

Neighbouring landholders have concerns over nature refuge



Ardgour Station, near Wyandra has been bought by the state government to be managed as a nature refuge. Picture Department of Environment.

The state government has bought a 8200 hectares property near Wyandra to be managed as a nature refuge, but neighbouring property owners aren't happy.

Ardgour Station, near Wyandra in south west Queensland will join the NatureAssist program to deliver on a number of conservation projects, the Palaszczuk Government announced.

The former sheep grazing property was destocked in 2016 due to drought and is now actively delivering a Commonwealth Government Emissions Reduction Fund carbon project.

Environment Minister Meaghan Scanlon said an agreement has been made between the Palaszczuk Government and Paniri Ventures, the owners of Ardgour Station to protect important wetlands and ecosystems that form part of the Wyandra-Cunnamulla Claypans Aggregation.

"Queenslanders have made it clear: they want us to continue to protect our environment and grow our protected area system," she said.

"This new agreement does just that, building on the record \$262 million we announced in the budget to create new national parks."

Former owner of Ardgour and next door neighbour, Evan Palmer of Offham said he sold the property in 2010.

"We basically used it for mulga reserve and only light stocked the country as it is not very productive," Mr Palmer said.

"The turkey bush has now taken over so the mulga is not regenerating.

"The previous owners have been part of the baiting program for wild pigs, so we hope that continues."

Kevin Bredhauer, who owns several properties in the Wyandra district, including neighbouring Carbeen feared more turkey bush would grow and the property would be a refuge for breeding more feral dingoes and pigs.

"It really is a cop-out and a waste of time and money," he said.

Another Wyandra district landholder, Bill Tomlinson, who has owned Elmina Station since 1988, said he had not seen any nature refuges managed properly, and has cause for concern with this latest government acquisition.

"The whole idea is to have refuges that represent what Australia was originally like and this property has had mulga growing there since the 1960s," Mr Tomlinson said.

He fears it will be left unmanaged and the wild vermin will be out of control.

"They will need to build an exclusion boundary fence so this doesn't affect adjoining landholders," Mr Tomlinson said.

The state's nature refuges, which will number 555 when the new refuge is declared, cover more than 4.4 million hectares - almost a third of Queensland's protected area system, which itself totals 14.2 million hectares.

Minister Scanlon said to support the nature refuge declaration, the Palaszczuk Government would invest \$259,000 through its NatureAssist program to deliver a number of conservation projects on-site.

These include removing all internal fencing to improve wildlife movement, baseline flora and fauna assessments and mapping, and commissioning the land's Traditional Owners to carry out a cultural heritage survey to gain a better cultural understanding of the property.

Paniri Ventures managing director Gary Wyatt, said the establishment of this nature refuge on Ardgour Station demonstrates how these projects can be used to deliver a range of benefits, including improved ecological condition and biodiversity.

"This partnership between private investment and the state and federal governments shows what is possible in tackling climate change and habitat loss," Mr Wyatt said.



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