

HEALTHY COUNTRY, HEALTHY PEOPLE

Supporting Indigenous Engagement in the Sustainable Management of Land and Seas

Statement of Intent

The Australian and Northern Territory Governments value the past and ongoing work of Indigenous people protecting and sustaining country and the productive use of natural and cultural resources of the Northern Territory for future generations. The role the Northern Territory Land Councils' Caring for Country programs have played in supporting the engagement of Indigenous people in this area is acknowledged. Under this schedule, the Governments commit to support the effective engagement of Indigenous people in the decision-making and management processes in this area, including by taking a more focused and coordinated approach to the implementation of existing, and development of new, policies, legislation and programs.

This schedule sets out improved joint working arrangements between the Australian and Northern Territory Governments in the area of supporting Indigenous engagement in sustainable land and sea management. It is understood that the implementation of the schedule must take full account of Indigenous aspirations, priorities and preferences. Delivery of this schedule will therefore include full and ongoing consultation, participation and partnership development with Indigenous communities and representatives.

Scope of Indigenous Management of Land and Sea

Sustainable Indigenous management of land and seas is defined to include a broad range of employment, economic development, training, community and cultural activities in the areas of:

- natural and cultural resource management including biodiversity conservation;
- land and sea monitoring and reporting for border protection, including assisting in the identification and reporting of domestic and foreign illegal fishing;
- active participation in the sustainable economic use of land and sea in industry sectors such as mining, pastoralism, forestry, tourism, fisheries, aquaculture, horticulture, wildlife utilisation and the commercial provision of environmental services; and
- practical maintenance of Indigenous knowledge, culture and heritage.

Background

The Northern Territory Land Councils' Caring for Country programs have been critical to building Indigenous engagement in land and sea management. The programs have been based on wide consultation with Indigenous landowners and have provided a mechanism for Indigenous people to address their natural and cultural resource management interests. They have also provided an avenue for Indigenous people to undertake economic development activities relating to land and sea management on their lands, particularly in remote areas of the Northern Territory.

Both the Australian and Northern Territory Governments currently recognise the key role Indigenous people need to play in Indigenous management of land and seas in the Northern Territory. For example, the Australian Government *Environment Protection and*

Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 legislates a role for Indigenous people in the conservation and ecologically sustainable use of Australia's biodiversity and promoting the use of Indigenous knowledge in cooperation with the owners of this knowledge.

The Northern Territory Government's *Parks and Reserves (Framework for the Future) Act 2003* establishes joint management arrangements between the Territory Government and Traditional Owners, acknowledging and incorporating Indigenous culture, knowledge and decision making processes into the Territory's parks and reserves system. The *Northern Territory Indigenous Economic Development Strategy 2005* identifies natural and cultural resource management as a key sector for development over the next fifteen years due to the importance of biodiversity conservation work in the Northern Territory and its linkages to enterprise development in related sectors, including the tourism industry.

In particular, it is recognised that the engagement of Indigenous people in land and sea management is vital for achieving cost-effective biodiversity protection, conservation and border security outcomes in remote regions of the Northern Territory. Indigenous people are very significant landholders currently having stewardship responsibilities for at least 44% of the Northern Territory's landmass, as well as 84% of its coastal areas.

The Australian and Northern Territory Governments also acknowledge the range of environmental, socio-cultural and economic benefits provided by the engagement of Indigenous people in land and sea management. These benefits provide a clear case for on-going government support and investment in this area. There is growing evidence that activities in this area enhance the self esteem and confidence of participants; reduce social alienation; and act to promote and preserve health, particularly in remote communities.

Well coordinated and effective government investment in this area will strengthen environmental, cultural and heritage values, including those of national significance. It will also ensure the practical maintenance of Indigenous knowledge and cultures alongside scientific approaches to land and sea management.

Additionally, both Governments agree that investing to improve the governance and operational capacity of local Indigenous groups engaged in land and sea management projects, including Indigenous Land and Sea Rangers and Indigenous Land Management Officers. This may increase the take-up and creation of training, employment and economic development opportunities, particularly in remote areas.

Objectives

Consistent with the multiple benefits provided by the engagement of Indigenous people in land and sea management, the Australian and Northern Territory Governments commit to pursue the following four objectives under this schedule:

Better Coordination

The parties agree to improve the coordination of whole-of-government investment in Indigenous land and sea management in the Northern Territory. This will include focusing on better coordination of government support for planning, training and capacity building, enterprise development, infrastructure and employment, including fee for service work.

Consistent with the *Overarching Agreement on Indigenous Affairs*, it is the intention of both parties to:

- work in a whole-of-government way to simplify and streamline funding support to individual groups engaged in land and sea management projects;
- improve collaboration between all parties including Northern Territory and Australian Government agencies, land councils and Indigenous organisations and communities and promote the development of new partnership arrangements;
- ensure that mechanisms are developed to map existing Australian and Northern Territory Government investment in this area and ensure that future investments are complementary; and
- better target government investment in this area to deliver environmental, socio-cultural and economic benefits in a cost-effective fashion.

In order to achieve these objectives, the parties agree to establish a steering committee of government agencies, to be jointly chaired by the Australian Government Department of Environment and Heritage and the Northern Territory Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts in conjunction with the Australian Government Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination and Northern Territory Office of Indigenous Policy.

The steering committee will be informed by representatives from the land councils, other Indigenous organisations and Indigenous communities on progress with the implementation of the schedule and to raise any issues for improvement.

The steering committee will oversee implementation of this schedule and be tasked with examining options for better coordinating investment in Indigenous engagement in land and sea management activities in the Northern Territory. This will include, but not be limited to, examining the potential for:

- new structural arrangements for the delivery of Australian and Northern Territory Government funding. This will include consideration of a 'virtual pool' of Australian Government funding for Indigenous engagement in land and sea management. This pool will include existing funding sources as well as a \$10 million commitment over two years for land and sea rangers in the Northern Territory from the Australian Government's Aboriginals Benefit Account. As part of this investigation, the steering committee will consider options for reducing the administrative burden on land and sea ranger groups, through simplified funding delivery mechanisms; and
- the Australian and Northern Territory Governments nominating officers responsible for assisting with the coordination of government investment in this area and liaising with the land councils and Indigenous groups. The governments will allocate the necessary resources to achieve this.

The steering committee will report to senior officials with recommendations on how to best implement the new arrangements under the schedule by October 2006.

The Australian and Northern Territory Governments agree to pilot the new arrangements starting with Indigenous groups identified through processes as determined by the steering committee. It is agreed that groups will be identified for support under these new

arrangements on the basis that they are operating, or have the potential to operate, with strong leadership and high levels of community engagement; ensuring a geographic spread across the Northern Territory; and selecting groups at different stages of development.

The Australian and Northern Territory Governments agree that the pilot projects will also aim to improve knowledge of the workforce requirements in the fields of environmental management and sustainable land use. In particular they will examine the potential for improved employer arrangements, streamlining training and clarifying career pathways into related businesses and industries.

Employment and Economic Development

Both parties recognise the importance of natural and cultural resource management as a key remote area industry which has significant employment potential, particularly when linked to other established and emerging resource-base industries in the Northern Territory including mining, pastoralism, tourism, fisheries, aquaculture, forestry, horticulture and the application of Indigenous knowledge and culture to the commercial provision of environmental services. Over the medium to long-term, the Governments aim to elevate the importance of these industries and strengthen the employment and economic opportunities they can provide, particularly for Indigenous people living in regional and remote areas of the Territory.

Consistent with this understanding, the parties will:

- ensure that Australian and Northern Territory Government programs and projects, strategically coordinate, including in conjunction with the private sector, to effectively increase stable commercial and economic opportunities for Indigenous groups engaged in land and sea management projects.

Actions may include:

- investigating relevant and related scholarships, cadetships and traineeships;
 - the development of a strategic plan identifying and coordinating these opportunities and commissioning relevant studies to identify how these may be best delivered by and to communities;
 - ensuring the effective use of existing and new activities and programs to build opportunities for Indigenous people to enter mainstream employment or take-up enterprise development in established or emerging markets associated with natural resource management and sustainable land and sea use;
 - mapping the range of flexible employment models, including fully paid, full time, seasonal, fee for service contract and job sharing, that may be effectively used to improve employment and economic development outcomes for Indigenous people in this area; and
 - investigating opportunities presented by arrangements established under the Employment and Economic Development schedule to the *Overarching Agreement on Indigenous Affairs*.
- assist Indigenous groups to access training and expertise in areas that enhance natural and cultural resource management skills (recognising existing traditional knowledge and management practices) as well as improving literacy and numeracy through the use of training providers and informal mechanisms such as mentoring and seconded officers

placed in Indigenous groups from government, not-for-profit and business organisations;

- The Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations and Department of Education, Science and Training, the Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training and organisations such as Indigenous Business Australia and Indigenous Community Volunteers will play key roles in this area.
- consider options for better utilising existing government agencies, including the Australian and Northern Territory Government parks and wildlife services, the Australian Customs Service and Australian Quarantine Inspection Service, Defence, the Australian Fisheries Management Authority and the Northern Territory Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines as key employers (sponsoring apprenticeships/traineeships) who may be able to create pathways for Indigenous people engaged in land and sea management work from the Community Development Employment Project (CDEP) program and training into fully paid employment inside or outside these agencies;
- ensure that Indigenous business development advice and support programs are readily available and effective for Indigenous groups engaged in land and sea management activities and also consider the broader economic development opportunities to which they may be linked. Where appropriate, the Governments may help to facilitate partnerships with Indigenous individuals, groups and the not-for-profit and private sectors; and
 - The Northern Territory Department of Business, Economic and Regional Development, Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations through their existing program areas and the economic development activities of Indigenous Business Australia and the Indigenous Land Corporation will play key roles.
- link the expansion and enhancement of the Northern Territory protected lands network, including through the development of Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs) under the Department of Environment and Heritage IPA program, to the identification of related employment and enterprise opportunities for Indigenous people, ensuring people receive the support necessary, including training and infrastructure, to consider and take-up these opportunities.

Improved Planning and Sustainable Partnerships

Both parties support ongoing planning to underpin Indigenous engagement in land and sea management in the Northern Territory. Consistent with the coordination objective of this schedule, both parties will:

- seek to more effectively tailor government investments and partnership arrangements as closely as possible to plans that have been effectively developed by Indigenous groups;
- ensure that the development of land and sea management projects contribute to wider community aspirations and are matched to other activities to reinforce or complement other government or private investments; and
- consider the provision of additional government investment in the planning process.

Both parties also recognise the importance of developing and maintaining longer-term partnerships between Indigenous groups, government agencies, not-for-profit organisations and the private sector in the area of land and sea management. Both parties recognise that these partnerships:

- should be reciprocal and collaborative, recognising the traditional decision-making practices and knowledge of Indigenous people, the objectives of government and aspirations of the broader Northern Territory community; and
- need to be flexible, creating opportunities for Indigenous landholders to determine their priorities for looking after their land and sea and their plans for training, employment and potential economic development, at the same time fulfilling the priorities and outcomes sought by the Northern Territory and Australian Governments.

Broader Indigenous Engagement

Both parties recognise the importance of facilitating greater participation of senior community members, women and younger people in Indigenous land and sea management projects. This can promote the intergenerational transfer of traditional knowledge and bring social benefits in terms of strengthening community governance mechanisms and improving self-esteem. It can also assist younger people identify future training and career pathways. Options for encouraging greater participation of these groups will be examined by the steering group established under this schedule, with a report back by December 2006.

Data and Information Sharing

Recognising and building on previous research and evaluation work on Indigenous land and sea management in the Northern Territory, including the recent review of the Northern Land Council's Caring for Country Program and preparation of regional resource condition reports by the Central Land Council, the parties agree to establish a monitoring and evaluation framework to build up comprehensive qualitative and quantitative information in this area. In so doing, the parties agree to have particular regard to the following issues, and make recommendations as appropriate:

- levels of Indigenous engagement, including qualitative information on the development of land and sea management plans, governance arrangements for Indigenous groups and the experiences of Indigenous people working in this area;
- the biodiversity conservation, resource security and border protection outcomes being achieved by Indigenous people, including through the Indigenous Protected Areas program;
- CDEP contribution to Indigenous land and sea management activities and the transition of people from CDEP to independent seasonal, part-time or full-time work;
- numbers of Indigenous people engaged in both accredited and non-accredited natural and cultural resource management training activities, as well as literacy and numeracy, administration and business and other types of training provided by government agencies linked to employment pathways;
- levels and types of employment for Indigenous people engaged in land and sea management
- delivery of small business advice and support programs for Indigenous people seeking to explore economic development opportunities associated with this area;

- consideration, and take-up, of these economic development opportunities, including the numbers of business plans developed and start-ups, with ongoing analysis of the reasons for success and failure;
- numbers of young people and women engaged in land and sea management activities and qualitative information on the maintenance and passing on of traditional knowledge as appropriate;
- levels of natural resource management grant funding being used by Indigenous groups to support land and sea management activities;
- the administrative burden placed on Indigenous groups by funding arrangements and reporting requirements for Indigenous groups, including Indigenous land and sea rangers, accessing government support in this area;
- ownership of intellectual property by Indigenous people (pre-existing and gained through proposed processes) is recognised as an important issue, particularly access to and ownership of data collected as a result of processes stemming from the implementation of this schedule;
- related social, physical and mental health benefits; and
- specific actions and new approaches taken by agencies to directly support delivery of this schedule, together with resource impact assessments.

Performance Indicators

The parties agree to report on progress in delivering the four objectives of this schedule in one year from announcement.

The parties further agree on an ongoing basis to evaluate objectives and mechanisms developed under this schedule. This will include an evaluation of:

- the work of the steering committee established under this schedule;
- the outcomes of the steering committee, and whether these were achieved within the agreed timeframes;
- the implementation of actions agreed to by the steering committee during this period;
- efficiency of streamlining procedures for funding support arrangements; and
- should the concept of pilot regions be adopted, an initial evaluation of these pilots should be included in this report.