

Consulting with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities

– agroforestry in north Queensland –

RIRDC Publication No. 08/168



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Venture Agroforestry Program**



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Consulting with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities

— agroforestry in north Queensland —

by Mark Annandale and Sue Feary
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Foreword

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been practising various forms of agroforestry in Australia for thousands of years, as custodians of the natural environment. Traditional land management, often called ‘caring for country’, was practiced through strategic use of fire to encourage growth of certain species. Some species were planted and others were selectively cultivated to favour certain species or faunal habitats. Elements of these traditional systems of land management are contained in the modern practice of agroforestry, yet there are few examples of commercial agroforestry enterprises involving Indigenous Australians today.

The purpose of this project has been to explore the potential for an enhanced engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander in agroforestry in north Queensland and the mechanisms required to achieve it. The report has resulted from an extensive consultation process, capturing the results of discussions, meetings and workshops with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Wet Tropics and Cape York regions of North Queensland. The needs and aspirations of Indigenous communities with respect to agroforestry project development are documented and presented, together with a review of the impediments and challenges that will be faced. The report also develops and tests a methodology for effective community engagement, based on the workshops held during the course of the project.

The authors do not attempt to represent or speak for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, but aim to provide an accurate record of opinions and views raised during the consultation process for this project. The findings of the project can assist in increasing awareness among all Australians, of the valuable contribution Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can make to sustainable development through agroforestry, and provide guidelines for effective community engagement.

This project was funded by the Joint Venture Agroforestry Program (JVAP), together with the Queensland state government through the Department of Tourism, Regional Development & Industry and the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, the Aboriginal Rainforest Council and the Rainforest Cooperative Research Centre at James Cook University. JVAP is supported by three R&D corporations – Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC), Land & Water Australia, and Forest and Wood Products Research and Development Corporation¹, together with the Murray-Darling Basin Commission (MDBC). The R&D corporations are funded principally by the Australian government. State and Australian governments contribute funds to the MDBC.

This report is an addition to RIRDC’s diverse range of over 1800 research publications. It forms part of our Agroforestry and Farm Forestry R&D program, which aims to integrate sustainable and productive agroforestry within Australian farming systems

Most of our publications are available for viewing, downloading or purchasing online through our website <www.rirdc.gov.au>.

Peter O’Brien

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¹ Now Forest and Wood Products Australia (FWPA).

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The Indigenous Technical Support Group with the Wet Tropics Aboriginal Plan Project Team provided support and advice for the community consultation in the Wet Tropics region.

The report was reviewed by Michelle Cochrane from the Aboriginal Rainforest Council, Libby Larsen from the Rainforest Cooperative Research Centre, and Rosemary Lott from the Joint Venture Agroforestry Program.

Finally, this report would not have been possible without the ongoing support, advice and assistance of Alan Bragg and Mila Bristow in organising and running both workshops and in the review of this report, plus numerous other inputs. I would also like to acknowledge the support of Doug Stewart, Lyle Johnson, Katrina Horsten, George Ropeyarn, Peter Solly and the Traditional Owners from the Napranum Aboriginal Community.

Abbreviations and Glossary

Agroforestry	Combining the growing, use and management of trees and forests with agricultural systems, including farming systems such as cropping, growing fruit trees or grazing livestock.
CDEP	Community Development Employment Program. A Commonwealth ‘work for the dole’ program introduced into remote Aboriginal communities in 1977 and expanded later into urban areas. It was disbanded in the Northern Territory in mid-2007 and is being reduced in other states as part of the Coalition Government’s ‘welfare to work’ strategy.
Country	Country is a term used by Traditional Owners to make sense of their connections and responsibilities for the land and sea. It refers to the traditional estates of Traditional Owners and incorporates the biophysical environment and associated cultural property recognised according to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander custom and tradition as belonging to particular individual, family, or tribal group.
Outstation movement	The re-establishment of housing and other infrastructure on traditional lands, for periodic, seasonal or permanent occupation, generally away from permanent settlements and/or towns.
CYPLUS	Cape York Peninsula Land use Study
DOGIT	Deed of Grant in Trust
DPI	Department of Primary Industries (Queensland)
Product replacement	To identify products that are imported into a community and replace them with locally made products e.g. timber.
Sustainability	Meeting the economic, cultural and social needs of the current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.
Value-adding	To process raw materials or primary products and increase their value.

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Executive Summary

What the report is about

Agroforestry is the practice of combining trees, shrubs and forests with agricultural systems. Indigenous people in north Queensland have expressed a desire to develop sustainable commercial agroforestry enterprises to provide local employment, enable people to work on country and to improve health and well-being. However, several factors must be addressed in order to create socio-political frameworks that are conducive to economic development in particular circumstances. These include organisational considerations such as realistic timeframes that allow people time to discuss issues amongst themselves before making a decision. They may require non-Aboriginal parties such as government or private enterprise to be more co-ordinated and consistent in their dealings with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Who is the report targeted at?

For each project venture, strategic collaboration and partnerships between government, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the private sector are required, with a view to an integrated holistic approach that links all the critical elements. The report addresses these collaborating participants. Much of the information in Part 2 has wider application beyond agroforestry to economic development in Aboriginal communities more generally. The consultation framework could also be utilised in other locations, although the influence and status of native title groups varies from state to state depending on the nature of state-based land rights legislation.

Background

This project was initiated for several reasons. There is increasing recognition that the social justice agenda for Indigenous Australians incorporates the right to derive economic benefit from land-based enterprises, and the expanding Indigenous owned land base offers opportunities for various agroforestry enterprises. However, the potential to include agroforestry in traditional land management practices has not been fully investigated in north Queensland. The authors of a review of research priorities for agroforestry in Northern Australia noted that they were unable to consult properly with Indigenous people. They suggested a specific study be undertaken to gather this information (Turvey and Larsen 2001).

Aims/Objectives

The aims of this project have been twofold:

- to ascertain the potential for agroforestry development and the requirements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities wishing to engage in agroforestry projects in north Queensland
- to develop and test a methodology for consulting with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in north Queensland.

Methods used

The findings in this report have come from extensive consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the Wet Tropics and Cape York regions of north Queensland. The consultative process included several meetings and discussions during 2004 including:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people actively involved in agroforestry
- Other primary industries and forestry processing enterprises
- Community leaders, including Traditional Owners, elders and elected community leaders
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander non-government organisations
- Two regional workshops, one in the Wet Tropics of north Queensland and the other in north-western Cape York. Both attracted a good representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities from north Queensland.

The research has endeavoured to understand and document as comprehensively as possible, the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with respect to commercial opportunities in agroforestry and other forestry related enterprises. By examining some existing agroforestry projects, the research has also identified some of the barriers and challenges that will need to be faced.

As well as documenting the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with respect to potential agroforestry enterprises, the research developed and tested a method for consultation, including organising and running meetings. This can serve as an information source for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Aboriginal people, particularly government departments and research organisations, to assist further discussion of the issues that can turn agroforestry development opportunities into realities.

Results/Key findings

This project has shown that adopting a concept of ‘working together’ is a highly significant factor for realising the economic development opportunities that agroforestry and forest product industries can offer Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The main outcomes of the project have been to raise the awareness of Indigenous people and forest industries about the opportunities that agroforestry systems provide for people and its supportive industries. The workshops have generated discussion and linkages between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations that did not previously exist and build on the information in the previously published RIRDC report *Introduction to tropical agroforestry for Indigenous communities* by Bristow M, Annandale M and Bragg A (2003).

Recommendations

The recommendations in Part 1 of the report offer ways to overcome barriers and challenges facing Indigenous people wanting to pursue agroforestry projects:

1. Increase institutional support (government and private sector) to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.
2. Ensure consultative and participatory processes are adequate and appropriate.
3. Review relationship between native title rights and interests, and regulations affecting customary hunting and gathering in protected areas.
4. Include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in higher level decision-making about land use and policy development.
5. Ensure that agroforestry projects are sustainable.
6. Adopt an integrated approach to land use.
7. Protect Indigenous intellectual and cultural property rights.

Part 1: Agroforestry in north Queensland

Background

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in far north Queensland are interested in pursuing socially, culturally, environmentally and economically sustainable development on their own land. They have identified the need to develop integrated production systems, to become more self-sufficient and to engage with mainstream society on an equal footing, by marketing high quality products.

There is increasing support for sustainable economic development by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, with common ground increasingly being found between leading conservationists and the forestry industry, demonstrating 'best practice' principles. For example, the Canadian conservationist David Suzuki actively works with indigenous people to implement sustainable forestry development in his country. In Australia, two high profile former members of the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF), are now actively involved in the forest sector where they are promoting sustainable forestry-based industries. In November 2003 the ACF and the Rainforest Co-operative Research Centre sponsored a workshop entitled *Appropriate Economics Roundtable*, to identify sustainable business opportunities on Cape York.

Recognition of native title has provided some communities with jurisdiction over large areas of land in north Queensland, but this has not provided funds to manage these lands. Production models are required that recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' conservation priorities while supporting their aspirations for meeting their material, cultural and social needs. Certain types of land-based economic activity can generate long-term employment and business opportunities, while enabling people to work on their own country.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people identify a common desire to return to country. They want to get back to country with a purpose, which includes educating younger people in traditional ways, looking after country and/or being able to make a living compatible with the lifestyle of the people involved. Therefore projects that involve people getting back onto country are attractive and often provide an opportunity for younger people to get to know their country in greater detail. Elders in several Cape York communities have talked about the time when many people lived on country, in outstations, as a time when many of the social problems and dependency on welfare did not exist. There is a desire to find a balance between living in towns or communities and living on country. Agroforestry business development may provide this opportunity.

Currently, sustainable land use options available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are limited. New industries involving some form of agroforestry could offer opportunities for ecologically sustainable development and provide long-term employment. Ideally, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people would be directly involved in management and decision-making processes, with an ultimate goal of viable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned and operated business enterprises. These enterprises would provide career paths for their members and contribute to the wider regional economy.

There are potential business opportunities at many stages along the forest industry chain. These range from domestication and commercialisation of wild native plants, to value-adding processing and end-use opportunities of forest products. Enterprises could be structured around one of several Indigenous socio-economic systems, depending on the nature of the activity. The business may be run by an individual, a household, or a clan/tribal group and could be independent of the wider community. Larger enterprises could occur at the council level and involve joint ventures with the private sector.

Current programs

Over the past few years, particularly on Cape York, government funding has been provided to establish a number of pilot agroforestry projects. These include: community farms, market gardens, timber plantations, bush tucker orchards, production of native honey (sugarbag) and plant nurseries. The on-ground medium to long term benefits of the pilot programs are maintenance of existing plantings, upgrade of existing nurseries, and planting of thousands of trees. The training courses associated with the programs are aimed at empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to develop viable business enterprises.

Many of these projects represent the first direct contact that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have had with the mainstream market economy and have necessarily involved finding the best mix of traditional knowledge with modern business practice. For example, the native honey project at Aurukun on the western side of Cape York combines traditional uses of native bees and knowledge of their biology and behaviour with modern bee-keeping practices. Projects such as these recognise the rights of Traditional Owners to make decisions about the management of their lands and to provide direction for development initiatives. Not only are these projects delivering real and immediate business, employment and training opportunities, but they also have the potential to build business capacity and confidence. This could lead to the development of business opportunities in the future that give appropriate recognition to the value of traditional land management skills still held by individuals and by the community.

These pilot projects have shown direct benefits to people in communities by developing, or strengthening, their sense of project ownership and improving their capacity to understand the process of developing and managing follow-on projects. In the long-term, these projects have the potential to generate long-term employment that will ultimately increase community and individual wealth, leading to reduced levels of welfare dependence and improved health and well-being. Other significant benefits include improved natural resource management regimes and production of locally available fresh food at affordable prices.

An important aspect of the capacity building programs associated with the agroforestry projects is the strong linkage between the training component and business development. Throughout Australia, there are numerous examples of training programs developed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with no business outcomes and hence few employment opportunities. Furthermore, the employment opportunities available to the growing number of skilled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in north Queensland are provided primarily by Aboriginal community councils through the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP). In general, CDEP supports the council workforce to provide the services of local government such as parks and garden maintenance, garbage collection, and construction and maintenance of council infrastructure. However, CDEP does not provide adequately for self-determination, integration of traditional knowledge into enterprise development, generation of wealth, or longer-term independent employment prospects.

The integrated training and education programs currently being developed in conjunction with the agroforestry projects use CDEP as a means of supporting the early stages of economic development through subsidised wages. When linked to projects in this manner, CDEP has some potential to progress from a system of government handouts, towards one of development and opportunity in communities, thus avoiding a continued dependence on welfare. Training and education programs are currently being developed to provide technical skills and business competency through accredited and mentor style training, to support entrepreneurs and project staff. The provision of ongoing support from government will build the capacity of individuals, families, clan groups and broader communities to develop innovative, culturally appropriate business enterprises, underpinned by a comprehensive training and education program.

The north Queensland region: a socio-economic overview

Queensland is home to 27% of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This equates to 3.1% of Queenslanders who identify as Indigenous. The far north Queensland region covers around 16 million hectares, including the Wet Tropics, Cape York Peninsula and Torres Strait Islands. Nearly 30% of the state's Indigenous population live in the far north region, managed by 14 identified Aboriginal, 17 Torres Strait Islander and a further 16 local governments in the region.

The population of far north Queensland is 228,154 with the population of Cairns city at 123,760. There are approximately 15,000 businesses in the region and 91% of businesses employ fewer than 10 people. The gross regional product is approximately \$6 billion; about 6% of the state's total. The unemployment rate is approximately 4.5% for the whole population, while that of Indigenous peoples in the same region is over 20%. A massive 95% of Indigenous people in Cape York townships rely on welfare. In 2007, the indicators of social and economic well-being show the figures for the Indigenous population to be well below those of non-Indigenous Australians. Consider Indigenous life expectancy (20 years lower than for the non-Indigenous population); general health (the rate of hospitalisation of Indigenous children under 4 years of age is double the non-Indigenous rate, based on 2002 figures); infant mortality (1999-2001 Indigenous figures are more than double the non-Indigenous rates), schooling (less than half the rate of high school completion and 1.8 times less likely to attend university compared to the non-Indigenous population), employment (unemployment 2.8 times higher than non-Indigenous rates) and income (individual and household incomes just over half of non-Indigenous rates and lower again in remote areas). These results are comparable to developing countries (Botsman, 2007).

The region has both disadvantages and advantages for economic development. On the one hand it is relatively remote and some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities on Cape York are cut off by road during the wet season. Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are unskilled and untrained for engagement with the mainstream market economy and capacity building is a high priority. On the other hand, they are able to maintain and strengthen their cultural identity by practising and teaching culture on the large areas of Indigenous owned land. The considerable knowledge held by Traditional Owners, of sustainable traditional land management practices and utilisation of natural resources, offers a competitive advantage when combined with other characteristics of the region.

These other characteristics include proximity to major Asian markets and a well established tourism industry, supported by a wide range of facilities and infrastructure such as an international airport in Cairns. Transport infrastructure is generally good and the mining industry has established major ports in a number of locations including Cairns, Mourilyan, Weipa and Karumba.

Additionally, strategic partnerships and alliances are already in place between three levels of government, Regional Development Organisations and private industry, including the influential Cairns Chambers of Commerce. These partnerships are often supported by research conducted within the well-serviced private and public educational institutions in the region.

Finally, the climate and soils of north Queensland are suited to a wide range of agricultural and agroforestry industries.

Potential forest Industries for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in north Queensland

The forestry industry has always been a key part of Queensland's economy. Queensland harbours the largest forest estate in Australia, at 56 million hectares. The forest and wood products industries are important to many rural and regional communities, with over 19,000 people employed in Queensland, producing over \$3 billion annually. According to a regional forest investment workshop held in 2005, for every three forestry jobs, another four jobs are created elsewhere. For every \$1 made in forestry, \$1.80 is made in other parts of the Queensland economy.

The native forests of north Queensland are diverse and include many species with demonstrated commercial values, including high value timber species. Over 160 species are recognised as having commercial timber values in the Wet Tropics alone. There are expansive woodlands on Cape York and extensive areas of rainforest in the Wet Tropics, which offer a wide range of opportunities for agroforestry-based enterprises, including traditional uses, timber production and biotechnology. The unique characteristics of Cape York's main timber species enable a wide range of end uses and potential markets (Hopewell, 2001). For example, Cooktown ironwood (*Erythrophloeum chlorostachys*) is one of the densest timbers in the world and sandalwood (*Santalum* sp.) is an excellent carving timber that also yields a valuable essential oil. The scale of the resource, the predicted demand and supply outlook for hardwood species, and the unique properties and wide range of market options for identified timber species strengthens the opportunity for agroforestry-based opportunities.

There are also a number of plantation species that have demonstrated their suitability to far north Queensland. These include species such as African mahogany (*Khaya senegalensis*), with established high value markets that can be utilised for appearance-grade timber by both the sawmilling and the craft-wood industries (Bragg et al., 2004). The contribution of plantations in providing environmental services is also being increasingly recognised.



Several species are suitable for sawn timber

Plantations of bush tucker species also have prospects with respect to non-timber forest products. The Australian bush food industry currently has a strong demand for products such as wattle seed, herbs and spices, native figs, quandongs and other fruits, but there is an untapped potential for new markets in bush foods and medicinal plants to meet an ever-increasing national and international demand. Currently the products used by the bush food industry are harvested mainly from the wild, but this will not continue to meet market needs in terms of quantity, continuity of supply and quality of the product.

The bush food industry has identified the need to develop plantations of target species in order to meet increasing demand but research is needed on how to grow key species successfully in plantations. As

use of bush foods or medicinal plants relies on traditional knowledge and adherence to customary laws, any research must be of a collaborative nature. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in north Queensland have knowledge of the location of plants, their uses and preparation requirements. Once identified, these species could be sampled and tested. An example of collaborative research between Indigenous people and scientists is the Ma:Mu community, near Innisfail, working with James Cook University to identify bush food plants suitable for commercial production. It is most important that the intellectual property rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are recognised and adequately protected with respect to existing and new plant varieties.

Bush tucker gardens or orchards have potential for business development, using species that have commercial values. They also have other important non-economic values. Bush tucker gardens could be used to educate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth about traditionally used plants and how to prepare them for use. The bush food plantations could also provide products for local consumption, leading to health benefits for communities. In the longer term, bush food enterprises could go beyond supply of raw materials to development of value adding opportunities such as production of honey or jams. As more raw materials are processed into products, more local employment is generated.

The use of mixed timber and non-timber species in plantation design can deliver a wide range of products from the same plantation, including, for example, timber, seed, fruits, and oils. Potential economic benefits arising from mixed plantations or bush food gardens are considerable. With appropriate planning and design, they could be integrated with other enterprises such as native honey production. The use of native bees in these plantations would produce organic honey and beeswax (used in didgeridoo making). It would also provide a base from which to provide pollination services to other primary industries (e.g. macadamia and avocado orchards).

Cape York

Cape York is a biologically and culturally diverse region of tropical Australia, covering some 13 million hectares and renowned for its unique natural environment and rich Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. The vegetation of Cape York contains a unique and diverse mix of species and ecosystems with forests and woodlands covering 84% of the area. Expansive woodlands dominated by Darwin stringy bark (*Eucalyptus tetradonta*) occur on deeply weathered plateaus. Patches of rainforest occur along the eastern coast and extensive tropical grasslands, heathlands, and mangroves are well represented throughout. The most significant commercial timber species in the region is Darwin stringy bark (*E. tetradonta*), which can grow to over 40 metres and produces strong, straight timber suitable for both general building and a range of speciality applications. Melville Island bloodwood (*Corymbia nesophila* syn. *Eucalyptus nesophila*) is a medium to tall tree to 25 m. There are also a number of other eucalypts and secondary species that have commercial potential, including Cooktown ironwood (*Erythrophleum chlorostachys*) and brown salwood (*Acacia mangium*).



Darwin stringy bark (*Eucalyptus tetradonta*) forest

Extensive archaeological and anthropological research on Cape York has demonstrated that for thousands of years, Indigenous people moved through their traditional country to take advantage of seasonal resources. They actively managed the environment, governed by a complex set of cultural practices to improve productivity through burning and replanting particular food species. Different laws and protocols regarding sustainable natural resource management ensured resources were maintained. In some areas this knowledge remains extant and practices continue.

The timber species occurring across Cape York include some very versatile woods that were used to make special tools to hunt, including spears, woomeras and boomerangs. Traps made from lawyer cane were used to trap forest animals, fish and eels. Vines were used to climb trees and poisons obtained from certain trees were used to stun fish.

Today, Cape York is often described as Australia's 'last frontier', because of its remote location, lack of development and sparse human population. Over half of its 18,000 people are of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin, living in discrete communities across the Cape and in the main townships. Apart from early gold mining and cattle grazing, Cape York experienced a slow rate of development, until the advent of World War II. Since then, a steady improvement in infrastructure (roads, transport, communication, towns, etc.) over time has been accompanied by significant expansions in large scale mining, beef cattle grazing and tourism development. Beef cattle grazing is currently the primary land use, covering 60% of Cape York with some 60 leasehold properties. Mining deposits include significant areas of bauxite and silica sand. Tourism is also economically important, with potential for expansion of ecotourism, cultural tourism and recreation-based tourism.

Commercial forestry activities have been occurring since the 1890s when sandalwood was harvested and exported to China (Wharton 2005). However, most forestry operations have been small-scale and low intensity. These activities have concentrated on meeting demand for lower value products, such as fencing materials, although important bridge and other construction timbers have also been locally sourced. A number of species have also been extensively used by the local pastoral and mining industries as poles, fencing, building materials and sleepers. Despite this, the value and qualities of the timbers of Cape York remain largely unknown and unappreciated outside the north Queensland region (Hopewell, 2001).

In the 1990s a major land-use planning exercise, the Cape York Peninsula Land Use Study (CYPLUS) identified the need to develop projects for Cape York that would create a strong and diversified economy within a framework that recognised the unique environmental values of the region (Cape York Regional Advisory Group 1996).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from the western side of Cape York had also advised the Queensland government and the mining company Rio Tinto Aluminium that they wished to benefit from the mining activities on the vast bauxite mining leases (covering nearly 600,000 hectares). These interests were diverse and included economic use of the forests that were otherwise being cleared and burnt in order to get access to the bauxite deposits beneath. The forests contained commercially valuable timber that was being wasted, as well as other products with potential commercial use, such as seed for land rehabilitation, bush food and medicinal products. Mining agreements between Traditional Owners and the mining sector have been important for advancing collaborative arrangements for resource use on the Cape.



Several local timbers are well suited for infrastructure projects

Wet Tropics of far north Queensland

The Wet Tropics region covers an area of approximately 2.2 million hectares, from southern Cape York to the Burdekin region of north Queensland, including the coastal lowlands, the ranges and tableland sub regions. The forest areas are dominated by many rainforest types and over 1 million hectares is included in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (Figure 1). The remaining area is made up of freehold land, national park, and other tenures covering relatively small areas, including lands subject to Deed of Grant in Trust (DOGIT) and Aboriginal reserves.

Indigenous participation in forest management and forest industries occurs mainly through the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area Regional Agreement. The regional agreement was signed in 2005 and is between 18 Rainforest Aboriginal tribal groups and the Australian and Queensland governments to cooperatively manage the wet tropics area (www.wettropics.gov.au). Indigenous organisations run several ecotourism operations within the World Heritage Area. The Bama Way – Aboriginal Journeys is an example of an Indigenous run ecotourism operation, that includes tours of several days duration showcasing Aboriginal culture between Mossman Gorge and north of Cooktown.

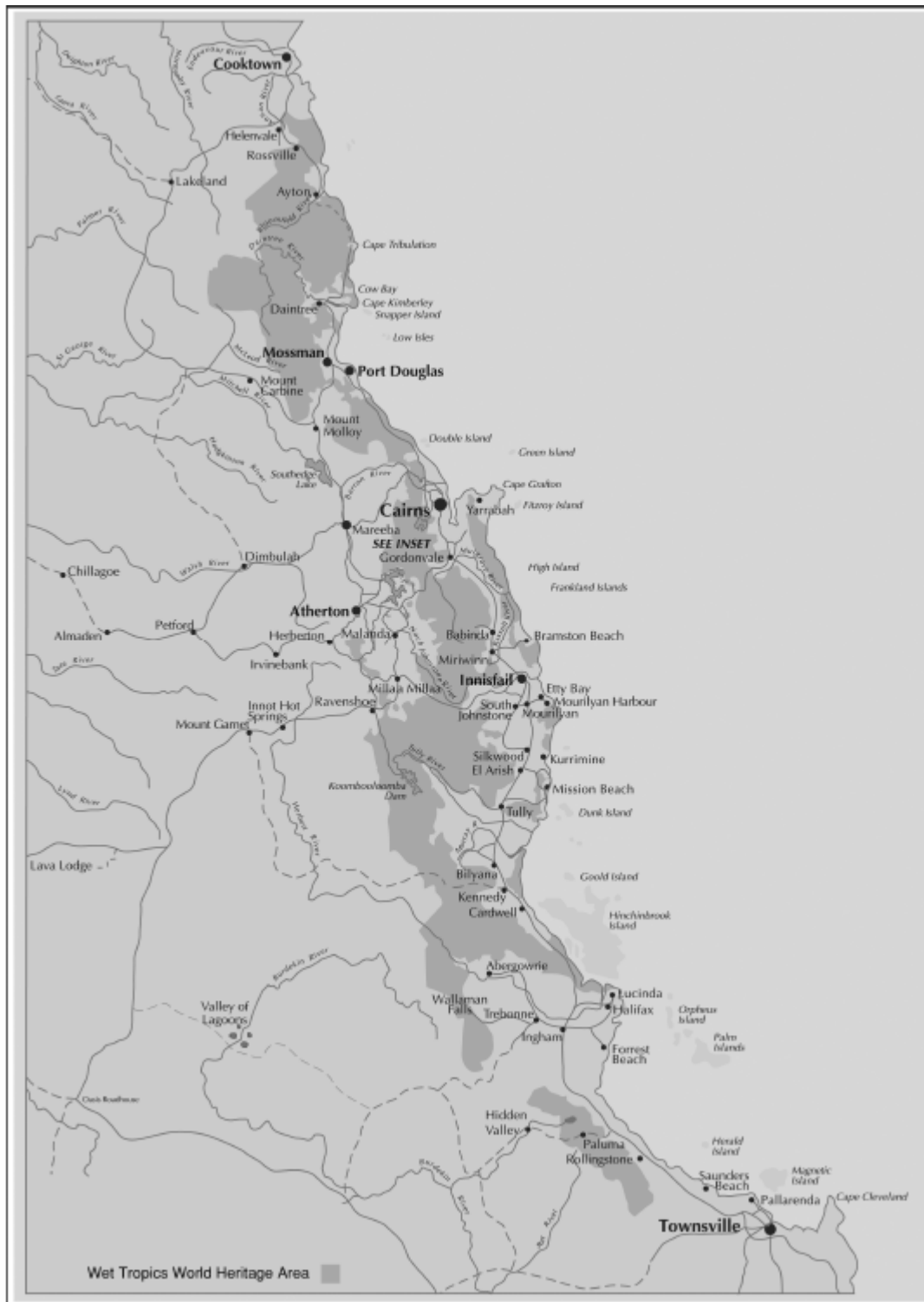


Figure 1. Wet Tropics World Heritage Area of north Queensland

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have had limited involvement in commercial timber production in the Wet Tropics. However, the potential of the area to produce commercial timber and other forest products has been assessed as quite considerable. Annandale et al. (2003) identified more than 11,000 hectares of plantation estate, 95,000 hectares of private native forest and 85,600 hectares of cleared freehold land suitable for plantation development – all within 200 km of Cairns.

Opportunities arising from agroforestry and other forestry industries

A wide range of opportunities could be realised from development of agroforestry. These range from immediate, low cost ventures capable of delivering positive revenues in a short period of time, to more complex projects that involve a longer establishment phase due to their size and complexity and greater investment prior to producing positive cash flows and return on investment.

Development of sustainable agroforestry and value adding enterprises could include a wide range of social, economic and research activities. These include – training and business development in – plant/product identification; plant ecology and growth characteristics; preparation and processing techniques; harvesting times and post-harvest handling; identification of favourable genotypes; development of establishment techniques and silvicultural practices. This would lead to the identification of desired products and markets available from different species (i.e. timber, fruit, seed, nuts and fodder) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business development.

The forest industry sector has the potential to make a significant contribution to regional economic diversification in the Wet Tropics. There are a range of potential opportunities for the establishment of a commercial agroforestry and forest products industry in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people could play a key role. Plantation development on previously cleared land could provide employment, skills development and business activities throughout the life span of the plantation. Plant nurseries could be established where Aboriginal women and younger people could be employed. Semi-skilled and technical staff could establish, manage and harvest the plantations. Products could be used locally, substituting for more expensive imported timbers, and potentially for developing export markets for specialty timbers and manufactured products.

On Cape York, the integration of agroforestry mine regeneration and forestry comes under the umbrella of ‘minoforestry’ (Bragg et al., 2004). ‘Minoforestry’ is the planting of tree crops on previously mined land. It provides additional benefits to existing systems of regeneration by providing a commercial return, employment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and benefits to the natural environment. There are many design options in minoforestry and the feasibility of several options has been investigated. Options that combine mine regeneration with potential for commercial returns include:

- Integration of high value species into standard regeneration through establishment of plantations, e.g. African Mahogany for mine rehabilitation areas and enrichment planting into established regeneration areas. This includes adding species such as sandalwood species into areas rehabilitated with other native species which provide shade, cover and/or nutrients.
- Block plantings of selected species for timber or bushfoods that include mixed species plantations of complementary species e.g. *Acacia* species for bush foods which act as hosts for Sandalwood species.
- Plantations (such as African mahogany) as windbreaks and shelter for stock in pasture areas.
- Bush food gardens for: food, fibre and medicine plants for traditional use; small business and environmental benefits using diverse plants in mixed species plantings and that may include rare or threatened species; plants that are naturally sparse or hard to collect; plants that may be used as fodder by native bees; or plants that provide habitat for target animal species.

In addition to economic and environmental benefits, some species can contribute to the health of local communities by addressing some of the nutritional needs, including greater access to affordable fresh foods, in particular traditional foods.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders of Cape York have also identified economic opportunities in the broader forest sector. An example of this comes from recent research with the Wik people, of western Cape York, who identified diverse opportunities for sustainable forestry on their lands. They expressed a desire for conserving the forests, while undertaking wise extractive use, and a desire to see

forestry managed landscapes to sustain people and culture (Venn, 2004). The Wik people would like to encourage forestry as one of several economic activities through selective logging, using accepted guidelines, and as a means of generating culturally appropriate jobs on country. The Wik elders suggested external timber sales would increase self-esteem, hope for a positive future and other benefits of having 'real' jobs as opposed to employment through CDEP.

This study highlighted how forestry could contribute to several Wik social objectives. One of these objectives is further development of outstations, which raises issues of relevance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across north Queensland. The outstation movement is aimed at decentralising remote community townships, getting people back on country, at least on a seasonal basis, to promote traditional and cultural practices, and reaffirm traditional connections to the land. The outstation movement also has a goal of moving people away from welfare dependence through becoming self-sufficient from community-based business enterprises.

However in order to be viable, outstations require basic infrastructure and an economic base as part of a broader land management framework. In recent years, Land and Sea Management Centres have been established in a number of locations in Queensland, funded through the federal government's Natural Heritage Trust. These have generally been community-based for local people to manage land and sea country, including through the outstation movement. Land and Sea Management Centres have the potential to address a wide range of issues that currently face Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including education, employment and training, cultural maintenance, economic development opportunities including agroforestry and value adding businesses, as well as tourism and cultural heritage protection. Market-based mechanisms have been developed, tested and proven as a method of community development and environmental protection in other countries (Archer and Beale 2004) and could provide models for far north Queensland. Land and Sea Management Centres could introduce innovative sustainable management systems that provide economic, cultural and environmental benefits to the Traditional Owners and to the regional and wider community by conservation through sustainable use. They also form a crucial link between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, government and non-government organisations. This is acknowledged by the Queensland government's Ten Year Partnerships; however, adequate, secure funding is critical to their success.

Listening to Indigenous peoples' voices

Two regional workshops were held in north Queensland during 2004 with the aim of gaining an appreciation of Indigenous people's aspirations and interests regarding agroforestry and other forest sector development opportunities. A need for effective consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples was recommended by an earlier JVAP funded project reviewing research priorities for agroforestry development in Northern Australia (Turvey and Larsen 2001). JVAP subsequently funded production of a report aimed specifically at providing Indigenous people with information on agroforestry (Bristow et al. 2003). This information was distributed at the workshops.

The workshops were held in locations to maximise attendance by people interested in agroforestry in the Wet Tropics and Cape York regions. The Wet Tropics workshop was held at Lake Tinnaroo on the Atherton Tablelands over two days in October 2003 and attracted approximately 80 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The workshop with a Cape York focus was held in the township of Napranum, near Weipa on western Cape York from 8-10 June 2004. Approximately 100 people attended this workshop over three days and the entire proceedings were recorded on video.

Invitations to both workshops were inclusive and utilised existing communication networks. For the Wet Tropics workshop, the Aboriginal Rainforest Council and James Cook University networks proved invaluable for disseminating information. The process was assisted by the communication networks already established through the Wet Tropics Aboriginal Cultural and Natural Resource Management Plan (Anon 2005). For the Cape York workshop, invitations were sent to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities by way of letter and follow-up telephone calls and personal

communications. Specific invitations were given to people working in forestry. In order to encourage as many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as possible to attend, accommodation and food was provided at the workshops and travel costs were reimbursed.

The workshops stimulated considerable interest, particularly the practical demonstrations of setting up native honey apiaries and artefact manufacture at the Napranum workshop. The details provided below are an overview of the issues raised by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at the two workshops. The authors have endeavoured to reflect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander views as accurately as possible, but the reader must appreciate that small editorial changes were necessary to assist in presentation and flow of the text. The workshop conversations have been organised into three main categories (Aspirations, Needs, Impediments) to assist in understanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' perspectives.



Small scale sawmilling is a potential opportunity to add value to existing resources

Workshop findings as identified by the Indigenous participants

Aspirations

- Involve Aboriginal people in policy development and management arrangements that impact on their rights and aspirations for using resources.
- Recognise knowledge and traditional practices (such as hunting and gathering) so that they are maintained and passed on to future generations of Traditional Owners, and to promote amongst the broader community the belief that this cultural maintenance is crucial for social well-being, cultural identity and sustainable environmental management.
- Support and resource Aboriginal community-based initiatives to monitor and manage their own resources for hunting and gathering.
- Attain financial and economic security.
- A desire for forest industry development activities that target:
 - Self-reliance, human development (health education), cultural preservation and environmental protection
 - Regional and small enterprise development, establishing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned and operated businesses
 - Import substitution, replacing imported timber with local products for construction and other purposes, such as small scale sawmilling
 - Development of joint venture partnerships between communities, private business and government

- Development of a high value agroforestry and forest product industry capitalising on the unique timbers of the region
- Development of business on country
- Finding employment and business development opportunities that allow people to work on country. There is a desire for agroforestry to provide a range of small-scale, low-impact, culturally appropriate, economically viable and environmentally sustainable opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the region.

Needs

- Increase the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to access support and resources for the development of agroforestry initiatives.
- Support for development of partnerships with private enterprises and research institutions.
- Resource and support training initiatives in business administration, marketing and technical skills required to generate and run a business.
- Support more research and pilot projects in communities and regions.
- More information about agroforestry, with examples of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned projects requiring an ongoing commitment to provide updated information.
- Support for technical requirements, training, and funding for commercial agroforestry projects.
- Development of successful commercial agroforestry businesses (such as bush-tucker, agroforestry and artefact manufacturing) that provide economic and social benefits to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- More support from government.
- Clarity on access to country for commercial and cultural purposes.
- Clarity on legislative and native title issues.
- Recognition of rights.
- Pathways for increased Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation and career opportunities in government
- Flexible service and program delivery, funding, training, business development, technical support, quicker response from agencies
- Stronger linkages with private sector for business development
- Recognise Aboriginal peoples' use of resources in forest country, and allow management by Aboriginal people according to their laws, customs and aspirations, and for this to be recognised in legislation, policy and management arrangements and by the broader community as an integral part of Aboriginal culture in the region (Wet Tropics).

Impediments

- Current legislation policy and management arrangements of Queensland national parks and state forests restricts Aboriginal people from hunting and gathering on their country, which contradicts the Native Title Act 1993 and common law native title.
- For many people their rights and obligations for country provide a right to gain economic benefit from their land, including the development of appropriate commercial enterprises on national parks. Current restrictions on using resources from Aboriginal owned country for commercial ventures (e.g. as with freehold land with World Heritage status) impede the development of forest-based industries.
- Permit processes that restrict Aboriginal people from utilising resources are seen as an infringement of their rights to practice culture, particularly when, under the Native Title Act 1993 and common law native title, they do not need a permit. Aboriginal people are concerned about the notion of having to get a permit to carry out their cultural obligations

on traditional country. Without freedom of access and use of resources, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' ability to meet cultural and spiritual obligations is undermined.

- There is a lack of recognition of Aboriginal peoples' rights and aspirations for hunting and gathering and the cultural significance of hunting and gathering practices by the broader community, "We need to get permission now to get materials and it's our land. The land has been restricted from us."
- There is often no work after people have been trained.
- Access to support for the establishment of businesses is difficult. Groups with a business proposal are unable to obtain support without completing a business plan and do not have the skills, resources or funds to complete such a plan.
- There are complex processes and waiting lists to access support or funds from government.
- There are low levels of ownership or involvement in mainstream businesses in the region, i.e. a lack of available appropriate role models or mentors to help newcomers' entry into business.

Recommendations

A number of recommendations can be drawn from the outcomes of the workshops and from analysis of other oral and written sources utilised in the preparation of this report. The recommendations broadly reflect the views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people consulted during this project. They are aimed at addressing needs, overcoming the impediments and establishing mechanisms for achieving aspirations. The authors' experiences in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on forestry projects has also been applied in developing the recommendations.

1. Increase institutional support (government and private sector) to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

The need for support by federal and state governments and the private sector in all areas relevant to establishing and maintaining a successful agroforestry business was identified as the highest priority. This recommendation includes the areas of capacity building, on-ground project development and regional community development centres.

1. a. Capacity building recommendations are to:

- provide general information about agroforestry, with examples of viable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned projects
- provide pathways for increased Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation and career opportunities in federal and state government agencies
- provide resources and support for training initiatives in business administration, marketing and the technical skills required to generate and run a commercial agroforestry business
- Increase access to support and resources for the development of agroforestry initiatives.

1. b. On-ground project development recommendations are to:

- provide ongoing technical and funding support for commercial Indigenous agroforestry projects
- provide ongoing mentoring and supervision and monitoring of projects once they have commenced
- support the development of partnerships with private enterprises and research institutions
- support more research and pilot projects in communities and regions
- improve the flexibility of service and program delivery, funding, training, business development, and technical support
- provide a quicker response from agencies.

1. c. Establish regional community development centres with a core group of specialists to provide support for Indigenous agroforestry and community development projects and business

2. Ensure consultative and participatory processes are adequate and appropriate.

People intending to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be adequately prepared. This may involve background reading on the local Indigenous history and culture, and developing an awareness of local Indigenous political and governance structures.

Consultation or other participatory processes are an essential component of any project involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Inappropriate or inadequate consultation can cause a project to fail and result in ill-feeling that jeopardises future projects. Part 2 of this report provides a comprehensive guideline to effective consultation, with specific application to agroforestry projects in north Queensland. Many government departments have their own guidelines for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consultation as well as providing cross-cultural awareness courses for their staff and these can be seen on state and federal government agencies' websites, for example the Australian government's Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources has a series of booklets including Community Engagement and Development. The private sector has information publicly available on their websites, with many examples provided by the mining sector, for example through the Minerals Council of Australia website. Some universities offer courses that include learning about the principles of cross-cultural consultation e.g. Courses on Participatory Action Research at the Australian National University's Fenner School of Environment and Society.

3. Review relationship between native title rights and interests, and regulations affecting customary hunting and gathering in protected areas.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have consistently raised concerns about constraints to hunting and gathering in protected areas and to economic development e.g. concerns raised over potential impacts of new Wild Rivers legislation in Queensland.

Clarity is required on access to country for commercial and cultural purposes. Other states are addressing this issue in relation to jointly managed parks e.g. NSW and Northern Territory, but Queensland has not yet gone down this path.

4. Include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in higher level decision-making about land use and policy development.

Indigenous people consistently requested a greater say in decisions that affect their lives, as part of social justice. Decisions that impact on the way they use the land for subsistence or commercial purposes should be informed by proper consultation processes. The Queensland government already has the Cape York Partnerships and a number of other instruments to facilitate this process.

5. Ensure that agroforestry projects are sustainable.

Sustainability will be an essential part of any enterprise, achieved through a combination of scientific and traditional knowledge. However, pressures of the market economy to produce large quantities of a product in a short timeframe have been known to lead to unsustainable forestry practices by Indigenous people in other settler societies. Within Australia, customary laws concerning resource use are sometimes ignored, leading to social tensions (Koenig et al., 2005). To ensure that agroforestry projects are addressing cultural and environmental sustainability, appropriate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms must be in place. These should include feedback from Traditional Owners on the impacts of the project on the natural environment and on cultural integrity.

6. Adopt an integrated approach to land use.

Establishment of plantations or bush food orchards occurs in a broader landscape that is managed and used for a variety of purposes by Indigenous people. If planning does not occur in the context of the broader landscape, plantations may be inappropriately located, for example, in an area that gets regularly burned.

7. Protect Indigenous intellectual and cultural property rights.

All issues associated with intellectual property rights would need to be properly addressed and no enterprises should commence until these have been satisfactorily dealt with, including an agreement in writing. Indigenous intellectual and cultural property rights will be acknowledged and respected within the framework of commonwealth and state government policy and legislation and community expectations.

Pending the finalisation of a state-wide policy, the parties will work to develop an interim protocol to ensure appropriate and agreed use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultural knowledge and traditions. The protocol would focus on use of traditional ecological knowledge and cultural information.

Part 2: Protocols for effective community engagement.

This guide is intended to assist those working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in collaborative research or community development projects.

The Beginning

All non-Aboriginal people intending to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities should undertake comprehensive induction and cultural awareness programs prior to entering communities. They must develop the interpersonal skills to freely exchange information and transfer skills that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people require to give a community greater autonomy. Additionally, skills and knowledge cannot be passed on without a basic level of understanding of the culture and society of community members.

When working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, one must first make steps towards understanding some of the background issues which have impacted on the communities and individuals in both recent and past times. Be aware that attitudes will be influenced by consultation processes undertaken in previous years, some of which may not have been adequate to meet the needs and aspirations of the community.

The building of meaningful relationships is critical for the success delivery of any project. This can often take a considerable amount of time, especially when many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander are involved. Lack of time to build relationships and a mutual understanding is the main reason that cross-cultural projects fail, so it is important to factor sufficient time into work programs. Once established, projects and enterprises evolve and mature. There is a vast amount of existing knowledge and experience in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities with people who have insights into what sorts of projects work. For successful project development there needs to be an exchange of information and experiences that occurs over a long period of time.

When discussing project development ideas or opportunities both parties must be committed, have confidence in the process, be open, honest and provide reliable information. The project must be discussed at length and clearly outlined so that expectations remain realistic. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are then in a better position to decide whether or not they wish to participate in projects.

Changes in government policy or reduced levels of support have led to project failure in previous years. Others have failed because the project leader exits the project, leaving no one to continue driving it along, because knowledge and skills transfer were not primary project objectives. One of the challenges of working in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is to adapt services to suit the needs and aspirations of the people concerned and to pass on all relevant skills to successfully manage these enterprises. If this does not occur then participation rates decline and/or projects fade away when support moves on.

The need for sustainable economic development is critical. If real economic opportunities are developed in collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, numerous social benefits will result. A holistic approach is required to provide the communities with the tools to freely determine their own economic and social development, to empower people to control their destiny. The criterion for measuring the success of any business needs to be identified and agreed by all those involved. It should not be determined by government or any other external stakeholders. This will keep all expectations at a realistic level.

Education and training needs to be adaptive and responsive to community needs. People need the opportunity to have inputs into curricula, including incorporation of cultural knowledge.

Consultation protocol

[Adapted from: the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area Regional Agreement (2005)]

Any non-Aboriginal person wishing to develop projects, business or other activities in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people needs to consider some basic common sense issues. Community consultation does not have to be complicated, but it does need to be inclusive and follow some basic protocols. Protocol means following the customs or lores of the people with whom you are working.

Effective consultation needs to be designed to meet the unique aspects of the situation and to identify and clearly define the issues. Enough time must be allocated for the consultation process and detailed, balanced and accurate information must be provided to enable informed discussion and negotiation. Once a proposed activity requiring involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people has been identified, a consultation protocol should be followed to ensure that the appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are consulted in mutually agreed ways. The consultation process should begin as early as possible and be flexible. Consultation procedures for proposed or new activities may differ from those for existing activities where protocols have already been established.



Engagement with indigenous communities should follow accepted protocols

Consultation for new and proposed activities in north Queensland

Making contact

- Prior to making contact, gather as much information on the area as possible, gain an understanding of the environment, the climate, the make up and history of the community, language issues, the politics of the community or region, representative Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups and the key government agencies working in the area and their contacts.
- To identify the appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, groups or individuals to be consulted, contact the relevant Native Title Representative Body(s) including the relevant Native Title Prescribed Body Corporate, by liaising verbally and/or in writing. It may be beneficial to make contact with state government agencies and non-

government organisations to gain an overview of the region and information on topical local issues. Public servants within government with established links to the community can be a good source of advice and information. For the Wet Tropics contact the Aboriginal Rainforest Council.

- Seek formal advice, on Native Title holders, Native Title claimants and/or other known Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people, or other parties, with rights or interests in the area. Obtain contact details outlining the appropriate people to be consulted, and the protocols for making contact with them. The identification of community representatives is a community matter as there are internal protocols for who can speak for country (geographic areas), and who can represent Traditional Owner groups. It is important to be aware that communication among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is determined by customary laws governing kinship relations, including rules that forbid direct communication between certain types of kin.
- Inform the identified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contact people of the activity and consult with them on their desired level of involvement. Agree on whom to include in the consultation process and the level/type of consultation appropriate for each.
- Consultation should commence with a written outline of the proposed activity and an offer to meet at a suitable time and place, nominated by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives.

Commencing the consultation process.

The aim of the consultation process is to exchange and share information and to build a shared vision, through starting with an open mind and allowing the consultation process to draw out issues, opinions and concerns. Be aware that discussion about the proposal may take many meetings over a long period of time, depending on the local situation. The following points are a guide for undertaking effective consultation:

- If issues surrounding the proposal are complex, it is advisable to engage the services of a person known to the community or one experienced in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, to assist and facilitate communication, particularly for remote communities.
- Have confidence in the process. All parties need to start with transparency and accountability in the consultation process. A full understanding of how consultation contributes to the overall outcomes is critical.
- Clearly define the objectives and outcomes of the proposed activity and the roles and responsibilities of all parties in the activity. Providing as much information as possible will encourage fair and informal discussion and will make clear the purpose and nature of the need for consultation.
- Identify and explain the potential benefits of the activity, including those which may apply to the broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and the general public.
- Discuss and agree on processes for incorporating community views into the decision-making for the project.
- Discuss and agree on what kind of community, group and individual participation is being sought and what it will mean for participants, in terms of time away from other family and cultural obligations.
- Identify, clarify and agree on issues and positions, negotiation methods and decision-making processes. Ensure that the purpose of the consultation is clear to all parties and that outcomes are realistic and achievable.
- Provide support and assistance if requested, for the consultation process, including the use of an interpreter if English is the second language.
- Identify and clarify any substantially opposing points of view, documenting any which cannot be resolved.
- Mutually agree on techniques for documenting and recording the consultation process and its outcomes, e.g. a video or DVD may be more appropriate than a written report.

- Explain in detail and agree on methods for storing information and how it will be accessed and used in the future.
- Obtain written consent for the use of any culturally sensitive information.
- Ask whether anyone has registered any intellectual cultural property that should be protected and obtain prior, informed consent for its use.
- Mutually agree on the way to conduct the activity, including any statutory timing and phasing of the project.
- Discuss any relevant cultural, political and legislative circumstances and issues, both local and broad-ranging.
- Identify and share contact details for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants, members and proponents, including a key contact for each.
- Provide a comprehensive assessment of the risks and potential adverse impacts of the activity.
- Discuss financial, technical and human resources available for the activity.
- Mutually agree on time requirements for the discussion and consideration of proposals – establish clear, realistic and agreed timetables, be sensitive to time limiting resources available to people and groups.
- Establish a process to monitor and provide feedback on the progress and effectiveness of consultation for the life of the activity.

Outcomes of the consultation

Whether or not a consultation process has been effective can be tested against a series of questions that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people may ask of the process, as presented below:-

What is everyone going to get out of this?

An understanding by all parties of the proposed outcomes by all parties, and the benefits, risks and/or adverse impacts associated with the outcomes.

Who will be involved and what is required of them?

An understanding of the level of participation being requested.

How long will it take and when will things happen?

Agreed timelines.

What do we need to make things happen?

An understanding of resource requirements, e.g. people, funding, transport, or training.

Who should we talk to?

Identify the key contact person/s.

How will we get to hear what people think and make sure the right people get to have their say, how do we decide on the best way forward to make decisions?

Through established ongoing consultation, negotiation and decision-making mechanisms

How can we check that everyone is doing what they said and check to see if it is the best way so we can change things if needed?

Through established monitoring and review processes.

Who will have access to information and who is responsible for looking after the information?

Information collection, storage, access and use have been addressed.

What is the best way to let people know what is going on?

Type and format of feedback is appropriate.

Who should we thank for helping with and doing the work and how should we thank them?
Appropriate acknowledgment processes.

How can we check that everyone has done what they said?
Appropriate compliance processes.

What government law affects what we are talking about?
Relevant legislation and policy.

What traditional lore is important and how does it affect what we are talking about and how can we protect traditional knowledge?
Appropriate use of intellectual cultural property and/or sensitive information.

What is the best way to let everyone know what we did, so others can learn?
On completion of the activity, document the outcomes of the consultation process, including recommendations for future improvement.

Existing and ongoing activities

In some instances, a project may have already commenced with little and/or ineffective consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Understandably, in these circumstances they may be angry and upset and negotiations could become complex and prolonged. Nevertheless, all practical steps need to be made to involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in a manner consistent with the protocol described above, while realising that some steps may not be achievable.

Consultation process

- Summarise and explain the activity in terms of identified aims and outcomes and the current status of tasks within the activity.
- Provide a forum for feedback to be given on the progress of the activity to date.
- Identify and discuss future aspects of the activity and any opportunities for consultation, participation and review in regard to future activities.
- Outline any resources available to complete activity and facilitate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander involvement.

Meeting guidelines

Consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people invariably involves meetings, often involving large numbers of people from widely dispersed communities. The way a meeting is organised and run can determine the success or otherwise of the broader consultation process and ultimately the project itself. A large number of matters must be taken into consideration, some of which apply to all meetings and some that are unique to circumstances where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are involved. The procedures adopted for holding the regional workshops undertaken for this project are detailed below as a guide to those intending to organise meetings with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in north Queensland. Obviously every situation will be different but there are always commonalities and the aim of these guidelines is to provide direction and stimulate the meeting organiser/s' thinking in appropriate directions. The guidelines are divided into matters to consider before, during and after a meeting.

PART A: Prior to the meeting

Logistics and housekeeping

Transport, venue and equipment

- Determine how many people need transport each way. Check on availability and type of transport required for getting people to a meeting. Always give as much notice as possible

so people can make the necessary arrangements. Arrangements for people using their own transport should be negotiated.

- Be realistic about what your budget can cover and plan accordingly. Ensure there are adequate funds to cover travel costs, including, where required, the costs of person's family travelling with him/her. In some cases, travel costs may be partly covered by the community itself, but this cannot be assumed.
- Choice of venue is a very important consideration and demands careful attention. Facilities must be appropriate e.g. toilets nearby and easy access for people who are not very mobile, such as elders. The venue must be an appropriate size, with appropriate layout, atmosphere and ventilation. If the venue is indoors, it is important to have an outdoor area adjacent to it so people can mix and talk informally. Advice on selection of the venue should be sought from the groups involved.
- If the venue is outdoors and 'on country' be guided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contacts as to the best location e.g. by a river or under a tree. In these circumstances, it may be necessary to hire equipment such as a marquee, portable toilets, and chairs. Seek prior permission from the relevant council when visiting a DOGIT community.
- Obtain a quote for the cost of hiring the venue and determine the method of payment.
- Make sure the appropriate equipment is available e.g. paper, computers, projectors, screens and whiteboards. Take pens, paper, nametags, attendance list etc.

Catering for the meeting

- Find out if anyone in the community would be interested in being contracted to provide meals for the function. If not, arrange for catering to be delivered to the meeting.
- Obtain a quote for the cost of the catering and agree on the method of payment, i.e. cash on the day, invoice or purchase order, half payment up front.
- Ensure you cover anyone with special dietary needs e.g. diabetics.
- Don't have 'fancy' food and make sure there will be sufficient. Plain wholesome food is preferable.

Attendee's expenses

- It is most important that all meeting attendees are clear about what expenses are or are not being covered by the meeting organiser. The person or agency holding the meeting may need to cover all, or a percentage of the costs associated with attendance. These may be considerable if attendees do not have their own transport. In some cases people will be required to take leave without pay from their workplace.
- Clarify and agree on whether or not 'sitting fees' will be paid. These are generally paid to elders/Traditional Owners in recognition of their special knowledge and social status in the community. If these fees are to be paid, agree on who will be paid, how it will be paid and how much it will be.
- If expenses are not being paid in advance, establish and agree on how expenses will be reimbursed. If people are to be reimbursed in cash at the meeting, ensure the appropriate facilities are available e.g. a bank. Ideally there should be a set rate for different expenses such as accommodation, travel reimbursement, meals and incidentals, to ensure equity across all attendees. Organise for petty cash and documents to be signed prior to the meeting taking place, for example for fuel expenses. Ideally, tasks associated with attendee's expenses should be delegated to someone other than the meeting organiser as they can be time-consuming and complex.

Other matters that may need to be addressed

- Organise for an interpreter if required.
- Organise for minutes to be taken.

- If a mediator and/or facilitator are to be used, confirm that attendees endorse the person/people. There are advantages in employing an Indigenous person, although he/she needs to be independent of the community groups and interests represented at the meeting.

Providing information about the meeting

- In circumstances where the meeting is on country, contact the relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation/s well in advance.
- Explain verbally the reasons for the meeting, expected dates of arrival and departure, anticipated duration of face-to-face communication, likely number of visits, who is travelling with you, and your accommodation and contact details.
- Ask permission to advertise the meeting, to ensure that Traditional Owners missed by existing networks are informed.
- Follow up in writing, outlining the agreed time and place of the meeting/s.
- Give plenty of notice.
- Prepare a draft agenda and circulate it for comment. Allow ample for time for discussion and flexibility for last minute modifications.

Attendance

- Allow sufficient time to identify the key decision-makers in community groups and organisations. Ensure that the main groups with respect to the meeting topic are going to be represented at the meeting e.g. formally elected representatives, community groups, elders. Utilise the knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative organisations to identify the appropriate people to liaise within the community and talk to people about the upcoming meeting.
- Request that the appropriate Traditional Owner does a 'welcome to country' at the opening of the meeting. This is a sign of respect of the Traditional Owner group's country.
- Undertake briefings with relevant government agencies and/or private sector representatives, to ensure they are equipped to respond to questions from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. Ensure that all non-Indigenous meeting attendees are aware of and respect meeting protocols.
- Ensure you have an appropriate spread of representation of both genders and age groups to ensure equity. Most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups will ensure that the right people attend but if this does not occur, another meeting may be required. Matters of gender and age will vary from group to group. Men cannot speak about women's business and vice versa. If there are issues that are gender specific, a separate meeting should be considered.

PART B: During the meeting

Conduct

- Arrive on time, but be prepared to be flexible about the starting time of the meeting. Be very flexible with the agenda and how it is presented.
- Avoid direct criticism of any matter, as this may cause loss of personal dignity or 'shame' of individuals.
- Show respect for elders on country. For example, direct eye contact may cause discomfort to some elders. Check with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contacts on this matter.
- Use appropriate language and avoid overuse of acronyms, jargon and long words. These can confuse people and result in negative attitudes towards the speaker and the topic.
- Introduce yourself.
- Acknowledge Traditional Owners and give thanks for permission to be on their country.
- Always give a brief overview of why you are there and summarise the outcomes you hope to achieve for the day.
- Don't assume everyone is aware of the issues and always explain the background to the discussions taking place. Be prepared to answer questions unrelated to the topic.

- Never expect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to make an instant decision, even if he/she is a key representative, as this is not in accordance with customary meeting practices. Put forward suggestions and work through their responses so everyone is clear about what is being discussed.
- Clarifying issues as you go along will assist in achieving negotiated outcomes.
- Think carefully about what your response might be to queries regarding potential barriers e.g. government policy, environmental constraints, legislative constraints and potential areas of conflict with other groups. Make it clear that some matters are out of your control. In some cases, government agency representatives will be able to provide an answer. Always undertake to get back to people with an answer within a specified time period.

Dress code

Always wear appropriate dress when engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Do not wear revealing clothing as this may be seen to be disrespectful. Neat casual business attire demonstrates a professional approach to the meeting.

Meeting procedure

- Welcome to country: introduce the Traditional Owner/s.
- In reply thank the Traditional Owner group for allowing this meeting to take place on country.
- Ask if everyone is happy about the agenda, is there anything to add or change?
- Refer to the presence and speaking rights of any observers.
- Read out any apologies.
- Allow everybody to introduce themselves. Some community/organisation members have multiple roles and it is important to clarify what his/her role is at the meeting. Introductions can take a considerable period of time if the meeting is large and/or people want to raise issues. It may be necessary to have a set time for a person to introduce him/herself.
- Seek permission for photographs or videos to be taken and for their future use.
- Determine if any information from this meeting is considered confidential or culturally sensitive, so that appropriate steps can be taken regarding the distribution of reports and materials. This needs to be done again at the end of the meeting.
- If issues arise where further discussion is warranted, have mechanisms in place to allow time out to break into small groups. Not everybody is confident about speaking out in a large group and small groups give everyone an opportunity to explain their position and negotiate a way forward.
- Visual aids, such as diagrams, maps and pictures are very useful for presenting points of view. Sometimes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders may want to use items from the natural environment to prepare a map, such as stones or lines in the dirt.
- If a dispute arises and cannot be resolved, call for a break in proceedings and allow people to cool down, regroup and clarify the issues. If you need to correct or deal with direct criticism, avoid using names and shaming people as this is seen as disrespectful. Address the situation indirectly and move on.
- Usually, decisions are made outside of or after the meeting. Allow time for people to get back to you with relevant information, as the appropriate decision-makers may not be present at the meeting. Know when to absent yourself from negotiations.

Concluding the meeting

- At the end of the meeting, review the main outcomes of the meeting; describe the recommendations and the actions proposed to address the recommendations.
- Obtain endorsement from the meeting attendees of the recommendations and actions.
- Note any outstanding issues and describe how these will be dealt with.
- Clearly outline how people are to be kept informed of progress after the meeting is over.
- Thank everyone for their time and input.

PART C: After the meeting

Evaluation

- Evaluate, follow up and report back on outcomes as agreed. This can be achieved through verbal communication, a mail-out or a newsletter. The latter is particularly useful and worth the extra time to do.
- The report should include the main points made at the meeting, information about the scope of the consultation and diversity of opinions obtained, analysis of how that information relates to input from other consultations processes, government agendas, etc. Where possible, the same staff should be involved in reporting outcomes to maintain continuity.
- In evaluating the meeting, the following points need consideration:

- the most effective means of information sharing and gathering and communication
- the best way to use financial, human and time resources, and further investigate and solve identified problems
- whether the outcomes correspond with the objectives
- any factors which caused trouble at the meeting/consultation
- the benefit to participants including how their views were taken into account
- the skills or knowledge gained by participants
- the implementation of decisions.

Other

- Ensure that intellectual cultural property sensitivities have been adequately addressed. Culturally sensitive material and intellectual property created by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people remains vested in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- The determination of intellectual and cultural property rights may require specialist expertise.

Conclusion

The aims of this project have been twofold:

- to ascertain the potential for agroforestry development and the requirements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities wishing to engage in agroforestry projects in north Queensland
- to develop and test a methodology for consulting with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in north Queensland.

Part 1 of the report has presented information on current agroforestry projects involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in north Queensland with particular reference to the Cape York and Wet Tropics regions. It also identified the potential for a range of new agroforestry related projects and explored the associated challenges and barriers that would need to be addressed. The aspirations and views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for greater engagement, as well as identified impediments were expressed at two regional workshops held during 2004 and these are also presented.

Based on research and the findings of the two regional workshops, Part 1 of the report concluded that there are opportunities for agroforestry in north Queensland, including ‘minoforestry’ on Cape York and establishment of plantations in the Wet Tropics region. It demonstrated that agroforestry has a ‘natural advantage’ in that it enables Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to work on country and to care for the land, while deriving economic benefit from it.

However, several factors must be addressed in order to create socio-political frameworks that are conducive to economic development in particular circumstances. These include organisational considerations such as realistic timeframes that allow people time to discuss issues amongst themselves before making a decision. They may require non-Aboriginal parties such as government or private enterprise to be more co-ordinated and consistent in their dealings with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. For each project venture, strategic collaboration and partnerships between government, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the private sector are required, with a view to an integrated holistic approach that links all the critical elements. Thus training and education must lead to future employment in the economic enterprises under consideration. Benefits from the economic development must be evaluated not only in terms of generation of wealth but also in building of social capital, allowing cultural practices to be maintained and contributing to health and well-being.

The recommendations in Part 1 identify the key issues requiring attention. They are based on the fundamental premise of ‘working together’ to realise the economic development opportunities that agroforestry and forest industries can offer Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.



Planting at New Mapoon (northern tip of Cape York Peninsula)

Part 2 of the report has developed and tested a methodology for consulting with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with regard to agroforestry projects in north Queensland. This iterative process has resulted in useful hints for organising and running meetings and has presented a consultative framework. Much of the information in Part 2 has wider application beyond agroforestry to economic development in Aboriginal communities more generally. The consultation framework could also be utilised in other locations, although the influence and status of native title groups varies from state to state depending on the nature of state-based land rights legislation.

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Consulting with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities

– agroforestry in north Queensland –

RIRDC Publication No. 08/168

Indigenous people in north Queensland have expressed a desire to develop sustainable commercial agroforestry enterprises to provide local employment, enable people to work on country and to improve health and well-being. However, several factors must be addressed in order to create socio-political frameworks that are conducive to economic development in particular circumstances.

For each project venture, strategic collaboration and partnerships between government, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the private sector are required, with a view to an integrated holistic approach that links all the critical elements, and this publication addresses these collaborating participants.

Much of the information in Part 2 has wider application beyond agroforestry to economic development in Aboriginal communities more generally. The consultation framework could also be utilised in other locations, although the influence and status of native title groups varies from State to State depending on the nature of State-based land rights legislation.

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