

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE AUSTRALIAN RANGELAND SOCIETY
BIENNIAL CONFERENCE**

Official publication of The Australian Rangeland Society

Copyright and Photocopying

© The Australian Rangeland Society 2012. All rights reserved.

For non-personal use, no part of this item may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without prior permission of the Australian Rangeland Society and of the author (or the organisation they work or have worked for). Permission of the Australian Rangeland Society for photocopying of articles for non-personal use may be obtained from the Secretary who can be contacted at the email address, rangelands.exec@gmail.com

For personal use, temporary copies necessary to browse this site on screen may be made and a single copy of an article may be downloaded or printed for research or personal use, but no changes are to be made to any of the material. This copyright notice is not to be removed from the front of the article.

All efforts have been made by the Australian Rangeland Society to contact the authors. If you believe your copyright has been breached please notify us immediately and we will remove the offending material from our website.

Form of Reference

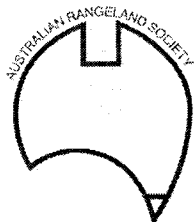
The reference for this article should be in this general form;
Author family name, initials (year). Title. *In*: Proceedings of the nth Australian Rangeland Society Biennial Conference. Pages. (Australian Rangeland Society: Australia).

For example:

Anderson, L., van Klinken, R. D., and Shepherd, D. (2008). Aerially surveying Mesquite (*Prosopis* spp.) in the Pilbara. *In*: 'A Climate of Change in the Rangelands. Proceedings of the 15th Australian Rangeland Society Biennial Conference'. (Ed. D. Orr) 4 pages. (Australian Rangeland Society: Australia).

Disclaimer

The Australian Rangeland Society and Editors cannot be held responsible for errors or any consequences arising from the use of information obtained in this article or in the Proceedings of the Australian Rangeland Society Biennial Conferences. The views and opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Australian Rangeland Society and Editors, neither does the publication of advertisements constitute any endorsement by the Australian Rangeland Society and Editors of the products advertised.



The Australian Rangeland Society

THE WESTERN LANDS BOARD: POST 2000

Guy Fitzhardinge

PO Box 35, Mandurama NSW 2792

In 1884, as a result of the Crown Lands Act, a line was drawn separating the western third of NSW from the eastern two thirds. As a result of this Act, further alienation of the western third (later to be known as the Western Division) ceased, and as a result the crown retained the capacity to “manage” the land. The reasoning behind this separation was a belief that the semi-arid and arid areas in western NSW required different management from the land in the rest of the State. Through the proprietary rights of lessees and the State, the Government had an integral role in the management of the land. However, in the 1890s a number of factors including drought, financial and the effects of earlier management practices demonstrated that the interests of neither the State nor the pastoralists were being served by the current arrangements. This led to the Royal Commission of Inquiry, and as a result the formation of the Western Lands Act of 1901.

In considering the future of the Western Lands Act and therefore the Commission post 2000, two fundamental issues need to be considered. Firstly, how successful has it been in fulfilling its statute role? Secondly does the same social and environmental “climate” prevail as did at the time of its inception? While the first point could attract considerable debate, the fact remains that many of the issues that led to the formation of the Western Lands Act in 1901 remain today in 2000. Unsustainable ecosystems and social systems are more the rule than the exception. However one defines the “role” of the Western Lands Board, it is fair to say the “intent” has not been fulfilled. In relation to the second point, namely the social and economic climate, it is clear that the Division faces a completely different scenario.

In the last 100 years there have been substantial demographic changes in the Division, and in rural Australia in general. This has led to shifts in the political power base. Further, it has led to a split in the homogeneity between urban/rural understandings of landscape values and landscape usage. There is now a range of Acts apart from the Western Lands Act that prescribes resource use in the Division. These Acts reflect a departure from the belief that the Western Lands Division is somehow different from the rest of the State. There is also a range in international agreements that further impact on activities in relation to land use generally and thus in the Division. In today’s global marketplace, the power and expectations of the consumer have begun to usurp the ability of Governments to control and direct change.

The consumer push for “clean and green” and for the implementation of demonstrable environmental management systems will eventually force lessees in the 21st century to do what the Western Lands Act failed to force them to do in the last 100 years. Where the Western Lands Board procrastinated and failed to eject lessees who were in breach of their agreements, market forces will be ruthless. Given the changes in the domestic social and political climate, and the requirements of international customers for the products of the Division, it is hard to see any role for the Western Lands Commission in the future, apart from the administration of an antiquated and scarcely relevant Act.