

Heritage list fans Kimberley fears

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As much as 17 million hectares of the Kimberley could be placed on the national heritage list, sparking pastoralists' fears that a raft of new restrictions will cripple the cattle industry.

The Pastoralists and Graziers Association said yesterday that listing the area, which would take in Broome, Fitzroy Crossing and Derby, as well as pastoral land responsible for 30 per cent of the State's beef cattle production, would stymie local development.

PGA spokesman Geoff Gare said the proposal, from Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett, was naïve, because at least half of the area in question was already developed.

"He's an absolute goose if he thinks there is nothing there," Mr Gare said. "Our concern is that the Government wants to lock up the Kimberley without proper recourse."

A spokeswoman from Mr Garrett's office confirmed that the Government was assessing the West Kimberley Region for heritage listing, with a decision expected in June 2010.

"The Australian Heritage Council is doing a two-year National Heritage List assessment of the Kimberley, she said. "The council



Peter Garrett

and the Commonwealth Government must consult with owners, occupiers and indigenous people with a right or interest in the region as part of this process."

But councillors from the Shire of Wyndham East Kimberley raised concerns proper public consultation had not been undertaken. In a letter to the Department of Environment on July 15, council members requested the public comment period be extended beyond August 7 to allow for public forums in the Kimberley region.

Shire president Michele Pucci said yesterday the council was concerned about the impact the listing

would have on communities and business in the affected area.

"Obviously we are unclear on how it will impact on further development in the region. I think in one regard, it's really positive, but in another there is some concern over what this means for people, investment and business in the Kimberley," she said.

Shire chief executive officer Peter Stubbs said chief executives from Broome, Derby West Kimberley and Halls Creek would discuss the heritage listing proposal at a meeting in Perth today.

Mr Stubbs reiterated Ms Pucci's concerns. "There needs to be proper public consultation and information provided about the immediate and long-term affects the proposals will have," he said.

Mr Gare said the proposed heritage listed area, extending from south of Broome, east along the Fitzroy River to Fitzroy Crossing, north of Kalumburu and out to sea, could cripple "the core" of the State's beef cattle industry with severe management restrictions.

Peter Robertson, Wilderness Society State co-ordinator, said his organisation would work closely with the Department of Environment on the proposed listing.

He dismissed concerns from the PGA and local government as "scaremongering."