

LEX LOCI'S TRAVELS

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An irregular one-pager from The Public Land Consultancy

Lex saves Ten Shillings at Lake Buloke

Lex is nothing if not thrifty. Just north of Donald in the Wimmera, he sees his big chance.

Lake Buloke is a rather bleak place. The Richardson 'river' flows in, but nothing flows out. The landscape testifies to a series of ancient shorelines, but the waterfowl haven't had a decent swim there since 1998.

What little water remains is described either as 'eutrophic' (mineral-rich, and unpotable) or 'in environmental decline' due to excessive salinity.



Back to the ten shillings! Like so much of the State, Lake Buloke is carved up into neat rectangular Crown Allotments visible only to Lex's friends, the cadastral surveyors. But unlike CAs elsewhere, these blocks were never sold off. Instead, they were *leased*.

No doubt the Crown's tenant-farmers worked hard to transform this terrain into a land of plenty, as depicted symbolically by the coat of arms of the Shire of Donald. It was a forlorn task.

Amongst the burdens they faced was a condition of their Crown leases: they must 'improve' the land. And the said improvements had to be valued at ten shillings, per acre, per annum.



The said tenants somehow exerted political pressure, and obtained an amendment to the *Land Act 1901*. Their leases still required them to expend the ten shillings, but the Minister of the day was given the power to waive that obligation.

The provision remains on the statute books to this day*. If Lex obtains a Crown lease of Lake Buloke, he can apply to the Minister to be relieved of the burden of expending ten shillings per acre per annum.

You might imagine that such a condition would get reviewed from time to time. Well, this condition was indeed reviewed – in 1974. The ten shillings per acre was changed to \$2.50 per hectare. Does this hold out the prospect of even greater savings? Lex is working through the arithmetic.

See you there! *Lex Loci*

** Section 115(2), Land Act 1958*

Lake Buloke is in Barengi Gadjin country