

Kimberley listing blasted

By property
writer

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PASTORALISTS are united in condemnation of the Federal Government's proposed National Heritage listing of 17 million hectares of the Kimberley, labelling it as an "absolute crime" with the potential to have a massive negative impact on the pastoral industry.

The Australian Heritage Council is conducting a two-year assessment of an area covering roughly three-quarters the size of Victoria, stretching from south of Broome to east of Fitzroy Crossing and then north, including the Drysdale River National Park.

National heritage places are protected under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 which requires that approval be obtained before any action takes place that could have a significant impact on the values of the listing.

Jack Burton, Yeeda Station, Derby said public consultations on the proposal were a farce, with some pastoralists who own substantial areas of the Kimberley only finding out about it a few days ago when submissions are due to close this week.

"If the Kimberley is national heritage-listed, it will

be an absolute crime," Mr Burton said.

"To apply a broad brush approach and lock up cattle properties is going to have a massive impact on property values and potential and will stifle economic development."

"Listing will take away the opportunity for anyone in the Kimberley, including the poverty-stricken Aborigines, to engage in the economic potential of the area and will put paid to any new activities like irrigation or mining."

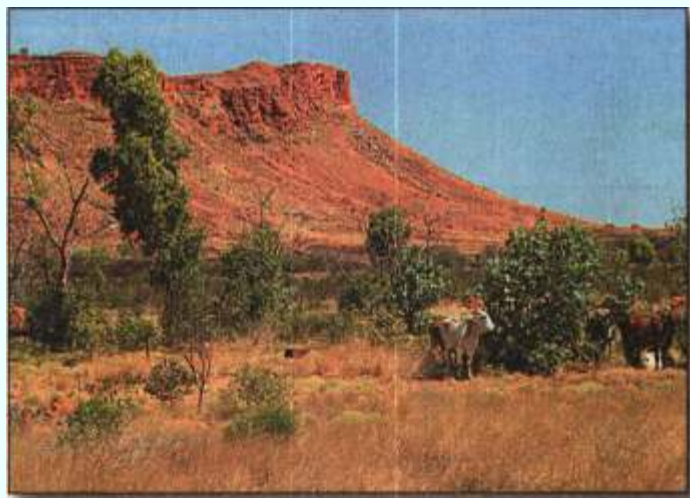
Mr Burton said there were some pristine areas in the Kimberley that might be suitable for listing but to include such a vast area was 'absolutely absurd' and would add another layer of regulations and bureaucracy over what was already there.

"I suspect it is more of a ploy from the environmental groups to stop the Browse Basin gas development but if it is about stopping the gas development then they don't have to bash everyone in the street to hurt one person in particular," Mr Burton said.

Pastoralists' and Graziers association vice president Ruth Webb-Smith said the proposal was a first step in taking away the state's rights.

"WA is perfectly capable of looking after the Kimberley in every aspect including environmental aspects," she said.

"This is not only going to affect the pastoral industry but also the fishing, pearling and



tourism industries, with an economic effect on every person in the Kimberley.

"All the decisions about the Kimberley will be made federally from a long way away with a total loss of control."

Ms Webb-Smith said 95pc of people in the Kimberley were great conservationists and cared very much for the Kimberley and she had no problem with specific heritage areas being adequately protected under the state's jurisdiction.

PGA spokesman Geoff Gare said earlier meetings with officials from the department had not revealed that it was planning such a massive sweep of the Kimberley area and an explanation was now needed.

"It is a case of being guilty until proved innocent - now all the people within the

proposed area will have to prove that national and world heritage listing does not apply to them and if it does, that it shouldn't interfere with their livelihood," Mr Gare said.

"The only beneficiaries would be the Department of Environment and Conservation who will be able to put more people on and make it harder for people to exist."

The Federal Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts says the listing will not restrict development or activity in the area and it was working with industry to avoid long-term impacts on the Kimberley's environment and heritage values while supporting necessary economic development.

A decision on the national heritage listing of the Kimberley area is expected by June 2010.