

Western Division Office

Output 1 Land Needs Planning Process

Land acquisition activity has decreased in the WDO during the past financial year. This is because the WDO has concentrated efforts on finalising the development of a SROLN for each ATSIC region and on its heavy involvement in ensuring the inclusion of input from regional organisations and local groups into the revision of the NILS.

Over the past year, the WDO continued to work on sub-regional planning throughout the state. This involved a constant working relationship with the NTRB, ATSIC Regional Councils, the State Aboriginal Affairs Department and other Indigenous organisations. Progress in each of the six sub-regions; Kimberley, Pilbara, Yamatji, Noongar, Goldfields and Western Desert, has been dependent upon the capacities of the regional organisations to participate in the process.

The WDO has concentrated resources towards regional planning and during the 2000-2001 year finalised agreements in all sub-regions except one. Some of the major outcomes of the LNPP were:

- the input of local groups into the revision of the NILS and RILS
- the use of the LNPP as a tool for input into the development of other ILC policy
- the identification of ways in which the ILC can assist in addressing dispossession at a regional level through our acquisition process.

The WDO's close working relationship with the NTRB in the LNPP has also been beneficial because they have become aware of the extent of the land management issues, both through our acquisition process and in relation to existing Indigenous-held land.

The Goldfields Land Council (GLC) completed the Goldfields Sub-Regional Overview of Land Needs in October 2000. The ILC and GLC have since been negotiating the development of a working partnership in the region. This will ensure that the ILC utilises a regional approach to land acquisition in the Goldfields and assists it to operate in a more transparent and equitable way.

The ILC entered into an Agreement with the Noongar Land Council in January 2001 for the development of a Noongar Sub-Regional Overview of

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Land Needs. The Land Council has sub-contracted the project to Advent Consultancy Services. It was expected that the project would be completed by May 2001 but its completion has been extended due to the complexity of the regional issues.

The ILC entered into an Agreement with the Kimberley Land Council (KLC) in March 2001, and the Kimberley Sub-Regional Overview of Land Needs is expected to be completed by December 2001. This will be an integral part of the ongoing Kimberley Aboriginal Beef Strategy (KABS). KABS is seeking, through the efforts of the ILC and the Kimberley Aboriginal Pastoralists Association (KAPA), to enhance the beef production capacity of the existing and newly acquired Indigenous pastoral properties of the Kimberley.

The Yamatji Land and Sea Council (YLSC) has also committed to the LNPP. The ILC entered into an Agreement with the YLSC in March 2000 to undertake the development of a Yamatji Sub-Regional Overview of Land Needs for the Yamatji region. It is anticipated that the SROLN will be completed in the next few months.

The YLSC has also been recognised as the NTRB for the Ngarda-Ngarli-Yarndu (Pilbara) region. While the Ngarda-Ngarli-Yarndu (ATSIC) Council had already undertaken some regional planning through its Pilbara Land Needs Survey, the ILC, in consultation with the Regional Council, formalised an Agreement with the YLSC to finalise the Pilbara Sub-Regional Overview of Land Needs. To assist, the Regional Council has contributed \$20,000 towards the completion of the overview of land needs and is actively involved with the ILC in its management through representation on a steering committee. This committee meets regularly with the YLSC to monitor progress and address any issues that may arise. The expected completion date for the SROLN is December 2001.

The ILC continues discussions regarding the development of a Western Desert Sub-Regional Overview of Land Needs with the Ngaanyatjarra Land Council, which was recognised last year as the native title representative body for the Western Desert area. Given that the possibilities for land purchase in that particular region are minimal, primarily due to land tenure issues, the ILC entered into an Agreement with the Ngaanyatjarra Council in September 2000 through its land management unit for the development of a Ngaanyatjarra Land Management Needs Analysis. Similar to the Sub-Regional Overview of Land Needs, this project will look at the identification of land management issues in the Ngaanyatjarra lands.

FIGURE 6:
WDO LAND ACQUISITIONS AND DIVESTMENTS 2000 -2001



Output 2 Land Acquisition

During the 2000-2001 financial year, the WDO received 29 new land acquisition proposals, bringing the total number of registered land acquisition proposals to 189. The emphasis on the development of Sub-Regional Overviews of Land Needs will assist the WDO to work through the large number of land acquisition proposals.

No land acquisition proposals were submitted to the ILC Board without the completion of the SROLN. With the exception of one highly culturally significant property in the Yamatji region. Unfortunately, the ILC has been unsuccessful in its attempts to purchase the property.

In 2000-2001, after four years of purchase negotiations, settlement occurred on another property in the Yamatji region. The total number of purchases in Western Australia since the ILC's inception is 26 properties. This past year, the WDO has spent considerable resources working on the divestment of numerous properties to corporations representing the traditional owners. This work has involved a lot of time as the WDO worked to facilitate the resolution of conflict between groups.

Three properties were divested to title-holding bodies during the 2000-2001 period. This brings the total number of properties divested to Indigenous interests in the WDO to 11. Arrangements for the establishment of appropriate title-holding bodies and the subsequent transfer of title to the appropriate group is a complex and time-consuming matter. However, there has been good progress on several of the proposals and more divestments are anticipated early in the new financial year.

To achieve better outcomes the WDO has concentrated on property divestment to traditional owners in the first half of 2001.

The ILC, at 30 June 2001, owned 15 properties in Western Australia and this created a significant amount of repair and maintenance work for the WDO. The ILC undertakes this work in order to have the property at a reasonable standard prior to its divestment to the appropriate title-holding body. Dealing with the day-to-day operations of such varied properties requires a

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flexible approach to their management while maintaining a strong rapport with the traditional owners of the land.

Output 3 Land Management

In 2000-2001 the WDO assisted Indigenous landholders in planning for the use and management of their land. A project team of land acquisition and land management staff assists groups to undertake a group-based planning approach using the LNPP. Once the strategic directions for the land are set by the Indigenous group, any commercial activities then require the engagement of an agricultural consultant who will work with the group to develop long-term business and property plans.

The project team approach allows land management planning to be undertaken early on in the land acquisition process and gives community groups a clear understanding of their complex role as landholders.

As a result of the number of commercial activities being carried out in Western Australia, the WDO has employed in this financial year the services of an agricultural consultant to provide specific technical advice on commercial agricultural activities.

The following are summaries of the land management assistance the ILC has provided throughout WA.

- South West – land management planning has focused on allowing groups to use the land to build a capital base while starting low-risk agricultural enterprises. Many community groups achieve this by leasing or agisting portions of the land. Other properties have entered into share farming operations that allow the opportunity for skills transfer and other learning opportunities.

Some of the other activities supported throughout the year in the South West region include the trial of a sheep feedlot on one property and the establishment of a community gathering area on another property to give community members greater access to the land in addition to enterprise development. The ILC has also supported a project which will provide support to landholders through the purchase of basic farm machinery and livestock.

- Southern Rangelands – building on the two ‘strategy workshops’ undertaken in the previous financial year the ILC, in conjunction with

the Central Agricultural and Pastoralists Aboriginal Corporation, developed the Southern Rangelands Indigenous Land Use Strategy. The strategy is designed to assist Indigenous producers within the region to address key land management and business issues. The major focus has been the delivery of best management practice workshops, which have been delivered in conjunction with local Department of Agriculture officers.

In addition to this project, support continued at Peedamulla and Mt Divide and new projects were started on Belele and Ninghan Stations.

- Goldfields – producers in the Goldfields also came together for the first of a series of meetings that developed the Goldfields Indigenous Primary Producers Aboriginal Corporation. Many producers are looking at diversification of land use in order to bring about the long-term viability and sustainability of their businesses. This will result in a property review being undertaken in the early part of the next financial year.
- Ngaanyatjarra Lands – the ILC continued to work with the Ngaanyatarra Council in order to address the specific cultural and natural heritage management issues that landholders face within this region. The ILC gave assistance to the Council to undertake a land management needs analysis of the region that will form the structure for future ILC land management support,
- Kimberley –KABS continued to be the main focus of land management activity in the Kimberley. Activities were undertaken at both the regional and property level to advance the Strategy.

At the regional level, the ILC continued its partnership with KAPA through a 12 month Project Agreement for services in support of KABS. These services included:

- development of ‘immediate needs support’ proposals and their implementation
- establishment and support for a KABS ‘Development Team’
- land management representation and coordination
- industry development representation and coordination
- training coordination.

In the second half of 2000, KAPA and the ILC worked together to establish an independent steering group to lead the further development of KABS. The 'KABS Steering Group' was formally constituted at its first meeting in October 2000 in Broome. It has 10 members who represent Kimberley Indigenous and non-Indigenous pastoralists, the ILC, Agriculture WA (AgWA) and an independent chair from the Prime Minister's Supermarkets to Asia Program.

The Steering Group oversaw the development of a pre-feasibility study into the establishment of a marketing cooperative for Kimberley Aboriginal Pastoralists. This study, undertaken by Hassalls and Associates consultants, was developed in direct consultation with property managers and KAPA representatives in the first few months of the 2001 year. Subsequently, the KABS Steering Group met to consider this pre-feasibility report. The Steering Group provided its endorsement of the directions contained in the report, including the testing of the co-op concept through organising two trial boatloads of mickey bulls from participating Indigenous properties.

Following the recent ILC Board endorsement of the proposal, arrangements for the trial are now being finalised. At the present time it is expected that cattle will be pastured at Roebuck Plains and then exported to Malaysia in late 2001. The data resulting from the trials will enable the co-op concept to be tested and, if successful, allow for the eventual development of a formal co-op structure.

The KABS Immediate Need Support program continued in 2000-2001. It enables participating properties to maintain their present level of pastoral operation while the KABS is developing. Immediate needs support is primarily directed at holding infrastructure and herd improvement where there is both an immediate and strategic benefit to the enterprise. All proposals are assessed against a stringent set of criteria which ensures that support is well targeted. At 30 June 2001, there were eight properties receiving immediate needs support.

The WDO has been involved in a number of joint initiatives with other government agencies in the Kimberley. The higher profile initiatives were:

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- Aboriginal Pastoral Directors Training – the WDO coordinated the delivery of a five-day course in August 2000 to the Tjurabalan Pastoral Company. The course was a collaboration between the Training Providers, Mr Jim Downing and Mr Alan Lawford, with staff from KAPA, AgWA and ILC.
- Roebuck Plains Field Day – the ILC, AgWA and KAPA held a field day at the ILC's Roebuck Plains Station in December 2000. The Field Day attracted strong participation from Indigenous properties across the Kimberley and the Pilbara. Participants found the practical aspects very useful, which included bull fertility testing and assessment, spaying, dehorning and marking.
- Bunuba Improved Land Holding and Management Structures –in partnership with the National Native Title Tribunal and the KLC, the ILC aimed at assisting Bunuba people to develop improved land holding and management structures for Leopold Downs and Fairfield Stations. The ILC's involvement reflected the overlapping nature of traditional ownership, proprietary and management interests that are emerging as a major challenge for Indigenous landholders.
- Aquaculture Projects – the ILC is a member of the West Kimberley Prawn Aquaculture Working group, which is exploring the development of commercial aquaculture projects on Indigenous land. The Working Group involves representatives from the Kimberley Aquaculture Aboriginal Corporation, the KLC and a number of State and Commonwealth government agencies.