

Exclude pastoral areas: PGA



By property
writer
JOANNE LE VAUX

THE Pastoralists and Graziers' Association (PGA) has called on the WA Government to exclude pastoral leases from State and Federal governments' study areas for proposed National and World Heritage Listings in the Kimberley.

PGA president Rob Gillam said the proposal for national heritage listing of 17 million hectares of the region was an ambit claim made by "someone sitting 5000 kilometres away".

It should not have included pastoral areas that did not satisfy criteria for national heritage listing, Mr Gillam said.

He said the State Government was required to endorse any national and world heritage listings before they could proceed.

"We want the State Government to have a really good look at this issue and to reverse the position taken by the (previous) Carpenter government, refocusing this Federal study initiative so that it does not include key assets of the Kimberley region," Mr Gillam said.

"Pastoralists have been in the Kimberley for well over 100 years and have been able to co-exist with the environment and there have been no recorded cases of them having wiped anything out.

"There were areas of the Kimberley that should be looked



at for national heritage listing such as along the coast and the gorges, but serious consideration needed to be given to exactly what areas really required protection, with a consequent reduction in the area under study."

Earlier this year, the Carpenter government agreed to a NHL/WHL study area proposed by national Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett.

"The Federal Minister's study area proposal covers 17 million hectares of the West Kimberley and includes the towns of Broome, Derby and Fitzroy Crossing, as well as the entire West Kimberley coast," Mr Gillam said.

"Such a massive area can only be regarded as an ambit claim by the Federal Government for control of most of the Kimberley and it goes well

beyond including the features that may justify listing such as gorges, bays and Aboriginal culture along sections of the coast.

"However many of these features are already parks, or nature or Aboriginal reserves.

"There is absolutely no justification to extend the study area to working pastoral leases that have been part of the landscape since the Kimberley was first settled in the 1800s, or to include the massive mineral and water resources of the area and the towns that support them."

Mr Gillam said the pastoral industry would have liked some major input into the proposal but has had little cooperation or consideration from the Federal Government, with most pastoralists only finding out about the proposal a couple of

months ago.

Heritage listing of such a large area would also adversely affect the tourism industry and indigenous groups.

"We therefore see an urgent requirement for the new State Government to reverse the position taken by the Carpenter government and to refocus this federal study initiative so that it does not include key assets of the Kimberley region," he said.

A Premier's Department spokesman said the issue relating to the proposed national and world heritage listings in the Kimberley had not yet been discussed by Cabinet and no decision had yet been made on the Government's approach to the issue.

The Government was prepared to listen to the PGA's viewpoint on the issue, the spokesman said.