

- NT Aboriginal Economic Development Focus Group and Land Management (Pastoral) Sub-committee.

In the coming year the Division will continue to give priority to identifying land management issues on Indigenous land and supporting sound planning by Indigenous landowners in relation to their land.

The major land management challenge for the Division continues to be the demand from existing properties with enterprise aspirations, especially pastoral properties, that wish to establish or re-establish viable commercial operations. The cost of doing so, along with the capacity of those landowners to manage these enterprises, is often an issue beyond the capacity of the ILC alone.

Eastern Division Office

Output 1 Land Needs Planning Process

The EDO entered into two new LNPP agreements during the year with work continuing in the Peninsula, Coffs Harbour (Many Rivers), Sydney and Queanbeyan ATSIC regions. The local and sub-regional planning in the Bourke (Murdi Paaki) and Tamworth (Kamilaroi) ATSIC regions was completed during the reporting period and the task now is to develop an ILC Sub-Regional Strategy for these regions. Comprehensive planning has not been undertaken in the Cairns, Townsville, Mt Isa, Roma and Brisbane ATSIC regions nor the Torres Straits, but is expected to commence in the coming year.

Some of the existing Land Needs Planning agreements have been hampered by uncertainties concerning the status of the Native Title Representative Bodies (NTRB), as a number of SROLN are being undertaken by them. Another complicating factor is that the EDO has approximately half of Australia's Indigenous population as its clientele, and the decentralised nature of these Indigenous populations makes access to them difficult.

The EDO continues to assist several self-defined groups to develop their LAAS, which underpins their SROLN. These LAAS have assisted land acquisition assessments, and the

“These LAAS have assisted land acquisition assessments, and the Indigenous groups themselves, to determine whether any other land access mechanisms are capable of addressing their needs.”

Output 2 Land Acquisition

The EDO received 44 new land needs registrations during the 2000 – 2001 year. The majority of these new proposals came from New South Wales (27) with Queensland based groups submitting 17 proposals. The new registrations brought the total number of proposals under assessment by the EDO during the 2000-2001 year to 117.

The ILC Board approved four land acquisition proposals submitted by the EDO and supported recommendations to decline two proposals during the reporting period. All recommended approvals related to the high traditional cultural values of the subject properties. As at 30 June 2001, the total number of approvals for the EDO since the inception of the ILC land acquisition program is 83.

Eight purchases were settled in the EDO during the reporting period. Of the eight properties, six were purchased in New South Wales and two in Queensland. The 2000–2001 purchases brought the total number of properties acquired since the commencement of land acquisition by the ILC in the EDO to 63 purchases. A further three properties were the subject of negotiations to purchase at the close of the reporting period. More than 75 per cent of approvals have resulted in the acquisition of properties in the EDO. In a majority of remaining cases, the ILC continues its endeavours to purchase the properties.

A total of 10 properties (361,704 hectares), broken down into seven in New South Wales (15,995 hectares) and three in Queensland (345,709 hectares), were divested during the reporting period. Since its inception the total number of divestments by the EDO to Indigenous title-holding corporations is 47 properties. At the close of the reporting period 17 properties remained in ILC ownership in the Eastern Division area.

Output 3 Land Management

During the reporting period, the EDO increased its capacity for land management liaison and community-based planning through the recruitment of additional qualified staff based in Cairns and Sydney. This initiative offset the geographical remoteness of Brisbane from Far North Queensland in particular, and provides a greater localised access to the ILC's Land Management Program.

Perceived weaknesses in the national Property Management Planning

Report Of **Operations**

Program, and its unsuitability for Indigenous landowners, are being addressed through greater emphasis on community or group-based planning as well as Cultural, Social and Environmental (CSE) initiatives.

The EDO land management activities have continued to link in with land acquisition assessments, particularly at the pre-acquisition phase and the period of ILC property ownership.

The ILC continued to provide direct assistance for a range of Indigenous land management projects in Queensland and New South Wales. These projects included 'good order' works on ILC-purchased properties and the provision of essential equipment to Indigenous groups so that they can fulfil their responsibilities as landowners in the community. Much of the 'good order' works related to weed control, repairs and maintenance and the mitigation of land degradation through provision of strategic earthworks for access tracks. Further assistance was provided for community-based planning, property management planning and the establishment of third party agreements during the early stages of Indigenous land ownership.

During the reporting period initiatives were established to work towards the effective coordination of Government and non-Government programs and services that are relevant to Indigenous land managers. This will be achieved through the ongoing development of networks and the documentation of programs and services for distribution to Indigenous landowners as part of the ILC's coordination and information dissemination responsibilities.

The EDO continued to host an Indigenous Land Management Facilitator (ILMF) in Brisbane and provide administrative support for the position. The ILMF are part of a national network of facilitators funded under the NHT, helping communities with different aspects of environmental work.

The facilitators work with Indigenous landowners, other individuals and organisations involved in promoting sustainable land management and biodiversity conservation. They provide feedback to Commonwealth Government policy makers on land management issues of concern to Indigenous communities. EDO involvement with this project has assisted Indigenous people throughout Queensland to access NHT funding for a range of environmental projects such as protecting remnant vegetation, restoring cultural heritage sites, planting bush tucker, establishing wildlife corridors and caring for watercourses and wetlands.