



Natural Heritage Trust

Helping Communities Helping Australia

An Australian Government Initiative

Working with Indigenous Knowledge
in Natural Resource Management

Recommendations for Commonwealth Agencies

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Indigenous Knowledge

Introduction

This short report is drawn from the Workshop Outcomes Report of an Indigenous Knowledge Forum, held at Alice Springs on 28–29 May 2003.

The purpose of this report is to provide recommendations and advice on how Agency staff can better equip regional staff to work effectively with Indigenous knowledge in regional natural resource management.

The report outlines:

- the regional delivery context
- the issues involved in supporting Indigenous knowledge
- a framework of principles for engaging with Indigenous knowledge
- an Indigenous Natural Resource Management (INRM) planning process
- a partnership approach
- protocols for working together
- the overall way forward
- recommendations to improve Australian Government processes
- next steps agreed

Regional delivery

The institutional context for regional delivery includes the following:

- The arrangements for delivery of the second phase of the Natural Heritage Trust and the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality take account of lessons learnt from the first phase of the Trust.
- The extension of the Trust focuses on investing in large strategic projects at the regional level.
- Integrated natural resource management plans and investment strategies that identify investment priorities to implement the plan are the foundation of regional delivery.
- Regional plans ensure that investment is targeted at achieving outcomes in the sustainable use of resources, conservation of biodiversity, capacity building at an appropriate scale and addressing the most important issues in each region.

The views and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Australian Government or the Minister for the Environment and Heritage.

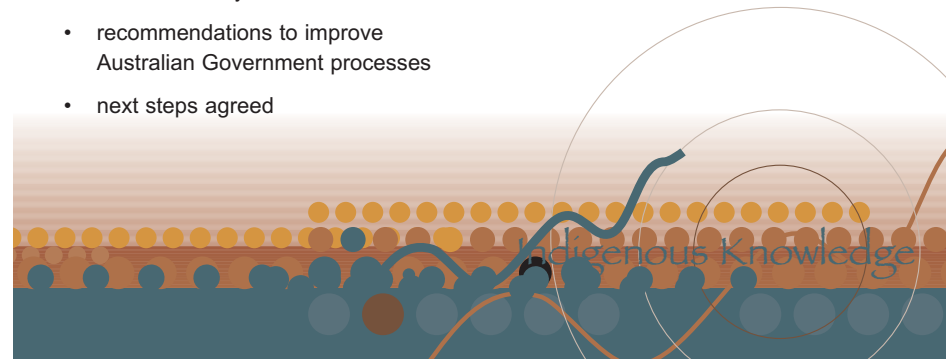
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- Guiding the development of integrated regional natural resource management plans is the 'accreditation criteria for integrated catchment/regional natural resource management plans'.
- The accreditation criteria identify the key elements needed in a plan to provide a sound basis for investment in integrated outcomes.
- Regional bodies, in consultation with a range of community interests, are responsible for developing and implementing plans.
- The accreditation criteria identify the need to effectively engage all key stakeholders, including Indigenous communities.

Issues

Participants identified the issues involved in supporting Indigenous knowledge in the regional delivery of natural resource management in the rangelands, as follows:

- poor understanding of Indigenous knowledge
- devaluation of Indigenous knowledge by Western science
- low cultural awareness
- not consulting the right people
- lack of mechanisms to protect Indigenous knowledge
- Aboriginal organisations not working together
- lack of resources and frameworks for Indigenous knowledge
- community needs not being met
- accountability processes are unclear
- current planning processes are inappropriate
- poor information access and flow
- problems of distance and dispersal in desert regions

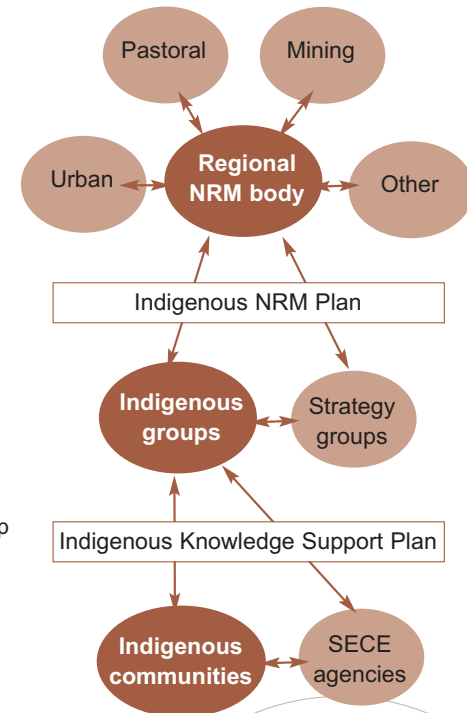
A framework of principles

Participants agreed on the following guiding principles for a framework agreement on Indigenous knowledge, with Government agencies, regional planning bodies and industry:

- Indigenous people enjoy a fundamental and continuing relationship to all landscapes and seascapes.
- Support for the maintenance, protection and continuity of Indigenous knowledge is an NRM regional priority.
- Regional bodies recognise Indigenous rights and interests in planning and implementing their regional plans.
- Natural and cultural resource management involves a partnership between Indigenous and non-Indigenous interests.
- Active involvement of Indigenous people is essential at all levels of decision-making on NRM regional groups.
- Indigenous people must be adequately resourced to effectively participate in the development and implementation of regional NRM Plans.

An Indigenous NRM planning process

The concept of an INRM planning process was outlined:



- **INRM Plan**

- is written like an Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) Plan
- strategy group reflects the IPA approach
- INRM is an overview of the issues
- INRM in turn, informs local plans

- **Existing regional initiatives are the vehicles to push into regional strategies, that is:**

- NAILSMA
- KLC *Healthy Country*
- NLC *Caring for Country*
- SAMLISA in South Australia
- SAMLIV in Victoria

- **Need to add cross-cultural and participatory support to the planning process within the regional NRM body**

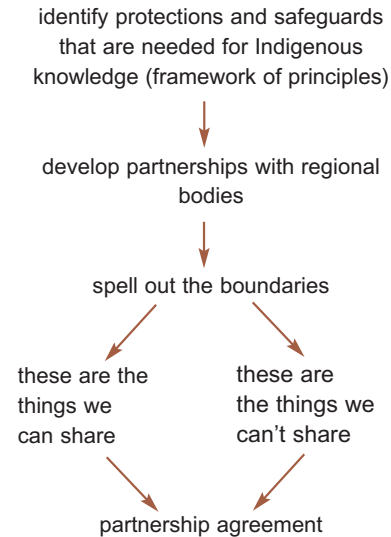
- **Indigenous Knowledge Support (IKS) Plan:**

- offered as an incentive to participate in the regional process
- funded by a broad range of agencies

- Indigenous people use as appropriate to their situation
- keeps Indigenous groups strong
- develop the IKS Plan by employing people to work with Indigenous communities to define issues, priorities and linkages to existing structures and specific Indigenous knowledge projects.

A partnership approach

The process for working together was developed:



Protocols for working together

The following draft points represent good practice in meeting the requirement for INRM Plans to demonstrate proper consultation with Indigenous groups in their region. These draft protocols have been prepared by the Indigenous Policy and Coordination Section of the Department of the Environment and Heritage to assist Australian Government officers in the assessment of regional plans submitted for comment.

Good practice in Indigenous consultation and involvement in integrated regional NRM planning will be reflected by:

- the inclusion of at least two Indigenous people on each regional body
- a list of local Indigenous people and organisations with interests in land management issues in the region

- a list of the Indigenous organisations and individuals who were consulted in the process of developing the INRM Plans (these last two dot points address the requirement to demonstrate consultation has occurred)
- the identification of Aboriginal-owned properties in the region or the percentage of Aboriginal-owned land in the region; identification of areas of public land where Native Title rights and interests may continue
- the plan explicitly seeking to build partnerships with local Indigenous organisations
- each plan having a statement on the region's Indigenous history, heritage and interests
- the plan including recognition that there are Indigenous interests in most, if not all, natural resources, i.e. there will be spiritual, totemic and economic relationships with many plants and animals (biodiversity) and Indigenous people have rights and responsibilities for these
- the plan including recognition of Indigenous cultural interests in water management, e.g. lakes, rivers and coastal areas, special places, fishing and environmental flows
- the plan recognising the need for protection of Indigenous cultural heritage places as part of Indigenous Natural Resource Management
- capacity building programs recognising and including Indigenous peoples' traditional ecological knowledge and land management practices
- plans identifying the need for ongoing Indigenous participation in Natural Resource Management, e.g. the development of Indigenous Land Management Facilitator-type positions
- consultation with Indigenous communities should commence in the early stages of the plans and not be developed once everyone else has had their say.

Overall way forward

Agreement was made on the following:

- issues to be put on the table that continue the education and awareness process
- simple outline of the principles, processes and protocols to be provided to regional bodies
- processes and the concept of IKS Plans to be available to the community
- ideas and thinking behind the advice to the regional bodies to be provided by the Australian Government agencies
- implications for the accreditation of regional NRM Plans to be spelt out by Australian Government agencies
- framework for greater involvement with INRM to be agreed, documented and accountable.

Recommendations to improve Australian Government processes

The recommendations are as follows:

- adopt policy at a Ministerial level on the protection of Indigenous cultural heritage and the management of Indigenous knowledge, including storage and access issues
- incorporate Indigenous knowledge into the State of the Environment Report
- incorporate and recognise Indigenous knowledge within the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act
- Australian Government to recommend that a cultural resource management strategy be an integral part of the regional NRM investment strategy
- Australian Government to provide inducements to regional bodies such that:
 - all regions articulate their current level of operation in regards to Indigenous knowledge (i.e. awareness, recording, encouraging, repatriating, etc)

- a picture is built up of the current status across all regions
- decisions can be made on where to invest resources
- Australian Government to recommend that regional bodies acknowledge who holds significant Indigenous knowledge and fund those people to develop an IKS Plan
- support for key cultural people within communities and raising profile by supporting as Senior Cultural Advisers
- adding Cultural Ranger positions to the existing ranger programs for community-based resource management
- changing the emphasis of Indigenous Land Management Facilitator (ILMF) positions so that they meet the needs of Indigenous communities, as well as meeting the needs of NRM:
 - the positions tend to be absorbed into the system with less Indigenous involvement and contact
- they need to be an equal NRM and Indigenous doorway for local communities
- they need to be more proactive in providing skills and knowledge at a local level
- Department of the Environment and Heritage to reconsider terms of contracts to account for intellectual property and Indigenous knowledge:
 - for example, the Envirofunds application forms have a standard intellectual property clause in them
 - there needs to be specific Indigenous intellectual property clauses in the application forms
- dissemination of information through clearing houses for publications, internet and combinations of media
- increased support for ways of communicating Indigenous knowledge through language programs and innovative communication methods.

Next steps

Agreement was reached on the following:

- workshop outcomes to be documented and circulated to all participants
- indigenous communities to take the key recommendations to regional bodies
- Australian Government, through the Department of the Environment and Heritage, to take these outcomes and seek support from the Minister:
 - for the outcomes and recommendations
 - to take them to other Ministers as conforming with the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) framework and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) obligations
 - to address with State Government Ministers as part of the signed performance agreements

- Australian Government, through the Department of the Environment and Heritage, puts these outcomes on the table with regional bodies, as requirements and investment priorities:
 - guidelines and details provided
 - Regional Delivery staff push forward to other regional staff
 - Regional Delivery staff reinforce the message to the regional bodies
- Australian Government to monitor the progress of the regional NRM Plans, including the level of consultation and involvement with Indigenous communities
- Australian Government, through the Department of the Environment and Heritage, to develop and enhance mechanisms for sharing information and progress between regions

Options include:

- a National Secretariat
- creation of National ILMF positions
- resourcing of an ILMF network

- expanding the ILMF network such that regional bodies employ facilitators (as Cultural Management Facilitators)
- the preferred action is for the Regional Delivery team to talk to the Policy and Natural Resource Management teams within the Department of the Environment and Heritage, to examine how the ILMF Network could be expanded
- seek Indigenous Advisory Council endorsement for the expanded ILMF Network

Glossary of terms

ATSIS	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services
ARAP	Aboriginal Regional Advisory Panel
BBIFMAC	Burdekin Bowen Integrated Floodplain Management Advisory Committee
BRIG	Burdekin Rangelands Implementation Group
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
GIS	Geographic Information System
DAFF	Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
DEH	Australian Government Department of the Environment and Heritage
IAC	Indigenous Advisory Committee
IKS	Indigenous Knowledge Support
ILC	Indigenous Land Corporation
ILMF	Indigenous Land Management Facilitator
INRM	Indigenous Natural Resource Management Plan
IPA	Indigenous Protected Area
KLC	Kimberley Land Council
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAILSMA	Northern Aboriginal and Islander Land and Sea Management Alliance
NAPSWQ (also NAP)	National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality
NAREF	Townsville Thuringowa Natural Resource and Environment Forum

NHT	Natural Heritage Trust
NRM	Natural Resource Management
On country	In situ; in the actual place
RIS	Regional Investment Strategy
SAMLIV	Strategy for Aboriginal Lands in Victoria
SAMLISA	Strategy for Aboriginal Lands in South Australia
SECE	Social, Economic, Cultural and Environmental
TOR	Terms of Reference

