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Integrated Natural and Cultural Resource Management for Pastoral Properties in the East Kimberley Project: Learnings of the Project.

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- Kimberley Land Council
- Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia (DAFWA)
- Tropical Savannas Cooperative Research Centre
- Indigenous Land Corporation

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TROPICAL SAVANNAS CRC
Cooperative Research Centre for Tropical Savannas Management



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INTEGRATED NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT FOR PASTORAL PROPERTIES IN THE EAST KIMBERLEY PROJECT

LEARNINGS OF THE PROJECT¹



February 2007



¹ Compiled by David Garnett, Tropical Savannas Management CRC, relying almost entirely on material contained in the range of internal project reports listed in the bibliography.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Integrated Natural and Cultural Resource Management (INCRM) Project in the East Kimberley was unique in that its objectives were to provide guidance on the options for sustainable development of Indigenous-held properties that acknowledged cultural traditions and aspirations in addition to addressing conventional natural resource management practices. It evolved from the work of the Ord-Bonaparte Program (OBP), which ran from 2000 – 2003. When this was terminated prematurely the Tropical Savannas Management Cooperative Research Centre was requested to put forward a proposal to take forward one of the five sub-programs of the OBP which focused on Aboriginal management and planning for Country. This resulted in the INCRM project, which began in early 2004.

Given the ground-breaking nature of this work it should come as no surprise that a significant section of this 'learnings' report is devoted to documenting the challenges encountered in the project process itself. What worked? What gave problems, and how could it be done better next time? Issues that needed to be addressed included collaborative research and multidisciplinary team work; project work; confidentiality of cultural information; redefinition of project objectives; staff turn-over and recruitment; gender balance; organisational resource bases and processes; project planning and timeframes; cross-cultural communication; need for preparatory research and methods of analysis of research information.

Land-use options reports were completed for the two properties (Bow River and Violet Valley) that were chosen for detailed study. In addition a fire management plan was completed for Bow River. At this property scale the vulnerabilities that could block development were identified as including pressure on natural resources; the requirement for protection of cultural and significant areas; issues associated with mobility and migration and the impacts of fluctuations in the number of people living on-site; the lack of appropriate dwellings and community resources; maintenance of capital and skills/ capacity/ interest in enterprise development; poor financial history; current business management issues such as inadequate financial management, and lack of human resources and skills.

The two properties are also exposed to an institutional environment which has the potential to create both barriers and opportunities. This environment is complex even if only a single land use was envisaged for the properties. In many regions, groups seek assistance with this complexity through a 'resource agency', a non-government organisation which acts as their development agent. There is no such agent in the Kimberley region, although the work of the INCRM field staff with the properties may have raised the expectation that such field contact will continue. In studies such as this it is important that there should be an exit strategy and/or a strategy to pass the project to another body that would act as an ongoing agent.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This overview relies extensively on a range of internal reports prepared for the project 'Integrated Natural and Cultural Resource Management Options for Pastoral Properties in the East Kimberley' (See Bibliography, Section 15). At the property scale those deserving particular recognition are Rachael Quast and Janelle White (formerly Kimberley Land Council (KLC), Kununurra); Nadene Schiller, Paul Novelly and Francis Bright (Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia (DAFWA), Kununurra) and Kate Golson who prepared the Final Process Report for DAFWA and KLC. The regional and cross-regional sections are drawn from the work of Bill Arthur of the Centre for Aboriginal Policy Research, The Australian National University, as is also the Glossary, the extensive listing of broader references and the listing of useful web-sites (See Bibliography, p. 40, Sections 16 and 17). All are gratefully acknowledged.

GLOSSARY (From Arthur, 2006 a and b)

ADM	Argyle Diamond Mine
ALRA	<i>Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976</i>
ALT	Aboriginal Lands Trust
ANU	The Australian National University
ARG	Aboriginal Reference Group
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
BAC	Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation
BR	Bow River
CAEPR	Centre for Aboriginal Policy Research
CDEP	Community Development Employment Projects
CDU	Charles Darwin University
CFC	Caring for Country
CHIP	Community Housing and Infrastructure Program
COAG	Coalition of Australian Governments
CRC	Cooperative Research Centre
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
DAFWA	Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia
DEH	Department of the Environment and Heritage
DET	Department of Education and Training
DEST	Department of Education Science and Training
DEWR	Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
DIA	Department of Indigenous Affairs
DFACS	Department of Family and Community Services
DOGIT	Deed of Grant in Trust
DPI&F	Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries (Queensland)
IBA	Indigenous Business Australia
IBPD	Indigenous Business Development Program
ICC	Indigenous Coordination Centre

ILC	Indigenous Land Corporation
ILUA	Indigenous Land Use Agreement
INCRM	Integrated Natural and Cultural Resource Management
IPA	Indigenous Protected Area
IPP	Indigenous Pastoral Program
ISBF	Indigenous Small Business Fund
KAPA	Kimberley Aboriginal Pastoralists Association
KDC	Kimberley Development Corporation
KGTT	Kimberley Group Training
KIMSS	Kimberly Indigenous Management Support Service
KLANRO	Kowanyama Land and Natural Resource Office
KLC	Kimberley Land Council
KSG	Kimberley sub-group
LUA	Land Use Agreement
LSU	Land and Sea Management Unit
LWA	Land and Water Australia
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAILSMA	North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance
NGO	Non-government Organisation
NHT	National Heritage Trust
NLC	Northern Land Council
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NT	Northern Territory
NTA	<i>Native Title Act 1993</i> (Cth)
NTRB	Native Title Representative Body
OAED	Office of Aboriginal Development
OCRG	Ord Catchment Reference Group
OIPC	Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination
PBC	Prescribed Body Corporate
PLB	Pastoral Lands Board of Western Australia
RCG	Rangelands Co-ordinating Group
RPA	Regional Partnership Agreements
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
RPA	Regional Partnership Agreement
RPM	Rosewood Project Management
SRA	Shared Responsibility Agreement
STEP	Structured Training and Employment Projects
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TO	Traditional Owner
TSCRC	Tropical Savannas Management Cooperative Research Centre
VV	Violet Valley
WA	Western Australia

A. INTRODUCTION

The Integrated Natural and Cultural Resource Management (INCRM) Project in the East Kimberley aimed at achieving a greater understanding of the opportunities and challenges faced on Indigenous-held pastoral properties. It was unique in that its objectives allowed specific options to be identified, while assessing the capacity of communities to bring them to fruition. This output from the project will provide not only an assessment of how enterprises could develop, or be encouraged, on Indigenous-managed land, but will also provide guidance on the manner of that development that acknowledges cultural traditions and aspirations in addition to conventional natural resource management practices.

Despite Indigenous people making up a significant proportion of the population across northern Australia, there has been a lack of effective recognition of Indigenous aspirations and rights in resource management, and in particular, virtually no incorporation of Aboriginal interests into broader land use objectives. To ensure Indigenous engagement, multiple use strategies on Indigenous-controlled land must be developed to achieve a degree of viability that might satisfy a community's cultural aspirations, yet recognize the realities of 21st Century development.

This report is a synthesis of the learnings of the INCRM project. As such it borrows freely from the various reports produced by and for the project team, and the authors of these are gratefully acknowledged. Given the ground-breaking nature of this work it should come as no surprise that a significant section of this report is devoted to documenting the learnings from the project process itself. What worked? What gave problems, and how could it be done better next time? The reports themselves are listed in the bibliography (Section 15, p. 40).

1. BACKGROUND TO THE INCRM PROJECT

The INCRM project evolved from the work of the Ord-Bonaparte Program (OBP), which ran from 2000 – 2003. The OBP was a research and development program concerned with the sustainable use and management of natural resources in the East Kimberley. When the OBP Project was terminated prematurely the Tropical Savannas Management Cooperative Research Centre (TSCRC) was requested to put forward a proposal to take forward one of the five sub-programs of the OBP which focused on Aboriginal management and planning for Country.

This resulted in the INCRM project, which began in early 2004. It was concerned with the sustainable use and management of cultural and natural resources on lands in the East Kimberley, with a focus on Indigenous-held lands. The original timeframe for the work to be completed was two years, but this was ultimately extended until March 2007.

The project partners, who also funded the work, were: Land and Water Australia (LWA), the Tropical Savannas Management Cooperative Research Centre, the Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC), the Department of Agriculture and Food WA (DAFWA - formerly the Department of Agriculture WA) and Kimberley Land Council (KLC). These organisations formed the steering committee which was responsible for the overall management of the project.

1.1 Project Objectives

The original objectives of the project were to:

- develop property plans for four case studies: Carlton Hill, Ivanhoe and Bow River stations and Violet Valley Aboriginal Reserve, which runs a cattle enterprise
- assemble useable digital datasets
- provide an analysis of community aspirations
- map cultural landscapes
- identify alternative economic opportunities
- assemble multiple land use strategies
- develop training initiatives
- develop useful communication products
- evaluate the institutional environment both of the East Kimberley and more widely across northern Australia.

1.2 The Regional Organisations

On-ground development and implementation of project processes was the responsibility of KLC and DAFWA. Both had previously participated in OBP.

KLC is the peak body representing Aboriginal land interests in the Kimberley as well as the Native Title Representative Body for the region. A main role of the Land Council, through the Land and Sea Management Unit (LSMU), is to assist and support Kimberley Aboriginal people in the sustainable use and management of their land and waters. KLC was responsible for developing culturally appropriate processes through which the project team worked with the landholders, which included the collection of relevant cultural information.

DAFWA has responsibility for pastoral and agricultural development in the State. One of its main roles in the project was to obtain biophysical information for the case studies. This was added to existing information that the Department holds, some of which had

been collected through the OBP sub-program, The Characterisation of Rangeland Resources Project.

1.3 The Multidisciplinary Project Team

DAFWA dedicated one full-time research/project officer position in Kununurra to the INCRM work. Other staff from DAFWA provided technical input into the project. These included an economist, a research officer, a biosecurity officer and a technical officer. The project leader was a DAFWA manager.

The KLC appointed a full-time project officer's position to the work as well as a full-time field officer's position. The latter position was filled for about ten months and a part-time field assistant employed for two later fieldtrips but for much of the time it was vacant.

The KLC legal section, other project staff and consultant anthropologists provided advice on a range of matters, including intellectual property issues and the native title implications of the work. The consultant anthropologists assisted in the development of culturally-appropriate processes for the project in the context of cultural research at Bow River station.

Following on from OBP, INCRM adopted an integrated, multidisciplinary approach to the work.

2. THE PROCESS AT THE PROPERTY SCALE

2.1 Selection of the case studies

With the aim of encompassing a range of properties with different economic potentials and social conditions, the project plan originally called for four property-scale studies to be undertaken.

KLC was responsible for assessing the suitability of properties to participate as case studies. This was done on the basis of work undertaken in OBP, with reference to the following criteria:

- availability of landholders to participate
- people's interest in participating
- community cohesion
- availability of young people to work on the properties
- historical relationship with KLC

- in the case of the two non-Aboriginal pastoral leases, the lessees' willingness to engage with Traditional Owners.

Initially, Bow River station (Jurwuliji), Violet Valley Aboriginal Reserve (Baula-Wah) and Ivanhoe and Carlton Hill stations were identified as potential case studies.

Traditional Owners (TOs) from Violet Valley Aboriginal Reserve and Bow River station had been central participants in the OBP sub-program, Aboriginal Management and Planning for Country.

INCRM work began in early 2004, with the appointment of a project officer at the Kununurra office of DAFWA. The biophysical officer focused on land-unit mapping for the four properties, continuing work begun during OBP. Meanwhile, KLC's recruitment process for a cultural project officer encountered difficulties and this position was not filled until September 2005.

By the beginning of 2005, after the first season of fieldwork and with a new team in place, it had become clear to the project staff that many of the milestones would not be able to be completed within the two-year timeframe. The main reasons for this are discussed later in this report, but included unclear project objectives and difficulties in recruiting staff.

In early 2005, at a project team meeting, KLC and DAFWA staff reviewed the work up to that point and discussed what could realistically be achieved in the remaining time. It was agreed that it was not possible to undertake and complete land-use planning for each of the four case studies in one year and that the work should focus on several achievable outcomes: namely, the completion of two land-use options papers for Bow River and Violet Valley and a fire management plan for Bow River (See Figure 1 for location maps).

In addition, it had also become clear by that stage that the involvement of Aboriginal communities on Ivanhoe and Carlton Hill stations in complex native title negotiations with the State Government precluded their participation in the INCRM project.

2.2 Approach and Methods

2.2.1 Preparatory Research

Preparatory research was undertaken by the project team before the field research began in earnest. The project officers identified and familiarised themselves with the relevant existing cultural, social, economic, land tenure and biophysical information.

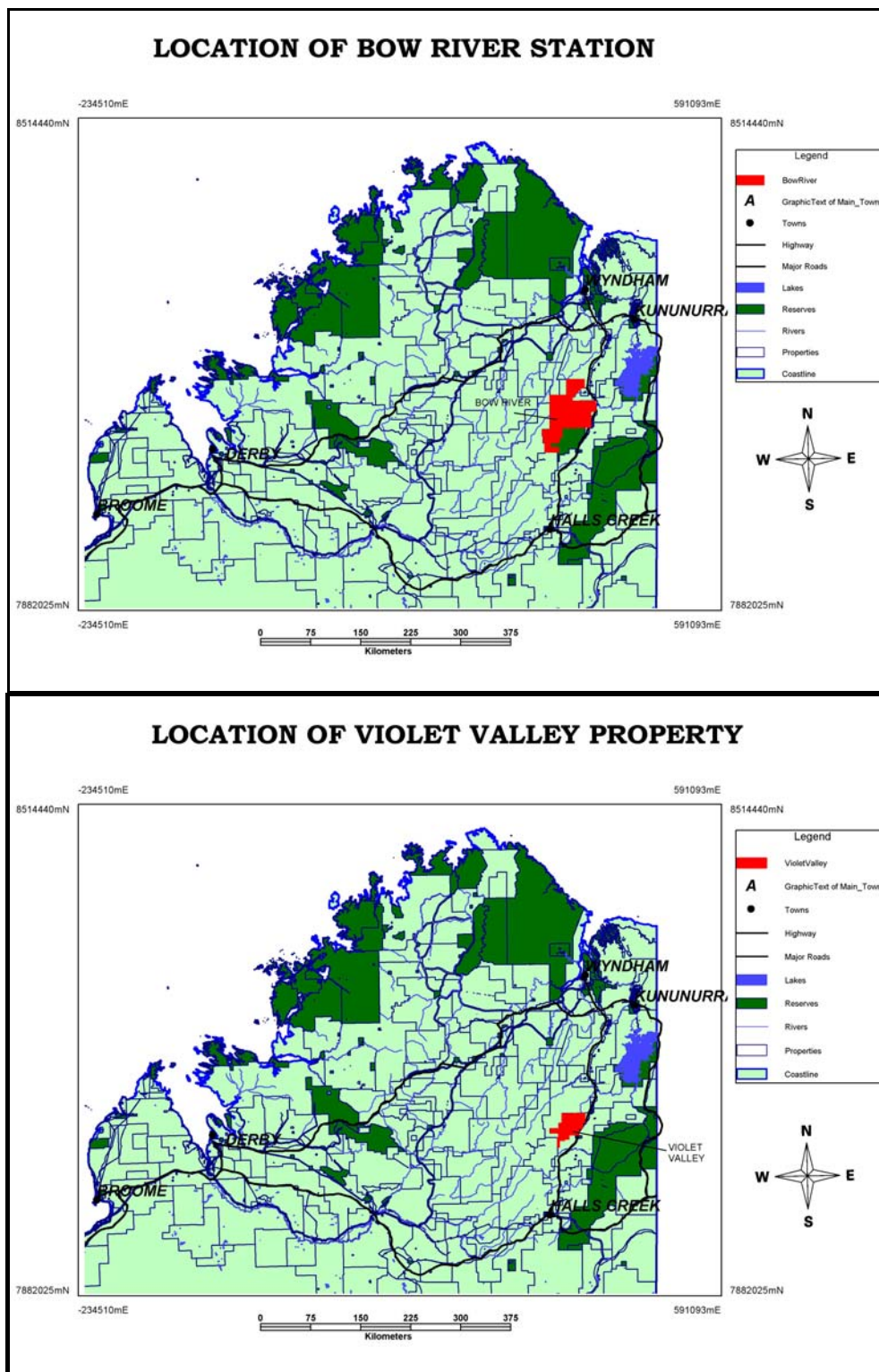


Figure 1. Location of Bow River station and Violet Valley property, East Kimberley, Western Australia

DAFWA had a great deal of biophysical information about Bow River station but little on Violet Valley, an Aboriginal Reserve. The land-unit mapping work undertaken through OBP was built upon by INCRM.

KLC holds extensive historical and contemporary social, cultural, demographic and other information and materials in its library in Derby and files in the East Kimberley, and has access to specialist information through its networks of researchers and others.

2.2.2 Who was the Information Collected From?

After KLC staff had made contact with the landholding corporations at Bow River and Violet Valley, they secured approval to organise meetings to disseminate information about the project.

2.2.2.1 Bow River and Violet Valley Landholding Structures

The members of a number of Kija Traditional Owner (TO) families form the Violet Valley land-holding corporation, Baulu-Wah Aboriginal Corporation. All the office-bearing positions, and the pastoral manager's, are filled by corporation members. There are two outstations on the Reserve, Violet Valley and Norton's Bore, but most of the corporation members live in Warmun, which is 30 km away.

At Bow River station, the landholding body is the Juwilypany Aboriginal Corporation, which is likewise comprised of the members of a number of TO families. All of the office-bearing positions at the station are held by corporation members. Most of the corporation members are living on Bow River at the sole community, Juwurlinji.

2.2.2.2 The Main Participants in the Project

Most of the TOs of Bow River and Violet Valley did not have much direct involvement in the project, leaving it to a number of key participants to work with the project team.²

At Violet Valley, there were six main participants in the project, three senior and three younger TOs. All of the senior and two of the younger people worked together on the cultural research. The Baulu-Wah Corporation Chairperson worked most closely with the biophysical project officer to provide information about the pastoral enterprise, land management matters and so on. The project team also put heavy reliance on the Chairperson as their general point of contact with, and to disseminate general

² As is outlined below, the project team kept other TOs and community members informed of the work at regular intervals.

information to, the wider group of landholders (see also under 2.2.3 Communication of Information, p. 13).

At Bow River, the five main participants were two senior, knowledgeable women, two younger TOs, including the pastoral manager, and the manager's wife, not a TO but knowledgeable about the pastoral enterprise and very helpful in organising meetings and fieldtrips.

2.2.2.3 Meetings

For both case studies, the main arenas for the dissemination of information, consultations and formal decision-making about the work were community meetings on the properties, where the appropriate Traditional Owners gathered together with the project staff.

These meetings were two-way processes. While participants were provided with, for example, information about the purpose of the work, the progress being made, or details about the research findings, participants provided direction, advice and information to the project team and made decisions about an array of matters that required discussion with the wider group.

Where appropriate, information was sought by the project officers from individuals but this was always reported back to the wider group.

The meetings and fieldwork necessitated a great dealing of travelling by project team members between the properties and Warmun. All of the formal meetings were held at the communities of Juwurlinji and Violet Valley other than the presentation of the Violet Valley land-use options paper, which occurred in Warmun. The organisational effort was a collaborative team one.

2.2.2.4 Fieldtrips for research

Cultural research with TOs in the Kimberley usually involves some travelling on Country with senior people. In the course of the INCRM work, a number of these trips were made by car and, where the land was too rugged, by helicopter.

The biophysical research entailed fieldtrips for a number of purposes, including verifying existing biophysical information, collecting land-management data, for example weed mapping, and to gather pastoral information, for example an audit of existing infrastructure. The biophysical project officer also participated in several cultural research trips, providing fieldwork support to the team.

Later sections outline the data collection methods that were used on these trips.

2.2.3 The Communication of Information

The inter-cultural and language differences between the participants and the project officers were managed in a number of ways.

As so often happens, younger people fluent in English took on the role of cultural interpreters between the project officers and the senior people, both facilitating information and translating it into more understandable forms. The field officer played an important role in this regard.

The use of visual aids such as maps and pictures was central to the processes of collecting and presenting information.

Feedback about the project that was received from the main participants at Violet Valley included a comment that, while the initial ways in which the project officers attempted to communicate revealed their inexperience, they learnt quickly from people and changed their approach by learning how to use plainer English.

2.2.4 What Information was Collected and How?

2.2.4.1 Aspirations of participants

The project officers asked people about their aspirations for the future use and management of their Country. This information formed the basis of the land-use options research.

At Violet Valley, the aspirations were able to be recorded at the earliest community meeting, where over twenty people were present. At Bow River, this work occurred over the course of a number of meetings as well as in discussions with the main participants during fieldtrips.

2.2.4.2 Cultural Information

The cultural research process was never intended to gather comprehensive or extensive information. The focus was on resource management and people's cultural priorities and responsibilities in this context. As such, the information collected centred on where culturally important places were located on the properties.

Cultural information was obtained from the senior, knowledgeable TOs assisted by younger family members. For example, at Violet Valley, two senior people and their daughter and son worked closely together with the project officer. These knowledgeable people guided the project team around the Country to visit places and provided general

and specific cultural information. These places were recorded on maps in a way that only disclosed their general locations.

For this work semi-structured interviews were the main method for collecting information, usually involving one Traditional Owner or a small group of people. Some of the most detailed information was provided in the car on fieldtrips on Country.

Consultant anthropologists who have extensive experience working with people in the area were engaged by KLC to assist in the cultural mapping and fire management research at Bow River. Much of the mapping research was done by helicopter because of the ruggedness of the terrain.

2.2.4.3 Biophysical/Natural Information

By contrast, much of the biophysical information was able to be gathered through a desktop study. Information about biodiversity, ground and surface water and general vegetation and soils was collected from existing reports and maps. Land-unit mapping completed during OBP and at the beginning of INCRM laid the foundation for the later research on the case study properties. Some field work was undertaken, mainly to verify the existing information.

The collection of biophysical information (as well as much of the land management and pastoral enterprise information, see below) was often able to be undertaken by the DAFWA project officer working with the corporation chairperson and/or pastoral managers. Where required, DAFWA expertise was called upon.

2.2.4.4 Land management Information

Information for the Bow River fire management plan was gathered in semi-structured interviews with the main participants. The data covered such matters as the history of fire in the area, traditional and conventional fire management practices, and current burning methodologies. Both project officers worked together on this research. Conventional topographic maps and satellite images were used to locate where fires have occurred, their general direction, sites that require protection and natural resources that are natural 'firebreaks'. Fire scar maps were also used in discussions about the history of fire.

For the land-use options reports, in addition to many discussions with the pastoral managers and the Violet Valley Chairperson, observations were made of the rangeland conditions for both case studies. The rangeland condition assessment completed for Violet Valley Aboriginal Reserve used the same processes as those used for pastoral leases. Other land management observations made included for weeds and their distribution and severity, land erosion and its distribution and severity, and the number

and impact of feral animals. The recording and mapping of sites was undertaken and the other information compiled in reports.

2.2.4.5 Pastoral Enterprise Information

Pastoralism is the main economic activity on Bow River and Violet Valley was therefore the major focus of the research by the biophysical project officer. The information collected included the stocking history and current stock and business management practices. Potential cattle carrying capacities were re-evaluated using land-unit mapping.

Both pastoral managers, the Violet Valley Chairperson and the wife of the pastoral manager at Bow River, provided all the information. The team was assisted in this work by DAFWA's Kununurra-based economist.

On the basis of these data, opportunities for pastoral development were identified, and proposed infrastructure plans and a short term management plan developed, among other things. Existing infrastructure locations were mapped and the details recorded, the proposed infrastructure was mapped using existing maps and aerial photography and tracked on the fieldtrips, and all other information was compiled in reports.

On Violet Valley, some information was collected on the tourism enterprise.

2.2.4.6 Skills audit

The project officers carried out a skills audit on both properties to identify the skills, experience and knowledge of the workforce and the main project participants and most of the Community Development Employment Project (CDEP) employees working on the properties.

This information was collected in one-on-one interviews. The audits did not include all the members of the participating corporations or the communities and were not therefore comprehensive.

2.2.4.7 Physical Information

An audit of all the physical resources on each property was undertaken, which included an audit of the community infrastructure and infrastructure related to pastoral activities as well as existing equipment.

2.2.4.8 Financial Information

Financial information about the current enterprises and income streams of the corporations was obtained by the team.

2.2.4.9 Sustainable Livelihoods Information

In the last months of the project, Steve Fisher, an Alice Springs-based expert on sustainable livelihoods approaches in Australia and overseas, provided advice to the project team on the framework for their findings.³ The final report, the Bow River land-use options paper, reflects a changed perspective shaped by the comments that were received.

2.2.5 Reporting Back

The project officers reported back to the main participants and the wider groups at regular intervals. This was always done through formal meetings where corporation members were gathered. However, information was also communicated informally. The large meetings were all at the Bow River and Violet Valley communities other than one held to present the completed Violet Valley land-use options paper, which was in Warmun.

As was stated earlier, these meetings were not one-way deliveries of information from the project team. These were the times that the main participants and members of the wider groups were able to sit and talk together, to make decisions, to provide guidance and advice and further information to the project officers.

2.2.6 Integration and analysis of data and presentation of findings

On return from fieldtrips, the project officers compiled and documented the data that had been gathered. Each officer analysed her own datasets.

The officers then often contacted or met again with participants to cross-check and, where necessary, collect further information.

The integration of information involved the project team discussing the major findings and then working together to compile the information in reports and maps, with input from the project managers and specialist staff.

A GIS mapping program was used to record all the assembled biophysical information. Cultural information was recorded on hard-copy maps.

³ The sustainable livelihoods approach considers the range of factors that form the basis of people's livelihoods, including natural, human, social, physical and financial resources.

A number of maps were produced for the communities. For Violet Valley, a topographic and satellite map was used as the base map, and this was overlaid with numerous transparencies on which the collected information was printed. Separate transparencies were produced containing: non-confidential cultural information; environmental data such as weeds, erosion and rangeland condition features; natural features such as waterways; pastoral features such as existing infrastructure, paddocks and grazing areas; current land uses including existing mining sites and current tenements; and, proposed land-use options, including tourism sites and proposed infrastructure/grazing areas.

The overlays provided a clearer visual representation of the data so that all involved could better understand where areas for future land-use opportunity lay and where there were areas of potential conflict or management problems.

For Bow River station a similar process of overlaying information was used, however only paper maps were produced. These maps included similar information to the Violet Valley ones.

A mapping and GIS company in Broome, Ecomap, was contracted to develop the maps. Only the information that had been integrated was made available to all the project stakeholders; other cultural information gathered in the course of the work was, or will soon be, handed back to the TOs, with copies stored in the KLC Library.

The Violet Valley and Bow River land-use options papers were completed in December 2005 and June 2006, respectively. For Violet Valley participants, a sophisticated multimedia presentation on the landholders' priorities for Country using plenty of visual information was developed. It was presented in an office in Warmun. At Bow River, a ground-mapping exercise was undertaken outside on the station in a sandy river-bed using leaves, sticks and rocks to represent features on Country.

The fire management report for Bow River station, which included a version for the community and one for the Pastoral Lands Board, was produced in 2005.

A range of other materials that were produced, including photographs and a summary of the cultural materials collected, were handed back to people at Bow River in 2006.

B. LEARNINGS AT THE PROPERTY SCALE

3. BOW RIVER

The land-use options identified by the INCRM project included:

- protecting and enhancing the resource base
- sustaining and enhancing customary economies and culture
- developing the community dwelling
- developing the pastoral enterprise and a new tourism and cross cultural/ tourism enterprise.

The project identified numerous natural, cultural, community and enterprise resources on the Bow River station. There are also a variety of current land-use purposes, including personal and cultural use and pastoralism, while mineral exploration is also occurring on the property.

The people of Bow River station (the Juwurlinji community) identified four major groupings of aspirations. These fell into the areas of:

- **resources** (to ensure natural and cultural resources remain strong and healthy)
- **culture** (to maintain and strength culture on Country)
- **community** (to build the assets, skills and opportunities at the community to support a range of 'lifestyle' choices)
- **enterprise** (development of a viable pastoral business that sustains employment and training opportunities, and new enterprises such as tourism).

There are significant links and interdependencies between these aspirations, and there is a clear need to stress the holistic approach required when considering all land-use options.

To achieve these aspirations, the INCRM project identified the strengths and weaknesses of current community assets. This information, combined with an understanding of the community aspirations, helped to identify the vulnerabilities that may prevent the fulfilment of current and/or future land-use options and livelihoods advancement.

The vulnerabilities identified included:

- pressure on natural resources
- the requirement for protection of cultural and significant areas
- issues associated with mobility and migration and the impacts of fluctuations in the number of people living on site
- the lack of appropriate dwellings and community resources
- maintenance of capital and skills/ capacity/ interest in enterprise development
- poor financial history

- current business management issues such as inadequate financial management
- lack of human resources and skills.

These constraints need to be fully addressed before overall land-use goals can be met. In particular, any future enterprise development (including pastoralism and tourism) needs to be considered in the light of the overall livelihoods goals of the Bow River community members. To keep language, family, identity, Country and culture healthy and strong, people need to retain access to Country. Therefore, goals like adequate and appropriate housing, maintenance of roads, infrastructure and grading equipment, and trips to cultural sites with tourists/visitors can all become crucial elements in a sustainable livelihoods framework.

Whether development of the pastoral industry on Bow River station would provide a sustainable land use option for the Juwurlinji community members at this time remains in doubt. While there are potential links with employment provision, identity enhancement and financial profit, there are also several constraints needing to be addressed before successful enterprise development can occur. These constraints need appropriate management and strategies developed to help overcome them. This would allow for a more sustainable livelihoods and land-use options outcome.

It is recommended that the community investigate opportunities to address these vulnerabilities, and external agencies and organisations assist with the activities and developing strategies. The strategies chosen should reflect the findings of the relevant internal INCRM reports and be informed by:

- ascertaining the level of energy and resources to each of the aspirations identified
- prioritising the aspirations of the community
- further defining how community aspirations are interlinked and addressing the vulnerabilities and constraints to their fulfilment
- understanding the capacity of each enterprise to meet the broader livelihoods goals.

Ultimately the success of sustainable land use will depend on all of the above factors being integrated and addressed.

It is further recommended that future work by potential funding bodies and government and non-government agencies and organisations use the broad community aspirations identified in this report as platform for further socio-economic development.

4. VIOLET VALLEY

The information collected and interpreted in the Baulu-Wah Violet Valley Reserve land-use options document suggests the following:

1. The land-use options defined for the Reserve are those that satisfy the aspirations and socio-cultural values of the community.
2. There are areas on the Reserve where conflict between differing community aspirations will affect the degree to which current land uses can be expanded or the possible development of alternative land uses.
3. However, it is possible to expand current land uses without compromising the cultural values of Traditional Owners.
4. The land-use opportunities on the Reserve include development of further areas to expand the pastoral enterprise and consolidation and increase in the tourism enterprise. Mining exploration (and possible future production) is also increasing on the Reserve. A small horticulture venture is another land use opportunity that warrants further consideration.
5. Economic analysis suggests the expansion of the pastoral enterprise would be financially beneficial to the community. Consequently the development of a business plan to define the process for enterprise development appears warranted.

C. LEARNINGS ON THE PROJECT PROCESS AT THE PROPERTY SCALE

This was an unusual and ambitious project. As such it would have been surprising if challenges were not met along the way. Some of these were overcome more successfully than others and it is therefore important to learn from the project process itself. How could we do it better next time? What worked and what did not?

5. PROJECT EVALUATION

The following evaluation of the INCRM project process at the property scale is based mainly on semi-structured interviews with project team members (past and present) and line managers (past and present). A review of available information, particularly of meeting notes, briefs and reports, was also undertaken.

Furthermore, a trip was made to Bow River station and Violet Valley Aboriginal Reserve to talk with the main participants from each of the case studies. At Bow River, it was made clear that feedback would be provided by participants at a final project meeting planned for July 2006.

At Violet Valley, the request for information about the process report was not well-received but dealt with politely. People were busy, and perplexed by the effort to evaluate the project. As a result, not a lot of feedback was provided, although the comments that were made were very valuable.

Much of the time and effort of the INCRM team was spent developing and implementing culturally appropriate processes through which to work with people in the communities.

It is important to emphasise that the INCRM project was not requested by the land-holding corporations or the TOs of either Violet Valley or Bow River. Both were chosen because they are Aboriginal owned properties within the Ord River catchment area and were seen as providing good case studies. The objectives of the project had been determined before the communities were engaged and/or were driven by external priorities. The Bow River fire management report, for example, was pursued because it had been identified by the project team as a priority since it was a requirement of the Pastoral Lands Board.⁴

⁴ The project team saw the development of the plan as an opportunity to support the station and to build trust and networks, and, as well, a starting point to the collection of data for the land-use options research.

As such, certain obstacles and conceptual difficulties were created and sensitive cultural issues raised, all of which had to be dealt with in the course of the work. These matters are elaborated upon in following sections.

6. VIOLET VALLEY APPRAISAL

The comments provided by participants from Violet Valley were:

- The fieldwork undertaken on the properties was too drawn out. Rather than numerous visits to Violet Valley, information should have been collected more intensively on fewer, longer trips. This would have meant, for one, that much greater advantage could have been made of the times that people, particularly the older people, were all together.
- The project team was inexperienced, and in the beginning the way that they communicated with people was patronising. However, the workers learnt quickly and have done a good job.
- Violet Valley participants had no expectations that any tangible outcomes would come from the project. The main reason for this is that they have had many agencies visit over the years and have listened to a lot of talk, without seeing anything much being produced. The completion of the report based on the research was a pleasant surprise.
- It is a bonus, then, that the report is also a useful document which can be provided to potential funding bodies. A copy has already been given to one agency.
- The report is a good document. It is strongest on the cultural side, with the senior people working closely with the team. It is less strong on the business side.⁵
- Several comments were made about how the pastoral options provided in the report could have been more extensive. Since this interview, these comments have been followed up.

⁵ This feedback was not a criticism of the work undertaken on the pastoral enterprise as much as a comment that the potential of economic activities at Violet Valley, in general, had not been examined in any detail.

7. KEY PROCESS ISSUES

On the basis of the interviews with project team members, a number of general points can be made. These are outlined in the following section.

7.1 Collaborative Research and Multidisciplinary Team Work

The main strength of this project lay in the capacity of the project team to work together and support each other in the face of various challenges which are outlined in following sections. The collaboration was weak in the first year of the project but steadily strengthened in the course of the work as these difficulties were overcome.

The INCRM project officers were, in general, new to the Kimberley and had no or limited experience working with Aboriginal people in any context. This inexperience was counter-balanced by the guidance and specialist support provided by DAFWA and KLC.

The importance of KLC's appointment of a local Aboriginal team member, albeit for only 10 months of the work, cannot be overstated. The position was filled by a man with family connections to the Warmun area. His local knowledge was invaluable in the building of relationships between the INCRM officers and the main participants and was a key point of contact for the project.

The field officer also provided gender balance to an otherwise all female fieldwork team.

By the second year, the project team was working well. The project officers worked closely together in the field and the office. They collaborated in the planning of work programs; in project management, travelling together to the case study properties and Warmun; in the production of progress reports, maps and budgets; and the writing of the land-use options papers. The field officer was engaged in the time-consuming and often complicated logistics of planning and organising meetings and fieldtrips and ensuring all the necessary people were gathered together, but in this he worked closely with the other project staff.

The project team members relied on each other. For example, the cultural project officer assisted the biophysical project officer with: the translation of information; checking the validity of information collected; ideas for the best way to collect information with Aboriginal communities; and ensuring that people attended meetings and field activities.

In turn, the biophysical officer supported the cultural officer by, for example, providing maps and information about natural and physical resources as well as the pastoral enterprise, and assisting with fieldwork when cultural information was being collected.

Where the two officers worked separately, such as when they were at the properties collecting cultural or biophysical information with participants, they usually travelled together and kept each other informed of progress, often de-briefing at the end of the day.

The project officers relied on the field officer in a range of ways. For example, the field officer took on the role of a cultural interpreter, translating information into more understandable forms for both project participants and the workers.

In general the project team members learnt quickly, were able to develop and adapt to new ways of working, and got on with and supported each other. Team harmony was critical to the achievement of the project outcomes.

This degree of collaboration did not exist at the management level since there was only one project leader. One interviewee commented that INCRM would have benefited from joint management by DAFWA and KLC.

7.2 Project Work

Complex inter-cultural issues are an inherent part of project work with Aboriginal communities in Northern Australia. Effective consultations with people at Bow River and Violet Valley rested on an understanding of community relationships. Knowing who to speak with is critical; without this knowledge, project workers risk generating conflicts or exacerbating existing tensions which have obvious implications for project work.

KLC was responsible for ensuring that the INCRM team's engagement with people was culturally appropriate, and the processes developed were based on protocols and approaches used by the Land Council in the course of its work generally.

The KLC Land and Sea Management Unit manager engaged two experienced consultant anthropologists to assist the project team in the earliest fieldwork period, in the first year at Bow River station.

In their report to KLC, Doohan and Bornman⁶ outline a number of methodological and inter-cultural research issues that had to be considered - all of which are relevant to project work with Kimberley Aboriginal people generally.

⁶ Report on Bow River prepared for KLC by Kim Doohan and Joh Bornman, Mintupela Pty Ltd July, 2005

For example, in the course of the research, consideration was given to the relationships between the community residents and TOs and the fact that the level of detail that 'residents' might be able to disclose would be different from those who are considered to be TOs. At Bow River, as was the case at Violet Valley, one of the main participants in the project was a community member but not a TO.

The INCRM work had to consider issues of appropriate cultural protocols in relation to recording detail about the Country and making management decisions about cultural areas lying within the realm of the Traditional Owner group rather than the station manager. Knowing who the appropriate people were to speak with about specific areas of the station was critical.

Tensions are not uncommon between station managers and Traditional Owners of Aboriginal-held leases even when the manager is a Traditional Owner, and Bow River was no exception. While the project officers, particularly the biophysical officer, worked closely with the station managers, they needed to consider whether the station manager was a Traditional Owner as well as the relationship between the station manager and the Traditional Owners for the station area.⁷ They did not make the error of assuming that the views and aspirations of the latter were those held by all the other members of the group.

7.3 Confidentiality of Cultural Information

Issues about community control and management of the information being gathered for the INCRM project arose in the course of the work because the project was externally-driven and the information for use by a range of 'outside' stakeholders. The Aboriginal participants were concerned about losing control of the information, how it would be used and by whom.⁸

⁷ Arthur (2006a) also makes this point: "The use of any land and resources is often contested between the Indigenous people who are classified as 'managers' and those who are TOs (or just 'the community', broadly defined). That is to say, their objectives and aspirations may not always be the same. This is despite the fact that they may all be of the same language, or of some other classified group. This point also applies to any income derived from an enterprise. For example, at BR it was not clear that the TOs or the 'community' would always support the station 'manager' in the use of resources even if these derived from station work...As the BR manager's wife said, when he was hinting at difficulties re decision-making, 'he is just one voice'."

⁸ In response to the concerns that Aboriginal people are constantly expressing about the ways research is carried out in their communities, a number of Kimberley Aboriginal organisations, including KLC, are currently working on the development of a set of protocols or guidelines that will form the basis for any future negotiated agreements that the organisations enter for cultural research.

Dooohan and Bornman worked with the project team on the cultural mapping at Bow River station. In their report they state that

“... a mapping project cannot occur outside of the internal protocols of the relevant Aboriginal group(s). The making of maps that are held by external agencies generates a range of concerns that require careful discussion and debate and may also require some consideration of the legal implications of transferring ‘ownership’ of such maps to government departments and their agents.

In the light of these considerations (although no legal advice was sought), the Aboriginal people who were involved in the mapping exercise were very concerned that their traditions were not compromised, that their internal integrity was not challenged and that their cultural information remained with them. The Traditional Owners considered that this information was their information and that to deliver this information to an external agency would compromise their traditional rights and responsibilities to their laws and customs and could also compromise their native title rights and interests when they lodge a native title claim.” (p.2)

With the assistance of the anthropologists and advice from the KLC legal unit, the concerns of people at Bow River were able to be alleviated. A map of places of interest to the people at Bow River was prepared without any ‘cultural’ information attached to it and the cultural information that was collected was collated for the TOs of Bow River and lodged with the KLC for possible future use.

7.4 Project Objectives

All of the INCRM project team members interviewed commented on the difficulties that resulted, particularly in the first year of the project, from the project objectives being unclear.

This lack of clarity resulted, in part, from the generality of these objectives but also because there were too many objectives to satisfy in the time allocated for the project.

In 2004, KLC and DAFWA staff had very different ideas about the aims of the project and as a result the capacity of the project team to work together and engage with people at the local level was hampered. The fact that the objectives were externally-driven further compounded the situation.

As a result of a review of progress in March 2005, the original objectives were revised. Some aims were narrowed down, such as the number of case studies. It was agreed that other aims could not be pursued within the designated timeframe and would therefore not be attempted, for example the development of training initiatives.

In better defining the project objectives, the team began to work more effectively and with a shared sense of purpose.

7.5 Staff Turn-over and Recruitment

The project experienced major disruptions because of staff turn-over and difficulties in recruiting staff.

A cultural project officer was not appointed until September 2004, whereas the project officer at DAFWA was in place by February. In the intervening period, the biophysical project officer began collecting information. When her counterpart was finally recruited, it proved difficult for the officers to develop a close working relationship and there was limited collaboration between them. At the end of 2004, the biophysical officer left and the position was filled again in February 2005. In June 2005, the cultural project officer resigned and, as a result of the earlier recruitment problems, a suitably experienced person was contracted on a consultancy basis but was not full-time.

During these times, the work, being specialised and collaborative, was unable to progress as effectively. In addition, the sole project officer was placed under much greater pressure and carried many more responsibilities.

All of the project team members interviewed said that, in retrospect, work on the project should only have begun in 2004 once both positions had been filled.

The presence of the field officer was essential in the earlier stages of the project as relationships at the local level were being formed. After the field officer's departure, the project officers were required to take on additional responsibilities in both the office and field.

While KLC was unsuccessfully attempting to fill the position, the project officers accommodated the absence of a field officer and managed their additional responsibilities through close cooperation and having trust and confidence in each other. In times of intense field activity, such as during the Bow River cultural mapping work, a local person was contracted to assist with the operational work.

For everyone involved, however, the inclusion of a capable, skilled field officer with local knowledge was unquestionably the best arrangement, and absolute crucial in the earlier stages of project development and implementation.

KLC experienced greater difficulties than DAFWA in recruiting staff. In the case of the cultural project officer position, for example, only two applicants applied in the first round of recruitment and neither filled all of the job requirements. This is not surprising given the duties of the position called for both land-use planning and anthropological

experience. As it is, recruiting staff for cultural research is difficult and KLC most often engages consultant anthropologists. The usual difficulties in recruiting staff to, and retaining them in, a remote region were compounded by KLC being unable to offer any incentives with the position, such as future career prospects elsewhere in the organisation or subsidised housing.

7.6 Gender Balance

When the field officer departed, the field team lost its only male. This presented difficulties. The project officers interviewed said that it would have been preferable if KLC had been able to recruit another male field officer to provide gender balance to the team since the work was being undertaken with men as well as with women.

Moreover, as Doohan and Bornman point out in their report, it is preferable to have a male and female team to undertake research. "Age and gender play significant roles in determining who can 'speak' for a place and what they are allowed to say within the context of the local laws and customs of the particular group of Aboriginal people...In the East Kimberley the domains of men and women can be very separate. There are instances where men and women have different interests in the physical and cultural landscape."

For much of KLC's work involving cultural research, the Land Council appoints a male and a female anthropologist or project officer to work together. In the case of INCRM, the Land Council engaged the anthropological consultants where it saw gaps in the composition and experience of the team.⁹

7.7 Organisational Resource Bases and Processes

Arthur (2006a) describes DAFWA as "a robust state government department with well resourced staff in the pastoral business". The KLC, by contrast, is a non-government organisation with fewer resources, whose core business is its native title representative body responsibilities. The KLC Land and Sea Management Unit (LSMU) is responsible for land management and conservation matters which fall outside of the Land Council's core duties, and is reliant entirely on project funding.

The KLC's management of INCRM was the responsibility of the coordinator of the LSMU. A major difficulty for the Unit in the course of the project work was the absence of a budget allocation for management support.

⁹ In its recruitment process for the cultural officer, only women applied.

On occasions, frustrations and strains emerged because the LSMU's capacity to process information and make prompt decisions was not as great as DAFWA's.

One of the project members interviewed also spoke about the different philosophical viewpoints held by the staff of the two organisations that was successfully accommodated by the team.

7.8 Project Planning and Timeframes

After the work in the first dry season, the project team began to realise that the original timeframe placed on the project was unrealistic and that more time would have to be factored in.

Working in remote Aboriginal community contexts in northern Australia takes time and is often unpredictable. Among other things, people have other commitments in their lives, including earning a living and participating in other events such as funerals. Unplanned interruptions such as other meetings affect the timing of work.

In the INCRM project, the consultation processes involved organising large numbers of people who were not all living in the one place and many of whom are highly mobile though often dependent on others for transport. The logistics of gathering people together for meetings were complicated and time-consuming.

A range of other factors outlined here such as staff turn-over played a part in the need to extend the project timeframe.

7.9 Cross-cultural Communication

The project officers quickly became aware that there was a wide range in the use and comprehension of English amongst the people they were working with.

The project officers communicated information, such as the research findings, in a variety of ways. While the use of pictorial forms such as maps and diagrams was common to their techniques, the officers found that they could use more sophisticated methods, such as a multi-media presentation, at Violet Valley.

From the perspective of the participants, the project officers had to learn to use plain English as opposed to high English. The feedback from Violet Valley included a comment about the difficulties early on when the project workers used patronising language but that this changed as they learnt how to communicate more effectively.

7.10 Preparatory Research

Some areas in the Kimberley have been subjected to a great deal of research whereas others have not. The lodging of native title claims, for example, usually means that a substantial amount of cultural, historical and other material has been gathered. In the selection of case studies for the INCRM project, consideration was given to the amount of research that had been conducted for each of the stations. As well, the INCRM work was able to build on biophysical information collected through OBP.

Before proceeding with the field research, the INCRM project officers allowed adequate time to identify and locate existing materials. They tapped into the resources and corporate knowledge of their respective organisations.

Even so, difficulties were encountered in attempts to access some of the existing cultural information from OBP. As a result, time and resources were expended gathering information that had already been collected. The project team report that this led to the project losing credibility with participants, which was an inauspicious beginning after the unpopularity of the decision to finish OBP.

Feedback from the interviews included a number of comments about how the steering committee team might have been more active in directing the project officers to existing reports and studies on land-use planning, sustainable livelihoods and other areas of relevance to the INCRM research and approach, including other LWA research projects.

7.11 Analysis of Research Information

The thinking of the team members about how to interpret and analyse the data changed over time.

For much of the project, the concept of culture was viewed by the team as a resource category along with natural resources, and the analysis of the findings focused on the economic options available to people. There was a shift in perspective in the later stages of the project work to looking first at the people and taking their cultural priorities and responsibilities and their aspirations as the starting point of, and context for, the planning process, followed by an analysis of the available resources.

The final document produced through the work, the Bow River land-use options paper, reflects this shift. The report was informed by the ideas and work of a body of work known as sustainable livelihoods approaches.

7.12 The Next Step

A main point made by interviewees was that the work that has been completed represents only the first step in what should be a longer-term process of land use planning. Ideally, the research would be extended to look in much more detail at the land-use options that have been identified, such as for example the feasibility of operating cultural tourism enterprises.

Feedback from the interviews included comments about the need to follow up on the INCRM work with other agencies and organisations that could provide support in building the capacity of Bow River and Violet Valley, such as TAFE and the Indigenous Coordinating Centres.

It is unclear whether there has been any discussion at the steering committee level of the possibilities for further research on the two properties as a result of the INCRM work but the matter was uppermost in the minds of the project team members interviewed.

7.13 Concluding Remarks

INCRM got off to a shaky start and was, for the first year or so, impeded by a number of difficulties.

The original project proposal was unclear and unrealistic. The timeframe of two years was far too short for such an ambitious program of objectives, and few of the difficulties that caused the research to slow were anticipated.

For most of the project's duration, a full field team of three was not in place, and staff turn-over and slow recruitment processes by KLC led to interruptions particularly in the initial stages when community engagement was being undertaken. In these circumstances, the collaborative research work was not pursued efficiently.

Nevertheless, over time, a strong and efficient project team emerged with adaptable and committed members, directed and supported by the two specialist organisations.

Effective culturally appropriate processes were able to be developed through which the project team undertook the research with the project participants at Bow River and Violet Valley and successfully completed the (revised) project objectives.

The success of the project is best measured by the appraisal of the project participants of Violet Valley who spoke of the usefulness of the land-use options paper and the good work of the project team in putting it together.

D. LEARNINGS AT THE REGIONAL SCALE – THE INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

8. INTRODUCTION

The two INCRM east Kimberley properties, (Violet Valley [VV]¹⁰ and Bow River [BR]), are surrounded by an institutional environment, elements of which have the potential to both impede and encourage development. It is therefore critical to understand these institutional forces that are at play in order to assist the properties achieve their goals.

Figure 2 is a schematic representation of the institutional landscape for the properties and the east Kimberley. The central portion of the diagram shows the two properties, the right-hand portion has the agencies that have the most relevance to land matters, and the left-hand portion the agencies handling other programs and services.

9. KEY FINDINGS

The Commonwealth government is considering changing its approach to the support of outstations, to land rights and to home ownership. The possible changes may have implications for the INCRM properties and other outstations across the north.

Some key government agencies were not part of the INCRM project, eg the Indigenous Coordination Centre, Department of Indigenous Affairs, and Office of Aboriginal Development (OAED). This would appear be inconsistent with the spirit of the Coalition of Australian Governments (COAG). Consideration should be given to including them and their programs in the future.

The INCRM project and the Kimberly Indigenous Management Support Service (KIMSS) project appear to be examples of collaboration across governments, government agencies, non-government organisations (NGOs) and communities. This would seem to be in the spirit of COAG and should be supported even if only for this reason.

The INCRM project included a cultural dimension handled by the KLC which is an NGO. The KLC does not have the necessary security of funding to make it a reliable and effective partner in such a project.

The INCRM was operating in the post- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) period and the institutional arrangements that replaced ATSIC were still being tested and bedded down. It may take some time for groups to become familiar with the changes and how to access them.

¹⁰ VV also includes the small settlement at Norton Bore (NB).

Whereas ATSIC may have provided recurrent funding to development projects, this cannot be assumed to be the case in the post-ATSIC arrangements.

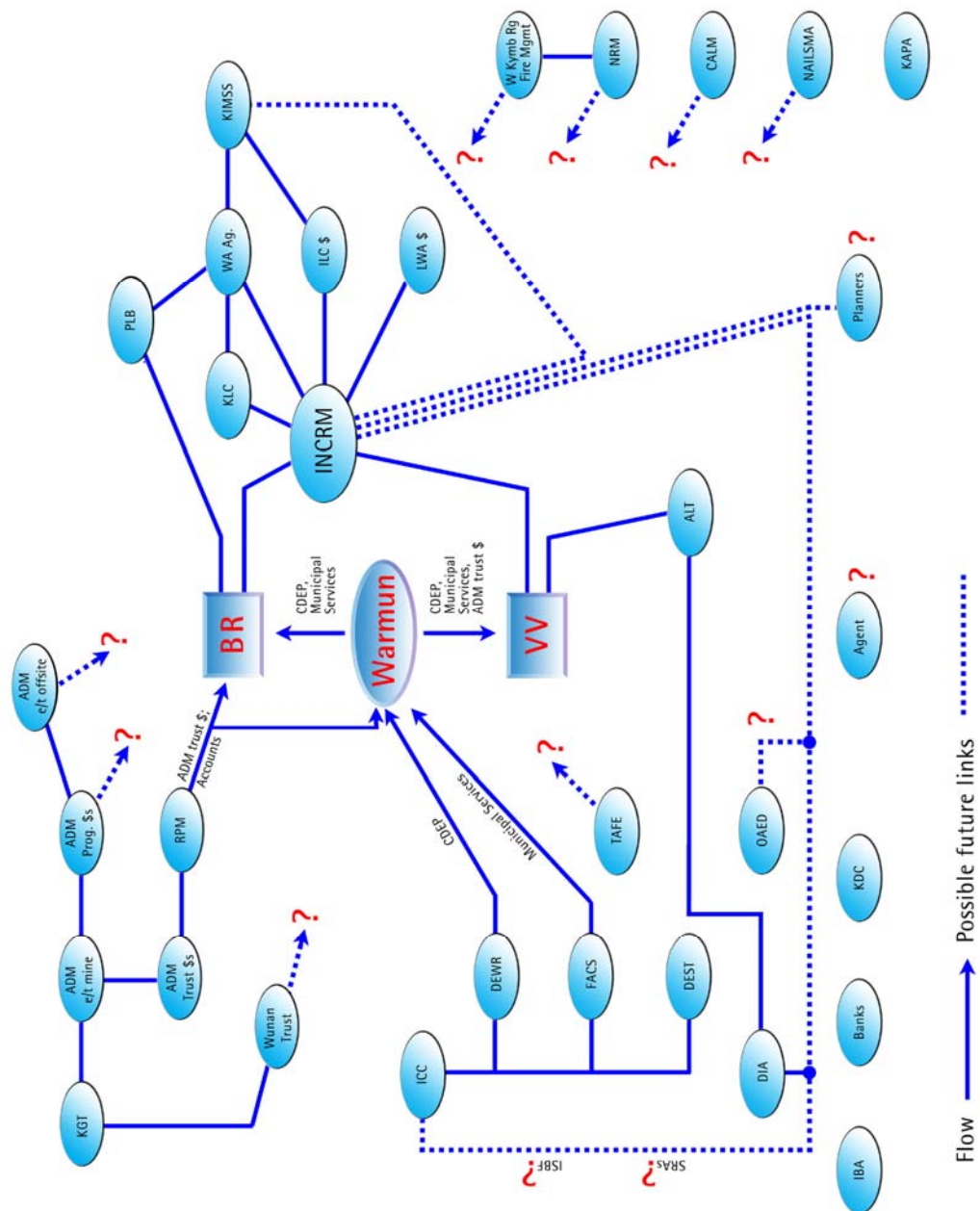


Figure 2. The institutional landscape for the INCRM project

Several government agencies that fund enterprise development have commercial viability as a funding criterion, eg OAED and Indigenous Business Australia (IBA). Commercial viability is unlikely on the INCRM projects.

Several government agencies or bodies will only commit development funding or support to groups that have the appropriate levels of corporate governance and that are not dysfunctional, eg KIMSS, OAED, and ILC. Ensuring that communities are functioning is outside the responsibility of these agencies.

Several government agencies will only provide funding to projects that are fully planned and costed. Such plans are still to be prepared.

The INCRM properties are dependent on CDEP for their development projects. Changes to the CDEP program put it under threat. Business planning should take CDEP and its possible changes into account.

The institutional environment is complex even if only a single land use was envisaged for the properties. In many regions, groups seek assistance with this complexity through a 'resource agency', an NGO which acts as their development agent. There is no such agent in the region. The work of the INCRM field staff with the properties may have raised the expectation that such field contact will continue. INCRM should develop an exit strategy and/or a strategy to pass the project to another body that would act as an ongoing agent.

The INCRM project was concerned with multiple land-use options. This increases the complexity noted above. In the main, agencies and bodies such as DAFWA, KIMSS and OAED, deal with single land-use development options, eg pastoralism or tourism. There appears to be a mismatch between the INCRM notion of multiple land use and the approach of mainline agencies. An agent, as discussed above, may be needed to pull together the various strands of a multiple land-use approach.

The INCRM properties encompass, as do many Aboriginal properties, a community or group and some land use activity, eg pastoralism. It would seem advisable for planning and budgeting (business planning) of the land-use sector, to be set alongside planning of the community sector (projected housing etc) to give an integrated, budgeted property plan. Fully budgeted community plans do not exist here and in most other parts of the country.

It cannot be assumed that the aims and aspirations for the properties are commonly held by all of the residents. An impediment to development may include contested views of the use of the properties.

The long-term aspirations of the residents of the properties are not clear. It is acknowledged that such aspirations are hard to determine.

The supply of labour to the properties is not certain. This element should be detailed in any project plans.

Obstacles to developing enterprises and to participating in employment and training include low levels of numeracy and literacy; alcohol and substance abuse; and lack of driving licences. Low numeracy and literacy would seem an impediment to any activity that hopes to engage with the modern world.

VV and BR are outstations of the larger and nearby Warmun community at Turkey Creek and are linked to Warmun institutionally. Warmun sits between the properties and the government. Neither VV nor BR seem to value this present arrangement and would like to terminate it. This would probably run counter to current Commonwealth Government policy.

Although both the VV and BR properties are small and contiguous, family or clan issues make it unlikely that they could be combined to improve economies of scale. The properties should be considered quite separately in future work.

The future of pastoral leases is uncertain in Western Australia. However, the present rules seem to be treated flexibly enough to allow non-pastoral activities on pastoral leases. The INCRM project could consider assisting the Government of Western Australia resolve its position on pastoral leases that are held by Aboriginal people.

The ILC will not fund projects on Aboriginal Land Trust (ALT) reserves. VV should consider changing their tenure to that of a lease.

No matter what tenure the properties are under, they include and will probably continue to include, communities and community housing. This would seem to reduce their marketability, making it hard to obtain loans from outside the government sector.

10. THE WIDER POLICY ENVIRONMENT

The Commonwealth Government is currently reconsidering its approach to several elements of Indigenous affairs. These include:

- the viability of small outstations
- elements of land rights legislation
- Indigenous home ownership.

It is not possible to say how these elements will change at this stage; however they have the potential to impact on the INCRM properties and similar locations across the north.

11. MULTIPLE LAND USE

The long term aspirations of the two properties are not clear. INCRM objectives for the properties are a land use plan for VV and a fire management plan for BR. The latter has been completed as a requirement of the BR pastoral lease. Neither of these objectives can be considered as long term aspirations. This report proceeds on the basis that the following are the broad occupational options for the two properties, and that they each may adopt a mix of these:

- commercial pastoral operations
- non-commercial pastoral operations
- commercial tourism operations
- contract work carried out on the properties (eg for Argyle Diamond Mine [ADM])
- formal employment off the properties (eg at the ADM mine site)
- employment as rangers or custodians
- art work
- commercial use of bush products
- non-commercial customary and subsistence use of bush products.

(Art work and commercial and non-commercial exploitation of bush products are not considered in any detail here.) Commercial use of bush products may be included as part of a government program (see Shared Responsibility Agreements (SRAs) p. 37). And, commercial and non-commercial use can be carried out under the Community Development Employment Projects program (CDEP)¹¹. Any estimate of the potential for the use of bush products would require an analysis of the commercial species available and the carrying capacity of the land. In addition, the use of bush products is not cost-free and estimates of the value of commercial or non-commercial use should take into account the costs associated with the activity, eg vehicle, fuel, labour, firearms, ammunition etc. All of these aspects are quite hard to determine.

¹¹ CDEP is often classified as the Indigenous ‘work for the dole’ scheme. In it people forgo their individual unemployment benefits and instead receive a wage from their community for undertaking community-oriented projects and work.

E. LEARNINGS AT THE CROSS-REGIONAL SCALE

12. INTRODUCTION

While it is important to understand the regional institutional setting of the two INCRM properties, it is also important to place them in a broader northern Australian context that includes the Northern Territory and Queensland, in addition to Western Australia

13. KEY FINDINGS

In the East Kimberley project the aim of the INCRM project was to construct a land-use and management scheme that combined commercial, non-commercial and cultural elements, though with a pastoral focus. There is no legislation that directly supports this approach across the Tropical Savannas zone.

There are however programs and institutions that each support different elements of an INCRM approach. Those with a pastoral focus include the Kimberly Indigenous Management Support Service, the Indigenous Pastoral Program (IPP) (Northern Territory) and the Savanna Plan (Queensland). Those that support, or have the potential to support, other (environmental and cultural) elements of the INCRM model including the Caring for Country (CFC) and Ranger programs, the Land and Sea Management Unit and the Natural Resource Management program. It should be noted that much of the material (available to this report) that describes the CFC and Ranger programs relates to examples outside the pastoral zone. The value of these programs to integrate pastoral and other land uses is unclear.

Similarly there is no one agency which takes an integrated approach. Possibly those which most closely approximate the INCRM approach include the Northern Land Council (NLC) (with both its IPP and CFC), but only in the Northern Territory; and the Tropical Savannas Cooperative Research Centre (TSCRC) (with its INCRM) but only in Western Australia, and even there INCRM failed to engage with the major State and Commonwealth Indigenous agencies. This is a failing as the Commonwealth's Indigenous Coordination Centre programs (Shared Responsibility Agreements, Regional Partnership Agreements, Community Development Employment Projects) either interact with land-management initiatives or have the potential to do so. As noted in the report, the 2006–07 Budget Overview says that the Commonwealth will aim to support these programs where people are working to conserve and improve the natural and cultural resources of a region.

Two examples in the report are of agreements associated with the *Native Title Act 1993* (NTA). The NTA extends across the Tropical Savannas zone. However, only the area

affected by the agreement can benefit from it. Therefore, such agreements are unlikely to form the basis of a unified land-management policy across the Tropical Savannas zone. In addition Prescribed Bodies Corporate, which might have had carriage of land management are not funded; Native Title Representative Bodies are also not funded to carry out land management. This leaves open the question of who has carriage of land management in NTA agreement areas.

The examples show that the Community Development Employment Projects scheme is an integral part of several land-management strategies, such as the CFC and ranger programs. It is also used to support pastoral activities and the customary sector. Current modifications to the scheme may threaten its potential to continue to do this. The 2006–07 Budget Overview indicates that the Commonwealth is committed to supporting land and sea ranger groups and this commitment is supported here.

The Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC) is cited in many of the examples in the report. Furthermore, its four major programs appear to embrace multiple forms of land use and management. It would seem that it has the brief, if not the resources, to be a major force in integrated land management across the Tropical Savannas zone. However it may be limited geographically as not one of its offices is in the Tropical Savannas zone: they are in Adelaide, Brisbane, Perth and Canberra. It may be that the ILC's intention is to act through local or regional 'agents' (see Arthur 2006a) and the examples suggest that it has operated in this way. This would make the role of local or regional agents important.

Considering 'agents', the examples in the report suggest that the most successful of these are the NLC, the larger communities, Balkanu, and the Wet Tropics Natural Resource Management. In all of these cases, scale, skill, structure and resources seem to have been critical to success. The NLC appears to be the most successful, but then it operates in a completely different environment from organisations in the other jurisdictions. Some factors that compound to the benefit of the NLC include: the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* (ALRA) and the NLC's access to Aboriginals Benefit Account funding; the probable influence of the ALRA to co-opt State and Commonwealth agencies; a significant level of academic interest in and support for the NLC's area, and the geographical link with the expertise in the TSCRC and Charles Darwin University. The Kimberley Land Council, which is basically a Native Title Representative Body (NTRB), by comparison is not funded to carry out land management and is shown to be much less successful as an agent.

Although the capacity of Indigenous agents is influenced by legislation (e.g. the ALRA) the particular culture of Indigenous-non-Indigenous interaction and organisations should be noted. Examples suggest that the capacity of an Indigenous organisation in remote areas is often directly related to the degree and length of commitment to it by a key individual. That is to say, the organisation's capacity to act as an agent may rest with certain individuals rather than with the corporate structure. Where staff are hard to

retain in remote areas (see Arthur 2006a) this becomes an issue in mounting land-management programs.

The degree to which land tenure might affect an INCRM approach has not been fully explored here (for comments relating to Western Australia see Arthur 2005). However, due to the ALRA regime, and the conversion of pastoral tenure to freehold, it is possible that tenure and pastoral regulations are less of an issue in the Northern Territory than in Western Australia or Queensland. This could suggest that the economic or cultural ‘testing’ of INCRM should be carried out in the Northern Territory. It should be noted however, that whereas much of the Western Australia and Queensland parts of the Tropical Savannas zone are pastoral, this is less so in the Northern Territory.

There are substantial cross-jurisdictional differences in the institutional landscape across the Tropical Savannas zone and this would affect the application of an INCRM model across the zone. The TSCRC and its funders (Land and Water Australia and ILC) have championed the INCRM model and if the intention is to further apply it, such quality support would have to continue.

14. POSSIBLE FUTURE RESEARCH

The following topics could be considered for future research under the heading of ‘Managing the Indigenous Estate’:

- The terms ‘sustainable land use’ and ‘commercial viability’ commonly appear. An inquiry into what these terms mean in the context of Indigenous land use and management could be useful.
- Communities themselves form part of the institutional landscape and are often the unit of land ownership. The interaction between land management and community management warrants some investigation.
- Reference is often made to the potential for the commercial exploitation of natural resources, or to the potential for employment in natural resource management. A study that attempted to estimate the number of jobs or the income that could be derived from these activities would have value. Such a study would estimate the costs as well as income. Two different ecological regions could be trialled.
- It seems that many Indigenous pastoral properties may not operate commercially; a study could be mounted to investigate the future for these across the Tropical Savannas zone, including the relevant legislation.
- The form of land use suggested by the INCRM model and the hybrid economy on pastoral properties may contradict pastoral lease legislation. A more detailed study of alternative forms of leasing across the zone is warranted.
- The possible articulation between INCRM and Coalition of Australian Governments trial sites should be explored.

- The impact of the current changes to the Community Development Employment Projects scheme and the ALRA should be investigated with respect to land use and management.

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