



**OFFICE OF THE MINISTER FOR PLANNING  
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Mr Derek Recsei  
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**13 DEC 2007**

Dear Mr Recsei

**PASTORAL LEASEHOLD LAND - NINGALOO REEF CORAL COAST**

The Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, Hon Alannah MacTiernan MLA, has asked me to thank you for your letter of 10 October 2007 regarding pastoral leasehold land along the Ningaloo coast. The Minister is unable to meet with you when you are in Perth and has asked that I respond on her behalf.

I appreciate your acknowledgement that you may not be fully aware of the Government's view on this matter and therefore have provided a summary for your consideration along with a suitable contact should you wish to find out more detailed information.

At the outset it is important to understand that pastoral leases in Western Australia that exist adjacent to the coastline already have their coastal boundary set back 40 metres from the High Water Mark. These leases are on Crown Land and the ownership of the land is with the Government on behalf of the community. A pastoral lease allows the leaseholder to use the land for pastoral purposes.

The exclusion of the coastal strip along the Ningaloo coast from the pastoral leases is part of a process for a number of exclusions from pastoral leases for a range of public purposes throughout the rangelands of Western Australia. The exclusion process was undertaken as provided under legislation passed by the coalition Government in Western Australia in the late 1990's. The intention to change the land tenure and purpose for land on the Ningaloo coast has been identified in a number of Government processes in the past two decades.

The Ningaloo Reef is a marine park vested with the State's Marine Parks Reserves Authority. The boundary of the Park extends from Exmouth south to Red Bluff about 100 km south of Coral Bay and generally includes the 40 metre terrestrial reserve up to the boundary of the pastoral lease. Much of the camping that occurs along the Ningaloo coast actually occurs in the Ningaloo Marine Park. A pastoral lease permits the use of the land for pastoral purposes; other tourism related uses can only be undertaken where the activity is considered to be of a scale less than that of the primary purpose of the pastoral lease.

There is a need to legitimise the access that has occurred in the past and in more recent times has significantly increased. There are increased impacts resulting from these higher levels of visitation that require action and investment beyond that undertaken by the pastoral lessees.

For example, on one station along the coast where camping is very popular, it is known from surveys that up to one thousand people camp in the peak season, with inadequate waste disposal and little regulation or effective management of access.

The Government will be vesting the majority of the coast in a special reserve for conservation and will provide only for low key, low impact and nature-based tourism activities in specified areas. Most of the immediate development opportunities provided for are being undertaken by pastoral lessees under existing agreements with the State. Camping is to be retained, although improved management is required and the State is seeking to undertake this in a suitable partnership with the adjoining pastoral lessees. All high impact developments, such as marinas, large resorts, industry and residential development are to be excluded from the Ningaloo coast and are to be directed to the townsites of Exmouth and Carnarvon.

The State Government also provides for, manages and regulates the protection of fish stocks and the Marine Park, including the establishment of sanctuary zones. It is important that access for the management of these important areas is not encumbered or hindered by holders of competing land tenure. The State has formal agreements with four of the five pastoral lessees along the Ningaloo coast in relation to the exclusions. We are also endeavouring to establish management partnerships with them as neighbours to the Ningaloo Marine Park in a cost effective, legitimised and practical way. The central aim is to ensure the long term protection of this highly valuable area and to put in place land tenure and planning controls to ensure the area is not over developed and remains a remote and natural area available indefinitely for visitors.

I trust this explanation is of value to you in obtaining a balanced understanding of the Government's intentions and actions. If you would like to discuss this further, please contact Mr David Nunn of the Ningaloo Sustainable Development Office in Carnarvon on (08) 9941 3559 or visit the following website to view the Government's planning strategy for the Ningaloo coast:

<http://www.wapc.wa.gov.au/Initiatives/Ningaloo+Coast/Managing+the+coast/default.aspx>

Yours sincerely



**ROB GILES**  
**CHIEF OF STAFF**