

# Regional Environment and Natural Resource Management Forum

*Wet Tropics Region*

Forum Proceedings

14 -15 March, 2002  
CAIRNS



Rainforest CRC

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- North Queensland Land Council Native Title Representative Body Aboriginal Corporation and Giringun and Elders Reference Group who were responsible for supporting the forum.
- Mr. Rowan Foley for facilitating the forum and assisting in its organisation.
- Ms Peta-Marie Standley, of Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) and Ms Tracey Kluck, of the Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC) for their individual efforts on behalf of their organisations, whose support for this forum is widely appreciated.
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Editors: R. Hill and M.J. Nursey-Bray with R. Foley, J. Fenton, L. Talbot, M. George, R. Noble, and J. Epong.



# Acronyms

<b>ACC</b>	Aboriginal Coordinating Council
<b>ATSIC</b>	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
<b>BDTG</b>	Burdekin Dry Tropics Group
<b>CRC</b>	Cooperative Research Centre
<b>CY HoAIG</b>	Cape York Peninsula Heads of Agreement Implementation Group
<b>CYHOA</b>	Cape York Heads of Agreement
<b>CYLC</b>	Cape York Land Council
<b>CYP</b>	Cape York Peninsula
<b>CYPDA</b>	Cape York Peninsula Development Association
<b>CYPLUS</b>	Cape York Peninsula Land Use Study
<b>CYRAP</b>	Cape York Regional Assessment Panel
<b>DNRM</b>	Department of Natural Resources and Mines
<b>DPI</b>	Department of Primary Industries
<b>EPA</b>	Environment Protection Authority
<b>ILC</b>	Indigenous Land Corporation
<b>ILUA</b>	Indigenous Land Use Agreement
<b>INF</b>	Interim Negotiating Forum
<b>NHT</b>	National Heritage Trust
<b>NNTT</b>	National Native Title Tribunal
<b>NQAA</b>	North Queensland Afforestation Association
<b>NQLC</b>	North Queensland Land Council
<b>NRM Board</b>	Natural Resource Management Board (Wet Tropics) Inc.
<b>QMDC</b>	Queensland Murray Darling Commission
<b>QPWS</b>	Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service
<b>RAP</b>	Regional Assessment Panel
<b>TRG</b>	Tenure Resolution Group
<b>WHA</b>	World Heritage Area
<b>WTMA</b>	Wet Tropics Management Authority

# Table of Contents

Acronyms.....	4
Table of Contents .....	5
Executive Summary.....	8
List of Participants .....	11
Welcome.....	14
Seith Fourmile .....	14
<b>Forum Introduction: Mr. Rowan Foley, North Queensland Land Council.....</b>	<b>15</b>
Introduction.....	15
Four processes.....	15
<b>Towards Strong Indigenous Land and Sea Management Agencies: Allan Dale, General Manager Resource Policy, Queensland Department of Natural Resources and Mines.....</b>	<b>17</b>
An Emerging Policy .....	17
Indigenous Land and Sea Management.....	17
Government historical record.....	18
Key Drivers for a Re-think on dealing with Traditional Owners.....	18
Cape York/Ten Year Partnerships Drives the Rethink.....	18
Principles Underpinning the Agreements .....	19
Key Strategies .....	20
Supporting Traditional Owners to Manage Resources .....	20
Roles of Indigenous Groups .....	20
In Bama Country.....	21
<b>Natural Heritage Trust Stage 2: Sarah Chalkley, NHT 2 Taskforce, Environment Australia .....</b>	<b>23</b>
Strategic Framework of the Extension to the NHT.....	23
Four Trust programs .....	23
Three Objectives NHT .....	24
Areas of activity .....	24

Funding will be delivered at three levels.....	25
Regional NRM Plans .....	26
Regional Investment Issues for Consideration .....	27
Local Investment Level = Local Action Grants.....	27
Integration with the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality.....	27
<b>Moving Towards Regional Arrangements: Brad Dorrington, Executive Officer, NRM Board (Wet Tropics) Inc.....</b>	<b>30</b>
Introduction.....	30
Board Membership .....	30
Core Business .....	30
The Wet Tropics Regional NRM Forum.....	31
Regional Body Roles .....	31
Regional Arrangements – Indigenous Involvement .....	31
<b>Cape York Partnerships – Land and Sea Management: Mr. Noel Pearson .....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Management Partnerships: Josh Gibson, Manager, Area Conservation Program WTMA.....</b>	<b>35</b>
Introduction.....	35
Wet Tropics Management Agreements .....	35
Mona Mona Community Management Agreement .....	35
<b>Natural and Cultural Resource Management Planning: Melissa George, Aboriginal Traditional Owner Liaison Officer .....</b>	<b>38</b>
Burdekin Dry Tropics .....	38
Process to date.....	38
Issues to be addressed. ....	38
How did we get here? .....	38
What is happening now? .....	39
What is at stake? .....	39
Structures .....	39
Involvement in the Burdekin .....	39
<b>Different Ways of Thinking About Land Management: Steve McCann, Caring for Country Unit, Cairns TAFE.....</b>	<b>43</b>
Introduction.....	43
Caring For Country Program .....	46

<b>Mona Mona Flora and Fauna Project: Barry Hunter .....</b>	<b>48</b>
Introduction.....	48
<b>Badjuballa Green Corps Experience: Chris Kennedy, Badjuballa, Girringun Elders and Reference Group.....</b>	<b>50</b>
Introduction.....	50
Green Corps .....	50
<b>Subregional Indigenous Land and Sea Management: Mr. Jim Davis, Indigenous Land Management Facilitator, Balkanu .....</b>	<b>52</b>
Introduction.....	52
Cape York Peninsula.....	52
<b>Summary of First Day Outcomes: Tracey Kluck, Indigenous Land Corporation.....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Group Discussion.....</b>	<b>58</b>
Options .....	60
Discussion of Options .....	60
Closed <i>Bama</i> Meeting .....	<b>63</b>
Final Resolutions .....	<b>64</b>

## Executive Summary

- The Wet Tropics – Regional Environment and Natural Resource Management Forum held March 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> provided an opportunity for Rainforest Indigenous peoples to present and discuss ideas about land and sea management, and biodiversity conservation, and in particular to address future options relating to Stage 2 of the Australian Government's NHT (NHT).
- The Forum was hosted by the NHT Bushcare Program, and organised with the support of North Queensland Land Council, Giringun Elders and Reference Group, the Indigenous Land Corporation, Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation and the Rainforest Cooperative Research Centre.
- Presentations outlined new government policy and programs for sustainable land management and conservation. A number of case studies highlighted Indigenous approaches to land and sea management in the Burdekin Dry Tropics, Cape York Peninsula, the Queensland Murray Darling Commission, the Green Corps at Badjuballa and the Cairns TAFE Caring For Country program.
- The Forum recognised that Indigenous people have major rights and interests in natural resource management in the Wet Tropics. For example, Indigenous peoples' native title rights may extend over more than 80% of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (WTHWA), and over much other land outside the WTHWA with the exception of freehold lands. Indigenous people in the wider Wet Tropics region number approximately 18 000, and constitute some 12% of the total regional population. Traditional owners, governments and other stakeholders are currently negotiating the recognition of native title through processes established under the *Native Title Act 1993 (Cwlth)* and associated Queensland legislation. Nevertheless, native title rights are afforded protection under Australia's common law regardless of whether they have been recognised through statutory law.
- The Forum identified major deficiencies regarding Indigenous participation in the new regional natural resource management arrangements currently being developed for implementation of Stage 2 of the NHT in the Wet Tropics. Figures from NHT Stage 1 demonstrate that Indigenous peoples received only 1% of available funding, despite being major land holders. Workshops and discussions conducted during the Forum identified the key factors leading to the current deficiencies as:
  - inadequate consultation methods;
  - poor Indigenous representation in planning leading to poor mechanisms and structures to support project development and implementation in the current environment and natural resource management programs; and



- gravely deficient proposed new NHT structures for the Wet Tropics Region that exclude Indigenous people from a decision-making role in relation to funding, planning, and other key issues.
- The Forum agreed that allocation of all Commonwealth and State natural resource management funds, including NHT Stage 2 funds, needs to recognise and be complementary to processes currently being undertaken for negotiated recognition of Indigenous rights by State and Federal Governments, including:
  - the Interim Negotiating Forum (established to negotiate a Regional Framework Agreement for WTWHA);
  - the various claims for recognition of native title;
  - ongoing negotiations for the establishment of joint management of national parks; and
  - development of a cultural heritage re-listing proposal for the WTWHA.
- The Forum strongly emphasised the need for greater input and participation by Wet Tropics *Bama* in decision-making, and the need for equitable allocation of funds to manage country. Key factors that would enhance management of country include:
  - active Indigenous participation in NHT Stage 2;
  - recognition of and respect for existing traditional knowledge about Wet Tropics country;
  - effective representation of Indigenous people in any new Regional Board;
  - development of an Indigenous plan for natural resource management in the region;
  - renewal of the spiritual self and internal wisdom within Indigenous peoples; and
  - guaranteed percentage of NHT Stage 2 funds for Indigenous projects.
- At the conclusion of the meeting, and after consideration of several options, three resolutions were unanimously passed that present a way forward that if adopted will address in part some of the issues raised during this workshop. The resolutions were as follows: -
  1. That there be a 70/30% majority Indigenous representation on the Steering Committee to develop the proposed Wet Tropics (WT) Regional Plan for NHT 2, and the process be halted until there is 70% Indigenous representation.
  2. That the Indigenous participants at the Regional Environment and Natural Resource Management (NRM) Forum endorse a majority membership on the proposed Wet Tropics Regional NRM Board, and a guaranteed percentage of 50% funding for Indigenous projects,

3. That \$60,000 be made available for URGENT and proper consultation with Indigenous landholders for the development of the WT Regional NRM Plan. A regional workshop for all Rainforest *Bama* should be organised as soon as possible.

## List of Participants

Peter Ambrym	North Qld Land Council
Niree Appo	Ma:Mu
Reg Brim	Djabugay
Rhonda Brim	Djabugay B.O.D.
William Boslem	Girringun (Girramay)
Julie Boslem	Girringun (Nywaigi)
Claude Beeron	Girringun (Girramay)
Bruce Butler	Girringun (Bandjin)
Allan Cassidy	Girringun (Nywaigi)
Sarah Chalkley	Coastcare, NHT Taskforce Environment Australia
Allan Dale	Qld Department of Natural Resources and Mines
Jim Davis	Indigenous Land Management Facilitator, Balkanu
Brad Dorrington	NRM Board (Wet Tropics)
James Epong	Ma:Mu
Seith Fourmile	Gimuy CDAC
Jean Fenton	Coastcare
Jason Fred	Badjuballa (Warangnu)
Rowan Foley	North Qld Land Council
Christina George	Girringun (Wargamay)
Melissa George	Burdekin Dry Tropics Group: Wulgurukaba
Josh Gibson	Wet Tropics Management Authority
Elsie Gosan	Atherton
Julie Go-sam,	Jiddabul
Allison Halliday	North Qld Land Council
Claire Heath	Qld Department of Natural Resources and Mines
Rosemary Hill	Rainforest CRC
Nicky Horsfall	Consultant, Cultural Heritage
Barry Hunter	Mona Mona project and Premiers Department
Judulu	<i>Bama</i> .Ngappi.Ngappi, North Qld Land Council
Chris Kennedy	Badjuballa (Girramay)
Tracey Kluck	Indigenous Land Corporation
Ian Kuch	North Qld Land Council
Sherry Marchand	Australian National University
Nadia Mack	North Qld Land Council
Victor Maund	Ma:Mu
Leah Talbot	Rainforest CRC
Marion McCarty	Ma:Mu
Steve McCann	Caring for Country Unit, TAFE
Troy Minniecon	Ma:Mu
James Moran	Jiddabul, Ravenshoe
William Morganson	Girringun (Wargamay)
Charles Morganson	Girringun (Warangnu)
Michael Morta	Ma:Mu
Dale Mundraby	Wet Tropics Management Authority
Dwayne Mundraby	North Qld Land Council
Ricko Noble	Gunggandji

Noel Pearson	Cape York Partnerships
Jim Petrich	Interim Negotiating Forum Facilitator
Garry Rees	Qld Department of Natural Resources and Mines
Phillip Rist	Girringun (Nywaigi)
Margaret Ross-Kelly	Wet Tropics Management Authority
Kirsti Sampson	Marine and Coastal Community Network
Lisa Stagoll	Wet Tropics Management Authority
Peta Standley	Bushcare Facilitator
Connie Stewart	Yidinji
Renee van der Zijden	James Cook University
Lachlan Walker	Indigenous Land Corporation
Patty Worboys	James Cook University
Troy Wyles–Whelan	Girringun (Wargamay)

# Day One

March 14th

# Welcome

## ***Seith Fourmile***

Welcome here on behalf of the Gimuy-walbu Yidinji, I would like to say welcome on behalf of everyone. On behalf of my father and my people, I would like to welcome you here onto our country. When we come here we are going to sit down and talk like before about business on country, like my great grandfather and our grandfather. Our name, Fourmile, came because our camp was four miles from town. That's how we got our name. Some people don't realise what's in a name, especially because of dispossession. In our clan group we have Cannons as well, everyone knows Cannon farm. When you sit down here, all listen. Just like to say, welcome you here.



Ian Kuch, Chief Executive of the North Queensland Land Council, makes a point during the Forum

## **Forum Introduction: Mr. Rowan Foley, North Queensland Land Council**

### ***Introduction***

I pay my respects to the Traditional Owners. My name is Rowan Foley and I come from the Wondunna Clan of the Badtjala people. I will be facilitating this workshop.

I am currently a Planning and Research Officer with the North Queensland Land Council. I am also a member of the State Assessment Panel for NHT Stage 1 and worked on the Cape York Regional Assessment Panel. I am reliably informed that of NHT applications in Queensland only 1% has gone to Indigenous communities. We need to improve this in NHT Stage 2. In Wet Tropics, Aboriginal groups are one of the largest land holding groups.

We need to become part of the political economy.

How are we the largest land holding group? Seventy to eighty percent of land in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area is currently under claim and will be going through consent determinations and handed back. In the next five to ten years land will come under the direct control of Aboriginal people through native title claims and also through the development of the Regional Agreement through the Interim Negotiating Forum (INF).

Currently there is an Aboriginal Negotiating Team (ANT) for the INF elected through a meeting of 130 Wet Tropics Aboriginal people. We also have Sherry Marchand here who is a researcher who will be recording the negotiations. It will be wonderful to give the Inuit a copy of our negotiations and also to have been able to receive a copy of theirs to establish Nunuvut.

Joint management of Parks are under negotiation and the Cultural Heritage Re-listing of the Wet Tropics is currently being advanced through a research project. When it was listed for its natural heritage values the cultural heritage values were not on the agenda.

### ***Four processes***

We are now engaged in four processes to establish our Aboriginal rights in the wet tropics region:

- native title;
- regional agreement;
- joint management; and
- cultural heritage re-listing

Although these processes are taking place, people are still locked out of the political economy. According to Marx (1941) "no matter how greatly the systems of distribution may vary at different stages of society, it should be possible here, as in the case of production to discover the common features and to confound and eliminate all historical differences in formulating general human laws. For example, the slave, the serf, the wage-labourer – all receive a quantity of food, which enable them to exist as slave, serf and wage-labourers. The conqueror, the official, the landlord, the monk or the Levite, who respectively live on tribute, taxes, rent, alms, and the tithe - all receive a part of the social products which is determined by laws different from those which determine the part received by the slave.....all production is the appropriation of nature by the individual within them and through a definite form of society".

1% of NHT funding has gone to Indigenous people in Qld. If we accept 1%, it will continue. It is fair to say that as the majority land holding group, we should have a much larger share.

All production is appropriation of nature. People's land has been appropriated – people's land has been taken and turned into sugar cane farms and an economy developed. People are not part of that political economy even though it was their land taken in the first place.

People need to participate in regional forums, they must have effective representation on Regional Boards. Currently consideration is being given to the establishment of a Regional Board for the NHT Stage 2. If Aboriginal people do not participate in this Board they will be locked out of the economy once again.

That's all from me. Consultation is important however when it comes down to critical decisions traditional owners need to be actively managing and controlling those decisions.

Marx, K. 1941. "Grundrisse". Re-published in *Karl Marx Selected Writings*, (ed.) D. McLennan, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 348-349, 1977.



## **Towards Strong Indigenous Land and Sea Management Agencies: Allan Dale, General Manager Resource Policy, Queensland Department of Natural Resources and Mines**

I would like to express my respect for the Traditional Owners and my best wishes in going into the INF process. When working with Traditional Owner (TO) groups to establish the negotiations for Regional Agreements, I recognised how hard it was to get going. So congratulations in getting this far—but recognise there is still a long way to go. You are entering new territory for both Traditional Owners and government—government previously have seen Traditional Owners as stakeholders rather than land owners and land managers. So this is the beginning of a completely different relationship. If you are seen as a stakeholder you are marginalised.

I'm not going to try and paint a rosy picture of what government can do. There are positive moves in the way government has changed its thinking but there are not going to be massive moves. A lot of work needs to go on in government. However, I'd like to talk about some of the things that are starting to happen now that might make it easier in the next 10 to 20 years.

Queensland Government Policy Directions: We have seen a turn around at the George St<sup>1</sup> level in a bit of understanding that if Traditional Owners are land holders, then they are serious clients of government for land management support. We in government haven't previously seen this client—previously most of our services directed towards agricultural user and miners. Government is starting to recognise at the highest level that Traditional Owners are major clients. I'm not suggesting a rosy future but things are starting to change.

### ***An Emerging Policy***

For the first time in Queensland all natural resource management departments are starting to understand the importance of supporting strong Indigenous land and sea management groups.

I am glad to be able to get some feedback from Traditional Owners on these changes. This is quite a recent discussion pushed on by some different pressures. It is quite a significant shift—even a year ago there was not an understanding of what an Indigenous Land and Sea Management Agency might be and look like, even though some have been going for 10 to 15 years.

### ***Indigenous Land and Sea Management***

Groups are emerging at:

- local scale (e.g. Kowanyama);
- sub-regional scale (Girringun); and

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<sup>1</sup> A colloquial term for Queensland Government and its bureaucracies, many of which are located in George Street, Brisbane

- regional Scale (Fitzroy Basin)

dThese organisations really pulled themselves up from nothing with their own resources. These groups are saying that they want much more than to be at the table – they want a fundamental role in management.

### ***Government historical record***

Our past record:

- we have not viewed Traditional Owners or groups of Traditional Owners as key clients;
- we haven't supported building groups to build their land and sea management issues in regional agreements/ILUA; and
- we don't have the best record at facilitating TO involvement in our planning process

For example getting to the INF – it took the government nearly two years to respond to the Review into Aboriginal Involvement in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and get the negotiations going. Partly this is because of 'silo' mentality—departments are broken up into groups. There is not much cross-department involvement in water plans, regional plans for vegetation management and so forth.

### ***Key Drivers for a Re-think on dealing with Traditional Owners***

There are key drivers for a rethink on dealing with Traditional Owners including:

- Indigenous people are demanding it;
- implications of the Native Title Act;
- Cape York Partnership process;
- ten year Partnership Process; and
- National Ministerial Council seeking cohesive approach to reconciliation.

Where all Ministers from the state get together at the Canberra level, more push for change.

### ***Cape York/Ten Year Partnerships Drives the Rethink***

As a result of Cape York and Ten Year Partnership initiatives there:

- has been a land cultural and natural resources working group formed (State agency group at the State level);
- broad dialogue undertaken as part of the Ten Year/Cape York Partnership process
- departments drew on this material to build some key directions;
- upcoming discussions with Traditional Owners rep bodies, Queensland Indigenous Working Group etc;
- can we draw in other delivery partners?



*Alan Dale presenting at the Forum*

### ***Principles Underpinning the Agreements***

Key principles:

- Indigenous people are more than just stakeholders in land and sea management areas;
- Indigenous communities are wanting to influence the State and national natural resource management agenda;
- partnership is essential; and
- monitoring our effort is critical.

NHT is a good example – the 1% is a classical example of marginalisation of people's interest. Partnership might sound a bit rosy and I know it will take a long time to get to a position where partnership is effective – this is not only a concern for Aboriginal people but also for example for pastoralists. Having figures like the 1% shows very bluntly that Aboriginal people are not influencing the policy.

### ***Key Strategies***

We want to really start to build up those existing land and sea management agencies including:

- support Traditional Owners to access and manage their land/resource interests;
- strong negotiating involvement in planning and management; and
- better quality service delivery.

This is quite a shift for government and it has taken a lot of work to get here. When Forums are happening at the regional level for vegetation management – the question is how do we support negotiated involvement. This is not just having a seat at the Board. Government has a lot of services, but the level of access by Traditional Owners is very low – for example the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) extension services is not used by Aboriginal people at all.

### ***Supporting Traditional Owners to Manage Resources***

Investing in needs of Traditional Owners based land and sea management groups is not about just little bits of money here and there. We want to move to long term core funding not just a bit of program here or a bit of program there. But it is hard work to shift this debate.

Whole of government support is necessary– bringing DNRM and EPA to be doing the same thing – a common approach to supporting the agencies.

Regional approaches to the resolution of land access and management needs are important but we haven't previously had a policy that we support regional stuff – this has hindered government ability to get to the Wet Tropics INF.

Reform in the Aboriginal Land Act is gradually happening.

Building a research and development base for Indigenous needs is important—from their point of view rather than having people come and do a little bit and nick off again.

### ***Roles of Indigenous Groups***

It is important that Indigenous Natural Resource Groups can:

- build a mandate from their Traditional Owners;
- build their technical administrative and management capacities; and
- work closely with representatives and partner potential support partners (e.g. Universities).

Very critical when going into government that you can keep that one voice approach, constantly working with your people and telling them what's going on. You need to make sure you have all the technical information you need when you come to the negotiating table—given the vast resources that government has. Most traditional owner groups know it is difficult to work by yourselves—so government needs to support you. You need to build partners with the potential support players, where they are a support service.

### ***In Bama Country***

Management means more focus on supporting Traditional Owners to be involved in regional negotiations. There could eventually be a common cross-government approach to building long term support for regional and local *Bama* groups. However, I need to emphasise that change is slow—it is hard getting shifts at the top level to flow down through the organisations. I want to stress that some of the lead up to getting the INF going was stressing the need for the Aboriginal groups to put the work into getting the mandate from the Aboriginal groups—government needs to support Traditional Owners group to get this mandate.

These changes might lead to a more cohesive Government response via the INF. We are starting to get a more cohesive approach between agencies like DNRM and the EPA – so far has been a bit of a silo approach, the hardest approach for government is getting ‘corralling’ everyone up so government is actually speaking with one voice. I don’t want to paint a picture that is overall rosy, just saying that some cracks are starting to appear. We need to get some feedback from people about whether this is the right direction—we are absolutely looking at getting some feedback.

### ***Questions***

*Question:* How receptive are the local people in Cairns and also local government compared to George St<sup>2</sup>—it is local government that has to give up a lot of control – how receptive are they at letting go.

*Comment:* There are a lot of individuals out there who already thinking this way. But that is not the overall culture. Starting to try to change local government. At the local government office in Brisbane are interested in trying to start buying into this change – but recognise that this will be hard. Currently there is a positive start to discussing it.

*Question:* When family services started handing back, even with main roads, they gave some back but didn’t give a lot – like Q Build. Will they do the same with QPWS – they will start to lose control if management goes back to Aboriginal people. How receptive are they at letting go of that.

*Comment:* That’s the thing that hits at the heart of agencies—changing the feeling of “can I actually let go of control of this” is definitely a cultural issue with government – but I’m really saying for the first time (we are using George St), saying we should definitely be handing this back to the Aboriginal people but have to get the change in thinking both at George St and locally to get this happening. This thinking has never been at the George St level historically before so ultimately locals have to report up so it will eventually change – but we won’t change the world overnight. But we are starting to look at that sort of devolution. However, there is still going to be head bashing for you guys for years to come.

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<sup>2</sup> Refers to George Street, Brisbane

*Question:* Have to say that some continuity in government should help –given the current government mandate would have to say they will be there for 6 to 8 years – so if you can get that mind set changing from the top, it will be hard for the coalition to change it back.

*Comment:* We all know there are cycles but if we can get some of this real cultural change inside the agencies and more importantly build the capacity of groups on the ground it will be impossible for groups to go back.

*Question:* But what about people losing their jobs as jobs go over to Aboriginal people? For example, when the government left Yarrabah they took the ambulance and fire station with them, they're only coming back now. I'm concerned that this could happen

*Question:* It is good to hear a change in culture, fundamentally changed by the Native Title Act – what frustrates Representative bodies is the unwillingness of government to engage through the Native Title process on these very issues – a number of parallel process occurring on water resource management, INF – government is unwilling to engage through native title on simple things like national park management – lots of traditional owner groups asking why aren't we dealing with this through the native title process – rather than through your process. Why can't we engage through the native title?

*Comment:* There are lots of pressures on government – not just native title, but international agreements – biodiversity – so can use some of that pressure – needs to be an integrated response, but part of the real barriers – one is the 'silo' one, the control of budgets.

*Question:* Observation that Magnetic Island meeting – met with QPWS regional directors and managers for the first time to speak about joint management - previously native title. Had to get them there to talk about connections report, native title consent determinations – first real discussions on many of these issues. They were also briefed on Native Title processes. This was the first time that the Native Title Representative Body had an opportunity to speak to QPWS about connection reports and consent determinations. It was the first real discussion that had taken place on many of these issues , despite more than 20 years of concerns.

## **Natural Heritage Trust Stage 2: Sarah Chalkley, NHT 2 Taskforce, Environment Australia**

I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners and thank them for welcoming us here today. I am here to talk to you about the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) and the processes involved and the resources it will provide to help the broader community to manage Country.

I have been in Canberra for three years where I have been running the Coastcare Program – we have been proud to include Indigenous people and we are happy to fund a Coastcare facilitator who is dedicated to supporting Indigenous communities in Queensland. As part of my involvement in Coastcare, I was invited to join a task force to consider issues associated with the extension of the NHT. I have been working on the Trust extension now for about 6 months.

Six years ago there was a decision to sell Telstra and use some of that money to establish the NHT, with \$1.25 billion funding to ‘help conserve, repair and replenish Australia’s natural capital infrastructure’. Another \$1 billion has been allocated for the next 5 years. So we have been looking at how that money will be allocated and delivered. The NHT extension is only one small part of where Indigenous people can get involved in land and sea management; I am personally really keen to see Indigenous involvement in the Trust extension be improved and the Indigenous involvement be made easier and more accepted by the general community.

### ***Strategic Framework of the Extension to the NHT***

In 2002-03 to 2006-7:

- there is \$1.032 billion in new funding; and
- this brings the total NHT funding from 1996 – 97 to \$2.5 billion

The goal of the Trust is to “conserve, repair and replenish Australia’s natural capital infrastructure” (NHT of Australia Act 1997).

### ***Four Trust programs***

Under the Trust extension, the existing 23 programs will be simplified into four, the four programs are:

- Landcare—will invest in activities that will contribute to reversing land degradation and promoting sustainable agriculture;
- Bushcare—will invest in activities that will contribute to conserving and restoring habitat for our unique flora and fauna;
- Rivercare—will invest in activities that will contribute to improved water quality and environmental condition in our river systems and wetlands; and
- Coastcare—will invest in activities that will contribute to protecting our coastal catchments, ecosystems and the marine environment.

### **Three Objectives NHT**

The Trust in Stage 2 will have three objectives:

1. *Biodiversity conservation*—the conservation of Australia’s biodiversity through the protection and restoration of terrestrial, freshwater, estuarine and marine ecosystems for native plants and animals.
2. *Sustainable use of natural resources*—the sustainable use and management of Australia’s land, water and marine resources to maintain and improve the productivity and profitability of resource based industries.
3. *Building capacity and institutional change*—support for individuals, landholders, industry and communities with skills, knowledge, information and institutional frameworks to promote biodiversity conservation and sustainable resource use and management.

Building the capacity of you as Indigenous people to get involved and be key players in the Trust extensions is important but equally important is the need to raise the awareness of regional organisations, government and others so that Indigenous issues are recognised and included in all levels of the Trust and environmental management.

### **Areas of activity**

Long term objectives are to be achieved over a 30 to 40 year period, and areas of activity are being established (interim outcomes) against which investment will be made over the five year period from 2002-03 to 2006-07. These follow:

- BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION
  1. Protecting and restoring the habitat of threatened species threatened ecological communities and migratory birds;
  2. Reversing the long-term decline in the extent and quality of Australia’s native vegetation;
  3. Protecting and restoring significant freshwater, marine and estuarine ecosystems;
  4. Preventing or controlling the introduction and spread of feral animals, aquatic pests, weeds and other biological threats to biodiversity;
  5. Establishing and effectively managing a comprehensive, adequate and representative system of protected areas.
- SUSTAINABLE USE OF NATURAL RESOURCES
  6. Improving the condition of natural resources that underpins the sustainability and productivity of resource based industries;
  7. Securing access to natural resources for productive purposes;
  8. Encouraging the development of sustainable and profitable management systems for application by landholders and other natural resource managers and users.



- COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING AND INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE
- 9. Providing landholders, community groups and other natural resource managers with understanding and skills to contribute to biodiversity conservation and sustainable natural resource management;
- 10. Establishing institutional and organisational frameworks that promote conservation and ecologically sustainable use and management of natural resources.

***Funding will be delivered at three levels***

So why make changes to the NHT? There have been many reviews done of the Trust including the NHT mid Term Review and individual program evaluations, there has also been some criticism of the way in which Trust funding under the first phase has been allocated and spent. Comments have been made that the money has been frittered away and is unstrategic. As part of the Trust extension, the money will be invested at the national, regional, and local level and will be more strategic in the way it is allocated and used.

***National/State Investment level***

Matching State/Territory funding will be sought on a case-by case basis in relation to Australia-wide policy and planning for: protected areas, threatened species, introduced weeds and pests, World Heritage, capacity building, resource condition assessments and research.

National funding will be for:

- Commonwealth activities – e.g. International wetland obligations, international water issues;
- joint Commonwealth and State/Territory activities include cross jurisdictional activities, identified and agreed jointly by the Commonwealth and the States/Territories; and
- statewide and within-State activities that have been identified and agreed to jointly.

***Regional level***

The regional level will become the principal investment pathway and:

- matching state/territory funding is being sought;
- will require the development and accreditation of integrated NRM plans;
- will require the development of an investment strategy;
- community-based regional bodies will develop and implement the plans; and
- needs to be integrated with the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality.

Country is being broken into about 60 regions. Each region will be expected to develop an integrated natural resource management plan. Plan development needs to include the whole community and not be developed in isolation by the regional body or consultants without adequate input from the community. The Commonwealth won't accredit a plan and give money for the implementation of the plan unless all the community has been involved. That plan has to cover all natural resource management issues including

agriculture issues and environment issues. The plan has to 'owned' by the whole region and is to help the region with planning ahead into the future — not just to get Trust money.

The region will also be expected to develop an investment strategy for the implementation of the plan upon which Trust funding will be provided. The investment strategy will include priorities, and also the people who we are approaching for money—NHT plus the private sector. The boundaries for the 60 or so regions around Australia are currently under development—it will be reasonably consistent with the existing NHT and NRM regions for Australia.

*Brad Dorrington* commented on the consultation and regional planning process regarding the boundaries—there are so many different boundaries and none of them match up—so will be more consultation on proposed regional boundaries, to allow people in the region to decide on what is in the regions.

### ***Regional NRM Plans***

Regional plans must:

- be accredited, based on agreed Commonwealth criteria;
- identify all the NRM issues;
- develop and then prioritise actions to address these issues; and
- set resource conditions and management action targets based on agreed national standards.

A key question is what happens before a regional organisation and regional plans are in place. This will take a long time in some regions—and it may never happen if there are too many factions in a region or if capacity and/or the population are too low.

*Proposed Interim Arrangements:*

- foundation funding – for plan development; and
- priority action funding – to fund priority projects in a region prior to the development of integrated natural resource management plans.

There will be only one interim round unless circumstances justify further interim rounds. Bids will be sought from the regions but could be assessed and prioritised by States and Territories. Commonwealth and S/T are to consider acting as joint investors. This proposed interim phase could be similar in some ways to the processes under NHT stage 1. The timing for the interim proposal has not yet been decided as it is still being discussed between the Commonwealth and the States and Territories.

### ***Regional Investment Issues for Consideration***

In developing the regional strategies, matters for consideration include:

- identification of regional boundaries;
- based on integrated natural resource management considerations;
- reflect where possible regional arrangements;
- where relevant incorporate coast and adjacent waters;
- how to manage regions where capacity is slow to develop;
- local government engagement;
- access to funding for Indigenous Australians; and
- Indigenous involvement in regional planning.

### ***Local Investment Level = Local Action Grants***

Local action grants will assist groups to undertake small on-ground projects tackling local problems, or to develop projects where there is no regional plan or the project has recognised importance. Projects:

- to be consistent with the Trust, but not necessarily a priority in the regional strategy;
- grants <\$30,000;
- predicted release, mid March 2002; and
- doesn't have to be in a regional plan but has to be consistent with the regional plan.

One of the things I'd really like to make sure of is that the regional bodies have 'real' community representation. We need to make sure that the local land managers (including traditional owners) and local government continue to be represented and involved. In some ways it comes down to marketing, marketing to keep the Indigenous issues on the agenda.

### ***Integration with the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality***

Trust investment will be integrated with the NAP in the 21 priority regions:

- a single accredited plan to target all NRM investment within a region;
- integrated processes – including delivery of funds and the monitoring and evaluation of performance, and data management;
- other integration opportunities being explored;
- capacity building;
- common accreditation criteria for regional NRM plans;
- linking investment to changes in institutional arrangements to facilitate sustainable NRM practices and use; and communication activities – particularly at the regional level; and
- structures for community advice to government.

#### ***Questions***

*Question:* Does the task force have Indigenous representation or involvement with ATSIC?

*Comment:* No , but we work closely with Indigenous Policy unit of EA, although not ATSIC.

*Comment:* Are there any mechanisms from Canberra to ensure Indigenous participation? For example the Burdekin Catchment has no Indigenous involvement.

*Comment:* There are no strict guidelines about who is going to be on a regional body but it will be outlined in negotiations between the Commonwealth and the States and Territories.

*Comment:* It is fair to say that the State will be doing most of the effort—but State is not yet clear about its policy.

*Comment:* There could be an opportunity through this meeting to get some input into some of those government processes.

*Comment:* With the wetlands development, there was feasibility study undertaken on Trust funding, from NHT money—how can we access that money? Lots of people are gearing towards building wetlands. Cairns has 2010 Regional Plan—how can we change the mind set to get an Indigenous plan and not just a regional plan in regard to government authorities—we always finish up with just one or two pages. But we actually are the biggest land-owners within those regions. What about an Indigenous plan?



*Sarah Chalkley from Environment Australia addressing the Forum*

*Comment:* Under the Trust extension, the Commonwealth will be looking for an integrated natural resource management plan, we don't want 'silo-ed' plans. The whole idea is to ensure the regional plan is the best it can possibly be—with all the right people involved. It won't be funded unless all the right people have been included in the development of the plan. This is not a prescriptive process—there are no rules about who can and can't be involved.

*Question:* Now who decides who gets grants?

*Comment:* Local action grants are proposed to be assessed by a State Assessment Panel and then the Natural Heritage Ministerial Board, made up of Ministers Kemp and Truss will make the final decisions.

*Question:* How are natural resources defined and how will the process will cope with the Aboriginal cultural values of those natural resources?

*Comment:* The integrated natural resource management plans must be inclusive of ALL environment and sustainable agriculture issues in line with the 3 objectives of the Trust and the 10 areas of activity. It is my understanding that cultural heritage issues need to be considered in the context of environmental management and where there are associated environmental outcomes.

*Comment:* The sort of questions Sarah is getting highlights that people don't understand what happened in Stage 1—from my understanding natural/cultural are hard to separate, so I guess it is up to the region to try and reflect that in the Regional Plan.

## **Moving Towards Regional Arrangements: Brad Dorrington, Executive Officer, Natural Resource Management Board (Wet Tropics) Inc**

### ***Introduction***

I am the Executive Officer with the Natural Resource Management Board for the Wet Tropics (NRM Board). This Board was established under NHT Stage 1—it is one of 13 such Boards in Queensland, one for each region. Our job was to develop a Strategy for our Region and then to facilitate NHT Stage 1, to make recommendations about which plans and projects fitted our Strategy. Our recommendations then went to a Regional Assessment Panel (RAP) in Townsville for the whole of NQ—they ticked some, but not others. Then the rest went to a State RAP before finally going to Canberra.

There was a lag time of about 18 months between submission and funding which caused trouble—sometimes people didn't even want to do the project any more. We saw the devolved grant as a way of making some progress. Around this time last year the issue of Indigenous involvement in NHT was identified—1% figure of funding is around about right. So we convened a workshop, Traditional Owners got together through the Facilitator and Coordinators network and asked how we could address the problem of such a poor proportion of funding. We came up with a devolved grant that would fund smaller projects on the ground, around \$15 000 each. We put it into our bid and much to our surprise it was not funded. The proposal was from Girringun.

### ***Board Membership***

Membership of the previous NRM Board includes:

- 5 Agency: NRM, DPI, EPA, GBRMPA, WTMA
- 7 Catchment representatives: Herbert, Tully-Murray, Johnstone, Russell-Mulgrave, Barron, Trinity, Mossman
- 2 Local Government representatives: NQ ROC
- 1 each community conservation and Indigenous interests and NQRTA. Indigenous representative is the Girringun Elders and Reference Group. They were proponents for the devolved grant in partnership with NQ Land Council.

### ***Core Business***

Our focus is:

- to develop and maintain a Regional strategy for NRM;
- to facilitate the cooperative integration of the NRM effort;
- strategic investment of NRM funds at a regional scale; and
- communication of accurate and relevant information

In terms of administrative arrangements, Queensland has lagged behind NSW and Victoria—in the southern states the regional bodies are statutory,

effectively a fourth level of government that manages resources at a regional scale—but this is not the case in Queensland.

### ***The Wet Tropics Regional NRM Forum***

In August 2001, we called together a Regional NRM Forum. We invited 156 stakeholder groups—130 attended, but this included only 8 Indigenous groups. The outcomes from this meeting were:

- the NRM Board and NQAA should form an Interim Board;
- this group should commence development of a new regional NRM Plan; and
- the group should report back to stakeholders with a model of the proposed new Body for consultation.

The Regional Plan is being developed by the Rainforest CRC, and funded by various local and state governments.

### ***Regional Body Roles***

The proposed role for the new Regional Body is to:

- develop and monitor the Regional NRM Plan;
- liaise with agencies, authorities and other bodies in order to promote integrated and sustainable NRM;
- attract and leverage investment and provide financial accountability;
- provide adequate public access to information and effectively communicate decisions made by the body; and
- select and use appropriate NRM tools such as incentive mechanisms and education.

The Commonwealth/State wanted a small body, but stakeholders wanted it large. Many support functions will be sourced out, such as to the Rainforest CRC and others. There will be regional planning workshops.

### ***Regional Arrangements – Indigenous Involvement***

Indigenous representatives will be nominated and elected by Indigenous groups in the region and may include representatives from Land Councils, Aboriginal Corporations, Community Councils and Reference Groups. A consultative process led by Indigenous groups will determine this membership and mechanisms for participation. This large group is a stakeholder group—but it has been driven home to me this morning that Traditional Owners believe that they are landowners and land managers rather than stakeholders.

What we meant by regional arrangements was not just representation. At a regional strategy workshop in Brisbane we were actually workshopping how to engage Traditional Owners in regional structures. In a lot of cases it was difficult to identify who the groups are—so are now trying to develop a data base of who we would be talking to that could help to foster relationships. We are not prescribing numbers.

**Editorial Comment:** *Mr. Dorrington's presentation at the Forum included a proposed model and Board Structure for NHT Stage 2. This proposed model and Board Structure formed the basis of much of the discussion for the remainder of the Forum. However, the material has been withdrawn from the report at Mr. Dorrington's request. Other changes to the substance of the paper as presented have also been made at Mr. Dorrington's request.*

### **Questions**

**Question:** You should work through the NQLC to help find Traditional Owners very sensitive data.

**Comment:** The regional directory will be up on the web.

**Question:** You say it is not a numbers game—but we know it is a numbers game, the proposed structure that has marginalised Indigenous people. I wish you luck, but I can't see that structure fitting in with the aspirations of Indigenous people.

**Comment:** We have spent a lot of time over this structure—I would like to stress there is still hope for discussion.

**Question:** When you get all these Local Governments in, you should have the Traditional Owners for each of those Shires in as well.

*Much discussion about the inequalities inherent in the consultation draft.*

**Comment:** Most of the land that will become Traditional Owners land is former state land. There seems to be a great perception that the state has been using big chunks of money to manage this land—I would like to point out that there is currently little money going into the management of this land

**Question:** We are currently not involved through the local government—there is a problem with being seen as a percentage game.

**Comment:** I suggest that you need to rethink the whole model—once you have stacked it with this many people from local government, industry etc. it cannot possible work.

**Comment:** The main argument is getting the money —we have to look at representation, how our representatives can get the issues onto the table.

**Comment:** Board's decision-making process will be consensus.

**Question:** if Local government can't trust each other, and all want representation, how are we going to talk to them?

**Comment:** One suggestion is that they might have to look at the Board structure again based on the feedback to the consultation paper.



*Comment:* Consultation Paper has been developed by the Interim Regional Body between NRM Board and NQAA – combined Executives, four from each body including:

- Charley Loudon - farmer
- Peter Gilbey – government man
- Jax Bergersen - Envirocare
- Tip Byrne – Mayor of Cardwell Shire
- Mike Berwick - Mayor of Douglas Shire
- Anne Portess - Mayor of Herberton Shire
- Barry Moyle - Mayor of Johnstone Shire
- Sue Vize - NQAA

*Comment:* Management decisions will be made at the Executive level—as far as projects go, the regional plan and the investment plan are critical. We are moving beyond the application mind set—the challenge now is to be involved in the planning process.

## **Cape York Partnerships – Land and Sea Management: Mr. Noel Pearson**

Mr Pearson discussed a wide range of strategies for improving Indigenous engagement and representation with the Forum participants. At Mr Pearson's request, the Editorial Panel agreed that these discussions would not be included in the Report.



*Noel Pearson addressing the Forum*

Noel Pearson's publication *Our right to take responsibility* is now on line at [www.noelpearson.com](http://www.noelpearson.com)

Other relevant information can be found on line at [www.balkanu.com](http://www.balkanu.com) and [www.capeyorkpartnerships.com](http://www.capeyorkpartnerships.com) as well as selected background briefings at [www.abc.net.au](http://www.abc.net.au)

## **Management Partnerships: Josh Gibson, Manager, Area Conservation Program WTMA**

### ***Introduction***

I head up a program at Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA), called the Area Conservation Program. We also have an Aboriginal Resource Management Section—have Lisa, Dale, Margaret, and Chris from that section here today.

I'm new to the WTMA and a lot of these processes. I worked up here in north Queensland for about 20 years, and studied here. I'm here today really for two reasons—to listen and to share some information about management agreements.

Noel touched a little bit on management agreements and provided you with a snapshot about what Management Agreements actually are. They also do have a strategic role.

### ***Wet Tropics Management Agreements***

These are a special form of agreement under the *Wet Tropics Plan 1998*:

- voluntary, negotiated cooperative agreements;
- must add to the protection or better management of the World Heritage Area;
- reconciling peoples rights and community development aspirations with Wet Tropics legal obligations;
- recognising and protecting Native Title Rights;
- way to share the effort, costs and benefits of protecting the World Heritage Area;
- each party needs to be completely happy with the terms of any proposed agreement before it is finalised; and
- legally binding contracts—can cover any length of time.

Wet Tropics provides a blanket or layer over the rest of the tenures and land in that region. If I want to see whether I can do a road, I need to look to the Plan, the zones and the rules.

Why would someone want to enter into a Management Agreement? Firstly it is a very powerful tool in reconciling people's rights and community aspirations with Wet Tropics obligations—this includes native titleholders.

### ***Mona Mona Community Management Agreement***

Lots of people in the room today have been involved in the Mona Mona Agreement, so I would like some input from those people. Basically it was 2 stage process—initially there was a request to build a rodeo ground. The proposed rodeo ground was inconsistent with Wet Tropics Plan but was agreed to proceed on the basis of rehabilitation providing a conservation

benefit overall. This led on to a larger agreement that dealt with community settlement.

Agreement outcomes included:

- care for and repair the natural and cultural values of Mona Mona for present and future generations;
- development of community facilities and infrastructure;
- Sustainable and culturally appropriate economic development (grazing, plantation forestry);
- use of resources;
- protection of Native Title Rights in a way that benefits the World Heritage Area.

The Agreement also recognised the need for development of other plans:

- pest management plan (weed control);
- fire management plan;
- grazing management plan;
- rehabilitation Plan; and
- fencing plan.

The Agreement also provides for resourcing:

- information—expert advice on issues;
- capacity building—training;
- commission joint planning exercises;
- assistance in preparing grant applications; and
- funding (ranger wages and equipment) to contribute to the management of the land to World Heritage standards.

Now if we go back to the Wet Tropics Plan itself and the zoning map – special provisions now exist that vary what was in the Plan for that section according to the Mona Mona agreement. The Mona Mona Management Agreement dealt with a lot of issues. But a management agreement can exist in a lot of different forms—it can be just one person or a neighbour and just focus for example on grazing. It can be very simple. Management agreements now can occur as a result of a tenure transfer or a Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) like the Yalanji ILUA—it is an intention that the agreed outcomes will be formalised through a management agreements—that is how any changes will be formalised through the Plan itself.

Management agreements provide flexibility for recognising rights in a way that protects the World Heritage Area. I didn't want to go into more detail, just wanted to provide information about Management Agreements. At the end of day it also comes down to resources—can take years to negotiate an agreement but need to be able to implement these on the ground. I look forward to workshopping these issues over the next couple of days.

### **Questions**

*Question:* In regards to management plans, people accept this, can I put in a management plan for 100 000 ha of area near Cairns?

*Comment:* You can as a landholder, or through something out of native title like ILUA—it depends upon the basis for which the management agreement is being struck. Can be small or large.

*Question*—If we put a plan together over all the Yidinji lands in the WHA, 230 000 ha, how can we be resourced in the same way that they are resourced?

## **Natural and Cultural Resource Management Planning: Melissa George, Aboriginal Traditional Owner Liaison Officer**

### ***Burdekin Dry Tropics***

Firstly I would like to say that before I was asked to present here I had been talking up cultural resource management with traditional owners and ultimately running down the Burdekin Dry Tropics Group (BDTG) for their lack of Indigenous involvement. I am now working for the BDTG. There could be something here of use to others. The Burdekin Catchment is very large, and now has subregional and regional processes—there are at least 30 different Traditional Owner groups within which have to date been excluded. I'm a bit over the concept of natural resource planning, I think it is about looking after culture.

### ***Process to date***

In 1997 the Burdekin Dry Tropics Group (BDTG) developed a regional strategy, and 3 sub-regional strategies for the Rangelands, the Bowen Floodplains, and the Townsville-Thuringowa Coastal Plains.

Their vision of the future is:

*To provide a high quality of life for current and future generations through the maintenance of viable natural ecosystems and the development of economically sustainable production and urban systems.*

Their overall goal is:

*To facilitate sustainable natural resource management in the Burdekin Dry Tropics through the development of true partnerships*

### ***Issues to be addressed.***

The main issues have been identified as:

- catchment management and awareness;
- water Management and Quality;
- vegetation management;
- habitat and biodiversity protection;
- pest Management;
- soil conservation;
- coastal and marine area management; and
- social and economic Issues.

### ***How did we get here?***

Over the last three to four years consultation has been undertaken with identified stakeholders and the wider community – included about 6 Traditional Owner groups, who were spoken to at broader community meetings.

Three subregional groups have formed. These now have their own community natural resource management strategies:

- Burdekin Rangelands Implementation Group (BRIG);
- Burdekin Bowen Integrated Floodplain Management Advisory Committee (BBIFMAC); and
- Townsville Thuringowa Natural Resource & Environment Forum (NaREF)

The sub-regional plans have virtually no Indigenous content—only one of 30 Traditional Owner groups had its aspirations expressed in the sub-regional strategy.

### ***What is happening now?***

Current points include:

- appointment of Aboriginal Traditional Owner Liaison;
- what the Board expects is unrealistic—56 days have been allocated to involve Traditional Owners; and
- what do Traditional Owners want?—each Traditional Owner group has own aspirations.

Cultural resource management planning is poorly understood by the wider community. For example, key questions like "culture and nature, are they different?" have not been addressed. Managing a resource for cultural maintenance and sustainability and for ensuring intergenerational equity is not understood.

### ***What is at stake?***

There are quite a lot of resources at stake:

- National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality has \$3.92 million for the Burdekin Catchment in 2002-03; and
- NHT Stage 2 is \$1 billion over 5 years.

The key question is what size piece of pie will be ours? I guess the answer is it is up to us.

### ***Structures***

#### ***Involvement in the Burdekin***

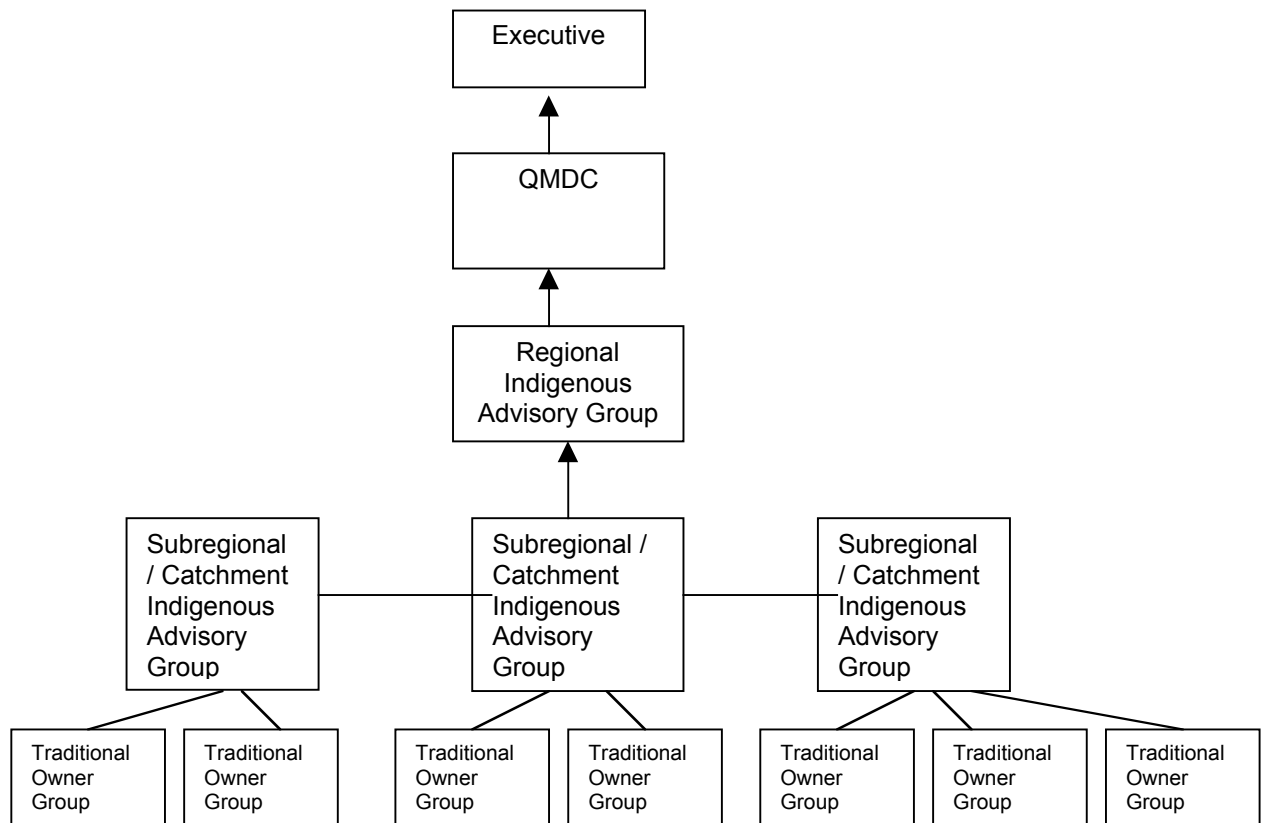
The membership of Burdekin Board consists of:

- Chair (pastoralist);
- Science—academia (CSIRO) (also social scientist);
- Local Government east and west;
- Burdekin Rangelands;
- Burdekin Bowen ;
- Townsville-Thuringowa CP;
- ATSIIC observer; and
- DNRM advisory.

It is now my job to get Murrumbidgee involved in the Regional NRM process. In Queensland we have CCC—cane, cotton and cows. If this is how it exists how we will get involved? We need to consider whether we have our own structures/processes to ensure that Traditional Owners within the region are

included, and not as another stakeholder group, but one that has a legitimate role to play in decision making.

I have been considering the structure being considered by the Queensland Murray Darling Committee:



Compared with the proposed structure that was on the board this morning for the Wet Tropics, the QDMC structure is more workable. We have been trying to get 50% of green corps teams to be made up of young Murri people. Work for the dole, to the best of my knowledge will only consider Indigenous teams if the work is on culturally sensitive areas. Any work on our country is considered culturally sensitive. I'm quite sure they would be happy to see us all doing nothing.

It is quite interesting talking to migaloo people who hold land on Burdekin about country—it is quite news to them that Aboriginal groups have freehold title—Landcare groups are not aware of Indigenous land holding groups. It's going to take a long time for the groups there to get used to it. We usually only hear about the project when it's finished. That has to change—there has to be a turn around. We need to be actively involved.

One other thing that has been happening in the Burdekin Catchment is the WAMP – I pulled it off the web about two weeks ago, comments in 22 March – said there would be a working group established outside the technical group for Indigenous community consultation. How are we going to respond if we don't know what the process is about? This is effectively signing away our



rights to our water – so we need to be able to change this - need to establish our own structures at local, sub-regional and regional levels.

That's about it. Thanks.



Melissa George presenting at the Forum

### **Questions**

*Comment:* Please don't kick us in the head for our structure—other structures like the BDT structure and the QMDC structure were voted down by the meeting in August. I think the structure you have put up is excellent—it might be that it is best for Indigenous groups to feed in on the side.

*Comment:* I think it has to be 50/50 so there is some equality. I'm just putting up some alternatives here.

*Comment:* The terminology is about an advisory group—but I think it has to be more about an Indigenous Board. I'm worried more about linkage down rather than negotiations between the Indigenous Group and the QMDC—perhaps these two groups should sit beside each other at the same level in the structure to enable negotiations. There needs to be investment in the Indigenous group—so there are my three worries with structures put up from the Murray Darling Commission.

*Question:* Would a structure like that be funded through Wet Tropics Board?

*Comment:* Burdekin is tapping into NAP, which is targeted to Catchment with extreme risks. Our resourcing of Indigenous involvement is for the new board to consider—it would be presumptuous of me to do this.

*Question:* Could think about foundation funding—if you wanted to set yourself up as a group that was in partnership with the Board—in order to do a Indigenous plan—could consider that option?

*Comment:* Even two plans? I think the State/Federal governments only want one plan.

*Comment:* The Indigenous plan could feed in eventually but still be developed separately.

*Comment:* Melissa is working in an area with a lot of salinity problems, but there is foundation funding for all other regions—so the floor is open as nobody has made agreements yet.

## Different Ways of Thinking About Land Management: Steve McCann, Caring for Country Unit, Cairns TAFE

### *Introduction*

I would like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners. I am the Program Manager at TAFE for the Natural and Cultural Resource Management Program—I have left some information at the back including a document put together by students.

Today has been very interesting. I wanted to go a little bit further back. I'm a Gurinji person from the Northern Territory but my adopted family are from east Arnhem Land. I brought this painting here, that I got my brother to do.

The painting is called *Yirritja Dhuawa*

These are the two moieties from the country—the boss is pouring the land to the old man, but the old man is pouring the spirit of the land back to the boss as a way of changing that. I also am going to play one song. My own song. I call it old man song. When I travel with people in country before, old people start singing for country.



*Steve McCann presenting at the Forum*

That song was to give your spirit more energy to continue to fight, and this picture of the old man and that song "from little things big things grow". We have to keep going to make that change.

That Yirritja Dhuawa is the moiety from the Arnhem Land. When I was living there I was adopted into the Mungu clan, they gave me a name and everything and told me the creation story. Wherever I see the creation story, about how the ancestral being came in and created the land, in Arnhem land they came out of the sea with different marks on their body giving different pattern to the land either Yirritja or Dhuawa—we only marry opposite. I am talking out of country and I say these things to put it back in perspective. Too much is getting dragged out of our eyeballs through these meetings; we have to come back inside and put something in talking to ourselves inside, talking to ourselves inside. We are getting dragged out and getting exhausted from all this paper business and the fight for this paper. There was not paper business happening when we lost our country, there was not paper, just gun massacre and then they just take our country. That's the only true part about *terra nullius* after they finished up there was no one left.

They talk 'bout country, them creation beings, the country is broken up and there is different clan group's name, and all that. There are different pockets of Yirritja Dhuawa—all is broken up, the land, the fish, the sugar bag bee, like yin and yang, but in between here is that neutral point, and that neutral point is where that spirit power comes when you have that balance. That balance has been maintained for thousands and thousands of years. There is proof. When Anglo Saxons came here, it looked like that country hadn't been touched. When the old people came here they put that land down, in the law, that law was about how they created this country and the sacred sites were where they stopped. I've been to that place where they landed in that big canoe, and that beach is just that biggest bay and in behind is that biggest sand dune and where the sisters and brothers walked between the sand dune there is still that biggest hollow. In that law there were behaviours to follow—man look after kid, look after nature, animal and nature, to live in harmony with that, with respect. If you didn't abide by the law, maybe you get a spear, finish.

So when Anglo-Saxon people came here, they seen that pristine condition, they saw fires. They must have known *Bama* been here, proof of that balance being maintained. What happened since then? All our country-men being moved around, me myself, still trying to work out which way my grandfather came, from Kimberley or Daly River, still researching that. All because of people coming here and trying to destroy us so that they could take our land. Stealing is not even a strong enough word for what happened here. All that law has been broken by non-Indigenous people, and by taking over, all that has taken our language, our ceremonies, and our spiritual association. And here we are still fighting for a few dollars to fix up something that was done by other people. We get land back and it has been destroyed not to say the *Bama*. There has been no counselling and there is transgenerational trauma that goes from one generation to the next and it cannot be healed.

On moieties, on a parallel somewhere else in the Northern Hemisphere there is Genesis, okay. But at the same time the spiritual ancestors of all of us are god beings. But they lived out day to day, can't just do it on Sunday.

With that Anglo Saxon belief that God created mother earth how can you go and do the things you do to your fellow man? Later on we find, we know why it was, been driven all that wrong reasons for action. It is based on selfishness, greed, but inside that silent one is sitting there, which brings us to another question. In them teachings you talk about dominion over flora and fauna, maybe its true. It must be true, look at country, it's definitely true that you have dominion. But what about respect; respect for land, fellow humans and to maintain that balance? I think that was lost a long time ago. How come if *Bama* have perfect harmony for thousands and thousand of years, how come it had to happen? Is this some divine plan here?

I guess there is some divine plan here, and it is about being connected spiritually to country. The opposing polarity, be it like Yirritja, this one is proper negative, this one is positive, they had to come together, they had an attraction to each other. Which was the perfect opportunity for our brothers from the north that had only lived by their own teaching. They had a perfect opportunity to sit down, learn, yarn might have been a good opportunity to come back to wisdom self. But that negative drove them, and that negative and positive is in all of us. For the wrong reasons, they did what they did and caused all the hardship and suffering. Why all the suffering and all the pain? Whatever that plan is from the creation force, but we here now in this country are more advanced in our differences when you look around at what is going in the planet. I think that has maintained our connection to our ancestral beings. Not everyone has lost ceremony. But some of those old people in Arnhem Land, the Cape have still got that business strong.

With this dominion over this flora and fauna. The difference between us and flora and fauna is that they have no freedom of choice. We have freedom of choice. When you put your thought into verbal and action, you manifest it from inside, so if you are going to do that manifesting, do it right way or you can have freedom of choice going wrong way. And that dominion over nature is why we are here talking about flora and fauna. Too much pain, everything, but pain is part of pleasure, love is part of hate always these polarities.

We are talking about healing country, we have to fight, everyone fighting for that piece of paper. We know it's a lie for people who administer that paper to say, yes this is yours now, what has always been yours. How can aboriginal people believe in white man's law? When our silent wisdom self is feeling run down we need to come back, walk bare foot, sit down in the soil, father mother, give you the energy back, make you strong again. Re-harmonise, and pull out of white brothers the wrong reason for action. We are becoming a slave to money, so you are locked in. Can't sleep if you are a millionaire.

In our struggle we are going to pull your mob this way back to the middle. Not only are we getting our country back, but also we are finding themselves, white Australia got to find itself too. If you for on Sunday and say I did this, this and this, and then walk out and do it again, its not good. Cause when we die we're going back to our creation ancestors or to the god we believe are here. White-fellas tied up with this much money, millions here and there—it shouldn't be about money, it should be about human values, based on these

decisions. Never a word mentioned in parliament about wisdom. They don't understand the complexities of taking information back into country, back to elders, sit down and have that yarn, purposely put out there two weeks before the closing date.

I didn't really want to talk about this to *Bama*, cause *Bama* know this, it was to try and impress on the hearts and minds of some people that don't understand, think about it where are you at knowing your wisdom self? Are you doing the right thing or the wrong thing?... you know when you are doing bad. That time has finished there happened when the Law was set down.

I had some stuff here talking about all these government departments and stuff. Why do you want to stop *Bama* progressing and getting further. Couple of years ago I did flag raising at the Council, right there at the school, first day back doing year 12 – what's wrong with paints, wrong colour. Wrote stiff letter. Just gamin. All those people, have they got the right attitude. They sitting there pulling the string. About how we can recover the country from their actions, not fair, they used gun, poison, flour and still try to control us. Social studies at school. All these Aborigines were savages—so all these black faces staring back, had to argue, get flogged. What happened when you came in, you were the mob who were savages. That's why when people are in the wrong, they try to put the blame. That is why Johnny won't say sorry. Couple of years ago, getting up the Japanese for war time atrocities and not having it in your education system.

I really wanted to share this today, put it out there. Can't give out money on dislikes, and prejudices, issue here is a lot better than that. I've seen what is happening in the world, and some places are a lot worse off, and we are well on the way down that path. We got to look at this land management as our boat, and that boat is going to sink. We have to look at it not as a black and white issue. It's about mother earth, and we should treat mother earth the same way we treat mother, and father. Mother earth is the solid polarity between mother and earth, mother earth, father sky, the unseen side of those two polarities. We can experience the good or the bad; it is up to us as individuals. We need to come back to harmony.

Same from traditional perspective. Law broken, sacred sites desecrated, man's obligations to one another not met. Time to repair relationships with one another.

### ***Caring For Country Program***

To come back to Caring for Country program about natural and cultural resource management. We have a lot of students, starting again this week. Some in Kuranda, 15 people in remote communities, lots of people want to come in. We have a CRC project going next month, with 13 people, also others, 7 are going to finish the Diploma. So if we can bring about this balance, maybe a job will come for these younger ones coming through these programs.

## **Questions**

*Comment:* We don't need money to manage country, it's more to fix up the damage that has been done to country.

## **Mona Mona Flora and Fauna Project: Barry Hunter**

### ***Introduction***

We got money from NRM Board to conduct flora and fauna surveys at Mona Mona, a reserve north west of Kuranda. The funding was from the NRM Board to conduct surveys. The project was about getting that information going back into the community. Leah Talbot from the Rainforest CRC and JCU is working with us.

Also Rhonda Brim and Lisle and Reg Brim are working with us. This is another part of the project. Instead of looking after our sites, we are getting dollars to understand the birds we have in our area, their trees and the animals. I want to talk about this and also reply to some of what Josh said earlier about the Mona Mona Agreement



*Barry Hunter addressing the Forum*

The money was used to get us out on country. We were able to pay four fellows to be part of this team. We undertook surveys—flora survey, ground proofing information identified in the Mona Mona vegetation survey—that was about just getting out there.



The fauna survey was about looking at different types of small animals at Mona, exciting stuff, in the morning we are wondering what is in the traps, having a good talk. We got to know many of the small animals—got to know the differences between melomys and other rats – even studied their tucker. We are learning more about the species, its biology, we went through a key. Biological information, and bird surveys are a chance for sitting down quietly looking for birds. The work was good because Darren has worked for national parks for a long time and is really clued up on scientific information. When we was young we used to go out with our shanghai and knock this bird over—we had our names—so we shared and tied this together with scientific name. It is about a chance to develop new skills.

That's in short our project. It's pretty exciting, we would like to do it again soon, we have some more funding coming in. It's about getting out there to build capacity, not just capacity, also that mob saying they can do that—and learning how to tie it to the migaloo system.

In regards to Management Agreement, we are the community, we have obligations that we have to respect. We have to do the fire management plan, but we have no planners, no fire ecologists, we have a lot of people who have been out on country, at the moment it is about trying to get it to a stage where we can get out and do it. At the same time we are not trying to shirk our responsibility. When planning process was under way, we had CAT and a whole host of people—now we only meet once every three months. Community now has to fend for itself—and it is not easy to meet those responsibilities. We could throw a lot of money at our agency and they would still not be able to do all that. It's about setting up simple processes and getting people on the ground.

## **Badjuballa Green Corps Experience: Chris Kennedy, Badjubulla, Giringun Elders and Reference Group**

### ***Introduction***

We have been successful in getting country back and looking at ways to care for country. The country was formerly known as Kirrima Station. My grandfather Tommy Murray is from there. We signed two pieces of paper, Kirrima station is coming back—thought that it was gone—but signed the two papers to get country back—it finally did happen. Uncle Hector—old people grass roots people. Thanks to old people for allowing me to talk.

Old people sat down and talked about how to get country back. I couldn't see it when my grandfather kept saying it, that the country (station) was coming back, I could only see walls. When the old people from the different tribal groups sat down in unity to try to get country back—coming from elders at the grass roots level. Nine groups united going around the wall, over it, put a door in it—talking to government on a local and face to face level. How can you help to get the key to open the door? Questions were asked. Tree planting, water quality, natural trees from the place back there. Looking after the animals and plants, replacing bush tucker so that animals and bush tucker come back, and looking after the water systems. Over the years fish been harder to find, bush tucker hard to find, chemicals running off—killing. Culture—old people correct to go on here—to talk in language, want to tell python stories. I have heard stories of pythons coming down being sung there.

If we find him we kill him, but if we don't find him what happens is this. He knows when we come here, he start to cry. Like a little baby my Nan would say, I'm sorry I have to do this, but you have to sustain my family and me, I have to kill you snake. It's like at funerals they say, 'ashes to ashes, dust to dust', if you look at the natural environment, spirituality is connected, when people die they go back to country.

### ***Green Corps***

When the Green Corps happened, it was an adventure that was embarked on with our eyes wide shut. We didn't know when we started what we were getting into. We were under an illusion about how Green Corps worked. We have since opened our eyes and would want some changes before taking on such a group again. There were always deadlines, things we were supposed to have done. Do you read the report it's closed today? If you can get in and talk to government departments. All people involved got something out of it so I think we can go on and improve it. So all involved in the Green Corps project would like to thank you for your support. This 6 months, lots of training, skills. On the ground, young people learnt how to plant a tree, how to recognise the right tree to plant, it wasn't an easy road, but it had to be recognised. Being a culturally significant place, we asked to have to look at the young people. What would be better than to have Aboriginal people as our superiors? We did get the right people and then we moved on to the next

one, Green Corps got another person – didn't liaise with us about putting on a Traditional Owner, they said the person didn't have certificates etc. It was a joke. The bloke that they did employ didn't know anything about it.

But the fellow we wanted as supervisor was an uncle of these kids, he could have supervised. Old people lead by example, they would let you know if they are doing the wrong thing. Simple things they taught me, no matter whose land you are on, you should respect it. The old people taught me things like Steve touched on, that was respect, you can't just get respect over a day, or over a week of training, it comes with the life experience, you know, my uncle told me how to earn respect. I can make my worst enemy my best friend that's how my uncle taught me.

On that note of caring for country, at Girringun we put up plaques on the old peoples' graves and the massacre sites that are up there, all that helped with the process of getting country back. We go there today. On the coast you have the little brown wallaby, and I used to say how come he's not up there. They say when the range was built it was too high for them to climb over—but go to that station today, there are about 30 wallabies there and that's saying to me, old people are happy that they have got the country back.

### **Questions**

*Question:* Were the Green Corps Traditional Owners?

*Comment:* Nine of them were, but only one wasn't.

*Question:* Could you use those nine young people now as Work for the Dole or Green Corps supervisors or national parks supervisors?

*Comment:* That is one of the main ideas. For national parks would they need a bit more training?

*Question:* What didn't the kids like about working on Green Corps?

*Comment:* Things like curfew hours, shouldn't that be on a sort of system like lights out.

## **Subregional Indigenous Land and Sea Management: Mr. Jim Davis, Indigenous Land Management Facilitator, Balkanu**

### ***Introduction***

I am an Indigenous Land Management Facilitator hosted by Balkanu.

Firstly my respects to the Traditional Owners of the country. Thank you all for allowing me to work here and to come to this workshop.

My name is Jim Davis and I have been asked to talk about sub regional land and sea management in Cape York Peninsula and how working with Aboriginal Traditional Owners has brought over \$10 million since 1999 in NHT funding directly to Aboriginal organisations in CYP. This funding has gone towards enhancing land and sea management by Aboriginal people across CYP.

I hope by doing this the Cape York experience shows:

- that representation on assessment panels and Regional Strategy groups as they are being called now can be more than the tokenistic one or two seats that we usually cop. The big factor here is that there has to be some willingness and backbone shown by people in government agencies to listen to you fellas and to help advocate equitable representation;
- sparks ideas on how you fellas can become real partners for the Wet Tropics region to create realistic opportunities in land and sea management, something more than just tree planting; and
- generates improvements in the level of consultation and cooperation between all of the people and agencies that have an interest in managing the natural and cultural resources within the Wet Tropics region. Something which we still have to admit, and putting it very kindly, is still poor. Aboriginal people in the Wet Tropics are not obstacles like speed bumps nor are you voices in the wilderness. In fact I think that Aboriginal people are the biggest land holder group in the Wet Tropics region apart from the Wet Tropics Management Authority.

### ***Cape York Peninsula***

So here are some points about the Cape York Peninsula, and you can ask me questions after.

CYP has an allocated \$40 million...it is the only separate NHT Regional Strategy operating at present. How did this plan come about?

Two main factors:

1. Cape York Heads of Agreement (CYHOA); and
2. The CYPLUS Stage One and Stage Two Reports.

CY HOA is essentially a signed document recognising the rights of Aboriginal people, the cattle industry and the conservation groups, the major interest groups to operate in the Cape York Peninsula. Keating when he was PM committed \$40 million in direct support for the outcomes of HOA which

Howard matched. Outcomes from the election, resulted in the partial sale of Telstra and Howard government kept their promise and allocated \$40 million specifically to the Cape York. However the focus of the CYNHT Plan changed to included a lot more stakeholders and it was linked directly towards supporting the outcomes of the CYPLUS strategies. The Plan has been operating since 1998. Incorporated within the plan are 10 strategies.

Initially in 1996 the Commonwealth proposed two seats for Aboriginal representation on the CYRAP. This was rejected and significant lobbying from Cape York Aboriginal leaders increased the number of Aboriginal seats on the Panel. The Assessment Panel is made up of 14 representatives, an independent Chair (who has the balance of power), and deputy chair (an ex – Cook Shire Mayor) with no voting powers. There are six representatives for Murries – Gerhardt Pearson, Balkanu, Richie Ahmat, CYLC, Allan Creek, Coen, Christopher Dean, Lockhart River, Dick Namai Napranum, and Allison Woola from Aurukun as the ATSIC representative. six non – Indigenous peoples are also on the panel, two from Cook Shire, two from the pastoral industry, one from Cairns and Far North Environment Centre and one from the peak industry representative body being the Cape York Peninsula Development Association.

While we are always looking to be involved as project leaders or partners in other areas of the plan, the most important strategy as far as building sub regional land and sea management structures is Strategy 1, Element Three.

CYP has been broken up into 13 sub-regions. We have established a series of sub-regional land and sea management units taking the day to day responsibility away from Councils who are swamped and inundated with issues such as community health, housing, justice, roads, and sewage (among other things).

Each Land and Sea Management Unit is made up of a Steering Committee of Elders and other Senior peoples from each language group in the sub region. This Steering Committee is responsible for identifying projects, prioritising project activities, and advocating and lobbying government agencies for their funding submissions and recommending policy change.

Below that we have a land and sea management coordinator who is responsible for implementing the visions of the Steering Committee. Essentially the land and sea management coordinator has to plug the issues into the various agencies to produce outcomes. This means collaborative outcomes that meet the needs of the community and the policy objectives of the agency. For too long consultation has been ad hoc, sometimes outsiders talk to the first Murri they come across, or call meetings where there is only one black face in the crowd and call that consultation. If we are going to be fair dinkum about this consultation has to take time, trust needs to be built. It really is a two way street. Our old people are pretty good at judging the qualities of people.

Out of the 13 sub-regional land and sea management coordinators, 9 positions have been with Kaurareg and the NPA region. My area of focus now is on the Yalanji and Laura sub regions. It must be noted also we have three Traditional Owners as Land and Sea Management Coordinators within their respective areas. Rangers and other staff such as horticulturists come underneath to complete on ground projects as required either as project leaders or as part of a partnership.



*Jim Davis addresses the Forum*

On-going maintenance post-NHT of these positions should be subsidised but economic enterprise such as ecotourism, commercial utilisation of natural resources e.g. selective harvesting of native timber species, grant funds, and percentages from project brought in from outside agencies

To date over \$30 million has been funded, committed, or recommended from the CYNHT Plan. Of that over \$10 million has gone to Aboriginal groups in Cape York Peninsula.

We are slowly and surely turning the triangle around to make our directions and decisions come from the ground up. The one size fits all solutions that are dreamed up in Brisbane or Cairns do not fit all. It is important to learn from our mistakes just as much as our successes. I'm certainly not saying that all are roses in the garden, there are some issues that we have to work through. But its up to all of us to work together in the sprit of partnership, true collaboration.

Thank you.

**Day Two**

**March 15th**



## Summary of First Day Outcomes: Tracey Kluck, Indigenous Land Corporation

People might have heard for the first time a lot of the information about what is going on with NHT and community resource management, which demonstrates that community resource management hasn't at this stage been able to engage Wet Tropics *Bama*.

Just to recap—over the last 6 and a bit years, about \$1.5 billion has been spent on community land management and about \$7 million in the Wet Tropics. You would have heard yesterday about the RAPS (Regional Assessment Panels) and the process. During that phase the Commonwealth had a large bucket of money that went to States, then to regions, then groups in the region could apply for money.

This process didn't necessarily give the most strategic results which is why changes are being made to the way NHT Stage 2 operates. Analogy is that money leaves Canberra in a fire hose and gets to the people in a trickle. That stage is now over and those projects will be finished by September.

For the new phase of NHT, \$1 billion will be spent over 5 years but with a new structure. Government wants to give the money to the region directly—straight line from Commonwealth to the Wet Tropics. That Board that was presented yesterday are lining themselves up to be the recipient of that funding and to develop that regional plan. The first Wet Tropics Strategy was done in 1997. The Plan that is in existence already—that is not a Plan that looks hard at the need and the support base that *Bama* would like for the land management. It is a good time now to get organised because between now and the middle of next year all the groups are getting organised to go to the government and say we are the regional group who will do the plan and receive the money.

Nothing is signed, sealed and delivered—so this is a really good opportunity to address the question—do we want to part of the regional board, or do we want to sit beside it and directly receive some of that money. It is really up to people at the regional level to work out what you want. It's all about what are the actual outcomes—Murray Darling people said it has to mean something for our people on ground and on country. Maybe don't get too concerned about structures and participation first up but think about what needs to happen at that community level, and then think about what structures are needed to enable that to happen.

## Group Discussion

*Comment:* We need to look at the structures and how they will be pushed out into the community. We need to overcome those blockages where we can't get our programs because the values are different and so forth. We know what we want, we just need to figure out how to access these funds on an equitable basis so we can pick up these funds and start running these programs. Remember we have 80% under native title so it is very important for us.

*Comment:* You mentioned it starts from Canberra as a fire hose and ends up as a trickle. We've got to turn that around so that the same volume is coming out this end as it started out in Canberra.

*Comment:* The regional divestment of funds—there are two parts to that, the regional board and the actual plan itself. There is not necessarily going to be enough money to fix the place. The plan will address everything that is an environmental problem in the wet tropics—the Commonwealth wants a cohesive plan. When the bucket of money arrives, it will be attached to the investment plan that is part of the environment plan. The operating of the plan is not really clear yet—will the decisions about spending the money be made by the Board? If it is the Board, then there needs to be a strong link between you and the Board—could be that you decide a certain amount should go to you. Have current arrangements but really not appropriate—could try to make this come out more. I know the frustration that you feel about this.

*Question:* Have the regional priority issues been identified in mainstream?

*Comment:* We have been talking to the converted. People have been working on the same issues for 45 years. What Melissa put up yesterday was good. But what we should be doing now is putting up a committee and looking at the modules and working out what comes up next.

*Comment:* Scientific knowledge that white-fellas got and the scientific knowledge that *Bama* got—people come and steal that knowledge. That has been stolen by a pat on the back and now they come and get all that knowledge. We can tell you about cassowaries more than what you fella know. We dance with them. We fellas know the snake, you are still learning about the snake—you fella still studying them. If the Board is going to be responsible for distributing funds, then we will match it up, put fellas up there. All the *Bama* here got knowledge of country. We got to bring those two things together.

*Comment:* What you have just said is absolutely right. The reason we tried to get the speakers yesterday was to get some discussion going. Our responsibility is to help you carry whatever comes out of today—what we are here for it is to carry whatever comes out of today.



*Forum participants consider the issues*

*Question:* How do we do it, to look after country—talk about joint management, you give us the money and we manage it.

*Comment:* For this region, there was a plan done about four or five years ago, about this place. People may decide they want to have their own planning and management board for the Wet Tropics.

*Question:* How does it all fit together?

*Comment:* A couple of days ago we drew up a list of 30 organisations that are currently involved in land and sea management in the Wet Tropics. So the lists are already there, the organisations are there to fund. If you don't have your hands on the purse strings you will not get the money. The second thing is that plan. NQLC has been asked for one seat out of 7 on a Steering Committee to put together that plan. The steering committee should be 50/50, equal numbers. Nigel Weston is just there to do what we tell them—we say we want equal numbers, if they don't agree, we just don't participate. So if they go to Canberra and say *Bama* are involved and we have written letters, and we're not there, then they won't get their money.

*Comment:* The QMDC Regional Board of Traditional Owners could run parallel to the mainstream—that would be up to *Bama* in the Wet Tropics to decide. But we also have the local, sub-regional groups and then all get

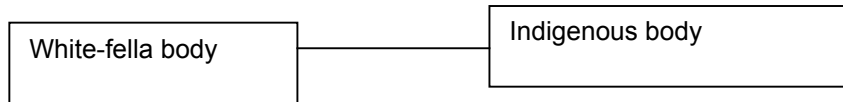
together at the regional level to share information and agendas. But pretty much based on what Jim was talking about yesterday.

**Options**

Four options emerged from the discussion:

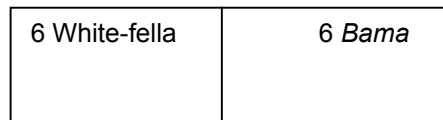
**Option 1**

Two bodies side by side for negotiations.



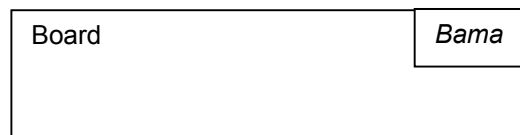
**Option 2**

Now at Cape York they set it up as one body with 6 and 6.



**Option 3**

Current model proposed by Wet Tropics interim NRM Board.



**Option 4**

Guaranteed percentage of the money.

**Discussion of Options**

*Comment:* In some circumstances the 10% Indigenous funding goal of Coastcare was realised—but in other places (Victoria) there were not sufficient applications from around the country to get that 10%.

*Question:* Was that a resourcing issue about getting submissions?

*Comment:* Could have been, but in Victoria they are very well resourced so I'm not sure.

*Comment:* Have had Indigenous organisations with Coastcare applications rejected.

*Comment:* Queensland is the only State that has an Indigenous Coastcare Officer.

*Comment:* If we go for option 4, then we would need to have money to be able to do an Indigenous regional plan.

Current arrangements for development of the Regional Plan for the Wet Tropics are:

- Steering Committee—7 people with 1 Indigenous person;
- Rainforest CRC is preparing the Plan;
- proper consultation; and
- community plan.

Regional Plan Assessment Panel (Commonwealth) has one Indigenous representative from ATSIC/ILC

*Comment:* Rainforest CRC have been commissioned by this Interim Board to do this—some funding from Local Government and private investors.

*Comment:* Consultation process needs to be fixed up so that we can take this back to our mob and get some feedback.

*Comment:* If the current process isn't working, should say start again.

*Comment:* Only way that reconciliation is going to come about is if there is proper respect, if that respect is not given than you can't go ahead. So let's do it jointly so that this process of looking after this country and healing it can start again. Can we just get *Bama* mob in here?

*Question:* If we reject that model and come up with another structure—what is going to happen?

*Comment:* You do need to be careful about the way in which you manage it—not to be so negative that you are cut out of the process. So you need to be quite sensitive in the way you approach it. From my point of view, this process is started that is not inclusive with the whole community—people want to be involved but there is a major problem. Also have to remember that those people have the purse strings.

*Comment:* Talk about sensitivity—but we have been to these people, scraped and apologised and so on. But we would be going there again, crawling and going back to them. We have a mandate at this meeting to put forward our own structure. But I don't think we should go cap in hand and be sensitive. We are at the stage where we have a mandate to say what sort of structure we want.

I went to a meeting at CRC and there was something like 76 things driven by the white man—and there was about 9 or 10 Aboriginals employed. 76 and we've got 9! Sounds fair to me if you have a gun in your hand. Shove number 4, that's gone, it's a shot duck as far as I'm concerned. If those white people want to sit on it they can.

*Question:* Coastcare on a national level – where have Indigenous issues been prioritised?

*Comment:* They haven't been – there are 10 priority activity areas and they have been set.

*Question:* I have a document that fell off the back of a truck, a document that includes securing access for production purposes, understanding and appreciation of coastal communities including the Indigenous communities on the operation of biodiversity on the coast. No Indigenous input from the top level, despite the ATSIC sea rights, land and environment portfolio. So how can we work it out on the ground if our mob that we have elected at the national level don't have any input? Where does that leave us on the ground—whole process of NHT 2 is going to be crap. So we might need to be parallel.

*Comment:* Commonwealth and State will have to sign off , but we don't know how. There are currently criteria about the content of the plan, but no criteria about the process for involving the community—but there will be.

*Comment:* Should take a bit of all options except number 3.

*Comment:* Should start with the population—if it is 20% of the region, should not fall below that, then can go higher according to land ownership.

*Comment:* Top argument land holding interest, bottom argument population numbers.

## Closed *Bama* Meeting

The closed session began with an explanation of the process under NHT1 and how it was administered by Environment Australia. NHT2, regional NRM Plans will be accredited at State level (DNRM, DPI, ILC, EPA). Industry have 3 votes, environment (EPA) have one. Effectively Aboriginal interests are represented through one vote.

### *Discussion Points (relating to Motion 1):*

- make our own recommendations;
- investigate options to form our own structure;
- consider class issues;
- need to factor in more time to consider options;
- need for wide knowledge of what is in the plan
- concern that the plan already being drafted without the *Bama*;
- we need to get some submissions and requests and input into the plan;
- our aspirations currently not recognised;
- membership of steering committee needs to be looked at;
- we need equal representation on board; and
- need to consider ways to delay the planning process until *Bama* represented
- concern that current proposed membership is 7 non-Indigenous people to 1 Indigenous person; and
- need for the membership to reflect the land owning status of the *Bama* – since *Bama* own more than 80% of the Wet Tropics, and are the largest landholders, they should be the majority on the Steering Committee, say 70%.

### *Discussion Points (Relating to Motion 2):*

- need for funds for process whereby we can elect our representatives;
- we need to decide on how we are going to get representation;
- a list of duties for Steering Committee is needed;
- a level of technical and cultural understanding is required – not just skills like literacy;
- need to put in place from the beginning what the role of ATSIC and Rep Bodies and other groups involved in land management are;
- CRC commissioned to develop Wet Tropics Regional Plan;
- proper consultation required;
- development of an Indigenous community plan should be considered;
- regional plan assessment panel – Indigenous involvement needs to be increased; and
- Indigenous consultation forum.

## Proposed Board Structure

After some discussion five options were looked at:

- Option 1: - two separate boards – 1 Indigenous, 1 non –Indigenous;
- Option 2: 50 % Indigenous, non-Indigenous on the same board;
- Option 3: Mainstream structure as currently proposed;
- Option 4: Guaranteed percentage of the dollars to Indigenous management; and
- Option 5: Ask for majority on board in first instance, if they don't agree then not below 50%.

### *Discussion Points Relating to the Options:*

- role of Ministerial Council;
- need for forum to make recommendations about a structure; and
- need to brief all *Bama* not here about what happened at this meeting, and the options that were discussed.

Voting on the five options:

Option 1: For 0 against

Option 2: For 0

Option 3: For 0

Option 4: For 0

Option 5: For 27 Unanimous

### *Discussion Points in relation to Motion 3:*

- need funding to get the process of consultation started; and
- \$60 000 is to run a workshop, the amount is based on the funding of the Clump Mountain workshops.

After much discussion three resolutions were unanimously agreed to:

## **Final Resolutions**

1. "That there be a 70/30% majority Indigenous representation on the steering committee to develop the proposed WT Regional Plan for NHT 2, and the process be halted until there is 70% Indigenous representation."

Moved: Charles Morganson

Seconded: Bruce Butler

Carried Unanimously.

2. "That the Indigenous participants at the Regional Environment and NRM forum endorse a majority membership on the proposed WT Regional NRM Board, and a guaranteed percentage of 50% funding for Indigenous projects".

Moved: Elsie Gosan

Seconded: Connie Stewart

Carried Unanimously.



3. "That \$60,000 be made available for urgent and proper consultation with Indigenous landholders for the development of the Wet Tropics Regional Plan. A regional workshop for all Rainforest Bama should be organised as soon as possible.

Moved: Connie Stewart

Seconded: Victor Maund

Carried Unanimously.

***Working group was established:*** Phil Rist, Jean Fenton, Leah Talbot, Victor Maund, Melissa George, and Ricko Noble.