

# NON-PASTORAL USE PERMITS

DIVERSIFYING THE TERRITORY  
UNLOCK THE POTENTIAL OF OUR LAND



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### *What is the Pastoral Land Act?*

The *Pastoral Land Act* governs pastoral leases on Crown Land in the Northern Territory.

The Act provides a form of tenure that facilitates the sustainable use of the land for pastoral purposes and the economic viability of the pastoral industry.

### *Who does the Act apply to?*

The *Pastoral Land Act* applies to individuals and companies who have pastoral leases over Crown Land in the Northern Territory.

There are 223 pastoral leases in the Northern Territory, which is divided into 11 gazetted pastoral districts that cover about 600 000 square kilometres of land.

The pastoral districts include Southern Alice Springs, Northern Alice Springs, Plenty, Tennant Creek, Barkly, Sturt Plateau, Katherine, Victoria River, Gulf, Roper and Darwin.

The pastoral districts are defined based on natural vegetation characteristics, rainfall level and reliability and geographic location. The lease areas range from 198 square kilometres to 12 212 square kilometres and account for approximately 45 per cent of land in the Northern Territory.

### *How long are pastoral leases valid for?*

Leases can range from a maximum of 25 years for a Term Lease that includes specific terms and conditions relating to the development of the lease, or Perpetual Title Pastoral Leases.

### *Who administers pastoral leases?*

The Pastoral Land Board is a statutory authority established under the Act to administer pastoral leases in the Northern Territory.

The role of the Board is to monitor the condition and use of pastoral land to ensure it is used sustainably for the economic viability of the industry in accordance with the Act.

The Board has a range of responsibilities in regard to determining approvals for clearing native vegetation, non-pastoral uses, subdivision and lease management plans.

### *How has the Pastoral Land Act been changed?*

Amendments to the *Pastoral Land Act* allow pastoral lease owners to apply for permits to diversify into a range of non-pastoral uses including agriculture, horticulture, aquaculture, tourism and forestry.

The permit is approved for up to 30 years, or until a Term Lease expires. The permit is also registered to the lease rather than issued to the lessee, providing longer term security for investment and allowing for the permit to be transferred should the lease change ownership.

Previously, parts of pastoral properties could be used for non-pastoral use activities but permits were only approved for up to five years and had to be renewed annually. Permits were provided to the lessee and were not transferable if the pastoral lease changed ownership.

### *What is allowed on a pastoral lease under a non-pastoral use permit?*

Non-pastoral uses can include tourism ventures, horticulture, aquaculture, forestry, purpose-built tourism accommodation, station stores and extensive agriculture.

Cattle production must remain the dominant industry on the pastoral lease and account for the use of more than 50 per cent of the land under the lease, in accordance with *Pastoral Land Act*.

Non-pastoral use permits approved under the Act have included tourism campgrounds and mango crops.

## *When do the amendments to the Act come into effect?*

The amendments came into effect on 1 January 2014.

## *Why was the Act changed?*

The pastoral industry has been through tough times, with extreme seasonal conditions and the live export bans to Indonesia. The Government wanted to make it easier for pastoralists to use part of their land for other purposes to provide greater income security through diversification of operations.

The non-pastoral use permits will create a more even playing field, in terms of land use, between pastoral lease holders and freehold title owners, many of whom have mixed pastoral, horticultural or agricultural activities on their land.

## *What are the benefits of the amendments to the Act?*

The *Pastoral Land Act* has been amended so pastoralists can diversify their land use.

The Government has cut red tape to make it easier for pastoralists to diversify and develop new income streams.

Pastoralists can use part of their properties for crops or tourism, providing an extra buffer against hard times.

The primary operation of a pastoral lease must be for pastoral purposes, but they can operate other business enterprises like mango crops or tourism and camping operations side by side, providing two revenue streams.

The up to 30-year permits provide more incentive for farming activities that require major investment in infrastructure.

The non-pastoral use permit is now registered to the lease, not the lessee, potentially increasing the value of the pastoral lease, while making it easier to attract investors and provide longer term security.

These changes give people greater certainty and confidence to explore and invest in longer term non-pastoral opportunities.

## *Are there any fees for the non-pastoral use permits?*

An application fee and annual charges will apply to a non-pastoral permit. A working group, which includes industry representation, was established to examine the fee structures for non-pastoral use permits.

## *Why are there fees for non-pastoral use permits?*

Fees are charged to cover administration costs, registering the permit on title, Native Title Notification and newspaper advertising of the applicant's desire to conduct non-pastoral use activities for consultation purposes.

## *What about Native Title?*

The Pastoral Land Board will continue to ensure the provisions of the *Native Title Act* are complied with before approving a permit for a non-pastoral use. Notification as required under the *Native Title Act* is the responsibility of the Board.

## *What about land clearing and impacts on the environment?*

The Government has cut red tape to make it easier for pastoralists to diversify and develop new income streams.

Before issuing a non-pastoral permit, the Pastoral Land Board will require the necessary permits to be approved for clearing native vegetation, water extraction licenses and if required, environmental assessment.

The permits are administered by the Pastoral Land Board with support from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and other government agencies as required.

## *How do I find out what non-pastoral use is suitable for my property?*

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources and Department of Primary Industry and Resources can provide pastoralists with advice on land suitability, crops and potential markets

### **For more information contact:**

Department of Environment and Natural Resources  
P: 08 8999 4478 | E: [rangelands@nt.gov.au](mailto:rangelands@nt.gov.au)

Department of Primary Industry and Resources  
P: 08 8999 2143 | E: [warren.hunt@nt.gov.au](mailto:warren.hunt@nt.gov.au)

## *How do I find out about potential environmental impacts of a non-pastoral use?*

Information about land suitability and water availability is available from:

the Department of Environment and Natural Resources  
P: 08 8999 4455 | E: [waterresources@nt.gov.au](mailto:waterresources@nt.gov.au)

## *How do I find out about investment opportunities for non-pastoral uses?*

Information about business programs and preparing business cases for investment is available from the Department of Business.

**Contact:** Department of Trade, Business and Innovation  
Client Liaison Officer, Graeme Kevern  
P: 08 8901 4061 | E: [graeme.kevern@nt.gov.au](mailto:graeme.kevern@nt.gov.au)

## *How big is the pastoral industry in the Northern Territory?*

Pastoral leases account for approximately 45 per cent of land in the Northern Territory and cover about 600 000 square kilometres.

With an estimated two million head of cattle in the NT, the gross value of production from the local cattle industry was estimated to be \$285.3 million in 2010-11.

It is estimated that 53.5 per cent of the Northern Territory's total value of production from agriculture and fisheries was from cattle production in 2010-11.

### *Why does the pastoral industry need help to diversify?*

The impact of a downturn in the live cattle trade reduced profits for many pastoralists in the Northern Territory who relied on cattle as their main source of income.

Giving pastoralists the chance to develop new income streams through non-pastoral uses, such as agriculture, horticulture, aquaculture, forestry or tourism, helps them generate more income and take advantage of new markets.

### *Was there any consultation about the amendments to the Act before they came into effect?*

Pastoralists were consulted about the proposed amendments to the *Pastoral Land Act* in 2011, with this recent amendment as part of those proposed changes.

The Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association was consulted in 2013 of the recent change to the *Pastoral Land Act* and were supportive of the initiative.

### *What if I object to a non-pastoral use on a nearby pastoral lease property?*

Before making a decision on a non-pastoral use permit application, the Pastoral Land Board must give public notification of the application. A public notice will be published in a newspaper circulating in the area of the Territory where the pastoral lease is located and on the Pastoral Land Board's website: [www.nt.gov.au/npu](http://www.nt.gov.au/npu)

The public has four weeks from the notice publication to make a written submission to the Board about the application.

Any submissions made by the public will be provided to the applicant and the Board may decide to hold a public meeting to allow the applicant and members of the general public to address the Board.

#### For more information:

Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Rangelands Division

P: 08 8999 4474 | E: [rangelands@nt.gov.au](mailto:rangelands@nt.gov.au)

[www.nt.gov.au/npu](http://www.nt.gov.au/npu)

