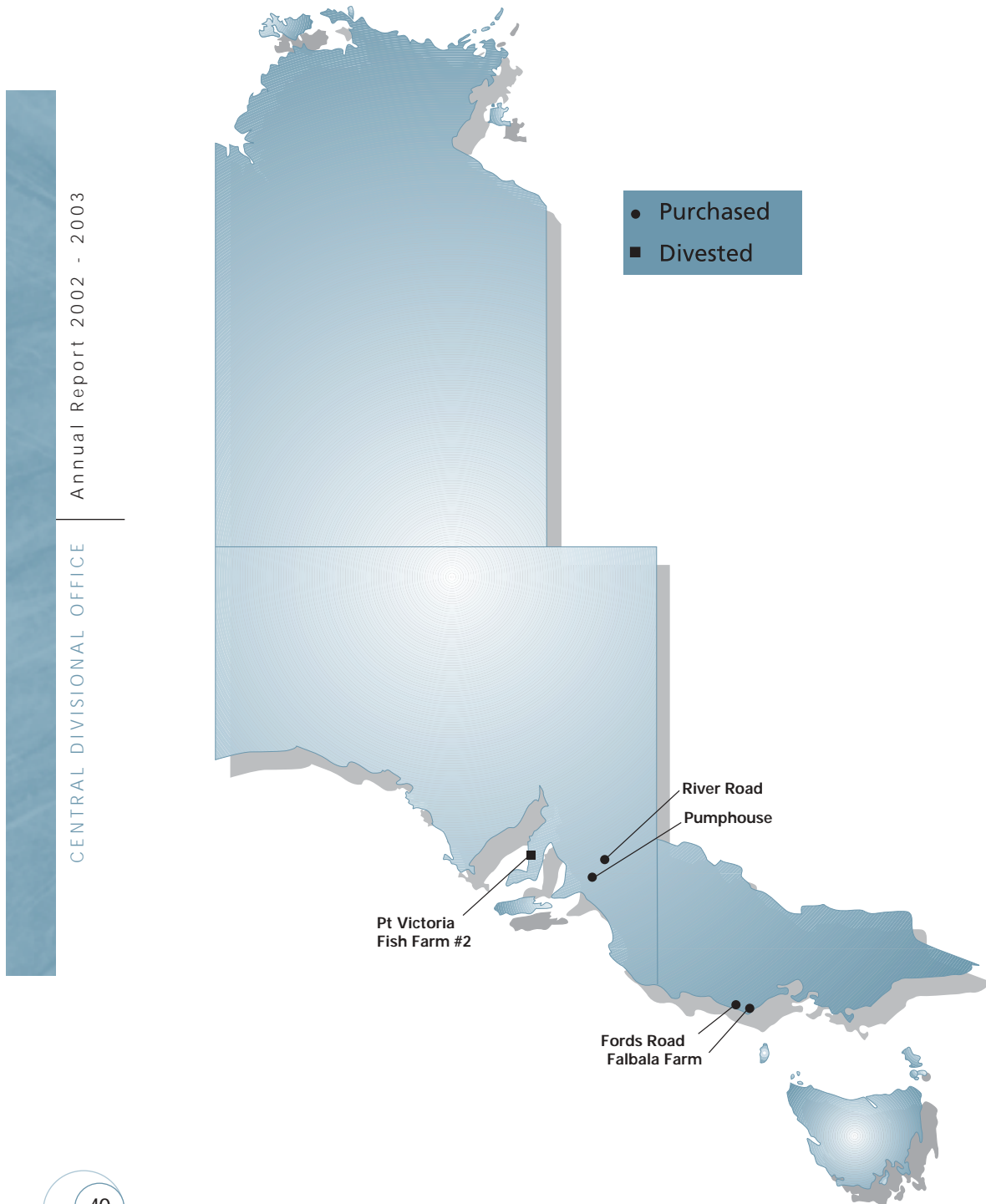


CENTRAL DIVISIONAL OFFICE

FIGURE 5: CDO LAND PURCHASED AND DIVESTED 2002-2003



ASSISTANCE IN THE ACQUISITION AND MANAGEMENT OF LAND

Six land acquisition proposals were registered prior to the launch of the new programs in December 2002: four from Victoria and two from South Australia. Two of the Victorian proposals were submitted to the ILC Board and approved, and one of the subject properties was successfully acquired.

Under the new programs, eight land acquisition applications were registered: two from the Northern Territory, three from South Australia and three from Victoria. All, except an application to the social program from SA and one to the cultural program from Victoria, were lodged under the Economic Acquisition Program. The nature of the applications varied, ranging from horticultural (mangoes and table grapes) and pastoral properties to an aquaculture farm.

Total land acquisition applications for the year, at fourteen, were down from the previous year's total of 39. This was due to the suspension of the acceptance of applications for land acquisition and land management assistance during the latter part of 2002 in the transition from the previous NILS to the new land acquisition and land management programs. A gradual increase in applications is expected as interested groups become more familiar and comply with the requirements of the new program.

To raise awareness of the new programs, staff of the CDO conducted a significant number of information sessions with community groups and agencies in the latter half of 2002-2003, including nine of the twelve ATSIC Regional Councils in the Division.

No properties were divested during 2002-2003. The main reason for this is the position taken by the ILC Board that proposed Title Holding Bodies should be thoroughly assessed as having the capacity to take on the responsibility for land ownership before divestment, and that the ILC should retain ownership of properties for up to three years to enable this assessment to be undertaken. The assessment of capacity, as well as the provision of support for capacity development, is well underway with a number of properties in the Division.

The obstacles to the grant of ILC-acquired properties in Tasmania to the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania (ALCT) remain unresolved, but the ILC Board reviewed the situation in May 2003 and decided to rescind its

previous decision to grant only to the ALCT, allowing the option of granting to other Aboriginal corporations to be explored.

Sixteen applications for land management assistance were received (excluding land management activities such as essential repairs and maintenance undertaken on properties acquired by the ILC). Eleven applications came from the Northern Territory, three from South Australia and two from Victoria. As was the case for land acquisition, the number of land management applications was fewer than previous years (31 were received in 2001-2002), again largely due to the transition to the new programs, but also because of the requirement that applications now be accompanied by a detailed property management or business plan.

Two land management projects of particular significance were approved during the year:

- NT Pastoral Project – a collaborative approach between the ILC, the Northern Territory Government and the Northern and Central Land Councils aimed at working with Indigenous pastoral property owners to identify and support opportunities to increase their cattle production.
- Native Foods Industry Development – a collaborative project between the ILC, Reedy Creek Nursery and several Commonwealth and South Australian Government agencies, aimed at assessing a number of interested Aboriginal communities across South Australia to trial the cultivation of native or bush foods. Concurrent with these assessments and trials, a range of research and other activities is being undertaken aimed at developing this fledging industry into a commercial one providing sound economic, social and cultural benefits to Aboriginal landowners.

Support for land management planning as a precursor to further land management activity continued to be a priority. To that end effective relationships have continued to be developed and/or maintained with FarmBis providers across the Division. Support was also provided to them by directly assisting to fund Indigenous planning facilitators and providing funding needed by Indigenous landowners to participate in the formal

planning process. A significant number of Indigenous landowners are now successfully involved in the FarmBis program in South Australia, the Northern Territory and Victoria.

At June 30 2003, the CDO was solely or jointly involved in managing approximately 60 land management projects with a total value of over \$35m. The majority of these funds were provided from sources other than the ILC, including significant contributions from the participating communities. The ILC's overall commitment is approximately \$11.5m. The nature of these existing projects is diverse and, apart from those mentioned previously, they include:

- major multi-agency environmental projects, particularly in the NT, involving the eradication and/or control of invasive weeds and feral animals, and fire management, on Aboriginal lands
- small-scale sustainable enterprise development in the areas of cattle, buffalo and camel production, horticulture, aquaculture and land-based tourism.

Significant training and employment activities for the landowners are associated with many of these projects and in the current projects alone approximately 300 people have received, or will receive, either formal (accredited) or informal training in a variety of land management skills.

OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES IN MEETING OUTCOME 1

Operational challenges during the year revolved around the finalisation of the new programs, and guidelines and application procedures. The transition to the new programs also required significant effort and patience from both staff and potential applicants in terms of familiarisation and compliance with the new requirements, creating a lull in new activity. Staff took the opportunity to re-visit a range of existing issues and bring many of them to a resolution.

Of particular note was the focus of effort on ways to ensure that potential Title Holding Bodies (THBs) have the capacity to take on the responsibilities of land ownership and achieve their aspirations. A range of assessment and capacity development approaches were developed.

Particularly successful was the development and trial by this office's Capacity Development Coordinator of an 'Operations Portfolio' workshop – a two day program for THBs providing them with foundation information regarding the responsibilities and obligations that come with being part of an incorporated body and with land ownership.

It is envisaged that these challenges will continue into 2003-2004, but will be progressively addressed as the new programs and approaches are bedded down.