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# Pastoral Lands Board Policy Structure

The Pastoral Lands Board acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of this land. We pay our respect to Elders past and present, their descendants who are with us today, and those who will follow in their footsteps.

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# PASTORAL LANDS BOARD POLICY STRUCTURE

## Purpose of the Policy Structure

The Pastoral Lands Board (PLB) Policy Structure (Policy Structure) is designed to provide a coordinated, consistent approach to policy development across the areas of pastoral policy that intersect with the PLB's functions. The Policy Structure ensures the core mission of the PLB, as articulated by its Functions, is being met in some way by each policy or guideline. This provides transparency, clarity of purpose, and accountability with respect to PLB decisions and actions.

Alongside the PLB's responsibilities, pastoral lessees are required to manage and work the land under the lease to its best advantage as a pastoral property, use methods of best pastoral and environmental management practice, and maintain the indigenous pasture and other vegetation on the land to the satisfaction of the PLB.

While the practical interpretation of both the PLB's and the pastoralists' requirements under the *Land Administration Act 1997* (LAA) is a matter of policy, to date this policy work has been done on an *ad hoc* basis. The exception to this is the PLB's *Pastoral Purposes Framework* (PPF). The PPF provides a clear articulation of what the PLB considers "pastoral purposes", within the definition provided at section 93 of the LAA. In essence, the PPF explains what activities are permissible on a pastoral lease without a permit or alternative tenure<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Pastoral Lands Board of Western Australia, *Pastoral Purposes Framework 2021: A guide to activities that can be undertaken on a pastoral lease*, Perth: Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage 2021.

However, in the (prior) absence of a broader context, the PPF has acted as a *de facto* policy framework. Now, with the development of this Policy Structure, which operates in concert with the Statement of Strategic Intent and Strategic Action Plan, a broader understanding of the PLB's role, priorities, and general approach exists.

## The Policy Structure

The Policy Structure was developed to reflect the considerations that inform both strategic and operational policy in the pastoral estate. The Policy Structure contains seven elements:

1. **The PLB Functions** – these are the basis for all actions and decisions taken by the PLB, which are defined by section 95 of the LAA:
  - (a) to advise the Minister on policy relating to the pastoral industry and the administration of pastoral leases; and
  - (b) to administer pastoral leases in accordance with this Part; and
  - (c) to ensure that pastoral leases are managed on an ecologically sustainable basis; and
  - (d) to develop policies to prevent the degradation of rangelands; and
  - (e) to develop policies to rehabilitate degraded or eroded rangelands and to restore their pastoral potential; and
  - (f) to consider applications for the subdivision of pastoral land and make recommendations to the Minister in relation to them; and

- (g) to establish and evaluate a system of pastoral land monitoring sites; and
  - (h) to monitor the numbers and the effect of stock and feral animals on pastoral land; and
  - (i) to conduct or commission research into any matters that it considers are relevant to the pastoral industry; and
  - (j) to provide such other assistance or advice as the Minister may require in relation to the administration of this Part; and
  - (k) to exercise or perform such other functions as it may be given under this or any other Act.
2. **The PLB’s guiding principle that a profitable and prosperous pastoral estate is inextricably linked with the condition of the land upon which that prosperity is built.**
  3. **The Statement of Strategic Intent 2021-2023**, which aligns closely with the PLB functions and responds to the Auditor General’s 2017 Report, *Management of Pastoral Lands in Western Australia* (AG Report), reflects the second element of the Policy Structure (the first two goals are “increased diversity and ecological sustainability of the estate”, and “create a prosperous estate”).
  4. **The annual Strategic Action Plan**, which arises from the objectives, outputs, and activities of the Statement of Strategic Intent, and provides the impetus for policy development.
  5. **The Strategic Risk Management Plan 2021-2023** is focussed on five key areas of risk for the PLB: strategic issues, governance, communication, policy and operational.
  6. **Policy development** – policies are the most visible and tangible interface between pastoral lessees and the PLB. They explain and are consistent with all the other elements of the Policy Structure.

7. **Guideline development** – guidelines provide clarity on how a policy or direction developed by the PLB can and will be implemented, setting out the PLB’s expectations and standards on a particular aspect of their Functions.

Figure 1, below, represents the Policy Structure.



Figure 1: Pastoral Lands Board Policy Structure

## Key Principle: Profitable Pastoral Businesses Require Good Land Condition

The key principle of the PLB's approach to pastoral lease sustainability holds:

The long-term sustainability and profitability of the pastoral estate is reliant on good land management, as is the credibility of the pastoral industry.

Profitability requires, among other things, fat, healthy livestock. To produce the weight gain required to sell the livestock profitably, high-quality pasture is required. The more high-quality pasture, the more animals can be run on the land under the lease, and the more healthy livestock at a good weight can be sold.

These aspects, profitability and sustainability, are encapsulated in the PLB's definition of ecologically sustainable pastoralism, which states:

The management, development and use of natural resources relevant to pastoral operations being undertaken on the land, with an aim to meet the needs of today while conserving ecosystems for the benefit of future generations.

Beyond profitability, good land management is an essential element of the pastoral industry's social licence to operate, which is why this aspect is second only to the Board's functions in the Framework structure.



## Statement of Strategic Intent

The Statement of Strategic Intent is the PLB's mission statement, vision for the future, and list of clear goals that provides impetus for action. The PLB's role, responsibilities, and functions are all encapsulated in this document, which sets the direction for all action.

### Strategic vision:

The PLB is committed to working with industry and government to create a prosperous and sustainable pastoral industry. The PLB believes that economic development and ecological management of pastoral lands are interdependent. Achieving a balance of both will require creating an environment where Government works cooperatively with pastoral lessees to enhance productivity and financial viability to achieve improved land management outcomes.

Key objectives for the Statement of Strategic Intent include ecologically sustainable industry development, prosperous pastoral enterprises, as well as contemporary policies recognising the diverse uses and geography of the pastoral estate, and land use reform for the pastoral industry. Each of these objectives includes a series of key outputs, which will be reviewed regularly.

### Key outputs:

- an effective and practical pastoral land management system
- an efficient approvals process for diversified economic activities on pastoral land
- regionally-specific industry opportunities
- growth of sustainable Aboriginal-led pastoralism
- endorsed Policy Structure
- a process for annual assessments of ecological health across the pastoral estate
- clear and decisive guidance to Government on pastoral land reform.

## Strategic Action Plan

The annual Strategic Action Plan outlines how the PLB will implement the activities outlined in the Statement of Strategic Intent, with a range of actions designed to ensure the key outputs are achieved in a timely manner. The Strategic Action Plan provides a timeline of work across each of the PLB's key objectives, which focuses work and ensures visibility on the progress of projects. This includes how the PLB and relevant stakeholders may agree to work together collaboratively to achieve the broader strategic vision for the pastoral estate and may include formal agreements, such as MOUs, or informal agreements to provide regular updates and ad hoc consultation on issues of interest. Deadlines are set against PLB Meetings, ensuring the focus is on the PLB as the decision-maker and accountable body for the tasks included in the Strategic Action Plan.

The latest version of the Strategic Action Plan can be found [here](#).

## Risk Management Plan

The PLB Risk Management plan identifies risks to the PLB and its ability to implement its Statement of Strategic Intent. Further, the Risk Management Plan was a key recommendation of the AG Report. The risks are broadly grouped into five key areas:

1. **Strategic** – implementation of the Statement of Strategic Intent and progressing Pastoral Lands Reform
2. **Governance** – general Board compliance but also focus on conflict of interest
3. **Communication** – collaboration and advice to stakeholders and sufficient information to make informed decisions
4. **Policy** – contemporary relevant policies and guidance
5. **Operational** – administration and compliance of pastoral leases including assessing development applications and issue of permits

Under each of these five risk categories, a range of risks have been identified, possible causes, the consequences and/or effect of these risks being realised, as well as the controls and treatments of those risks. In some cases, the treatments or mitigations of risk involve policy and/or guideline development and implementation, which provides another impetus towards realising the PLB's broad policy agenda. Given the PLB's risk appetite for each area of identified risk, a residual risk rating has been provided for each risk area. This residual risk is the risk remaining after controls and treatments of the risks have been considered.

## Policy Development

A wide range of policies is required to ensure the PLB's vision and strategic intent are able to be implemented. The PLB has identified a series of key areas, via the Statement of Strategic Intent, in which policy is required to ensure consistency and transparency of decision-making, as well as provide clarity and guidance to pastoral lessees and other stakeholders, including pastoral industry groups, government agencies, environmental groups, and NGOs operating in the Rangelands.

Within the context of the structure illustrated in Figure 1, the PLB develops policy to reflect its functions, its overriding philosophy of promoting profitability of pastoral businesses as a result of good land management, and a statement of strategic intent and action plan that reflect this broad goal. Each policy developed by the PLB can be related back directly to its functions. In the table below, the policies, guidelines, and other policy material either currently in circulation, under development, or proposed, can be seen in its relationship to the PLB Functions. As can be seen, the PLB has substantial scope, and intent, to develop policy across the broad reach of its functions.

## Guidelines Development

Guidelines are the operational element of policy development, although some guidelines may stand alone. Some guidelines provide lessees with information on how to meet regulatory compliance requirements, such as how to complete a Development Plan, while others may provide departmental officers with instructions on how to undertake a specific task, such as issue a permit under Part 7 Division 5 of the LAA.

The PLB is developing a suite of guidelines for lessees that goes beyond the mechanics of legislative compliance and provides information regarding best practice land management techniques and actions, and guidance on how to develop a Management Plan. These documents are intended to complement policy and given lessees scope to plan and implement strategies that work best for them, and which will ensure their pastoral businesses are ecologically sustainable and profitable.



## Relationship of current and proposed policies and guidelines to Pastoral Lands Board functions

Function	Policy / Guideline (new/proposed)
<b>(a) to advise the Minister on policy relating to the pastoral industry and the administration of pastoral leases</b>	PLB Sole Powers Guideline
	Minister to Consult PLB Guideline
	Pastoral Lease Renewal Policy (Pastoral Lease Term Policy)
	Provision of Rent Relief (Transfer of Permits with the Lease)
	Viability and Sustainability of New Standalone Pastoral Leases
<b>(b) to administer pastoral leases in accordance with this Part</b>	Rangeland Management Compliance Policy
	Liability for Straying Stock on Roads Guideline
	Pastoral Purposes Framework
	Annual Returns – Portal / Questions Update / FAQs
	Statement of Strategic Intent (Streamlined Interagency Permits Process)
	Subleasing Part of a Lease Policy (New Pastoral Lease Process)
	(Rent for new Permit Development Policy)

Function	Policy / Guideline (new/proposed)
(c) to ensure that pastoral leases are managed on an ecologically sustainable basis	(Clearing for Pastoral Purposes)
	Cultivation of Non-Indigenous Plant Species
	Definition of Ecologically Sustainable Pastoralism
	(Fire Management Policy)
	Good Pastoral Land Management Guidelines
	(Field Guides)
	Rangeland Management Compliance Policy
(d) to develop policies to prevent the degradation of rangelands	Good Pastoral Land Management Guidelines
	(Management Plan Guidelines and Template)
(e) to develop policies to rehabilitate degraded or eroded rangelands and to restore their pastoral potential	(Rehabilitation of Degraded Land Principle)
	Preparing a Development Plan Guideline
(f) to consider applications for the subdivision of pastoral land and make recommendations to the Minister in relation to them	Viability and Sustainability of New Standalone Pastoral Leases Policy

Function	Policy / Guideline (new/proposed)
(g) to establish and evaluate a system of pastoral land monitoring sites	Rangeland Monitoring Policy
	Monitoring and Compliance Guidelines (DPIRD / DPLH)
(h) to monitor the numbers and the effect of stock and feral animals on pastoral land	Stocking Policy
	Agistment of Stock Policy
(i) to conduct or commission research into any matters that it considers are relevant to the pastoral industry	
(j) to provide such other assistance or advice as the Minister may require in relation to the administration of this Part	
(k) to exercise or perform such other functions as it may be given under this or any other Act	