

# Lake Eyre Basin

## Information Sheet



## Land-use

Number LU01

The natural and cultural assets of the Lake Eyre Basin are enormous. They range from the flora, fauna, and landscape itself, through to places of Indigenous and non-Indigenous significance. These assets have economic, social, cultural, or environmental value and form the basis for land-use within the Basin. The major land-uses are Aboriginal, pastoralism, mining and petroleum, tourism, urban, and conservation.



Angus Emmott photo

*Ancient rock art.*

### Aboriginal

The Aboriginal people of inland Australia have been associated with the Lake Eyre Basin for tens of thousands of years. Over this time they developed a complex culture interwoven with the land with which they lived. Legends, stories and song lines were anchored in the landscape and guided their system of natural resource management which has been proven sustainable for millennia.

For Aboriginal people, land-use is linked to responsibility for country. There is much work being done across the Lake Eyre Basin to protect and preserve important cultural sites which allow Indigenous communities to maintain their traditional links with the land.

Issues for attention are weed and feral animal control.

### *Channel country cattle.*



### Pastoralism

Grazing of sheep and cattle began in the Lake Eyre Basin in the mid-1800s, and today, is the most extensive land-use. It is viewed as being relatively sustainable, having low impacts on the land and biodiversity. This is due to little or no use of inputs such as fertilisers and chemicals, along with relatively low stocking rates.

Pastoral properties within the Lake Eyre Basin are generally on leasehold land and range from less than 10,000 hectares to the largest cattle station in the world, Anna Creek Station at just over 3 million hectares. Many of the larger properties are owned by pastoral companies while the smaller ones are generally family concerns.

While well-managed pastoralism has low environmental impact, efforts must be maintained to control feral animals and weeds, and ensure total grazing pressure from domestic and native animals is sustainable.



Angus Emmott photo

*Moomba oil and gas processing plant, Strzelecki Desert.*

### Mining and Petroleum

Mining is the biggest economic contributor to the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) of the Lake Eyre Basin. It ranges from large-scale mining of silver at Cannington and coal at Leigh Creek, to small-scale mining of opals at Winton and Coober Pedy. Oil and gas are recovered from the Eromanga to Moomba area which overlies Australia's largest onshore energy reserves.

natural resources

landscapes

land-use

people

issues

# Land-use in the Lake Eyre Basin

Major environmental issues for the mining and petroleum industry are soil disturbance, weed spread, pollution, and large-scale water extraction.

## Tourism

The natural, cultural, and spiritual significance of the Lake Eyre Basin to Australians has seen it become a major tourist destination. Over the past decade, tourism in the Basin has experienced considerable growth, and is now a major contributor to the economy of the region. Eco-tourism and cultural tourism are becoming especially popular. Tours now extend to remote destinations to experience the untouched 'Outback' and to visit indigenous and non-indigenous sites of interest.



***Leave nothing but footprints,  
take nothing but memories.***



Increased tourism puts pressure on natural resources and infrastructure. Travellers need to be aware that careless practices can aid the spread of weeds and lead to the pollution and degradation of the very places they have come to see. Everyone has an obligation to take nothing but memories and leave nothing but footprints.

***One of the smallest  
urban areas in the  
Basin, Birdsville,  
and the largest,  
Alice Springs.***

## Urban

Urban land-use in the Basin is largely restricted to the north-east in the Winton to Tambo corridor, in the southern tip at Peterborough, and at Alice Springs. Over the balance of the Basin, mainly the eastern and southern parts, there is a scatter of small communities ranging in population from a handful to several hundred.

Urban land-use is important for economic and social sustainability but it can place pressures on the environment through water extraction and waste disposal.



***Common corellas (Cacatua sanguinea)***

## Conservation

The voluntary, on-property nature conservation practised by many pastoralists is a valuable contributor to biodiversity conservation. In addition, approximately 10.6% of the Lake Eyre Basin is protected in 37 national parks and reserves. The many areas of high conservation significance include

representative ecosystems, habitats for rare and threatened fauna and flora, and areas of high biodiversity like wetlands, lakes, and mound springs.



***Fat-tailed dunnart  
(Sminthopsis  
crassicaudata)***

Lakes and wetlands of the Lake Eyre Basin are especially significant as breeding grounds for many of Australia's waterbirds. The Ramsar listed Coongie Lakes is one such area. Many mound springs support plants and animals found nowhere else on the planet.

If not carefully managed, conservation areas can become havens for feral animals and weeds, thereby defeating the purpose for which they were created.

