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A summary of
Aboriginal Programmes by the
Department of Conservation
and Land Management 

▼ F O R E W O R D

West Australian Aborigines live in a wide range of circumstances varying from urban to near traditional lifestyles. They still express very strong interest in land, especially its natural and cultural values. This is particularly evident among traditional groups in the more remote parts of the State.

The Department of Conservation and Land Management is responsible for the protection and management of 18.1 million hectares around the State, including 7.2% of the land area of Western Australia.

Aboriginal individuals and community groups have lobbied strongly to be involved in the management of this growing conservation estate through liaison and consultation, formal joint decision making, training and employment.

Aboriginal involvement in conservation and land management practices has significantly contributed to the Department's performance of its functions. The incorporation of traditional ecological knowledge and practices has already enhanced contemporary management and improved the protection and appreciation of both natural and cultural resources. These benefits can only increase with further Aboriginal involvement and the Department is committed to achieving this goal.

Contact between CALM and Aboriginal people has steadily increased since the Department was formed in 1985. The main issues have been access to land, the power of Aboriginal people to make decisions as equal partners with CALM, methods of land management and opportunities for Aboriginal training and employment.

Many informal discussions have taken place in the districts and regions, while the relationship with other Aboriginal groups has developed more formally. There has also been a strengthening of the relationships between CALM and other Government agencies, chiefly the State Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority and Aboriginal Advisory Council and the Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission.

A summary of the detailed programmes which have been set up is provided in the following report.

▼ ABORIGINAL EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING POLICY STATEMENT AND PLAN

The Department published this policy and plan in 1989 in consultation with Aboriginal people and other Government agencies. It promotes Aboriginal employment opportunities through CALM by giving Aboriginal people equal access to -

- ▼ employment and career development within the Department, and
- ▼ training opportunities which allow their employment and/or participation in occupations related to the functions and operations of the Department.

One of the goals of this plan is to double the number of CALM's Aboriginal employees to about three per cent of its work force within five years.

CALM has appointed an Aboriginal co-ordinator of the programme on a 12 month contract to implement the policy. This includes promoting cross cultural awareness in the work place, liaising with Aboriginal communities and organisations, helping with Aboriginal recruitment and training and counselling existing staff.

The co-ordinator's salary and travel costs are provided by the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service contract employment programme. The associated administrative, travel and document production costs are met by CALM from its existing budget.

▼ PURNULULU NEGOTIATIONS

CALM has held extensive negotiations with the Purnululu Aboriginal Corporation (PAC) on the Purnululu (Bungle Bungle) National Park since 1986. PAC represents the interests of the area's traditional Aboriginal custodians.

The agreement reached is expected to provide a model for the management and protection of other areas of conservation and Aboriginal significance in Western Australia.

The Government has agreed to set up a Ministerial Committee with equal CALM and PAC representation to develop policy for the park and advise the Environment Minister on all matters relating to Aboriginal involvement. Aboriginal rangers have also been trained and employed in the park.

Members of the Purnululu Aboriginal Corporation will be able to live on leases within the national park and carry out their traditional role as custodians. These leases will ensure appropriate levels of access, privacy and security for Aboriginal residents. All site planning,

design and construction criteria will be subject to environmental assessment and sensitive to the residents' requirements.

A draft management plan for the park was released for public comment in May, 1989, and more than 50 submissions have since been received and analysed. CALM and PAC are now reviewing the plan together and preparing the final document, which is expected to be gazetted this year. The Ministerial Park Council Agreement and the living area leases will be signed at the same time as the final management plan is released.

▼ ABORIGINAL RANGER TRAINING

CALM conducted its first Aboriginal ranger training programme in 1986 in the Pilbara. A training officer was seconded from the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service to train and supervise four trainees. This co-operative programme, based at Millstream-Chichester National Park with additional work experience at neighbouring Hamersley Range National Park, was a great success.

CALM subsequently employed two officers on two year contracts from October 1987 to train Aboriginal people in the Kimberley and Goldfields regions.

The Kimberley officer was involved in national park ranger training at Purnululu (Bungle Bungle) National Park, while the Goldfields officer co-ordinated community ranger training with two groups in the Central Reserve and Great Victoria Desert.

These positions were funded through the Aboriginal Community Development Programme (ACDP) until the end of the 1988-89 financial year when CALM met costs to the end of the contract period.

One of these contracts was extended and a permanent position has since been created. A new training and liaison programme has just begun in the west Kimberley.

National Park Rangers

CALM currently employs eight Aboriginal park rangers, three of whom are long term employees recruited into mainstream positions. The other five graduated from specialised training programmes and represent traditional custodians for Millstream-Chichester, Hamersley Range and Purnululu national parks.

There are requests from communities all over the State for new Aboriginal ranger training programmes, including -

- ▼ Geikie Gorge National Park (soon to begin)
- ▼ Mt Augustus National Park
- ▼ Rudall River National Park
- ▼ Hidden Valley (Mirima) National Park
- ▼ Walcott Inlet (proposed) National Park.
- ▼ Mitchell River (proposed) National Park

The minimum expectation of Aboriginal communities with traditional ties to land vested as national parks is that selected community members will be trained and employed as park rangers. Most Aboriginal people have emphasised a desire for "equal qualifications" when seeking employment as national park rangers.

Training programmes are being designed in response to these requests, as well as the requirements of the Rangers (National Park) Consolidated Award 1989 that CALM's rangers must complete post-secondary qualifications (for example, the TAFE certificate in national park management).

Options being considered for these new programmes include a work experience component, academic bridging courses, possible extension of the training period and a range of evaluation techniques to accommodate cultural variation.

This approach proved successful at Purnululu (Bungle Bungle) National Park where training consisted of a range of CALM inservice courses, on the job training under the guidance of senior rangers and the completion of the TAFE certificate core units in block release format at the Northern Territory Open College in Katherine. The Department of Employment, Education and Training assisted with costs incurred in travel to Katherine.

There has been very strong support for the Aboriginal rangers from park visitors to Millstream-Chichester, Hamersley Range (Karijini) and Purnululu (Bungle Bungle) national parks in particular. Such an encouraging response adds to the already established success of these programmes.

Community Rangers

CALM has co-ordinated training programmes for community rangers on Aboriginal land at One Arm Point, Djarindjin, Beagle Bay, Warakurna and Yakatunya.

These rangers look after visitors to their communities, protect cultural sites, rehabilitate degraded areas, manage wildlife and liaise with other agencies. Although each programme was quite different and produced varied results, they were successful in their main aim of helping Aboriginal people manage their own land.

Community ranger programmes in the Great Victoria Desert have significantly improved communication between CALM's Goldfields regional staff and Aboriginal groups living in remote areas on or adjacent to CALM managed land.

This regular contact led to short term contract work for Aboriginal people in an area where employment opportunities are virtually non-existent. New contract projects have since expanded to include other groups in the Goldfields region.

The community rangers were not intended to be CALM employees and the programmes required varying degrees of involvement from different agencies.

CALM provided training, personnel and overall co-ordination and administration of the programme.

The Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority provided Aboriginal Community Development Programme funds for travel and material costs for the west Kimberley programme, as well as the budgets for ranger operations. Wages for the Warakurna ranger, together with most of the training costs also came from ACDP.

The Department of Employment, Education and Training provided wages for the west Kimberley rangers for six months and continued to contribute to some training costs, such as TAFE charges, and funded work experience tours.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and the Community Development Employment Programme also contributed to rangers' wages.

▼ CONTRACT EMPLOYMENT OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

CALM strongly supports the contract employment of Aboriginal people in nature conservation through a programme initiated under the Commonwealth Government's Aboriginal employment development policy. It has been successful in enhancing CALM's relationship with many Aboriginal communities and allowing Aboriginal people to take part in practical land management projects, as well as gain experience and skills in contracting.

Some contracts have involved Aboriginal people in the research fieldwork referred to in the next section.

Current and proposed contracts approved for 1990-91 are -

- ▼ Marine Turtle Conservation - Bardi Aborigines Association Inc
- ▼ Visitor Facilities and Cultural Information - Burringurrah Community
- ▼ Gravel Pit Revegetation - Central Districts Employment Co-operative

- ▼ Rubbish Removal (Narrogin District Nature Reserves)-Central Districts Employment Co-operative
- ▼ Heritage Management, Burrup Peninsular - Ngurin Resource Centre
- ▼ Manufacture of Nature Reserve Signs - Tambellup Employment Co-operative
- ▼ Environmental Management, Millstream - Chichester National Park - Ngurin Resource Centre
- ▼ Ethnobotanical/Ethnographic Study (Proposed Carnarvon Range Nature Reserve) - Ngangganawilli Village

▼ RESEARCH PROGRAMMES

CALM has carried out a number of research projects where the involvement of Aboriginal people has been central. One of the best examples of this work is the study of the sudden decline of many small mammals in the Gibson Desert.

With the help of Aboriginal people from the Central reserve, CALM's research scientists have located and monitored mammal populations and examined the factors influencing population size and species diversity. Central to these studies has been the influence of traditional Aboriginal burning practices in forming the desert biota. This information has been valuable in managing remnant populations, as well as planning for the future reintroduction of threatened species.

Aboriginal consultants have been employed in this area under the contract programme since 1988 and their local knowledge has been invaluable.

CALM has also drawn on the local knowledge of the Bardi people at One Arm Point to help research and monitor marine turtle populations in the west Kimberley. Contract consultancies began in 1988 and have continued with the co-operation of the Bardi Council and their community rangers.

▼ CROSS CULTURAL AWARENESS

Cross cultural awareness programmes are essential to provide information about Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures. They help develop understanding and positive attitudes and improve communication between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal employees.

CALM has already designed and run a successful cross cultural course for selected employees. A new course offered by a Perth tertiary institution is being assessed for possible inclusion in the CALM staff training manual. An essential criteria for all such programmes is the participation of appropriate Aboriginal people, including CALM employees and community

representatives who reflect the diversity of groups and lifestyles within Aboriginal culture.

In addition to planned courses, informal opportunities for cross cultural interaction are encouraged at regional and district level through contact with Aboriginal communities.

▼ WEST KIMBERLEY NEGOTIATIONS

CALM is a member of the joint Government and Aboriginal Gamali Committee which considers Aboriginal and conservation interests in the west Kimberley. The committee, which reports to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, makes recommendations to Government concerning existing and proposed reserve lands in the west Kimberley.

Other members of the Gamali Committee include the Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority, Environmental Protection Authority, Department of Aboriginal Sites and Gulingi Nangga Aboriginal Corporation. The Corporation represents all Aboriginal language groups from the Buccaneer Archipelago to Kalumburu and west of the Gibb River Road.

The Gamali Committee is currently working on concerns raised over the proposed Walcott Inlet National Park, the Mitchell Plateau area (including the proposed Mitchell River and Lawley River national parks) and the Buccaneer Archipelago (see below).

Other matters such as Aboriginal living area excisions, protection of Aboriginal sites, control of public access to places of cultural significance and issues regarding mining and exploration in the west Kimberley are also discussed by this committee.

▼ BUCCANEER ARCHIPELAGO PROJECT

The islands and waters of the Buccaneer Archipelago have very high nature conservation value as well as cultural significance to Aboriginal people. There are also commercial interests in the area, including fishing, tourism and possibly mining.

Several islands have been recommended as nature reserves, including some which the Bardi Aborigines Association Inc at One Arm Point applied to the Aboriginal Lands Trust for control of in 1985.

CALM has had many discussions with the community about the possibility of protecting and managing this area together. CALM initiated a study of the Buccaneer Archipelago to document the major biological, cultural and social resources of the area and to identify the main issues of concern. A consultant was employed to carry

out this study and the Bardi Aborigines contracted to help collect and record information.

Through his visits to the area, the consultant identified a second Aboriginal community group with traditional ties to the Buccaneer Archipelago islands. These people of the Larinyuwar community and the Bardi Aborigines have elected a joint sub-committee under the umbrella of the Gulingi Nangga Aboriginal Corporation. They have asked that all future discussions and work on the islands be directed through this committee.

The first phase of this project, the research consultancy, was completed at the end of June, 1990. The Gulingi Nangga Corporation, on behalf of the traditional Aboriginal custodians, has now prepared a submission concerning Aboriginal interests in the area. The Government will consider these reports before deciding on future vesting and management arrangements for the islands and waters of the Buccaneer Archipelago.

▼ RUDALL RIVER NATIONAL PARK

Several years ago CALM began a draft management plan for Rudall River National Park - a complex plan involving Aboriginal living areas, mineral exploration, conservation and tourism. Recognising the potential conflict in the area, Cabinet decided in October, 1988, to commission a social impact study of the region. CALM funded the production of a resource document for this study and also engaged in many discussions and provided a formal submission to the study team.

The interaction of Aboriginal interests, conservation

and economic development in this region are still being considered at Government level, but in the meantime CALM has continued discussions with the communities and their representative body, the Western Desert Puntupurnukana.

▼ ABORIGINAL ACTIVITIES IN THE SOUTH WEST

There is increasing pressure on the limited natural resources of the State's south west, with its growing population and most land allocated to urban or rural uses. Many aspects of traditional Aboriginal culture have been either modified or abandoned but Aboriginal people still identify strongly with the land, especially with places and objects of historical value. Nyoongah people in the south west have asked CALM to consider their special needs, both in terms of employment and access to the land.

CALM has initiated a research and consultation project to identify existing and future activities of Aboriginal people in the south west in relation to Crown lands and nature conservation.

The sorts of activities being pursued by Aboriginal people include camping, hunting, gathering, fishing, firewood collection and commercial enterprises such as wildflower picking and fence post cutting.

Numerous meetings have been held with key groups and interviews are being conducted with nominated Aboriginal representatives. Recommendations are being considered to allow increased access and use of conservation lands by south west Aboriginal people. CALM is also hoping to help Aboriginal people gain access to other Crown lands and private land where the consent of the owners can be obtained.

Summary of Aboriginal involvement in management planning and research programmes

CALM is encouraging Aboriginal involvement in many research and planning exercises. Some of the following are referred to in more detail in previous sections -

- i) Purnululu (Bungle Bungle) National Park draft management plan (released) and final management plan (in preparation).
- ii) Karlamilyi (Rudall River) resource document (released).
- iii) Karlamilyi (Rudall River) draft management plan (in preparation). As well, the State Government has funded a social impact study.
- iv) Hamersley Range (Karajini) National Park draft management plan (released) and second draft (in preparation).
- v) Kimberley rainforest survey (in preparation).
- vi) Buccaneer Archipelago planning study (under consideration).
- vii) Marine turtle research and management (continuing).
- viii) Fire and wildlife research of the Central Reserves (continuing).
- ix) Great Victoria Desert Nature Reserve research programmes (continuing).
- x) Badjaling Nature Reserve and Aboriginal Reserve research programmes (about to begin).
- xi) Aboriginal activities in the south west (continuing).

Glossary

AAPA	Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority
ACDP	Aboriginal Community Development Programme
ANPWS	Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
CALM	Department of Conservation and Land Management
CDEP	Community Development Employment Programme
DEET	Department of Employment, Education and Training
PAC	Purnululu Aboriginal Corporation
TAFE	Department of Technical and Further Education

Aboriginal committees and organisations with frequent or regular liaison with CALM

- ▼ Aboriginal Advisory Council and its various regional consultative committees
- ▼ Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority
- ▼ Aboriginal Lands Trust
- ▼ Aboriginal Legal Service
- ▼ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
- ▼ Badjaling Wanderers
- ▼ Bardi Aborigines Association Inc.
- ▼ Beagle Bay Aboriginal Community Inc.
- ▼ Bililuna Aboriginal Communities
- ▼ Burringurrah Community
- ▼ DarlIngunaya Aboriginal Corporation
- ▼ Djarindjin Aboriginal Corporation
- ▼ Gnuraren Aboriginal Association
- ▼ Gulingi Nangga
- ▼ Innawonga Group Inc.
- ▼ Karijini Aboriginal Corporation
- ▼ Kimberley Land Council
- ▼ Maralinga Tjarutja (SA)
- ▼ Miriuwung Aboriginal Corporation
- ▼ Mowanjam Aboriginal Corporation
- ▼ Mulan Aboriginal Community
- ▼ Mungullah Aboriginal Community Inc.
- ▼ Ngaanganawilli Community Inc.
- ▼ Ngaanyatjarra Council Inc.
- ▼ Ngudarra Banjima Aboriginal Corporation
- ▼ Ngurin Resource Centre
- ▼ Nomads Strelley Aboriginal Community
- ▼ Nyoongah Community Inc.
- ▼ Pupiyala Tjarutja Inc.
- ▼ Purnululu Aboriginal Corporation
- ▼ Southern Aboriginal Corporation
- ▼ Upurl Upurlila Ngurratja Inc.
- ▼ Warakurna Community Inc.
- ▼ Western Desert Puntukurnuparna Aboriginal Corporation
- ▼ Wheatbelt Aboriginal Corporation

There are many more Aboriginal groups and community councils with whom CALM has occasional contact.