the AW NRM Board to continue its camel fencing projects and to train local community members in the construction and maintenance of camel proof fencing and related infrastructure.

2.1.6 Enterprise approach to rounding up camels

Members heard that a 'multi-faceted' approach is being sought as the best management approach to camel control. This will enable people to get income from camel harvesting as well as aerial shooting (because harvesting and transporting to market will not be sufficient to reduce the huge numbers of

⁶ See: <http://www.environment.gov.au/indigenous/workingoncountry/projects/sa/index.html#oneb>

⁷ See <http://www.environment.gov.au/parks/uluru/culture/culture/>

animals). The Commonwealth Government has funded an aerial shooting program that employs people licensed to shoot camels and leave the carcasses, but this cannot operate within the APY Lands due to an APY Executive veto; the Executive prefers to see the carcasses benefit the community in some way.

The Committee heard that a number of businesses have started on the APY Lands to remove camels. Anangu People earned \$250,000 over the twelve-month period prior to its visit from these enterprises. Unfortunately the businesses relied on the employment of a particular contractor who is no longer working on the Lands.

2.1.7 Grazing program and carbon capture opportunity

Doug Humann further explained that Pastoralism is not just about managing cattle, but also sustainable management of the land. In particular, there is an opportunity to take advantage of carbon capture as a way of generating income by the removal of feral animals:

“The opportunity is around carbon and the opportunity that we might benefit from carbon should we get appropriate methodologies that allow us to build carbon credits. It may be around fire. It may be around re-vegetation. It may be around removing camels [by] removing the methane. There are methodologies being considered with all of those. Regrettably none of them have been successful, but a recent meeting which I had with Greg Hunt last week suggests that an incoming Liberal Government would be looking very favourably at trying to develop those methodologies. I’m hopeful that under any government, Labor or Liberal, in the future that we would be looking at opportunities to look at a range of ways that carbon could be an income source for Aboriginal people.”

(Humann 2013)

Members heard that the AW NRM Board had been successful in gaining Commonwealth funding to run information sessions with Anangu People to find out what they would like to take advantage of this opportunity.

2.1.8 Biodiversity corridor funding

The Committee heard that in the past Caring for Our Country and the Biodiversity Fund were the main sources of funding for Board programs from the Commonwealth, but these programs have been replaced with a new funding regime associated with building biodiversity corridors. The Federal Government put out a prospectus in December 2012 seeking submissions for funding under its Biodiversity and Natural Resource Management programs for projects related to biodiversity corridors.

APY Land Management together with the AW NRM Board has submitted expressions of interest for six projects under this new program. If it is successful in its applications it will be able to extend the type of work that it does in its IPAs across the rest of the Lands to the east not currently covered by an IPA but within the target area of the Central Australian Corridor. That will mean it can continue its cultural/natural heritage programs, look at the range of threats and values and engage Anangu People in working on them.

2.1.9 Tri-State Fire Project

The Committee heard from Doug Humann that fire management is critically important for Aboriginal People:

“There is probably no single thing that’s more important in land management on the Lands than undertaking fire management...It has all the consequent benefits for nature and culture that Anangu People seek. So, for example, in about August last year [2012] a fire started...in a really important Tjukurpa area, a very important storyline. People were very upset. You won’t see it, but if you looked out the plane window as you came in [to Yulara] today you would see there was a lot of fire in the landscape. This fire went right through a swathe of country down here, and people were very concerned by the extent of the fire and by its universal heat and landscape destruction. So when you drove through it a

couple of months later there was barely a blade of anything, roads were covered with moving sand and all the values that Aboriginal People seek have gone from the country.”

(Humann 2013)

Members heard that the Tri-State Fire Project aims to return the country to a more traditional fire regime by supporting the right mix of plants and animals. Since traditional fire regimes have been lost, fires have tended to be extremely intense and widespread. Bushfires have become more of a problem since the spread of Buffel grass, which burns at a higher temperature than spinifex, which it largely replaced. The ‘Tri-State Fire Project’ name stems from the partnership that the AW NRM Board has with Western Australian and the Northern Territory in relation to fire management⁸.

IPA Rangers employed under the Regional Ranger Project also are involved in fire management, using a patch-burning technique to reduce the risk of wildfires. Members heard that due to the vastness of the APY Lands, aerial fire management is often required. This involves the use of helicopters to ignite fires when conditions are suitable and monitoring their progress.

2.2 Warru (Black-footed Rock-wallaby) Recovery Project

Committee Members met with AW NRM Board staff at New Well and Warru Pintji on Wednesday 8th May 2013 between 11.30am and 2pm. Aboriginal Rangers employed under the Working on Country Program demonstrated the use of a radio tracking system to locate Warru that had been tagged before being released (see Figure 6) and Warru Recovery Officers Rachel Barr and Simon Booth spoke about the breeding program.



Figure 6: Warru Rangers demonstrate the radio tracking system used to locate Warru at New Well, Tomkinson Ranges, during the Committee visit

2.2.1 Decline of Warru

Members heard that Warru once lived all over the rocky hills of Central and Western Australia, however due to predation and changes in fire regimes, their numbers have dramatically declined. A

⁸ See: <http://www.clc.org.au/media-releases/article/a-first-for-cross-border-fire-management-and-a-win-for-biodiversity>

small colony is located in the east of the APY Lands in the Musgrave Ranges near Pukatja (Ernabella) and another is located in the west in the Tomkinson Ranges near Pipalatjara and Kalka communities.

Since the first biological survey of Warru on the APY Lands in 1985, Anangu People have shared their knowledge of this species with scientists. Ongoing biological surveys on the APY Lands involving Anangu revealed a rapid decline in Warru populations and, since 1999, Anangu rangers employed by APY Land Management have worked alongside scientists to breed young animals and reintroduce them to their traditional habitats.

2.2.2 Staff employed in Warru recovery

The Committee was informed that APY Land Management has two project officers, ten permanent and several casual rangers employed on the Warru Recovery Project. One team of Warru Rangers monitors the Tomkinson Ranges Colony. Another team monitors the Musgrave Ranges Colony and the captive bred Warru population. All Warru Rangers are trained in the use of radio tracking equipment and have been monitoring in-situ Warru populations on the APY Lands for the past four years.

To date, Warru recovery has involved trapping Warru to conduct health checks, using radio collars to monitor survival rates, conducting Warru scat surveys, patch-burning, tracking, and predator baiting in existing habitats. Warru Rangers have also participated in training workshops at Monarto Zoo, contributed to university research, and presented at the 2012 Australian Mammalian Society Conference and the 2010 and 2012 Ecological Society of Australia Conferences.

2.2.3 Warru Recovery Team

Members heard that in 2007 a steering committee known as the Warru Recovery Team was formed to assist in the management of Warru recovery. Today the Team consists of ecologists from DEWNR (AW Region), Australian Government Working on Country (WOC), Conservation Ark (Zoos South Australia), the University of Adelaide, Ecological Horizons, APY Land Management and the broader Anangu community. The Warru Recovery Team holds regular teleconference and on-site meetings to apply a collaborative decision making approach to the project and has been chaired by DEWNR since its inception.



Figure 7: Rocky hills at New Well, Musgrave Ranges, one of two remaining wild populations of Warru.

2.2.4 Monarto Zoo surrogate mother connection

The Committee heard that between 2007 and 2009, twenty two Warru joeys were taken to Monarto Zoo to establish a captive Warru population. The Warru joeys were cross-fostered with captive yellow-footed rock wallabies and have since matured and had joeys of their own. Since the first translocation in 2007, Anangu People have worked with APY Land Management and the rest of the Warru Recovery Team to select a site suitable for the construction of a predator enclosure that would allow the captive bred Warru to ‘harden off’ and adapt to their natural environment.

The Warru Recovery Officers were hopeful that eventually the Warru could be released at twenty five sites across the APY Lands, which they have identified as suitable for hardening off the Warru. The Team has combined traditional ecological knowledge of Anangu with contemporary scientific methods to assess potential sites and determine those most suitable.

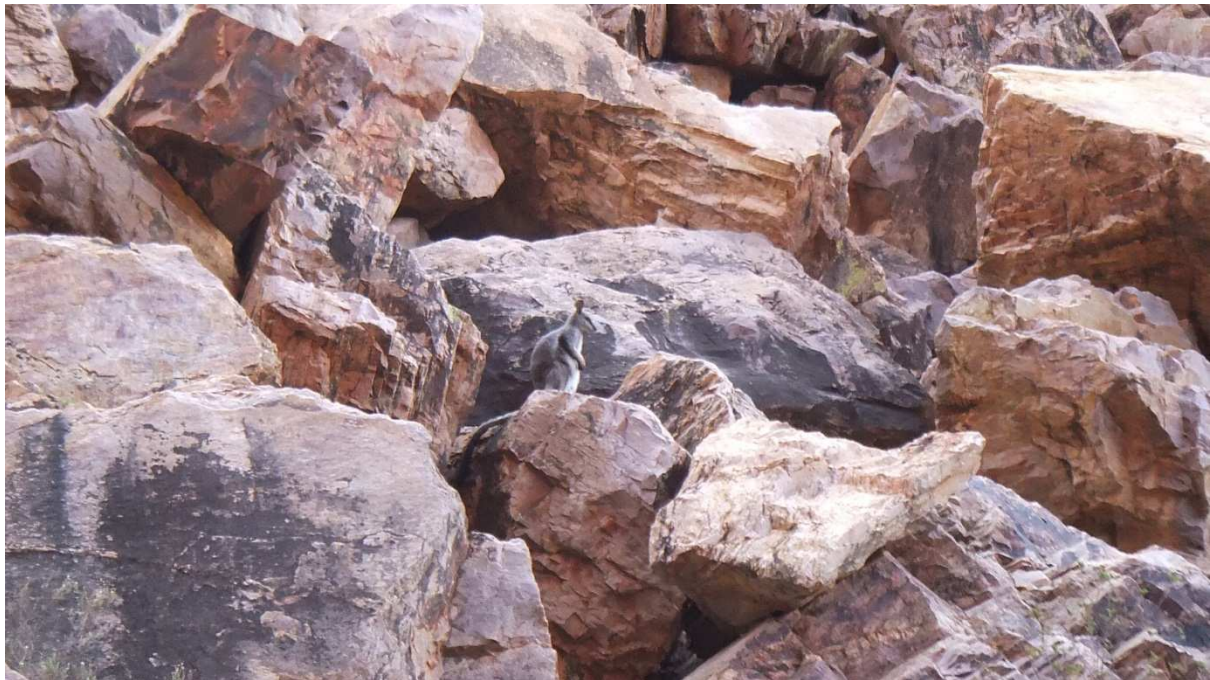


Figure 8: Warru at Simpsons Gap near Alice Springs, 11th May 2013

2.2.5 Warru colony enclosure

Members heard that in February 2010 Donald’s Well, approximately 35 kilometres from Pukatja and the Musgrave Ranges Warru colony, was selected as the preferred site for the construction of an enclosure to be built and managed by the Warru Rangers. The predator enclosure, often referred to as ‘Warru Pintji’ by Anangu People, was modelled on the Arid Recovery⁹ fence at Roxby Downs, South Australia.

Construction of the fence began in June 2010 and involved fourteen Anangu community members who installed 4.359 kilometres of fencing (enclosing an area of one square kilometre). They were mentored by an experienced fencing contractor. Members were told that all Anangu People involved in the construction are now equipped with the skills to perform ongoing fence maintenance without supervision.

Since March 2011, sixteen Warru have been released into the “Warru Pintji” and their health is continuously monitored by the Warru Rangers.

⁹ See <http://www.aridrecovery.org.au/location>



Figure 9: Warru colony exclosure, as seen by the Committee during its visit to Warru Pintji on 8th May 2013

2.3 Water resources and mining potential

2.3.1 Introduction

Prior to the APY Executive meeting Committee Members met informally with Paul Dalby, a water education consultant employed by the AW NRM Board, to discuss water resources and mining potential. The Committee was briefed on the geology and hydro-geology of the region with a view to gaining an understanding of potential water resources that could support a robust mining industry.

2.3.2 Water resources

Palaeozoic-channels and the Officer Basin

Paul Dalby explained that during the Palaeozoic geological period (up to 545 million years ago) much of the AW NRM Region was covered by oceans. As a consequence the underground water held within what are known as ‘Palaeozoic-channels’. The watershed for the Officer Basin extends almost all the way south to the Great Australian Bight. The Officer Basin is a sequence of sandstones, siltstones and clay stone and is believed to be eleven to thirteen kilometres deep at its deepest point. It is likely to contain vast quantities of ancient water.

To the west, the Officer Basin extends out to Western Australia where it becomes the Gunbarrel Basin. North of the Musgrave Ranges is the Amadeus Basin. Umuwa is located on the Musgrave block of rocks which extends 150 kilometres to the Western Australian border, into the Northern Territory and to the east of the APY Lands where it joins with the Great Artesian Basin which cuts across the south east corner of the APY Lands. Rainfall can be very high during summer at Umuwa; 300 millimetres has been recorded over three days at Kampi Hapri in the middle of December. Paul Dalby advised that most of this water bypasses local aquifers, which lie within fractured rock, and runs through the Palaeozoic-channels down into the Officer Basin (see Figure 10).

The Committee heard there is tremendous potential for tapping into ancient water resources. However, due to the great age of the aquifers, such extraction would amount to ‘aquifer mining’ because the current rate at which they are being recharged is only a fraction of the rate that occurred when they were formed.

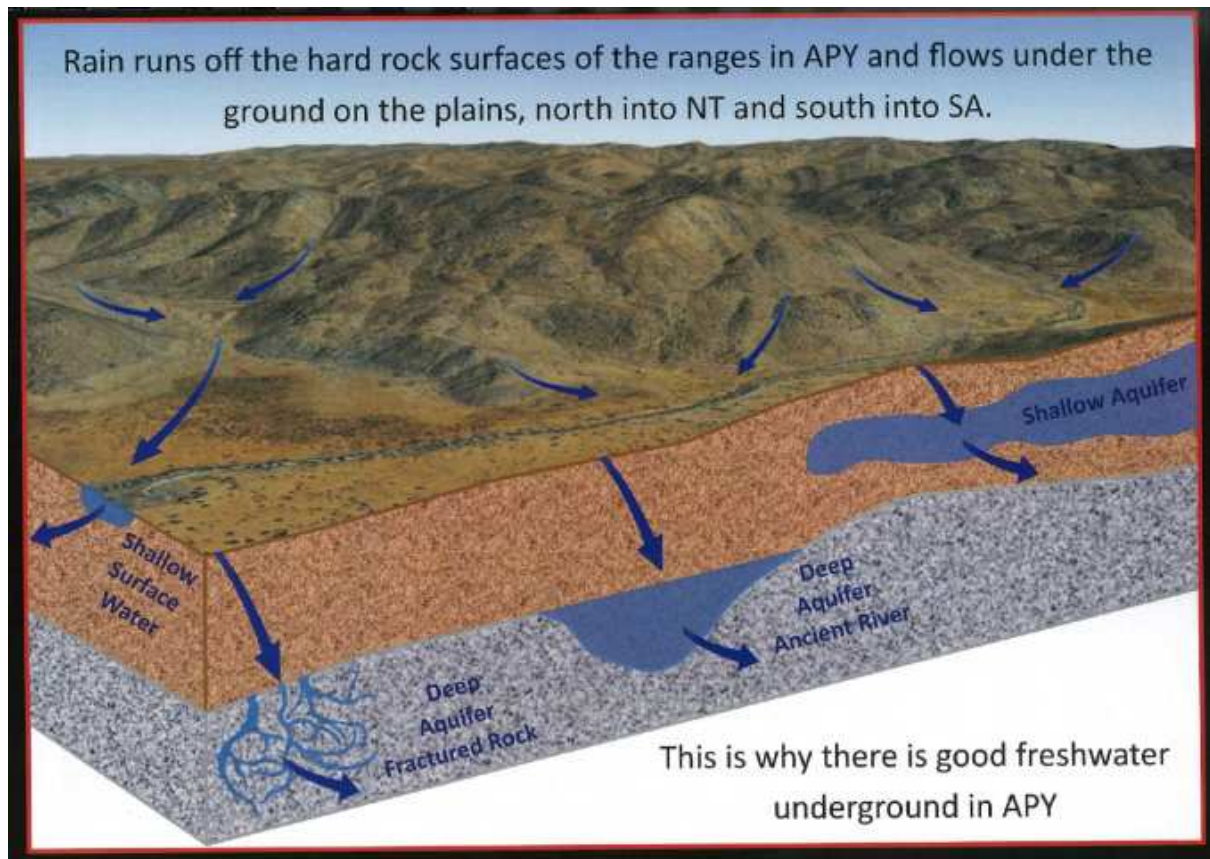


Figure 10: Diagram showing hydro-geological characteristics of APY Lands

Salinity

Paul Dalby explained that one of the problems with this water is that when it runs down into the channels it picks up salt on the way due to the ancient Cretaceous ocean that once existed. Consequently the water is too saline to be used for drinking or stock watering. However, with desalination it would be suitable for mineral processing.

Water allocation planning

The Committee heard that the AW NRM Board is researching the potential for accessing the Palaeozoic-channels by community bores, assisted by Anangu Health and an expert consultant. Very few of the existing bores intersect the Palaeozoic-channels with the exception of a channel near Pipalatjara that runs south and several near Kampi Hapri running in a south east direction. It appears that all these channels eventually join up as the Officer Creek which flows to Fregon and down to the 'delta' near Munyurai.

Committee Members heard that considerable research needs to be done to find out where the water is and the quantity and quality of the water for drinking and other purposes.

Recommendation 2:

That the Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation prescribe underground water resources in the AW NRM Region and support an amendment of the Regional NRM Plan to provide for Water Affecting Activity Permits for waterholes, water courses and other surface water assets in the Region.

2.3.3 *Nickel mining potential*

Paul Dalby was of the view that underground water offers tremendous economic opportunities for mining in the APY Lands. There is already one identified ore body; between 33 and 50 million tonnes of nickel.

Nickel discovery at Wingallina, Western Australia

At Wingallina¹⁰, three kilometres over the Western Australian border, 167 million tonnes of nickel ore has recently been discovered. Members heard that from known outcrops of the nickel laterite the volume of ore has the potential to be double that volume i.e. up to half a billion tonnes. Mr Dalby estimated that for each tonne of ore one tonne (one million litres) of water would be needed for processing (not including water needed for workers, projected to be 400 people for the next 40 years).

The company licensed to extract the ore, Metals X¹¹, has a 30% joint venture with Samsung (a Korean company) to supply the technical processing plant – a high-pressure acid leaching process. This would involve boiling more than 10,000 tonnes of ore per day with concentrated sulphuric acid at 4,000 C to extract the nickel. Members heard that approximately 400,000 tonnes of sulphur per year would be needed to generate the sulphuric acid needed for ore extraction using this method. In addition, 800,000 tonnes of limestone (to be sourced from the APY Lands) would be needed to neutralise the acid once the extraction process had been completed. The process would take place in containment vessels in Western Australia. Mr Dalby flagged the cross-jurisdictional nature of the project as a potential problem given the largely State based legislation that would be triggered.

Potential benefits from new road construction

The Committee heard that nickel mining has the potential to make the APY Lands an economic centre for South Australia. Another potential major benefit to the region is a proposed road running from Pipalatjara Wilurana to the Stuart Highway, to be used as the access haul road carrying out concentrate and bringing in supplies. Connection to the railway is also a possibility.

2.4 **Davies' Bore Pastoral Project, Indulkana**

Committee Members visited Indulkana School on Thursday 9th May 2013 between 11.00 and 12.30pm after which they travelled to Davies' Bore, south of the town, where they visited the site of a proposal pastoral project, finishing at 2.30pm. Bruce MacPherson, Community Engagement Manager, AW NRM Board, spoke to Committee Members about the project together with several related projects in the Indulkana area. Matthew Ward, Acting Regional Manager for the AW NRM Board, accompanied Committee Members on the visit and provided expert advice on pastoral projects, Buffel grass and community development issues.

2.4.1 *Proposed pastoral projects near Indulkana*

Community capacity building

Members heard from Mr MacPherson that there is an on-going issue of community capacity in the APY Lands: a non-Aboriginal person usually manages projects and programs and local Aboriginal people are employed on a short term basis to do the on-the-ground work. Consequently Aboriginal people fail to develop the skills needed to manage their own affairs and are unable to take advantage of the money that would normally go through the community due to their employment. Money is spent by externally based employees in other places rather than being spent within the communities themselves.

The AW NRM Board is seeking to contract community members to work for the Board and where possible, on a case-by-case basis, support them in that process. This will enable wages to stay within the community. In theory, the communities will eventually become more capable of doing work

¹⁰ See: <http://www.metalsx.com.au/nickel/>

¹¹ See: <http://www.metalsx.com.au>

themselves. Local communities will be engaged by the Board to work on specific projects within the area (e.g. Buffel grass control, managing water resources) with a high level of confidence. At the time of the Committee's visit the Board was anticipating possible changes to the CDEP (Community Development Employment Projects) program after 1st July 2013. These changes were understood to include the provision of monetary incentives for people to work more hours than they presently do under the CDEP; Members heard that unemployed people are currently required to work two days per week and are only paid for this time, but work is not always supervised or enforced.

Policeman's Soak Project

Members heard that when Bruce MacPherson started working with the AW NRM Board, State NRM Project funding had already been granted for a project involving people 'working on country', but a location had not been selected. He met with the School Chairperson, School Principal, Indulkana School Youth Worker and senior members of the local community to further define the project. They said they would like to do something at Policeman's Soak, about 45 minutes out of the Indulkana. This was a waterhole that had been impacted by camels and needed to be protected with camel-proof fencing.

Further funding was procured via the Dreamweaver Program (see section 2.1.5) to undertake conservation of surface water ecosystems such as rockholes; mixing culture with science. The Committee heard that in August 2013 the project was due to commence with a women's camps held at several sites that senior women have identified as needing attention.

Indulkana horse problem

The Davies' Bore Pastoralism Project, like the Policeman's Soak Project, is being funded by the AW NRM Board via the Dreamweaver Program. In most other communities in the APY over-population by camels is an issue, but at Indulkana feral horses is the main problem. Members heard that Indulkana is a high biodiversity area and the removal of the horses would benefit both the environment and the community because of the potential economic benefit. The key to controlling the horses is controlling water sources.



Figure 11: Davies' Bore – the windmill, water storage tank and timber fencing which will need to be replaced.

Bruce MacPherson explained that Davies' Bore was chosen by Indulkana community members as the most logical place to corral wild horses because the existing yards are in relatively good condition and

the location is well away from the town but close to the Stewart Highway and Adelaide to Darwin rail line. The Board estimates that for about \$30,000 the site could be functional again.

Granite Downs Station and EMU

Members heard that Davies' Bore was originally part of Granite Downs Station (80 km distant) when it was a working station. The Davies' Bore Pastoralism project sits well with the EMU (Environmental Management Understanding) Project being undertaken at the station, which has been handed back to the Traditional Owners. Through the EMU Project the Board is talking to the Traditional Owners about their longer term aspirations for Granite Downs.

The Committee heard that if a serious pastoralism venture is to be pursued the boundary fencing on the station will need to be replaced. The Davies' Bore project is a short-term proposal to get good quality water in a place where horses or even camels could be held and possibly shipped out and controlled. Initially the aim is to control the water to get the horses away from the town. What evolves out of that is not so well defined at this point in time.



Figure 12: Metal fencing at Davies' Bore – the holding yards would not need to be replaced

Is there a market for horse meat?

Members questioned whether it might not be better to graze cattle rather than horses given that there is a traditional market for beef, notwithstanding the recent setbacks to the live cattle trade due to animal welfare concerns. In response to this question they heard that mustering camels and horses is more attractive to the young men in the communities than cattle because it requires much more skill.

Matthew Ward advised that a further issue that the Board needs to consider is consistency and commitment. A cattle based enterprise would require constant day to day care at a higher level than required for camels and horses which essentially just look after themselves and simply require rounding up and trucking out. Watering points are required for cattle, they have to be tagged and treated for diseases, and they cannot be simply left to roam the landscape – properties would need to be fenced and maintained to ensure the animals are not lost.

The Committee also heard that Aboriginal communities do not just want to sell horses for slaughter. In many cases their intention is that some (if not all) would be kept for riding or as pets. There is a strong sense of ownership of the animals and they are loath to give them up for slaughter. Therefore at

the outset the strategy the Board has adopted is to look at options with regard to the pastoralism project. The importance of this project is not so much a money making exercise as an opportunity to enable young men to learn new skills and be engaged in meaningful activity. Any economic benefit from the sale of animals from the enterprise would be an added benefit.

2.4.2 Buffel grass

Members heard that the EMU Project is attempting to reinvigorate pastoral enterprises involving Traditional Owners and that control of Buffel grass is seen as a potential outcome. The aim is to reactivate former pastoral leases that once provided gainful employment for Aboriginal stockmen, albeit on minimal wages. A small number of cattle are still being run on the former Granite Downs lease.

Members were curious as to whether it might be possible to control Buffel grass by reintroducing cattle, given the dramatic difference between the landscape on the Northern Territory side of the border (where cattle were present) compared to South Australian side (where cattle were absent - see Figure 13). Matthew Ward cautioned that cattle are not like wild camels or horses; they require constant rotation to ensure they have access to the pest plant at the right time.



Figure 13: Photograph taken 8th May 2013 at the border of NT and APY Lands (in SA). The NT side (left) is grazed by cattle whereas the SA side (right) is not.

The Committee observed that at the time of its visit the Buffel grass in the APY Lands was extremely healthy and green. However, Mr Ward cautioned that the appearance of lushness was due to recent heavy rains. At other times of the year the grass dries (see Figure 14) and becomes clumpy and less inviting; it is not as simple as just letting cattle onto the land to eat the grass.



Figure 14: Buffel grass after drying off (Western MacDonnell Ranges, NT) photographed July 2013

Recommendation 4:

That the Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation declare Buffel grass for control under the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004* as a first step towards seeking support for its listing as a Weed of National Significance, Commonwealth funding support to find a biological agent or agents to eradicate the weed and ending promotion of the weed as a pasture plant in Australia.

3 APY Executive Board meeting

3.1 Introduction

Committee Members met with APY Executive Members, APY Lands and AW NRM Board staff at Umuwa on Wednesday 8th May 2013 between 3pm and 5.30pm. The meeting with the Natural Resources Committee was permitted to take place despite the death of a senior Anangu man the week before.

APY Executive Members sought the assistance of the Committee in obtaining funding for a State Funeral for the deceased. The Presiding Member, Hon Steph Key, responded that she would raise this issue with the Premier upon her return to Adelaide on Friday 10th May 2013.

Committee comment:

The Presiding Member spoke to the Premier, Hon Jay Weatherill who was pleased to be able to assist with funding for the state funeral requested for a senior APY man, as requested by the APY Executive. The funeral was attended by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation, Hon Ian Hunter MLC.

The Presiding Member thanked the APY Executive for inviting the Committee to its meeting and acknowledged that the Committee was meeting on Aboriginal Land. She invited Executive Members to put forward issues they would like the Committee to raise in Parliament in its report. She also stated the Committee's hope that it would be possible to have an on-going relationship with APY Executive Members.



Figure 15: Meeting with APY Executive, Umuwa



Figure 16: Meeting with APY Executive, Umuwa

3.2 Requests for community infrastructure assistance

3.2.1 Improved security in townships

APY Executive Member Owen Burton explained that the generator used to provide electricity for street lighting in Amata has broken down. The Amata Community is seeking assistance to provide a new generator. There is small generator already that operates using batteries, but it is insufficient to deal with the problem. Better street lighting is needed to assist with security; the Committee heard that many young people wandering around the APY communities at night are the major cause of security related problems.

Owen Burton suggested that in addition to better lighting the employment of community constables to undertake night patrols would be a major benefit. They could round up the young people causing the problems and take them back to their homes. In addition, community constables could assist in stopping grog being brought into the communities illegally. He said that this issue has already been raised with the Government but to date there has been no response that has satisfied the community.

Committee Members heard that it is difficult for Aboriginal People in the APY Lands in South Australia to get assistance for improved infrastructure and security. In Western Australia and the Northern Territory such concerns qualify as core business and the communities' requests are responded to more quickly and in a more concrete way. Communities like Amata have only four police officers, and some of the smaller communities have even fewer.

In the Northern Territory the median life expectancy of Aboriginal people is 44 years. It is similar in the APY Lands. Young people comprise a significant proportion of the population of the communities; over 50% of community members are under the age of 15.

3.2.2 Rainwater tanks along roads

APY Executive Member Charlie Anytjipalya requested assistance for rainwater tanks between Watarru and Umpukulu (see Figure 17) to provide drinking water as well as for stock watering and wildlife (e.g. Mallee Fowl). It was unclear from the discussion whether bores were also sought to provide water for the tanks or whether it was intended that the tanks be filled by truck.

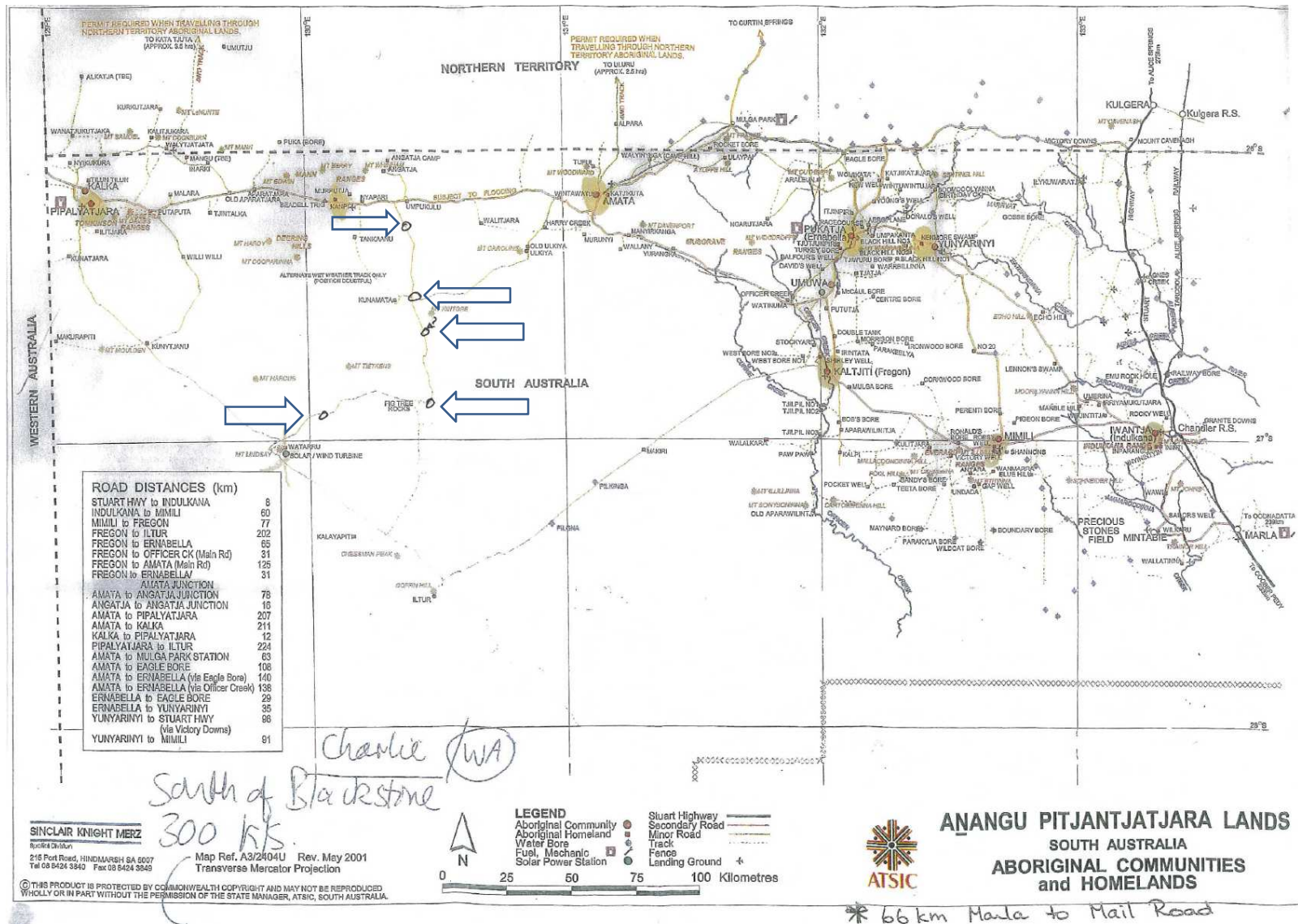


Figure 17: Location of requested rainwater tanks on the track from Warruru to Umpukulu

Committee comment:

The Presiding Member agreed to raise the issues of street lighting in APY communities, community constables and water tanks on the Watarru-Umpukulu Track with the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Hon Ian Hunter MLC.

3.3 Pastoral projects

3.3.1 *Large feral animal problem*

APY Executive Member Trevor Adamson emphasised the ongoing problem the APY community has with feral cattle, camels, horses and donkeys roaming the Lands. When the water runs out they get into places that have great significance for Aboriginal People and do a lot of damage. The Committee heard that the community gets some funding from the Department for Primary Industries and Resources (PIRSA) to remove the animals, but this is insufficient to deal with the problem. Some funding has been provided for camel-proof fencing and barriers over the rockholes (see section 2.1.5), but these measures compromise the integrity of the sites and do little to reduce the numbers of animals roaming about.

The APY community does not support shooting large feral animals and abandoning the carcasses (see section 2.1.6). Members heard that donkeys in particular have special significance to Christian community members and they prefer a pastoral approach rather than a culling approach to reducing animal numbers.

3.3.2 *Existing pastoralism ventures in the APY Lands*

The Committee heard from Andy Bois, APY Pastoral Manager, that a pastoralism industry has started to develop in the APY Lands led by Aboriginal men with few resources. However, at present APY pastoralism is only a fledgling industry and has little State Government input. Members were told that the capacity to develop such an industry does not always mean training or education: it can be as simple as providing the right tools for the job. One local man, Charlie Anytjipalya, was able to muster 96 camels in one night with a 'bull catcher' put together with some vehicle spare parts scrounged from a dump and some fuel borrowed from his neighbour. Several of these men working together have the capacity to muster up to 1,000 camels in a day, but they need the mustering vehicles, yards, trucking facilities and other logistic support to do the job.

Mr Bois advised that the APY Lands comprise one tenth of South Australia by area. Every year it costs \$100,000 per person to keep the people on the land, but people are not self-sufficient in terms of income and food. There was an attempt to build a garden, but this was not sustainable: nobody asked the people what they wanted and needed.

3.3.3 *Donkeys sold to Queensland*

Andy Bois stressed to Committee Members the need to 'think outside the square' when seeking solutions to feral animal problems. Donkeys have been found to have a major benefit in deterring dog attacks on sheep. Local APY men approached a wool buyer in Queensland with a proposal to buy and on-sell donkeys from the APY Lands. He subsequently purchased 130 donkeys and sold them at a profit. All of the male donkeys were castrated to ensure they did not subsequently breed and become a feral pest in Queensland. This project was so successful that in all a total of 500 donkeys have now been sent to that State and an order for a further 130 donkeys has recently been received. The Kidman family company has also been selling donkeys to Queensland graziers.

3.3.4 *Need for seed capital*

Andy Bois expressed the view that many of the young men in the community, many of whom are past offenders, could be provided with an outlet for their energies through pastoralism. Seed capital is

needed to develop grazing businesses to provide APY youth with the ability to earn an income and feed themselves and their families. Pastoralism companies existed in the past on the APY Lands; during the 1980s T&O Pastoral ran 80,000 cattle in the Lands (see Figure 18). People working for the company at the time claimed the APY was the ‘sleeping giant’ of pastoralism in Australia. It was known to have some of the best feed for cattle in the outback, requiring only secure water supplies, fencing and the ability to transport cattle to market. Members heard that the APY Lands are large enough to ensure that biodiversity is maintained and carbon-neutrality achieved through appropriate mechanisms.

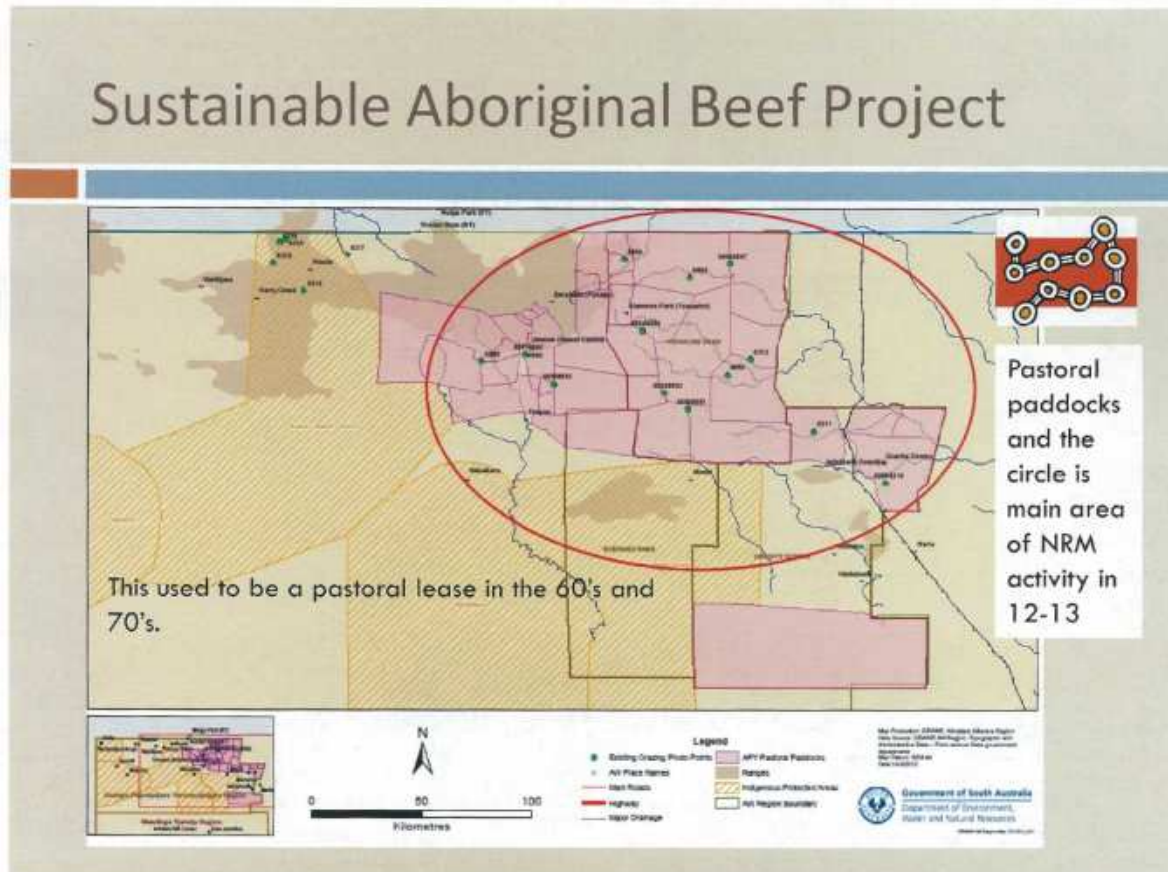


Figure 18: Map showing portion of APY Lands that was leased for pastoralism in the past (Ward 2013b)

3.3.5 Need for export market and strategically located abattoir

Richard Preece, APY General Manager, also spoke on the issue of pastoralism at the APY Executive meeting. He advised that the problem with pastoralism ventures in the past has been getting enough trucks to take the camels (and other animals) away and having enough abattoirs in the right locations (i.e. close enough) to process them¹².

Mr Preece estimated the total number of camels on the APY Lands to be somewhere between 25,000 and 75,000. He said that at present the local men can catch more camels than can be processed:

“It’s really the post-catching infrastructure that’s missing. Federal governments really need to be involved - you’ve got export, behaviour of the United States¹³ all sorts of stuff like that. What we really need is an export abattoir close enough so that the camels can be processed cheaply, we don’t have to spend ten thousand bucks on fifty four camels to get them to a market and so on. They’re the problems

¹² Camels in particular are a problem to transport because they cannot stand in trucks but need to kneel down. They need to be rested (i.e. let out of the truck into a holding pen) regularly when being transported.

¹³ Private individuals in the United States have funded significant campaigns against the culling of kangaroos for example.

people are confronting. There's also a tension between the damage the camels are doing to waterholes and other places, and the more camels there are the easier they are to catch and the more money you can make out of them. So there's that tension there all the time. People have different views in different places."

(Preece 2013)

Members heard there is only one abattoir in South Australia (at Peterborough) currently slaughtering camels. The manager of the Peterborough Abattoir is understood to have a contract with the Moroccan Army to supply camel meat and taking 200-300 camels per week at present. Mr Preece advised that the APY Lands had taken off about 5,000 camels in the year prior to the Committee's visit and had transported them to Rockhampton as well as Peterborough.

Mr Preece advised there is currently no market for brumbies but there is a project being considered at Indulkana (see section 2.5.1) involving the mustering of horses for sale to abattoirs. Members heard that there are many wild horses around the communities, but they are more difficult to muster than cattle or camels. Whilst there is a market for horses they do not pose as great a problem as camels and there is a desire by the communities to train them as stock horses in keeping with the tradition of Aboriginal stockmen employed on cattle stations during the last century.

3.3.6 Transportation challenge

Richard Preece estimated that it costs \$20,000 per truck to transport camels to the Stuart Highway from the Watarru Community (in the far west) and \$10,000 from the nearest community. Transportation is a major impediment to a sustainable industry. The option of taking animals out by train (as opposed to transporting them by truck along the Stuart Highway) is also too expensive. The problem is made worse by the fact that trucks with more than three trailers are not allowed (by regulation) to travel any further west of Umuwa. The cost of freight therefore multiplies. There is no assistance from the State Government to improve the road network to allow longer trucks¹⁴.

3.3.7 Providing a future for young people on the Lands

APY Executive Members Trevor Adamson and Murray George asked the Committee to look seriously at the pastoralism issue and do something about the camel problem. They were concerned that when the Committee has finished its business the issue will be forgotten. They emphasised the plight of their young people and need to support the next generation of people coming through on the Lands in taking on the knowledge of their elders and finding a sustainable source of income so that they can stay on their country:

"We've got a lot of young people that we help them in different ways, like young people with their family doing a bit of camel work, and they do a lot of those things through grandparents... APY is a body that's help and talk under the Pitjantjatjara Anangu through mainly older people. We still do the traditional things and I think through that, looking over the country, and caring for the country we want to see that through this, your natural resource area, should be able to support, because we haven't got any funding. At the moment we do it through continual helping and supporting and learning as we going for those young people taking it into. So, we want to see some way that you can be able to come up with something and support APY so it will be able to work.

(George 2013)

Recommendation 3:

That Parliament establish a Joint Select Committee to investigate a range of propositions for a pastoralism industry in the APY Lands with a view to founding a long term sustainable industry that provides for local employment at the same time as reducing numbers of large feral animals and their impact on the environment.

¹⁴ See comment above under Nickel Mining re possible new mining road from Pipalatjara Wilurana to the Stuart Highway. This may provide the road upgraded needed to allow triple road-trains.

4 Joint Management of Breakaways Conservation Park

4.1 Introduction

The Committee met with the Chief Executive of Coober Pedy Council, the Chief Executive of the Antakirinja Matu-Yankunytjatjara Aboriginal Corporation (AMYAC) and staff of AW NRM Board staff at Coober Pedy Council Chambers on Friday 10th May 2013 between 9.30 and 10.30am.



Figure 19: The Breakaways Conservation Park, as viewed by Committee Members on Thursday 9th May 2013

4.2 Native Title determination

Mr Ward explained that in 2011 the Federal Court made orders recognising title over the entirety of the AMYAC Native Title Claim. This means that AMYAC People are determined Native Title holders of land which includes The Breakaways and Tallaringa Conservation Parks. The consent delineates those areas of land within the claim where Native Title exists and those areas where it has been extinguished.

There are a number of agreements that occur over the land comprising the claim:

1. The Co-Management Agreement, including the requirement for a Board to manage The Breakaways CP with an advisory role over Tallaringa CP); and
2. The ILUA (including The Breakaways and Tallaringa).

The four parties to the Co-Management Agreement are:

- The Minister
- The Attorney General
- The Coober Pedy Council and
- The AMYAC People

4.3 Co-management agreements

Members heard that co-management of national parks in South Australia is undertaken pursuant to the National Parks and Wildlife (NPW) Act. Co-management agreements are made between the

Traditional Owners and the Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation. Under the Act the parks remain accessible to the public but are subject to co-management arrangements.

There are three types of co-management within South Australia:

1. The park remains Crown owned, with an advisory committee over the park (e.g. Ngaut Ngaut CP, Coongie Lakes CP, Gawler Ranges NP);
2. The park remains Crown owned with a co-management board having more powers than an advisory committee in relation to the park (e.g. Vulkathunha / Gammon Ranges NP, Witjira NP, Flinders Ranges NP);
3. The park is Aboriginal owned (i.e. by the Native Title holder(s)), with a co-management board (e.g. Mamungari or Unnamed CP and Breakaways CP).

Mr Ward explained that the Co-Management Board assumes management responsibility for the park and, when completed, the park management plan. The District Council of Coober Pedy assumes the role of a service provider. The Director of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) has no role or function in relation to the administration of the Board or operation or management of the park. The Breakaways Conservation Park is unique in that it is the only park in the State which combines co-management with a service delivery role.

4.3.1 Breakaways Co-Management Board

Matthew Ward informed Committee Members that the establishment of the Breakaways Co-Management Board had taken several years to be completed. He was recently nominated as the State Government representative on the Co-management Board together with Grant Pelton (Director Regional Coordination, DEWNR Partnerships and Stewardship Regional Coordination) as his deputy. The Parks and Planning division of DEWNR has been responsible for much of the background work together with Coober Pedy Council.

The Co-Management Board initially met in September-October 2012 to commence working towards full operation of the park. In February 2013 the members of the Co-management Board undertook Cultural Awareness Training with the Native Title holders for the area: the Antakirinja Matu-Yankunytjatjara Aboriginal Corporation (AMYAC).

The Coober Pedy District Council will provide executive and governance support to the Co-Management Board. It will provide a framework for the logistical support for the operation of park management as well as revenue collection. Many permits issued for the park are for filming (e.g. it was used in the Mad Max films). The agreement also includes some stipulations about employment and the Council will provide the service to engage those employees as well as enforcement of compliance with the NPW Act and Regulations (the State would usually be responsible for this).

Members heard that there will be four AMY nominees to the Board, two Council nominees and one DEWNR representative. The Chair will be an AMYAC nominee. The Deputy Chair will be nominated by the Minister. The Co-Management Board must meet at least twice per year but can meet more often if desired. It may also apply to other bodies beside the State for funding. It receives a nominal amount of funding through the Attorney General's Department for management of the park, but there is nothing stopping it from applying to other funding providers for funds to implement the park management plan.

4.3.2 Breakaways CP

The Breakaways Indigenous Lands Use Agreement (ILUA) is within the Tallaringa Native Title Claim. The boundaries of the Breakaways ILUA coincide with the boundaries of the Breakaways Conservation Park (CP). Compared to other conservation parks in South Australia Breakaways CP is very small, however the park is significant due to its iconic landscape features. It provides considerable opportunities for building on existing visitation and interpretation.

4.3.3 Tallaringa CP

Tallaringa Conservation Park sits on the border between the AW and SA Arid Lands NRM Boards. In accordance with the determination the Breakaways Co-management Board has an advisory responsibility for Tallaringa CP, but not a management responsibility. The Co-Management Board will form a sub-committee to advise the AW NRM Board and Director NPWS on the management of Tallaringa CP. The Board might for example make recommendations to the AW NRM Board, which currently has oversight of Tallaringa CP, but it won't have responsibility for direct management in the same way that it does for Breakaways CP.

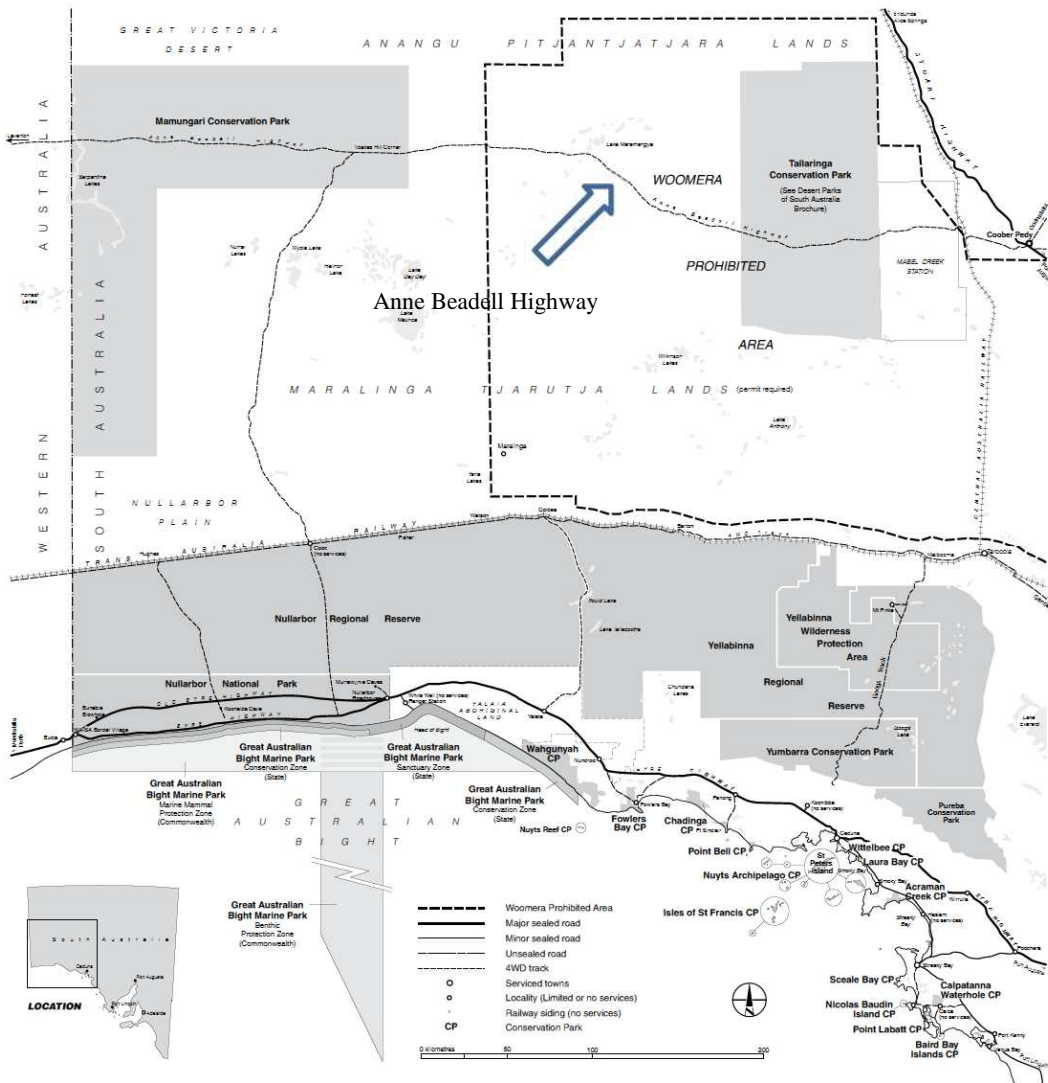


Figure 20: Map¹⁵ of Maralinga Tjarutja Lands, showing Tallaringa CP and Mamungari CP.

4.3.4 Visitation risk

The Committee heard that visitation risk is very high in the list of issues for The Breakaways. The risk relates not just to visitors but to the country due to its fragility, dryness and ongoing popularity for film shooting and four-wheel drive use. Members were told that vehicle tracks from the shooting of the Mad Max movies (30 years old) are still visible in the park. Unmanaged off-road driving could lead to a permanent impact. There continues to be strong interest in using the park for making films

¹⁵ See: www.environment.sa.gov.au/parks/Find_a_park/Browse_by_region/Eyre_Peninsula/Mamungari_Conservation_Park

and advertisements (a Qantas advertisement was being filmed during the week of the Committee visit).

4.3.5 *Aboriginal employment*

The Committee heard that there are very few employment opportunities for AMYAC people in natural resources management, though Traditional Owners are employed occasionally under the CDEP program and with Umoona Health. Members heard that The Breakaways CP and the Co-Management Board could provide a pivotal role in providing some foundational support for getting people involved in NRM. The Park itself is very small, and while there are some significant management issues, they could be addressed fairly easily. They also heard that co-management is not just about park management, but reconnecting indigenous people with their country and providing NRM training and capacity building.

Mr Cameron advised that the Co-management Agreement has some stipulations regarding employment. Staff will be employed by the Coober Pedy Council to work on the park and selection processes will be in accordance with the Local Government Act. There must be one AMYAC nominee on the selection panel along with the CEO of the Council or a delegate. At the time of the Committee visit the applications for the position of Executive Officer were being sought. The Executive Officer will have important governance and planning functions in relation to the park. They would be responsible for managing requests to access the Breakaways CP for filming (at present the Council CEO has had to deal with these requests).

Members heard that once that position had been filled another one or two positions would be advertised. It had not yet been decided whether one of these positions would be that of park ranger. Because the park is relatively small (approx. 1800 ha), having a dedicated officer to perform the role of ranger would not maximise employment opportunities for AMYAC people in the park. There are stipulations about rangers in the Co-Management Agreement, but Members heard that in the case of Mamungari CP this was a counterproductive measure because community members incorrectly assumed they could gain fulltime employment as park rangers when in fact there was insufficient funding available.

4.3.6 *Management Plan*

Matthew Ward explained that the Co-Management Agreement requires that a management plan be prepared for The Breakaways in collaboration with the Minister (i.e. DEWNR). The management plan will remain the Minister's management plan but won't be adopted without the agreement of the co-management board. It will be subject to the same consultation requirements as management plans for non-co-managed parks. Once adopted the management plan guides management actions in the park.

4.3.7 *Coober Pedy Council responsibility for management and maintenance of park*

The Breakaways CP is outside of the Council boundary. The Council is in the process of signing a funding agreement with the Minister to employ the staff required to manage the park. This will enable annual work plans to be prepared and actioned (e.g. signage, projects). The Council currently grades the access road to the park, but more work needs to be done to formalise its role. Ensuring vehicles remain on marked roads is likely to be one of the main management issues for the Council.

Council CEO, Phil Cameron, told Committee Members that he has set up a committee with representatives from mining companies and is attempting to persuade them to donate money to NRM projects or cultural related facilities or events rather than the traditional sporting clubs and events. Ideally these projects should have a local employment component, replacing jobs lost when mining projects are completed. Mr Cameron was hopeful that the Council could work with AMYAC once the co-management project gets underway to get some local employment outcomes, particularly given that tourism already comprises 25% of the local economy.

4.3.8 Relationship between Coober Pedy Council and SA Arid Lands NRM Board

The Breakaways CP is in the South Australian Arid Lands NRM Region. The Committee heard that the SA Arid Lands NRM Board has been advised of the progress of the development of the co-management negotiations and provided with minutes of Co-management Board meetings. After the declaration of the park has been made, the park becomes the responsibility of the Co-management Board, the Council and AMYAC.

Members heard that the Coober Pedy Council and South Australian Arid Lands NRM Board are not currently undertaking any joint projects or engaging in any formal discussions. At present there is one SA Arid Lands NRM Officer employed DEWNR based in Coober Pedy. This officer liaises with landholders and supports property management under the EMU program. However, very few projects funded by the Arid Lands NRM Board are undertaken within Coober Pedy itself. The Committee heard there is some disgruntlement in the town about this because NRM levies paid by townspeople go to Arid Lands NRM Board (not the AW NRM Board). The CEO of AMYAC agreed with this assessment and supported a more local focus for Arid Lands NRM Board activities.

Committee comment:

Members were concerned about the seeming poor relationship between the Coober Pedy Council and the SA Arid Lands NRM Board. In particular, Members were puzzled about the strong involvement of the AW NRM Board in the co-management of the Breakaways Conservation Park given that the park is within the Arid Lands NRM Region, not the AW NRM Region.

5 Other Coober Pedy Council issues

5.1 Issues with ‘transient’ people and alcohol related problems

The Committee heard that funding for employment of Aboriginal People at the Breakaways CP under the Co-Management Agreement will only be available for Traditional Owners whose Native Title claim has been accepted by the Court. AMYAC represents around 200 people but does not include ‘transient’ people (both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) whose number varies depending on seasonal factors. There are few other employment opportunities for Aboriginal People in and around the town apart.

The Council CEO advised that public drinking and its attendant violence is the biggest social problem the town faces. The Council has met with the State Member of Parliament Lyn Brewer and the Federal Member of Parliament (Rowan Ramsey) and has recently commenced a review of its Alcohol Management Plan. Members heard that the Coober Pedy Council CEO met with the Mayor of Ceduna to discuss public drinking. As is the case with Ceduna, tourism is believed to have suffered as a result of alcohol related violence. In addition, many violent incidents have occurred including the death of an Aboriginal man from Mimili. There is also general and ongoing violence against women; families were reported to be running out of food on Tuesdays (the day before employment benefits were paid).

The Coober Pedy liquor outlet was blamed for exacerbating the problem of alcoholism and public drinking. It was claimed that the outlet is selling one to two pallets of ‘fruity gordo’ per week. This is a form of cheap liquor consumed by ‘transients’ because it is cheap. The Coober Pedy Council CEO said that the Council hoped to be able to employ a specialist staff member to implement the outcomes of a review being undertaken by the Liquor and Gambling Commission of current liquor sales arrangements.

5.2 Emergency accommodation in Coober Pedy

Members heard that transitional (‘safe house’) accommodation is to be constructed in Coober Pedy, funded and managed by Housing SA. The issue was reported to have been confused with public drinking, which relates to alcohol and transient Aboriginal people coming into the town to access alcohol, not homelessness generally. The Council CEO stated that no intoxicated person would be allowed to stay in the transitional accommodation (i.e. it would be a dry zone).

There was nevertheless a concern that the proposed transitional accommodation could be a magnet for transient people. A similar facility in Ceduna was reportedly not a success, but a Port Augusta facility was apparently functioning very well and could be used as a model for the Coober Pedy facility. Mr Cameron was concerned that the project was in danger of being derailed by opposition from local residents because of concerns that it would exacerbate the alcohol problem.

Committee comment:

The Committee will follow up the issue of public drinking, alcoholism, transience and homelessness at a later date and through an appropriate channel¹⁶. Hon Russell Wortley will be visiting Coober Pedy at a later date with the Social Development Committee. Lyn Brewer and Rowan Ramsey will also take up the issue in their respective parliaments and seek a workable outcome.

5.3 Buffel grass and other invasive pests

Once again the Committee heard that Buffel grass a serious pest plant problem at Coober Pedy. Other pests include Caltrop, rabbits, feral cats and dogs, which the Council deals with in its area.

¹⁶ These issues are not specifically related to statutory functions of the Natural Resources Committee.

Buffel grass is also a problem west of the Stuart Highway where the Anne Beadell Highway leads off into Mamungari CP in the Maralinga Tjarutja Lands (see Figure 20). Members heard that the Adelaide-Alice Springs rail line is being used by the AW NRM Board as a ‘containment line’ for the eradication of Buffel grass (to the west) together with road that goes through Tarcoola (to the north)¹⁷ (see Figure 21).

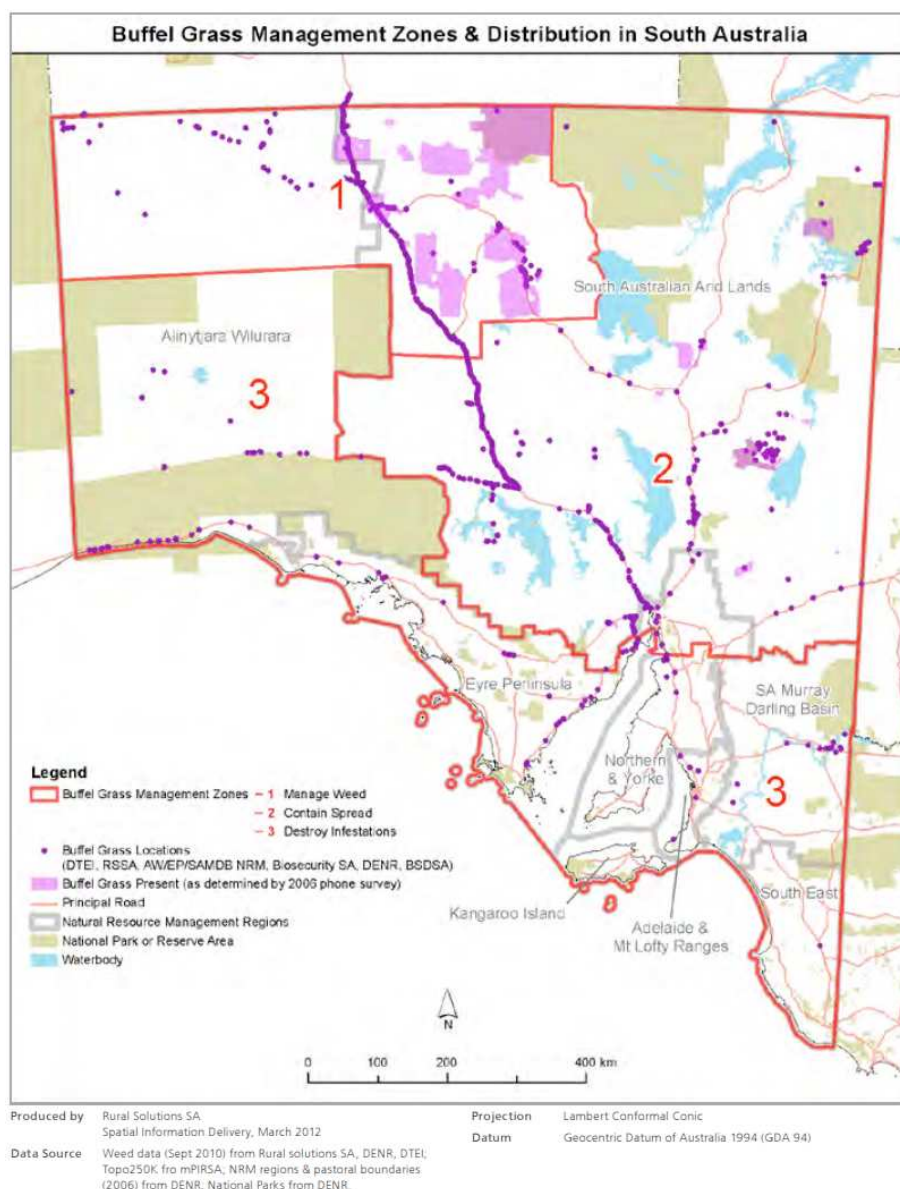


Figure 21: Buffel grass management zones and distribution in South Australia (Biosecurity SA 2012, p5).

Recommendation 4:

That the Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation declare Buffel grass for control under the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004* as a first step towards seeking support for its listing as a Weed of National Significance, Commonwealth funding support to find a biological agent or agents to eradicate the weed and ending promotion of the weed as a pasture plant in Australia.

¹⁷ The Buffel grass Strategic Plan states that the line of 29 degrees latitude (approx. Coober Pedy) is the containment line in a north-south direction (Biosecurity SA 2012, p6).

5.4 Desalination plant

The Committee inspected the Council's desalination and waste management plants during its fact-finding visit to the SA Arid Lands NRM Region in 2010. While both facilities are a major success there are some issues that need further work. The Council is currently seeking a licence from the EPA to allow it to continue to dispose of brine waste into a dry creek. It also needs to have a permit from the Arid Lands NRM Board. Members heard that the creek rarely flows due to insufficient rainfall. While the Council would be interested in finding alternative methods of disposing of the brine (e.g. in a lagoon) the problem it faces is that it has insufficient land of its own to accommodate such a facility, and the land is subject to Native Title. The Council CEO nevertheless confirmed that funding would be allocated in the next financial year to engage a consultant to look at options for brine disposal, but it will need financial assistance to carry out the public works that are likely to be required.

5.5 Rubbish dump

The Council CEO advised that the town rubbish dump is also outside of the Council's boundary and is currently managed under a licence from the EPA. Through the Native Title process, which should be completed in 2013, the rubbish dump has been identified as a heritage site. The Heritage Branch of DEWNR has granted the Council permission to continue to use the site until it has identified a suitable alternative location. The Council currently leases the land from the Crown through a dedication. It will approach the State Government for assistance in locating a new site for the dump and establishing it. The Council has permission to operate the current facility has another fifteen years life but does not have sufficient funding to construct a new waste management processing facility.

Mr Cameron stated that he did not believe Council should have to bear the cost of relocating the rubbish dump given that the existing one functions well. He will approach the State Government (Zero Waste) for assistance to construct the new facility, the estimated cost of which is \$1-2 million. Mr Cameron was also hopeful that the facility could be upgraded to a transfer station and salvage yard¹⁸ to reduce the volume to be disposed of. One suggestion was that local mining companies might be interested in a joint venture. Another suggestion was that the waste be transported south (possibly by rail).

5.6 Census

The Committee heard that there are approximately 1,900 rateable properties in the Council area. It is still the case that there are more post office boxes than residents¹⁹. The Coober Pedy CEO commented that the Census count is the 'Achilles heel' of the town: there is considerable antipathy to filling out Census forms by a proportion of the population. At the last Census the population was determined to be 1,700, but unofficially the population is estimated at between 2,500 and 3,000. Mr Cameron also believed that a considerable proportion of the population resides in the town for eight months of the year during the winter and departs in summer.

The problem for the Council is that due to its population being under-estimated it does not receive sufficient Commonwealth and State Government funding to meet the demands of the actual population.

¹⁸ The Council intends to undertake some study tours next year to look at facilities in other locations e.g. Quorn where a salvage yard and transfer station have just been completed. Members heard that people in Coober Pedy are very interested in accessing junk for artistic and utilitarian purposes. This provides an opportunity for salvaging rubbish and reusing it.

¹⁹ This was a finding of the Committee's previous visit to Coober Pedy in November 2010 (Natural Resources Committee 2011, p17).

6 Conclusions

6.1 Self sufficiency

A common theme that came across to Members during the fact-finding visit was the need for Indigenous communities in the AW NRM Region to be more self-sufficient. There are severe problems with the cost of food combined with a lack of employment opportunities. Pastoralism, tourism and mining ventures may provide a solution, but need to be pursued with extreme caution because such ventures have not always been a success in the past.

Recommendation 3:

That Parliament establish a Joint Select Committee to investigate a range of propositions for a pastoralism industry in the APY Lands with a view to founding a long term sustainable industry that provides for local employment at the same time as reducing numbers of large feral animals and their impact on the environment.

6.2 Water management

Clearly there is a desire to manage water resources sustainably to benefit local communities in the AW NRM Region. The best way to do this would be to prescribe underground water resources, but this would require a high level of resourcing. In the interim including Water Affecting Activity Permit requirements in the Board's Regional NRM Plan would be a good starting point. Provision needs to be made to ensure that waterholes are fenced and protected from feral animals. Such projects will require appropriate funding and training of local people in the construction and maintenance of fences and related infrastructure.

Recommendation 2:

That the Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation prescribe underground water resources in the AW NRM Region and support an amendment of the Regional NRM Plan to provide for Water Affecting Activity Permits for waterholes, water courses and other surface water assets in the Region.

6.3 Camel management

Members concluded that there is no simple solution to the problem posed by feral camels in the AW NRM Region. In addition to the evidence received by the Committee during its fact-finding visit, Members noted commitments by the Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation to camel management to be funding in 2013-14:

“The camel situation impacts especially upon biodiversity and Aboriginal cultural sites in particular, but also precious water resources in the arid lands, and infrastructure can be damaged by camels as well. There has been a four-year program funded from the commonwealth government of about \$19 million. We are in the fourth year now of that program. This comes from Caring for Our Country funds from the Australian Feral Camel Management Project.

In addition to commonwealth funding, the South Australian, Western Australian, the Northern Territory and the Queensland state governments are also providing funding. The South Australian government has invested \$2.3 million, I am advised, through the state NRM program into the project in the four years since 2009-10.

The aim of the project is to reduce the number of camels in key areas, ensuring that critical environmental and cultural assets are protected into the future. The camel management program is delivered in South Australia through Biosecurity SA. The project is a collaboration between the

Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources and various affected landholders in the rangelands, particularly Aboriginal communities.

Current removal activities focus on aerial culling and mustering for sale and slaughter. I am told that strict animal welfare guidelines are applied at all times to ensure that feral camels are humanely removed—as humanely as possible. I am advised that to date approximately 16,000 feral camels have been removed from South Australia, with around half being removed via mustering and half via the aerial culling approach.

National priority regions for feral camel removal in South Australia are the APY lands located in South Australia's north-west and the Simpson Desert region in the state's north. The success of the camel removal program in the APY lands is highly dependent upon maintaining the strong working relationships that exists between departmental staff and the APY Executive. This is critical as this region has the greatest density of camels in the state. I am advised that a formal agreement with the APY Executive for removal of camels by mustering and transport to abattoir for slaughter is currently in place. I am told that, under this agreement, over 7,000 animals have been removed from the APY lands in the past 12 months. The government is committed to continuing to work with the APY Executive to build upon this initial success.

I am advised also that the APY Executive met in May and agreed to the Department of Primary Industries and Regions South Australia undertaking consultation with local communities on the APY lands. This is a very positive step towards further reductions in camel numbers across the state. I am advised that aerial surveys conducted in March and April of this year identified that camel numbers have been substantially reduced in the South Australian portion of the Simpson Desert and are well below targets set for that part of the state.”

(Hunter 2013, pp266-267)

Members noted concerns of local people about the camel culling program, but supported the ongoing program to reduce camel numbers due to the obvious negative impacts the animals have on the environment. Members supported the continuation of the camel fencing program combined with on-the-ground training for local youth. Such training would clearly complement various pastoral projects the community seeks to promote.

Recommendation 1:

That the Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation provide funding to the AW NRM Board to continue its camel fencing projects and to train local community members in the construction and maintenance of camel proof fencing and related infrastructure.

6.4 Transport

While Members heard quite a few complaints during their visit about the poor state of the roads in the APY Lands, compared to other remote parts of South Australia they considered them to be quite good, though they understood that conditions deteriorate considerably after wet periods. Members could see a potential benefit to a pastoral industry if the main road leading west from Indulkana were to be improved to allow road train access, but they did not believe this to be a high priority for State Government funding compared to other regional roads with much higher usage. Improved road access was more likely to result from a proposed road running from Pipalatjara Wilurana to the Stuart Highway should nickel mining go ahead (see page 28).

6.5 Requests for State Government assistance to provide community infrastructure and services

The Committee during its meeting with the APY Executive on 8th May 2013 heard many requests for assistance from the State Government for community infrastructure and services, many of which were outside of its remit (e.g. a request for Community Constables and improved lighting, and a request for

water tanks). Members agreed however that the best approach would be to seek a meeting with the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and to discuss these matters informally.

6.6 Buffel grass

Buffel grass is a major problem in the AW NRM Region. Members concluded that it is probably too late to stop the spread of this pest using the current methods (poisoning, burning and hand pulling), though the valiant attempt by the Board to create a containment line was of course supported. Probably the only real hope to stop the spread of the weed is to have it declared a Weed of National Significance and for the Australian Government to provide funding to seek a biological agent to eradicate the pest. Biological agents²⁰ have largely eradicated Salvation Jane in South Australia. This provides some hope for a similar solution to Buffel grass.

Subsequent to the fact-finding visit, Minister Hunter announced funding for Buffel grass control during Budget Estimates hearings in Parliament House on 2 July 2013. In response to a question from Hon Steph Key seeking clarification as to whether the weed would be added to the Weeds of National Significance register, the Minister stated:

“I am advised that in April 2012, 12 new weeds of national significance were announced and the government has responded by proposing to declare all of these weeds under the Natural Resources Management Act 2004 where they were not already declared.”

(Hunter 2013, p264)

In a supplementary question, Hon Steph Key sought further clarification as to whether Buffel grass was included in the latest additions to the list. The Minister replied:

“I do not have that advice, but I will take that on notice and bring it back to you.”

(Hunter 2013, p285)

Minister Hunter was nevertheless able to confirm that State Government funding had been set aside for Buffel grass control/management and that Biosecurity SA was preparing a state strategic plan for the weed²¹:

“Two critical projects to control one of South Australia’s most damaging weeds will benefit from more than \$620,000 in funding through a Native Vegetation Council grant program. The projects to management buffel grass across about 80 per cent of the state have been awarded the funding through the council’s Significant Environment Benefit Grants program.

Funded in this round of grants is a three-year \$500,000 collaboration between Biosecurity SA and the natural resource management regions of Northern and Yorke, Eyre Peninsula, SA Arid Lands and AW to examine the management of buffel grass.

The second project aimed at eradicating buffel grass in the Anangu, Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara lands in the state’s Far North by 2015 will receive more than \$120,000 worth of funding.”

(Hunter 2013, p285)

“Biosecurity SA has led the review of the declared plant list under the Natural Resources Management Act 2004. It has engaged with natural resources management boards and the wider community on modernising the list of pest plants requiring control, a list which has not been reviewed since the early 1990s. Biosecurity has also led the development of a state strategic plan for buffel grass, an invasive African grass that threatens rangeland biodiversity and increases fire risk.”

²⁰ The crown weevil *Mogulones larvatus*, root weevil *Mogulones geographicus*, flea beetle *Longitarsus echii* and pollen beetle *Meligethes planiusculus*

²¹ The State Strategic Plan for Buffel grass already exists and was prepared in by the previous Minister in 2012.

(Hunter 2013, p253)

The Committee had previously taken evidence from Biosecurity SA in relation to the latter issue. On 3 May 2013 Dr John Virtue, Manager of Natural Resources Management, Biosecurity SA told Members that:

“Buffel grass is well established in South Australia; we are never going to eradicate it, but we are in a fortunate position compared to the rest of the country in terms of being able to contain it, and being able to manage it. Essentially, the strategy looks at zoning [see Figure 21]. Where buffel grass is most extensively established in the far North-West, and particularly in the APY lands, that is really, 'What can we do to manage the impacts of buffel grass?' We are not necessarily going to get rid of it, but what can we do to try and reduce the impacts of it?”

In a large part of the rangelands (essentially the South Australian Arid Lands area) buffel grass is established, but can we contain its spread, and can we protect particular assets? So, we are just trying to contain further spread there. In the southern part, it really is essentially 'seek and destroy'. There is not a lot of buffel grass in this part of the Maralinga area as well, so the AWNRM Board is very keen to be basically doing a seek-and-destroy process there.

We have established a Buffel Grass Taskforce with representatives from government, community and NGOs; the first meeting was in February, and there is another meeting being planned at the moment. It is looking at defining best-practice management. We are looking, as you always do, for funding investment into this. We are looking to Commonwealth funding at the moment with some applications that have gone into the Biodiversity Fund. We are looking at what are the priority actions of the state plan, and we are also looking at a draft declared plant policy. So, buffel grass is not currently declared under the NRM Act, but there is certainly a strong push, and that came through in the consultation with the strategy that it should be one that should be declared.”

(Virtue 2013, p17)

In response to a question Hon Russell Wortley about the efficacy of burning as a control, Dr Virtue stated:

“No, it doesn't kill it dead but it actually enables it—I mean, it depends on the age of the plant. If it's a very young plant, you may kill it but, for a herbicide control, it's very difficult to get herbicide uptake of a plant which has lots of dead leaves. So, you get that new regrowth coming back and then it is very susceptible—as you will find with a lot of grasses—they are very susceptible to control after a burn.

Another alternative is to mow, but obviously burning is much easier. We started working with the University of Adelaide, being engaged to prepare a buffel grass invasion model and a statewide map of areas of risk so, we know we can't remove buffel grass off the South Australian landscape, but where are the key areas where we need to be looking? We've been investing dollars in mapping where it is, but where are the areas of greatest risk? So, habitat, suitability and susceptibility, and what are the areas for control and monitoring?”

It's been unusual, I would say, for South Australia to have come up with a buffel grass strategy. It's very much a fodder plant in northern Australia, but in South Australia in the past years we've essentially had a pastoral system focused on utilising native fodder species and not the introduction of exotic grasses into those areas. So, really, I would say that it is actually a threat to pastoral productivity based on a healthy, diverse, native fodder system in South Australia.

Weeds of National Significance. We now have 32 Weeds of National Significance through state, territory and commonwealth agreement. They are not formally declared at a national level under an act, but they are basically recognised as important threats on a national basis.”

(Virtue 2013, p18)

In response to a question by Committee Member Dan van Holst Pellekaan in relation to the roadside spread of the weed, Dr Virtue stated:

“We are working with the Department of Transport, which has actually been doing a lot of control on roadsides for buffel grass and continue to do so. We see that as, a lot of the mapping has been roadside mapping because that is how it is spreading, how it's moving in. I didn't say it before, but another benefit of the fire is that heat is also destroying the soil seed bank or the seeds on the surface as well, so it does have that advantage over mowing. In fact, the SA Murray Darling Basin work, through this interest in buffel grass and working with the state herbarium, they've actually been finding a lot of incursions on roadsides and they have been doing burning and follow up control work in the Riverland area for buffel grass as well.”

(Virtue 2013, p23)

Committee Members noted Dr Virtue’s reference to Buffel grass being a fodder grass in the Northern Territory. When Members visited the SA Arid Lands NRM Region in November 2010, they heard that in Queensland the weed is still actively promoted as a fodder grass (Natural Resources Committee 2010, p20). If this remains the case it is likely to be an impediment to its being declared a Weed of National Significance. Nevertheless they felt South Australia should proceed with efforts to lobby the Commonwealth to do so.

Members also noted, after studying the Buffel grass Strategic Plan (Government of SA 2012, p4) and checking the Biosecurity SA website confirmed that Buffel grass is yet to be declared for control under the Natural Resources Development Act. The Committee agreed that as a first step to persuading the Commonwealth Government to add the weed to the Weeds of National Significance list, it should be declared in South Australia.

Recommendation 4:

That the Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation declare Buffel grass for control under the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004* as a first step towards seeking support for its listing as a Weed of National Significance, Commonwealth funding support to find a biological agent or agents to eradicate the weed and ending promotion of the weed as a pasture plant in Australia.

7 References

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8 Abbreviations

AMY	Antakirinja Matu-Yankunytjatjara
AMYAC	Antakirinja Matu-Yankunytjatjara Aboriginal Corporation
APY	Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara
AW	Alinytjara Wilurara (meaning North West)
CP	Conservation Park
DEWNR	Department for Environment, Water and Natural Resources (formerly DENR and DFW – merged in 2012)
DENR	Department for Environment and Natural Resources
DFW	Department for Water (formerly DWLBC)
DMITRE	Department for Manufacturing, Innovation, Trade, Resources and Energy
EMU	Environmental Management Understanding (program)
ILUA	Indigenous Land Use Agreement
MOU	Memorandum of Agreement
NPWS	National Parks and Wildlife Service
NRM	Natural Resources Management
NRM Act	Natural Resources Management Act 2004
NRM Board	Natural Resources Management Board
PWA	Prescribed Wells Area
SARDI	South Australian Research and Development Institute
WAP	Water Allocation Plan