

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE AUSTRALIAN RANGELAND SOCIETY
BIENNIAL CONFERENCE**

Official publication of The Australian Rangeland Society

Copyright and Photocopying

© The Australian Rangeland Society 2012. All rights reserved.

For non-personal use, no part of this item may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without prior permission of the Australian Rangeland Society and of the author (or the organisation they work or have worked for). Permission of the Australian Rangeland Society for photocopying of articles for non-personal use may be obtained from the Secretary who can be contacted at the email address, rangelands.exec@gmail.com

For personal use, temporary copies necessary to browse this site on screen may be made and a single copy of an article may be downloaded or printed for research or personal use, but no changes are to be made to any of the material. This copyright notice is not to be removed from the front of the article.

All efforts have been made by the Australian Rangeland Society to contact the authors. If you believe your copyright has been breached please notify us immediately and we will remove the offending material from our website.

Form of Reference

The reference for this article should be in this general form;
Author family name, initials (year). Title. *In*: Proceedings of the nth Australian Rangeland Society Biennial Conference. Pages. (Australian Rangeland Society: Australia).

For example:

Anderson, L., van Klinken, R. D., and Shepherd, D. (2008). Aerially surveying Mesquite (*Prosopis* spp.) in the Pilbara. *In*: 'A Climate of Change in the Rangelands. Proceedings of the 15th Australian Rangeland Society Biennial Conference'. (Ed. D. Orr) 4 pages. (Australian Rangeland Society: Australia).

Disclaimer

The Australian Rangeland Society and Editors cannot be held responsible for errors or any consequences arising from the use of information obtained in this article or in the Proceedings of the Australian Rangeland Society Biennial Conferences. The views and opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Australian Rangeland Society and Editors, neither does the publication of advertisements constitute any endorsement by the Australian Rangeland Society and Editors of the products advertised.



The Australian Rangeland Society

THE ILC'S PASTORAL INITIATIVE FOR INDIGENOUS LANDHOLDERS TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE OUTCOMES

A. Padgett

Indigenous Land Corporation, Level 6, 182 St Georges Terrace, Perth WA 6000
Email: allan.padgett@ilc.gov.au

ABSTRACT

The Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC) has a mandate to deliver cultural, social, environmental and economic benefits to indigenous landholders across Australia. A focus on capacity development, willingness, succession planning, strong governance and the development of a business enterprise culture, assist indigenous landholders in the rangelands to reach sustainable outcomes - and thus the achievement of actual, on ground benefits for people.

Historically, the ILC acquired pastoral leases to 'service' the cultural connection that traditional owners have with country. Today, an economic focus is beamed onto these and other indigenous-held pastoral leases in order to optimise business outcomes and to provide sustainability in both economic and environmental terms.

INTRODUCTION

The Board of the Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC) has directed that up to 2010, the ILC will have a major focus on developing pastoral businesses and tourism. The Board has emphasised its commitment to employment and training outcomes, and as a consequence, the ILC is developing substantial on-job training opportunities. It is working closely with indigenous people and their representative organisations, registered training organisations, Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia (DAFWA) and its interstate analogues, TAFE colleges, the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, the Aboriginal Economic Development office in Western Australia, other state and Australian Government agencies, the Pastoralists and Graziers Association, and private enterprise to ensure that there are links between training and real, ongoing jobs in the pastoral and related industries, including 'mainstream' and 'cultural' tourism.

Most of the ILC's landholdings by area in Western Australia are in the rangelands - northern and southern - and as might be expected, these are largely pastoral leases. Similarly, most of the land area held by indigenous people within the rangelands is held under pastoral tenure. There is an expectation by the Pastoral Lands Board, DAFWA, Western Australian and Australian Government agencies through their development of indigenous policies (the bilateral agreement on indigenous economic development, shared responsibility agreements and regional partnership agreements), and of course the ILC, that, where possible, this vast estate should be productively managed to achieve economic outcomes. This view is shared by the majority of indigenous pastoral lease holders. It is highly likely that, if this business approach is installed and maintained, durable cultural and social benefits to indigenous landholders will follow.

DEVELOPING PRACTICE IN THE RANGELANDS

The ILC is involved in a broad range of land management projects across the rangelands of Western Australia and in other States and Territories - which are helping to provide for more sustainable rangeland management and the creation of employment and training opportunities. These projects include the Kimberley Indigenous Management Support Service (KIMSS), and the Integrated Natural and Cultural Resource Management Options projects in Western Australia (both in strong and effective partnerships with DAFWA), and the Indigenous Pastoral Program in the Northern Territory. The first and third of these projects focus on developing a capacity to successfully manage pastoral businesses. Especially in the Northern Territory, direct benefits are achieved through lease-offs for defined periods where, for example, a cattle operation continues with relevant training and employment being contracted through an agreement, and the lease fee is returned to the indigenous landholders for the development of enterprise, social and cultural capital. The second project is possibly the first of its kind in working toward securing property management plans which take account of and respect, the need for sustainable rangeland management and cattle production (and related fire, feral animal, weed and grazing management) to proceed alongside of, and together with, the protection and maintenance of culture. It is expected that the land use plans and fire management plans produced in this project will have applicability throughout the rangelands where indigenous people have control of land through direct ownership or other arrangement, and be used as templates for property management and fire management planning.

The ILC focuses on building the capacity of people to properly manage their pastoral lease business, with a view to enhancing productivity, rangeland management, and individual and group skills; identifying diversification options; and undertaking property management planning. The Board has recently committed to amplifying tourism opportunities and has instituted a four member expert, external advisory panel to assist in this regard. As a practical example, significant funds are currently being invested in Home Valley Station to encourage greater visitor usage through improved and more welcoming facilities, and to increase the scope of activities available to travellers. A number of Balanggarra trainees are working with the Home Valley manager to develop skills in hospitality and tourism.

On Karunjie and Durack River Stations, members of Nyaliga Aboriginal Corporation are working closely with the ILC on managing a small cattle enterprise. This is being assisted through participation in musters, and through training, mentoring and upgrading the cattle herd. Kimberley Group Training has been contracted by the ILC to provide 'work ready' and occupational health & safety training for Nyaliga Aboriginal Corporation members who work on the muster. In the near future, Nyaliga Aboriginal Corporation members – with the ILC's support – will be working in a partnership with the World Wildlife Fund to identify, restore and conserve habitat to protect the Gouldian Finch, with the potential development of tourism enterprises.

The cattle businesses at Roebuck Plains and Myroodah Stations continue to prosper, with approximately 19,000 head of cattle on the former and 15,000 on the latter (with an aim of reaching 30 – 35,000 head on Myroodah over the next few years). The ILC employs local Aboriginal people as much as possible, and works with them to enhance their capacity to manage cattle and business operations through formal training programs and onsite mentoring. The existing accommodation at Roebuck Plains Station is currently being extended to accommodate 12 or so indigenous trainees, who will live in and work with station staff to develop expertise in managing cattle and land in a unique and successful enterprise. Trainees will be able to be employed on ILC-held and other pastoral leases.

Kimberley Indigenous Management Support Service

In May 2005 the ILC and DAFWA agreed to extend for another five years, a program which had proven successful in improving cattle businesses on Kimberley pastoral leases over the previous two-three years. The principal objectives of KIMSS are to service indigenous pastoral lease-holders by assisting landowners, managers and station employees to:

1. increase the profitability and sustainability of indigenous pastoral businesses, and to improve animal husbandry, herd management and livestock marketing;
2. establish effective business management and planning systems, including the use of modern communications and information technology;
3. identify and assist landholders to pursue alternative land uses and/or diversification options in order to maximise sustainable land-use opportunities and long-term economic benefits, especially for properties of limited pastoral potential;
4. create durable links between clients of the service and other government agencies, non-government organisations and private sector providers;
5. draw upon the resources and expertise of other such bodies to implement the service itself; and
6. adopt, develop and promote innovative approaches to agricultural extension for indigenous Kimberley pastoralists in relation to animal production and rangeland ecology.

Indigenous Pastoral Program - Northern Territory

The Indigenous Pastoral Program (IPP) in the Northern Territory has two key objectives: firstly to help indigenous landowners implement sustainable pastoral enterprises; and secondly, to increase pastoral production from their land. Underpinning these aims is an imperative to substantially expand indigenous participation in the pastoral workforce. As a recent measure of the program's success, 10 trainees, inducted into the IPP in October 2005, were successfully placed into full time employment with corporate pastoral companies in March 2006. A mentor is assigned to a group of 10 or so trainees, with funding provided by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. The ILC's partners in this highly successful program are the Northern and Central Land Councils, the Northern Territory's Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines, the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association and the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations.

For 2006 – 2007, all training projects for indigenous people in relation to pastoral leases in the Northern Territory, will be overseen and monitored by the Indigenous Pastoral Program, with an industry-based advisor consulting with pastoral companies about their training and labour needs and feeding this information back into the program. The advisor will document current training processes with a view to the creation of a training model translatable to other states and/or industries. The program to date has focussed on the basics required to get people in the position where they are employable as entry level stockmen (Cook, G., Indigenous Land Corporation, *pers comm*).

To date, the IPP has achieved:

1. an increase of 14,000 head of cattle on indigenous-held land;
2. agreements in place or under negotiation for a further 40,000 head;
3. Australian Government support through the National Landcare Program for three years to employ a full-time manager and additional extension staff;
4. financial and resource support from a range of Central Australian businesses;
5. 21 successful traineeships through the Barkly Indigenous Traineeship Scheme;

6. 60 people completing pastoral training workshops in central Australia;
7. 100 company directors and land owners engaged in corporate governance training through FarmBis; and
8. a successful feral animal reduction program.

A pre-employment training program which was run on Elliot Station during 2004/05 for 18 young indigenous people resulted in 13 people graduating and 11 people being placed in full-time employment. Other arrangements include short and medium-term contracts that have created 20 stock camp jobs and more than 30 jobs under short-term fencing contracts. In addition, over 80 indigenous company directors have completed or are undertaking corporate governance training (Jeffries, 2006).

Indigenous Agriculture Desk

The ILC and DAFWA jointly fund and manage a three-year project called Indigenous Agriculture Desk, which funds a senior, experienced person to promote and manage opportunities in the rangelands (and agricultural zones) for enhanced participation of indigenous people in pastoralism. Similarly, a project likely to be approved by the Western Australian Government in the near future, will establish a new position in the Pilbara to work with indigenous landholders in that part of the rangelands, along the lines of the Kimberley model – that is, with the objective of achieving observable, on-ground improvements in all aspects of cattle business and thus adding measurably to improved cultural, social, environmental, and economic conditions.

FarmBis – ILC Partnership

Early in 2006 the ILC and FarmBis agreed to a new partnership in Western Australia, based on a successful model deployed in the Northern Territory and South Australia, which enables indigenous pastoralists to apply for a range of capacity development and property management planning activities. There will be no cost to participants, since FarmBis and the ILC each pick up 50% of the costs. Evidence from South Australia and the Northern Territory demonstrates this approach has been really useful in improving participants' confidence and capacity, and the knowledge, skills base and networking ability of indigenous landholders. A similar program is being developed in Queensland.

CONCLUSION

While the above illustrates that very considerable change is afoot in the rangelands in terms of re-engaging indigenous people in pastoralism, it is clear that an appropriate level of commitment and capacity does not yet exist to ensure the ongoing success of indigenous pastoral businesses across Australia. It is clearly a matter of small steps leading to larger outcomes, and the transmission of success into the practice of those not performing as well. The current political climate leaves little room for error, with its significant and hard-edged focus on improved economic outcomes as a key to liberating indigenous people from welfare dependency and related negative individual, family and communal symptoms (including dysfunction, disconnectedness and a reduced capacity to engage in the world of work and economic production that the rest of us take for granted).

It is envisaged that in the next five years the ILC will run approximately 80,000 head of cattle on indigenous-held land and create significant economic, employment and training opportunities for indigenous people in Australia's rangelands. The ILC is contributing to a return to the rangelands and to a net regional benefit, where lives can be lived as ongoing

managers and employees in the pastoral and tourism industries. Confidence, relationships, knowledge, skills and strategic networks developed over the long run are forecast to assist in the transition of indigenous land managers toward independence, success and pride, while focusing on sustainability of the land in both economic and environmental terms.

REFERENCES

Jeffries, S. (2006). ILC: A bridge between native title and sustainable land outcomes. Tradition and Change – National Native Title Conference 2006, Darwin, Northern Territory, pp. 7-8.