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Our File Number:

Your Reference:

Mr Tony Sievers
Committee Chair
Economic Policy Scrutiny Committee
GPO Box 3721
DARWIN NT 0801

Via email: EPSC@nt.gov.au

Dear Mr Sievers

SUBMISSION REGARDING THE PASTORAL LAND LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2017

Thank you for the invitation to comment on the Pastoral Land Legislation Amendment Bill currently sitting before the Economic Policy Scrutiny Committee.

The Pastoral Land Board is a statutory authority established under the *Pastoral Land Act* and is chartered with monitoring the condition and use of pastoral land to facilitate its sustainable use and economic viability.

The Board has considered the Amendment Bill and supports the amendments to the Act.

The *Pastoral Land Act* is an important piece of legislation governing the Northern Territory Pastoral Estate and as it is now 25 years old, the terminology and offences are dated. The opportunity to amend anomalies such as the ability to charge interest and bring the period for payment of rental invoices in line with Government standards is considered timely.

The Board considers that having the ability to increase membership of the Board, within existing financial resources, would be beneficial to ensure the quorum of four members is met when considering board business. Due to the nature of the industry Board members can become unexpectedly unavailable at short notice and this can impact on the timeliness when processing non-pastoral use and land clearing applications for pastoralists.

As the consent authority, the Board currently considers non-pastoral use applications, as has been allowed by Act since 1992. It is pleasing to note that Government has responded to industry calls to allow for existing sub-lease provisions to be broadened to include the allowable non-pastoral use agricultural activities such as horticulture, agriculture, forestry and aquaculture to attract investment in the pastoral estate.

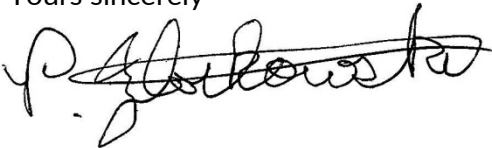
Industry has been seeking changes to the rent methodology for a number of years with a previous Chairman of the Pastoral Land Board sitting on the Working Group that investigated potential options. The Board acknowledges that extensive consultation was undertaken with all pastoral lessees in determining the Estimated Carrying Capacity in 2015 for which the proposed rent methodology refers.

The Board does recommend that the proposed definition of *estimated carrying capacity* on page 2 of the Bill be expanded to include reference to unimproved and un-supplemented vegetation and soil types to provide a clearer, more defined meaning and ensure future clarity over the intent of the use of estimated carrying capacity within the Act.

The Board supports a review of the entire Act in the future, to bring it in line with contemporary farming practices and review many of the other provisions that require further consideration since the legislation was introduced in 1992.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on 08 8999 4667 or email pastorallandboard@nt.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Zlotkowski', written over a horizontal line.

Paul Zlotkowski
Chairman

8 November 2017