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ADVANCING AND PROTECTING THE INTERESTS OF CATTLE PRODUCERS IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

STUART KENNY TRICIA O’HEHIR (DARWIN OFFICE) BEV SEIDEL (ALICE SPRINGS OFFICE)

NTCA STAFF 2004

IAN MCBEAN PHIL HOWIE

EXECUTIVE GROUP AND ALTERNATE
BACK ROW: JOCK MACKAY, PHIL HOWIE, TONY SEARLE, JOHN ARMSTRONG, JOHN UNDERWOOD, ROSS PEATLING, MARK CLIFFORD
FRONT ROW: ROWAN SULLIVAN, HENRY BURKE, JAMIE ROBERTSON, IAN MCBEAN, ROY CHISHOLM, ERNIE HOLT

STUART KENNY TRICIA O’HEIR (DARWIN OFFICE) BEV SEIDEL (ALICE SPRINGS OFFICE)
Greetings. As I reflect on topics for this foreword I am reminded of previous pursuits of this association. President Ken Warriner expressed a plea to the federal Ministry to reconsider the inequity of the exceptional circumstances judgement relating to the then centralian drought. Last year with our efforts in Minister Truss’s and the NT government drought review we may finally have gone some way toward relieving that concern.

President David Bailey referred to the Native Title debate and the unity and strength of our organization that was required to negotiate our way through this debate. The Native Title debate lingers, however never has the fomentation of unity been more crucial than in our efforts now to achieve the protection of our live-export trade and a major upgrading of our road network.

Some gains have been made, but as one sniffs the cool political air in our run up to the next federal election it is noticeable that the sale of Telstra assets may present bytes on the heels of any unwary politicians. Many bush people are not happy with this idea. We must preserve a high degree of good old fashioned service and be able to have access in equitable fashion with our city cousins, to the use of all future technological advances, whatever they may be.

One thing is certain though, any agri-political group that allow further sales of Telstra without the conversion of the ensuing cash into a major upgrading of rural infrastructure, especially our road networks then they will deserve much criticism.

This is where we will depend upon all industry participants having the fortitude to be part of good teamwork and unity of purpose.

It is sad but appropriate to reflect upon the life of one such very solid citizen, perhaps one of our best and a most respected NTCA member and cattleman, the late Mr. Mick Beebe.

The Beebe’s were one of the first importers of good quality Brahman cattle to the NT and one picture that I will carry in my mind’s eye always, is that of flying a helicopter across Ucharonidge nearly twenty five years ago when I noticed a few miles up ahead a large group of white Brahmans that had spotted me.

They were trotting out from a bore to the line of my flight, all jostling for a front row look at this flying machine and seemingly by the look on their faces comparing curious notes about the spectacle of it in the brilliant blue above their special part of, ‘the vision splendid of the sunlit plains extended.’

In my extensive mustering career I have often found that cattle reflect the personality of the man that works them, and the quality, strength and quietness of those cattle and the health of the pasture they were grazing in will always remind me of what I reckon Mick and his family were about.

Something to aspire to.

All the best for the next wet.

John Armstrong
President
I am pleased to report that our industry is on fair footing having enjoyed reasonable sales in 2003. This was due to the record beef prices in the USA which drew an extra 70,000 NT cattle east to service that market. This trend should increase due to the USA’s misfortune with BSE and with restockers going in to the eastern states. Up to 30 decks per week have been trucked from the centre this year to that market.

I am especially pleased to report that our association is in excellent shape with 21 new members since September 2003. What a year 2003 turned out to be. It commenced with the enjoyment of unveiling the year of the outback icon in Katherine, truly an inspirational tribute to not just our forefathers but to everyone in the industry, is the statue of Sabu Singh seated proudly on his horse, Docs Leo and heading to the Western Horizon.

We have handled a plethora of issues, from crocodile harvesting to drought management. Today I will talk about only three, but first I would like to give you a quick snapshot of our Association.

It is the peak NT primary industry lobby group and was founded in 1984 to create a single unified group. Embracing 90% of the Northern Territory cattle herd, its members range from small - medium family operations to large companies.

It is the strongest primary industry lobby group in Australia with offices in Darwin and Alice Springs and it manages the Bohning Sale Yard in Alice Springs – 50,000+ head per year – and the Elliott and Kulgera Yards on behalf of industry.

NT Cattle herd is 1,850,000 head and produces 450,000 quality cattle per year. • 240,000 shipped to Asian markets. • 70,000 Centralian cattle sold to abattoirs, feedlots and live-export • 140,000 sold into QLD and or value added through retained ownership. • A further 100,000 head are usually sourced from QLD for live-export demand.

The NT Pastoralists manage over 620,000 sq km which is 48.5% of the NT or 9.6% of the Australian Landmass. The three principal land tenures are Pastoral lease, Aboriginal freehold and Freehold. 65%+ of NTCA members participate in Landcare compared with 40% nationally and we are currently managing 42 Native Title claims on behalf of 60 members.

Most importantly our Industry injects $330 million dollars directly with an $880 million dollar flow-on effect into the Northern Territory economy.

Our Quadruple Bottom line is:
• Economically viable
• Sustainable environment
• Socially enjoyable
• Cultural / Historical preservation
And our priority issues are;
• Proprietary rights
• Access – Roads
• Access – Communication

PEOPLE

Our most precious asset is our people. Without people the land dies.

One of the tragedies of the pace at which we live, the way we conduct our business and especially in the Centre the prevarication of the weather patterns has been the disengagement of many of the past social aspects of our lives. Whilst as an issue this is not specifically embraced in the objectives of our association, it is nevertheless one which we should keep our eye on I believe.

Good interaction is healthy and apart from the fun of it, it is the by far the best way to develop policy, idea and resolution.

As a beginner to improving the social side I introduced the chairman’s choice of this year from the current crop of bush literature. Some of the stories within its cover may have taken some poetic license; it’s for you to decide. My selection is Jeff Hill’s book “HorseBells and Hobbblechains”.

Some of the characters mentioned are here in this room and many people here will have mentors in this book. You will have to read it to find the reason for the title, though nowadays many of us canter to a different tune.

The NTCA is built on many characters of like charisma and substance, some of whom we will recognize tonight at our dinner. Another is Mr. Barry Coulter for his efforts over many years in his capacity as the NT Minister for the Railway. Perhaps there could have been a ‘Coulter Carriage’, or one the locos out front known as ‘Coulter’ on the first train, but then it might be more fitting that the new Darwin Port freight terminal be recognized as the ‘Coulter Connection’ by the masters of ships that sail in from the seven seas.

Our NTCA executive has been a delight to work with and visitors to our forum have appreciated their frankness and hard work.
We have four perpetual young fellas, Ian McBean, Dick Cadzow, John Underwood and Ernie Holt, who have thoroughly enjoyed their time on the exec and perhaps their sons back home have also enjoyed their time away.

We have many young people coming on and of course these industry associations are a great place for them to do something for industry and themselves.

ROADS
This has been our priority topic all year.

The total road network is 19,375 kms of which 6,545 is sealed. The Department of Main Roads tells us that the system needs an injection of $40M to Repair, Re-Align & Refurbish and $20M per year (+CPI) for recurrent Repairs.

Road users break up into the following major groups:
- CATTLE – Our NT industry use is about 280,000 tonnes per year.
- ABORIGINAL OUTSTATION MOVEMENT – This activity accounts for far more than the cattle use when one considers all fuels, food, steel and cement to build and support such communities along with their service agencies, not to mention all of the associated light traffic.
- TOURISM – Picture the average well fed superannuated tourist with 4 wheel drive, caravan out the back, rocking chair. They dress out at nearly two ton each and there are 200,000 of them. Tourism of course includes Coach traffic, Amateur Fishermen and the touring public. This would be the biggest single use and it embraces heavily our entire network, not just the major through routes.
- MILITARY – Most military usage of today was not even contemplated when our NT roads were being designed and built thirty years ago.
- MINING – There are three major mining areas, Jabiru on the Kakadu highway, Macarthur River area mines on the Barkly Highways and those on the Tanami Highway.

Trucks are much larger now than they were when our roads were built and many roads are so bad that road safety is becoming a serious issue.

Equity of road use we support.
We have a unique problem in the NT where 98% of the NT is unincorporated and finding funding for those roads outside of the Roads to Recovery scheme has engendered some robust and prolific debate.

Roads are the backbone and prime tool of all viable industries.

They are essential for effective drought management. Only government has the capacity and opportunity to provide such infrastructure.

All successful businesses are neat and tidy, with no broken down assets or tools. The nations arterial assets are these broken down roads, they need fixing and the project to fix them is right under our nose, it could be known as, ROADWORKING THE NATION to follow on from the NETWORKING THE NATION, Railway & Snowy schemes.

NATIONAL BEEF STRUCTURES (NLIS & NVD/LPA)
It is a great tragedy that these topics have become acrimonious. Why?

It does not help to see an MLA magazine article proclaiming “this is NLIS” and portraying a gentleman holding up an electronically coded, Property ID Eartag, or a CCA press release: – “The NLIS is based on Australian cattle being fitted with a radio frequency device (I.E. an electronic ear tag), to provide a mechanism for recording the movement (I.E. sale) of all Australian cattle.”

WHAT IS THIS NLIS?
The Primary Industries Ministerial Council (PIMC) decision is that there will be a national livestock identification and tracing system called the “National Livestock Identification System” or NLIS. This is a risk based system which includes individual animal identification including the use of Radio Frequency Identification Devices or RFID, visually readable eartags and herd or flock based systems. Herd or flock based systems are not exemptions, they are an integral part of the NLIS. It is quite clearly not a blessed Eartag.

WHY ARE WE PURSUING NLIS?
To my knowledge, there is not one market yet stipulating it. Our market is the world-wide housewife who wants safe-food and maybe to recognize a brand-name from time to time.
She is not interested in cattle-care class two from Nanango, or LPA class one from some other obscure place, I mean where’s that if you are in Japan? The housewife just wants safe-food be it broccoli or beef.

NLIS is used to locate all animals that have been in contact with any animal with a notifiable disease or with a banned substance in excess of acceptable limits. To go right to the source of the problems, and rectify them.

In the NT we do that easily. Our permanent brands and waybills are not the NLIS in themselves, they are the tools that we use to achieve the standards set by PIMC that are NLIS.

Other states will use other tools. There are a number of proposed tools to achieve the PIMC principles of NLIS. How these tools will stack up in reality is not yet known. There is talk of forty minute desk top audits to trace animals. It is yet to be demonstrated that those paper animals can be identified in the field, especially the ones that were never permanently identified or those whose tags have fallen off. And there-in lies the biggest RFID myth, that of ‘whole of life history’.

Back when this NLIS first started, those animals that were to be identified using the RFID pathway had to be tagged at birth to achieve whole of life identification, now it’s when they leave the property to go to market. Well how do you identify this unidentified animal in a disease outbreak? Where was it for its life if it had no identification to describe it on a waybill? How do you take corrective actions if you are unable to identify the owner of an animal that has no ID, especially one that may wish to suddenly disown infected animals.

Compliance and world-wide accreditation for safe-food will be about cheap and easy to use permanent identification and movement reporting, especially when times are hard. That is why the NT pathway is good and we understand where we are going with it. The rest of Australia seems mighty confused as all of the interaction that we are seeing is angst – as expressed in the media.

This confusion must have come from somewhere, let me go to the meat industry representative structures. When formed six years ago, they were to deliver more grass roots interaction with less government intervention. Those structures all had clear lines of communication from grass roots to Government and across to their service delivery companies. I do not think that those structures and procedures are failing now; I think that it is a failure of the senior members of those structures to communicate with their grass roots members.

The meat industry structures must demonstrate that they understand the issues and communicate those issues to their constituents, recognizing that there may be a number of equally valid alternatives for each issue. That is not happening. It must happen before any more collateral damage occurs. Key personnel of our industry structures will fail us – by failing to communicate effectively and by failing to listen. In short by losing their grass roots interaction. Perhaps they already have? That, is crisis mode in any political world.

Key personnel of our industry structures will fail us – by failing to communicate effectively and by failing to listen. Perhaps they already have? That, is crisis mode in any political world.

• When it is boiled down there are only three things that our housewife market wants, AUSSIE BEEF (hopefully) with, recognizable OIE worldwide safe-food accreditation of which animal ID is only a minute but important part, and of course a quality guarantee which should be our own MSA.

I move on with a quote that I noted in the NT News 20/03/04, by Sir Laurens Van Der Post, explorer, author and philosopher, he said “Human beings are perhaps never more frightening than when they are beyond doubt that they are right”.

CONCLUSION

This is a true story from October 1990 back in the dreaded BTEC days. We were part of a three helicopter party doing the final big shootout down Fitzmaurice river way, that’s up on the northern Bradshaw Station boundary. The first day out Greg Scott and I were collecting PM samples for Lab testing down along the river. One of the really big bullocks that we tested looked like it could also help out with our beef supply.

I took it upon myself to protect this valuable beef from the usual nightly marauders.

I was awoken at 3 am the first night by a big bush pig right beside me and tried to noiselessly get out off my wire stretcher bed, load an SLR to shoot it, but the pig bolted.

The next night I didn’t miss as I had slept with the gun on my bed, safety catch on.

Later that night Dave Russell (one of the stock inspectors) and I brewed up a coffee and yarRED for a while.

• Dave made a remark that I shall not forget. He said, You know John, your mob and our mob, we have hopped a fair bit of criticism for our part in BTEC, but look at our herd now – in the future I know that I can sit back and say – I’m glad that I had just a little bit to do with that”!

And that ladies and gentleman was my philosophy too with BTEC, and now with our own NTCA and as I look around this room I see it well embodied in this forum.

John Armstrong
President
ADVERTISEMENT
Virginia Greville
Special International Agriculture Adviser, Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Thankyou for the opportunity to be here today.

I was a part of the FTA negotiations over the last year or so. While the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade generally runs treaty negotiations, my Department (the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry) clearly has a big interest in Free Trade Agreements in general, and this one in particular, so we took a very active part in the negotiations. I was a member of the agriculture negotiating team and the team which managed the SPS (quarantine) negotiations, and I took a close interest in several of the other negotiations – on non-agricultural goods which covers fish and forests, on rules of origin, on intellectual property and financial services – which were likely to affect agricultural trade. I attended all of the negotiating sessions – we had two in Canberra, two in Hawaii and two in Washington.

So, it is a matter of great personal satisfaction that, despite the considerable odds against it, this Agreement will be concluded.

And I make the comment about the odds being stacked against it, quite seriously. I was posted in Washington, at the Australian Embassy, for the 3 years leading up to the announcement that negotiations would begin. I know first hand how hard it was to convince certain elements in the United States that the Agreement would be worth the pain it caused. And of course, most of the pain that was envisaged up front, and a lot of the pain that actually eventuated, has been in relation to agriculture.

To give some perspective on the process I will just take you back in time to the middle of 2001. I happened to be in Iowa on a week long tour with a group of diplomats from other countries. And, at that stage, while there had been some grumbling among agricultural groups about Australia’s ambitions for a free trade agreement, there was no concerted opposition. But while I was in Iowa – and I remember it very clearly for that reason – the concerted opposition began. A letter from the American Farm Bureau Federation, signed by about 25 of its member organisations, to the United States Trade Representative, started a storm of letters and protest over the next several months from almost every agricultural group in the country, raising every possible reason why a Free Trade Agreement with Australia was a bad idea.

They used a range of very innovative reasons for their opposition to this Free Trade Agreement, ranging from our alleged sins on quarantine and our policy sins in relation to single desk trading, to the fear that such an Agreement would reduce our resolve and our energy on multilateral reform. Some of their reasons and the claims they made in support of them were ridiculous – but what was clear was that US agriculture did not want to do a free trade deal with Australia – they were really scared about competition.

The US understands that Australians are productive, competitive, flexible farmers. They have little interest in any analysis of where we are most or least competitive and why, but were pretty confident that if we wanted this deal badly, then it could not be good for them. It took the next 14 months, and a lot of effort by a lot of people to reduce that level of opposition to a point where the Administration could agree to negotiate with Australia, with any chance of concluding an agreement which could withstand the criticism of the powerful agricultural lobby.

And we now have a draft agreement that does that.

But, following that storm of letters and for the period of 14 months after that, our task was to lower the angst level of the agricultural community in the United States and the elected representatives who, more or less, faithfully reflect their views. We were pretty sure that we were not going to convince them that this agreement would be a positive for them but we had to convince them not to actively oppose it.

I should pay tribute here to the industry representatives, including representatives from the Australian beef industry, who also spent much time and energy on that task. We talked to industry groups, we addressed meetings, we met with Senators, Members of Congress and Staffers and reassured them about our benign intentions.
THE AUSTRALIA-US FREE TRADE AGREEMENT  CONTD.

We talked about the complementary nature of our trade in beef and our shared global interests and ambitions. We talked about our relative size in dairy and the ridiculousness of the concept of us swamping their dairy market, and we stressed the importance of sugar.

It was actually a miracle, of sorts, and a testament to the fact that the Americans do value their relationship with Australia, that the Administration (with our help) got to the point in November 2002 of announcing its intention to negotiate. There were very many times over the preceding months when we were told by well-intentioned and well-connected people – from the Secretary of Agriculture down – that the agriculture sensitivities were so significant that Australia and the United States could not do a deal and we were better off not trying.

So, my point is that it was a long hard battle to convince the Americans that they should even negotiate with us – and, almost to a person, the sensitivity they pointed to, that made a Free Trade Agreement with Australia just too hard, was the fact that we would be looking for a big result on agriculture.

We knew that there has been a significant groundswell in the United States of protectionist sentiment. Those of us who were involved in the lamb safeguard case or who protested and argued against the Farm Bill over the two years that it took to develop and enact understood that. And those of us who witnessed the range of excuses the agriculture groups in the US used in their protestations against any agreement to negotiate an FTA with Australia certainly understood that.

The attitude was enormously frustrating and hugely hypocritical – but before we could deal with it, we had to understand where it was coming from.

American agriculture interests, like their counterparts in Australia or anywhere else, are not all the same. They do have differing attitudes to trade and competition – depending, in large part, on their own experiences with trade, their competitiveness on the world market, the level of protection and subsidy that they enjoy in that heavily distorted environment, the level of subsidy enjoyed by their most vigorous competitors, the distortion in their major markets and a range of other factors. The US only had, in 2001, one free trade deal worth talking about – the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). So the perceptions of much of the agriculture industry were based on what they saw as the results of NAFTA.

The US beef industry, compared to most other US agriculture sectors, is reasonably pro-trade. Certainly, speaking generally, they see themselves as pro-trade and consider their sector to be both unsubsidised and competitive. However, like the agriculture sector as a whole, the US beef industry is not homogeneous. The peak body in the US is the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association (known as the NCBA), which is moderate and well connected politically, with ex-officers located in the Agriculture Secretary’s office and high up in the US Department of Agriculture, and friends in the White House. But there are other cattle industry bodies whose views are less moderate and whose influence is especially important in a number of states. The organisation R-CALF (Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Fund), represents cattle producers in the prairie states along the border with Canada and has a particularly jaundiced view of trade in beef.

It does not seem to matter that, pre-BSE at least, the US and Canadian beef industries were quite synergistic – R-CALF has pursued several anti-dumping cases against Canada and sees NAFTA as a negative – so is anti-trade and wants no market access concessions to be made to anyone.

So, way back in mid-2001, the NCBA may not have been, in principle, opposed to a free trade agreement with Australia. But its membership was declining and there was a noticeable feeling among cattlemen that other trade deals had not been the bonanza for the US beef industry that had been promised. The on-going restrictions into the European market and the seeming inability of the US or the WTO to do anything about them has eroded the confidence of the US cattle producers in the trade system. An on-going battle for members, especially in the north with R-CALF, and uncertainty about the future of the beef check-off was affecting its financial viability – it determined that it could not take a pro-trade position. So, even the NCBA, the organisation among US agriculture groups that we should have been able to depend on, was well and truly on the bandwagon opposing this agreement.

So, in that context, perhaps we were naïve to expect that we would get everything that we wanted from this agreement.

But, the Government has always been clear that it will only enter into bilateral trade deals if the deal on offer is better, or the results achievable more quickly, than can be obtained through the WTO negotiations. And the market access gains made for agriculture in this FTA certainly meet both those criteria.

A realistic assessment of this deal can only be made if you understand why agriculture markets are so highly protected and so distorted. The reason they are so highly distorted is that they have resisted all attempts to reform them either in multilateral or bilateral contexts.
Agriculture was effectively excluded from the first seven rounds of multilateral trade negotiations in the GATT and WTO. After 50 years of failure, the Uruguay Round was a breakthrough because agriculture was included for the first time. It was enormously important that agriculture was included in the Uruguay Round and the reforms themselves were groundbreaking. But, important as they were, the gains made in the Uruguay Round were relatively modest.

The pursuit of further agricultural trade reform through the WTO remains the highest trade priority of this Government – and no country has pushed this agenda harder than Australia. But, given the WTO’s (and the GATT’s) long history of frustration and lack of progress, we need to be realistic about our prospects of success. We will keep trying, of course, and few countries want the Doha Round to succeed more than we do, but we are by no means predestined to succeed.

On the other hand, under the US FTA we have gained real improvements in access for Australian agricultural products to the world’s biggest and richest market. Access which, it seems to me, is beyond what is in prospect in the Doha Round.

On beef, we have eliminated the tariff on our existing exports as soon as the Agreement enters into force. This is worth about $20 million to the Australian beef industry.

We have also gained a significant and growing increase in quota in addition to our current quota of 378,214 tonnes that will, in year 2 or 3, equate to around another $60 million, and which continues to grow over 18 years.

We would have liked more – and we asked for more. I know the industry is disappointed and I understand why.

But let’s remember that Australia has only filled that quota on a few occasions. We are unlikely to do so again for at least a couple of years due to the increase in demand for Australian beef from Japan and Korea following the BSE case in the United States just before Christmas. And by the time that situation resolves itself, Australian beef producers will have access to additional quota volume, in year 3 at the latest.

In that year, year 3, Australian beef producers will be able to export 398,214 tonnes of beef duty free to the United States – an increase of 20,000 tonnes.

That figure will grow to 448,214 tonnes by the 18th year of the Agreement. And by that time, the 26.4% tariff will have been eliminated and Australian beef producers will be able to export an unlimited volume of beef to the US subject only to a beef safeguard.

While I understand the industry’s disappointment that there is a safeguard after year 18, realistically it should only represent a minor inconvenience to the Australian industry.

The safeguard is designed to trigger when beef prices in the United States are falling relative to the average price over the preceding two years. Under this scenario, the safeguard may trigger every two or three years and if it triggers, a safeguard duty – equivalent to 65% of the then US tariff on beef – can be applied.

But it can only be applied to Australian trade in excess of the 448,214 tonnes to which we will be entitled by Year 18 – or the amount to which that has grown by the time the safeguard triggers.

In other words, regardless of the beef safeguard, 448,214 (plus) tonnes of Australian beef will always be able to enter into the United States duty free.

In addition, it is a fact that when beef prices in the US are falling sufficiently to trigger the safeguard, the historical trend has been for Australian beef producers to focus on other markets and to supply less product to the US market - meaning that, in those years when the safeguard is triggered, it is entirely possible that Australian beef producers will not be supplying more than the 448,214 (plus) allocation of duty free beef.

On dairy, we have more than doubled the existing access for those dairy products where access to the United States is constrained by quotas currently.

And this duty-free access will continue to grow at an average of 5% per annum, in perpetuity.

Increased access for Australian dairy products into the United States will begin immediately the Agreement enters into force. This outcome brings substantial benefits to Australian dairy farmers and manufacturers that they would not otherwise have enjoyed. And it provides a deal of certainty – of access and of growth – that should not be dismissed lightly.
There are other agricultural sectors that will also benefit from this agreement immediately. Of all agriculture and food tariff lines, 66% will go to zero on entry into force. A further 9% will be duty free after 3 years. Another 6% after 9 years. And, except for dairy and sugar, all other lines will reduce to zero after 17 years – that is, they will be duty free in year 18.

We have quota access for peanuts and avocados, and for that matter, cotton and tobacco, that we did not have before.

And, as I have already acknowledged, while these gains may not reflect our ambitions, they have been exacted with no painful concessions on the agriculture front.

We did not eliminate our single desk – an overt and oft-stated ambition of the US going into the negotiations and something on which they pressed us very hard.

We have an agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary matters – that is, quarantine – that will work well and in the interests of both partners. We have not agreed to anything which compromises our quarantine standards and we certainly did not – and nor were we asked to – trade off access for any commodity or product. What we have agreed on is a mechanism which will allow for early engagement on technical and scientific matters between close trading partners which will hopefully allow each Party’s risk assessment and policy development processes to work more smoothly.

SO, to sum up, there is one final point for those who might question the value of this deal.

By rejecting it, Australian producers would not only forgo the value of increased quota access and reduced tariffs, but they would also see the value of their existing access eroding over time as the US negotiates FTAs with other – particularly Latin American – countries.

In other words, the choice is not between moving forward with this deal or standing still – the choice is between moving forward and going backward.
ADVERTISEMENT
**RENEWABLE OPTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR CATTLE STATIONS**

Subhash Chandra, Department of Business, Industry and Resource Development

The Renewable Energy Rebate Program offers property owners a window of opportunity to reduce, over the long term, the cost of power supplies. Renewable options for 24-hour power with ‘flick of the switch’ convenience and case studies will be presented.

**POTENTIAL FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY**

The pastoral stations in the Territory are generally large in size, and remote from electricity wires. The Department of Business, Industry and Resource commissioned a scoping study in 2001 to characterise the off-grid electricity market in the NT. The study indicated that there were 277 pastoral properties in the Territory, with over 20-megawatt of diesel-fired electricity generation capacity. This is equivalent to the energy needs of around 10,000 households. According to the study, the installed capacity ranges from 12 -156 kilowatts, with an average capacity of 78 kilowatts. About 26 gigawatt-hour of electricity was generated, consuming over 10 million litres of fuel annually.

The above figures were based on assumptions and generalisations. They do however indicate that diesel generators are extensively used for electricity generation and for irrigation and stock water supplies. With each station having a number of bores, which, in some instances, could be several kilometres apart, servicing the generating sets is time consuming and expensive.

While diesel generators are relatively inexpensive to purchase, there are a number of drawbacks associated with their use. Diesel generators are generally sized to meet the peak demand. If the average demand is much lower than the peak demand then the generator will either operate at light loads or will need to be artificially loaded. At light loads, the generator uses more fuel and causes glazing of cylinder bores, and thus reducing the life of the generator. Diesel generators are expensive to operate due to high fuel and maintenance costs. With power supply limited to generator run times, the lack of 24-hour power impacts on the quality of life. Another drawback is the noise and pollution associated with the use of diesel generators.

The high cost diesel generation and the ideal climatic conditions in the Northern Territory offer opportunities for utilising renewable energy. Renewable energy systems are ideally suited for distributed generation.

**THE SOLAR OPTION**

The Territory receives abundant solar energy. Solar energy has been used in the Territory for many years in a variety of niche applications, including domestic hot water and telecommunications. With recent technological developments, solar energy is becoming an increasingly viable for most pastoral stations, particularly with the rebates that are currently available. Other renewable energy sources such as wind, biomass and micro-hydro are not as abundant, and are site specific.

There are a variety of ways to convert solar energy into useful energy, including flat plate photovoltaics (solar panels), concentrator photovoltaics (PVs) and solar thermal systems. Flat plate and concentrator PVs convert sunshine directly into electricity. Solar thermal systems on the other hand first convert solar energy into heat, which is then converted into electricity. Flat plate PVs and, to a lesser extent, concentrator PVs are being used in commercial applications in the Territory.

Hybrid energy systems integrate solar panels, diesel generator, batteries, and an inverter into a single power supply system, and are most suitable for pastoral stations. Solar panels convert sunshine into electricity, which is stored in the batteries. The inverter converts battery output into single or three-phase AC. The diesel generator automatically cuts in when the batteries are low. The generator when running supplies the load and charges the batteries. The key is to find the right mix of solar array, diesel generator and battery capacity.

Hybrid energy systems offer numerous advantages:
- 24-hour power
- High reliability (more than one independent power source)
- Modular design
RENEWABLE OPTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR CATTLE STATIONS

- Reduced fuel cost
- Low maintenance cost
- Extended diesel life
- Reduced noise and pollution

Figures 1-3 show some of the hybrid energy systems supported by the rebates.

It is not practical to store energy in batteries if the demand for electricity is high. The option for large pastoral stations is to reduce the amount of diesel fuel used during the daytime by connecting the output of the solar array to the diesel grid system via an inverter without battery storage. The capital cost of solar technology and the percentage solar contribution into the diesel grid system are key factors in the viability of such systems. The Power and Water Corporation is currently testing the feasibility of providing up to a third of the peak capacity by solar arrays at Bulman and Kings Canyon (Figure 4).

Pilot projects utilising concentrator PVs are currently being installed at Hermannsburg, Yuendumu and Lajamanu communities. Figure 5 shows a typical dish concentrator system.

THE REBATE PROGRAM

While the use of solar power is becoming cost-effective over the long term for most pastoral stations, the high upfront cost of the solar equipment is still a key factor. The Renewable Energy Rebate Program (RERP) funded by the Australian Government and administered in the NT by the Department of Business, Industry and Resource Development (DBIRD) provides a 50 per cent rebate towards the cost of converting from expensive and environmentally damaging diesel generation to clean renewable energy. $38.2 million is available for this purpose.

There is no dollar limit on the amount of rebate for power systems. The smallest single rebate offered to date has been around $9,000 and the largest around $1 million. There is however a limit of $10,000 for replacement of diesel powered water pumps with solar pumps.

Pre-purchase approval is required in the first instance. The rebate can be paid directly to the supplier once the system has been installed.

RERP commenced in May 2001. It provides a window of opportunity to pastoral stations and other off-grid power users to reduce over the long term the cost of power supplies.

UPTAKE OF REBATES

About $1.07 million in rebates have been offered to date for a total of 54 projects in pastoral stations (Table 1). This represents 13% of the total $8.1 million offered for 160 projects throughout the Northern Territory. The Alice Springs region accounted for about 70% of the total funding approved for pastoral stations.

Table 2 provides details of the hybrid energy systems approved for pastoral stations.
SATISFACTION WITH SOLAR POWER

A survey of all the rebate recipients was recently conducted to gauge client satisfaction with solar power systems. The results indicated that:

- 100% of the clients were satisfied with the reliability of supply;
- 94% were satisfied with fuel savings, 6% were unsure;
- 91% were satisfied with ease of maintenance, 9% were unsure; and
- 94% were satisfied with cost of supply, 3% were unsure, and 3% were not satisfied.

Here is what some of the pastoralists who have taken advantage of the rebates have said:

“I am saving $35,000 a year and by the end of 2004, I will have paid off the cost of the system”

“After two and a half years the new system has been very successful. We’ve only turned the generator on a handful of times”

“Life here is really much easier, freer and more pleasant in many aspects for everyone since we decided to install the new system”

“We can run the overhead fans all night and everyone’s getting a good night’s sleep”

CONCLUSIONS

Renewable energy systems can provide reliable, cheaper and continuous power supply 24 hours a day. The current rebates offer pastoral stations an ideal opportunity to switch from diesel generation to renewable energy at half the cost. We hope many more pastoral stations will take advantage of this opportunity before the rebate funding runs out.

Table 1: Uptake of rebates by pastoral stations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>USER GROUP</th>
<th>NUMBER OF REBATES OFFERED</th>
<th>REBATE AMOUNT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>POWER SYSTEMS</td>
<td>PUMPING SYSTEMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastoral stations</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Hybrid Energy Systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATION</th>
<th>DIESEL GENERATING SET(S)</th>
<th>NUMBER AND RATING OF SOLAR PANELS</th>
<th>BATTERIES</th>
<th>REBATE (EX GST)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>12 kVA, 45 kVA</td>
<td>112, 80 watt</td>
<td>240 V, 120 AH</td>
<td>$165,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.5 kVA, 15 kVA</td>
<td>80, 80 watt</td>
<td>120 V, 600 AH</td>
<td>$99,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>32 kVA</td>
<td>30, 175 watt</td>
<td>60 V, 1320 AH</td>
<td>$79,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>12 kVA</td>
<td>56, 80 watt</td>
<td>120 V, 600 AH</td>
<td>$74,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>18 kVA</td>
<td>40, 140 watt</td>
<td>120 V, 1025 AH</td>
<td>$74,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>35 kVA</td>
<td>25, 175 watt</td>
<td>120 V, 1025 AH</td>
<td>$57,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>35 kVA</td>
<td>25, 175 watt</td>
<td>120 V, 1025 AH</td>
<td>$57,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>45 kVA</td>
<td>25, 175 watt</td>
<td>120 V, 1025 AH</td>
<td>$53,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>35 kVA</td>
<td>20, 175 watt</td>
<td>120 V, 825 AH</td>
<td>$47,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>18 kVA</td>
<td>20, 175 watt</td>
<td>120 V, 700 AH</td>
<td>$47,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>35 kVA, 12.5 kVA</td>
<td>22, 60 watt</td>
<td>48 V, 1080 AH</td>
<td>$35,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>15 kVA, 12 kVA</td>
<td>20, 80 watt</td>
<td>120 V, 670 AH</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>28 kVA</td>
<td>10, 80 watt</td>
<td>24 V, 600 AH</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
ADVERTISEMENT
It gives me great pleasure to address the Annual NT Cattlemans Association Conference being held in Darwin.

My name is Libby Beath and I'm Corporate Affairs Manager for Telstra based here in the Territory. I'm a mother of two and I have lived and worked in the Territory for nearly 30 years.

I've only been with Telstra for a year, previous to that I began my working life in the Territory in January 75 working for Peter and Sandy Bloomfield on Loves Creek Station – I spent three years there and I still say that my time there taught me more about myself and others than any time I spent at University.

Since then I have worked on remote Aboriginal Communities as a teacher, and in an education/pr role with the mining/oil and gas industry including Methanex and most recently with the AustralAsian Railway Corporation during construction of the rail link between Alice Springs and Darwin.

If I can dwell just a little longer on my story I must say that my reaction to joining Telstra and learning just how “in contact” people now are on remote properties I was a little shocked, almost saddened – I likened it to how I felt when they sealed the final section of the Stuart Highway – inevitable and necessary but sad for those who remember the “good old days” of the daily galah session – at 12:00pm when every man, woman and child (it seemed) tuned and made contact, Papa Kilo was our call sign – it was a gossip session come catch up time but it wasn’t very personal – you couldn’t really express how you felt about being at the homestead alone for 3 weeks.

It saddened me because I am a romantic – that pioneering spirit where real bushies don’t...use a mobile phone. But the more I thought about what changing technologies has meant to those living in the bush the more I have come to realize that the bush still exists – its still harsh and tough but you can’t stop progress and if we were really honest with ourselves – we wouldn’t want to go backwards and lose those tools of communication that are now part and parcel of everyday life.

When I knew that I would be talking to you today about Women and Telstra I spent some time talking to the women I work with. Without exception all have worked for Telstra for at least ten years, usually 20 and a few have been with the company for over 30 years. I would like to begin with a couple of their insights.

Lyn – who has worked for Telstra for 34 years recalls getting the Darwin exchange back up and running after Cyclone Tracy – when they finally made contact with the outside world (2 days later) they could only contact Mt Isa and of all places Sale – they knew why they were able to talk to Mt Isa as they had a direct line there but they couldn’t and still don’t know why they contacted Sale but for days all phone calls went direct to Sale and then onto the callers destination.

There have been two constants along the way – unrelenting technological change and a necessarily ever-increasing commitment to customer service. You may raise your eyebrows to the latter – I know I would have joined you 12 months ago BUT 6 years ago – on average remote fault restorations took place on time only 63% of the time, now its 94% of the time – but its still not good enough – we will continue to strive for 100%.

Together, these have resulted in a stunning array of new products and a range of ways to use those products that is aimed at giving you, the customer, convenience, value-for-money and relevance. Its not a ‘one size fits all,’ solution anymore.

I want to let you know just how this new age technology – with the internet and wireless technology at their heart – can support the role of women in the bush.
I want to talk about how they can enhance the lives of women and their families living, working, learning, studying, accessing goods and services, ideas and information – and just keeping in touch – in outback Australia.

And I want to talk about how Telstra, in particular Telstra Country Wide, is working very hard at getting it right, to ensure that all Australians – irrespective of where they live – have the ability to communicate at the same level of those living in the city.

I begin with a simple observation: “women may well prove to be the key to unlocking the potential of the new communications and information products and services in outback Australia.”

Why? – because they do so much – a trite answer, perhaps, but in my opinion, not that far off the mark.

Let me explain – They make an immense contribution.
I speak generally, but I think it’s fair to say that many women in the bush do not just run the home, but also have a major say in running the property, or business. They’re business partners in the truest sense, while still running a household.
• They do the shopping.
• They pay the bills.
• They do the banking.
• They keep the books.
• They order supplies for both home and business.
• They play a significant role in decision making, both home and business-related.
• They deal with government departments and agencies and other authorities.
• They keep in touch with others. They’re more heavily involved in family and community communications networks than men.
• And they’re intimately involved in their kids’ education, which is often long distance.

My point is that so much of what women in the bush do everyday lends itself perfectly to the online environment. These are all traditional activities that can now be replicated electronically – done more conveniently, more quickly, and often more cheaply, online and via a mix of state-of-the-art cable, satellite and wireless delivery technologies.

Online banking, bill paying, shopping, ordering, paying taxes, rates and charges, researching for business or personal use, teleworking, distance education, pursuing hobbies and interests, checking commodity prices, monitoring the weather, video conferencing, email, chatting – the list goes on.

So, if women are the ones predominantly undertaking or overseeing these activities, it follows that women could well be the key to outback Australia fully realising the benefits that new communications technologies have to offer.

The geographic, technical, operational and economic challenges of being connected – of ensuring adequate telecommunications for all Australians across the breadth of the nation (often in many areas as the only interested provider) – are ongoing for Telstra.

To better meet these challenges, we established Telstra Country Wide nearly four years ago with the deliberate aim of rebuilding Telstra’s reputation in rural and remote Australia, improving service performance and growing our business in the bush.

Telstra Country Wide is a separate business entity within Telstra. In fact, it’s the only Telstra business unit to have its own Board – eight members, two of whom are women.

Jenny Russell, a Queensland grazier, and Jano Foulkes-Taylor, who has pastoral interests in WA, bring to the Board formidable track records and the perspective and experience of women who know first-hand the communications issues confronting outback Australia.

When we set up Telstra Country Wide, we did something quite unusual – though it was hardly rocket science when you look back at it – just plain common sense.

We decided to put a number of our best managers back into regional areas.

We now have 35 Area General Managers across Australia. The idea is to have them and their teams live and work in the same place as their customers, and potential customers.
This was no token decision. We gave those handpicked managers – a brief to:
• get out and talk with their customers
• find out what people really wanted by way of communications
• work with local communities and individuals to improve service delivery; and
• identify product solutions to meet local needs.
We empowered these managers to make decisions based on local needs and circumstances.
We gave them budgets.
And we gave them authority to make decisions about where those budgets should be spent – decisions based on local factors, local network knowledge and local priorities.
Now, almost four years on, I’m delighted to say this local management model has worked better than even we thought it would. We’ve taken a number of other initiatives to ensure customers in rural and remote areas can access us.
In communities that have no Telstra presence, authorised agents provide a local ‘Face of Telstra’. There are currently ?? such agents in locations such as newsagents, general stores and post offices.
As a direct consequence of Telstra Country Wide’s on-the-ground presence, it has been able to go a long way in addressing the issues raised by customers themselves, including women, in rural and remote Australia.
These include –
• delays in installing services and fixing faults
• the need to improve infrastructure, networks and rural exchanges
• cost disadvantages generated by the fact that the majority of calls made by remote subscribers were timed and charged at STD rates.
• the need for Telstra’s product and service offerings to be relevant to the bush, not just the urban areas
accessibility, particularly to the internet
• expanding and improving mobile coverage
• educating people to get the best out of internet and mobile usage
So, nearly four years on, how has Telstra Country Wide done?
Telstra Country Wide has overseen some demonstrable and, in some cases, dramatic improvements in the delivery of communications to the bush.
With its local presence, it now better understands the communication priorities of its customers and is able to provide faster and more responsive customer service, better education on new technology and to build lasting community partnerships.
Projects like the $187 million investment in rural & remote telecommunications infrastructure announced in July 2002 are a major assault on areas of the remote telecommunications network that haven’t been performing as well as we – or our customers – would prefer.
We’re also constantly upgrading our infrastructure to make way for new technology and products.
For instance, we replaced the older Digital Radio Concentrator Systems (DRCS) with the latest technology under both our own national program and in delivering the requirements of the Commonwealth Government’s $150 million Untimed Local Calls in Extended Zones tender, which has significantly upgraded services for around 28,000 customers in some of Australia’s most remote parts.
Affordability is always being addressed. Access charges have been rebalanced with call costs, our broadband offerings re-priced and our mobile offering plans streamlined.
Call zoning system changes and new pricing plans provide greater choice and flexibility.
Customers in outer metropolitan areas can now make 25 cent untimed calls to adjoining metropolitan areas, rather than pay STD rates. These are real improvements for people – both socially and financially.
One of our major successes has been to make the internet more accessible and affordable. We now provide local call access from anywhere in the country to the most popular dial-up BigPond plans available. No matter where you are in Australia, you can access the internet for the cost of a local call.
As more and more Australians discover the potential of the internet, the demand for higher internet/data speeds increases.
For customers requiring faster speeds we have improved access to high speed internet and BigPond Broadband through a range of technologies – ADSL, Satellite and ISDN.
Through this mix of technologies we can meet coverage, capacity, speed, and cost requirements of our regional customers.
People living in some of the most remote parts of Australia, including indigenous communities, were offered high speed internet through the Telstra BigPond Broadband Two-Way Satellite service – at no installation cost.
I would like to say that it was the creative thinkers within Telstra who included two-way satellite in our bid for the Untimed Local Call tender, mentioned earlier, as the best solution to providing improved voice telephony while also relieving the voice network of internet traffic.
This enabled us to offer the installation and hardware for free,
resulting in some 3000 customers in remote Australia enjoying faster, more reliable internet for banking and other online services and sharing in the global on-line community.

An example of how the internet has changed the way those living remotely do business is better said by one of our customers – Val Fisher, she is the owner of the Hayes Creek Wayside Inn: “At first, I wasn’t sure how it could be of use; but we gave it a go – and now I love it... I use the two way satellite to order supplies for the roadhouse, do my banking and keep in touch with family in other parts of Australia. We also rely on the satellite as a back-up if there is a fault on the phone line. When a fire damaged the cable recently I was able to email Telstra, who also phoned through my weekly milk order.”

A range of help services to solve internet problems and assist customers with a Telstra fixed line to achieve sufficient speeds for simple browsing and e-mail – the most common uses of the internet – is also available through the Internet Assistance Program, a joint initiative with the Commonwealth Government.

Mobile communications are another big issue in outback Australia. There are now 30 remote communities that now have CDMA coverage – these include Ramingining, Pine Creek, Alyangula, Mataranka, Timber Creek, Elliott, Barkly Roadhouse, and Eldunda just to name a few.

When all of these projects are completed by June 2004, Telstra’s CDMA network will cover 1.4 million square kilometres – making it accessible to more than 97 per cent of the Australian population.

Even so, the sheer size of Australia and its sparse population means that terrestrial mobile networks may not cover everyone.

So Telstra continues to explore affordable alternative technologies to meet the telecommunications needs of its rural and remote customers.

Two years ago, Telstra Country Wide entered into a Service Provider Agreement with the global satellite carrier, Iridium, for the domestic sale of its global mobile satellite services.

We used our marketing expertise and strength to maximise the opportunity of a restructured Iridium to bring cost effective mobile services beyond the reach of our CDMA and GSM networks.

This agreement enables us to offer a competitively priced, hand-held mobile satellite phone across the Australian land-mass, including the Australian Economic Zone 200 nautical miles out to sea and extend to all external Australian territories, except Antarctica.

Another new product generating lots of interest from property owners in areas of little or no mobile coverage is the long-range cordless phone, which provides cordless coverage up to about 10km with a line of sight from the home antenna – potential coverage, under ideal geographic conditions, of around 30,000 hectares.

We don’t kid ourselves that all is perfect communications-wise in outback Australia. There’s still much to do to plug the service gaps, to overcome the network shortcomings, to rectify the persistent fault areas.

But we’re convinced we’re on the right track. Continued feedback from our customers in rural and remote areas will help us keep up the momentum in closing the gap between customer expectation and our performance.

The new technologies offer the opportunity to positively enhance the economic viability, the sustainability and the very livability of rural and remote communities across this country.

For women in particular in these communities, they offer –
- The opportunity to overcome the tyranny of distance like never before
- The opportunity to overcome isolation

Some other advantages include:
- The opportunity to better access education, health and a range of services
- The opportunity to network
- The opportunity for lifestyle improvements that can really make a difference –
  - like being able to be more closely linked with children at boarding school through email,
  - or knowing that your husband working in the stock camp is safe and only a phone call away
  - or starting up a business online
  - or having time to pursue a hobby on the net
  - or simply chatting online with people of like-minded interests.

As such, the new technologies offer –
- choice
- a sense of identity
- empowerment, and
- freedom

To date, the focus in communications and information technology has been on the technology.

For 25 years, people have had to adapt to changes and new developments in technology – to come to terms with its complex structure and demands.

Today we are on the verge of a new era. For the next 25 years, technology has to adapt to people and their needs.

It must meet people’s expectations in every facet of their lives – at work, at home, in their communities, their interests, their need for information and knowledge.

Outback Australia will be part of this user-driven transition where society’s real needs will define the arrival and form of future generations of communications technology. In this most demographically diverse of nations, the city/bush divide is definitely closing.

Maybe we are approaching for the first time a situation where, no matter where people choose to live, they can have it all.

Thank you for your time.
Thank you for inviting me to your conference.

It seems rather ironic that someone from Canberra should be addressing this gathering on the topic of sustainable pastoral production. Particularly when so much has happened in recent years within the industry itself to improve grazing management.

But this is a good opportunity to explain the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry’s interest in the rangelands and the grazing industries.

The department has always had a close relationship with primary industries. However, the focus has been more on production, commodity policy and trade issues. There has been rather less emphasis on natural resources management.

Recently the department has been working to develop closer partnerships with industry through several of its natural resource management programs. In particular, we are forming partnerships with industries through the National Landcare Program, which I manage, to assist industries to identify resource management issues and to work out how best to address these.

As part of this program, we have placed Landcare coordinators with a number of producer organisations around Australia, including the Northern Territory Cattlemen’s Association. And I want to tell you something more about that program.

More importantly, I will be asking for your feed back and advice on how the pastoral industry and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry can work together towards better management to produce both profits and to protect the resource base.

**IMPORTANCE OF THE RANGELANDS AND GRAZING INDUSTRIES**

DAFF’s mission is to increase the profitability, competitiveness and sustainability of Australian resource-based industries. Based on this, there are two good reasons why DAFF is interested in the rangelands. First, they make a considerable contribution to the economic viability of a large part of Australia.

Second, the people who live and work in the rangelands have an important role to play in the use and conservation of natural resources.

The total value of Australia’s meat and livestock exports was estimated by ABARE in 2002-03 to be $4.3 billion. About half of Australia’s cattle herd is located in northern Australia. Some 7 per cent of the national cattle herd is located in the NT with an export value of $187 million. This is an important industry to northern Australia.

About 60 per cent of Australia is classified as rangelands – used largely for extensive grazing of livestock. All up, there are about 4,000 enterprises in the rangelands, a relatively small proportion of the 100,000 agricultural enterprises nationally. 200 of these are in the NT.

The point of giving you these figures is to demonstrate that a relatively small number of people have responsibility for managing a huge part of Australia’s land area.

Sustainable agriculture is a high priority for governments – state, territory and federal. This reflects a concern in the wider community that Australia’s natural resources need to be more sustainably managed.

The concept of sustainable management should not ring alarm bells. It has been with us for the best part of 15 years. The focus is not on the environment alone. The concept of sustainability also includes economic development and the social outcomes – the so-called triple bottom line. The aim is to match land use with its long-term capability.

Healthy, productive and profitable farming and grazing operations are closely associated with sustainability. High productivity is associated with healthy ecological systems.
The idea of sustainable development is increasingly being recognised in Commonwealth and State legislation and, I understand, is reflected in recent Territory legislation applying to the pastoral management.

The thing that I want to emphasise is this – if the community’s broader sustainability objectives are to be achieved, it can only happen with the full cooperation and engagement of farmers and pastoralists.

As I have pointed out, they own or have responsibility for managing most of the land. Farmers and pastoralists have a strong vested interest in the condition of their properties. Not only for today but also so that the land may be passed on to the next generation in good condition.

**INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS**

So, how can governments and industry work together to achieve better resource management. The National Landcare Program will be familiar to many of you. The Program has funded a range of activities in the Territory over more than a decade.

The program is currently funding projects, amongst others, being undertaken by the Victoria River District Conservation Association, the Roper River Landcare Group and the Centralian Land Management Association.

Landcare’s penetration is good – it engages about 40 per cent of farmers Australia-wide. Landcare is associated with the uptake and adoption of improved farm management practices. But we have recognised that the landcare group approach does not suit everyone and that it does not suit all conditions.

The large distances and remoteness of many pastoral properties makes traditional landcare group activity difficult: although the coverage of Landcare in the NT is surprisingly high at around 60 per cent, according to ABARE survey results.

To increase the uptake and adoption of improved management practices, this year a new element has been added to the program. It is called Industry Partnerships. It is not designed to support traditional landcare activity – other parts of the program do that.

The focus of Industry Partnerships is on working with industry groups to identify resource management issues facing industry and to assist the industry in developing ways of addressing these issues. The idea of industry ownership of issues and the development and implementation of solutions is a central feature of landcare.

The following will give you some idea of partnership programs already in place:

- **DAIRYING FOR TOMORROW PARTNERSHIP**
  The partnership is implementing key elements of the Dairying for Tomorrow strategy developed by the industry. The partnership, being managed by Dairy Australia, has four elements – an Environmental Management Systems styled, farm level Self Assessment Tool; a dairy whole farm business-planning package to enhance environmental and financial management; a process to assess environmental needs and industry capacity, in order to establish appropriate targets for change in management practices within the industry; and facilitating communication between regional industry and catchment groups.
  Importantly, the dairy industry will be seen as progressive, innovative and a responsible natural resource manager, within their regions, across Australia and in international markets.

- **COTTON: INTEGRATED NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH KNOWLEDGE, PARTNERSHIPS AND ACTION**
  The aim of the Cotton Industry Partnership project is to increase the adoption of land use strategies that maximise the contribution to catchment health made by cotton farms.
The focus is to provide the necessary technical expertise to improve longer-term natural resource management services provided to the industry through the extension network.

- **Australian Fertiliser Services Association Natural Heritage Trust Project**

The Association has been a partner with the Commonwealth to develop guidelines and code of best management practices for fertiliser management specifically covering the storage, transport, provision of product knowledge and application of fertilisers.

Now these projects may appear to be of little relevance to the pastoral industry in the NT. But the principles are very relevant and, as you can see, management systems and practices are a prime feature of the three projects.

As I pointed out before, an important characteristic is that the projects are industry owned and managed. There may be the potential to develop similar partnerships with the grazing industries.

**NTCA Landcare Coordinator**

I mentioned earlier that the National Landcare Program is funding a coordinator located with the NTCA. Matthew Bolam has been appointed to the position and I am sure many of you will have had the opportunity to meet him.

I would like to thank the Cattlemen’s Association, and particularly Stuart Kenny and Jim Forwood for their enthusiastic support for the coordinator project and for their assistance in getting the project up and running.

Matthew’s brief is to explore natural resource management issues with pastoralists – to determine what their priorities are and to see how and where the National Landcare Program can assist the industry in meeting its goals.

One important task will be to look for ways of improving the communication of messages back to the wider community about improvements in rangeland management practices.

The grazing industries need to get recognition for the advances already made. They need to be able to demonstrate that it is not all doom and gloom out there and that significant advances in management have been made.

You will know better than I where management systems have changed. But the clearly the development of rotational grazing in many areas, the better management of watering points and control of total grazing pressure, including feral animals and the capacity to handle droughts are developments that reflect the better understanding of the way rangelands respond to grazing.

Improvements in the quality of livestock and the ability to get younger stock off to market have provided the cattle industry with more flexibility to respond to seasonal and market variability.

Many corporate properties are already using triple bottom line reporting – their shareholders are increasingly expecting it.

The National Land and Water Resources Audit, managed by a former Territorian, Blair Wood, is developing a means of reporting on rangeland condition at the national level.

The Audit rangelands work will incorporate the good work that has been going on in the Northern Territory government agencies on rangeland assessment.

And the Audit reporting is designed to reflect improvements in condition and management practices as well as identify areas of concern.

**Concluding Comments**

In closing, I would like to emphasise the importance of the engagement of landholders and managers in implementing improved natural resource management practices. Improved management can contribute to social and environmental outcomes, as well as improve productivity and profitability.

We are looking for ways in which we can assist industries to identify and implement strategies for improved management. In this respect, I would encourage you all to talk to Stuart Kenny and Matthew Bolam – give them your ideas and feedback.

I would also encourage you to provide information on where improvements in management practices and condition have occurred so that a complete picture can be presented.

Thank you.
Panel Session

Nathan O’Brien
Max Lines
Paul Zlokowski

The Hon. Ted Egan AO, Stuart Kenny & Nerys Evans
Virginia Greville, The Hon. Ted Egan AO & Nerys Evans
Barry Gerschwitz, Bruce White, Bill McGuinness & Tricia White

John Cox, John Underwood, Virginia Greville & Charles Willcocks

NORTHERN TERRITORY CATTLEMEN’S ASSOCIATION INCORPORATED
ADVANCING AND PROTECTING THE INTERESTS OF CATTLE PRODUCERS IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY
When I first went to Canberra as your NFF representative, my initial thoughts were: “what an absolute maze!” I didn’t have a clue as to who was who and who did what. Well, twelve months down the track, it is still a maze but I do have some idea of who does what.

The organisation structure at the moment is made up of the Council incorporating State Organisations (NTCA is one), Commodity Councils (eg Cattle Council) associate members, affiliate members and Friends of NFF. The Council has two meetings a year. Affiliation fees are based on the gross value of agricultural product.

These Council Meetings set Policy.

Next is the Executive of NFF who keeps the finger on the pulse and can make policy suggestions to the Council. The Executive is made of State Farm Organisations –

These include NTCA; three elected members representing Commodity Councils (at present grains, cattle and cotton); as well as the NFF President, Vice President and Treasurer. The Secretary of the NFF Executive is the CEO of NFF.

The NFF is supported by a series of committees, each having a Chairman to report to the Council and to the Executive when required. The Committees include:

- Farm Business and Economic Committee
- Industrial Relations Committee
- Farm Chemicals Sub-Committee
- Quarantine and Animal Health Sub-Committee
- Trade Sub-Committee
- Environment Working Group
- Land, Water and Vegetation Task Force.

The National Farmers’ Federation Strategic Plan has three components –

a) VISION: Australian Farmers operating profitable and sustainable farm businesses.

b) MISSION STATEMENT: To influence the Commonwealth Government, its Parliament and agencies, to deliver policy outcomes to the advantage of Australian farmers.

c) GOALS:

1) **Increase profitability by reducing costs** concentrating on:
   - Industrial relations
   - Taxation
   - Telecommunications
   - Transport
   - Macroeconomics
   - Farm Costs

2) **Increase markets & revenue including**
   - Trade negotiations to reduce market barriers and trade tariffs
   - Generally encourage trade reform

3) **Improve sustainability**
   - Environment including land and water security
   - Agricultural programmes
   - Regional development
   - Basically that is what NFF is all about. It is a pretty big ask and an expensive one which I shall comment on later. We must remember that NFF is our national and international voice. NFF must be REACTIVE and PROACTIVE in the national debate.
   - Just a quick comment on some of NFF activities from my first year as your representative:

**LABOUR & EMPLOYMENT COSTS**

There was a postponement in payment of 2003 national wage increase for all farmers receiving Exceptional Circumstance Assistance.

There was an agreement reached with the ATO to minimise some of the costs (mainly humbug) associated with administering the new super employee notification, i.e., if you are not sure of where ex employees are, just keep the notification on record.

**TAXATION**

Negotiations resulted in Farm Management Deposits becoming more user friendly. FMDs help individuals control farm income in good years in order to minimise tax or alternately by withdrawing FMDs when income needed in low-income years.

**TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

NFF has worked hard on the government to ensure services in rural and regional areas are up to an acceptable standard at least equivalent to those in urban areas.

**TRANSPORT**

NFF has pushed for the continuation of the Roads to Recovery Programme, which will provide $300 million per year to rural and regional councils for upgrading roads and putting in new infrastructure.
TRADE
NFF continued to play a role in the campaign for meaningful reform of world agricultural trade.

NFF was frustrated after the 5th WTO ministerial meeting in Mexico last year refused to address farm reform. There were a lot of negatives, not many positives but the battle goes on...

The Free Trade Agreement with the United States of America represents a landmark in improving Australia's trade relationships with the world's most dynamic and richest economy, one third of the world's GDP and the world's largest merchandise and service exporter and importer.

The agreement will very significantly enhance Australia’s attractiveness as a destination for US investment.

For most of our export industries these slow but sure advances to a key market with reduced in some cases, and zero in others, tariffs will underpin their prosperity.

Peter Corish NFF President, Alan Burgess Trade Committee Chairman and Ben Fargher Senior Trade Policy Manager all put in a super human effort during the final weeks, days and hours of signing the FTA.

It could have been a lot better result for agriculture, but one thing is for sure - it would have been a lot worse without their stirring efforts.

LIVE EXPORTS
NFF welcomed the release of the Keniry Report. The government response will be interesting. In its submission, NFF supported the establishment of an independent national standards body for livestock exports.

NFF was also pleased by recommendations about contingency planning and risk negotiation, as well as the development of an emergency response system based on similar lines to Ausvet plan.

Recommendation 6 of the Keniry Report regarding closure of southern ports at certain times of the year and an operational holding facility in the Middle East were treated with caution.

NFF contributed to the review on National Animal Welfare Strategy. This strategy is of the utmost importance to a shell shocked live export industry.

Equally important is the attendance of NFF Quarantine and Animal Health Chair Keith Adams to an international standard setting body, the Office of International Epizooties (OIE) Conference in Paris this February 2004.

The big issues facing farmers Australia wide are land and water security.

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) reached agreement on water usage in August 2003. Guidelines were agreed upon based on improved security of water access entitlements.

These guidelines also took into account reduction in future allocations where they might be needed for the health of the river system.

The encouragement of cities to be more responsible for their water use including better use of rainwater, storm water and recycled water was mooted.

Funding by the Federal and State Governments for the Murray Darling over utilisation was agreed upon. Although there is still a long way to go, it was a positive start.

For farmers to manage their natural resources, particularly land and water, in an environmentally sustainable manner, they must have certainty about their long-term use of their resources. Farmers must have this security to invest in efficient and environmentally sustainable management practices and also to give banks and other leading institutions confidence to support these investments.

Wish the NFF luck. The political battle has only just begun as the Douglas Daly people are starting to realise.

NFF has called for COAG to adopt a similar approach to land and native vegetation as to that which has evolved with water. A similar positive approach would give farmers the security they need to ensure that farming is sustainable and environmentally sound.
Drought, Biodiversity, Greenhouse, Biotechnology and Farm Chemicals are some of the numerous other ongoing issues that NFF embraces on behalf of Australian farmers.

At the beginning of this report I mentioned the cost of running NFF was becoming a challenge to all concerned. State Farm Organisations were having trouble meeting subscriptions. Reserves were diminishing quickly.

NFF has reacted by reviewing its workload, hence its new strategic plan. NFF is also planning a restructure aimed at increased membership and funding. One of the ultimate aims is to reduce members’ affiliation fees.

At this time this proposed restructure is still being worked upon and subsequently still “in house.” It will surface at the NFF AGM and Conference in June 2004.

Any further details on NFF activities can be obtained from web site www.nff.org.au

Thank you for your support.

My best wishes to everyone for a prosperous 2004.

NFF still cannot make it rain.

JOHN UNDERWOOD AM
Riveren Station, 17th February 2004

ADVERTISEMENT
CATTLE COUNCIL REPORT 2003/2004

Cattle Council has been very active over the past twelve months on a whole range of issues that affect the industry. I will try to briefly cover the main ones.

One major issue that took a lot of time and effort was the “Cormo affair” which left a very bad taste in the mouth of the majority of the general public as well as a lot of politicians. Even though this was a sheep issue it affected the live export industry as a whole.

I think that a lot of our industry did not quite understand how many people wanted to close down the live export trade, whether it be cattle or sheep. If the industry suffers another disaster like the Cormo or Becrux I think we, as producers, will be battling to keep the live export trade going.

Out of the Cormo debacle came the Keniry Review on live export. The NTCA responded with recommendations to this review. The first recommendation by Keniry was to prepare a national standard for live exports: “The Australian Code for Export of Livestock”.

Our response was that The Northern Territory wishes to participate in the development of the code.

I raised the subject at the CCA Executive meeting in Melbourne in March this year & the response was: “the whole code will be written by the Government & there will be no input from industry”. This was not the fault of Cattle Council.

We as an industry have to make sure we are not totally driven by governments in the foreseeable future. (The President was to pursue the issue with our Chief Minister to try and get input from the NTCA and John may wish to comment on that later on.)

Live exports to date this year are well back on numbers due to a huge wet in the Top End, poor condition of roads, the value of the $, and, I am told the lack of ships. As everyone knows this is a very important market for the NT and our “short haul” live export record continues to be well above international standards with regard to mortality and general animal welfare practices. We should be on main stream TV telling everyone these facts.

MLA/Livecorp and the industry is working to improve facilities overseas with regard to slaughter facilities and general animal welfare issues.

I won’t go into it but Richard Carlton & 60 minutes is dredging up some archaic footage which blatantly demonstrates his lack of understanding of progress within the industry over the last couple of years.

Another hotly debated topic is of course the NLIS.

A huge amount of paperwork has been circulated by email and press releases about NLIS and a lot of this material is contradictory and confusing.

Cattle Council is supporting the PIMC agreement in regard to NLIS.

The Territory has a very good position on NLIS and our department has issued a small booklet covering our compliance. Basically we have herd based traceback through brands, waybills and tailtags. We will not require RFID tags unless we decide to sell in a State where electronic identification is mandatory and then cattle will only have to be tagged when they leave the property for that destination. Stock going to live export will not require RFID and at this stage cattle moving into Queensland do not require RFID. Cattle born after 1 January 2004 moving from the NT to SA will require RFID.

I would encourage everyone to get hold of the Producer Information Package from the Dept.

We should not fool ourselves. Eventually it will be mandatory for all cattle in the NT & other states to have an RFID tag. Consumer forces will bring that on the industry but, we
should stall as long as possible. There are still too many kinks in the system.

The ABA & Property Rights Australia have been noisy groups and anti NLIS advocates in Queensland however the Minister for Primary Industries in that state has reiterated that the State Government will go ahead with its commitment for a 1 July 2005 start date for NLIS in Queensland.

Queensland has had the same policy as the NT and that is “NLIS be on a voluntary basis and market driven”.

MLA will continue to improve the national data base and develop the National Livestock Identification System and work with producers to iron out any problems.

**BSE**

Everyone is well aware of the problems that both Canada and the United States suffered with single cases of BSE in each of those countries. Their markets collapsed overnight and it has cost the Canadian industry in excess of $1 billion. Canada is moving to mandatory electronic identification, they did have a barcode system, and the US is also making noises along the same lines of mandatory identification.

Cattle Council position on (Transmissible spongiform encephalopathy) TSE’s is: maintain the status quo in regard to the TSE program as required by OIE (Office of International des Epizooties) and endorses the testing of 400 ‘4D’ cattle. (dead, downers, distressed & disabled)

**QUALITY ASSURANCE**

With producers dropping out of CattleCare at an alarming rate Livestock Production Assurance was spawned.

LPA is a fairly simple approach to quality assurance

Level one was designed to cover five standards only and be audited through a combined NVD/Waybill. The five standards for Level one are:

- Property risk assessment
- Safe & responsible animal treatments
- Stock foods, fodder crops, grain & pasture treatments
- Preparation for dispatch of livestock
- Livestock transactions & movements.

The next level is full accreditation including, level one plus customer driven on farm QA eg eating quality & the environment etc.

Producers have some concerns regarding audits for level one but I would encourage everyone to look closely at LPA as we are being driven more & more by consumers and we don’t want to lose any market share.

**The Free Trade Agreement with the USA** was another topic and I will be a very old man before any benefits flow through to producers. The negotiated FTA would result in an additional access of 70000 tonnes of Australian beef into the US over a transition period of 18 years and this will not come into effect until three years after the agreement is signed. It is fair comment to say that the US does not embrace free trade.

Cattle Council spent a fair amount of time in 2003 reviewing the MLA programs and this caused a bit of angst between both groups but as sensible people do, the issues were worked through in a very mature manner. Overall the review indicated that MLA performed pretty well in most programs.

One of the major items the review identified was that by 2005/06 the beef marketing budget, both export & domestic would not sustain effective programs in the current major markets.

Money will have to be shuffled around within sales promotions programs to be effective but there is only so much money available.

State Member Organisations like the NTCA should be on the front foot with regard to an increase in the transaction levy to make sure we maintain or increase market share and that sales promotion does not suffer.

In conclusion I would like to say that Cattle Council covers a very wide agenda for the national beef industry. Every State & Territory is represented on the Council. A lot of issues are covered and as everyone knows, you can’t please all people and that has to be expected.

We have small breakaway producer groups who represent the minority but they get some media coverage.

I would like to say however, that the Australian beef industry should look at any changes in a very rational manner and adopt the change that is most beneficial for the Australian industry in both the domestic and international arena.

If we don’t do this and take a “head in the sand” approach we may wake up one day without an industry.

The NTCA, since I have known it, has taken the rational approach.

I hope it stays that way.

ROSS PEATLING
Cattle Council Delegate
11 April 2004
I’m pleased to be able to present a brief overview of the issues affecting our industry for 2003-2004, and the broad range of activities that the executive has undertaken on behalf of our members.

GENERAL OVERVIEW
During the past 12 months, the cattle industry maintained its status as a major Northern Territory economic stronghold, continuing to produce around 450,000 head of high quality cattle for both domestic meat and international live export markets.

The industry packs a powerful punch in terms of its value to the Territory economy, but its status is not widely appreciated. Most Territorians would be astounded to learn that our industry bolsters the regional economy by more than $330 million a year, and a further $880 million in indirect benefits and employs more than 3000 people.

The NTCA was highly proactive in 2003 in lobbying, on behalf of our members, for our industry’s right to be recognised for its contribution as one of the Territory’s three top economic drivers.

We have also been working to enhance communication between the association and various arms of government, not the least being a better understanding of the Territory’s cattle industry needs at Cabinet level.

We are doing some excellent work with both the Territory and Federal Governments and getting relevant parliamentary powerbrokers to sit up and take notice of our industry and its enormous economic benefits.

PRODUCTION
In terms of production and markets, the past 12 months have been a time of mixed fortunes for our members.

A total of 265,000 head of live cattle were exported through Darwin last year, some 63,000 head less than for 2002. Indonesia remained our biggest market, taking 182,000 head of Australian cattle.

A whole range of forces combined to cause declining exports. The driving force behind the Indonesian situation was the steady appreciation of the Australian Dollar against the Rupiah, coupled with the Australian cattle prices.

We face the possibility of greater pressure on export numbers over the next 12 months due to the rising Aussie Dollar and problems much closer to home – like Rooney shipping pulling out of live-cattle transportation, resulting in a possible price hike between 15-30 per cent in the short term.

INDUSTRY ISSUES
Priority issues in 2003 have been roads and transport challenges, drought policy, animal welfare, telecommunications, the NLIS System, LPA, and addressing the lack of appreciation about the value of the cattle industry to the Northern Territory economy.

ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE
Without question, the appalling state of the Territory’s beef roads has captured more of industry’s attention and demanded a lot of effort over the past 12 months.

The Association advocates a well structured road network to cater for large movements during drought stress times and the 365-days-a-year market access that our industry now demands.

Regrettably, the term, ‘well structured’, cannot be applied to the beef road program that our members are being forced to negotiate over to keep their businesses viable.

Things have come to head in recent months and we have lobbied hard as part of a concerted campaign to have our members’ voices heard on this critical issue.

The Federal Minister for Roads, Senator Ian Campbell, attended the NTCA’s executive meeting in February this year and heard first hand the concerns of pastoralists about the state of disrepair of the Territory roads network.

The result of that meeting was that, for the first time, money was made available through the Federal Government’s new Roads to Recovery program, for unincorporated rural roads in the Northern Territory.

Minister Campbell clearly stated that extra funding of between $20-$40 million could be available to Territory’s beef roads.
The Association also put NT Government on notice ‘that it wanted urgent action to fix unsafe pastoral roads across the Territory’.

At the Alice Springs Branch meeting at Mt Riddock Station in November, Chief Minister Clare Martin announced that her government would increase beef roads funding by placing “more than $10 million on the bankcard” in the coming budget.

Members welcomed this news but there is still a long way to go. A much greater funding effort is needed to get our roads network up to a standard that adequately meets the needs of the pastoral industry and other users such as tourism and mining.

As an industry, we must maintain pressure on the Federal and Territory Governments to ensure they move beyond the talking and promises, and follow through on their commitments.

**DRIVER FATIGUE**

Long haul driver fatigue management was another prominent issue in 2003, particularly because changes proposed by the National Road Transport Commission (NRTC) had the potential to impact severely on the industry in remote areas like the Northern Territory.

The Remote Area Livestock Transport Group (RALTG), acting on behalf of remote area pastoralists and stock carriers engaged ARRB transport researchers to undertake a world-first fatigue management study and report back to the group.

**NLIS**

The NLIS PIMC decision is that there will be a national livestock identification and tracing system called the “National Livestock Identification System” or NLIS. I would like to reinforce that this is a risk based system which includes individual animal identification including the use of Radio Frequency Identification Devices, visually readable ear tags and herd or flock based systems.

Herd or flock based systems are not exemptions; they are an integral part of the NLIS.

Each state and Territory must implement a pathway to meet the Australian Standard by 2010. The NT pathway is of course the herd based system, structured around the waybills and mandatory cross branding. Other states like Victoria pathway are RFID’s and that is their choice.

**STATE AND NATIONAL DROUGHT REVIEW**

The NTCA arranged a forum to discuss the National Drought Review in Alice Springs on the 21st of January 2004. Members attended from all over the Territory to discuss issues relating to drought management, exceptional circumstances, subsidies and social assistance packages to help Territorian pastoralists and downstream industries through difficult times of drought.

Also, the NTCA, in conjunction with the Primary Industry Division of the DBIRD, has completed the NT Drought Policy Review.

**DALY BASIN REFERENCE GROUP**

The NTCA is a key player in the Daly Basin Reference Group – a significant effort on our part will be necessary to reinforce our policy:

‘That land clearing be permitted while maintaining a balance between viable productivity and environmental sustainability.’

The Douglas Daly is a vital growth area for Territory cattle production and it is imperative that the NTCA maintains pressure on governments and other agencies to ensure they don’t stand in the way of regional economic development.

**YARDS MANAGEMENT**

The Northern Territory Cattlemen’s Trading Company; yards came under new management this year. The new contractor Steve Turner is doing a fantastic job with general repairs and maintenance to the Bohning Yards. And with the requirements to meet interstate NLIS pathways, we will be installing RFID readers into the yards to meet interstate NLIS requirements.

**LOOKING TO THE FUTURE**

A few months ago, I stressed the importance of our cattle industry striving to develop and maintain strong markets for the Territory’s future benefit.

I reiterate now that, as an industry group, the NTCA must maintain a clear focus on long-term industry issues so we can sustain viable export markets as well as develop stronger markets to meet domestic demands for quality NT beef.

**CONCLUSION**

I would like to welcome the new members to the Association. I would like to thank the outgoing executive for your solid support and encouragement during my first 12 months.

Finally, I look forward to the opportunity of working with the new executive to further strengthen and advance our pastoral industry across all parts of the Northern Territory.

Stuart Kenny

Executive Director
It seems a long time ago since we stood side by side at 4pm on 4th April 2003 for the Official Unveiling of The Katherine Icon. Through the one and a half times life size bronze statue, we continue to honour our ancestors, acknowledge our families and friends who are the doers and battlers of today, and encourage new generations to take up the baton beyond the bitumen.

With the arrival of the Ghan twice a week in Katherine, the numbers of people who marvel at The Katherine Icon and all it represents have noticeably increased.

Amongst those who examine in awe the details of horse and rider are financial contributors journeying north for the first time. I have received numerous telephone calls of enthusiasm and joy with exclamations of: “It is even more powerful and inspiring than anticipated.”

On June 8th 2003, ABC TV LANDLINE featured a comprehensive overview of The Katherine Icon from conception to unveiling to a national audience. This programme entitled “Stockmen Tribute Remembers Top End Pioneers” produced by Peter Lewis was repeated in The Best of LANDLINE 2003 on 8th February 2004.

The response from one city viewer epitomises all we could have hoped to achieve:

“I had the great fortune to view LANDLINE ABC TV this weekend and see your wonderful story on Sabu Sing, Archie St Clair and the most amazing tribute to the Australian Outback I have ever seen. I spent a lot of the programme in tears actually as I felt overwhelmed by the emotions of such a tribute and the way it has been expressed in such a lasting memorial.

Congratulations to everyone who has had the vision and commitment to realise such a magnificent outcome. It makes me proud to be an Aussie.”

Sadly, senseless vandalism of The Katherine Icon occurred in March 2004. Katherine police still have no suspects regarding the removal of 60-7cms of the stockman’s whip. Subsequent relevant photographs with this information have been forwarded to Sculptor Archie St Clair in the United States.

The captivating professionally filmed documentary of The Katherine Icon Unveiling Ceremony and Afterwards (27 minutes duration) is still available for $30.00 a copy from NTCA office. This historic keepsake would make the perfect gift for every occasion for family and friends irrespective of age or location.

All things considered, how thrilled we are today to uphold the supremely powerful and beautifully engaging stockman on horseback that stands in the heart of our nation forever more. In the words of Tony Clark, one of the old brigade and member of Sabu’s stock camp:

“It’s very good that there’s a statue of our mate out there.”

Terry Underwood
Project Coordinator, 14th July 2004
NTCA 2004 AGM — GALA DINNER

John Armstrong & Helen Murphy

Ken Forster & Sharon Haste

Bridget & Steve Gaff & Roy Chisholm

Ross Peating & David Crombie

John Dyer, Sue Carter & Ian McBean
NTCA 2004 AGM – GALA DINNER

Teresa Lugg, John Armstrong & Jean McGill

Fay Miller, Geoff Wagstaff & Terry Underwood

Pippa Clarke, Brett Kraft, Marie Underwood & Geoff Warriner

Geoff Warriner, Ken Warriner, Jim Cooper & Marie Underwood

Stuart & Louisa Kenny & Peter Fitzsimons

John Mackenzie

Peter Fitzsimons
NORTHERN TERRITORY CATTLEMEN’S ASSOCIATION INCORPORATED
ADVANCING AND PROTECTING THE INTERESTS OF CATTLE PRODUCERS IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

David Crombie, Peter Fitzsimons & Minister Paul Henderson

Ian McBean & John Dyer

Peter Blake

John Dyer & Ian McBean

Roy Chisholm & Bob Lee

Peter Fitzsimons, Geoff Goodrich & Stuart Kenny

John Underwood, Marie Underwood, Pam Gray & David Crombie

David Crombie, Peter Fitzsimons & Minister Paul Henderson

NORTHERN TERRITORY CATTLEMEN’S ASSOCIATION YEAR IN REVIEW 2003-2004
The Tennant Creek Branch elected at its Annual General Meeting on 23rd March 2004, the following members to serve as the Branch Committee and representatives on the Association’s Executive Committee for 2004.

**CHAIRMAN:**
Henry Burke

**DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:**
Ernie Holt

**SECRETARY:**
Cameron Rasheed

**COMMITTEE:**
John Stafford, Jamie Robertson, Brett Kraft, Geoff Murrell, Kelly Daly.

**BRANCH DELEGATE TO THE EXECUTIVE:**
Henry Burke and Ernie Holt

**ALTERNATE:**
Jamie Robertson
The last twelve months have shown us what can go wrong in our industry and economic loss can be catastrophic. Things like BSE in Canada and USA and the Como Express etc. and the free trade agreement have all been major influences within our business.

Industry groups such as NFF, CCA and Livecorp, industry groups have worked very hard to deliver the best possible outcomes in all of these issues. The outcome is not always one that suits us but one we must take on board and work with anyway. NLIS is a major concern at present for the industry and most producers are objecting to the national mandatory implementation of this. The question is does all this effect us, yes it does and these are some of the issues that the NTCA Executive have been busy lobbying and addressing on your behalf throughout the year.

Most of you have met with Stuart our new Executive Director at the last meeting held at Brunette last year. I would like to make acknowledgement of the huge contribution that Stuart has made to the organization since taking on this role. He has achieved some excellent results in a lot of areas. Things like roads, the national drought review policy, driver fatigue policy, native title, landcare and industry employment are issues that the NT Government are regularly seeking Stuart to voice the policies and direction the NYBF would like to recommend in these areas.

Once again the seasonal conditions are patchy throughout the Barkly Region. Some areas have received above average falls and other areas are well below their annual rainfall.

The cattle markets for the past twelve months have held at reasonable prices throughout 2003, and to date the market for 2004 looks to be in a strong position. On a personal level I would like to thank all members of the Tennant Creek Branch for their support throughout the year, John Stafford as Secretary and Ernie as Vice Chairman. Throughout the past twelve months Ernie and I have attended on your behalf the National drought Review Policy in Alice Springs, Executive Meetings held in Katherine, Darwin and Alice Springs. I have yet to make it to a meeting but have been nominated to be the local NTCA representative on the Regional Development Board in Tennant Creek.

In conclusion this is a general overview of my year as Chairman of the Branch, Stuart will present a more detailed report on the areas that the NTCA has been active in throughout the year.

I have the greatest faith in our industry and look forward to the tremendous opportunities that will present in the future for the cattle industry of Northern Australia

HENRY BURKE
22nd March 2004
At the Katherine AGM held on 20th March 2004, the following members were elected to serve as the Branch committee and representatives on the association’s Executive Committee for 2004.

CHAIRMAN:
Jock MacKay

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:
Mark Clifford

SECRETARY:
Kate Townsend

COMMITTEE:
Rohan Sullivan, Henry Townsend, Shane Dunn, Steve Gaff

BRANCH DELEGATE TO THE EXECUTIVE:
Jock MacKay and Mark Clifford

ALTERNATE:
Rowan Sullivan
Welcome to the annual general meeting of the Katherine Branch for 2004.

Again, we have had a fluctuating year, with some market uncertainty, and some weather fluctuations, but all in all it can only be considered as reasonable. A very wet wet season for most members in the Katherine region has certainly made sure the dams are full and hopefully we face another reasonable season ahead.

The dollar has caused some concern with the last twelve months seeing the US dollar rising from 50 to 80 cents, before settling recently at 75 and, like the weather it is hard to predict what is ahead.

Our industry is facing some ongoing and new challenges though, Land Tenure and roads being on going, and new threats such as disease, terrorism and animal welfare are issues that all need addressing. Our roads have been a major concern for a while now and are steadily becoming more of an issue, despite reassurances to the contrary.

Land Tenure has been a long and ongoing debate, with uncertainty for those involved (on both sides), and hopefully we can look forward to some indications of resolution in the near future.

However, these are areas that we know about, and although they are unsettling, we are on familiar ground. The new areas of major disease threat and the result of public perception to animal welfare incidents are new territory to a certain extent, as they now have real and major implications for the welfare of our industry.

It is for these reasons, we need the NTCA, and we need it to be as strong as we can possibly make it, both by member representation and member participation. A single operator alone has very little chance in influencing a debate in any area, but a participating member in a strong Territory organisation has significantly greater chance of getting an opinion across.

This goes for internal Territory issues as well, where insurance, Occupational Health and Safety matters and other new legislation because of the greater need for duty of care to the general public have increased pressures on the cattle industry in a number of areas. Being a member in the association gives a much more powerful voice in parliament, than being a single member alone. For these reasons, I urge all members to support the association, and encourage other people to join where possible.

With the recent outbreak of diseases (BSE in cattle, and the influenza in chickens), it is pleasing to see the preparation being put together in case of an outbreak in Australia. Whilst the exercises to date have highlighted some issues, now is the time to be finding and addressing those issues, rather than when we are focused on the real thing and end up with a major catastrophe that would be difficult to control.

Our office has seen a change of staff in the last twelve months, and whilst change can be painful, I think we have a professional team in Stuart and Tricia, who are committed to the industry and the members within. Since the last meeting, we have seen both Neita and Kara move on to new directions. I would like to thank them both for their efforts in helping Rachel and myself with last years dinner and conference, they really had a lot on their plate, but managed it with style. I really need to thank my wife Rachel as well, as she put in a massive effort to ensure that the Icon dinner was a success. Kara has also provided a lot of help in the transition between Executive officers, and put a lot of personal effort into ensuring the association was not left high and dry. She really deserves appreciation for the assistance she gave during that period.

It is nearly a year since the unveiling of the Icon, and it still attracts regular visits both day and night. It is another indication of the determination and drive of Terry Underwood, for the benefit of our industry as a whole. I thanked her last year, but I do so again.

Michael Underwood has had to understandably step down from the chair of KPIAC, but his contribution and style of running the meetings was both refreshing and effective. I wish both he and Georgia every happiness in their future together. KPIAC is now chaired by Jim Kerr, and I am sure he will both challenge and lead the committee in representation of the Katherine Pastoral Industry.

Karen Brosnan has been secretary for six years (I think), and again has been a great help. This is a huge effort, and I would like to personally thank her for her dedication.

Thanks to Jock Mackay for his support, both in Katherine and on the executive and I would like to say that in my opinion, we have had a diverse and strong executive over the last twelve months, and this can only be described as healthy for the organisation.

The executive, I believe, are totally committed to the industry that they represent, and they unbiasedly put the feelings of the members forward. I am sure that this will continue in the future. The executive and association has been admirably led by our president, John Armstrong, and I can only commend the passion and personal commitment he has shown to the association and industry over the last twelve months.

I would like to conclude by saying that I have finished my three year term and will now step down. It has been a huge learning curve for me, with some difficult areas along the way. All in all though, it has been a lot of fun, and I have gained a lot of experience as a result. I thank the Katherine Branch members for the support I have received this year and would like to conclude by wishing you all future success and stability in the years to come.
At the Top End Branch AGM held 2nd April 2004, the following members were elected to serve as the Branch Committee and representatives on the Association’s Executive Committee for 2004.

**CHAIRMAN:**
Ian McBean

**DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:**
Phil Howie

**SECRETARY:**
Tricia O’Hehir

**COMMITTEE:**
Tony Searle, Markus Rathsman

**BRANCH DELEGATE TO THE EXECUTIVE:**
Ian McBean and Phil Howie

**ALTERNATE:**
Tony Searle and Markus Rathsman
I ask you to cast your mind back 12 months to when we in the Top End branch were undecided whether to keep the branch going or disband and the few of us interested in an industry association to transfer our allegiance to the Katherine Branch.

The whole association was in turmoil last year with the President and executive director at loggerheads and little being accomplished for the betterment of our industry. It is with considerable pride in the integrity of the cattlemen in the Territory in the Top End in particular that I discuss our progress over the past 12 months.

Firstly, I will mention that the acting executive director, Steve Ellison, at the AGM when I was elected as Chairman stated that one of the biggest hurdles we faced was the absolute necessity of small operators and large corporations working together. I am of the opinion that our present President John Armstrong and Executive Director Stuart Kenny have accomplished this admirably.

The main priorities of the Top End branch over the past 12 months have been roads National Livestock Identification Scheme, the formation of the Daly Basin Reference Group, dingo eradication, poison strength and availability, railway and protocol re crossings etc and for our Executive Director ongoing problems with native title.

I have had Stuart elaborate on some of these items where he is more conversant with the present situation. On roads, Senator Campbell made it clear there was money available under the Roads to Recovery program, however it appears we are going to have problems accessing this. The NLIS has been an ongoing problem for cattlemen all over Australia. We have jurisdictions in the south of Australia virtually telling Cattle Council and Meat Livestock Australia what direction all cattlemen should take.

You have received an update of this situation from Kel Smell this afternoon. I also got Stuart to give us the latest position regarding better access to 1080 and Kel Small to fill us in on the resistant tick situation. The other very pertinent item on the Top End agenda is the Daly Basin Reference Group of which you have been previously informed this afternoon. I will take this opportunity of thanking our Executive Director Stuart and Secretary Tricia for their help and advice over my term as chairman and thank you members of the Top End Branch for your continued support and attendance at meetings, for without you the branch would fold and leave a big void in the overall cattle industry profile in the NT. I also thank Phillip Howie our vice chairman for his assistance at our executive meetings and David Walker and Jeff Little’s willingness to stand as committeemen although we have not had to call on their assistance this year.

Thank you.
On February 20th 2004 at the Alice Springs Branch AGM, the following members were elected to serve as the Branch Committee and representatives on the Association's Executive for 2004.

CHAIRMAN:  
Roy Chisholm

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:  
Dick Cadzow

SECRETARY:  
Stuart Kenny

COMMITTEE:  
Tracey Hayes, Jamie Evans, Grant Barber, Tim Edmunds

BRANCH DELEGATE TO THE EXECUTIVE:  
Roy Chisholm and Dick Cadzow

ALTERNATE:  
Liz Bird
Looking back over the past year, I have to say that a lot has happened. 2003 saw the aftershocks of the final Bob Lee chapter still reverberating through the Association. May I say that Bob is a much happier man today. That doesn’t make it right, it just makes it bearable.

The true cost to the association was not just in dollars, but also in our public image and our bush values of fairness and justice which I believe were severely eroded through this sad episode. It was your votes which got our new President over the line, and this should always serve as a reminder to us that if we care enough to make a stand we will be heard.

I would like to emphasize that we now have an open and transparent process for dealing with issues as they arise, with which I am very comfortable. On the whole, I think that the NTCA has made some good ground and once again is thought of as the strong representative group it has been in the past. This is evidenced by the increase in our membership over the year.

We are a tenacious and optimistic organization, so if we all concentrate on signing up those who aren’t members who are having a free ride on your membership dues in areas such as Native Title, Roads and Arbitration, and all the other areas we work on, then we will be fine. Ask them ‘Are you a member of the NTCA? – Why not?’

Not with-standing new members or those old ones who, for one reason or another aren’t currently active, any support you can possibly give through using our Bohning yards will greatly help our financial bottom line. Our Bohning Yards are now a complex to be proud of, neat and tidy and operating efficiently, they are a great front gate to our industry.

So sign ‘em up and sign ‘em in.

Looking forward to the year ahead, I am truly regretful of stepping down from the position of Chairman of this wonderful branch. If it weren’t for the fact I no longer live here, and feel that you are best served by someone who does live here, then I would be more than happy to stay on as your representative, because right now the NTCA is such an exciting place to be. There is nothing like feeling that you are getting somewhere on a range of issues, that you are listened to, that you have generated the momentum to achieve real outcomes for members to make you want to be a part of the winning team.

This executive is not made up of individuals, or individual agendas, rather it is an individual team.

Your representatives throughout the year were Liz Bird as a very able Deputy Chairman who brought her considerable experience as State President of ICPA to the table. When she elected to step down, our regional treasurer, Dick Cadzow stepped up to the crease. Dick is certainly enjoying the experience, but no more so than the members across the NT who have managed to snare him for a chat and who have commented afterward how lucky we are to have people like Dick with his vision and knowledge as members of executive. Of course they are preaching to the converted!

While acknowledging that there could be some bias in my next comment, I believe we have an excellent President in John Armstrong. He is truly consultative, has acres of acumen and is incredibly fair. And we made a good choice in shanghaicing Stuart Kenny for our Executive Director. One cannot fault the time Stuart has put in. Between them I think they eat breathe and sleep NTCA.

It would be remiss of me not to mention Kara Lyman who moved on to a different job during the year. Kara is a great friend who gave us many years of wonderful caring and intelligent service. Bridget Crowe helped out as branch secretary and I am sad to say that she too has moved on – we wish her well for the future. I would ask you to join me in thanking our staff, Bob, Kara, and Neta for the wonderful job they did and to wish them well in their new endeavors and also to welcome Bev Siedel as a very able and effective person in the Alice Office.

It is sad to think that I am also saying goodbye. There are times when I pine for wide open red spaces and sweet short grass country. Believe me when I say that where ever I am, whatever I do, you and my country will be large in my thoughts.

In conclusion, I ask you wherever you are to charge your glasses to “The Future”.

Thank you.