

EASTERN DIVISIONAL OFFICE

FIGURE 6: EDO LAND PURCHASED AND DIVESTED 2002-2003



ASSISTANCE IN THE ACQUISITION AND MANAGEMENT OF LAND

In New South Wales, the Land Needs Planning Process (LNPP) remains current in the Coffs Harbour ATSIC region. Sub-Regional Overviews of Land Needs (SROLNs) have been completed in all other New South Wales ATSIC Regions. It is anticipated that the LNPP for the Coffs Harbour region will be resolved in 2003-2004.

The EDO formally advised all proponent groups who had submitted land acquisition proposal under the previous NILS of the requirement to reapply under the NILS 2002-2006 if they were still seeking ILC assistance in addressing their land needs.

The EDO received seven land acquisition applications under the NILS 2002-2006 from Queensland based groups and eight from applicants in New South Wales. These applications were at various stages of assessment at 30 June 2003.

The ILC Board approved two Queensland acquisition proposals under the previous NILS. The properties concerned were purchased in 2002-2003. The first property, Gaythorne Station, is a 2,104 hectare freehold parcel of land in the Miriam Vale region, South East Queensland. Gaythorne Station holds approximately 1,464 hectares of Eucalyptus plantation. The ILC and the proponent group successfully negotiated a contract-for-service that will provide employment and training opportunities for the applicants.

The second property, Old Homebush Road, is a 6.3 hectare freehold allotment, situated northwest of Toowoomba, Queensland. The site comprises a traditional Bora-ring and a number of culturally significant stone arrangements.

The Board approved two acquisition applications from New South Wales during the reporting period. Both were applications to the social acquisition program.

Two properties were purchased in New South Wales. One, near Grafton, was approved under the previous NILS, while the second, located in Moree, was approved under the new regime. At 30 June 2003, one other New South Wales property was the subject of purchase negotiations.

Land management activities in the EDO focused on the development and implementation of the Property Remediation Program and land management initiatives on ILC-owned properties.

Eight properties qualified for the first stage of remediation assistance in 2002-2003. Remediation packages were at various stages of development or implementation at the close of the reporting period.

Land management activities on ILC-owned properties focussed on essential maintenance and repair issues and Property Management Planning for prospective title holding groups.

OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES IN MEETING OUTCOME 1

Many challenges arose in 2002-2003 from a restructure of the EDO and implementation of the revised NILS. During the year the EDO formalised project teams to assist in managing all facets of land acquisition and land management projects, as well as using specialist skills and expertise within the Division.

Following the property stocktake, land management activities of the EDO focused on developing a program to address those properties requiring remediation in 2002-2003. Project Advisors were appointed to facilitate the critical remediation program across the Division.

The major ongoing challenges were:

- the management of operational change
- the development and implementation of operational units
- management of a transitional phase for proposals submitted under the previous guidelines
- implementation of the new NILS and procedures with respect to the assessment of land acquisition and land management applications
- communication of the new policies to stakeholders to ensure their understanding of the new programs.

The dissemination of information about the NILS 2002-2006 was in part carried out through regional information sessions and formal presentations to ATSIC Regional Councils, Native Title Representative Bodies and Commonwealth and State agencies.

The EDO continued to work in a coordinated approach with a number of Commonwealth and State agencies to address land management issues on Indigenous-held land throughout Queensland and New South Wales.

The EDO continued its involvement in the National Indigenous Land Management Facilitators Project. The project is jointly funded by Environment Australia and Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Australia, and supports a national network of thirteen Indigenous Land Management Facilitators (ILMFs). The facilitators work with Indigenous people to develop and support sustainable land management initiatives, and to improve Indigenous access to mainstream natural resource management funding programs. As a host agency for one of the Queensland based facilitators, the EDO provides administrative and other support to the project.

During the 2002–2003 period, the ILMF worked with Indigenous organisations, regional natural resource management organisations and the Queensland government, to gain support for the establishment of regionally based, Indigenous identified positions to support Indigenous land management activities at the local level. Many Indigenous land owners and traditional owner groups in Queensland are actively involved in community natural resource management planning and decision-making, and have successfully sought funding from programs such as the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) and the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality, to support their land management efforts.

The first phase of the NHT program will be replaced and new regional arrangements are being developed for the delivery of the second phase. The EDO-based ILMF consulted with Indigenous communities in many regions of Queensland, providing support for their involvement in the proposed new regional arrangements and for improving access to funding and support for natural and cultural resource management.

