

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

**Official publication of The Australian Rangeland Society**

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**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 15<sup>th</sup> Australian Rangeland Society Biennial Conference'. (Ed. D. Orr) 4 pages. (Australian Rangeland Society: Australia).

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## **ALLIANCES IN THE RANGELANDS – LEB & OTHER EXAMPLES: CROSS-BORDER TOURISM INITIATIVE**

*J. Schmiechen*

Charles Darwin University, PO Box 795 Alice Springs, NT, 0871  
Email: [schmiech@ozemail.com.au](mailto:schmiech@ozemail.com.au)

### **IMPETUS FOR THIS INITIATIVE**

In 2000 the Lake Eyre Basin Coordinating Group, a community based land and catchment management organisation successfully applied for a Commonwealth grant to undertake a major tourism study of the Lake Eyre Basin. To this time, major concerns had been about protecting the natural environment from feral weed and pest invasion as well as maintain the integrity of the unique desert river systems, which drained into Lake Eyre. Tourism activity was increasing throughout the Basin, yet little was known about the dynamics of what was happening and the possible impacts and opportunities this presented. The Heritage Tourism Project was commenced in 2001 and concluded in 2004. It specifically set out to identify the nature and effects of heritage tourism in the Basin and possibly provide a strategy for future action and development.

### **PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES**

From the outset it became apparent that the issue was much broader than developing new business opportunities for tourism in the Basin, but more importantly managing the current activity and setting clear directions for the future to develop an environment in which tourism could grow in a sustainable manner. The Basin includes four major state and territory jurisdictions, along with numerous local and regional bodies. This was not conducive to developing an overall strategy that would be readily adopted across the varied jurisdictional boundaries. Instead it was deemed that identifying the key issues, analysing the tourism flow patterns and their dynamics would provide a series of guidelines for future action that could be adopted by the different bodies in their planning processes. Over the three years of the project extensive field work and consultation with stakeholder both in and out of the Basin formed the basis for delivering the final report ‘Lake Eyre Basin Heritage Tourism – Future Directions.’

### **KEY OUTCOMES**

- It was identified that tourism flow routes and travel patterns were critical to understanding the nature of tourism in the Basin and the importance of cross border linkages and cooperation.
- Access was seen as the major issue both in terms of the heritage tourism resources and their different users as well as appropriate information.
- The majority of the Basin was crown land under various tenures and tourism is a new form of land use which has no clear legislative framework to operate in like pastoralism, mining, conservation and Aboriginal use.
- Managing environmental impacts was also highly rated and highlighted the need for the Natural Resource Management bodies to take much greater account of tourism in their planning and activities.
- There are significant implications to take a broad across border approach to implementing the Future Directions suggested and ensure tourism is sustainable and provides for enhancing the livelihoods of the Basin communities.