From Colonial Outpost to Popular Tourism Destination: an

Historical Geography of the Leeuwin-Naturaliste Region

1829-2005

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BA Honours Curtin University of Technology

This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of

Murdoch University 2005
I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work, which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

..............................................................

Dale Sanders
Abstract

While much of inland rural and regional Australia in the early 21st Century is struggling to survive through a tough restructuring period and significant population decline with its associated impacts on local services, many coastal locations are experiencing unprecedented development including non-urban population growth and coastal subdivision. There is an urgent need for a more holistic approach to future development in coastal communities around Australia that recognises the contribution of past land uses and the implementation of sustainable policies and practices that link the environment, people and the economy. Many of these coastal locations share a similar post contact history of a constant effort to create and maintain sustainable communities. Most have experienced several different dominant land uses since European occupation as various political and ideological forces have promoted new ideas and technologies to exploit the available natural resources. Remnants of these past activities, including pre European land use, still remain and have now become an important component of the cultural heritage and tourist product in these coastal regions.

The Leeuwin-Naturaliste Region occupies the extreme south western corner of Western Australia approximately 250km south of the city of Perth and is one location that shares this experience. The region is presently one of the fastest growing areas in Western Australia outside of the metropolitan area. Between 1991 and 2001 the population of the Leeuwin-Naturaliste Region increased by 65% to 31,911 (ABS 2001). Although the region has been experiencing unprecedented growth since the late 1980s, it had previously comprised mostly small rural communities struggling to maintain their populations and economic viability.
The Leeuwin-Naturaliste Region has been ‘discovered’ no less than seven times since European occupation in 1830. It has been ‘invaded’ by a series of different people from both the public and private sectors who have initiated diverse land uses for different objectives. Each new land use activity was initiated from outside the region as people reappraised the environment with little consideration of the knowledge of the local environment obtained through past land use activities. These new land uses were usually politically or demand driven and related to the broader development of the state rather than the long term viability of the local region. Whilst the phenomenal development associated with tourism constitutes the most recent land use activity, tourism was preceded by Early European agricultural Settlement from the 1830s; the timber Industry from the 1850s; the Group Settlements and establishment of a dairy industry from the 1920s; the alternative lifestylers from the 1960s and the viticultural industry from the 1970s.

This thesis will explore both the historical and contemporary processes which have played a significant part in shaping the region’s cultural landscapes and underpin the current development issues it is experiencing. It is argued that much of the land use history of this region has been framed by a consistent frontier ethos and that it is only relatively recently the concept of sustainable development has begun to be implemented even though ironically its principles were effectively guiding land use practices for centuries before European settlement. This thesis concludes that for the most recent land use activity of tourism to achieve the long term sustainability that has eluded so many past land uses, development must facilitate multiple land use management and encourage the continued incorporation of past land use activities to maintain the region’s cultural, social and economic diversity rather than tourism
overpowering them to become the dominant activity. At the same time, of course, these multiple land uses must themselves be managed by contemporary and evolving principles of sustainable development. All stakeholders both within and outside the region need to adopt a more holistic sustainable approach to managing the region’s resources learning from both past land use attempts and the principles of Indigenous cosmology including the importance of the interconnectedness of people, environment and economy. If this is achieved then it is more likely that both current and future generations will have a high quality of life with long term economic security that also ensures the long term maintenance of their socio-cultural and environmental resources.
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**Acronyms**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMR</td>
<td>Augusta Margaret River Mail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CALM</td>
<td>Department of Conservation and Land Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSIRO</td>
<td>Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CWA</td>
<td>Country Women’s Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESD</td>
<td>Ecologically Sustainable Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFA</td>
<td>Regional Forests Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SFA</td>
<td>Surfrider Foundation Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>WAPD</td>
<td>Western Australian Parliamentary Debates</td>
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