

Indigenous Environmental Service Provision Policy Forum

Outcomes Report

Held at CSIRO Tropical Ecosystems Research Centre (TERC)
Berrimah, Darwin, Northern Territory
Tuesday 13th and Wednesday 14th November 2007



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Denis Saunders (centre), from the Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists, facilitating a discussion among Indigenous, research and government policy participants at the forum

Background

The Indigenous Environmental Service Provision Policy Forum was initiated in March 2007 in response to the Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists Science Scholarship program for postgraduate students. Ms Samantha Muller applied for one of these scholarships as a mechanism to develop new ideas and investment opportunities for Aboriginal land and sea managers that had participated in her PhD research with Dhimurru Land Management Aboriginal Corporation in northeast Arnhemland. Wentworth group members were invited to meet with Aboriginal land and sea managers, researchers and policy makers to consider innovative means of increasing investment in caring for country in the Northern Territory. The Wentworth Group agreed to support the forum and a number of other contributors provided financial and in kind support to its development.

The forum brought together individuals with interests and experience in the field of Aboriginal land and sea management. It was never intended to be representative of Aboriginal land and sea managers in Northern Territory. As the idea of the forum spread, interest in attending grew and people were invited as recommended along the way.

The Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists is an independent group of Australian scientists concerned with advancing solutions to secure the long term health of Australia's land, water and biodiversity. Coming together in November 2002, the Wentworth Group is committed to using their combined experience, scientific expertise and shared values to work with others to improve the long term management and conservation of the Australian landscape. More information about the group is available at www.wentworthgroup.org

In September 2007 three Wentworth Group members were welcomed to Yolngu country in northeast Arnhem Land. Dhimurru and Yirralka Laynhapuy Rangers hosted the scientists, demonstrating their work on country and facilitating discussion about some of the key issues in the area. This visit to country assisted in orienting the Wentworth Group members prior to the forum.

Aim

To facilitate discussion between Indigenous people, researchers, government policy makers, corporate members and Wentworth scientists about enhancing investment in environmental services provided by Indigenous rangers and other Indigenous groups in the Northern Territory.

Objectives

- To discuss 'caring for country' history, current initiatives, Indigenous concerns and resource issues
- To identify key limitations and opportunities for greater investment
- To seek advice and support from Wentworth scientists to improve investment in Indigenous land and sea management
- To seek agreement on how to progress this agenda following the workshop

Participation

Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists

- Mr Peter Cosier - former Policy Adviser to the then Australian Environment Minister, Senator Robert Hill, former Deputy Director General of the NSW Dept of Infrastructure, Planning & Natural Resources.
- Dr Denis Saunders - President of WWF Australia, Editor of Biological Conservation

Community based representatives

Djelk Rangers

- Matthew Ryan
- Felina Campion

Dhimurru Rangers

- Djawa Yunupingu
- Mawalan Marika
- Steve Roeger

Yirralka Laynhapuy Rangers

- Wanyubi Marika
- Yinimala Gumana

Thamarrurr Rangers

- Bobby
- Dan Seacombe

Indigenous Land Management Facilitator NT

- Trish Rigby

Larrakia Traditional Owner

- Raylene Singh

Aboriginal Land and Sea Reference Group members

- Hmalan Hunter-Xenie
- Otto Campion
- Grace Daniels
- Cherry Daniels
- Mona Liddy
- Dean Yibarbuk

North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAISMA)

- Dr Rod Kennett

Research organisations

Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre

- Madeline Dixon - Yuendumu
- Rowena Tasman - Yuendumu
- Dr Jocelyn Davies, CSIRO
- Karissa Preuss, ANU
- Dr Richard Baker, ANU

Charles Darwin University

- Prof Bruce Campbell
- Prof Stephen Garnett

Australian National University

- Prof Jon Altman

CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems

- Andra Putnis

Government/policy/NGO

NTG Natural Resources Environment and the Arts

- Stuart Gold

Commonwealth 'Working on Country' program

- Matt Salmon

NRM Facilitator - Coastal and Marine NT Australian Government

- Kath Nash

NT NRM Board

- Julia

AQIS NAQS Coordinator

- Lyndall McLean

IPA Program representative

- Bruce Rose

WWF Australia

- Stuart Blanch
- Martin Taylor

The forum was facilitated by Dr Dermot Smyth
Coordinated and attended by Samantha Muller

Forum Agenda

Day 1

9:00 Workshop start

1. Welcome to country – Raylene Singh, Larrakia Senior Traditional Owner
2. Introduction, background, aims, housekeeping, recording information
3. Personal journey introductions
Each participant will be invited to introduce themselves, where they are from and a short summary of how their personal journey to arrive at their involvement in the workshop.

10:30 - 11:00 morning tea

4. Learning circle, sharing histories
Small group discussions about understanding country, caring for country, history, caring for country initiatives, Aboriginal concerns, funding and resource issues

12:45 – 1:30 lunch

5. Report back from groups and discussion on issues raised.

3:00 – 3:30 afternoon tea

6. Review of current funding sources for Indigenous land and sea management
7. Identify key issues, actions and strategies for day 2.

4:30 End of Day 1

6:00 pm Forum dinner at Jetty Restaurant, Stokes Hill Wharf, Darwin

Day 2

9:00 Workshop start

1. Summary of Day 1. Clarification of issues/topics for discussion
2. Break into small discussion groups

10:30 - 11:00 morning tea

3. Small groups report back to main group

12:45 – 1:30 lunch

4. Plenary discussion:
Consolidate key outcomes and seek agreement on ‘where to from here?’

3:00 – 3:30 afternoon tea

5. Reflection from participants on what they have learnt and what actions they seek to take from here on.

4:30 Finish workshop

Forum Discussions: Day 1

Following a Welcome to Country by Larrakia Traditional Owner Raylene Singh, each participant introduced themselves and their life experiences that led them to participating in the forum. The diversity of backgrounds and life journeys set the scene for the small group discussions that followed.

Following the morning tea break the forum broke into small groups for discussion of particular issues. Groups were invited to discuss their ideas and concerns about caring for country, including: understanding country, history, caring for country initiatives, funding and resource issues. Groups were encouraged to consider the successes, barriers and potential innovations for Aboriginal land and sea management in the NT. Summaries of each of the small group discussions are presented below.

Group 1: facilitated by Peter Cosier

Understanding Country

- Hunting bush tucker
- Burning off areas, how, when, who?
- Not just about burning, but ‘being there’ – renewal, ceremony, history, cultural, reconnection, spirituality

How people relate to country

- TOs’ relationships, protocol, how decision making is done, ceremony
- Balanda influence on country (big change – e.g. weeds and infrastructure) and needs to be taken into account
- Passing on knowledge, practical know-how
- Connection to country, consequences of fragmentation and being removed from country

What would country look like if there was no caring for country?

- Great *Mimosa* infestations
- Indigenous need to actively manage
- Continual degradation
- Economic consequences
- NT is huge, small population
- Big fires, huge fire front.
- From the south it is hard to understand how big 1.35million km² is – 1 person/7km²
- Removing people from their country to work in pastoralism has changed ecology

Positive successes

- 15 years ago, only a few ranger groups, now there are 50 land and sea ranger groups
- Always out there, issues of resources and structures
- Dhimurru: mine in 1972 had impact, environmental and cultural, influx of Balanda, Yolngu imperative to get Dhimurru off the ground. TOs’ initiative and resources.
- Yirralka rangers, buffalo impact increased. Need land management
- Djelk rangers, women and men. Women work with AQIS. Business opportunities, money for people on outstations
- Ranger groups: training and employment pathways for people
- CDEP introduced and harnessed in development of caring for country

Caring for country was developed in response to impacts and pressures

- About 500 rangers in NT
- Dhimurru is promoting land management
- Increasing the value of the landscape

Success of Indigenous land management program

- Indigenous involvement not all quantifiable. How do we quantify? Topic for day 2.
- Social cohesion: pride, self esteem, control of the future
- Economic success: high given the constraints
- Environmental success: burning regimes: snapshots of good outcomes
- Increasing profile of land and sea management through ranger programs – education/reconciliation provides opportunity for TOs to take charge
- Glimmer of hope: rebuild: respect
- Capacity to survive proven over 200 years
- Forget about the past, think about the future
- Documenting traditional knowledge and land management
- Intergenerational transfer of knowledge IEK:

Innovations/New ideas:

- Djawa: two way approach. Key people operating at the interface – whitefella/blackfella
- Public servants need to do both way approach
- Issues: capacity to deliver money: one entity to support ranger groups/ Need a more efficient model and institutional framework

Barriers

- 10,000km of coastline including islands
- Sea country: complicated jurisdictional framework, ownership and decisions
- NT 3 nautical miles, Australian Government Fisheries/minerals
- NT Land Rights Act, land to the low water mark
- Blue Mud Bay: tested High Court intertidal zone is land that TOs have rights to,(latest determination) – appeal pending
- Biosecurity threats: wildfires/weeds/ferals (ants, camels)/visitor access/marine debris/IFV/quarantine risks/disease
- A lot of coastline with a limited population: ranger groups are on site
- Chronic underinvestment
- Structure of groups: ranger groups vs community groups
- Numeracy/literacy: impedes TO control. It is a positive to keep language strong. Two way challenges are a Catch 22
- Health: die before we get old
- Population growth: employment, economics, money
- Language/cultural erosion: threat is the Western culture
- Funding programs use whitefella language
- 2 cultures but one path

Institutional frameworks: for day 2

- Does Sydney care about the NT?
- Big problems, few people
- Remoteness
- Infrastructure

Peter Cosier's feedback

- Caring for country has always happened and will always happen. The white intervention stopped it and is now trying to get it back. It is about relating to country and the responsibility people feel for country. Spiritual and cultural things.
- Growing pains, extreme growth. There is a parallel here with National Parks, which began as community-owned initiatives and transformed into formal institutions.
- The scale of the challenge is extraordinary.
- There are a range of roles that rangers provide.
- Caring for country has been a big success:
 - Value of the project to the people themselves
 - Employment opportunities to get more directly involved in country
 - Skills and training for young people
 - Helps whitefellas see new ways of seeing landscapes
 - Opportunity to document Indigenous knowledge
- Institutional challenges
 - Chronic underinvestment
 - Structural problems, rangers are hosted by other organisations
 - Need formal institutions to get money
 - Numeracy and literacy of young kids
- Some of the challenges are also indications of the strength of what has been achieved (eg having to deal with multiple funding sources is sign of innovation and success in strategies to access funding).

Group 2: facilitated by Samantha Muller

Successes/what works:

- Established groups across the top end
- Sharing our work with our neighbours – linkages and networks
- Strength of working together – Indigenous ranger networks a great success and demonstrate how to network well
- Strong connection with community – the kids and elders
- Working with elders as teachers about country
- Increasing education opportunities for whitefellas – schools and universities teaching about Aboriginal land management
- Scientists have realised that they need help from TOs about country
- Two way learning – learning from each other
- Aboriginal commitment to working on country and to living on country
- Strong vision and working beyond obstacles
- Good non-Indigenous workers and supporters – people that stay around
- Training opportunities
- Greater recognition of the role of TOs in land and sea – permission
- Aboriginal Rangers in the south want to learn about NT rangers
- Good leadership – driven by TOs on the ground
- Royalty money used to set up Dhimurru – permit money stays at Dhimurru which provides financial flexibility
- TOs are in charge as the umbrella organisation through formal structures
- All staff are working together through mutual respect and trust

- Strong culture – powerful
- Celebrating diverse ways of living and working

Challenges:

- Balancing two cultures, working in two worlds
- Fast turnover of non-Indigenous workers – need to keep building balanda staff capacity
- How to make the way forward appropriate to the desert
- Remote areas, high costs of operation
- Planning, making sure the right people are involved
- Funding and resources
 - Needs to be realistic
 - Need recurrent funds
 - Rangers stuck in the middle of many contracts
 - Need good facilitators to get funds, so poorly supported groups get less opportunities
 - So many stakeholders to meet with and develop relationships with
- Government is suspicious of TOs and their aspirations. Rangers in parks don't have to demonstrate outcomes to the same degree as Aboriginal rangers
- How to demonstrate you are making a difference?
- Recognising the holistic nature of land management. Getting support for health, employment and economic challenges that are related
- The intervention. Bringing in weeds through increased vehicle traffic; compulsory acquisition of land brings people's rights into question
- Having to work out of offices that aren't ours, or are hard to work from
- Not in control of TOs because they are dependent on so many external groups for support
- CDEP changes – hard for small groups that can't access support
- Trust is an issue – resources get locked away. Can't do work without resources
- Bad policy, negative press influencing public opinion

Innovations/new ideas

- Networks right across the land and sea
- Need different models for desert country (eg fewer people, bigger areas)
- Brokers to assist in coordinating funding
- Setting up ranger groups as businesses
- Getting one united voice, desert and top end. We are all facing same challenges
- Creating washdown areas for visitors to Aboriginal land, employing rangers to do that
- To stand up and ask mining companies for support
- Dhimurru TOs used their own royalties to start off, could work for others
- Alliance needs to incorporate and support smaller groups
- Stop the intervention!!
- No permits could mean an opportunity for greater surveillance role for Aboriginal rangers
- By-laws – Honorary Conservation Officers: increase the powers of rangers like parking inspectors, implement penalties that work
- Collaborate with NLC and police to protect land and outstations and how powers to enforce decisions
- Publicise and shame visitors and tourists that are doing the wrong thing
- Carbon abatement – WALFA project

- Integrating with private sector funding
- Invite external people onto country to see for themselves
- More cultural exchanges – powerful way to gain respect
- Using performance based outcomes, acknowledge achievements on country, equitable outcomes funding - compared to Kakadu resources Indigenous people looking after country get substantially less resources
- Streamlined funding
- Confidence in monitoring to tap into the commercial markets directly – make processes and systems simple
- We need new institutions rather than try to adapt old systems and institutions
- Good ways to show benefits, develop monitoring processes and outcomes
- Governance structures adapted to environmental structures
- How to get standard monitoring techniques
- Getting the balance right between Aboriginal and Western knowledge
- Accountability from people that have introduced problems
- Strategic engagement, working with Rangers, to ensure intervention for weed and feral animals



Walpiri Ranger Rowena Tasman videos group discussion

Group 3: facilitated by Denis Saunders

- Funding easier for things that others want: pests, ants, weeds, mosquitos, fire
- Funding not easy for healthy country
 - Fire management by community
 - Water monitoring
 - Management for tucker
 - Harvesting natural resources
 - Maintaining rock art
- More community involvement working on country
 - Getting young people involved
 - Maintaining knowledge of elders
 - Strengthening links between young and elders (role models)
 - Local government for community rather than government imposition
- How can caring for country generate income? It is essential for survival
 - Safaris
 - Rock art
 - Crocodile farms
 - Carbon sequestration
 - Cultural advisors, custodians of country. People = country

Problems

- Working through middle persons
- Terminology – ranger is not appropriate word – is too narrow a concept
- Government projects are set up to fail
- Lack of empowerment of traditional owners
- Lack of engagement of TOs and their knowledge, others appoint facilitators
- Exploitation of people in relation to time and knowledge
- Assumption that this can be done with no recompense – often with no costs covered
- Lack of jobs on community
- Disparity between communities depending on whether Commonwealth of NT jurisdictions
- Lack of coordination between those seeking access to community
- Intervention!
- Obstacles to people access some of their country – eg lack of access to some pastoral areas
- Current approaches to splintered funding allocations can lead to divisions in communities
- All country is not equal – some is richer in NRM than others – rainfall
- Lack of control over who can come onto country
- Much talk/conferences/workshops but little follow through for communities and country
- Lack of trust of communities by government and whitefellas
- High turnover of non-community members, such as facilitators
- Culturally inappropriate work arrangements eg women facilitators with male rangers
- Whitefellas getting jobs communities members should have

Group 4: facilitated by Hmalan Hunter-Xenie

What works?

- Growth in number of ranger groups and ranger numbers in last 15 years
- Large number of organisations supporting land and sea management activities and groups
- Key to success – involving traditional owners, people on the ground are pushing it and sticking with it
- Getting young people involved
 - Present: reduced social problems eg truancy
 - Future: discussion, ideas for youth
- Mix of older people and youth sharing knowledge
- Succession plans for group facilitators/coordinators
- Success of Fee-for-Service with further contracts and more call for services
- Recognition through
 - ‘real wages’ out now
 - 45% of NRM board funding to Indigenous organisations
 - Media highlighting positive stories (sometimes)
- Length of groups established
 - 15 years, 11 years
 - Interest is HIGH
 - Continuity of some key members
- Structure of groups
 - Trained/selected by TOs
 - Experience and skills shared and from other organisations
 - Wide range of training and skills
(from AQIS to chainsaw maintenance to timesheets and emails)
- Maturity and capacity of ranger groups
 - Moved on from wider public perception of ‘park rangers’
- Good to have opportunities to come together. Share experiences and ideas and speak up

Barriers

- Different funding buckets
 - Unrealistic expectations and reports
- Training
 - Position for a trainer (meets needs of people and push their needs forward)
 - 2/3 year contracts
 - Certificates to proper jobs
 - Recognition of skills. Hard to get training (BIITE/CDU)
- CDEP
 - Budget for people on wages with sick pay, rec leave etc (like park rangers)

- Resources
 - Equipment
 - Facilities
- Use of IEK
 - Valuing IEK and governance structures in group
- Communication
 - Small grants getting message to people?
 - Grant possibilities to communities
 - Can break down
 - Getting different departments to understand better
 - Background knowledge of fee for service opportunities
 - Eg Laynhapuy IPA permit system – people go to NLC
 - ‘Getting politicians tears in their eyes’
- Government/NGOs
 - Agencies to coordinate better
 - They fund land and sea management but don’t recognise it is interrelated to everything else
 - Don’t understand Aboriginal culture and the reality of what is achievable
 - Governance of institutions is hard to invest into
 - Person in between funding body and on ground projects
 - Contact person can change
 - Stable person to look after management of these projects
 - What is happening with funding within organisations in those positions?
 - Takes time to understand on ground projects and then retrain someone else
 - Continue interaction with government ‘demonstrate to doubtful politicians’ to prove worth of these programs
- Recognition
 - Skills
 - Government views on people’s abilities to look after country/what people do
 - What women rangers do and support for their work

New Ideas

- The way land and sea management is reported back eg money saved and dollar benefits
- Independent committee ‘collective voice’ issues for groups/what they want
- Offering of other skills to land and sea management activities from agencies rather than money
- Structure of reporting mechanisms
 - More consistent across funding providers
 - Other possibilities – video tape reporting
- WALFA project
 - Setting up a brokerage arrangement
 - Register of groups for businesses to look at (quicken process)
- Diversifying income sources for groups
- Systematic approach for supporting land and sea management activities, match needs with each group

Thoughts/Questions

- Is there a ranger network?
- Government money disjointed, is that an issue for green groups?

- Who works together? Government, philanthropists, NGOs
- What is the list of fee for service opportunities? Better for larger groups? Most/all reliant on CDEP
- How do we match fee for service with cultural needs?
- Government in a transitional environment towards open grant?



Hmalan Hunter-Xenie reporting on the outcomes of small group discussions

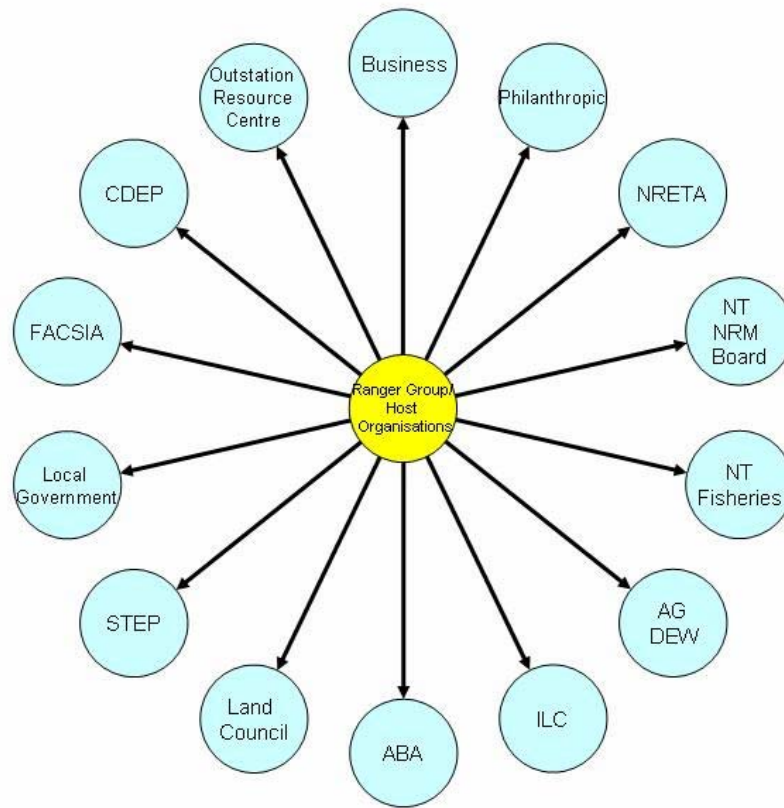
Current investment opportunities and constraints

Andra Putnis (CSIRO) contributed to the discussion on current government and non-government funding sources for Indigenous land and sea management. She prepared a handout that includes:

1. A snapshot of the government and non-government funding pattern for Indigenous land and sea management in the NT;
2. The major categories of government grant funding that can be currently accessed by Indigenous land and sea management groups; and
3. The major categories of other investment being access by groups, including through fee-for-service arrangements and philanthropic and research organisations.

This information set the foundations for further discussions on funding and institutional support arrangements for Indigenous land and sea management. The handout is reproduced on the following three pages.

Current Funding – Indigenous Land and Sea Management



Snapshot of the overall funding pattern

The above diagram shows that, in the main, current government and non-government funding for Indigenous land and sea management is delivered via dispersed and short-term funding contracts. The diagram shows a Ranger Group or their Host Organisation (such as a Land Council, Local Government Council or Outstation Resource Centre) having to try to obtain funds from fourteen sources to run their land and sea management program. However, many groups would have even more complicated arrangements with over thirty contracts. It is not uncommon for groups to have to spend a lot of time ‘hunting and gathering’ for funding which creates a lot of uncertainty for these groups. For example, the vehicles to run a land and sea management program may come from one source, the wages from another source and the equipment from a third source etc (with all grants having different timeframes and requirements that make planning very difficult).

Andra indicated that her research shows that representatives from Indigenous groups, government agencies and non-government organisations all recognise that this funding pattern is a barrier to Indigenous land and sea management groups being able to further develop their organisations. It may be necessary to look at different funding models to deliver more stable and coordinated support to Indigenous land and sea management groups so they can grow over the next five years.

Government Funding

Employment Programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CDEP • Working on Country • Work for the Dole 	Mainstream Environmental and Cultural Programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural Heritage Trust – National, Regional and Local • Envirofund • NT Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts 	Joint Management for Parks and Reserves <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NT Parks and Wildlife • Parks Australia North
Indigenous Infrastructure and Activities Funds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous Land Corporation • Aboriginals Benefit Account 	Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured Training in Employment Projects and Employment Related Services (STEP) • Batchelor and CDU • NT Flexible Training Pool 	Flexible Employment Arrangements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NT and Australian Government Parks and Wildlife • NORFORCE
Indigenous Environmental and Cultural Heritage Programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous Protected Areas • Indigenous Heritage Program • NT Marine Rangers • NT Indigenous Ranger Group Development Program 	Business and Industry Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous Small Business Fund • Indigenous Business Australia • NT Indigenous Business and Industry Services 	Other Grant Funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Partnerships Program • Shared Responsibility Agreements • NT Community Benefits Small Grants Program
Core funding – Land Councils and Other Organisations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caring for Country and Land and Sea Management Units 	Healthy Country, Healthy People Schedule ?????	

The Major Categories of Government Grant Funding

The table above shows eleven broad categories of government grant funding for Indigenous land and sea management groups. These range from programs with an employment or training focus through to programs focusing on environmental and heritage outcomes. A key issue is that the Australian Government has announced the phasing out of the CDEP program which is a major source of funds supporting wages for Indigenous land and sea managers at the moment. They have announced that they will transition Indigenous people to employment or other training and employment programs.

Other Investment

<p>Fee-for-Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AQIS • Customs • NT and Australian Parks and Wildlife • Mining companies • Forestry companies • Pastoral properties • Defence properties • Local community councils • Eco-tourism • Carbon trading companies • Biodiversity offset companies 	<p>Philanthropic Organisations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christensen Fund • Nature Conservancy • WWF • Greening Australia • Australian Conservation Foundation • Oxfam • Sidney Myer Fund • Pew Environment Group 	<p>Individuals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key supporters
<p>Social and Cultural Impact Compensation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mining companies • Forestry companies 	<p>Research Organisations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charles Darwin University • Australian National University • CSIRO • Desert Knowledge CRC and others 	<p>Raising Own Revenue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Royalties / lease payments
<p>Native Title and Indigenous Land Use Agreements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conditions of agreements 		

Categories of Other Investment

The table above illustrates that there are a lot of other investments being made in Indigenous land and sea management, including fee-for-service arrangements now being negotiated between Indigenous groups and government or business organisations on a commercial basis. A key example is the fee-for-service arrangement that the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service has with many Indigenous land and sea management groups across the NT coastline. Other sources of funding include philanthropic, business and research organisations, and their roles may increase over time.

Day 1 Summary

Based on the above summary of small groups discussions, and the plenary discussions that followed the feedback presentations, the following dot points summaries the key issues and ideas that arose during Day one relating to the successes, challenges and innovations in Indigenous land and sea management in the NT.

Successes

- Numbers of ranger groups increasing;
- Some ranger groups operating for 10-15 Years;
- Benefits to youth
 - ~ training and employment
 - ~ Transfer of knowledge from elders
- Moving from volunteers to full wages for some
- More people back on Country
- Funding for environmental services (e.g. AQIS, IPAs etc.)
- Recognition by scientists that they need the help of TOs
- Improved self esteem that comes from looking after Country

Challenges

- Training
- End of CDEP
- Recognition of
 - ~ existing skills of rangers and TOs
 - ~ role of women rangers
- Appropriate two way accountability processes
- Recognising holistic values of Caring for Country
- Negative media
- Commonwealth Government Intervention in the NT
- Inadequate office facilities for rangers groups
- Wash-down facilities to control weeds
- Under investment by governments
- Transaction costs of funding, including costs of “middle persons”
- Are Government programs set up to fail?
- Much Caring for Country work is unpaid
- Funding and other support is “splintered”, uncoordinated
- Access to Country
- Trust / suspicion
- Supporting cultural advisors
- Balancing Indigenous and Western science perspectives and approaches
- Short term funding
- High cost of Caring for Country in remote areas
- Range of environmental threats (ferals, weeds, climate change, population changes etc.)
- Documenting, storing, accessing and applying Indigenous knowledge
- Numeracy and literacy
- Community control and governance

New Ideas and Opportunities

- Using alternative means (e.g. video) to report outcomes of projects
- Establish an Indigenous ranger / Caring for Country Alliance
 - ~ collective voice
 - ~ cooperation between ranger groups
- Negotiate in-kind support from govt agencies in addition to funding
- Establish brokerage for carbon offsets (e.g. Western Arnhem Land Fire Abatement [WALFA] project)
- Recognise the diverse benefits (e.g. health & education) of Caring for Country
- Cross cultural exchanges
- Need new systems to coordinate funding and other support for Caring for Country
- “Healthy People Healthy Country” schedule

Day 2

Based on the outcomes of discussions during Day 1, as summarised above, the following key Themes and Issues were put forward for discussion on Day 2.

Theme 1: PERCEPTIONS

Issues

- ~ What is “Caring for Country”?
- ~ What are the roles of Indigenous Rangers
- ~ What does “accountability” mean?

Theme 2: INSTITUTIONAL MODELS

Issues

- ~ Streamlining funding sources to one or a few buckets;
- ~ Delivering Whole of Government support;

Theme 3: INVESTMENT

Issues

- ~ Addressing under investment
- ~ What are the barriers to investment?
- ~ Making a case for investment
- ~ Investing in all aspects of Caring for Country, including sustainable use of resources, cultural values etc. – not just biodiversity conservation

Theme 4: GOVERNANCE

Issues

- ~ Maintaining community/Traditional Owner control
- ~ Maintaining autonomy
- ~ Concept of an alliance or network of Indigenous Ranger groups:
 - ~ Coordination between Ranger groups?
 - ~ Speaking with one voice?

The forum participants divided into three small groups to consider the above Themes and Issues. Each group considered Theme 1 plus one of the other three Themes. Summaries of feedback from each of the discussion groups are presented below.

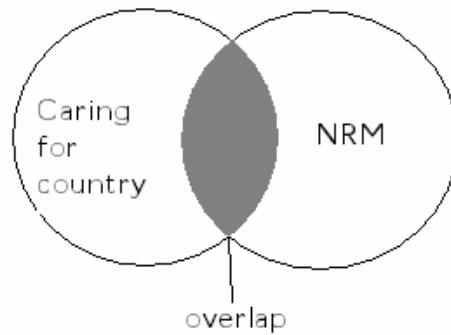
Feedback from discussions on Themes and Issues

Theme 1: What is Caring for Country?

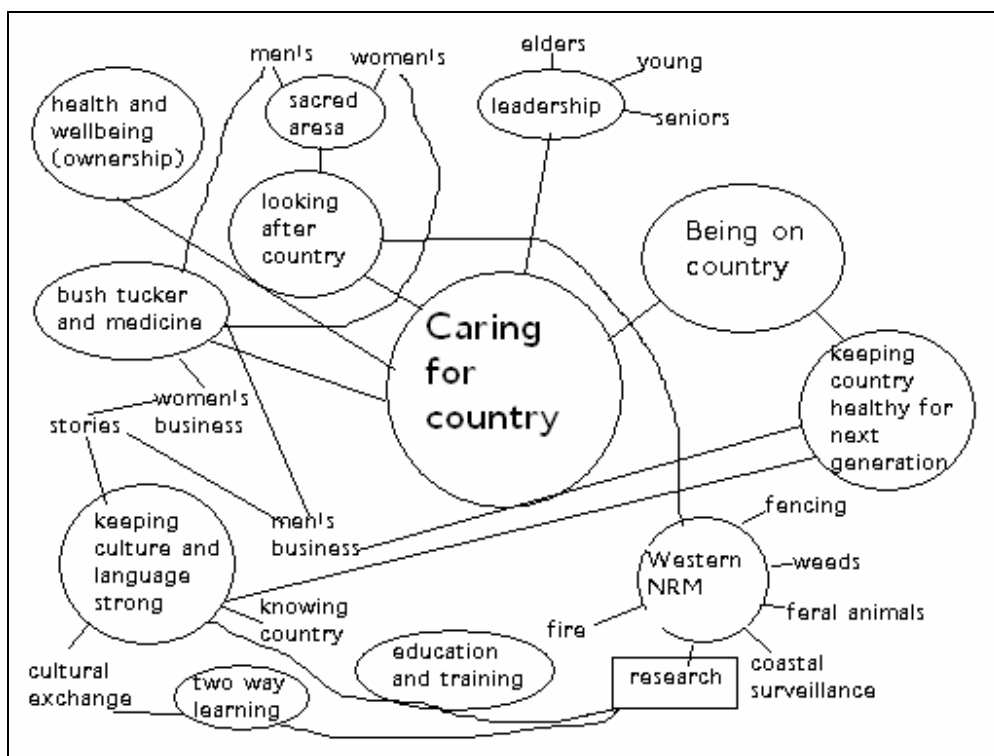
Each group was asked to identify and clarify what was meant by the term 'caring for country'. It was recognised that there is a disparity between what different people understand by the term and this disparity is a considerable challenge in resourcing land and sea management.

The following dot points and diagrams provide key meanings or implications of caring for country, as summarised by the three discussion groups:

- Traditional Owners' responsibility
- Passing on knowledge to next generation
- Comes from Aboriginal law
- Is not just about National Parks and the environment
- Means jobs for Traditional Owners
- Is being on country
- Means continuing tradition
- Rights and responsibility
- Connection/kinship
- Culture and people and heritage
- Caring for country means Aboriginal people caring for the land and sea, its people and culture and being nurtured by them
- Our country is us and we are our country
- Identity
- Sense of place
- Without our country we do not exist
- Spiritual and cultural connection
 - Our knowledge centre
 - Our health
 - Our religion
 - Our supermarket
 - Our schools
 - And contemporary life
- Learning from knowledge centre and developing knowledge centre
- Looking after people – healthy people, healthy environment
- Respect for Law (Aboriginal and Western)
- Ceremonies: essential for community, land ownership, family, knowledge, land and sea management
- This is seen as private benefits but much is public benefit



The two circles above represent the Aboriginal concept of caring for country and the government concept of natural resource management (NRM). The area of overlap represents the common ground between the two concepts, which is the aspects of caring for country that funding is currently available. The challenge is to increase the area of overlap between these two concepts so that there is great understanding and support for caring for country.



The above diagram represents the complexity of caring for country and its relationship to Aboriginal culture and society and its interaction with NRM and other contemporary approaches to environmental management. This diagram is another way of explaining that caring for country is more complex and holistic than NRM.

Theme 2: Institutional models

(facilitated by Peter Cosier)

- There will always be a number of funding opportunities. We have decided to focus on government investment which appears to be most confusing

In order to address this confusion we need to:

- Sell Indigenous Caring For Country Concept up not down
- Make a plan targeted to specific politicians
- Timing is good now
- Plan needs to include:
 - Vision
 - Explanation of caring for country
 - Describe multiple outcomes, using as many numbers as possible
 - Detail administrative structure at local level, umbrella organisations
 - What will it cost? 10 year plan.
- Administration – government is unlikely to fund 200 separate groups,
- Who do we trust?
- Do they have the capacity or can they get it? Can they deliver?
- Which body or bodies should be delivered to?
- 2 model options for facilitating streamlined investment:
 - Government Task Force
 - Aboriginal stakeholders model
- Progression
- Scale – what will be included?
- Principles for proposal to government:
 - Maximise effective coordination among government agencies
 - Deliver streamlined funding
 - Certainty and confidence for government and for Indigenous groups
 - Long term vision and marketing strategy
 - Timely – delivery of funding
 - Ensure Indigenous input into decision making
 - Close enough to the coal face

Theme 2: Investment

(facilitated by Denis Saunders)

- Challenge: to change to support for integrated cultural and land and sea management
- Need to recognise cost of doing business in remote areas
- Risk – funding will bring accountability and potential loss of independence; particular risk of funders scrutinising whether cultural activities are being done properly
- Fund for outcomes – healthy country (community decides on how to do it, held accountable to outcomes)
- Funding for contingency – eg defence models and drought subsidies. These arguments have worked for other sectors and could be extended to Aboriginal land and sea management
- Challenges in communication – government saying ‘enter mainstream’ but numbers of communities saying ‘we need to stay here and care for country’
- Funding such as ABA and ILC should be under Aboriginal control (accountability)
- Outcomes of workshop to Indigenous Affairs Minister

- Current funds from DEWR, ABA, ILC with acceptance of Caring for Country there is potential for wider funding sources, such as social welfare, health etc
- Prevention is more effective than repair

Theme 4: Governance and alliance

(facilitated by Hmalan Hunter-Xenie)

Accountability meanings

- Taking ownership of actions and roles
- Being responsible towards/for community
- Respect the land/country
- Doing it the right way for our people, old ways
- Agencies/government to be more adaptable for Indigenous people, to want to learn. Can always change
- Two different levels of accountability: community level and higher (funding)
- Who is accountable to whom?
 - Coordinator (local council or other)
 - Funders (spend money 3 months – sorry business comes up) x 10 different agencies but work with 2/3 people (not whole community)
- More negatives than positives being seen
- No transparency/coordination
- Ownership and control returning to Aboriginal people. Old people are advising:
 - New way: speak to us, we approach our mob and return to you
 - Old way: pick up people, photos everywhere
- ‘Learn the right way to do it’
- Smaller operators come out also with no accountability
- Dhimurru – ‘east wind’: money people put back into country
 - Federal money
 - IPA 2000 = more money
- 13 groups – TO structure, being in control
 - Stakeholders below us
 - 13 groups include women, but no women rangers yet
- TOs sat with NLC
 - Employment at mine
 - Employment opportunities
 - Employment at Aboriginal organisations

Governance and alliance

- If no money to start it puts you in opposition with NLC, mining etc. Not negotiated: nuclear, mines (5 years always come back)
- Alliance – one big strong voice of decision makers. Our agenda and controlled

How to start?

- NLC not allowing this process to happen
- One to cater for all
- Threat – share information, get our own funding. Doors are closed elsewhere
- ‘Right people doing the right job’
- Money staying at NLC
- Top End groups NOT linked to CLC groups

- National conference for Top End/Centre groups to meet up
- Need harmony (NLC and NAILSMA) looking elsewhere
- Not as many agencies working with groups in CLC region
- Government and funding
- NLC and funding
- Infrastructure/funds to needed groups

Options

- Restructuring CFCU/NLC/Others
- ILMF/NRM facilitators to assist? Sea ranger (Kath)
- Run it as a business
- NRM board newsletter re funding available

Aim

- Same vision. Share learning, experience and knowledge, resources with no red tape
- ‘Everyone growing together’
- Combination of resources (billy goat) and sell it
- ‘help each other out’

Happen/process

- Training of people together
- Agencies/NLC/others to approach groups
- Control and ownership of information in groups
- Balance to keep men and women equal
- Support network/hub re: funding, assistance available
- Place to bring people together (government and others)
- Issues raised more often can be dealt with, to allow follow up and regular meetings (skype)
- Interaction side by side

To do

- List of Indigenous groups active at the moment
- Stronger network for people talking
- Smaller groups will get more support from this process
- Enable people’s news to be listened to
 - Reports
 - Communication tools (video/stories)
 - Acknowledgement of its contents
 - People’s voice (true story)

Conclusions

In the concluding plenary discussion of the forum, participants agreed that it was not appropriate to endorse particular recommendations, as the group was not set up to be a representative body and therefore had no mandate to make recommendations. Rather, it was agreed that individual participants could utilise the outcomes of discussions at the forum in their own capacities as members of Indigenous organisations, ranger groups, government agencies, non-government organisations, scientific institutions and lobby groups. Key needs, concerns and proposals identified during the forum include:

- **Recognition of Caring for Country**

The forum identified the need for a greater understanding of what is meant by ‘caring for country’, and the need for greater support for all caring for country values and activities, not just the natural resource management components. Indigenous people have critical interests and roles to play in caring for country for the benefit of all, but have to be given the opportunity to do it in their own way.

- **Reform of institutional and funding support**

The forum identified the need for reform of institutional and funding support for Indigenous Ranger groups and other caring for country activities. The current diversity of sources for funding and other support has very high transaction costs and presents real barriers to the further strengthening of existing Indigenous Ranger groups and the establishment of new Ranger groups. In particular, an urgent need was identified for recurrent core funding for Indigenous land and sea management agencies to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities to care for country and to deliver broader environmental benefits, including through fee-for-service activities, to the Australian community.

The forum considered new mechanisms for delivering funding including using community developed plans as a basis, such as Indigenous Protected Area or Sea Country plans. Groups could then be funded for plan implementation rather than individual projects. Framing investments in terms of contingency, as they do for defence, for the protection of land and sea, culture and health was recognised as a potential new avenue for gaining support.

- **Alliance/Collaboration between Indigenous Ranger groups**

The forum identified the benefits that could flow from strengthening collaboration between Indigenous Ranger groups, either through further development of existing institutions (such as NAILSMA and Land Council support for caring for country initiatives) or through the development of a new alliance or network.

- **Recognising success**

The forum provided an opportunity to reflect on the extraordinary growth and success of Indigenous Ranger groups and caring for country initiatives over the last 10 years, despite the identified institutional and funding challenges. The forum recognised that the success of Indigenous Ranger groups derives from their origin as explicitly Indigenous initiatives supported by the ongoing commitment of Traditional Owners and their representative organisations. The forum also identified that this historical independence from government policy is reflected in the current difficulties in achieving holistic support for caring for country activities.

Progressing the Forum Outcomes

The Outcomes Report is intended to provide a summary of the discussions held at the Forum and articulate the ideas and concerns expressed. The Forum and the outcomes in this report are not representative of any particular group. Based on feedback from the Draft Outcomes Report, it is understood that the outcomes and ideas from the Forum will be used in the following ways:

- The Indigenous Land Management Facilitator (ILMF) felt it was important to get a more representative Indigenous group together to discuss the implications on how community ranger projects will now operate and how those discussions can become a framework to inform Northern Territory and Federal Government policies. The ILMF, with the support of other Australian Government Facilitators, offered to facilitate a workshop involving Indigenous people from all over the Northern Territory, including the Central, Tiwi and Anindilyakwa Land Council regions.
- Participants agreed that there would be great value in having the findings of this forum discussed at the next Caring for Country Forum convened in the NT with a view to ensuring that ideas raised in the forum which require coordinated effort across the Caring for Country network can be progressed.
- Representatives from Desert Knowledge CRC will:
 - share the outcomes on Yuendumu community radio about ideas and experiences from the forum
 - include a short item in Desert Knowledge monthly e-newsletter about ideas and experiences from the forum
 - make the report available on their websites
 - will be incorporate key points raised in the workshop and report into Desert Knowledge research and communication about what is important for strong ranger groups and land management in the desert
 - will continue to pursue and develop opportunities for stronger networking between Yuendumu land managers and other Indigenous land and sea managers.
- Wentworth Group members believe that the Forum and visit to country added new thinking into how to better manage the Australian landscape, with particular insight into managing land and water in northern Australia.
- Denis Saunders believes the workshop and outcomes report will be useful in assisting his family foundation, and others with whom they work, to have a greater understanding of caring for country initiatives.
- CSIRO employee Andra Putnis will use the report and the ideas to further their understanding of the Indigenous land and sea management sector and appropriate ways to engineer stronger support from government, business and philanthropic organisations and the broader public.
- Outcomes of the Forum will also be viewed in the context of the CSIRO Review of community ranger groups in the Top End, expected to be released in the near future. Concern was expressed at the Forum about the time it has taken to finalise this report