

**‘WE DON’T GO TO THE CASINO BUT WE’RE THE  
BIGGEST GAMBLERS IN THE WORLD’:**

**DRIVERS OF CHANGE IN THE MT MAGNET AND  
UPPER GASCOYNE REGIONS.**

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I declare that this thesis is my own account of the research conducted by myself except where other sources are fully acknowledged by footnotes or referencing. This thesis consists mostly of published work and my writing and partly of leaseholders' comments. I declare that this thesis contains as its main content, work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any University.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis examines the complex environmental, social, economic and political challenges surrounding sustainable land use of rangelands by European leaseholders in Western Australia. A study of historical, socio-economic and technological events, combined with the development of social values and policy, exposed a broad suite of factors that shaped pastoralism and grazing, and continues to influence development in these regions today. The thesis also explained how the emergence of the sustainable development paradigm is raising awareness of the ways societies define the issues of development, and the influence of this paradigm on attempts to shape change.

Extensive changes in animal production systems have been made in response to complex factors driving change in pastoralism and grazing in recent years. In the Upper Gascoyne, the change to cattle has resulted in extensive changes in infrastructure and raised new hopes for viable production systems in the future. Station amalgamation or sale of stations to Government Departments have been key factors of change in this region. In the Mt Magnet region, wool production remains dominant. However severe drought conditions and declining wool prices are increasingly forcing change to production of feral goats or Damara sheep.

Increasing conflict in the rangelands centred around competing claims to land and its use, against a backdrop of dry seasons and changing socio-economics, are escalating leaseholders' fears and concerns about growing community demands for multiple rangeland use. Government approaches now focus on multiple use of rangelands, providing incentives or opportunities to develop alternative methods of use for

rangeland resources. However, environmental barriers to sustainable land use and diverse perceptions of sustainability continue to create difficulties for developing effective policies and strategies for change. There is now an urgent need for a paradigm shift in attitudes towards rangelands that promotes more sustainable uses for the land, a greater equality in sharing resources and constructive integration of the values of all rangeland stakeholders.

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