



MEDIA RELEASE

Call for transparency on conservation areas and pastoral leases

Conservation group Environs Kimberley is calling on the Department of Lands to release information on new cattle grazing licence applications in the Kimberley.

The grazing licence applications cover hundreds of thousands of hectares of areas proposed for conservation and containing threatened plant and animal species. The applications are in the Dampierland Bioregion, which has less than 1% in conservation reserves.

“We are very frustrated that the Department of Lands is assessing applications to open up environmentally sensitive areas to damaging cattle grazing, while proposals for conservation reserves from decades ago are being ignored,” said Environs Kimberley Director Martin Pritchard.

The first area Environs Kimberley knows of is adjacent to the Coulomb Point Nature Reserve, within a 63,000-hectare zone that was proposed as the Dampierland National Park in 1962. It was again proposed for conservation and Aboriginal tenure when the government purchased and destocked Waterbank Station. It has sensitive springs and is a known habitat for Bilbies. A second area of concern is 212,381 hectares to the south of Roebuck Plains, which was proposed as a conservation area in 1991. The third area is north of Killo station, and was also part of Waterbank Station purchased by the government.

“The Department of Lands has refused to give us any information on these applications to put cattle on public lands that have long been recognised for their environmental values and recommended as conservation areas by successive government departments,” said Environs Kimberley Director, Martin Pritchard.

“We are extremely disappointed at the lack of transparency; we were expecting better from the Department under the new government. We’re talking about important public lands with high conservation value, and yet the public has no opportunity to comment on a proposal that is likely to damage the natural environment,” Mr Pritchard said.

Environs Kimberley has had to resort to a freedom of information (FOI) request under the FOI Act. This will take weeks to process, costs money and takes time to apply for. We have also requested that the EPA assess the proposals.

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