



Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara

A.B.N. 77 261 612 162

PMB 227 Umuwa via Alice Springs NT 0872

Phone: (08) 8954 8101 Fax: (08) 8954 8170

www.anangu.com.au

MEDIA RELEASE: Rogue graziers short-change Anangu and the environment

For immediate release

Shane Nicolle is determined not to abuse the privilege of running cattle on a vast area of the northern APY Lands that borders his Mulga Park Station.

The lifelong pastoralist has been using the APY Lands for grazing for several years and in 2019 accepted a five-year grazing licence offered by APY's Executive Board.

Mr Nicolle and other licensed third-party graziers are trying to responsibly operate in the best interests of themselves, Anangu and the environment. However, there is a pervasive problem on the APY Lands of individual non-Anangu operators attempting to undertake pastoral business operations without approval.

APY has designated grazing paddocks set aside for external third-party graziers such as Mr Nicolle, with agreements on cattle numbers and required infrastructure in place to ensure compliance with South Australian laws. This helps with responsible land management and sustainable grazing practices.

Mr Nicolle has around 1200 head of cattle on his designated APY grazing area of approximately 1800 sq km.

"The bit of country that I lease is just over the fence on the northern side of the Musgrave Ranges," he said.

"It is absolutely important to try and comply with APY's sustainable grazing practices, mainly to prevent overgrazing. You need to try and do your best to look after your country, wherever you are, especially when you're on someone else's land.

"You do not want to abuse the privilege you've got to be there because it is of great advantage to me and it should be a great advantage to Anangu.

"In the future, grazing should provide Anangu with more jobs and more opportunities. For many years, up until recently, the pastoral side has been badly managed. Trying to get it to work right is very difficult."

APY General Manager Richard King has worked closely with APY's Pastoral Manager Michael Clinch to reform ad-hoc leasing agreements under previous administrations that left Anangu vulnerable to exploitation by rogue third-party graziers.

Under the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Land Rights Act, pastoral leases and grazing licences can only be granted through APY. This ensures the legal rights of all parties are protected and more sustainable grazing practices can be implemented.

Stamping out informal arrangements ensures Anangu are not left with significantly less income than what a licence is worth and there is compliance with the state's Natural Resources Management Act; Animal Welfare Act; and Native Vegetation Act.

Work on the issue of pastoral leases and grazing licences is complex. It requires careful discussion and negotiation with third-party graziers and, unfortunately in a minority of cases, litigation.

Informal third-party grazing is very detrimental to the APY Lands. Aside from the potential for mining and tourism, the main industry available for Anangu is the pastoral industry, which has huge capacity to bring in millions of dollars annually.

But industry observers say the full potential of the pastoral industry for Anangu can only be realised with a set of rules that are complied with and enforced.

“There are too many third-party graziers who go into the APY Lands without doing the right thing and going through the Executive Board and getting a proper contract,” one industry observer said.

“They just pay people cash in hand and cars and bribe them. It doesn’t help anyone in moving forward.”

Mr Nicolle said he backed a crackdown on rogue graziers who did not adhere to the rules.

“Anangu need to be given more power but within a clear set of rules, as set by the Executive Board, to rearrange things and do it by the book,” he said.

APY is currently considering Regulations under the APY Land Rights Act to provide APY with authority to inspect, ensure compliance and prosecute rogue third-party graziers on the APY Lands.

Mr Clinch said Anangu and pastoralists could not afford to ignore the issue.

“What we do know is Australia’s landscape cannot sustain the degradation no matter what the alternative cost is,” he said. “Every drought, every flood and every wildfire becomes harder and more expensive to recover from.

“From a government and industry policy perspective, the enduring phenomenon of overgrazing in dry seasons is a major problem that must be properly addressed through collaboration across industry, government, commercial and not-for-profit NGOs, as well as individual pastoralists.”

To obtain a grazing licence, graziers must complete a proposal to be assessed by the Executive Board.

For further information please contact Richard King on 0401 124 876.



Responsible third-party graziers Alethea and Shane Nicolle

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