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## **Auditor General finds more can be done to protect pastoral lands**

In his latest report tabled in Parliament today, *Management of Pastoral Lands in Western Australia*, Auditor General Colin Murphy found that pastoral land is not adequately protected by the current system of land monitoring and administration.

Mr Murphy said pastoral land has been under threat for over 75 years and during this time there has been limited support to ensure the long-term productivity of the land and to halt the decline in condition.

'The leasing of pastoral lands benefits both the State and lessees. Lessees have the opportunity to run a pastoral business and earn an income. The State has land managed that might otherwise pose a higher risk of uncontrolled fire and feral animals,' Mr Murphy said.

We found the State's knowledge of land condition at the lease level has declined since 2009 as a result of reduced lease inspections, limited use of satellite imagery, a pastoral liaison approach to compliance work that is not well documented, and inadequate records.

As a result, the extent of land condition issues across the sparsely populated and vast pastoral estate is not always obvious.

'The future sustainability of the pastoral industry and the Crown's land estate relies on being able to make informed decisions on how to address existing issues and prevent new ones,' Mr Murphy said.

'I have made a number of recommendations to assist the Pastoral Lands Board, Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage and Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development in their roles, as they work together to protect pastoral lands.

'These include improving lease monitoring and compliance, making better use of satellite imagery to monitor land condition and inform management decisions, and to explore opportunities to provide guidance to lessees on good practice land management to protect our valuable pastoral estate,' Mr Murphy said.

The findings of previous inquiries into the pastoral industry, including the need for lease level monitoring of land condition, and guidance on how best to manage pastoral lands, were reiterated by the audit.

The Auditor General's report, *Management of Pastoral Lands in Western Australia* (Report 17 – 2017), is available on the Office of the Auditor General website at [www.audit.wa.gov.au](http://www.audit.wa.gov.au)

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