Dear pastoralists

The workshop phase of the consultation process initiated by the Minister for Lands, the Hon. Rita Saffioti, has now drawn to a close, with the final Pastoral Lands Board (PLB) workshop taking place in Carnarvon earlier this month.

I'd like to extend my thanks to those of you who took the time to participate in this process. It is an important way that our industry can be heard. We saw strong attendance at many of these workshops and your active participation is very much appreciated. I would also like to thank staff from the Pastoral Lands Unit in the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage and particularly Karel Eringa who provided a great deal of assistance with the design and delivery of the workshops.

Information gathered from the workshops has been collated in the form of strategic advice about ways to strengthen the pastoral industry and presented to both the Minister for Lands and the Minister for Regional Development and Agriculture, the Hon. Alannah MacTiernan, for consideration. I will be sure to keep you informed of progress in regard to the PLB's recommendations.

One of the questions I am often asked relates to the optional survey that pastoral lessees may undertake when completing their annual returns. The information collected is analysed and provides a snapshot of the views and perceptions of pastoralists. This data in turn helps to inform the development of policy and initiatives.

In 2016, 115 – or about one third of you – responded to the survey. The responses were compared to 2013 and 2015, and a brief analysis of the information and graphs showing changing trends are available here. In summary between 2013 and 2016:

- Perceptions of the overall economic state of the pastoral industry improved considerably. Only 20 per cent of respondents rated the industry poor or very poor, compared with around 90 per cent in 2013.
- Similarly, the number of respondents rating the economic viability of their own business as excellent or good increased from 42 to 57 per cent.
- Of the respondents who perceived the overall economic state to be poor or very poor, about 50 per cent stated feral animals as the main factor. Overall, however, the perceived impact of feral animals rated consistently low.

The picture that has emerged over the past few years is one of increasing confidence in our industry. While there is always room for improvement, I am encouraged by these indications of renewed optimism. We will be adding data from the 2017 annual returns in the near future for your information.

Finally, having completed 12 months as PLB chair, I can confidently say that after a period of uncertainty the PLB is operating on a strong footing now. All members make very positive contributions and take their responsibilities for administrating the pastoral estate and providing strategic advice to government very seriously. I thank them for that.

Regards

Tim Shackleton
Chairperson
Pastoral Lands Board