Aboriginal land and sea management in the Top End: a community-driven evaluation

"I want you mob to help tell our story" (Ranger group: 28-10-2006).

CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems, Darwin, Northern Territory

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Abbreviations

ABA	Aboriginal Benefits Account
ACF	Australian Conservation Foundation
AFMA	Australian Fisheries Management Authority
AG	Australian Government
ALEP	Aboriginal Landcare Education Program
ALSMART	Aboriginal Land and Sea Management Review Team
ANU	Australian National University
AQIS	Australian Quarantine and Inspection Services
AWLSM	Aboriginal Women's Land and Sea Management, an NLC Program
BIITE	Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education
CBNRM	Community Based Natural Resource Management
CDEP	Community Development Employment Project
CDU	Charles Darwin University
CEPANCRM	Contract Employment Program for Aboriginals in Natural and Cultural Resource Management
CFC	Caring for Country
CFCU	Caring For Country Unit, Northern Land Council
CRC	Cooperative Research Centre
DEET	Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education & Training
DEST	Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training
DEWHA	Australian Government Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage & the Arts
DEWR	Australian Government Department of Employment & Workplace Relations
DPIFM	Northern Territory Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mining
IBA	Indigenous Business Australia
IEK	Indigenous Ecological Knowledge
IK	Indigenous Knowledge
ILC	Indigenous Land Corporation
ILMF	Indigenous Land Management Facilitator
IPA	Indigenous Protected Area
IPP	Indigenous Pastoral Program
LWA	Land and Water Australia
NAILSMA	North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance
NHT	Natural Heritage Trust
NHT2	Natural Heritage Trust Extension Phase 2
NLC	Northern Land Council
NRETA	Northern Territory Department of Natural Resources, Environment & the Arts
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NRMMC	Natural Resources Management Ministerial Council
NT	Northern Territory
NTG	Northern Territory Government
NT INRM	Northern Territory Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan
NTRIF	Northern Territory Research & Innovation Fund
STEP	Structured Training and Employment Projects
TEALMES	Top End Aboriginal Land Management and Employment Strategy
TO	Traditional Owner
WAFMA	West Arnhem Fire Management Agreement
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

SUMMARY

This report presents a community driven evaluation of Aboriginal land and sea management in the Top End of the Northern Territory, undertaken in partnership with the Aboriginal Land and Sea Management Review Team (ALSMART). ALSMART was formed specifically to provide input to the evaluation project. The evaluation began as a literature-based review of ranger programs in the Top End. The scope of the project was later extended greatly to include a participatory evaluation process, undertaken in close consultation with Aboriginal land and sea managers. The scope of the evaluation was adjusted to cover Aboriginal land and sea management more broadly, rather than just formalized ranger groups, and the role of the NLC in supporting Aboriginal land and sea management. The evaluation is connected to three related projects:

i) An evaluation framework for enhancing Aboriginal community-based natural resource management, with support funding from The Northern Territory Research and Innovation Fund (NTRIF)

ii) The Healthy People Healthy Country Project: Sustainable Northern Landscapes and the Nexus with Indigenous Health, funded by a research grant (NTU7) from Land and Water Australia to Charles Darwin University

iii) The Review of Aboriginal Community Based Natural Resource Management (ACBNRM) funded by the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) through the Northern Territory Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts (NRETA)

iv) Training of the ALSMART, funded by the Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET).

A participatory approach to the evaluation was adopted to encourage engagement and ownership of the evaluation process by Aboriginal land managers. About 70% of formalized ranger groups within the NLC region were consulted in the evaluation. Seven groups operating outside the formal ranger network, two ranger groups operating outside the NLC region, and three Landcare groups were also consulted. Key stakeholders from government and non-government agencies and research organisations were also consulted. The primary focus of the participatory evaluation was to gather qualitative data from a cross section of stakeholder groups using a flexible methodological framework appropriate for different groups. Perceptions across all stakeholder groups are presented in the report to highlight their views and attitudes about Aboriginal land and sea management, and the key issues arising from the consultations are summarised. The evaluation was severely limited by a lack of documentation of activities related to Aboriginal land and sea management programs, and therefore relies heavily on the collective memory and perceptions of those actively involved in Aboriginal land and sea management.

The results from the consultations have been divided into two parts. The first consists of a synthesis of views and perceptions from Traditional Owners and other stakeholders about Aboriginal land and sea management broadly in the Top End. The second addresses more specifically the role of the NLC through its Caring for Country Program.

Outcomes of Aboriginal land and sea management in the Top End

Aboriginal land and sea management in the Top End has been described as the fastest growing movement in Natural Resource Management (NRM) in Australia. Other states have not experienced the same pace of growth and some have been very interested to draw lessons from the Top End to start their own programs. Recent figures indicate that there are 36 formal ranger groups in Top End. In particular, the number of sea ranger and women ranger groups is increasing. Many groups have also established, or are in the process of establishing, junior ranger programs.

Healthy country: Research and Traditional Owners' own perspectives provide evidence that substantial ecological benefit derives from Aboriginal people living on their country and/or able to actively interact with and work on country. Aboriginal people are well equipped through a remarkable skills base, commitment and location to address both opportunities and challenges in achieving a new level of effective management of land and sea.

Beyond direct environmental outcomes through improved natural resource management, many people consulted in this evaluation highlighted the wide range of benefits to Aboriginal people from land and sea management activities. These include:

Identity, self esteem and hope: Perhaps the greatest benefit of the land and sea management program as articulated by Aboriginal people is the sense of self worth and pride reported by rangers and Traditional Owners involved in the program. Traditional Owners explained in various ways their excitement, enjoyment, satisfaction and pride from being involved in land and sea management. Being a ranger or being involved in land management creates opportunities for Traditional Owners to be on country, see country and reconnect with country. Many Traditional Owners observed that countrymen respect those who are involved in the program, and feel good to know that country is being looked after.

Meeting cultural obligations: Ranger groups are a mechanism for facilitating individual, family or clan obligations to look after country. In some areas of the Top End ranger groups are managing areas that are uninhabited, or areas that would otherwise be inaccessible to individual Traditional Owners.

Indigenous Knowledge transfer: Land and sea management presents opportunities for inter-generational transfer of knowledge in the community.

Increased community capacity: Increased community capacity is one of the big achievements of the program. The program has improved adult numeracy and literacy levels in most of the remote communities in which the program operates, and Traditional Owners and rangers have received accredited and non-accredited training from a host of training providers. There has been increased access to infrastructure, resources and equipment such as computers, vehicles and storage sheds.

Recognition: There is growing Government and non-Government recognition of the important role that Aboriginal people can play in natural resource management, including the creation of economic opportunities through payment for environmental services.

Improved health: There are significant perceived benefits both for mental and physical health for rangers and Traditional Owners involved in Aboriginal land and sea management, as have been explored in detail as part of the LWA funded *Healthy People Healthy Country Project* led by Charles Darwin University (CDU).

Development of opportunities for enterprise: The involvement of ranger groups in enterprise and small business ventures is creating opportunity for wider involvement by Aboriginal communities in employment and business.

Governance arrangements: In some communities the local ranger group has become the focal point for interactions with external interest groups, and offers a functional institutional base from which to develop environmental and related programs.

Employment: In mid 2007 Aboriginal land and sea management employed an estimated 350 Top End Aboriginal people through CDEP, with some groups successful in securing or generating extra funding to pay 'top up' money. More than 15 Traditional Owners were on full wages in ranger groups in the Top End and this number was increasing.

Empowerment: External stakeholders are increasingly recognising that Aboriginal land management should be driven by Traditional Owners, and that their aspirations must be paramount.

Mutually beneficial partnerships: Many partnerships have evolved through Aboriginal land and sea management activities and most of these have resulted in beneficial outcomes for all partners involved.

Strong voice for land and sea management: Ranger groups and Traditional Owners involved in land and sea management represent a collective voice for advocacy within the Northern Lands Council (NLC) and for dialogue with government.

Conditions for success in Aboriginal land and sea management

The evaluation revealed the following set of conditions as necessary for strong and successful Aboriginal land and sea management

Adequate consultations: Establishment of ranger groups needs to follow on from effective consultative processes with Traditional Owners as set out in the *Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act*, 1976.

Understanding of Traditional Owners' aspirations: Priorities for land and sea management need to be reviewed regularly to ensure that local aspirations are understood and drive the program. Traditional Owners realise the need to align their interests with those of government, but feel that this alignment should be made in a way that also brings local aspirations to the fore.

Integration of Indigenous Knowledge in the program: Indigenous Knowledge is a very important cornerstone of caring for country, and effort must be made to ensure that integration of Western and Indigenous knowledge systems occurs.

Strong cultural connections: Aboriginal land and sea management must have a strong cultural base and have strong connections with related cultural activity and organizations that foster this.

Trust and longevity: Strong viable programs are developed on relationships of trust, while success builds over time as skills and knowledge are developed.

Strong governance structure: A strong governance structure is required that is based on the recognition that Aboriginal people have the right to speak for and manage country. This structure should be negotiated by Traditional Owners.

Matching local needs with external support: Group requirements for administrative or project related support should be determined in light of the group's capacity and Traditional Owners' preferences.

High quality targeted training: It is important that rangers receive targeted and highly relevant training. There needs to be greater communication between Aboriginal land and sea managers and their representatives and organisations that are able to deliver training, to ensure that training programs are designed around each group's specific needs.

Availability of adequate funding over an extended period: Ranger groups have developed management plans through participatory planning processes, but to date these have rarely been used as a basis for sourcing an integrated funding package. Such a model of funding would best ensure that local aspirations are funded. Program funding requires capital or asset investment as well as ongoing running and maintenance costs.

Long term strategic partnerships: Many groups recognise the value of strategic partnerships in their program in terms of advocacy and fundraising.

Relatively stable host organisations: Many of the groups have difficult relationships with their host organisations and sometimes these relations impact on the performance and stability of the group.

Presence of a strong and local charismatic leader: Many of the groups have strong and influential Traditional Owners who have been important in motivating and sustaining the interest in the program. Some of these individuals are now outside the formal programs although they still have interests in the program.

Wider interest in NRM among the community: Communities with a very high level of awareness of environmental issues are more likely to support the land and sea management program.

High elder involvement: The involvement of elders in the program is seen as important for accessing Indigenous Knowledge and accessing country.

Clear empowerment objectives and plans: Many Traditional Owners are frustrated that their programs are controlled by external facilitators or other individuals. They would like an empowerment strategy that has a clear exit plan for external or 'balanda' (non-Aboriginal) support.

Effective and responsive governance structures for Aboriginal land and sea management: Traditional Owners would like to see more coordinated support from the various Aboriginal land and sea management organisations, such as the Aboriginal Landcare Education Program, NLC's Caring for Country Unit, North Australia Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA), and government facilitators. Traditional Owners recommended more clarification of roles and responsibilities to minimize overlaps and tensions between organisations.

Long term mentoring support: Many key Traditional Owners need support to develop skills required to operate in their new roles in land and sea management (in the areas of conflict resolution, time management, managing 'humbug', drug and alcohol problems, relationships etc). Consistent support to these individuals will ensure the program's viability.

The following are key recommendations for strengthening Aboriginal land and sea management in the Top End:

1. Enhanced delivery of support to Aboriginal land and sea management, including:

2. Improved coordination among the relevant organisations and agencies.

3. The provision of funding over longer time frames to mitigate climatic, social and other technical challenges that may limit implementation.

4. Streamlined administrative requirements related to funding applications and reporting.

5. Active training and mentoring of leaders within ranger groups to develop the skills necessary to assume control of the program and ensure its viability in the longer term.

6. Higher priority given to the conservation of Indigenous Knowledge and its application to land and sea management.

7. Development of the capacity of ranger groups to record and document their activities, and to manage this information effectively.

8. Stronger and more coordinated advocacy for greater recognition of land and sea management as a 'real job', and the development of suitable incentive structures to reward land and sea management activities.

9. Development of clearer guidelines about the nature of support delivered from the host agencies, and their roles and involvement in decision making.

10. Review current procedures and processes for forming ranger groups to ensure that the right people are involved and consulted.

The Northern Land Council's achievements in Aboriginal land and sea management

The NLC in partnership with other key stakeholders has facilitated the formation of 36 ranger groups in the Top End of the Northern Territory. In this evaluation, the performance of the

NLC's CFCU is assessed against its objectives as outlined in the NLC's *Caring for Country Strategy 2003-2006*. A summary of this assessment is presented in the table below.

Summary table of achievements of Northern Land Council Caring for Country Unit against its objectives

Summary objectives of the NLC CFC Strategy	NLC CFCU achievements and rating
Increase participation of Aboriginal families in land and sea management.	*Significant achievement.* The growth in the program has been remarkable, with a very marked increase in the number of Aboriginal people involved in both the formal and informal program, despite the highly constrained environment under which the program operates.
Establish best practice approaches to major environmental threats particularly weeds and feral animals.	*Significant achievement.* A number of key programs focusing on weeds, fire, feral animal control and coastal surveillance have done much to underline the significance of the work Aboriginal people are doing.
Establish best practice approaches to the awareness, conservation and use of Indigenous Knowledge.	*Low achievement.* Most Traditional Owners felt this aspect of the program was the weakest and most under resourced. Most Traditional Owners would like to see more advocacy by the NLC and more project proposals developed that support Indigenous Knowledge.
Increase access to effective training and education of rangers.	*Moderate achievement.* Achievements have been undermined by the weaknesses in coordination among the key stakeholders (training providers, NLC and others) and the perception held by Traditional Owners that government agencies do not appreciate the importance of training and education.
Enhance communication networks to support Aboriginal land and sea management initiatives.	*Significant achievement.* Annual conferences have been identified as one of the strongest elements of the CFCU coordinated program, particularly in the Aboriginal women land and sea management program. Reports and other documents are not as important as these meetings for communication among the ranger groups.
Improve access of Aboriginal people to quality information about environmental impacts.	Unable to rate because of a lack of relevant information.
Develop a dynamic and effective service.	*Moderate achievement.* While the CFCU believe their delivery of service is high relative to their funding, most ranger groups considered it low and want to see the NLC strengthen its capacity to deliver a more effective service.

Generally Traditional Owners and other stakeholders were positive about the development of CFCU and commended the NLC for facilitating the program. However there are indications that the program has reached the limits of what it can deliver under its current structure. The following are key recommendations for changing current Aboriginal land and sea management arrangements within the NLC:

1. Increase awareness of, and priority given to, the Caring for Country Strategy within the NLC, and improve within-agency communication and collaboration.

2. Work with ranger groups to better understand their requirements for support from the CFCU, to raise awareness of the CFCU's roles and responsibilities, and to come to an agreed understanding of what are reasonable expectations.

3. In consultation with Traditional Owners and other key stakeholders, review existing partnerships and relationships to strengthen collaborations and improve coordination for Aboriginal land and sea management.

4. Annually review the strategy to ensure continued alignment with Traditional Owners' aspirations and priorities.

5. Develop an improved reporting framework for assessing progress and outcomes related to specific objectives of the Caring for Country strategy.

6. Lobby for more support for annual ranger conferences to allow for stronger networking and communication among Traditional Owners and ranger groups.

7. In consultation with senior rangers and Traditional Owners, review the role of facilitators in Aboriginal land and sea management, and provide clear guidance to facilitators about their roles and responsibilities in relation to the program and to wider Aboriginal land and sea management.

1.   INTRODUCTION

"What are Traditional Owners and other stakeholders saying? What are they thinking about Aboriginal land and sea management? Do they like where the program is headed? Is the NLC meeting their needs? Are we doing the right things? We want to make sure we are not taking on the role of the Traditional Owners, we have been at it for 10 years. There are many groups which are now involved. As the program grows I am constantly worrying about the direction we are taking, I want to know what people are thinking. What do they want from us? Are we delivering to their expectations?" (NLC: 10-10-2004).

1.1   Background

In the Northern Territory (NT), Aboriginal people constitute 28.5% of the population and own over 40% of the landmass, with a further 10% under claim. The *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act* 1976 established Land Councils as statutory authorities to assist Aboriginal people in the to claim back crown lands and to manage former Aboriginal reserves that became Inalienable Freehold Aboriginal Land under the Act. Today, Aboriginal people live in approximately 200 communities ranging in size from small family groups at outstations up to townships of over 2 000 people.

The Northern Land Council (NLC) is the principal representative body for Aboriginal people in the Top End of the Northern Territory. It supports Aboriginal land and sea management through its Caring for Country Strategy. About half of the 28, 000 Aboriginal people in the NLC region have retained or regained ownership of traditional lands – an area of land totalling about 170 000 km^2. These lands remain some of the most intact and biologically diverse landscapes in Australia, but they require ongoing management to ensure they remain in this state. Aboriginal people are active in areas and regions of the northern Territory which are currently not under active formal management by government. They reside or regularly visit country and ensure the management of their lands sometimes at their own cost.

In Aboriginal world-view land and sea management rights of use are not distinguished from management because use is seen as part of management (Povinelli, 1992). The health and productivity of land or sea country is dependent on regular human visits; sites must be occupied, used and talked about (Povinelli, 1992). Gathering and hunting is a way of attending to, re-enacting and ensuring the physical and mythical reproduction of the environment, the human body and the social group. Their activity on country, such as storytelling, camping and foraging, ensures reproduction of material, ecological and mythical landscapes (Povenelli, 1992). Spiritual affiliation to country accords both rights and responsibilities including custodial responsibilities for keeping the land healthy and its species abundant (Davies, 1999). Ranger groups are a mechanism to complement individual, family or clan obligations to look after country. Rangers have access to transport and can extend the scope of the land and sea management activities being undertaken.

Aboriginal land and sea management in the Top End has been described as the fastest growing movement in NRM in Australia. Other states have not experienced the same pace of growth and some have been very interested to draw lessons from the Top End to start their own programs. In particular, the number of sea and women ranger groups in the Top End is increasing. As well

many groups have established or are in the process of establishing junior ranger programs. ALEP has established a program to involve youths in land and sea management, and this aspect of land management is also growing. There is also management that is occurring outside the formal programs, though much of this is under reported and recognised. Some Traditional Owners wish to formalize their land and sea management activities as a ranger group but there are as many other groups that are happy to operate outside ranger group formation. This involvement by Traditional Owners covers substantial areas of the NLC region and there are indications that the numbers of ranger groups and Traditional Owners who are actively involved in land and sea management will continue to grow. For example, more ranger groups are getting involved under Indigenous Protected Areas (IPA), Indigenous Pastoral Programs (IPP) and Joint Managed Parks.

The nature of the community based management programs varies significantly between Aboriginal communities, from broad scale extensive control to control of regionally and nationally significant pest infestations. The need for resources for community based control is therefore a priority issue. Aboriginal lands are often vast, but the people are few and often without the physical, financial and technical resources available to control weeds (Storrs *et al.*, 1999).

In recent years there has been increasing recognition of the value of Aboriginal land and sea management and the outcomes generated by ranger groups and Traditional Owners (see Table 1.1).

Table 1.1 Outcomes of ranger group and Traditional Owner involvement in land and sea management, as portrayed in selected media articles.

Outcomes	Comment
NLC recognised for work in quarantine battle	Ranger groups are exceeding expectations with the outcomes of cooperative work with the Australia Quarantine and Inspection service (Northern Australian Quarantine strategy coordinator, Andrew Moss, Land Rights News: Dec, 2002)
Golden bandicoots thriving.	A program in the Top End is paying substantial dividend for an animal population believed to be extinct on the NT mainland. (Land Rights News)
Rangers protect our gold stocks.	A valuable collaboration between NT Parks and wildlife, traditional Aboriginal owners and local Yolngu rangers and the NLC are helping protect NT stocks of the Golden Bandicoot (Land Rights News, March 05)
Mimosa battle front is the community.	The crucial on the ground involvement of Aboriginal communities in fighting mimosa infestation has been recognised with a $42 650 per year grant from the NHT to the NLC…… The battle against mimosa should be collaborative, because mimosa doesn't recognise boundaries or tenure. (Land Rights News: July, 1999)
Aboriginal sea rangers.	I have informed Senator Macdonald of the great work being done by the rangers who work as part of the government's marine ranger program. These guys are People say rangers

Outcomes	Comment
	are our eyes and ears on the water and they make a valuable contribution to the fight against illegal fishing (Land Rights News: December, 2005).
Quolls thriving.	Another major project under island Ark has been the relocation of the Northern Quolls from across the Top End to the islands of Pabasso and Astell, located 50 kilometres NE of Nhulunbuy to protect the marsupial from cane toads. (Common ground: July, 2005).
Rangers capture illegal fishermen.	Territory Indigenous rangers captured a foreign fishing vessel and five illegal fishermen near the shore of the Top End coastal community of Maningrida at the weekend…. NT Fisheries Minister Kon Vatskalis said last night "the marine rangers are an important link in the battle against illegal fishing. I am calling upon the Federal government and the federal Minister Ian MacDonald to request funding to establish a bigger marine rangers network across the NT." (Vatskalis 2005a)
Indigenous rangers take a lead in new buffalo monitoring program.	Indigenous ranger groups from Arnhem land will be employed to monitor buffalo for tuberculosis…… Monitoring is a part of the government's ongoing animal healthy surveillance programs. It is necessary for the live cattle and buffalo exported from the territory to be disease free. We exported 1 556 buffalo to Malaysia last year and so it serves us well to know that they are free from tuberculosis. The disease free status also ensures a reduction of inspection costs for the territory (Kon Vatskalis 14-08-2005).
Saving Miyapunu.	A turtle recovery project at Nhulunbuy is operating with alarming results, with 52 turtles rescued since the start of May... 269 turtles have been found in ghost nets since the program commenced in 1996 with 152 surviving the ordeal.

There is emerging evidence that in situations where Indigenous people are active on country, ecological and other benefits are generated through favourable fire regimes, weed control and potentially through feral animal harvesting (Altman and Whitehead, 2003). Aboriginal people are well placed, through a solid skills base, demonstrable commitment to issues of natural resource management and their geographical location, to address both opportunities and challenges in achieving new levels of sustainable and equitable management of resources (Altman and Whitehead, 2003:7). Aboriginal land and sea management also provides an avenue for the transfer for Indigenous Knowledge. Ongoing management of these lands through Aboriginal land and sea management requires maintenance of links between families, clans, language groups and land so that knowledge held by elders may be passed on to the next generation (Morrison, 2003).

Northern Australia has the largest extent of intact savanna landscapes in the world (Hill, 2004). The Northern Territory landscapes in particular are important foci for the conservation of rare and endangered species (Woinarski and Braithwaite, 1990) with Indigenous lands located in bioregions acknowledged as high priority areas for conservation (Altman and Cochrane,

2003:11). While the tropical savannas remain structurally intact over large areas, many species are in decline. One reason for this is the use of these landscapes for extensive pastoralism and other increasingly diverse land uses, which has lead to invasion by feral animals and weeds.   In 2000, the NLC contracted Smith (2001) to produce a report looking at plant invasions on Aboriginal land of the Top End. Gardener (2005) reviews some of Smith's recommendations and considers the impacts of the Top End Aboriginal Land Management and Employment Strategy (TEALMES) and the Mimosa Services and Funding Agreements on control and containment of *Mimosa pigra*, a particularly aggressive and problematic weed that forms dense monocultures that out-compete and displace wetland fauna and flora, in turn limiting Aboriginal cultural activities and economic land uses.

Detailed descriptions of the state of the environment in the NLC region are provided in the NLC Annual Report for 2004 and the Northern Territory Natural Resource Management Board's Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan (2005). The report identifies weeds, feral animals, pest ants and cane toads as the main problems faced on Aboriginal lands. Weed infestations and feral animals and other exotic pests can have dramatic impacts upon the lives of Aboriginal people. There are approximately 40 nationally listed and 120 NT listed threatened species that have either been recorded from or are likely to occur in the NLC region (NLC, 2004a). Some communities are involved in programs to specifically preserve and maintain biodiversity while one coastal community is involved in the relocation of the vulnerable Northern Quoll to Aboriginal-owned islands.

As well as the spread of weeds and feral animals, the other major terrestrial environmental problem facing Aboriginal landowners in the region is the effect of wildfires in areas where traditional fire regimes have been disrupted (Storrs *et al*., 2003). Aboriginal landowners have continued to practise traditional fire management in some areas of the Top End, and there is a growing recognition of the positive effects of traditional burning regimes. Future effective management will depend on finding an appropriate mix of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal knowledge and technology and the resources to sustain application of that mix (Cooke, 2006). In recent years technology such as satellite imagery has enabled the broad scale comparison of areas undergoing controlled burning in occupied and traditionally managed country with large areas that remain unpopulated and unmanaged. Cooke (2006) observes that there is great potential in pursuing fire management strategies that integrate and involve the broad range of land use activities and land users in the business of fire management.

For Aboriginal landowners involved in the management of sea country problems include illegal fishing, wasted by-catch and the negative environmental impacts of marine debris (Storrs *et al*., 1999). The location of remote Indigenous communities within northern Australia places Indigenous peoples in a crucial position. It enables them to detect illegal foreign fishers and identify notifiable diseases and invasive alien species at an early stage (Marley *et al*., 2006). Therefore, a successful integrated approach to maintain Australia's bio-security requires Indigenous communities to be centrally involved in bio-security strategies in northern Australia (Marley *et al*., 2006). The Carpentaria Ghost Net Program, facilitated by The Gulf of Carpentaria Resource Group, involves several ranger groups who work with other partners in locating and disposing of nets (White, 2006). The North Australia Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA) Marine Turtle and Dugong project is another project where there is coordinated effort across multiple jurisdictions to develop a community based sustainable management program for marine turtle and dugong.

A number of key documents from NLC mention the need for an external evaluation of the NLC land and sea management program. The NLC's *Caring for Country Strategy 2003-2006* identifies evaluation as important in keeping the program responsive to local and external needs.

There has not been any formal external evaluation of the NLC's land and sea management program or its Caring for Country Unit (CFCU) over the last ten years. However, some of the components of the Top End land and sea management programs have been formally reviewed. For example, Gardener (2005) reviewed the weeds management program in the Top End. In 1999, there were two workshops convened by the CFCU to review the Contract Employment Program for Aboriginals in Natural and Cultural Resource Management (CEPANCRM). Other evaluations mention some of the ranger groups and have indeed looked at these ranger groups as case studies (Gilligan, 2006; Worth 2005; Altman, 2001; Altman and Whitehead, 2003; Cochrane, 2005; Altman and Cochrane, 2003; Davies, 1999; White, 2001). Comments from the researchers about ranger programs are largely positive. Other key stakeholders including government also supported the need to review Aboriginal land and sea management.

1.2 Aim of the evaluation

The aim of this evaluation was to consult widely with stakeholders, particularly Traditional Owners, in the Top End and determine the extent to which Aboriginal land and sea management is delivering desired outcomes for Aboriginal people. Further, the evaluation considers the role of the NLC in supporting land and sea management and highlights perceptions and attitudes held by Traditional Owners and related stakeholders on the nature and adequacy of support delivered by the NLC. The evaluation covers the last 10 years of Aboriginal land and sea management. Due to difficulties related to accessing some of the documented material, much of the analysis is based on interviews and group discussions.

The participatory evaluation was originally conceived as a desktop review of the ranger groups that was initiated as part of a collaborative project between Charles Darwin University (CDU), and the NLC, with funding from LWA. It was soon realised that a desk top review would be too limited in scope and offer little insight into the attitudes and perceptions of key stakeholder groups on the program. The project was therefore expanded to become a participatory evaluation that would be undertaken in close partnership with Aboriginal land and sea managers. The participatory evaluation is connected to four related projects:

i)   An evaluation framework for enhancing Aboriginal community-based natural resource management, with support funding from The Northern Territory Research and Innovation Fund (NTRIF)

ii)   The Healthy People Healthy Country Project: Sustainable Northern Landscapes and the Nexus with Indigenous Health, funded by a research grant (NTU7) from Land and Water Australia to Charles Darwin University

iii)   The Review of Aboriginal Community Based Natural Resources Management funded by the NHT through the Northern Territory Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts (NRETA)

iv)   A project to train the Traditional Owners to be evaluators funded by the Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET). Aboriginal land and sea management in the Top End was evaluated in partnership with the Aboriginal Land and Sea Management Review Team (ALSMART) which comprises 15 Aboriginal land and sea managers drawn from the NLC region.

While the original desktop review was to have focused on ranger groups, collaborators agreed to extend the scope, enabling participatory evaluation to cover different forms of engagement in Aboriginal land and sea management: ranger groups, Landcare groups, and Traditional Owners on country that are involved in land and sea management activity, including these involved

through joint management arrangements and on pastoral properties. The evaluation also considered Top End Aboriginal land and sea management that is outside the NLC region (on Tiwi and Anindilyakwa/Groote Eylandt) and/or outside the formal NLC Caring for Country Program.

This evaluation is based on consultations that were conducted with 26 ranger groups in the NLC region, two ranger groups outside the NLC region, three Landcare groups, four Indigenous Pastoral Program (IPP) and one Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) and seven Traditional Owner groups who are involved. The Aboriginal Landcare Education Program (ALEP) was also included as a group in the sample. Although there are junior ranger programs mentioned by various groups, there was no opportunity to interview participants in these programs. Key stakeholders including government were also consulted.

1.3 Report structure

The report has the following structure:

1) **Introduction:** providing a brief overview of the purpose, scope and nature of the evaluation.

2) **Aboriginal land and sea management: Background and context**: reviewing information about Aboriginal land and sea management in the Top End, focusing on some of the key issues that influence its performance.

3) **The evaluation:** presenting the methodological framework for the evaluation.

4) **Aboriginal land and sea management: performance and issues:** presenting perceptions and views of Traditional Owners and other stakeholders on Aboriginal land and sea management. This part of the analysis is focused on what is happening on the ground and highlights some of the issues that influence the performance of Aboriginal land and sea management. The measurement of performance is undertaken in relation to identified Traditional Owner aspirations.

5) **The NLC's Caring for Country Unit:** focusing on the NLC's Caring for Country Unit and highlighting some of the key issues raised during the consultation. The unit is assessed against the NLC *Caring for Country Strategy 2003-2006*.

2.   THE EVALUATION: APPROACHES, METHODS AND PROCESS

"Someone joined in the program I was doing on my country and he said: what is it like? A few years ago I used to work alone with my family see, people look at you and they don't understand what you are doing. Now you guys (the ALSMART), I need you guys to help me, I want feedback too to say what I am doing is good. That's what I want to hear, and then to keep going. The evaluation is important because its language, it's a story, its pride, it is caring for country, we learn and we go on. You know that is important cultural way. Sometimes you can communicate together because you do similar things, evaluation is a way of communicating to keep culture and country strong. You will get important information from TOs and who works in the field, family and friends will give back up" (Senior Marine Ranger: 4-7-2005).

2.1   Evaluation approach

The steps followed in the evaluation are presented in Figure 1 (see also Annex 11). The primary focus of the evaluation was consultation with ranger groups and other key stakeholders to elicit views and perceptions held about Aboriginal land and sea management. The approach particularly sought to highlight perceptions held by Traditional Owners and relevant stakeholders.

Brochures for the evaluation (Annex 1) were distributed to stakeholders, a short notice was posted in the NAILSMA newsletter Kantri Laif (Annex 2) and a list of questions was submitted by the NLC's regional division to be considered in the evaluation process (Annex 3).

The Terms of Reference were based on questions raised in a series of preliminary consultations with the key stakeholder groups. Stakeholders raised a number of issues, though within each category of stakeholders, there were some issues that were more common and raised more often in interviews (Table 2.1).

The list of issues identified was the basis for developing talking points for the interviews conducted in the evaluation (Table 2.2) and also for developing an integrated set of criteria and indicators for assessing the program (Annex 4). The list of issues from different stakeholders groups were also combined to form the basis for developing a comprehensive tool for assessing Aboriginal land and sea management (Sithole, 2007).

Figure 2.1 Steps to undertake the evaluation of the land and sea management program

Source: Saegenschnitter and Hunter-Xenie (2006).

Table 2.1 Key issues for the review to address, as identified in preliminary consultations

Group	Key issues
Ranger groups	Limited and in some cases lack of formal recognition and proper valuation of Aboriginal effort in natural resource management.
Caring for Country Unit of Northern Land Council	Level of and adequacy of existing funding arrangements for sustained activity in the program.
Northern Land Council	Development of capacity and employment of Traditional Owners.
Government	Accountability and delivery of expected outcomes from government investments.
Facilitators	Development of viable groups able to run their own programs.
Researchers	Nature of and type of participation within the program.
Traditional Owners	Governance issues in and outside the groups.
Women	Direction and funding of women's programs.
Informal groups	Developing appropriate mechanisms of getting support from the NLC without loosing their autonomy.
Local community agencies	The development of ranger groups as viable units of management.
Young people	Recognition of rangers as a 'job' on country.
Traditional elders	Integration of Indigenous Ecological Knowledge and western knowledge.

2.2   Evaluation methodology

There are three key elements to the methodology adopted for the evaluation:

v)   It would be a community driven evaluation;

vi)   It would use participatory approaches;

vii)   It would be inclusive in scope and coverage of key stakeholders.

2.2.1 Community driven evaluation

Generally, communities in the Northern Territory are sceptical of evaluations and are tired of being evaluated. There is also a general distrust of evaluators or consultants who come to perform the evaluations. The approach taken in this evaluation seeks to make Aboriginal people part of the evaluation process by creating opportunities for variable participation depending on the individual and their interest and capacity to engage in the actual evaluation process. Most Traditional Owners consulted in the early part of the evaluation were concerned that evaluations are generally driven by outsiders. There was very strong interest among Traditional Owners to participate. As part of the evaluation Traditional Owners were asked to nominate individuals who would participate as co-evaluators. An Aboriginal Land and Sea Management Review Team (ALSMART) comprising 15 Aboriginal people drawn from different parts of the NT and representing all of the NLC regions was formed (Appendix 5). Individuals in the ALSMART were either proposed by the ranger groups or the Traditional Owners or volunteered. Three of the members volunteered themselves to the group. The Indigenous Land Management Facilitator (ILMF) was engaged in the evaluation process and offered their expertise in engaging with Aboriginal land and sea managers. The Review Group has membership of 5 Aboriginal women and 10 Aboriginal men. Different members of the group have varying experience and roles in land and sea management. All of the Aboriginal people were identified as both actively involved in land and sea management and seen as leaders within their communities.

The ALSMART met regularly over the course of the evaluation to discuss issues and make specific recommendations about the land and sea management program. Discussions with the ALSMART were conducted both in formal and informal settings. Three formal meetings were hosted by the group during the course of the evaluation.

- ♦ Aboriginal voices workshop (January, 12-13 2006)

- ♦ ALSMART workshop (March, 18-20 2006)

- ♦ ALSMART training workshop (Oenpelli, July 24-30, 2006).

Key recommendations from the Aboriginal voices workshop have been integrated in the report (Annex 6). Other less formal but important meetings were also organised in relation to events and conferences that were taking place. Traditional Owner members of the ALSMART have seen the evaluation as a means of taking control of knowledge creation and challenging current narratives and constructions of Community Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM) in Aboriginal Australia. They feel they could 'set the record straight' on a number of issues which are misunderstood or are perceived to be invisible.

To ensure that all key stakeholders were adequately involved in the evaluation, a *Multi Stakeholder Peer Group* was created which comprised representatives from the government NRETA, CDU (from the School for Environmental Research), the NLC (Executive Officer of the Caring for Country Unit) and CSIRO (Researcher). This group offered support, advice and direction on the evaluation.

To capture the perceptions of other stakeholder groups, consultations were conducted at multiple scales and covered many levels of government and different arrangements for land management (Pastoral and Indigenous Protected Areas and Traditional Owners in Joint management arrangements). Within the communities, consultations focused on Traditional

Owners and the organisations that were involved in land and sea management programs or activities.

2.2.2   Participatory approaches

The type of evaluation applied to the program is called participatory evaluation. Participatory evaluation is a partnership approach to evaluation in which the stakeholders actively engage in developing the evaluation framework and are involved in all phases of its implementation. Participatory evaluation is not just using participatory techniques within a conventional evaluation setting. It is about radically rethinking who initiates, and undertakes the process and who learns and benefits from the findings (Institute of Development Studies, 1998*).* Participation occurs throughout the evaluation process including:

- ◆ Identifying the relevant questions;

- ◆ Planning and design; selecting appropriate measures and data collection methods;

- ◆ Gathering and analysing the data;

- ◆ Reaching consensus about the findings, and

- ◆ Disseminating the results and preparing an action plan to improve program performance.

For this evaluation, questions were identified by stakeholders. Stakeholders were also able to decide which questions were most important.

Participatory evaluation is reflective and action oriented. It allows stakeholders to take corrective action and mid–course improvements throughout the evaluation. In this evaluation we were able to interact with the NLC in the mid-stages of the evaluation and make presentations of the evaluation results at a consultative meeting of senior rangers in October 2006 and at the full NLC Council at Crab Claw Island in November, 2006 (Sithole and ALSMART 2006a, Sithole 2006, Sithole and ALSMART 2006b, 2006c). As well as participation in meetings, members of the ALSMART were able to present some of the results at seminars and workshops (Yibarbuk, 2006; Saegenschnitter and Hunter-Xenie, 2006; Sithole et al 2006).

Participatory evaluation is focused on creating a culture of learning. It builds reflective capacity within the local stakeholder groups so they can regularly review their programs and take action to make their programs stronger. Through group interactions, members have learned from each other and were able to take back to their respective groups some of the learning's from the evaluation. One of the key aspects of a participatory evaluation is to build local capacity for self evaluation and learning. Under the evaluation, funds were sourced from the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) to run a number of workshops to strengthen the role of the ALRMST. Members of the ALSMART were trained in participatory evaluation techniques (Sithole and Williams, 2006). Additional funds were received from the NTRIF to develop a strategy to develop Aboriginal capacity for evaluation within the land and sea management program.

2.2.3   The evaluation process

The most common participatory methods used in the evaluation were interviews, participant observation and workshops. Consultations among the communities occurred over extended periods in an effort to build trust with the ranger group.

Discussions and interviews were based on a list of talking points (Table 2.2). The questions were adjusted depending on which of the stakeholder groups was being addressed. For example the talking points for the government agencies and NLC and facilitators included questions about the nature of engagement with Aboriginal land and sea management, and expectations of outcomes and outputs.

Table 2.2 Talking points in group discussions and key informant interviews with Traditional Owners.

Aspirations of Traditional Owners and rangers. Focus on land and sea management and how the respondent feels about the program, why they are involved.

Structure and composition of the group involved: Ask questions related to who is involved and what is the level of involvement, also ask about decision making, leadership of land and sea management activities.

Land and sea management activities: Get an idea of what is the range of activities the group is involved in and how they feel about those activities. Ask questions on how perceptions of impact.

Indigenous Knowledge: Find out about attitudes and application of Indigenous Knowledge and find out what the main issues are.

Benefits derived from the program: Ask questions about what are the benefits that are derived from the project, i.e. what do Traditional Owners get out of the program.

Opinions about the NLC's role in land and sea management: Ask Traditional Owners about their awareness of NLC and their feelings about the NLC in relation to land and sea management.

Funding and resourcing of the program: Where do you get support for the activities? How do you feel about that support?

Opinions about partnerships for land and sea management: Ask questions about attitudes and views about existing partnerships for land and sea management.

Challenges facing the program: ask the respondents to identify challenges that they face in land and sea management and to put forward some recommendations.

Key informant interviews
Face to face interviews were conducted with individuals drawn from all stakeholder groups (Table 2.3). Information was checked with the respondent either during the interview or after the interview to confirm views and statements.

Many interviews were conducted in 'public' to avoid compromising the respondents especially when interviews were conducted between the sexes. Many interviews were held in informal settings, i.e. while fishing, collecting or participating in an activity. Some people were

restricted for cultural reasons to participate. Some of the interviews were taped while most of the interviews were recorded by hand.

Quotes cited in the report are referred to by date of interview and stakeholder group.

Table 2.3 Approximate number of people interviewed throughout the consultations

Stakeholder groups	Number of people interviewed
Rangers and Traditional Owners	84
Facilitators	16
Council officials	7
CDEP officials	6
Government	48
Researchers	13
Trainers	8
Northern Land Council personnel	16
NAILSMA	5

Focused group discussions
Focused group discussions were undertaken with 14 ranger groups (Wagiman women rangers; Yugul Mangi; Dhimurru rangers; Thamarrurr Rangers; Thamarrurr women rangers; Djelk rangers; Numbulwar rangers; Amanbidji women; Mandidi women; Yirrkala Dhanbul; Marthakal; Barunga Community; Manyallaluk Community and Malak Malak rangers). Most of these discussions were based on a list of predetermined topic themes (Table 2.2). Most of the group discussions were followed up with individual interviews to verify or clarify some of the issues raised.

Role plays

Role plays were performed in a few groups to show the relationships among stakeholders. However, much of the information presented in the role plays was deemed too sensitive or personal to cite in the report.

Participant observation

Participant observation occurred in situations where members of the research group spent time (week-long visits) with Traditional Owners or ranger groups often at the invitation of the Traditional Owners (Djelk, Anindilyakwa, Dhimurru, Yugul Mangi; Wanga Djakamirr, Thamarrurr, Ngaliwurru Wuli, Lianthawirriyarra, Garngi, Ngatpuk rangers, Kolorbidahdah, Gapuwiyak, Ramingirr and Yalakun). During these activities respondents became more open and discussed issues that would not have been captured during more formal interviews.

Workshops and conferences

Members of the ALSMART also attended various land and sea management conferences. These conferences and workshops presented opportunities to meet ranger groups that were difficult to reach and also to continue discussions with those groups that had been visited. Information gathered from workshops is cited in relation to the date of the workshop.

Literature review
Other data has been gathered from the relevant organizations including government departments, councils, resource centres and libraries.

2.2.4 Methodological issues

There were a number of issues that arose that have influenced the methods and data collected for the evaluation. These included:

Access to information. Access to files, reports and existing data from stakeholders presented considerable challenges for the evaluation. Access was hampered by unclear protocols in some agencies for information management and high staff turnover with new staff being unaware of what relevant information was held by the agency.

Identifying the right person. ALSMART assisted in identifying the correct people to include in the evaluation and were able to explain the evaluation to other Traditional Owners. NLC anthropologists provided good advice on how to proceed with consultations.

Language. Language was also a key limiting factor in understanding views and perspectives as most Aboriginal participants in the evaluation spoke Kriol or other Aboriginal languages and had English as a secondary language.

2.2.5 Analysis

Synthesis of the results and analysis of the data was undertaken with the ALMRST. Data was organised into thematic areas. These themes form the basis of subsections for summaries of the data. General trends in the data are presented under each theme to highlight the common and the not so common views. Where necessary we indicate how prevalent the views were in particular groups or particular stakeholders. Selected quotes have been presented in the text as footnotes to illustrate and in some places highlight views expressed during the evaluation. The performance of the NLC's CFCU was assessed against the goals of the CFCU strategy 2003-2006 while the performance of Aboriginal land and sea management was assessed against identified Traditional Owners' aspirations.

2.3 The scope of the evaluation

The evaluation was undertaken over a 2 year period from 2005-2006. However, it is important to note that delays in permit acquisition resulted in some time slippage, with the result that the evaluation was conducted in a much shorter period than stated. Travel was dictated to some degree by the seasons which affected when and which ranger groups we could visit with air travel used for a few of the consultations. Particularly remote or difficult to access ranger groups were not consulted with. Ranger groups were grouped into general clusters based on characteristics identified by NLC staff and ranger facilitators. These clusters formed the basis for targeted sampling (Table 2.4).

The initial plan was to consult with two to three groups from each cluster. However, actual consultations were conducted with more groups than planned - 26 ranger groups (including

those in IPAs and IPP), eight informal groups and two groups outside the NLC region (Table 2.5). A summary table of some characteristics of ranger and Landcare groups that were consulted is provided in Annex 7 and of Traditional Owner groups in Annex 8.

Two ranger groups declined to be included in the evaluation. Six ranger groups met with the ALSMART in Darwin rather than on their own country. Individuals also approached various members of the ALSMART to discuss their views.

Table 2.4 Clusters of ranger groups by characteristics identified by NLC staff and facilitators

	Some characteristics of the group	Names/locations of ranger groups
Group 1.	Well resourced, well established, with a facilitator/coordinator and daily support, more than 5 years in existence	Dhimurru, Djelk, Lianthawirriyarra, Yugul Mangi, Wanga Djakamirr Rangers, Wagiman, Larrakia, Thamarrurr, Malak Malak, Gamarrwa Nuwul Landcare, Manwurrk.
Group 2.	No facilitator/coordinator, self driven, CFCU support from a distance	Warruwi, Acacia, Marthakal, Mandidi, Ngatpuk.
Group 3.	NLC facilitator/coordinator	Timber Creek, Asyrikarrak Kirim, Waanyi/Garawa (Nicholson River)
Group 4.	Dormant ranger group	Croker Island, Jilkminggan (never really got started.)
Group 5.	Primarily pastoral	Wagiman, Amanbidji, Murwangi, Oenpelli.
Group 6.	Just starting	Numbulwar, Borroloola, Belyuen, Laboganya, Duwinji, Minyerri.
Group 7.	Tiwi and Anindilyakwa Land Council areas	Tiwi rangers, Anindilyakwa.
Group 8.	No NLC CFCU involvement	Bill Harney and group at Menngen, Peter Christophersen's family group in Kakadu NP, Garawa (Robinson River), Burramana (near Tennant Creek – in NLC region), Elsey Pastoral Operations, Corella Creek Community, Connells Lagoon Community, Jawoyn Association.

Table 2.5 Land and sea management groups consulted in the evaluation

Type of group	Name of group
Ranger groups.	Djelk (4), Dhimurru, Wanga Djakamirr, Murwangi, South-East Arafura Wetlands, Mandidi, Minyerri, Adjumarllarl, Larrakia, Ngatpuk, Tharmarrurr (2), Malak Malak, Yiralka, Lianthawirryarra, Manwurrk, Ngaliwurru- wuli , Yugul Mangi, Numbulwar, Mardbalk, Marthakal, Wagiman, Garngi.
Informal groups.	Kolorbidahdah, Manyallaluk, Barunga, Ramingirr, Yalakun, Rum Jungle, South Alligator.
Landcare groups.	Gamarrwa Nuwul Landcare, Yugul Mangi (see also ranger groups).
Other groups.	Aboriginal Landcare Education Program (ALEP).
Ranger groups outside the NLC region.	Tiwi, Anindilyakwa.

3.   HOW ARE ABORIGINAL PEOPLE INVOLVED IN LAND AND SEA MANAGEMENT?

"If you understood the situation of Aboriginal people you would understand why we say this program is important for us Aboriginal people. It is giving us our life back." (Traditional Owner: 21-06-2006).

There are different types of involvement in land and sea management by Traditional Owners. Some involvement is formalized and defined within conventional land and sea management regimes like Indigenous Protected Areas (IPA) and joint managed parks, sometimes under contractual arrangements to undertake natural resources management work. Other involvement is defined within the Indigenous pastoral properties program, where considerable natural resource management work is taking place. Many Traditional Owners operate either within locally based structures called ranger groups. There are 36 ranger groups in the NLC region (Figure 3.1), operating over an area of 90 000 km², and this number is projected to increase. The program employs around 300 Aboriginal people under various funding arrangements, but predominantly though the Community Development and Employment Program (CDEP). The majority of Traditional Owners operate outside any formal structure. While Traditional Owners are central to the Aboriginal land and sea management movement, they are connected to a number of other organisations and sectors at local, regional and national scale (Figure 3.2).

3.1   Caring for country

'Aboriginal land and sea management' is the common term used to describe 'caring for country' or 'looking after country' or 'cultural natural resource management' by Aboriginal people in the Top End. The use of the term 'caring for country'[1] elicited much discussion among Traditional Owners and within the ranger groups and has also received previous research attention (Povinelli, 1992; Rose, 1995; Davies, 1999; Baker *et al*., 2001; Altman and Whitehead, 2003; Williams, 1998). Research on the operation of individual ranger groups has also been reported (see Langton, 1998; Cochrane, 2005, White, 2001; Robinson and Munungguritj, 2001).

Even among Traditional Owners and among key stakeholders there is no shared view about what caring for country means. Many respondents in government acknowledge that current understanding within government is variable and for most part superficial. Some rangers readily accept that contemporary 'caring for country' is now different from traditional 'caring for country' and that it needs to be because of the nature of the problems being faced on country. Other Traditional Owners accept that contemporary 'caring for country' should be different but argue for management to be informed by traditional concepts which are more integrative of people, lifestyles and management. Some Traditional Owners would like to see a shift towards more traditional 'caring for country' on their lands and despair at the disappearance of the 'old ways'. Some rangers and Traditional Owners (particularly those

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[1] *"Land management is culturally based – which place, which people, there are so many issues that are intertwined. When you work with land management it is about people." (Facilitator: 31-01-2005).*

operating outside) the program believe Aboriginal land and sea management is moving progressively towards the conventional Balanda (non-Aboriginal) type management.[2]

Many Aboriginal people who were interviewed feel that the type of management currently in place has shifted away from their preferred type of caring for country[3]. Some respondents in government concede that there needs to be more understanding of caring for country from the perspective of the Traditional Owners[4] as some Traditional Owners and rangers are concerned that NRM as it is currently conceived and applied does not translate directly to their understanding of Aboriginal land and sea management.

3.2   On ground work: land and sea management activities

Experienced ranger groups and Traditional Owners are undertaking on-ground work and they have had variable success in their programs depending on the availability of funding for broad-scale and localised on-ground work. The activities for the land and sea management range from feral animal control, weed eradication, fire management, coastal surveillance, research and monitoring activities, ghost nets clearing, maintaining sacred sites and enterprise activities including tourism. Different ranger groups are involved in various configurations of these activities for a variety of reasons, with most of the older programs having more elaborate programs covering many issues. Some programs which are comparatively better resourced than others deliver more on-ground outcomes than those of other groups. More systematic documentation is being made on several of the key programs like TEALMES, Marine debris, coastal surveillance, fire programs that the ranger groups are involved in. As well there are significant outcomes as people develop high level skills: i.e. rangers take up leadership training, Certificate 3 or Certificate 4 and degree training, full Coxswain Certificates, rangers get seats on committees, become key note speakers in international conferences.

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[2] *"When our people saw rangers it terrified them, it's restricting to our systems. In the old days we think balanda (non-Aboriginal) is stopping us doing our own hunting and looking after land. Many people don't realize we are different. I am not comfortable with community rangers, this is changing our old understanding and doing it the white way. I don't want to hear about the rangers, cannot do anything else, its restrictive of community development. CFC was a way of life,, moving around, just looking after country, no feral animals or weeds. Since colonization all these exotic things start coming in. Before we didn't see that pollution in the sea all feral and exotic weeds inland therefore people woke up and decide to take over. We need to talk about this looking after someone' else's mistake." (Traditional Owner: 18-03-2006).*

[3] *"We don't want to be seen as only tackling weeds or feral animals, that's not what caring for country is   about, we want to look at other options to generate more options for people , rather than be stuck carrying out Whitefella system of land management." (Traditional Owner:18-03-2006).*

[4] *"From the government side we have some basic understandings of common interests but don't necessarily understand the Aboriginal perspective. Do we risk imposing yet another program that is unwanted by Aboriginal people? I wouldn't expect these things to be absolutely clear at this stage." (Government: 20-07-2006).*

Figure 3.1 Location of land and sea management groups in Top End Northern Territory
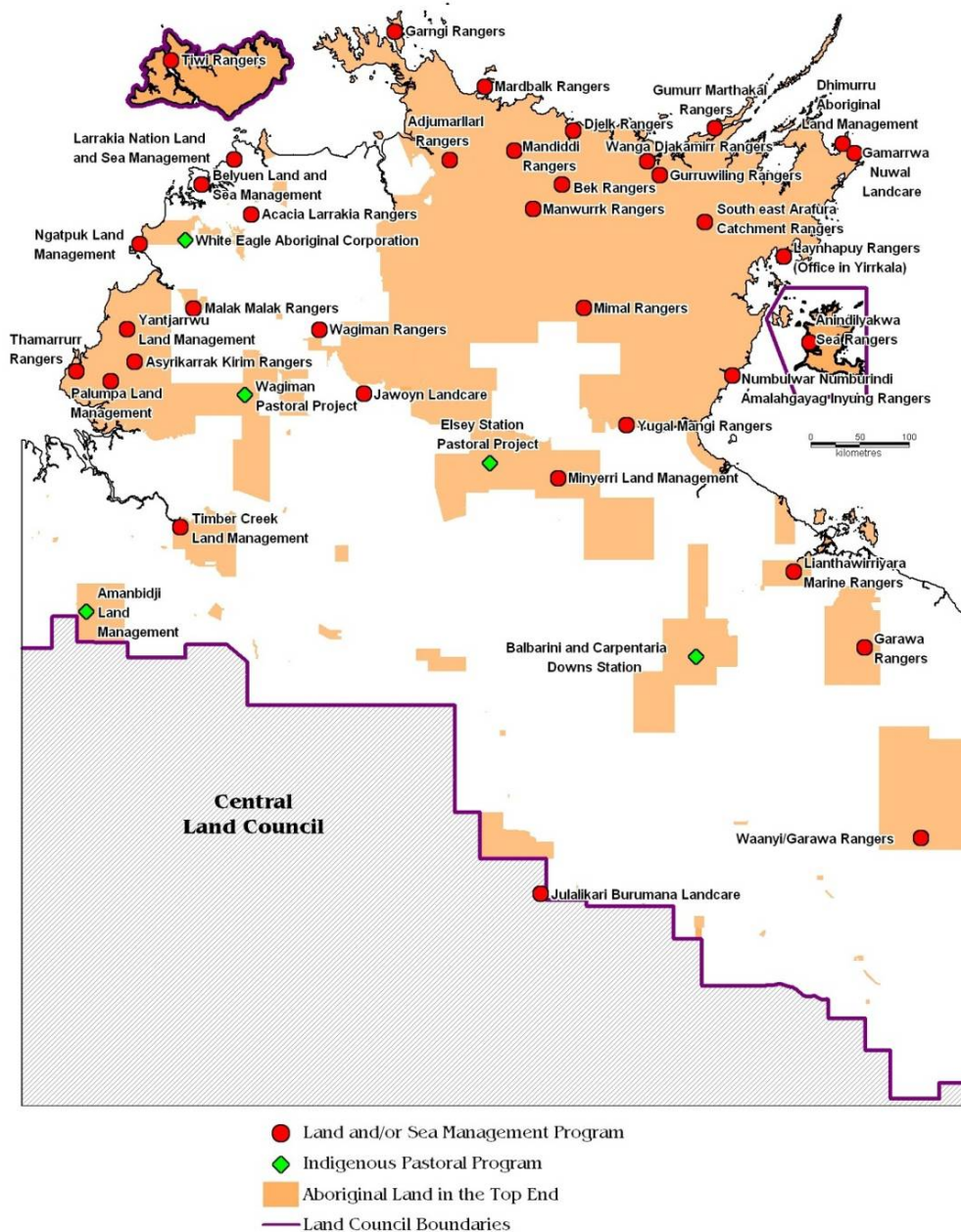
Source: NLC, 2006

Figure 3.2 Institutional framework for Aboriginal land and sea management in the Top End
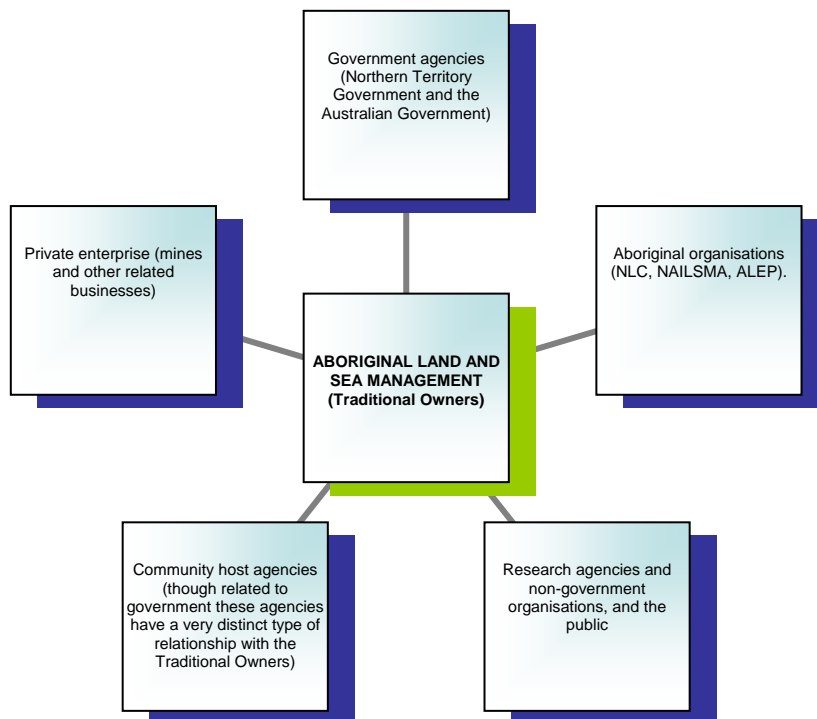
Fire management is a big part of the management of NRM. Impacts and extent of use of traditional fire regimes are well researched and documented. Traditional fire regimes are variable among the Traditional Owners. For east Arnhem, traditional fire regimes are described in Yibarbuk (1998).

Attitudes among respondents towards fire management vary. Most respondents believe that fire is the main tool of management in traditional management regimes. Concerns were noted among Traditional Owners who felt Traditional Owners, rather than outsiders, should burn country[5]. Traditional Owners also had varying attitudes towards the way fire is being used at present. There is no agreement about which fire regimes are traditional and certainly among some Traditional Owners, the variability reflects the diversity of the clan groups which are resident on country. Further, some Traditional Owners were concerned that they were often not present or notified when places were going to be burnt. Some Traditional Owners operating outside the ranger program were concerned that there were areas of country that were not

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[5]   *We want to see TOs get involved with us mob. But you gotta settle with senior land owners. Like the bushfire, countryman should burn own country rather than mob from Darwin coming here and telling them mob how and when to burn. I don't agree with them bushfire mob do. It should be us mob telling them mob what to do (Senior Ranger: 6-07-2005)*

getting regularly burnt. Most Traditional Owners indicated that the extent of the fire work is limited by access to country[6].

Feral animal control is an important and common activity undertaken by many of the ranger groups and Traditional Owners. Weed management is also common and is long standing with a steady stream of funding over the last ten years under various agreements including the Mimosa Control Agreement and TEALMES. The weed control work among Traditional Owners, particularly mimosa control, has been well documented (see Storrs *et al.*, 1999; Smith, 2001; Gardener, 2005). For example, over 7000 km^2 were cleared of mimosa as a result of Traditional Owners and ranger work on country (see Storrs *et al.*, 1999). Several issues were raised in relation to the weeds work. One recurring issue was the monotony of the task and the amount of work involved. Traditional Owners were concerned that they had limited resources to really control the infestations and some groups were not getting 'top up' due to lack of funding. Traditional rangers operating outside the weed program observed that the scale of the problem makes it almost impossible to address on a single tenure parcel or clan estate. Cross tenure relationships are required to deliver meaningful outcomes. Rangers and Traditional Owners felt that the weed program demonstrates significant benefit to the Australian public yet rangers and Traditional Owners were paid only through CDEP.

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[6]   *We want to see TOs get involved with us mob. But you gotta settle with senior land owners. Like the bushfire, countryman should burn own country rather than mob from Darwin coming here and telling them mob how and when to burn. I don't agree with them bushfire mob do. It should be us mob telling them mob what to do (Senior Ranger: 6-07-2005)*

3.3 Rangers

The adoption of the term 'ranger'[7] for Traditional Owners involved in land and sea management created some debate among Traditional Owners and relevant stakeholder groups. While most of the Traditional Owners that are using this term are happy and are proud of their badges and uniforms, some of the Traditional Owners are uncomfortable with the use of the term.[8] Rangers

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[7]   *"We should come up with our own term, not rangers. It is a contemporary word that come into our world, we thought it was a good thing. Ranger for Balanda is caretaker, for Yolngu it's a way of life. I don't want a shirt like them rangers; I wanted to do my own things, my own way with my mob."* (Traditional Owner: 23-02-2006).

"Firstly, what is defined by a ranger group? I would think we'd be kidding ourselves if we thought that just because people have a badge that they are a ranger? How about the fact that just blackfellas on country could be really defined as a "Ranger"……. In this instance, if we seek resources for these groups, then what about the majority of people in say Arnhem Land, who live a strong customary lifestyle i.e. the people at Kamarrkawan, Doyndji, Wuyagiba, Mt Catt, Markolidban, Manmoyi, Mirrinadja etc? These people, in my mind are doing just as much or even more in the way of caring for country in the truest sense in terms of social, economic and biophysical outcomes. I would be keen to discuss what a ranger group is before we begin clustering things, which I would have suspicions about marginalising some people who don't wear badges but do amazing things on country – for the local, regional, national and sometimes international good." (NAILSMA: 08-12-2004).

"I think it is important we don't get to worried over definitions i.e. rangers, sea rangers, Landcare, etc, etc. These are all very loose terms indeed. Sure there are groups who are structured politically, culturally, family way, socially and economically from other group/s who care for country or sea in a cultural and contemporary way, they all do immeasurable things with or without the tags. It is important for sure that we do not ignore the " informal" from the "formal" these are notions. But I don't think such thing exist because things have been and are driven culturally from clan upwards. What is important here is the cultural processors in terms of the dynamics taking place, and how we can evaluate ourselves and approaches in identifying components and gaps influencing ourselves, government with the practical problems people face. I.e. mechanism is knowledge expressed in one form or other. I guess we need to come up with some expression but remembering it is the mechanism that we are dealing with." (NLC: 15-12-2004).

[8]   *"It is necessary to define what a ranger group is, because if we are to break a deal with governments, and they are likely to understand what we are doing, they can fund ranger groups but we must accept that then there will be division, created by our lack of foresight! My issue is not ranger, vs. Landcare etc, but more so ranger vs. non-ranger (Traditional Owner - customary management mobs) i.e. people on country doing things that are not called ranger activities. I would also argue that not all supposed ranger groups, in my mind work to the wishes of old people, or from a clan based system. This has to be a challenge when the funds come from NHT and other government sources which don't acknowledge this authority or even want to. It is an issue, when the ranger network purports to be doing things to appease the interest of non-Indigenous society. I just think at the end of the day, we as a collective need to articulate that a ranger may have certain roles in the Whitefella sense, but also we should speak for the people who are not engaged, or importantly don't want to be engaged in this network, to have access to those resources enjoyed by ranger groups. Some ranger groups also do tremendous things on the customary front, but it isn't acknowledged. I would see those groups that fight for autonomy at the local level and actually practice it, should be provided as many resources to look after their country as possible. I know there are many groups, such as down in the Barkly district that are fairly autonomous, but are kicking huge goals! Life goes on, these people have coped with little access to resources from NTG and all others. They have learnt to do things themselves! On another more difficult note, I think that some thought is required for those people who see themselves as cattlemen. While the ranger movement has been pushed from a conservation angle, there are those that wear big hats and see themselves as a cow cocky. These mob have to be taken into account as well.*

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feel that the term adequately describes what they do[9] and is useful for outside agencies and other stakeholders to understand the scope of the work Traditional Owners are carrying out on country.

Traditional Owners differentiate between rangers involved in Aboriginal land and sea management and those under conventional government driven programs such as Joint Managed Parks and National Parks. The distinction is made in relation to a variety of factors in particular types and combinations of roles that the rangers involved in Aboriginal land and sea management perform. The scope of the work that Aboriginal rangers do is broad including roles as educator, ranger, community worker, and or mentor (see Figure 3.3). Consequently, most Aboriginal rangers call themselves a 'special type of ranger'. There is also time spent planning and performing administrative tasks.

When the rangers compare themselves to government employees holding the same position, they emphasize the multiplicity of their roles and responsibilities and the level of integration within the community as main factor defining the differences.

Ranger Groups and Traditional Owners who are involved in land and sea management tend to also be constituted differently. Ranger groups are part of a loosely defined hierarchical structure comprising of the Traditional Owners who are hosted in various ways including by the local government council, the development association, the resource centre or the NLC.

There are different types of groups involved in land management. Some are issue focused and thus have land or sea ranger groups. Other groups are gender based and thus have women and men groups operating as separate units. Mixed groups also operate, where men and women are members of one group. There are junior rangers and green corps which are age based groups. In the informal land management groups, there are more family based units comprising parents and children.

They have desires to run cattle, but importantly to keep their culture strong and invigorated through ceremony etc." (NAILSMA: 14-12-2004).

[9] _"People who know their land best, with assistance they are the best placed to know what's best. It is critical that we understand the role of rangers in Aboriginal communities; - contribute to the conservation and environmental management; contribute to the goals of intra-generational transfer of knowledge; monitoring our borders and play a practical role in managing environmental risks." (Community government council: 1-06-2006)._

Figure 3.3 Scope of ranger activities
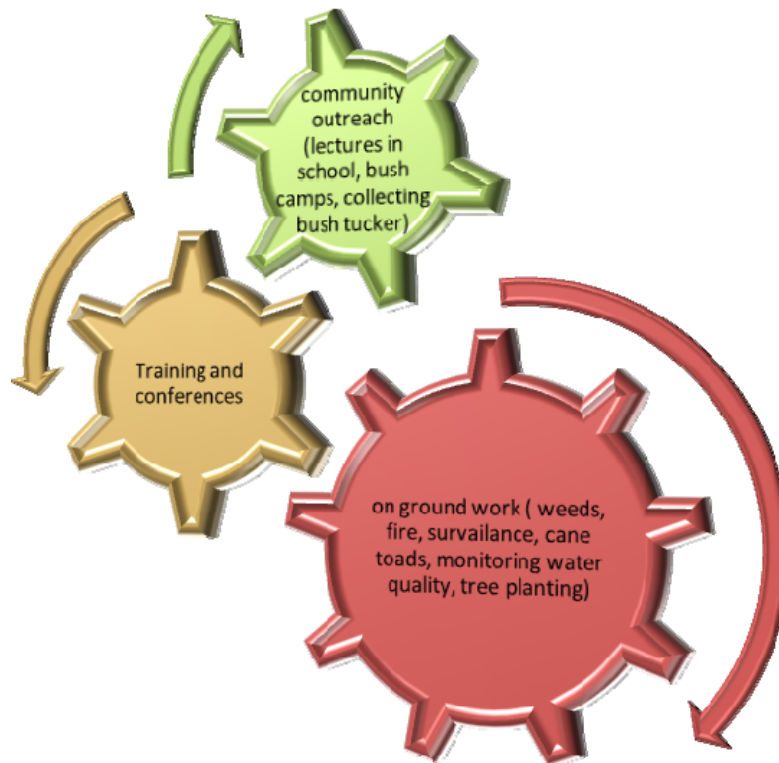
Source: based on the work of the Yugul Mangi Women Rangers

3.4   Informal groups

Much of the literature available on the groups makes a clear distinction between groups that fall under the formal Aboriginal land and sea management programs and Traditional Owners that are described as informal and are operating outside the formal program. It is important to note that there are no hard and fast boundaries between the two types of ranger groups. There are many Traditional Owners either living on their outstations, or periodically visiting their outstations, who regularly undertake land and sea management activities[10]. These are focused primarily on fire management (and through that; weed management), monitoring and surveillance. There is also much effort placed on transfer of knowledge to children. Many of the informal groups also involve family and many are trying to ensure the children get exposed to the traditional knowledge and practice of looking after country. These efforts have not been systematically recorded.

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[10] *"I am entirely different to you mob.   Twelve years on country, burning, killing the pigs, keeping people out of country.   You mob got everything.   .....I need people to back me up, we don't know what's going on at the NLC, we are fighting amongst ourselves.   Its really hard at the level at which I work."* (Traditional Owner:12-1-2006).

Most of these groups choose not to formalize their programs. Some of the Traditional Owners have developed close collaborations with ranger groups in their regions and get help with some of the problems they identify on their country. Some of the Traditional Owners have developed relationships with other stakeholders and receive some support. For example, some Traditional Owners work directly with government and some with research based organizations and universities. Most of the informal groups are not well resourced and some are not resourced at all. In some cases, the Traditional Owners indicate that they are happy to continue managing their lands with limited external help. The big challenge for most Traditional Owners is the size of their country and the nature of some of the problems that are now prevalent. Problems like weeds and feral animals are difficult to manage at an individual level. Some of the Traditional Owners who have traditionally worked away from the formal programs are now seeking to be part of a larger program, such as the Caring for Country program run by the NLC, in order to get assistance for some of the issues on their country.

3.5 Women's involvement in Aboriginal land and sea management

Generally, land and sea management has come to be seen as male domains even though there is wide acknowledgement among the traditional leaders that women have their role and traditionally participated in many land and sea management activities[11]. The increased involvement of women in land and sea management needs to be supported along with the male ranger groups in order for Aboriginal people to achieve their aspirations[12]. Further, women also have their own areas to manage which have been referred to in various conversations as '*women's business'*.

Women are now involved in ranger groups as well as in land and sea management outside the ranger groups. Several issues were raised by women about their involvement in land and sea management. A discussion paper on the future direction of the role of the Aboriginal Women Land and Sea Management (AWLSM) Program prepared by the NLC highlighted many issues that limit the participation of women in the program (Knox, 2000). However, the findings in this paper were not directly discussed with the women and some of the women who have seen or heard about the report raised concerns regarding the level of communication and feedback in regards to the report and the importance of reviewing some of the issues rose in the report.

Generally, women are interested in participating in land and sea management. The level of interest was considered in relation to the enthusiasm expressed by women at the Annual

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[11] *"Right to talk about stories, right to make craft. Men taken over the role of the women. Men have that authority of the women. Man and women should look after country. Not only men's role, women's areas are clear. Only elders with white hair can talk about women's side."* (Traditional Owner:17-03-2006).

[12] *"Women have knowledge for collecting Pandanus for mats, baskets, where they can get the colour, make the colour, collect yams when it is the season for yams, collect oysters when it is seasons for oysters to collect from the islands, or collect mud (shells) clams and what else is there? Women know the landscape they know where they can find the bush medicine from what type or tree. All that knowledge is remaining there it's women's knowledge. So we must work together, male and the female. Even though we are working mainly with the ranger groups to capture what the women think about land management and ranger work and just looking after the country the Yolngu way, we still need to talk to them."* (Traditional Owner: 17-3-2006).

Women's Aboriginal land and sea management conferences as well as feedback to the NLC. There are currently seven formalized groups. Of these groups half are operational while the rest are waiting on a facilitator or a planning session facilitated by the NLC to get the group fully operational. Most groups share a facilitator with the men's group. In situations where the facilitator is shared, women felt the facilitator did not give them as much attention as the men's group. Women also felt that the allocation of resources was skewed towards the men's groups, and were concerned that the significance of the work they were carrying out was not visible to government agencies. In most cases, women's participation within these groups tended to be intermittent with very low numbers of constant participants. However, intermittent participation of women needs to be seen in relation to a variety of factors including family situation, attitudes towards the facilitators and relationships in the group.

There were very diverse responses to the question of facilitator support. Some of the women that had worked with facilitators raised concerns about the nature of their relationships with the facilitator. Some elder women expressed the feeling that the facilitator they worked with was not showing enough respect and held views and attitudes at odds with the group. In some groups, women mentioned that some of the facilitators have little experience and knowledge of how to work with Aboriginal people. Those women that expressed these concerns were still keen to have a facilitator work with them as they felt this was the only way they could access resources and support. Other women ranger groups were concerned about the rate of turnover of facilitators with some acknowledging that they felt disheartened when the facilitator leaves. Likewise, other women observed that they develop very close and personal relationships with their facilitators and find it hard to stay motivated when the facilitator leaves. Some felt let down by the facilitator and many rangers expressed disappointment at a facilitator's departure, especially when the group believes everything is going well. In some instances, women dropped out of the group when the facilitator was not living up to their expectations. Some women rangers observed that some of their facilitators seem more interested in the host organization rather than working for the women.

Facilitators have different approaches to working with the groups. Some facilitators observed that they find it hard to motivate the women[13]. During the consultations, some of the facilitators were concerned that the participation by women was not consistent. Both facilitators and staff in the CFCU commented on difficulties related to achieving consistent participation and delivery of on-ground outcomes in the program[14]. However, some stakeholders and Traditional Owners argue that the issue of motivation underlines the need for groups to have ownership of the program.

Most of the women groups develop work plans through participatory planning processes facilitated by the NLC. Yet most women respondents were concerned with the direction of their involvement in land and sea management. Some of the women observed that they joined the ranger group to undertake land and sea management but are finding that their involvement is limited. Many women indicated that they wanted to get back on country and look after it just like the men's groups do. However, some women perceive that a significant amount of their

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[13] *"I find it hard to motivate the women or know what they want or what they are passionate about."* *(Facilitator:12-10-2006).*

[14] *"These groups need to start doing some work; they need action not funding, they want to do a bit of this and a bit of that, then they lose interest and we cannot support them, often we cannot really support them and the motivation to keep people going , now we need to get people to work. Now I think we should stop being dogmatic and even if it's hard and say it, people need to work."* *(NLC: 21-05-2006).*

time is being taken up with non land and sea management activities. Women involved in enterprise development, either as part of the ALEP program or outside the ALEP program, felt that a significant amount of their time was being spent undertaking enterprise activities. While many of these women expressed interest in being involved in enterprise development, they were also keen to strike a balance in managing country. In three of the four groups involved in enterprise development activities, women want to reverse the balance and make land management the primary role and enterprise the secondary activity. Women who are members of mixed groups (male and female members) generally found that their role was relegated to 'female' tasks while men do the land management work[15]. Women in informal groups felt they were not restricted in their roles and were able to undertake land and sea management activities with other women, or with their families, and still get involved in enterprise through art or basketry. In some mixed groups, the few women involved are able to go on country and work alongside the men. In some groups, women and men are allocated separate tasks and they perform these separately[16].

3.6   Sea rangers

The government has acknowledged the importance and role of ranger groups and Traditional Owners in surveillance and some communities, worried about bio-security, are regularly involved in activities to monitor incursions along their coastline. As well as the regular monitoring and management of sea country, two big programs were mentioned in the consultations. These are:

♦ The Marine Debris Program around the Gulf of Carpentaria; and

♦ NAILSMA's Marine Turtle and Dugong Project.

For example, the Dhimurru Sea Country Plan lists the land owner's concerns as; uncontrolled access to areas of environmental sensitivity, over fishing, high mortality of turtles and other wildlife in marine debris, impacts of bauxite mining (contamination of sea country), pollution and impacts of burning activities on Melville Islands to dispose of illegal fishing vessels.

Enforcement powers were the main issue raised among the sea ranger groups. Government agencies noted that enforcement powers require that the people are equipped with special skills and training before powers can be conferred. Though there are many rangers and Traditional Owners interested in gaining the skills, these are difficult to attain. Many Traditional Owners and rangers observed that very often their work or efforts are rendered meaningless because the government has limited capacity[17] or is unable to react to all reports of sightings of illegal fishing vessels[18].

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[15] *"There is a bit stereotyping going on here, the focus on enterprises is making women into soap makers and basket weavers, what were her responsibilities in the past? What is she doing is that not natural management, now they go to the shop." (Traditional Owners: 8-03-2006).*

[16]*"I think women should be rangers. It is both side's men's and women's. We don't do anything together, we go spraying rubber bush and women go their way. Women go pick up old ladies and go out bush to pick palms and native foods." (Ranger: 1-06-2006).*

[17] *"We have many problems, we report it and there is no action. We need some support? They don't do nothing, so who should we complain to? I am pretty well frustrated." (Aboriginal Voices Workshop; 12-01-2006).*

Sea rangers wanted additional resources and better equipment to enable them to get around on country. Some of the groups already have some equipment, but servicing and maintenance of the equipment are still big issues. Many Traditional Owners operating independent of the ranger groups use their own equipment and vehicles and these are limited. Most Traditional Owners are diligent in reporting illegal fishing vessels and want to have their capacity to be developed to record and deal with illegal fishing vessels sighted on their country. Many of the Traditional Owners are also worried about some of the problems associated with the illegal incursions by the illegal fishing vessels and wanted more information from government about what to look out for in relation to bio-security hazards.

3.7 Landcare groups

There is not much difference perceived by Traditional Owners and stakeholders between Landcare groups and ranger groups. Landcare groups face the same challenges as ranger groups and are involved in a wide range of activities similar to rangers. The consultations covered groups whose activities included landscaping work, tree planting and nurseries. Both women and men are involved in Landcare groups.

3.8 Indigenous Pastoral Program

The evaluation covered four groups that are involved in pastoral projects. Many of the Traditional Owners are involved in the cattle business but have developed programs to look after their country. The cattle business is itself seen as a way of managing country. The big problems for these groups are feral animals and weeds. In some of the projects rangers were involved in fencing work, enterprise projects (crocodile harvests) and weed control. Many Traditional Owners and related stakeholders accept that success in some NRM activities, for example weed control requires collaborative effort.

3.9 Indigenous Protected Areas

There is one Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) in the Top End and several that are involved in processes to declare their areas as IPA's. Many of the ranger groups and Traditional Owners believe that the IPA is a flexible arrangement that allows them to realise their aspirations while providing base support.

3.10 Economic enterprise

Many groups involved in land and sea management have also developed or are involved in a number of initiatives for the creation of funds which generate capital often for payment of 'top up' or operation costs of land and sea management. This involvement in small business enterprises is growing. Traditional Owners have utilized wildlife and plant products for generations. They now use this traditional knowledge to develop local enterprises that

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[18] *"He come to us and complained that he found illegal fisherman. He is out there he came for 4.5 days he is always out there and looking after country. He is eyes out there for us, we don't know how many fishermen are out there." (Community Government Council: 21-3-2006).*

contribute to economic development, while maintaining and strengthening traditional and cultural ties (Cochrane, 2005).

Some groups involved with feral animal control seek financial return through value-adding. Pigs, goats, buffalo and horses are some of the introduced animals that cause a range of problems across the Top End, and some regions are actively culled and sold for profit. Several Aboriginal land and sea management groups are also playing an important role in the crocodile industry (Koenig *et al.*, 2005), providing eggs and hatchlings to various markets.
A new area of management is being supported through partnership between industry wishing to offset its greenhouse gas emissions and Indigenous people with knowledge and cultural obligations to manage fire. This provides a major opportunity to support customary land management on Indigenous owned lands, and foster economic development through participation in the emerging economy for payment for environmental services.

There are several other areas of Aboriginal land and sea management which have been identified as potential growth areas. These include coastal surveillance and bio-security, which are closely related to the management of sea country. Some programs and arrangements, known as fee-for-service arrangements, provide payment for land and sea management services provided by Traditional Owners and ranger groups.

3.11   Funding for Aboriginal land and sea management activities

Both the Australian Government (AG) and the Northern Territory Government (NTG) are key investors in Aboriginal land and sea management programs. Investment comes in the form of money, training, opportunities for employment and other logistical support. There is a wide variety of government support available at the state and territory level and federal level (Table 3.1). Worth (2005) presents a detailed account of current Australian intergovernmental infrastructure for the national delivery of natural resources management funding under a program jointly administered by the Commonwealth government departments of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry and Environment and Heritage[19] and is managed by regional NRM plans such as the NT NRM plan establish a framework for investment in agreed actions and are accredited using criteria agreed upon by the Territory government and the commonwealth through the Natural resources Management Ministerial Council . The AG's interest in NRM has extended to water with the signing of the National Water Initiative. Another initiative being developed is the National Indigenous Forestry Strategy. The National Oceans Office is also involved in NRM related programs.

As well as government sources Aboriginal land and sea management has received funds for much of the research related work from other grants including the Australian Research Council, NTRIF, LWA, and The Christensen Fund. Some of the ranger groups have benefited from arrangements for funding from private enterprise while other ranger groups have received funding from the Traditional Owners' revenue or royalties.

Directly related to funding and resource provision is the partnerships that exist between Aboriginal land and sea management and key stakeholders including local government councils, resource centres, development associations/corporations, researchers, universities, the private

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[19] Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts from December 2007; Department of the Environment and Water Resources from January to December 2007.

sector (industry) the public and other Traditional Owners outside the Northern Territory. Almost all Aboriginal land and sea management programs involve multiple stakeholders who have multiple scales of interaction and who are holders of often contrasting objectives and activities. Key stakeholders have multiple interests and place varying and sometimes divergent demands on the program. There are likely to be a series of mechanisms by which their interests are integrated and traded off. Key stakeholders include the numerous government agencies at the NTG, the AG and the NLC[20].

Table 3.1 Types of investments for Aboriginal land and sea management (2007)

Government agency (2007)	Type of investment
Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR)	The Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP)
	Structured Training and Employment Projects (STEP)
Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST)	Literacy training
Australian Government Department of the Environment and Water Resources	Shared Responsibility Agreements (SRAs)
	NHT
	Indigenous Protected Areas (IPA)
	Envirofund
	National Water Initiative
Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.	National Landcare Program.
Australian Government Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET).	Provides all ranger training funds through recurrently funded training money directed through major registered training organisations.
Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC).	Top End Aboriginal Land Management and Employment Strategy (TEALMES)
	Indigenous Pastoral Program (IPP)
	Funding for facilitators.
Northern Territory Department of Primary Industries, Fisheries and Mines (DPIFM).	Partial funding to six sea ranger groups across the Top End.
	Capacity building within ranger groups through the Indigenous community marine ranger program - training may include Fisheries Compliance, Legislation and surveillance.

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[20] *"The role of the CFCU is described by different respondents as advocacy – strongly articulate aggregation of messages to the NLC, government processes and community at various levels. They should give good policy advice reflecting what people say. The CFCU should fill gaps in community capacity - facilitators attached to the NLC rather than to the communities. CFCU becomes the flag of convenience and a reliable minder of money for the groups, The CFCU should be the facilitator of all groups through the ranger conferences."* (NLC: 19-09-2006).

Government agency (2007)	Type of investment
Greening Australia.	Aboriginal Landcare Education Program (ALEP).
Northern Territory Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts (NRETA).	Aboriginal Reference Group (ARG) Daly River Management Advisory Committee (DRMAC).
Customs.	Coastal surveillance program incorporating ranger programs.
Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination & Northern Territory Government.	The Bilateral Agreement on Indigenous Affairs: Schedule 2.5: Healthy People Healthy Country.
Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS).	Under the North Australian Quarantine Strategy, rangers undertake post mortems and collect blood samples on a regular basis under fee for service agreements.
Indigenous Capital Assistance Scheme	The Indigenous Capital Assistance Scheme
Indigenous Business Australia (IBA).	Indigenous Business Australia (IBA) works closely with the private sector and local community groups to foster economic independence and home ownership among Indigenous Australians to achieve this whole-of-Government objective in service delivery.

3.12   Policy context for Aboriginal land and sea management

The institutional and policy context for Aboriginal land and sea management is complex and characterised by multiple policies and fragmented implementation. NRM policy implementation fragmentation is a critical issue hindering better natural resources outcomes (NT INRM Plan, 2005). The idea that Traditional Owners have a role to play in formal land and sea management is relatively recent in Australia (Taylor-Hunt, 2000). Aboriginal participation in natural resources management addresses the core principles of sustainable development by pursuing an integrated agenda that responds to needs for environmental stewardship, economic development and social development. The National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development provides a framework for Aboriginal involvement in NRM through its goal - *"development that improves total quality of life both now and in the future, in a way that maintains the ecological processes."* (National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development, 1992).

The involvement of Indigenous people in formal Aboriginal land and sea management has become a major feature of conservation policy in the Northern Territory. The INRM plan for the NT- *Sustaining Our Resources – People, Country and Enterprises,* recognises the importance of involving Traditional Owners in achieving the objectives of the plan. The Northern Territory Indigenous Economic Development Strategy (2005) identifies cultural and natural resources management as a key sector for development in the next 15 years because of the links between NRM and enterprise development on country. In June 2004, the Council of Australian Governments agreed to a National Framework of Principles for Government service

delivery to Indigenous Australians. The framework provides for the negotiation of Bilateral Agreements between the Australian and State and Territory Governments. The *Overarching Agreement on Indigenous Affairs* between the Australian Government (AG) and the Northern Territory Government (NTG) makes provision under *Schedule 2.5* for the support of Aboriginal people's involvement in land and sea management.

The agreement commits to supporting:
> *"the effective engagement of Indigenous people in the decision making and management process in this area, including taking a more focused and coordinated approach to the implementation of existing, and development of new policies legislation and programs."* (Australian Government and Northern Territory Government, 2006).

Further, there is a recommendation that the Schedule "must take full account of Indigenous aspirations, priorities and preferences" (see also NTG's 2006 *Agenda for Action*). Further, the NT *Parks and Reserves (Framework for the Future) Act*, 2003 establishes joint management arrangements between the NTG and Traditional Owners acknowledging the role of Indigenous Knowledge and culture in park management.

The *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act*, 1999 recognises the role of Traditional Owners and promotes their involvement in NRM. Recognition of Indigenous Knowledge and practices, their application and sustainable use are amongst the principal objectives of that Act and of the *Australian Strategy for the Conservation of Biological Diversity*.

Major elements of these instruments seek to:

- ◆ Promote a cooperative approach to the protection and management of natural resources,

- ◆ Recognise the role of Indigenous people in conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and

- ◆ Promote the use of Indigenous Knowledge and practices in biodiversity.

Despite the existence of an appropriate institutional framework, Whitehead (2002) finds that Traditional Owners continue to be recipients of services rather than active partners in developing and implementing improved natural resource management and conservation practice (Whitehead, 2002; Lane, 2002). The trend towards developing policies and processes to facilitate or strengthen the participation of Traditional Owners in NRM through investment by government mirrors trends in other parts of the world where advocacy to recognise and integrate Indigenous Knowledge and practices in natural resources has been increasing.

3.13   Challenges facing Aboriginal land and sea management in the Top End

It is important to understand the context within which current performance is measured in order to appreciate the achievements realized in the program (Storrs *et al.*, 2003). Aboriginal land and sea management is taking place in constrained circumstances with very limited resources. Indigenous awareness of environmental threats on country is increasing and feedback from local people has contributed to rapid detection and control of weeds like mimosa (Storrs *et al.*, 1999). Indigenous people are enthusiastic and have already started to develop and implement Natural

Resources Management (NRM) programs, but the nature and scale of these programs varies significantly between communities, from broad scale extensive programs, to regionally and nationally significant programs depending on level of resourcing. Aboriginal landowners and managers across the rangelands face major constraints in addressing the natural resource management issues affecting their land (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2 Challenges for Indigenous NRM in the NT

Owning vast tracts of land with relatively few people to look after that land (about 1 person per 12 km²) and in certain areas there are no people;
Over 200 communities live in remote and very remote regions;
Links between families, clans, language groups and areas of country are still strong but the shift to towns and settlements makes it difficult to maintain those links;
A lack of community awareness, skills and capacity to deal with new and emerging NRM issues;
The death of people resulting in the loss of traditional ecological knowledge in many areas;
Major capacity deficits in areas of organisational and resource management, financial literacy, technology, governance, staffing, administration and infrastructure;
Growing pressure on Traditional Owners for development and increased access.

The lack of money and other resources to undertake Indigenous NRM is a result of a number of factors. These include the low priority afforded to NRM in comparison to other more immediate needs such as health and housing, the lack of political leverage to attract public funds and the existence of a low commercial base to support NRM. Despite these constraints, many Traditional Owners in the Top End, and increasingly in central Australia, are pursuing an active land and sea management role on their lands, encountering many issues in the process (Table 3.3). Where collaborations between government and Indigenous groups - and also with the private sector - have met with success, the partnership has been based on recognition of the 'real benefits' that can be achieved from joint participation in managing country.

Table 3.3 Summary of issues affecting implementation of Aboriginal land and sea management

	Issue	Challenge
Environmental aspects.	Vast areas of land;	Need for active land management;
	Significant habitats and landscapes;	Natural resource depletion;
		Threats from feral animals and weeds;
	Culturally significant habitats and landscapes.	Bio-security risk from foreign vessels.

Issue	Challenge
Human aspects.	Multiple and sometimes differentiated interests over NRM;
	Decline in capacity based on Indigenous knowledge but increasing capacity of western ways of managing country;
	Incidence of local social conflict;
	Labour force issues (alcohol, violence, humbug);
	Language, literacy and numeracy challenged;
	High mobility in communities and in ranger groups;
	High turnover or drop out of skilled personnel;
	Low level of inter-generational transfer of NRM skills.
Social aspects.	Constant reinvention and regrouping of government functions under new acronyms and jargon (Ross 2004);
	Weak and under resourced local organisations;
	Uncoordinated government;
	Difficult relationships among stakeholders (lack of trust);
	Disappearing knowledge and weak cultural base;
	Conflict;
	Heavy reliance on outsiders for administrative and management support.
Financial aspects.	Small amounts of funding from many sources, relatively weak funding base for long term program development;
	Lack of suitable incentives;
	No recognition and accurate valuation of effort in NRM;
	Inequitable distribution of funds.

Issue column details:

Human aspects: Indigenous Knowledge; Training in western NRM, Application of participatory planning skills among external stakeholders including government; Health of the people involved in NRM.

Social aspects: Local organisations and governance structures; Indigenous Knowledge and cultural traditions.

Financial aspects: Multiple funding sources e.g. NHT, CDEP, projects, fee for service, contracts, block funds etc.

	Issue	Challenge
Physical and infrastructure related aspects	Vehicles, infrastructure (transport, buildings), computer hardware, telephone access, email, fax , power supply or fuel supplies, GPS (global positioning system), satellite phones, cameras etc	Control over keys and conditions for use by local organisations influences ability to implement activities; Availability of reliable and efficient maintenance services; High replacement and maintenance costs; Seasonal accessibility to remote and very remote areas.

Indigenous land and sea management programs remain fragile, being dependent on difficult to manage bundles of money. Small individual projects, and at the mercy of apparently arbitrary shifts in priorities within government (Altman and Whitehead, 2003). Whitehead (2002) calls current efforts by government 'piecemeal' as they provide no conceptual or operational framework for enhancing and assessing the contribution of Aboriginal people to national goals.

The Aboriginal land and sea management movement also faces other significant social and institutional issues that affect delivery of on ground outcomes, as summarised in Table 3.4. The degree to which ranger groups or Traditional Owners are impacted on by these issues is variable across the Top End[21]. Nevertheless, Aboriginal land and sea management continues to deliver significant outcomes from the program, as described further in later chapters of this report.

Table 3.4 The issues affecting performance in the delivery of on-ground outcomes

Poor accessibility to country: There are many areas of country where the ranger groups have not been able to access because of the poor infrastructure or lack of transport. Some areas have not been accessed because the Traditional Owner for that country is not available or there is no one available to take the ranger group on country.

Lack of effective maintenance support: Many ranger groups comment on the lack of effective service for equipment or vehicles through the local host organizations. Some groups complained that poor maintenance of vehicles or boats and quad bikes severely restricted the amount of time they could do on ground work.

Lack of funds to replace tools and equipment: Sometimes the ranger groups do not have funds to replace equipment or purchase spare parts for the equipment. Further, the time between training and application can be long resulting in the groups requesting further or more training once resources are found.

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[21] *"There are elements of family politics, some rangers might feel like the senior ranger favours members of their family, there are always jealousies and suspicions. There is an important role here for the facilitator as an arbitrator. At least once a month, the group meets to update each other on stuff and to keep the air clean. In the community there is that he said, she said, can escalate therefore important to keep communication wide open. We have to respect one another. The group will probably change, better to have a larger poor to draw from, doesn't matter when people drop out, pass on information – spreading the word even though they are not completely involved. We have a solid base of 5 people who are always there. The dynamics in the group are good." (Facilitator: 14-12-2005).*

Lack of CDEP providers or CDEP resources to pay for the full hours required to deal with a problem: Most ranger groups are limited in the numbers of hours they work. Most groups' rangers work a 4 hour day and 2 hours is paid through top up or is unpaid. These hours vary in different groups. Further resource centres and local councils that run the CDEP contracts often place limits on the number of people that are employed under the program. Rangers must often compete with other jobs in the community. Depending on the level of understanding and support of the council or resource centre official, the rangers will get a proportion of the positions. Rangers believe that CDEP is desirable for "countryman" who want to work for short hours but not right for those that want a full time job.

Inadequate equipment: Many ranger groups are ill equipped to deal with some of the environmental problems they face. Some have boats that are not suitable, no shed for the chemicals, office space, some have no access to computers or other means of communication. For some groups, running a professional outfit is quite a challenge "when you are tucked away in a hot shed behind the main air conditioned offices."

Inadequate manpower: Some ranger groups do not have enough members to be able to operate effectively due to high dropout rates in some groups and in others there are not many interested Traditional Owners. Most of the groups that are starting and have few members but want more were women groups. Sea and marine rangers in some groups are still small part of the group but would like to have their own ranger group.

Problems in the community (social) that impede individual people's performance: Conflict in and outside the groups often impact the group members. Many individuals in the ranger groups are affected by the events and politics in their families, in the community and within their groups. In one group, the rangers mention that when violence erupts in the community they find it hard to stay out of trouble. Some take their families far away and come back when the violence has died down. This means time away from the ranger work.

Seasonal access to land is severely restricted in some areas: Environmental factors severely restrict the scope of the work that can be undertaken throughout the year. Access to country for most ranger groups and Traditional Owners is restricted due to nature of the wet season. The dry season is the time when rangers and Traditional Owners get around on country to do work, but that is also the time when there are ceremonies (also restricting access to some areas) and invitations to many different workshops and meetings (because it is cheaper to get people to drive). This leaves a very short time period for on ground work in the year.

Time away from the ranger group due to family, ceremony and other business: As Aboriginal people, there is business that the rangers cannot avoid. While they are away meeting these social obligations the ranger work slows down or grinds to a halt in some groups.

Members take time off due to problems related to alcohol use and substance abuse[22]. Some of the rangers in different groups admit that they have problems with grog or have had problems related to drugs, or kava use. While most rangers admit that being on the job helps them to stay away from temptation and trouble, there are instances when they get into trouble. Most senior rangers admit that grog is a problem, and when a person comes to work under the influence they tell them to go home and sleep. Many key individuals in the program have been lost to these types of problems. Problems are particularly bad when people receive their money or royalties.

Young people in the groups tend to play truant and need constant mentoring. There are many young people who are interested in land management, but they need constant support and monitoring. Some groups are better equipped for these roles than others[23].

Humbug from family can also affect the individual performance in the groups:[24] Many rangers reported taking stress leave because of the pressures from family, the ranger group or outside agencies. Many observed that when the pressure gets too much they just walk away and sometimes they come back but usually they stay away for a while. Some of the senior rangers admitted that humbug from family and the community can be bad, and often this is one reason they do not want to have positions or hold keys. Sometimes family can be the biggest problem because they perceive the rangers have money just because they go to work, they do not realise that CDEP is marginally better than the dole.

Lack of experience in the workplace: Many Traditional Owners observed that many people in the land and sea management program are in the work place for the first time. Being part of the ranger group is a big adjustment, and it takes time before people are at ease and start

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[22] *"A few young rangers but there are problems with Kava, grog and drugs so it is difficult to keep them motivated to come to work. Sometimes they come and other times they don't." (Traditional Owner: 9-7-2005).*

"Visited a group the very next day, none of the women are at the nursery, the coordinator is wondering around in the nursery. We sit and talk and she tells me she has sent them all home, they are drunk she says, it seems someone has been murdered the day before, everyone is angry. One woman is around but is very drunk and she barely can walk. The coordinator sends her home, now she is alone in the nursery shaking her head. She says she won't deal with it, she just won't, she shakes her head in resignation, and walks around the nursery. I ask her does this happen often, and she replies unfortunately yes and too often." (Ranger Group: 17-7-2005)

"What do you do with problems of grog and violence in the community, how do I put that in my plans (ranger group), we have been talking about this, we try to keep going, but there are obstacles, we gotta keep going, there are ways we can keep trying, there are theories we can try, if they don't work we try something different. In 5 years I have been a ranger I keep talking about it. Our men become so violent, they get mad inside, they don't know what they are doing, even when you fall they think it's a small fall. Some of us have gone to hospital, we gotta find solutions ourselves, the community gotta deal with this problem no Whitefellas." (Ranger group: 19-07-2005).

[23] *"I am disappointed with them boys, 2 days partying at a time, they don't do any work, you gotta produce to do something , those vehicles are being used to move grog, you can just see they don't know what they are doing." (Traditional Owners:18-08-2006).*

[24] *"We just get humbug, I just want to get up, go out bush, but yeah it is just been humbug, it interferes a lot with our work, we don't get anything out of the process, when they do their story its wrong people, wrong country, I wish they go humbug other mob." (Senior ranger: 6-07-2005).*

working in the way they should. Supervisors need to recognise this and mentor people to stay in the job as they struggle through these adjustments. Many rangers like the work because it's out on country and they are not stuck in an office. Self managed groups where a core group comes to work everyday, they stick to a work-plan and communicate with elders and have pride in their work can be seen as a mature professional group.

4. ABORIGINAL LAND AND SEA MANAGEMENT MOVEMENT: PERFORMANCE AND ISSUES

"I started ranger work in 2000, been doing ranger for 5 years now. First as normal ranger now land manager as I am learning so I can take over the manager's job. I am a sea ranger. I really love this job, I feel just right, like the right job for me, best thing to look after the country side I need more training for boats. First land management - definitely training on chemicals, public speaking, I am a bit shy. With my new crew they need more training with their English and training to become a ranger and learn more visits with other ranger groups and more ides from...2 or 3 more years I will be ready to take over." (Ranger: 1-06-2006).

"Each program is different. We don't want badges, we just want to be a family group but achieve outcomes. Many systems you could try to make out for you, but that may not work for you. Fire knowledge also went, those people are finished, a few left. As we go out there burning, people say it's sick country, so lets get the knowledge and bring it in. Would scientists recognize this knowledge? So we joined forces with ERISS, to prove that what we are doing is valuable Indigenous Knowledge and adds world heritage values. We set out transects, satellite images of different grasses by different colour, we put the burns in, dry/wet season monitoring. We monitor turtle of fish (5 years). Oh there is geese and ducks, turtle shells etc. We reinstalled the value for us. We went and we got six turtle. As we burn we have done that without to much hassle. It's about managing country how you want too. Now Parks says it was a success, now they want to expand it." Traditional Owner: 12-1-2006).

4.1   The early days of ranger development

Different Traditional Owners and ranger groups recount different histories in relation to events significant to their situation. A general history (Table 4.1) is based on some of the history that was recounted by Traditional Owners and some of this history is verified by other stakeholders.

A significant event highlighted in the discussion of Aboriginal land and sea management for West Arnhem is the outstations movement in the 1970s which is described as being a pivotal point when Aboriginal people challenged conventional land management practices and started to re-assert their control over land and sea management. The outstations movement got people back on country to reconnect, manage and protect their lands. However, despite the increase in population of Aboriginal people now residing on outstations, there are still vast areas of uninhabited land in the NLC region. However, as Altman and Whitehead (2003:3) observe, for some Traditional Owners who have had their connections to country eroded by colonial processes, the reoccupation of country is either not a viable option or is not desired.

Table 4.1 Significant shifts in control over land and sea management

Pre-colonial period	
	Strong Aboriginal traditions, knowledge and management practices being enforced.
Colonial period- Mission days	
	Many people see this as a period when control over management was lost as people were moved to missions.
Country needs its people	
Early 1970s	The Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation (BAC) was established in its original form as a support agency for Aboriginal people who wanted to live on their traditional estates in central Arnhem lands rather than in government settlement of Maningrida (Maningrida was established in 1957).
People challenging conventional methods of looking after country and demanding to be on country and looking after country.	
1972	Marks the rejection by Aboriginal owners of an attempt by the Federal government to impose a western style forestry land management regime over a large area of central Arnhem Land around Maningrida in the 1960s. Aboriginal resentment of exotic management methods reached a peak in 1972 after forestry managers sent in heavy machinery to extinguish a small fire lit within a sacred ceremonial ground during preparations for a ceremony. At the insistence of landowners the forestry project was closed down and non-local staff withdrawn.
Gradual shift in the focus of the Northern Land Council towards land management.	
1993	Establishment of Dhimurru Aboriginal Land Management Aboriginal Corporation.
1995	Ranger workshops in Maningrida and Gove.
1996	Establishment of the Caring for Country Unit in the NLC.
Half a decade of centralised control of land and sea management by the Northern Land Council.	
	NHT funding for the western Arnhem plateau fire management strategy.
1998	3 year agreement signed between NLC, DEWR, DEET and ILC called Top End Aboriginal Land Management and Employment Strategy (TEALMES) plus secondment of the Rangelands Management Coordinator.

Some Traditional Owners indicate that the formation of Dhimurru was an illustration that Aboriginal people could organise for land management and that they were serious and committed to it. The first ranger conference hosted by the Djelk rangers in 1995 crystallised people's aspirations to undertake land and sea management and formalized their involvement in the sector in relation to conventional management programs.

Some of the respondents presented at the Djelk conference noted that the conference was about affirmation of traditional people's obligations to look after country and it was also about traditional people speaking up for country and setting up groups to manage the land and sea.

This period is seen as people sitting on country, walking country and taking stock of the condition of country.

Some respondents in government and training providers tie the start of the land and sea management program to the training of Aboriginal people in natural and cultural resource management at Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE) and Aboriginal rangers who were trained in Kakadu National Park.[25] Though these training events occurred at different times, they symbolised the recognition by Traditional Owners that western knowledge was also important.

Traditional Owners who were trained to be rangers in Kakadu worked on their country, while Aboriginal people trained in BIITE went back to country and set up ranger programs. Most of the key Traditional Owners indicate that they would like to see Aboriginal land and sea management as a movement that started on the ground.

Some of these Traditional Owners remain key figures in land and sea management. By the time of the second NLC facilitated conference, the idea of land and sea management had gained ground and many people wanted to start their own programs. However, some of the respondents observe that at the second workshop the balance of power over the movement started to shift away from Traditional Owners as the program became more formal.

The creation of the CFCU[26] was seen as a largely positive development, though some Traditional Owners were worried about the relationship that would evolve between the NLC and the ranger groups and other Traditional Owners.[27]

By the 2001 annual ranger workshop some Traditional Owners had begun to get disenchanted with the movement, feeling to some degree that the NLC and other government agencies rather than the Traditional Owners were now dictating its direction[28]. The creation of NAILSMA was

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[25] *"Remember when we started at Batchelor, we were encouraged to learn through western training. The aim was the community, we wanted to go back and set up community rangers. Through seeing the problems we set up the ranger programs. We were a big pusher in setting up the CFCU, we wanted to engage partners and bring them in together to talk about managing country, everyone started running around and getting projects." (Traditional Owner: 23-2-2006).*

[26] *"Land and sea management is a key component in the NLC, it fits well with the outcomes of the NLC. This program is what our mob want. It creates an opportunity for our mob out on county. Land and sea management also makes Traditional Owners understand country from a scientific perspective as well." (NLC: 21-03-2006).*

[27] *"Land and sea management has grown from the Land claim movement. Now we are focusing on land and sea management and development. It is no good having country if it cannot look after you, but you must also look after it, you cannot enjoy it without looking after it." (Traditional Owners: 12-03-2006).*

[28] *"The 2001, an important meeting was convened by the senior rangers and Traditional Owners alone, they were concerned, they wanted to talk about the program. People were not happy about the direction of the program and wanted to discuss the role and relationship of the program with the NLC. By this management is now driven by the NLC, and scraps that government gives out to rangers. It is important to understand that when dealing with people who have been on welfare who are in control of very few things, sometimes they need to be left alone to control what they control. They feel good because they*

seen by some Traditional Owners as the opening up of new opportunities for cross jurisdiction collaboration among Traditional Owners in Northern Australia. Many of the communities believe there are problems that need to be tackled at a North Australia level. However, generally, as the number of Aboriginal and government agencies involved in land and sea management has increased, Traditional Owners have begun to feel more alienated from their interest and less in control over the program[29].

4.2   Structure of ranger groups

There are different opinions about what is a good structure for a ranger group. This diversity of structures is important. Some anthropologists interviewed for the evaluation suggest that perhaps this stage of the formative process should be more clearly guided by the existing consultative procedures in the NLC to ensure that all the community members have been informed and that the structure that is ultimately formed is legitimate[30]. The importance of consulting[31] and involving the '*right Traditional Owners*' has been stressed by Traditional Owners. Many Traditional Owners feel the current process for forming ranger groups is inadequate. Some of the staff in the NLC recognize the weakness in the consultation process and have started to think about ways to strengthen the governance of the ranger groups[32].

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are doing something good. The women movement has gone the same way, NLC tries to put everything in a box." (Traditional Owner: 11-08-2004).

[29] *"We want to own our program, we on the ground working. To have that ownership is good for us, bring partners to us to work with, like government, we work with them. Us mob we are coastal people, we like to have that ownership as rangers, that is what we are fighting for." (Traditional Owner: 21-3-2006).*

[30] *"People think it really good to have rangers around, but sometimes they get angry with the group." (Ranger: 1-06-2006).*

"Need back up in the community." (Facilitator: 18-03-2006).

"The full council made the decision to hire me on the recommendation of the ranger group, I never ever addressed the full council. I spoke to individuals on the council, informal communications. The relationship with TOs is excellent. People proud of the ranger group. I have never heard a bad response from the TOs." (Facilitator: 14-12-2006).

[31] *"Consultation takes weeks, maybe months, we gotta bear that, and we gotta wait a long time. That's how strong old people are for land, it's very strong for country, it's not necessarily one person. That's what I meant, it's not necessarily one person. All the family got to be involved because that's why it takes so long. I found that because the group runs into problems because they haven't had that consultation." (Traditional Owner: 12-01-2006).*

[32] *"What are people saying? What are they thinking about the program? Do they like where we are headed? Is caring for country unit meeting their needs? Are we doing the right things? We want to make sure we are not taking on the role of the land owners. We have been at it for 10 years. There are many groups now involved. We set up very quickly without much thought about things, even for things like governance, but as the program becomes entrenched I am constantly worrying about the direction we are taking, I want to know what people are thinking, what they want from us, are we delivering to their aspirations?" (NLC: 10-10-2004).*

Some Traditional Owners believe the composition of the groups currently leave out most of the people with the cultural responsibility to manage country[33]. Interest based participation does not always result in a balanced representation across all clan estates. While clearly the ranger group operates at a '*community level'*, (community here refers to a group of Traditional Owners who share the interest and have rights to speak and manage country) respondents doubt that most ranger groups have a community mandate. Some ranger groups and Traditional Owners have clearly demarcated areas of responsibility and find it easy to stay within those boundaries for their operations. Other Traditional Owners believe the focus on ranger groups can hide the contributions of Traditional Owners that are not or do not want to form ranger groups. Groups are relatively hierarchical in their structures. Most groups will have three levels in their hierarchy:

- ◆ Rangers;

- ◆ Senior rangers, and

- ◆ There will often be an acknowledged Indigenous leader or local champion of the group.

The position of the facilitator, Chief executive or manager in this hierarchy is variously interpreted by Traditional Owners, government agencies and the facilitators themselves. Most groups view the facilitator as an advisor, administrator or broadly involved in group support. The facilitator is sometimes viewed by Traditional Owners as not completely integrated in the group. Some facilitators are upset by this tacit separation from the Traditional Owners and see themselves as truly embedded within the group. Acceptance of facilitators by Traditional Owners has tended to occur as a result of building close relationships with the Traditional Owners and recognising that Traditional Owners are '*the boss'* of the programs.

Ranger groups and Traditional Owners are all in different stages of development in terms of their capacity to engage in Aboriginal land and sea management. Dormant groups were considered to be those groups which were no longer functioning (at the time of or prior to the evaluation). Rangers or Traditional Owners dispersed from the group and had stopped regular activities in the program. Groups that are 'hanging in there' were groups still considered to be operating even though there was little on ground work in progress. Thriving groups were seen as those with some funded projects, had accumulated assets, a long standing facilitator, uniforms, badges, equipment etc.

Some Traditional Owners and respondents in the NLC have questioned the gender separation within groups arguing that land and sea management were never really separate and the family unit was always the basis of management. The NLC is thought to have influence in how the groups are formed because of their role in facilitating the development of management plans. The configuration of the Ranger groups is variable in many communities (Table 4.2). As

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[33] *"They are the right people – they sing their country, they call the names, they are the right people culturally and they have the responsibility. The culture gives them privileges for the land, but they have a responsibility to manage, look after it as well. They must manage the land that is none negotiable."* (Traditional Owner: 15-04-2003).

Aboriginal land and sea management continues to grow some stakeholders caution against rapidly formalizing the structure of the movement[34].

Table 4.2 Examples of structure of ranger groups based on those covered by the evaluation

Case 1.	Ranger group is formed after extensive consultations with the Traditional Owners. Rangers are drawn from each clan group or from each outstation.
Case 2.	Interested individuals including none Traditional Owners form a ranger group, there is no wide consultation process, and membership in the ranger group is contested.
Case 3.	Interested Traditional Owners form a group, there is no direct involvement or connection to the Traditional Owners in the group even though the group desires more integration with cultural components of land management.
Case 4.	An individual or family group doing land management and receives some assistance from the CFCU or individuals in the CFCU.
Case 5.	Family or clan group dominates the membership of the ranger group.

It is important to note that groups don't always keep the configuration they start with. Over time, the configuration changes in response to a host of issues including the mobility of Traditional Owners.

As Traditional Owners and ranger groups are starting their involvement in land and sea management, their structure has been informed by specific conditions and in some cases the groups have borrowed ideas from already established groups. We determine there are currently few basic models of the ranger group (Table 4.3).

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[34] *"Aboriginal NRM is on the verge of being more institutionalised-but it is still fragile. There is still some ambiguity about what's achievable and what the expectations are. There is also needs to be a better understanding of what people are prepared to participate in." (Government: 20-06-2006).*

Table 4.3 Structure and function of ranger groups in relation to NLC and host agencies

Case 1.	The ranger group has a well defined institutional framework where roles and responsibilities are defined and adhered to. The structures in the institutional framework function and there is an annual review to manage dynamics within the ranger group and among and between individuals or partners.
Case 2.	The ranger group is directly managed by the local government council. Coordinators /or facilitators are supervised by the council. Groups sometimes feel left out of the decision making process. The coordinator can assume one of two possible roles, they can be an advocate for the group or they can be perceived to work against the group in support of the local government council.
Case 3	Ranger group is directly managed through the NLC. There are two models evident under this case. One is a model where the CFCU is seen as facilitating and in the other the role of the CFCU is seen as intrusive and obstructive. Groups in the later situation feel very powerless to challenge the situation.
Case 4.	Ranger group is managed by a local host organization but the arrangements and the structure and relationship between the group and the host organization is clear. In some communities Traditional Owners noted that sometimes they are caught between different local organizations. Other Traditional Owners indicate that the important issue when a group is being managed by the local host organization is the level of awareness of the Chief executive officer of what the rangers do and the degree of engagement with the program.
Case 5.	The ranger groups that have evolved out of relationships with a researcher or research agency. These types of ranger groups have remained outside the circle of the larger program, though some of the ranger groups are starting to engage with neighbouring groups and with the rest of the program.
Case 6.	Ranger group has very strong ties with the NLC, through it retains its own identity.
Case 7.	The ranger group has evolved out of interactions with individuals in government and structure and operations of the group are aligned towards government agencies.

4.3   Governance issues in Aboriginal land and sea management

The formation of the groups: Most Traditional Owners felt current consultative processes to create the groups are not inclusive of everyone in the community and sometimes they are leaving the key Traditional Owners out of the group. Further, these consultations were occurring over too short a period to allow for proper discussion within the community.

Membership of the groups: In many cases the membership of the groups is not discussed with all key Traditional Owners, just the few who are interested has created tensions within and between clan groups as some Traditional Owners are contesting membership of the groups by 'none Traditional Owners or adopted people'.

Participation of the community in the land and sea management program: Elders felt that it was important to emphasis that the participation of ranger groups in the group should always be viewed as complementing the Traditional Owners effort not as a replacement of it.

Right to speak for country: Most elders felt that ranger groups were now assuming the right to speak was granted just because the Traditional Owners support the group. Rangers have no right to speak for country unless that right is granted by the Traditional Owner.

Benefit sharing arrangements over revenue from enterprise: Traditional Owners are questioning the allocation of revenue derived from small scale industries based on resources derived from their country to non traditional land owners.

Supervision of management action: Traditional Owners are concerned that rangers are undertaking certain types of management or going to parts of country when they are not present. Some elders want to accompany the rangers and feel that their requests are sometimes ignored.

Passing on Indigenous Knowledge: Traditional Owners indicate that ranger groups should not automatically assume that information would be passed to them. There are protocols and conditions which must be in place before information is passed.

Engagement and disengagement: The development and success of Aboriginal land and sea management is attributed to the work and enthusiasm of a number of key Traditional Owners[35] who worked to set up various programs. Some individuals set up ranger groups and others are in Landcare and even more have remained outside the formal groups. The active participation of these individuals is essential for the moral of the group[36]. However, these individuals are not found in every community. Limited or intermittent mentoring from key stakeholders was identified as a key concern among this group of Traditional Owners. But some of the Traditional Owners are starting to challenge the focus of support by the NLC and other stakeholders[37] to few individuals or small family groups. Specific or continuous support of

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[35] *"He is a one man operation, very enthusiastic, and hard working. We try to work with him all the time." (Facilitator: 31-01-2005).*

"Dependency on individuals is important, but what would happen if that individual was not there, it's something you cannot get from anyone else." (Facilitator: 15-01-2006).

[36] *"I will tell you a story about this one man, he is self motivated, interested in managing sea country, he is incredibly focused, he is just one man, and he is brilliant, he has strong experience in sea management and he does a lot under difficult conditions and there is no back up support for this guy, you gotta want to help the guy. He has attracted interest in other owners – this one man has made an incredible sea change. I organised one workshop and this guy attended, I got inspired listening to him, now they are really positively engaged, they are self driven and self inspired – people ask me what did you do to these blokes, they haven't stopped working since they come back from workshop." (NLC: 11-08-2004).*

[37] *"He runs a lot of things but our family group stepped out, it's a big cop up, a lot of people work there, it is no more there's than ours. More families want to help. I have given up a lot to be here, we should have some say in something. That's where the CFCU has made a mistake, that's where our family steps*

individuals or small family groups creates some negative dynamics in the community. Conflicts or tensions related to the control of resources for land management controlled by particular individuals or families involved in the ranger group are an issue in some communities[38]. Several cases were identified where key Traditional Owners have walked away from good programs because of conflict in the family. Some of the key players in land and sea management have dropped out and are now marginally involved in the program though they have much to contribute to it.

Reason that some of these individuals have cited for their disengagement are:

♦ Inadequate mentoring support;

♦ Humbug from family and agencies;

♦ Stress from responsibilities and meeting multiple expectations;

♦ Conflicts in the community and

♦ Lack of recognition (incentives) for continued participation.

Many of these individuals would like to be involved in land and sea management in a *'stronger way.'*

Non-Traditional Owners: The presence of non-Traditional Owners in ranger groups presents its own problems within the Ranger group and between the ranger group and Traditional Owners. Non-Traditional Owners were identified as Aboriginal people who have married to Traditional Owners, or people (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) who have been adopted into some of the families. Even outside ranger groups, Traditional Owners identified the involvement of non-Traditional Owners as an issue. Some Traditional Owners do accept the presence of non-Traditional Owners and acknowledge the importance of their role. Non-Traditional Owners in turn acknowledge publicly and when necessary that they are not the 'right Traditional Owners' and defer decisions and speaking for country to the right people. Incidences of conflict or tensions were identified in ranger groups which had high numbers of non-Traditional Owners. There were some cases where Traditional Owners were challenging the disbursement of revenue generated on their country to pay top up for non-Traditional Owners. Some of the stakeholders predict that challenges about who should be in a ranger group will increase as advocacy for salaries gains ground.

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away from it. Some families take it upon themselves to take over. All funding, equipment is monopolized by one family, trying to get that idea across that it's not yours it's for the ranger group. We have found out that there is going to be a shed over there, it is not theirs, it is for everyone, but they rely on the ranger group for maintenance. Not enough elders left, mainly 5 men and 3 main women. We need to be stepping in taking the roles of our mothers and fathers. We should be sitting with them and finding out knowledge. I am doing that with my aunty." (Traditional Owner: 15-01-2006).

[38] *"In a lot of communities where resources are scarce, there is a lot of jealousy. Anything we build up becomes the object of envy. A bit of affirmation from outside can also bring on jealousy and unrest." (Facilitator: 31-1-2005).*

4.4   Group support and empowerment

Most Traditional Owners were happy that Aboriginal people are involved in 'looking after country'. Traditional Owners get respect from their peers for being involved. Many rangers and Traditional Owners acknowledged that seeing others get involved in land and sea management in spite of all the problems and challenges spurred them to also get involved. Those Traditional Owners already involved felt very happy to be involved in Aboriginal land and sea management.

There is widespread support within government and in the NLC for Traditional Owners to run their own programs[39]. For instance, the NLC states that Traditional Owners own the program:

"None of this is imposed on traditional people. All of it is driven from by Traditional Owners who with the help of the NLC set up their own ranger groups and decided on what they would like to see happen on their country…………… …This is key to the CFC program it is driven from the bottom up by the Traditional Owners themselves. They own the ranger program in their communities, rather than having programs imposed on them from above." (NLC, 2006)

Nevertheless, many Traditional Owners did not feel that they own or drive Aboriginal land and sea management. Generally, Traditional Owners are questioning the construction of Aboriginal land and sea management and the direction it is taking (see Section 3.1). The activities being undertaken are largely determined by funding and Traditional Owners feel they have little control over investment decisions. Some stakeholders have questioned the ownership of the community plans. There were comments made that suggests that these plans reflect the interests of the facilitator or the CFCU staff that is driving the process. Clearly, this is one area that needs further investigation as there a number of reasons that could explain why communities are now disassociating themselves from the plans and calling the movement '*balanda dreaming*'. One of these reasons is that the 'plan' represents the '*Whitefella world*' rather than their world where caring for country is a lived experience rather than an activity to be carried out. At this most fundamental level, Traditional Owners have transformed their ways to adopt western ways. The question becomes to what degree can or must a program be formalised without losing its Aboriginal character so that people can relate to the ranger group and to the activities being undertaken? (see Section 4.3).

4.5   The role of the facilitator

The issue of control is also discussed in relation to the Balanda (non-Aboriginal) facilitators or coordinators that work with ranger groups. The terms facilitator and coordinator are used interchangeably in the program though the term 'facilitator' has wider application. The term facilitator is itself problematic because not many people in the community understand what it means. Facilitators are seen in various roles and there are many contrasting attitudes to

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[39] *"I would love to see the Traditional Owners of that land, to manage and run their own country because you have got skills and people who know how to do things up there but you don't have the resources to do it. If they want to help us, then we should be in control, we should be managing, who better than us, like me and my brothers, cousins who ever, who knows this country in and out, you know when to start patrolling, we know salt water, we are salt water people. You know who has got a PhD or something and you get these mob to come up here and they don't know much really." (Traditional Owner: 12-01-2006).*

facilitators among the key stakeholder groups[40]. Generally, stakeholders hold the view that the facilitator is a necessary position in the ranger groups or with Traditional Owners that are engaged in land and sea management. In some groups a facilitator is referred to as boss and:

♦ The group will not act until the facilitator is present or gives the say so;

♦ Decisions are deferred until the facilitators is available;

♦ No work occurs until the facilitator is available;

♦ No keys are available until the facilitator arrives, and

♦ Drives the vehicle (even though there may be Traditional Owners with the capability).

The facilitator is often seen as the leader by ranger groups regardless of how the term is interpreted[41].

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[40] *"I have a problem with facilitators/coordinators – they take a lot of power from Traditional Owners because the facilitator is the driver and has power. I rather have the word advisor, to advise Traditional Owners or assistant or helper, not facilitator." (Traditional Owner: 16-03-2006).*

[41] *"When I got there people said here is the boss, it was shocking and I say it's wrong the elders are the boss. Now they say I am the facilitator who is helping us. Part of my job is to be a diplomat between the ranger group and the community. Sometimes I am a diplomat in the ranger group. At the interview they asked if I could work with men and women and I said I would be happy to work with everyone, but cultural affiliations do play a role in these relationships so one needs to be careful about how one works." (Facilitator: 31-01-2005).*

"The job is about providing skills and training to people using NRM as a vehicle. From NRM there are small impacts if you look at NRM outcomes. We are using NRM as a mechanism to build confidence, introduce the job culture. It is about building capacity to operate independently. I see T0's as important from a cultural perspective, a lot of expectations and I struggle to find what that is." (Facilitator: 2-06-2006).

"You need people like these facilitators. Their role is embedded in the community. We advertised 2 times and the recruitment took about 3 months before we had someone in place. People don't understand that it's hard to get someone for this job. I tried to get the senior ranger to do it but he couldn't cope. One whiteface looks like another for them. It's a very personal thing. It takes some time for them to adjust people lose a sense of continuity. People make a connection, their expectation is cautious and then it is not gonna happen." (Community Government Council: 3-06-2006).

"Facilitators got to know the culture. In our case we didn't want a facilitator, we just wanted someone to look after the paperwork, that's all they are and are good for, a lot of us are scared about that job, but after you can do that job. I don't want to deal with the politics, but we can handle that our way, they can help with that load." (Senior Ranger: 18-03-2006).

"When I started I was overwhelmed because I didn't have many practical skills, initially I had things. I remembered they are in control, I must be flexible, and I must find a balance between process and outcomes. I was very cautious, I sat down and got the feel for what they wanted, I went with the Traditional Owners, they asked what do we do now. I asked what they wanted. Then our role is to say should we ask the older people – there was no clear style or direction." (Facilitator:31-01-2006).

Some facilitators choose to describe their role in terms of '*working together*[42]'and '*helping Traditional Owners out.*' None of the facilitators interviewed saw themselves as managers, directors or leaders of the program. Most believed that ranger groups and Traditional Owners want or need to have a facilitator. Generally, outside agencies see the facilitator as the leader of the group. Outside agencies act in various ways to legitimatise the position of the facilitator as leader of the group. Some Traditional Owners recounted cases where the facilitator gets acknowledged for the work they do. Host agencies and outside agencies start to communicate and deal exclusively with the facilitator, often when the ranger group or the Traditional Owners are not present. The facilitator also holds most information about the group and in some instances control the means to operate. Some Traditional Owners felt that there was limited or no trust between the ranger group and the facilitator.[43] Other see the facilitator as a means of complementing their weak numeracy and literacy capabilities[44] and as a buffer against family and other forms of '*humbug*'.

Among the groups sampled, nine ranger groups made statements suggesting the group did not want a facilitator, while 17 ranger groups wanted facilitators. However, it is important to note that '*not wanting a facilitator*' and '*wanting a facilitator*' are responses that need to be considered carefully. For whilst most groups acknowledged that there is an immediate need for a facilitator[45], many groups perceived that in the future they would have developed the capacity to run their own programs. There are at least 13 or more individuals among the 26 groups interviewed who believe they are capable of running the ranger program now or within two years. There are many individuals in each of the groups who can be called '*leaders in waiting*'.

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[42] *"Difficult to get support locally, people are already stretched. What you do here, people asked? Rangers asked, I said it depends on us, until we had a sense of each other there was nothing to say. There was no funding so had to look for money. The reality was quite different. In the first 3 months I was feeling my way through how things work. I talked to people around everything is very different and takes a lot of time. It's very dysfunctional in the communities and to get something to work takes a long time. You develop a different way of working."* (Facilitator: 14-12-2005).

[43] *"We have rules about the vehicle- changes occur and all rangers sign. Definitely changes have happened he thinks the project is good. People have got used to what's going on that they don't question nearly as much as before. Still people who want to be involved, it's more that harder for people living outside the community because they don't live here and we don't have the resources to include them."* (Facilitator: 2-07-2006).

"I think the facilitator was alright, I felt sometimes they didn't listen they didn't seem to think we were capable. Sometimes they treated us like kids, I found it so, I don't know, I believe people who are so educated should be so … ignorant, hello. The facilitators from the CFCU, they don't want to listen, they suggest something different." (Traditional Owner: 15-01-2006).

[44] *"Facilitators bring necessary skills to the program a key component to the program. When they leave the program falls. Facilitator instrumental in getting them involved, contract work. But they made $100 000 but the resource centre chewed it up. How can they continue?"* (NLC: 21-03-2006).

[45] *"Don't know how people feel about you until you are out, people need to have control, make decisions, training advice information and approaches to doing things that fit their values, they need networks and need to develop new skills, They need to feel valued. The facilitator's role is to make things happen. What has the group achieved, I am not the one achieving. I am irrelevant in a lot of ways, they shouldn't need me, hopefully one day they won't, but they still need access to white person skills for funding applications, training and networking."* (Facilitator: 3-07-2006).

*S*ome have been elected to that position and others have assumed the position. These individuals are already '*de-facto leaders*' and currently lead the ranger groups. All individuals in this position expressed commitment and are working hard to earn the right to lead the groups. There is tremendous variability across the program in terms of readiness to take charge of the program and capacity to manage and administer funds for the group. Hassall & Associates (2003) found that facilitators rank the ability of local Aboriginal groups to define and set goals as quite low[i]. The same report found that communities also rank their ability to plan and set goals as low. Some Traditional Owners and staff in the NLC felt that statements that Aboriginal people lack qualifications for the 'job of facilitator' are unfair considering that facilitators rarely have adequate qualifications and often Traditional Owners have to educate the facilitators in '*Aboriginal ways*' when they start[46].

Outside agencies like the government and the NLC continues to support this model of leadership[47]. Reported tensions between the group and the facilitator relate primarily to how members of the group perceive the relationship between the Aboriginal leader and the facilitator. Most of these individuals admit that even in the future they will still need some support especially in administrative work. The perception that the group needs or requires a facilitator is one that has caused some resentment among the ranger groups who feel they have individuals who are ready to assume these positions. Currently, there are 2 Aboriginal facilitators. Some groups perceive that because they have no facilitator they are not supported, recognized or eligible for some resources. Activities stop until a facilitator is found. Some facilitators cautioned against the assumption that many groups have leaders who are ready and willing to take over.[48] Regardless, some ranger groups and Traditional Owners are now

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[46] *"The facilitator is very strong, we call the ranger group his crew. This is a problem because it takes power away from the people because he is the driver, people get left from work because they are not the driver. I would rather have a word like adviser, listen to people, things coming in and advise rather than facilitator because then he is the boss. Depending on who you get you should be the ones running your program. The facilitator should be employed by the community and they still need training on the local level." (Traditional Owner: 18 -03-2006).*

"When it first started, it was good idea, but got to a stage now where if Whitefellas don't pull out it is doomed to failure, a lot of programs have white coordinators. Even in some groups where the facilitator wants to empower an Indigenous person, but they are still there. I am thinking about how the Indigenous person might feel if the facilitator was not there. The Indigenous person might jump in. Roles should be reversed, the Indigenous person the leader and the facilitator the assistant." (Ranger Group: 12-08-2005).

[47] *"Some of these groups are only productive if you have a facilitator for them." (NLC: 12-05-2006).*

[48] *"But we do have a serious lack of leadership. Leaders have gone to Darwin. Senior ranger has been away 90% of the time in Darwin. I am guided by what the rangers say, and we keep trying to engage as we go. They are managed by white people, hopefully that will change. One of the rangers has been given authority by the group, in a year he will be ready to start taking control of elements of the program." (Facilitator: 2-06-2006).*

"When our facilitator left we had difficulty knowing what to do. I was not manager. The group voted for me to be senior ranger and land manager and everybody agree I should take that position. Now I come up every morning and organize jobs for the crew, they always listen, really we have a good time as rangers." (Ranger: 1-06-2006).

advocating for self management and direction and see the presence of facilitators as constraining their opportunities to run their own program without outside interference[49].

There is also tremendous variability in qualifications and experience of the different facilitators. Traditional Owners and other agencies have questioned the qualifications and experience of some of the individuals who take up the facilitator's position. Some facilitators are young and have qualifications that do not adequately prepare them for community work however this is an issue of attracting people to these often remote and challenging positions. NLC and host agencies observe that the pool of applicants for these positions is not large and hence the choice is limited. Some respondents argued that at the minimum, facilitators should undergo facilitation training.

There is also a high turnover of facilitators[50]. Thirteen facilitators left their positions during the period of the evaluation[51]. Generally, most respondents in government and in the NLC felt that ranger groups and Traditional Owners become dormant once a facilitator leaves.[52]

There is a mix of women and male facilitators. Generally, women ranger groups tend to select women facilitators, though there are exceptions. Male groups invariably select male facilitators but 4 groups out of the 26 had female facilitators. Female facilitators working with male rangers indicated that they took extra care to not offend and consistently made an effort to behave in culturally appropriate ways. For example, one female facilitator took steps to always travel with the wife of the senior ranger whenever the group was going out or travelling. In spite of these efforts women respondents felt women were inappropriate for male ranger groups. In all the groups where women facilitators were present, women raised concerns about the

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[49] *" I just find that with rangers out there, they get knocked back, employ a non-Indigenous person, TOs don't have any say, are they putting them for what, my grandson was one of them but he got knocked back. You have these incidents where ranger in uniform come to remove people, this is very upsetting. Aboriginal person come and carried out instruction from Whitefella. He was very abusive. People on the land should have a say." (Traditional Owner: 4-1-2006).*

[50] *"I was really challenged I hated the job for the first 6 months. I couldn't cope – then I become more comfortable, there are some very suspicious people, but once I had relationships culture way and with other people working in the community I was fine, it was an amazing experience." (Facilitator: 28-10-2004).*

[51] *"Some facilitators stay long, I know some who have stayed very long, they work shoulder to shoulder with people there is nothing pretentious about them. I like them because they are committed and they stay on the ground. They are 'bushies'. There is not enough of this type around. Some masquerade as a bushie but I know one who is the real thing." (NLC: 19-09-2006).*

[52] *"I am worried about the projects that I work on with Indigenous people, this not a job it is my life, I have seen Whitefellas come and go to sip wine and show photos, if it is so important why do you leave, travel narrows the mind, you get a better understanding by staying in one place rather than looking at many things superficially. Relationships mean loyalty and not running away from people, not to criticizing colleagues who don't want to live in the bush, in my mind the ideal is not easy to do for most people." (NLC:19-09-2006).*

"Our facilitators are okay, both the same, I feel happier with the male facilitator, he is more straight up, when we ask him we wanna go and do that, he say hang on let us do this and that. In 2-3 years I will be ready to take over." (Ranger: 1-06-2006).

negative dynamics created by the presence of the female facilitator. Likewise, a male facilitator working with a women's ranger group highlighted some of the challenges for field work. Generally, Traditional Owners and other respondents commenting on this issue prefer female facilitators for women's groups and male facilitators for men's ranger groups.

Empowerment needs to be considered in relation to the needs of the different types of groups.

For some groups taking control means a number of possible things:

♦ Participating and making decisions;

♦ Saying we are the boss and feeling that you are the boss;

♦ Deciding on the priorities for the program;

♦ Having control over equipment and vehicles and other resources[53] and "having the respect and trust not getting rubbished all the time", and

♦ Making decisions about partnerships and many other interpretations.

Some groups are opting to engage assistance for administration and proposal writing under different arrangements to those applied for by facilitators. These arrangements are viewed as alternatives that hold more promise for empowerment.[54] Some of these alternatives are outlined in Table 4.4

Table 4.4 Examples of models of empowerment as defined by stakeholders

Ranger groups have a **projects officer** who manages all the contracts and undertakes all the grant applications and funding arrangements.
Consultants come and spend time with the group while developing proposals for the group. There is only one group that is applying this model and they feel it has worked and delivered good results in terms of raising funds. Further, the respondents note that this model frees the group from the responsibility of raising funds (few groups have the resources to support this model).
Some groups have an **administrative assistant** employed to assist with 'paper work' for the ranger group. These groups have Aboriginal coordinators who are supported by the assistant. In the groups where this model have been applied, most rangers have felt relieved that they do not have to deal with the administrative burdens associated with running a ranger group

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[53] *"We want to own our program, we on the ground working. To have that ownership is good for us, bring partners to us to work with, like government, we work with them. Us coastal people like to have that ownership as rangers, that is what we are fighting for." (Traditional Owner: 21-3-2006).*

[54] *"Problem because it takes power from the people because he is a driver, people get left from work because they not driver. I would rather have a word like advisor, listen to people, things coming in and advice rather than facilitator becomes a boss. He gets the cash and be boss and we don't…facilitator should be employed by the community. From the community they still need training at local level." (Interview: 18-03-2006)*

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or looking for funding.

Some groups have developed stable **research partnerships** with universities. As a result, joint proposals with the ranger groups have been developed, with some financed. Partners in this instance carry the burden of fund raising leaving the groups to pursue on ground work.

Some groups have utilised **students** in the groups to perform various administrative tasks. While the students were working on their research projects related to the work the ranger groups are undertaking.

Some groups have had their administration undertaken by the **NLC CFCU**

Some **government employees** have assisted various groups in developing proposals and other related information, and much of this effort goes unacknowledged as it is often undertaken at the discretion of the employee.

As well as these models, there are NHT-funded government facilitators and facilitators in the NLC who assist in program development and sourcing funds. These approaches demonstrate that there are many possibilities to strengthen capacity without undermining local autonomy. Traditional Owners identified individuals and agencies they feel use approaches that empower Traditional Owners or the movement. Much of the empowerment is associated with the level of trust between Traditional Owners and outsiders. Some Traditional Owners and rangers said that they don't feel trusted by the facilitator, the councils or by some of the staff in the NLC or other organizations they work with[55].

4.6   Wider community participation

The relationships between the ranger group and the communities are varied[56]. Elders and other Traditional Owners have varying degrees of interaction with the ranger group. In some groups the relationship with the clans and Traditional Owners is formalized through a committee. In others there is no formalized arrangement and the ranger groups actively seek engagement with the elders through the local government council and the NLC. Some groups will have elders who sometimes work with the group while others will ensure that some elders are senior rangers in the community. Other individuals may also be involved in the group including the CDEP

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[55] *"The coordinator keeps the keys, he should trust us, you mob feel you are trusted, no he don't trust us." (Ranger Group: 27-07-2006).*

[56] *"If there is an issue we normally hear about it. Some feel left out for several reasons and it changes with time, e.g. when I arrived one elder called the police, he felt left out." (Facilitator: 17-01-2006).*

"No issue about which clan is the boss. I just go and pick them up and I say come to work we got work to do. Elders sit down with us and explain where to go and where not to go." (Ranger: 1-06-2006).

"There is a lot of politics about who should be in the ranger group. It's on a cultural basis that people should look after country. Do they have to ordain so they can do it. It's offensive to me that some Chief executives do that (mix Traditional Owner's with non Traditional Owner's). We have knowledge but won't share that knowledge with them. The government wanted to proceed despite the politics, the government could have made the council more accountable – but no we cannot deal with this, they need to be satisfied that it's the right people involved all the rhetoric and the paperwork is not worth the paper it is written on, you get to a point where you don't want to participate." (Traditional Owner: 12-08-2005).

coordinator, council employees and the training officers. Some ranger groups noted that they were not having as much contact with the elders as they would wish, even when they are actively taking steps to initiate engagement. Some Traditional Owners accompany rangers when there is work being undertaken on their country. Some elders see the ranger group as an external construct, which interferes with how management or looking after country should be organized in relation to culture.[57]

However, some Traditional Owners and ranger groups have been concerned at the low level of interest and participation from other Traditional Owners[58]. Awareness of ranger work among Traditional Owners is variable. For example, rangers are very visible and readily acknowledged but the knowledge about what they do is more limited.

4.7   Integration of Indigenous Knowledge

Traditional Owners involved in Aboriginal land and sea management are concerned about the level of integration of Indigenous Knowledge (IK) and western knowledge for use in the activities. Traditional Owners see the ranger group as a clear pathway for Traditional Owners to reconnect to country and the transmission of IK to the wider community. In some ranger groups and among some Traditional Owners the connection to culture and awareness of IK is very strong. Aboriginal people have knowledge and experience of managing country and they know how to keep it healthy[59]. In other groups there are not many Traditional Owners in the group who are aware of and apply IK. For some Traditional Owners, processes of intergenerational transfer were interrupted and many people are having to start with nothing and are re-learning their culture, seeing country for the first time and realizing also what it means to have an obligation to look after country. In one ranger group elders noted that attempts to transfer knowledge were rebuffed because young people are afraid of the responsibility that comes with holding that knowledge. Many Aboriginal people inside and outside the ranger group want IK passed on and applied. The ranger group also offers a way of reconnecting the knowledge systems with neighbouring clan and family groups.

Many of the Traditional Owners made the following observations about IK:

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[57] *"We have structures imposed on us. ……….. If you had a Greek club, with no Greeks, would it still be a Greek club? What's going on? I am talking about people who have no authority to speak on country. NLC has allowed that to happen. With the governance structures imposed, that overrides the structures that are there. Today knowledge has been lost there are not many people that I can go to. Our elders don't feel good about themselves. I commented to our coordinator maybe we should have an elders group, women's group…………. If you are out on country, do elders know who is on their land?"* (Traditional Owner: 12-01-2006).

[58] *"We don't have their support. We tried and wrote a letter to them and had meetings, we said we need to get you involved and tried formal processes through the council at the next meeting we are going to ask for a meeting to see if they want to be involved. If we don't get a response then we assume all is well. We don't have what other facilitators say they have in their communities yet."* (Facilitator: 2-06-2006).

[59] *"Generally there is a good mix of Traditional Owners who really wanna be involved in caring for country. A lot of our mob have woken up to the fact that we must do something for our land, but this land is also part of Australia. We have natural ability in this area. Participation is increasing all the time. In 10 years you didn't see anything like that anywhere else, it's a very good thing."* (Traditional Owner: 10-07-2006).

- People are passing away and many do so before they pass on information;

- Young people are not always available or willing to learn[60];

- Few people are available who are regarded by elders as worthy holders of IK;

- Some IK has been passed on to researchers (scientists and anthropologists) and communities are finding it hard to get that knowledge back;

- There is limited funding to support back to country visits with elders and children to facilitate IK transfer;

- There are Traditional Owners on country who have incomplete sets of IK because holders of IK passed on before the transfer process was completed, and

- There are different types of knowledge. Some knowledge cannot be transferred to just anybody.

There are strong cultural connections between Aboriginal land and sea management and cultural activities such as ceremonies. Some Traditional Owners indicate that some ceremonies are important arenas for the transfer of knowledge about people, country and dreaming. One elder observed that ceremonies bring everything together and therefore Traditional Owners involved in land and sea management should be an integral part of the cultural activities. Yet, as some rangers observe, using the ranger vehicle to assist in ceremony can be seen as misuse.

Many Traditional Owners were concerned that the '*right people culture way'* to manage country were sometimes not involved, or not included in the ranger groups or were not getting regularly consulted about land and sea management activities on country. Some Traditional Owners stated that they would like to see greater involvement of people who should be managing country and in some cases avenues should be explored to ensure that the right people are informed regularly and have the option to be involved when necessary.

Not all Traditional Owners are holders of IK for land and sea management. Some Traditional Owners spoken to have grown up away from their lands and are starting to learn and reconnect with country. For some rangers groups, particularly in West and East Arnhem Land, the cultural connections are still very strong and Traditional Owners and rangers regularly participate in ceremony and recognise the connections. Elders interviewed in the evaluation observed that some of the young people do not recognise the importance of IK. The tragedy, as most Traditional Owners and NLC respondents observed, is that many of the elders and younger people that also hold knowledge, are passing away before the information is being passed on.

Traditional Owners are concerned that there is much talk about both-ways knowledge but they have not yet seen much integration. Many stakeholders talk about 'both ways' knowledge and rangers and traditional knowledge are sometimes applying it.[61] However, most ranger groups

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[60] *"Quite sad what has happened to our young people…today's children aren't respectable because of this introduced staff, not being with elders, we used to sit with our grandfathers, they taught us lots of things, but contemporary living has killed our children, kids start to get into trouble and so we started with the junior ranger program to catch them before they go bad. All these young people can't sing out all the names for country. A lot of people that have much knowledge of country , and I say hello you are not from here, you do not know this country."* (Traditional Owner: 23-02-2006).

[61] *"The Whitefella land management is science, ours is the real science, the traditional science. There should be more basic understanding of the traditional. They should have 2 skills, skills taught and skills*

acknowledge that they apply western knowledge more than IK because of the nature of the problems being addressed. Many of the rangers are young and have little knowledge and experience of IK. Though many want to apply IK they acknowledge that they are not currently holders of the knowledge, and such transfer of knowledge does not involve all members of the group. The transfer of knowledge is not systematic or consistent partially due to the high mobility of recipients of the knowledge.

The issue of IK being held by outsiders and researchers was raised frequently during the consultations. Some Traditional Owners are reluctant to pass on IK to non-Traditional Owners so that the presence of non-Traditional Owners in a ranger group can also limit the transfer of this knowledge. The presence of non-Traditional Owners was raised in 6 out of 26 groups covered in the evaluation. Different Traditional Owners hold varying views on this issue. Generally, Traditional Owners despair about not having the 'right person' to pass on knowledge to and at the same time some Traditional Owners were concerned that Elders are passing on the information to outsiders without discussion with other Traditional Owners first. Most Traditional Owners who are passing on or allowing certain information to be documented want IK to be available for future generations and feel that the transfer of IK is a priority even though there are costs. A number of ranger groups and facilitators acknowledged that it is difficult to get the holders of information and elders in the community to get involved. Some community leaders don't engage with the groups and some have dropped out of the groups. Consequently, very few groups are currently able to say they are applying 'both ways' knowledge; traditional knowledge and western-scientific knowledge, in their program.

The level of support for IK remains a very real concern for Traditional Owners and the NLC. Following two projects undertaken in collaboration with the NLC, Traditional Owners are hoping that funding for IK activities will increase to ensure the sustainability of Aboriginal culture and practices for land and sea management in the long term.

4.8   Funding

Aboriginal land and sea management is funded from a variety of sources. The principal funding sources are ILC, NHT, Envirofund, NLP, ABA and several other funding opportunities hosted by various agencies (see Table 3.1). Traditional Owners were generally not happy with the level of funding or the manner in which it is disbursed. Most Traditional Owners felt that funding is often in small grants which some of the Traditional Owners described as "*piddly little bits of funding*" which are difficult to manage and are often inadequate for the purposes intended. The administrative burdens on funding are quite high, hence the demand for facilitators, as discussed above. Further, this funding tends to be short term. Rangers felt that external agencies don't really appreciate the impacts of short term funding on land and sea management activities. Most respondents feel that short term funding has a number of effects on the group. The first and perhaps most commonly cited effect is the impact on the group's morale, the fact that they cannot do as much as they would like to do because of funding places boundaries on what can be done[62]. Traditional Owners felt they had demonstrated to

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of their own blood. Using non Indigenous equipment sometimes scares us because you are doing new things. We also expect not to be rubbish collector after learning all this knowledge, we want to be real rangers doing real NRM." (Traditional Owner: 23-02-2006).

[62] *"May be you can look at the ranger program as you do a child sitting on the beach and building a sand castle. The child works hard to build his sand castle. The water comes and washes the sand castle away, the child built some more and still more water comes, the sandcastle keeps getting washed away,*

government that they can deliver outcomes and have a proven record – i.e. that they had been able to survive on this very low level of funding demonstrates the cost effectiveness of the program and their commitment to it. The NLC, NTG agencies and Traditional Owners were all calling for increased investments provided under more enabling investment arrangements.

The amount of funding received by groups is another key issue. Most groups receive very small amounts of funding from a multitude of sources. The amount of funding must be congruent with the scale of the problem. Some Traditional Owners argue that the resourcing of the groups should be a primary focus of the government and related agencies. Vehicles, boats, quad bikes, helicopter time, spray guns, uniforms and other protected gear are necessary for the job. None of the groups interviewed felt they had adequate equipment. Few groups had access to computers, fax and phone, but there were many groups, particularly new groups who had no means of communication and relied on phones in the council, clinic or CDEP office. Some of the groups were concerned with the lack of facilities, while those that had some facilities found them limited and inadequate. Few groups have sheds (chemical and equipment) or offices to work from. Some groups complained that there was no housing for facilitators and that was also an important consideration for the infrastructure required by the groups. In few of the groups, there was no funding for replacing or fixing broken equipment. Though most communities are trying to raise funds though enterprise, many have also started to look to Traditional Owners for support.

Some of the ranger groups have been supported by Traditional Owners with money from royalties[63]. Some rangers have received support from donor organisations such as The Christensen Fund, while others have received funds from the private industry. However, many groups depend on government sources for funding.

Managing the outcomes from these different grants becomes a very big challenge (NLC, 2007). There is agreement among all the key stakeholders that there needs to be a review of the existing funding arrangements as current administrative and procedures limit Aboriginal participation. Big groups that are administratively savvy or those groups that can afford consultants who write proposals are seen as having an unfair advantage over smaller groups. Many of the respondents in the local host organizations, among facilitators and in some of the groups believe that current funding arrangements can end up privileging the bigger groups, government departments or the Land Councils at the expense of smaller groups[64].

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this is the story of rangers, we try and try really hard, but always we don't make progress, there are many things working against us." (Senior ranger: 14 -07-2006).

[63] *"We use our own money to support them boys. About time government see the importance, other rangers in the coast, we are in the same situation, what we are doing. But we are not getting the recognition there is not enough media attention. One of the important roles is enforcement, we don't wanna act as policeman, and it's good for us to be able to work with police, customs or quarantine. Our coastline has the highest illegal fishermen we can do what quarantine is doing. It Aboriginal people, we can do that, because we know our land". (Traditional Owner: 21-3-2006).*

[64] *"The most obvious from one point of view is getting money to flow onto the ground- i.e. getting money to the level of Aboriginal land and sea managements in who are actually doing the work. Money is a complicated issue. There needs to be less tied and cumbersome flow of funds. This would be a good start." (Government: 20-7-2006).*

"It is really about peak bodies and representative bodies, also there is lots of money going to agencies, big Landcare groups, land councils etc. It is going upwards in terms of community contact. Partly

Current arrangements are complex and bureaucratic and require skills that are not always available among Traditional Owners. Further, guidelines and procedures for funding are very difficult for groups to follow. Most of the respondents advocated for the procedures to be simplified and for the processes to be streamlined. Government respondents acknowledged that even with the presence of government facilitators at various levels who were meant to help the groups, the current framework for supporting Aboriginal land and sea management is flawed.

Many facilitators were themselves overwhelmed with the processes for fund raising and many felt there are barriers which limit opportunities for groups to compete effectively in the process[65]. Respondents among rangers argue that the conditions for funding should be flexible to reflect some degree of understanding of the local contexts, so that a project that is funded for one year may actually be undertaken in 2 or 3 years. Suitable funds for Indigenous NRM were described as having the following characteristics:

- An inbuilt flexibility;

- Are provided over long term time frames (5-10 years);

- Tackle interrelated issues, and

- Adequacy of the funds for the problems is most important[66].

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because the application and reporting process is so complex that smaller groups struggle to handle it. The forms are so complex and bureaucratic. We seem to have lost the capacity to make it easier for on-ground actions. It seems about ½ our money has gone to peak groups and half to NRETA. The smaller groups have dropped out." (Government: 20-03-2006).

[65] *"With the INRM plan the community consultation aspect that we were involved in was delivered very poorly in my view. For example it was running right in the Christmas holiday period which is terrible timing for everyone - particularly remote communities - the time frames for getting consultation were really short. Everyone admits it wasn't the best process. We need to stop working in that way however, the process has to be changed to generate more meaningful consultation. Having said all that there are groups with good relationships with people in this office. Consistency of government agency officer relationships with communities over time is very important." (Government: 28-03-2006).*

"The consultation phase for development of the INRM plan is a good example of bad practice. Whenever it came to the crunch we struggled to get information out further into communities. We weren't even that great about communicating with the ILMFs and ranger coordinators either. A lot of that is best done face to face but we don't have time or travel money to do that. Staff turnover at the local level has been high and this is a problem. This is partly caused by the funding cycle and uncertainty around this. Our ability to provide information to those going out to communities and mechanisms to do this are not good. Two ILMFs are not enough. Also we could do more." (Government: 16-03-2006).

[66] *"Governments need to make longer term funding commitments to encourage certainty. People will then plan with some confidence. Funding could be for developing a management plan, mapping etc. Three years should be the minimum duration. More certainty with funding gives people space to get on with the job. Shorter term and piecemeal funding crates bad patterns. People need to think about, construct and implement plans then get feedback." (Government: 11-05-2006).*

Traditional Owners and rangers consider the current administrative burdens to be heavy and the procedures of accessing various funding mechanisms as complex and difficult to work with.

Some respondents highlighted the need for special funds for Aboriginal land and sea management. Arguments for this type of funding are based on concerns that current funding regimes are inadequate and not inclusive enough in their spread across groups. Some Traditional Owners have raised the issue of distribution of funding across the program[67], arguing for wider distribution to smaller groups. Some respondents in government also suggested that perhaps it is time a funding framework specific to the program was developed to provide unrestricted funding for groups. Some respondents in the NLC have suggested that such funding could cover agreed base operational costs for a group including vehicle, facilitator costs, a small operational budget, equipment and a CDEP contract.

Some groups are exploring plans to develop Indigenous Protected Areas (IPA) as this is perceived as being the '*only bucket of money that offers regular funding and communities get to decide how they want to look after their country"*. The Northern Territory Government (NTG) has been exploring options with regards to Aboriginal NRM however they may be constrained to some degree as some of its money comes from the Australian Government (AG) (Sithole *et al*., 2007). There are indications that there is growing support for bottom up initiatives, with many respondents across stakeholder groups believing that the control over Aboriginal land and sea management should be located with the community rather than with government.

4.9　Enterprise involvement

There are many examples of enterprise projects involving rangers groups and Traditional Owners. Numerous projects are being undertaken by ranger groups and Traditional Owners within the broad areas of wildlife harvest, plant nurseries and tourism. Comments highlighted here are based on consultations held with the Traditional Owners or ranger groups who are involved in the enterprise projects focussed on: crocodiles (3 groups), cattle business (3 groups), nurseries (3), soap making projects (ALEP groups) and tourism (3). From the groups consulted, women tended to be more involved in bush foods, craft, nurseries and soap making projects. One women's group was also involved in tourism. Male ranger groups were involved in crocodile egg collection, tourism, cattle business and to some degree bush foods. The experiences and perceptions of these enterprises are varied. A workshop held jointly by NLC and School for Environmental Research – Production from the Marginal Lands: Sustainable Indigenous Enterprise Development and Commercial Use of Wildlife (held between, 11-12 September 2005), lists some of the issues and constraints to develop enterprises.

To some extent, all rangers and Traditional Owners were interested in enterprise and saw these projects as a way of co-financing some of their land and sea management activities. Some Traditional Owners observed that effort towards developing enterprise was focusing on individuals already involved in land and sea management. Some Traditional Owners suggested

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[67] *"Any resources flowing towards countrymen and women, should target all groups that want to do something full stop - not be based on the notion of ranger etc as is currently the case. This is why it's important to define a ranger program, because it can alienate the majority of our population who reside in the bush, and potentially force others, to develop into what is called a ranger group. This to me is the real challenge! Do we invest in the minority, or do we invite all Traditional Owners into the tent with us? I know it's a big task, but this is the task that, in some ways, we have created ourselves."* *(Traditional Owner: 8-07-2006).*

that Traditional Owners who are not actively involved with land and sea management on a regular basis should be targeted to be involved in enterprise development. Their main concern with enterprise was its competition with their land and sea management work. Generally, Traditional Owners felt the government and NLC had shifted the priorities for land and sea management too much towards enterprise with the result that some of the rangers felt that enterprise was now undercutting NRM[68]. For example, while rangers were willing to be involved in enterprise, with some rangers already participating and experienced, most felt their primary role should be to look after country[69]. There is tremendous scope to involve Traditional Owners, who are not already involved in land and sea management, in enterprise. Some of the Traditional Owners outside land and sea management saw the interest by rangers in crocodile farming as competition and felt rangers should let other Traditional Owners be involved.

Another issue raised by Traditional Owners relates to the profitability of the small enterprise projects. Many Traditional Owners and rangers note that the main reason they engage in small business is that they believe they can raise money to pay for land and sea management. In all the enterprise projects that were covered by the evaluation, Traditional Owners were employed under CDEP. Traditional Owners, individuals involved in enterprise and some of the host agencies indicate that the revenue generated does not adequately cover the cost of land management though it makes a significant contribution.[70] Some ranger groups have highlighted some of the challenges involved in running small businesses on country.
Some of these challenges include;

- Availability of labour;

- Adequate facilities and markets, and

- Governance arrangements for the business.

In particular, rangers indicated that enterprises are developed in consultation with Traditional Owners who have expectations of revenue from the business. Some of these expectations are difficult to meet or manage. In the cattle businesses for example, Traditional Owners were concerned that they were not receiving revenue from the business, jobs were still on CDEP, and though there are other benefits including investment in infrastructure, these benefits were not considered sufficient.

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[68] *"If we said to the men we are interested in soap making, the man would laugh and say what has soap got to do with land management, for now I think I should get them interested in caring for country and take them along when men go out to do their work, because then they can see what men do and feel about caring for country." (Facilitator: 05-10-2005).*

[69] *"We tried to do both, but we have learnt our lessons, it is hard, we have to think carefully about people, do we have people to work in the shed and work with the crocodile eggs who can stay who can go. Sometimes people don't want to stay then you have to think what to do." (Ranger: 28-07-2006).*

[70] *"If an enterprise can't pay for the action then it's unsustainable and dubious. Unless we develop some weird ways to make money, it's got a negative productive value and you still won't to get income out it. People trade off biodiversity with the economic value. We need to get people thinking about the reality of the situation." (NLC: 19-09-2006).*

There is an increase in the number of agencies involved and wanting to develop enterprise on country. NAILSMA recently developed a position of Business Development Officer to work with Indigenous people in North Australia over these issues. One of the key thrusts in the NT government "Building a Better Territory' is enterprise development. Within the NLC there are different divisions in the CFCU involved in developing enterprises with Traditional Owners. ALEP has over the last few years developed a small program focusing on the development of small scale plant based enterprises also focusing on selected locations. Private enterprises are also directly approaching communities for joint partnerships over enterprise. This multiplicity of interests towards the same target group has left some Traditional Owners bewildered and confused about what or who to deal with.

Some of the Traditional Owners and facilitators feel the sustainability of some of the resources has not been adequately addressed[71]. Generally, Traditional Owners were worried about harvests and their impact on subsistence supplies and also impacts on cultural (dreaming) and other considerations connected to those resources. Most of the Traditional Owners would like to see more discussion about some of the concerns they have on enterprise development.

4.10 Employment

Ranger groups account for the largest number of Aboriginal people employed on CDEP. Some Traditional Owners working on IPP and IPA projects are also paid CDEP[72]. Not all groups have funds to pay Top up. The numbers of hours paid for top up vary significantly depending on the groups' capacity to raise funds through grants, by fulfilling contract work or generating return from economic enterprise. In the majority of groups covered in the survey, rangers work hours exceeding the 'stipulated limit'. Different host organizations have different strategies for dealing with the excess hours. However, frequent changes of staff means that these discretionary arrangements are constantly changing as new people come into positions leaving groups vulnerable to whims and preferences of the local host agency. Some rangers have been on CDEP for many years and their rates have remained the same. Some rangers are concerned that CDEP does not offer incentives for people in jobs and therefore undervalues the effort Aboriginal people are putting towards land and sea management. Some respondents have been on CDEP for over 5 years on the "*same rate and unchanged conditions, no recognition, no super, nothing*". More experienced rangers "*want fair pay for the job they do*". Looking after

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[71] "*What of the black cockatoo? I am one of those ladies who goes out every year and when I go out at picking and collecting, seeds or other things, all the young ones ask me where you going and I go oh, I am taking all the old girls out to pick seeds and they say you are stealing that seed from birds. Alright, because it has never dawned on me but it does dawn on me now. We gotta leave the seed for the cockatoo. We only do what we have to do to keep our family that means not only your family that you have with you also have extended family. You must leave the seed for the birds.*" (Annual Aboriginal Women Land and Sea Management Workshop: 24-08-2006).

[72] "*Ranger groups employ one of the largest groups in the Aboriginal communities and takes up to 20% of the CDEP. If I had another male facilitator, that would be 10 more CDEP positions. The ratio of supervisor to member of the ranger group is important. These are people who have been disadvantaged over at least 1 generation. Ranger programs offers work to Aboriginal people relate to more easily It is much harder to keep Aboriginal people in the office.*" (Community Government Council: 3-06-2006).

country has to be seen as a real job and people have to be paid a real income (Morrison, 2003; Vatskalis, 2005, Vatskalis, 2005b). Traditional Owners and rangers were confused about the proposed changes to CDEP when the idea was raised, and wanted more information on how they could provide their comments to government.

As mentioned previously, demands for 'fair pay' are connected to demands for formal recognition and classification of ranger work as a '*job position*' on country.[73] Existing job audits do not list ranger work as a real job. Rangers and Traditional Owners compare the work they do to rangers working on conventional government NRM regimes. Some Traditional Owners argue that their job is of value firstly to Aboriginal people, to the Northern Territory as a region, rest of Australia and beyond. There is very little valuation of Aboriginal effort for NRM. CDU through School of Environmental Research has started an effort involving researchers, government and Aboriginal organisations (NLC, NAILSMA) to make a case for supporting Aboriginal NRM (Luckert *et al*., 2007). Traditional Owners are frustrated by the lack of recognition from government despite all the rhetoric. Traditional Owners want the proper valuation of their NRM activities.

Altman (2001) states that "*we need to afford people the dignity of recognizing their current economic contributions*"[74]. Contributions to the national good could (and should) be best

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[73] "*All ranger groups are fine and are doing well, they are capable of fulfilling any job but there is no feedback from government. Government must set up appropriate career pathways for rangers on country it makes you angry that there is no real job at the end of the day. The government asks Indigenous people to prove, prove, prove themselves, we have done that already, look at the program we don't need to do more. I despair about our government there is no real opportunity for these groups. I am keen to look at where the rangers go to from here, what happens when the money stops, when NHT money stops, there is no system in place to look after the groups.*" (NAILSMA: 4-01-2005).

[74] "*Things are done the local way, the facilitator is in the middle of the two worlds, also maintaining the two separate worlds without upsetting anybody is the challenge. This is a diplomatic and interpretive role. If people took some time to listen we can save weeks of hassle and humbug. There are always not enough resources, you are working with a workforce that gets $20 more than the dole therefore tempers wear thin, yet they are working in hot and sweating all day, no real wages, that's very difficult. It's different in my position because I feel I am flogging a dead horse. I am getting them to do all this, I start to feel desperate that it's not gonna happen, they will not get salaries, we have to be careful not to get caught up in the government rhetoric.*" (Facilitator: 14-12-2005).

"*I would like see funding 3-5 years to make you confident it's the time frame. It takes 2-3 years to get someone to work – have to be seen to be going. We have to be careful about the concept meaningful work and therefore we have to appreciate the hours involved in work. Some Aboriginal people in full time positions. No difference in how my job is funded and rangers are funded, the difference is that if we asked for funding, it gets back to that issue of recognizing that for use an employer we fund it from anything other than CDEP. There are no jobs not linked to CDEP. Real jobs are jobs where you hire your skills. Part of it is the image of CDEP because we haven't managed CDEP properly as organizations and bureaucrats – if it was run properly and people knew what that was for then there was no difference.*" (Community Government Council: 3-06-2006).

"*Often times Whitefella should really be looking at themselves and asking why haven't we communicated about CDEP. Government needs to think about how these things were, it hasn't been explained to them to take the responsibility and fix it up.*" (Community Government Council: 3-06-2006).

"*The biggest hurdle for these programs is salary money they have to provide money for jobs, there has to be policy changes to support salaries.*" (Facilitator, 2-06-2006).

valued and acknowledged by formally supporting a major role for Indigenous people in conservation and resource management in Northern Australia (Whitehead, 2002). However, by the end of the evaluation 3 ranger groups had found funding to pay for salaries for their senior rangers[75]. One group outside the NLC region had salary positions for all its rangers. It is important to note that not all rangers want or are ready for full time work[76]. Interviews with facilitators and senior rangers indicate that in most groups 3 to 4 people in a group want full time employment the rest want a high degree of flexibility to continue to meet family, cultural and other obligations. Some of the rangers wanted to continue on CDEP.

There are mixed opinions expressed about CDEP. Generally, the development stage of a group influenced the nature of comments received. For instance, ranger groups that were starting up wanted CDEP while more experienced ranger groups and Traditional Owners were now advocating for salaries[77] and saw CDEP as '*gammon payment*'. The later tended to see CDEP as a disincentive for the land and sea management and felt that CDEP devalued their efforts.[78]. Many of the Traditional Owners also noted that CDEP was undermining their enthusiasm and morale for continuing in the program. Even some contractors, companies or business were entering into agreements to pay Traditional Owners CDEP wages[79] and this was a source of

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[75] *"I started on CDEP, now I am not, but a bit frustrating at the time. I had good jobs and thought that I'd try being a ranger. You're more connected to country, to the river systems, to the ocean working the surveillance stuff. A bit difficult for me, because you gotta have power to arrest people. Always frustrating for us, try to negotiate how we can work together better with government. With inland we worried that boats might come in with something. Unless you monitor and enforce it doesn't mean nothing. We should be monitoring and enforcing to make sure the shit doesn't get dumped out. Otherwise, just cleaning up someone else's shit."* (Aboriginal voices workshop, 01-2006).

[76] *"CDEP needs to be reviewed we need to look at what it will look like in the long term. It's not the answer when you have qualified people and they are not recognised in their qualifications or recognised for the IK. How can one support themselves or a family on sit down money. It's like a 'band aid solution'. I admit that not everyone wants a job, just a percentage. But we should work towards giving those others jobs."* (NAILSMA 4-1-2005)

[77] *"I want full employment, it's not enough with my qualifications. NHT and ILC for top ups for 38 hours a week. I work from 9 till 5."* (Aboriginal voices workshop, 13 -01-2006).

[78] *"We don't call it CDEP, we call it community work. Here they all work if they don't work they get nothing. We follow work rules to a certain extent, same as everyone else. A lot of them earn top up. This top up is from dollars we generate ourselves, plus allocations from government budgets. We have a no work no pay rule based on time sheets and workbook."* (Government: 1-06-2006)

"CDEP is hanging by its last fibre of a thick rope. It could be here or gone by today or tomorrow, we don't know. CDEP works against you so much that it sets you up to fail. I have little successes here and there finding money for top up to give people a reasonable pay, I feel uncomfortable about it." (Facilitator: 21-01-2006).

[79] *"CDEP, even private contractors, a lot of input, they didn't want people on full time wages, they just want to put people on CDEP, we give you 'top up" and still put you down. Our rangers become slaves in terms of that CDEP. How do we support meaningful jobs, we believe that CDEP is too limiting, too restrictive, we are working with the land council and provided funding to pay full salaries. We are paying for 10 positions (2 marine and 8 terrestrial)."* (Private Enterprise: 01-09-2006).

irritation for the Traditional Owners. Generally rangers hold the view that CDEP in its current form is an inadequate form of remuneration for the work they do[80].

Contract work is becoming more common among the groups. Contracts involved groups getting paid for a job at market rates are mostly undertaken through private agencies. There are few groups that are held up as success stories. However, interviews with some of the respondents in these groups revealed that most rangers are worried about the disbursement of revenue generated from contract work. Some groups indicate that host agencies sometimes fail to find their funds and many Traditional Owners felt they had no control over their money. Some Traditional Owners allege that money disappears or is put to other use. New arrangements involving payments for environmental services are opening up new opportunities for Traditional Owners to be involved. There is a strong case to be made for payment for this service (Luckert *et al.,* 2007). The West Arnhem Fire Management Agreement (WAFMA) is a multi-million dollar agreement that has seen ranger groups contracted through the NLC to implement an agreed fire management regime for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from wildfires in the Northern Territory which counts for the 40% of the Northern Territory's overall gas emission.

Traditional Owners are aware of opportunities for Aboriginal people to work in government, but note that there are some challenges. Some of the participants listed the following as concerns for working in government:

♦ "Feel isolated because there aren't too many Aboriginal people around;"

♦ "Perception that Aboriginal people often not considered to work in higher positions even when they feel they might be able to do the job therefore feel very disappointed many times;"

♦ "Very few opportunities to do things Aboriginal way, some things don't make sense;"

♦ "Some people don't believe that job opportunities are given to local Aboriginal people, they go to outsiders or people coming from down south."

Most Traditional Owners felt government had not made the conditions for employment suitable for Aboriginal people.

4.11   Partnerships in natural resource management

Their roles and responsibilities are not always clear to the Traditional Owners. Aboriginal people recognise that strategic partnerships are important and many groups are actively seeking to develop partnerships with government and other relevant organisations. There is also recognition that some of the environmental problems cannot be solved without cooperating with other stakeholders. However, there is also acknowledgement that partnerships for partnerships

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[80] *"The issue is pay versus CDEP, even if it was the same, but was coming from a different bucket. It is just that CDEP program and its dole makes it difficult for the rangers to feel valued." (Facilitator: 31-1-2006).*

"CDEP – 4 hours a day, 2 hours top up. This is crap I reckon." (Ranger: 12-01-2006).

sake are '*humbug*'. The partnership should bring mutual benefit to both parties[81]. Most traditional people believe that current partnerships as unequal and benefit external actors more than the Traditional Owners.

4.11.1 Partnerships with government

Aboriginal lands occupy a significant proportion of the Northern Territory. Much of the future of biodiversity in the Territory depends on the sound management of Aboriginal lands. There is growing recognition by government of the need to develop collaborative arrangements to effectively manage these lands. However, many rangers felt that government currently does not appreciate the potential of genuine partnerships with them. Traditional Owners also felt that government is not connected to the people on the ground and information is lost through various buffers (facilitators and other mechanisms) that limit direct consultation between government and Traditional Owners. Some Traditional Owners observe that increased requests to ministers and important people to come and see them underline the disconnect between government agencies and Traditional Owners. Many Traditional Owners as well as other stakeholders believe that government does not fully understand the realities of the challenges on the ground and the need for a more consistent and adequate support framework for Aboriginal land and sea management[82]. However, there have been several examples of successful collaboration between government and rangers or Traditional Owners which are recognized though some of these need strengthening. The relationship between Fisheries and ranger groups is held up as a good example of mutual beneficial collaboration.

There is much confusion among Traditional Owners about government agencies. At a very general level government comprises of, and is largely perceived as, disparate agencies with differing experiences and interest in Aboriginal land and sea management.

Government is a complicated entity for people. Some participants noted that they find it hard to go to government because they are not sure who or how to approach government for assistance. Traditional Owners expressed a wish to have more coordinated government approach to Aboriginal land and sea management.

Traditional Owners stated; "*We need one person (agency) to liaise with, not too many people (agencies) to go to. Why can't we have a Department where some mob can go to, always going through the red tape to get there, we want a one stop shop. There are too many Departments.*" Most Traditional Owners find the multiplicity of agencies too confusing. The Federal Government has put structures in place through a network of Indigenous Land Management Facilitators (ILMF) and other government facilitators assist to improve the communication about government programs to Traditional Owners. Some facilitators also provide feedback to government about the aspirations of Traditional Owners and how Traditional Owners feel about some programs.

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[81] "*He is there looking after country, our land, he is always there. On Sunday he seen illegal fishermen there, we wanna give him a ranger job. He come to us and complained that he found illegal fisherman. He is out there he came for 4-5 days he is always out there and looking after country. He is eyes out there for us, we don't know how many fisherman are out there.*" (Community Government Council: 21-3-2006).

[82] "*People on the land should be a priority, go to the black fella sitting on the ground.*" (Aboriginal voices workshop:13-01-2006).

Generally, Traditional Owners view government as a few key individuals who are considered to be champions for Aboriginal land and sea management both at the NTG and the AG level. Respondents acknowledge that these key individuals have taken risks and supported the program when there was not much support within government and they continue to support the program (Sithole *et al.,* 2007). Some government respondents observed that once relationships are developed with Traditional Owners, that the individual becomes the main means of Traditional Owners interacting or communicating with government. Some government officials indicate that they have found themselves involved in tasks and activities that were not directly relevant to their terms of reference. However, some of the government respondents observe that they get into these brokering roles reluctantly but feel obligated to assist groups. Generally, Traditional Owners regard government with suspicion.[83] Some respondents feel government interests in Indigenous Affairs are driven by political imperatives rather than a genuine desire to see change.[84] Many respondents within government, in the NLC and among Traditional Owners and rangers believe that current government actions and policy is not adequately informed by a close understanding of the realities on the ground:[85]

♦ "Government put us aside."

♦ "Slow processes for things to happen, getting things to happen is really hard."

♦ "Disappointing to hear all the negative vibes for countrymen here, especially from government. We are all here trying to do our job, we are getting stopped."

4.11.2 Partnerships with private companies

There are several examples of partnerships between private companies and Aboriginal land and sea management. These partnerships involve provision of support for funding of programs through contractual agreements for services delivered by the Traditional Owners or ranger groups. Some groups are involved in contract work for fencing on pastoral lands while some Traditional Owners are contracted to burn country under different agreements. Some of the women's groups are involved in arrangements to supply bush foods and other products to companies. Some groups involved in crocodile harvesting have already developed long term

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[83] *"I didn't think they interact with Indigenous people. People in government flying in talking with usually whitefella admin. And going back and telling powers. If government want to be serious, people in decision making positions need to go spend a week in a community, and just shut up and watch."* *(Interview, 8-03-2006).*

[84] *"I see government or politicians are looking for runs on the board, this land & sea schedule I had concerns about it. It had focus on Indigenous organisations already well if it focused on those others would be pissed off. We are controlling the draft. The responsibility is to capture people's idea. Schedule has the potential for political damage if not handled sensitively." (Government: 11-05-2006).*

[85] *"Worry about how things time driven by government, the impatience of government, the world they live is rapid judgements almost like everybody feels driven by intuition to say what policy should be rather than look at evidence. Continuity issues, the churn of government beings moving thru these jobs. Funding, are 'houses of cards' built on a little bit of this and that young people's expectations are constantly being shattered." (Government: 11-05-2006).*

relationships with operators in the industry. In areas where there are mining interests, ranger groups and Traditional Owners are being contracted to do weed control or to provide plants to re-vegetate mine sites and other areas. Other mines are providing resources and materials to help combat specific problems like pest ants. The West Arnhem Fire Abatement Project is an example of long term funding to ranger groups and Traditional Owners for fire work which will offset some of the carbon emissions from a private company, Conoco-Phillips. More Traditional Owners and ranger groups were interested in this type of partnership and view it as an opportunity to complement government funding.

4.11.3 Relationships with local host agencies

The relationship between Traditional Owners or ranger groups and their host agencies is a problematic one for most of the groups. Few Traditional Owners and rangers were happy with the relationship or level of support they received from their host agency. Many Traditional Owners felt that staff in the host agency generally had a low awareness of ranger work or caring for country. Some Traditional Owners and rangers observed that sometimes host agencies interfere with the program and tried to dictate what the rangers should be doing. In some communities, rangers were seen as a landscape unit and were allocated tasks for cleanups around the community. As well as low awareness, Traditional Owners felt that staff in the host agency did not provide adequate administrative support or regular reporting on projects or potential funding opportunities[86].

Some of the complaints against the host agencies related to its arrangements for CDEP. Rangers and Traditional Owners felt some of the host agencies did not recognize the skills and training that rangers have achieved in land and sea management. Host agencies are seen by Traditional Owners as controlling the rates and numbers of hours of workers on CDEP. Traditional Owners argue that current arrangements for CDEP in some host agencies reflect this limited awareness and unwillingness to acknowledge the work the rangers and Traditional Owners perform[87]. This limited awareness may be expected where host organizations experience a high turnover of senior staff. However, within relatively stable host organisations where these senior people have been in place for up to two years there was still relatively low awareness of the programs. Most staff from the host organizations acknowledged their limited awareness of the program but most were enthusiastic and supportive of the rangers or Traditional Owners involved in the program. Some staff indicated that in some cases there was a need to develop more reliable work habits within Traditional Owners and rangers to ensure the

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[86] *"We are stuck in the middle, we need the three organisations to come together, how can they support the groups when they have their own politics, there is a lack of communication, there are too many chiefs." (Traditional Owners: 18-03-2006).*

"Very difficult because you are pretty much stand on your own, no sense of council support for what you want to do. Difficult to get budget information from time I started I have never seen the budget statements. You must appreciate that the council is dysfunctional and there is poor leadership. You must find a person in the council who helps you out – kill them with nice, be sickeningly nice. If I am pleasant may be they will help me. Some people in the council wait 3-6 months to see if you will stick around before helping you. When you stick around then they help out." (Facilitator: 14-12-2005).

[87] *"Council doesn't want to recognize the rangers. Fifth year of the ranger program. They haven't got the money for top ups, we need to go on a proper wage. $400 a fortnight is not enough, we've been sitting on $400 a fortnight since 1992. We need changes we need to be paid like any other human beings." (Ranger: 12-01-2006)*
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delivery of outcomes on some of the project grants. Traditional Owners indicate that for most host organizations relations and attitudes are determined by the manner in which the ranger group or Traditional Owners look after and manage the assets of the group.

4.11.4 Research partnerships

Partnerships over research projects are common. Researchers who come into a community to work sometimes become key players in NRM, in the ranger group and among the Traditional Owners. Although there was some negative feeling expressed about researchers[88] there were also many examples of engagement in research. In some of the more recent projects, Traditional Owners are becoming more intimately involved in the research process[89]. Traditional Owners indicate that there are some examples of good research practice. Among these examples, two projects were mentioned as reflecting a good balance between researcher and Traditional Owner relationships - the Ethno-botanical work undertaken by NRETA and the West Arnhem Plateau Indigenous Knowledge Project. Generally, Traditional Owners see research as extractive and the rationale is not always articulated for Traditional Owners to see its relevance. Respondents in the NLC, NAILSMA and other Aboriginal organizations argue for more meaningful participation by Traditional Owners and rangers in research. To a degree many of the long standing research projects have provided funds and other support to Traditional Owners.

Researchers indicate that their research is enriched by close collaboration with Traditional Owners Traditional Owners or rangers who have been involved in research have raised two critical issues. The first is recognition of the participation of the ranger or Traditional Owner in research. Traditional Owners felt researchers should make more of an effort to secure resources so that Traditional Owners working on projects get paid a real wage. Most Traditional Owners felt there was limited acknowledgement of their participation, which was sometimes covered under CDEP. The second issue relates to feedback from researchers and research results. Some Traditional Owners observed that researchers forget to bring back the results and sometimes when they do the outputs are in *'high English'* and it is unclear how the results can be applied. Researchers cited language as a big barrier in the partnership. Other issues highlighted by researchers included lack of support in funding grants to pay for the participation of partners,

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[88] *"Researchers are the most suspect among stakeholders, what do they want and what will they do with the information." (Facilitator: 14-12-2005).*

"There was this researcher, everybody jumped on her, is it gonna benefit us, we put her on hold, we tell them elders, you mob, you cannot keep saying yes to everyone, you have to say no." (Traditional Owner: 15-01-2006).

[89] *"Good that some scientists are now working better with traditional people, they are now more morally sensitized about it, they get insights from Aboriginal people while doing their research, and these insights enrich the research process. There is a lot of time spent sensitizing people and organizations about how to work with Aboriginal people and organizations. There has been a big change in how people do research, publicly a bar has been set at a level where there was not one before. Communities are really interested in scientists and want to spent more time with scientists there is a lot more demand for interaction with scientists. Communities have fun doing stuff together, they find it stimulating, they are enjoying new experiences, learning new things, they are also interested in what the scientists think, but the interaction must happen so both sides show respect to each other. People are interested, they do not threatened. People I work with are quite literate, they read and are interested." (NLC: 19-09-2006).*

difficulties getting ethical clearance for research, and difficulties in explaining the research role in a project to Aboriginal partners.

4.11.5 Non government agencies

There several key non government organizations involved in Aboriginal land and sea management. Some of these organizations are involved in joint projects with communities and provide support for activities and/or salaries to Traditional Owners involved. For example WWF has supported the employment of a marine ranger on the Tiwi Islands.

4.11.6 Partnerships in security and surveillance

Agencies concerned with security and bio-security, such as Northern Territory Marine Police, Customs and Australian Quarantine and Inspection Services (AQIS) acknowledge the significance of the Aboriginal work and its contribution to their mandates. For example, comments made in presentations at the Aboriginal sea ranger conference held Djinkarr, July, 2006 indicate overwhelming support for the role of Traditional Owners in NRM (Table 4.5).

Traditional Owners and rangers engaged in land and sea management provide a valuable service in terms of monitoring and surveillance[90]. For example, community government councils note that many Traditional Owners come to them to report on environmental problems in their areas and sometimes to report sighting of foreign fishing vessels[91].

Table 4.5 Comments about the land and sea management program from a cross section of government departments at the Aboriginal sea ranger conference, 2006.

"How to use capacities already in the community, there is a lot of diversity, we gotta set up models that suit different communities. In hindsight I don't think they engaged well with communities. I am talking to states about developing an engagement strategy on illegal fishermen issues. We also coming back into communities there is real capacity there to help us with these issues. We gotta look at this in a step wise process. I am hopeful we hoping to get something going." (AFMA: 3-7-2006).

"We recognise the value of collaborative work with rangers, making a lot of benefits we didn't envisage before. Work we do is collaborative and a lot is on Aboriginal land. A lot of dollars about. Dollars to sea rangers. I don't think we should be dispirited. Value that commitment. Will be recognised." (AQIS: 3-7-2006).

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[90] *"He come to the council and complained that he found illegal fisherman. He is out there all the time, he has already come to report 4 to 5 times before, he is always out there and looking after country. He is our eyes out there for us. We don't really know how many fishermen are out there, but while he is out there, we know what is going on." (Community Government Council: 21-3-2006).*

[91] *"I know the country, I walk the country, look I see this plant in this picture I don't want it on my country, I pull it out , I show it to someone, they don't know it, we burn it and we keep looking and watching, I don't want them things on my country. Every day I am out there watching and looking, I go alone sometimes or with family. I have no CDEP but I continue. Perhaps NLC can help." (Traditional Owner: 28-10-2006).*

"Work you guys are doing is very important to us. Illegal fishing is very important to us. We are looking for you to be our eyes and ears, you have the local knowledge. The information is invaluable, report it immediately and keep a record of it. You guys are the best defence on the frontline. Involvement of sea ranger groups is important and that's a message I will take to them." (Customs: 3-7-2006).

"The most powerful tool are you guys here on the water. We wanna go about and do the rest of the rangers. Best out there are rangers because you have knowledge. The TO's know the best fishing times, and area. They know they have 10 marine police. Now they have 100 fisheries police because we got all you rangers. You are our best friend when we go to court. You are the best eyes we have, that's why we like to have a good line of communication." (NT Marine Police: 3-7-2006).

"Rangers do valuable work and DEWR supports the case for rangers to get a proper wage. We are willing to negotiate with people, but we haven't got the support. You are highly trained. Our trouble is deciding who should pay for the salaries." (DEWR: 12-01- 2006).

"The Australian and Territory government value past and ongoing work of the Indigenous people protecting and sustaining country and the productive use of natural and cultural resources of the Northern Territory." (Schedule 2.5 to the Overarching Agreement on Indigenous Affairs).

4.12   Broader benefits of Aboriginal land and sea management

There have been many significant successes over the past 10 years in Aboriginal land and sea management. These successes have emerged through a number of areas including Indigenous Policy, training and employment, governance, infrastructure, health, empowerment, strong culture and environment. Most of these benefits are significant and challenge the traditional sectoral focus by government agencies in investment and policy. The increased level of investment by government in Aboriginal land and sea management in recent years and the extent to which the scope of Aboriginal engagement has been expanded underlies the growing formal recognition from government agencies that Traditional Owners have a role to play in NRM (Table 3.1; Section 4.11).

There is consensus among key stakeholders that frameworks must be developed which capture the multiple benefits derived from Aboriginal land and sea management. Many of the respondents in the communities have been concerned that external stakeholders often miss the wide range of benefits of the program as they tend to be concerned with environmental outcomes and everything else '*gets bunched up*' as employment. In the past some stakeholders have noted that they have reported on environmental outcomes and they haven't known what to do with other outcomes (Sithole *et al.*, 2007). Outcomes derived from Aboriginal land and sea management need to be considered at multiple levels – at the program level, at the group level and at the level of the communities. These outcomes are likely to reflect the diversity of the groups involved in land and sea management. Aboriginal people have for many years seen ranger programs as the logical nexus between the sustainability and reconciliation of country, people, culture, employment and enterprise development, health and well being. This section looks at a range of benefits derived from Aboriginal land and sea management, beyond the fundamental maintenance of biodiversity in Northern Australia.

4.12.1 Identity, self esteem and hope

One of the most acknowledged benefit of land and sea management as articulated by Aboriginal people is the sense of self worth and pride reported by rangers and Traditional Owners involved in the program. A small selection of statements made by Traditional Owners and rangers underline feelings held about land and sea management:

"I started ranger work in 2000, been doing ranger for 5 years now. First as normal ranger now land manager as I am learning so I can take over the manager's job, I am a sea ranger. I really love this job, I feel just right, like the right job for me, best thing to look after the country side…I need more training for boats. First land management – definitely training on chemicals, public speaking, I am a bit shy. With my new crew they need more training with their English and training to become a ranger and learn more visits with other ranger groups and more ideas from…2 or 3 more years I will be ready to take over." (Ranger: 1-06- 2006).

"Let me ask you a question, can you really tell an Aboriginal person to become a ranger and look after country. We are born to this. Whitefella see looking after country different way. When I was growing up, if someone told me I had to be a ranger and I would have laughed because I thought it was funny. I am already a ranger, I love the bush it looks after you and it can kill you if you don't look after it. Every Aboriginal person knows it. You gotta walk gently and know what you are dealing with. The law of the land is much stronger than anything. To me it is in your genes: that's land management for an Aboriginal person – for a white person it is different, whitefella gotta do something or change something. The reason they do that is they upset the balance, they make the problem, then they make projects and want to sort it out. Then they make rangers to sort it out." (Traditional Owner: 4-1-2005).

Traditional Owners explained in various ways their excitement, their enjoyment (satisfaction) and the pride derived from being involved in land and sea management. Being a ranger or being involved in land management creates opportunities for Traditional Owners to be on country, see country and reconnect with country. Many Traditional Owners observed that countrymen respect those that are involved in the program and feel good to know that country is being looked after.

Some Traditional Owners indicated that the benefit of being involved is so great that many would continue in the program even if there were no CDEP or salary. Some Traditional Owners have left paid employment to get involved in Aboriginal land and sea management and feel very strongly about doing ranger work. Rangers are aware of the value of the work they are doing and they distinguish between value at a personal level, at a community/clan level, regional level and for the country. Similarly, most elders expressed great pride in what the groups were achieving, in what the groups were representing and most importantly they were proud of the way rangers were challenging stereotypes of Aboriginal people in many areas where the rangers are demonstrating action, leadership, knowledge and innovation.

One elder noted that *"it gives me heart every time I see them boys in their uniforms, in their badges going out to look after country." (Traditional Owner: 15-04-2005).*
In many communities ranger work or involvement in the Aboriginal land and sea management was seen as the new hope for young people, who now have something to look forward to.

4.12.2 Indigenous Knowledge transfer

Land and sea management presents opportunities for inter generational transfer of knowledge in communities, though most of the available possibilities are yet to be fully explored (Section

4.12.2). Traditional Owners in almost every location were concerned about the degree of transfer of Indigenous Knowledge and its use in land and sea management. Storrs *et al.* (2003) highlights concerns related to the low levels of intra-generational transfer of Indigenous Knowledge among Aboriginal people as holders of that knowledge pass away. A related comment by (Davies, 1999) highlights the relevance and applicability of IK systems to some of the current environmental problems. For some of the Traditional Owners, the structure of the ranger group limits the transfer of IK. Some of the problems related to use of IK are due to the reluctance of holders of IK to pass that information on to individuals in the ranger groups who are not Traditional Owners.

There is also concern that the level of interest shown by young people in IK is very low. Young people may not be ready or interested in IK or want the responsibilities that come with receiving that IK. We have also noted that advocating for IK and Western Knowledge together presupposes that the IK is freely available or that it can be easily made available in the public domain. This is not the case, some Traditional Owners are not happy with passing on IK to outsiders though they do so on occasions. Some respondents acknowledged that IK was being held by outsiders. In some interviews respondents questioned the right of Traditional Owners to pass on IK without consulting with the rest of the community.

Davies (1999) observes that "Indigenous Knowledge has in some places not evolved to cope with the impacts of modern technology on natural environments and may be inadequate in this sphere." Despite these issues, land and sea management provides an avenue for the transfer for IK. Ongoing management of these lands through land and sea management requires maintenance of links between families, clans, language groups and their land and the passing on across generations of knowledge that is held by elders (Morrison, 2003).

4.12.3 Healthy country

There is evidence from research and from Traditional Owners own perspectives of the substantial ecological benefits derived in areas where Aboriginal people live on their country or are able to actively interact and work on country (see Section 5.2). Aboriginal people are well equipped through a remarkable skills base, demonstrable commitment, and location to address both opportunities and challenges in achieving a new level of sustainable and equitable management of resources. There are now several programs on the ground to demonstrate that Aboriginal land and sea management delivers significant benefits for biodiversity. Previous reviews underline the successes of some of the key programs in which ranger groups and Traditional Owners participated (Table 4.6).

Table 4.6 Comments on some of the programs engaged in land and sea management

The mimosa control and service agreement (MCSA):
The mimosa control program provided a high technology solution to ecological problems but, for control to be sustainable in the longer term, the provision of ground control was required. The agreement was successful in treating many large mimosa infestations, encouraging communication and cooperation between key organizations and local Aboriginal communities, but was not successful in increasing the capacity of Aboriginal people to undertake mimosa ground control… The community based mimosa management program has achieved significant environmental outcomes through on ground activities and significant social outcomes in terms of developing participant's employment skills and increasing the capacity of Aboriginal landholders to manage their country. (Storrs *et al.*, 1999:107-109).

TEALMES

The combined efforts of the work on the ground with TEALMES and aerial control by the NT government resulted in at least 50% reduction in both the extent (from 2780 to 1320 ha) and density of mimosa across all the TEALMES project areas. (Gardener, 2005:12).

CEPANCRM

It was agreed that CEPANCRM was working because it involved a wide range of Indigenous people and their land management organizations. It has consistently demonstrated that CEPANCRM is flexible enough to accommodate a wide range of management structures and community aspirations. Importantly CEPANCRM'S success is based on the explicit recognition of Aboriginal values and initiatives. It is not proscriptive in its requirements, so it allows Aboriginal people to set and achieve their own goals and outcomes by being able to use CEPANCRM in a range of creative and different ways. It is very effective in dealing with specific environmental issues it has been a catalyst for the development of larger land management strategies and programs. It has been most effective when utilized in conjunction with an existing community based land and sea management program. It is most effective in dealing with small jobs by providing a focus to deal with issues locally, is user friendly and easy to access and to acquit. (NLC, 1996).

Other programs that have been equally successful include the fire projects (WAFMA and the Gulf Fire projects), the marine debris program; and the coastal surveillance activities. Smaller projects implemented involving smaller groups have also been very successful. One example is the Boggy plains wetland fire management program which has resulted in the restoration of ecosystem function and productivity on a degraded wetland ecosystem. Fee for Service Agreements between Traditional Owners, rangers and AQIS have also been hailed as successful by stakeholders involved. The WAFMA project for example is demonstrating the value of Aboriginal management in a global environmental issue. The Indigenous Pastoral Program (IPP) has seen over 50 000 km^2 of Aboriginal land brought into production and 20 000 – 30 000 herd of cattle introduced and land management implemented to respond to weeds and feral animals. The Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) program has three areas declared in the NT and more Traditional Owners are discussing possibilities of joining the program. Aboriginal people are now able to monitor and report on environmental issues on country through various agreements with the relevant agencies. More systematic documentation is required for the program to capture these benefits quantitatively.

Most Traditional Owners or ranger groups are concerned and want to deliver good outcomes for the environment, for example, most indicate that they want to fix the problems, they want to see weeds gone and they want to see less damage from feral animals. They derive satisfaction when they look at their effort and see the impact. However, some of the ranger groups acknowledge that the resources they have available are rarely adequate to make the desired impact. The funding and resourcing for some problems is so small that, it is difficult to see the evidence of their efforts. Collaboration across tenures was highlighted as an important aspect of management that should be explored as some of the problems require joint efforts on many fronts. Traditional Owners and rangers acknowledge that there are many challenges locally, within groups and at a personal level which limit the effective delivery of environmental outcomes. However, despite these challenges there is evidence to show that the work the rangers are doing is having a significant impact.

4.12.4 Building capacity: training and skills development

Traditional Owners and rangers have received accredited and non accredited training from a host of training providers. Training providers have included Charles Darwin University (CDU), the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE), Little Fish (private company offering governance training in some of the Indigenous Pastoral Programs), the Australian Government, NAILSMA (leadership training) and ALEP (for training in small business enterprises). Northern Territory government agencies have also delivered courses to ranger groups and Traditional Owners, and unaccredited training has been delivered by agencies such as ALEP, the Bushfires' Council, and WWF.

The numbers of Traditional Owners completing their certificate courses is increasing. For example, programs such as Top End Aboriginal Land Management and Employment Strategy (TEALMES) and Mimosa Services and Funding Agreements are credited with having significantly enhanced the existing local capacity to deal with weeds (Gardener 2005). Further, with support from the STEP program, TEALMES has achieved admirable levels of Vocational Education and Training through Charles Darwin University (CDU) and the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE) (Gardener, 2005).

Other programs have also had successes in relation to training. For Certificate II in Fisheries Compliance, upwards of 77 Aboriginal people have been trained. The IPP has had 100 company directors trained, 21 traineeships, and now 11 people in full time employment.

Currently, the NLC estimates that 60% of the members of the land and sea management program are undertaking accredited training in qualifications such as Certificates I and II in Resource Management or the Certificate II in Conservation and Land Management (NLC, 2004a). There is no doubt that the land and sea management program has achieved significant results in building capacity among rangers.

The program has improved adult numeracy and literacy levels significantly in most of the remote communities. Numeracy and literacy training has been offered as part of a suite of courses delivered to rangers. Becoming literate and numerate has opened new opportunities for many people in the communities and the effects of this new capability impacts on the family and other people in the community.

Generally, enrolment figures for students in Natural Resources Management (NRM) related courses has been consistently high over the last ten years, but completion figures are low across most providers for some courses. For example, in 2006 estimated figures from School of Australian Indigenous Knowledge Systems (SAIKS) at CDU had 28% of 159 enrolled students complete their courses and graduate for certificate courses (SAIKS pers. comm.). BIITE has similarly reported high enrolment figures but the completion rates are very low (Figures provided by BIITE October, 2005). There are many reasons provided by Traditional Owners and trainers for low completion figures.

Completion is determined by one or more of the following:
- Participant interest in training;

- Length of time spent by trainers in communities; which affects relationship building time

- Ranger turnover within groups delays completion;

- High staff turn-over among training providers delays course delivery and issuing of

certificates;

♦ High facilitator turnover has the potential to interrupt training/coordinate training;

♦ Lack of systematic documentation by trainers of their activities resulting in delays in delivery of certificates and graduations.

Enrolment for higher level certificates indicates an improvement in the levels of numeracy and literacy among Traditional Owners who are involved. Some rangers and Traditional Owners have enrolled for Certificate 3 and 4 and one ranger is registered in a degree program. There are also rangers who have enrolled and are receiving training for the Full Coxswain Certificate which requires higher competencies in literacy and numeracy. The majority of rangers have completed Certificate 1 and Certificate 2 in NRM related courses. Many of the rangers and Traditional Owners who have gone through the program indicate that they felt liberated by the new skills learnt and some are making sure their children and relations go to school. Further, many rangers and Traditional Owners found that they were speaking more English on a regular basis because of the interactions they were having with other stakeholders on the program. One very important aspect of training in the program is that the new capacity stays in the community; very little capacity is lost as few of the trained participants leave.

One of the critical issues identified in the evaluation is how to strengthen existing capacity to achieve stronger and more effective caring for country. Most rangers and Traditional Owners are concerned that current training does not adequately integrate IK. While some of the rangers and Traditional Owners believe their IK base is adequate for NRM many more recognize the need for western knowledge as a complement to the IK (see Sections 4.7 and 4.12.2). Generally, informal groups believe they have capabilities to manage country based on IK though some do mix IK with western knowledge. Some noted the continued lack of acknowledgement of IK as an admissible qualification in the program[92]. While generally most rangers in the newly established groups were asking for more training[93], rangers in the older

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[92] *"I wanna do ranger work, I want to come in back and do ranger work but I don't want to be sitting in classes, pen and paper in hand to see if I got that paper to say yes (her name) you are now are a fully qualified ranger. I want to go out on my country I want to graduate on my country, to say yes (her name) here look you got everything here look, you finished, you bin pass. You know what I mean? I want to do everything on country. When you think about it, how dare they put us in training to look after our country, I mean countrymen, family been walking' on country for what? Four hundred years? Four thousand years? They know where to when to burn, what to do, how to look after the country, where to hunt. You got people Balanda people telling 'we' when to go hunting. (We know) all the seasons for when the animals are out, what animals are out, what type of fruit and vegetables are out in the seasons. You know? We don't have to do that, we know when we just go look for tucker, you know what I mean?" (Ranger: 13-07-06).*

"All this stuff about both ways training is all talk I reckon. There is not much to it." (Woman Traditional Owner: 1-07-2006).

"Training must be two way – senior elders dying down, none of the transfer is happening. Educational system in the community should be Yolngu, and senior people become tutors themselves and get acknowledged for their knowledge. A lot of elders aren't passing the knowledge. I tried to take the children back on country and get elders to talk about country, kids didn't know language, I asked why haven't we been taking them, why have we not been doing this." (Facilitator: 18-03-2006).

[93] *"I need more training. I need training for boats, definitely training on chemicals. Public speaking, I am a bit shy with my crew, they also need more training to become rangers and learn more from visiting with other ranger groups." (Senior ranger: 1-06-2006).*

groups were becoming more sceptical of training. Demand for training should be viewed from a number of perspectives:

♦ training as a means of gaining new knowledge[94];

♦ training as a means to access funding through STEP; and

♦ training provides an opportunity to get out on country for those groups with limited access to vehicles.

Many new groups identified training as one of their main priorities. Some of the groups spent at least 80 % of their time in some form of training.

Some of the Traditional Owners and rangers questioned the value of training and described the nature of training as a 'treadmill' and 'round about[95]'. The continuous training and sometimes

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"I need more knowledge about how to manage country to teach the young ones, not too much transfer of knowledge to them young ones. Sometimes I like to get help from the facilitator because some of us are not really well educated. That might change." (Ranger: 1-06-2006).

"I like my crew, some are not really trained even them girls, they need to go to Batchelor for study." (Ranger: 2-06-2006).

"Not too quick, we have to be steady and get training, then some of us may do like the facilitator do and manage things. We like the facilitator, the way he operates is good. Sometimes we tell him what we gonna do. He is a busy man but the projects officer takes over then. Very hard to take over. Aboriginal people need to know about white society and get educated." (Ranger: 3-06-2006).

"2 years spraying and I am bored. I would like to learn other skills, get more educated. I went to school, I want to get a passport and travel a bit." (Ranger: 03-1-2006).

[94] *"We need to have more training, the rangers want more training. Training makes them understand the basis of Whitefella thinking. They wanna do training. They are highly trained, most of them are highly literate but they find it intimidating to do administration and funding applications, so they are apprehensive and choose to avoid contact with Balanda. We try to keep a register of training. CDU and Batchelor are not the best record keepers." (Facilitator: 14-12-2006).*

"I like to have some certificates, because training is a big issue but I want certificates that can be recognised anywhere. In the community you are recognised for your IEK but in the mainstream there is no recognition. As soon as you come in the respect and recognition falls." (Ranger: 18-03-2006).

"Certificates- they only to make them look good, but they cannot read or write. Training is important for our education but to bring up false hope to our people, that's not right. No one is coming to see what's going on. People are coming in and chucking the certificate, if you cannot read and write how can they bring them together." (Traditional Owner: 18-03-2006)

"There is competition between CDU and BIITE and the quality of training and materials is not good." (Traditional Owner: 18-03-2006).

[95] *"The sea ranger mob still inexperienced and want to be stronger, they are struggling, they need someone to come here and help them out. If you want to train them mob, come up here and work with them for a week, rather than talk to council the trainers should be talking to us. I also said that you complete certificate there should be a next level, we get a piece of paper but nothing, no better, I told CDU there should be recognition for the certificate. With the same skill you should be able to get a job." (Senior Ranger: 5-06-2005).*

repetition of training is an issue for others[96]. For example, one Traditional Owner noted that *"You can never end up with too much training, but if that's all you ever end up with, then it's no use."*

Many rangers and Traditional Owners felt they there was no job, no recognition and salary increase, no rewards for Traditional Owners who have undergone training[97]. Some respondents felt that councils and related host agencies do not recognise the training that Traditional Owners were receiving[98]. Some Traditional Owners felt that government also discounts the experience and training that an individual receives and in some instances *"they (government mob) wont even let you light matches."* In one of several case examples recounted, rangers observed that facilitators recommended them for positions or responsibilities but the host organisations discounted the recommendations.

Some Traditional Owners and facilitators questioned the relevance of the training arguing that training should equip people for the job[99].

Some Traditional Owners, facilitators, government agencies and staff of the NLC questioned the quality of the training being delivered to the rangers[100]. Some rangers observe that when

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[96] *"NTU came to the community to do training. Frustrating.. there should be some incentives, but always you are in square one. You get your certificate, makes you feel proud but where do you go from there? We have had people train up for things that they have been doing for a long time, they get sick of it. No recognition, it's just another piece of paper." (Aboriginal Voices Workshop: 12-01-2006).*

[97] *"He has all the qualifications, but is not being paid the right wage. A diploma for ten years and in that time he should have been paid the right wage. But on country, still getting CDEP, work for the dole programme. Extra money for top up." (Aboriginal Voices Workshop: 12 -01-2006).*

"With my studies I have got they don't look at all the certificates that I have got. The council has not done it, other councils have, but them mob haven't done that." (Aboriginal Voices Workshop: 12-01-2006).

"We did our planning with the NLC and we thought we got extra top up, they only had enough to pay the facilitator, the office workers and the vehicle. We are not getting recognized. We don't have any money for top up and they still expect us to do 4 hours a day." (Aboriginal Voices Workshop: 12-01-2006).

[98] *"I have a Diploma in land management, the structure of council puts me on eight hours a day. They must let the rangers go on higher wages." (Aboriginal Voices workshop:12-01-2006)*

[99] *"Training is not an issue, people have been trained for no reason – we have chosen not to go on the training roundabout. I am very questioning about training as it's been particularly where training is so they can have little qualifications and wander all over the country. That's not the context the people want to live in. Focus on national standards; they want to see improvements in their own place. The cruellest thing to Aboriginal people by the educational system is an overt rejection of people's cultural knowledge that they are born with. They are born with the right and responsibilities to manage land. Nothing in the current system provides something like that, if anything there is nothing." (Facilitator: 18-10-2005).*

"Some of the group rangers were told a new manager was coming, we have always had difficulty when you are alone especially with jobs, - don't exactly know what to do not exactly know what to do when we go spraying, people haven't been using their training." (Ranger:1-06-2006).

they have gone for employment in government their status or position in the land and sea management program has meant nothing; qualifications have been set aside and they have been retrained, or they had to start in very lowly positions not commensurate with their experience or training. Traditional Owners in this position become disillusioned about being in a 'real job' and most drop out as well as suffer loss of face among their peers. As such, some rangers indicated that they want training quality assurances. While most Traditional Owners attend courses, trainers indicate that there is tremendous variability in actual participation, uptake and interest across the Traditional Owners so that it is inevitable that some Traditional Owners do better than others. In some groups, some rangers were not aware of what they had trained for. Hands-on training in practical skills was reported to be more popular than theoretical training.

4.12.5 Improved health

There are significant perceived benefits both for mental and physical health for rangers and Traditional Owners involved in Aboriginal land and sea management. Some of these benefits enhance the performance of the rangers and Traditional Owners involved in the program (see Table 3.3). The health benefits of Aboriginal involvement in land and sea country are explored in more detail in Burgess *et al*. (2005) as part of the Healthy People Healthy Country Project. There are benefits both for mental and physical health for rangers and Traditional Owners involved in Aboriginal land and sea management. Traditional Owners and rangers observe that undertaking land management is time away from '*humbug*', it is also time way from temptation for alcohol and drugs and time away from violence. While some of these issues persist in the groups and are identified as limiting factors for delivery of outcomes, many of the senior rangers and Traditional Owners noted that "*when one of them falls, they support them, they don't kick them while they are down, countryman goes away, sorts out the problems and comes back.*" Many of the rangers and Traditional Owners indicate that the nature of activities undertaken for land and sea management on a regular basis is '*hard slog'* therefore most Traditional Owners and rangers indicate that they feel that they have become fit, and healthy. Some rangers felt relaxed and free from the humbug, so they were not stressed. Other rangers testify to the good health because when they are on country doing land and sea management, they are swimming, eating bush tucker and spent time away from smoking as often they run out of cigarettes. Some ranger groups collect bush tucker for family and other countrymen.

4.12.6 Community governance

A number of institutional arrangements have emerged to support Aboriginal NRM. Davies (1999) describes these institutional structures for Aboriginal NRM as combining customary

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[100] "*CFCU coordinates getting the funding together then we contract CDU to deliver it. It has been good, but I wonder about the content sometimes. The rangers enjoy training, developing relationships with different agencies. This is really important for their work. Some groups wait for training too long, some groups get frustrated because they receive their certificates after long delays, there is a lot of training that is not being delivered and people are waiting. Agencies must make regular visits to reinforce the training. At the moment I would say the sea rangers are not year ready, they don't have the necessary capacity and confidence yet.*" (NLC: 17-10-2005).

"*Quality of training varies, depends on the trainer. Generally its good standard, but it is getting the training organized that is frustrating, getting a work plan in January about when they would like to do it and we never get a response and never got the training. We are now with CDU which is unfortunate because we want BIITE but they are just not coming through with the service.*" (Facilitator: 14-12-2006).

authority and knowledge, statutory land ownership and management roles with techniques drawn from western knowledge. CFCU, ALEP, and NAILSMA provide some of the networks through which partnerships with other agencies are brokered to provide support and investments in Aboriginal land and sea management (See Section 5.1 and 5.2). Such structures provide Traditional Owners with mechanisms for promoting partnerships, advocacy, creating linkages between stakeholders, facilitating research and coordinating activities on country. These new institutional structures also facilitate greater community level interaction through the development of ranger groups and the ranger networks (sea rangers or women ranger groups) which make it easier to coordinate support for land and sea management. Though ranger groups were constituted primarily as structures focusing on environmental concerns they are also seen as development nodes. The ranger group has in some communities become the focal point of interactions with external interest groups and offers a functional and legitimate institutional base from which to develop environmental and related programs in Aboriginal communities.

Traditional Owners operating outside the structure of ranger groups are organized in very fluid family or clan groups where participation is not formally regulated by plans or project activities. Traditional Owners who are involved become the point of contact for developing partnerships for land and sea management.

4.12.7 Infrastructure and resourcing

Traditional Owners and rangers have access to infrastructure (computers, vehicles, sheds etc) which have dramatically improved communications and accessibility for the Traditional Owners to areas on country and beyond (see Section 3.11). One respondent commented that the '*troopie*' (Toyota Troop carrier) or the '*boat*' instantly transforms a program and opens up new possibilities for the group in terms of the scope of work they can do and how much land they can manage. Ranger groups have been able to seek funding to support their programs. Of all these achievements, it is the cultural outcomes that are seen as of prime importance.

4.12.8 Networking opportunities

Ranger groups and Traditional Owners involved in land and sea management form a loosely defined network of Traditional Owners involved in land and sea management in the Top End and represent a collective voice for advocacy within the NLC and to with government (see Section 5.4.12). Operating in remote locations means that many people do not get the opportunity to network or visit other areas. Rangers are able to exchange ideas, share experiences and learn from hearing about other programs. Many Traditional Owners observed that their programs were initiated following interactions or mentoring from other groups. Conferences are seen as the main vehicle for networking. While women's annual conferences have continued uninterrupted since the program started, general conferences have stopped (see Annex 9). Rangers and Traditional Owners identified this change as a major blow for Aboriginal land and sea management. Many rangers would like to see the conferences started again.

4.12.9 Performance of Aboriginal land and sea management against Aboriginal aspirations

This section presents an assessment of Aboriginal land and sea management against the aspirations identified by the Traditional Owners (see also Annex 4). The performance rating of the achievements of Aboriginal land and sea management was based on a four point scale of significant achievements (Table 4.7).

Table 4.7 Rating scale for Aboriginal land and sea management

Scale of achievement:	Description:
Significant achievement	Outcomes achieved and local stakeholder perceptions are mostly positive. There are minimum comments made to qualify the rating.
Moderate achievement	There are many achievements but also many limitations or negative perceptions by stakeholders which reduce the rating.
Low achievement	This is when the program is achieving fewer than the expected range or types of outcomes possible or seen in similar programs.
No achievement	No outcomes are delivered.

Despite many challenges Traditional Owners face in the program, the overall rating was positive. There are very few areas where action needs to be taken to make the program strong. These are indicated as areas of low or moderate achievement in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8 Performance of Aboriginal land and sea management rated against Traditional Owner aspirations

Aspirations of Traditional Owners for land and sea management	Rating based on a 4 point scale (No achievement, low achievement, moderate achievement, significant achievement)
Challenge existing negative stereotypes about Aboriginal people.	Significant achievement: Aboriginal land and sea management has successfully challenged some of the existing stereotypes about Aboriginal people, work, culture and knowledge.
Strong engagement in NRM.	Significant achievement: There has been a dramatic increase in number of Traditional Owners involved in land and sea management both within the formal NLC coordinated program, groups operating under Landcare, and groups operating outside the NLC program.
Meeting cultural obligations.	Significant achievement: Aboriginal land and sea management fulfils individual obligation and also in many cases complements individual, family or clan efforts to look after country.
Regaining social–cultural and political identity.	Significant achievement: Many Traditional Owners spoke passionately about getting their identity back and how Aboriginal land and sea management has given them a new lease of life.
Transfer and application of Indigenous Knowledge.	Moderate achievement: While the program itself is a conduit for the transfer and application of Indigenous Knowledge specific funding and projects which target the documentation, transfer and application of Indigenous Knowledge are lacking.

Aspirations of Traditional Owners for land and sea management	Rating based on a 4 point scale (No achievement, low achievement, moderate achievement, significant achievement)
Healthy country.	Significant achievement: Recognised achievements in improvements of landscape health have been documented by researchers.
Improved numeracy and literacy	Significant achievement: Access to training has resulted in improved numeracy and literacy and application of these skills beyond the program.
Stronger skills base for land and sea management.	Significant achievement: Skills training has lead to increased community capacity with the highlight being that most of the capacity gets retained in the remote locations.
Greater recognition and proper valuation of effort.	Moderate achievement: Key stakeholders now recognise and have started to talk more realistically about what constitutes effective investment in Aboriginal land and sea management.
Good health for Aboriginal people.	Significant achievement: Traditional Owners on country and those Traditional Owners that are actively involved on a regular basis derive significant health benefits from land and sea management.
Viable enterprise.	Low achievement: Traditional Owners who are already involved in land and sea management are cautious in their support for enterprise and most are concerned that their involvement in enterprise limits their involvement in land and sea management.
Effective and supportive governance arrangements.	Moderate achievement: While the ranger group is a good structure for land management, there are many issues that need to be resolved with the governance of Aboriginal land and sea management at many levels including the role of the ranger group in relation to cultural and government structures at the local level.
Employment on real jobs as rangers.	Moderate achievement: More than 300 Traditional Owners are employed within the CDEP with some receiving "top up" money. Only a small percentage of the rangers are employed on full salaries.
Empowerment and self management.	Low achievement: Many Traditional Owners are concerned about ownership and control of the program in relation to facilitators, the NLC and some government agencies.
Mutually beneficial partnerships.	Significant achievement: Some high-level partnerships have been created which bring mutual benefits to both partners; Aboriginal land and sea managers and the government agencies or industry partners with which agreements have been negotiated.

Aspirations of Traditional Owners for land and sea management	Rating based on a 4 point scale (No achievement, low achievement, moderate achievement, significant achievement)
Adequate Infrastructure.	Moderate achievement: Most groups note the adequacy of facilities and resources at their disposal to effectively engage in Aboriginal land and sea management.
Strong voice for Aboriginal land and sea management.	Low achievement: Traditional Owners felt their voice in the NLC and within relevant processes and mechanisms for Aboriginal land and sea management could be strengthened considerably.

Groups (ranger groups and Traditional Owners) that are just starting tend to be delivering more outcomes related to people than environment. More experienced groups tended to deliver most of the outcomes listed though their primary emphasis will often shift from building capacity, delivery of on ground programs to focusing on diversification of the program, empowerment issues and developing a strong Aboriginal voice on land management. All groups deliver outcomes on many levels and there is now sufficient experiential knowledge and critical mass for Aboriginal people to become an even stronger voice in Natural Resources Management, policy formulation in the Northern Territory and beyond.

Obviously stakeholders have different aspirations for outputs and outcomes from Aboriginal land and sea management and often want assurances that their investments are delivering on those outcomes. In the past, key agencies have tended to emphasise the environmental outcomes of the program rendering other outcomes invisible. Stakeholders were asked to compare the delivery of different types of outcomes by Aboriginal land and sea management. Each stakeholder was asked to distribute 10 points across five categories of outcomes to indicate what they think is the relative strength of each outcome area (Table 4.9). There was general agreement amongst stakeholder groups that significant benefits are derived in terms of people-related or social outcomes confirming broader assessments of the overall Aboriginal land and sea management movement. Indigenous community stakeholders on average rated 'healthy people' outcomes as the most significant benefit, while government stakeholders rated 'healthy country' as equally significant to 'healthy people' outcomes. When scores are added across all stakeholder groups, people outcomes get the highest score in total as well as from each stakeholder group suggesting a high level of agreement and satisfaction across all stakeholder groups about the significance of delivery of these outcomes.

Table 4.9 Stakeholder assessment of benefits delivered from land and sea management

	Healthy country	Healthy people	Governance	Funding and resourcing	Physical and infrastructure outcomes
Government (n=5)	3	3	2	1	1
Indigenous communities (n=11)	2	4	2	1	1
Other stakeholders	2	3	3	1	1

(n=8)					
TOTAL	7	10	7	3	3

More systematic documentation and where possible quantification of the outcomes would strengthen the arguments regarding the significance of the contribution from the Aboriginal land and sea management. Generally, stakeholders agree that such high level of performance has been possible in spite of the constraints under which Aboriginal land and sea management operates.

4.13   Conclusions

4.13.1   Issues that need attention

To achieve the conditions necessary to maintain and strengthen Aboriginal land and sea management within the Top End of the NT, the following issues and areas need attention:

♦ More effective support of Aboriginal land and sea management must be achieved through more coordinated delivery of support to Traditional Owners involved in land and sea management. In doing so, agencies which currently invest in land and sea management need to take into consideration the complex setting within which land and sea management occurs and to develop investment procedures that recognize important aspects such as:

- The need to provide funding over longer time frames to mitigate climatic, social and other technical challenges that may limit implementation;

- The collective formal experience and capacity available among Traditional Owners to undertake land and sea management programs (groups mentor each other), and

- The administrative capabilities and potential burden on some groups who receive funding to handle the bureaucratic component of funding. This is an area that may have to be addressed through more streamlined, less complex reporting requirements attached to funding contracts.

   ♦ Key stakeholders including the Land Councils and government must ensure investment and strategies for Aboriginal land and sea management remains aligned with Traditional Owners aspirations and priorities.

   ♦ Ranger groups and Traditional Owners should be supported and mentored by facilitators, host agencies and Land Councils to develop the skills necessary to assume control of the program and ensure viability of the program in the longer term. This might include accessing training in the areas of planning, leadership, conflict resolution and facilitation to strengthen local capacity for self determination.

   ♦ There is need to develop the capacity of Traditional Owners and ranger groups to record and document their activities over time, and manage this information. Rangers groups and Traditional Owners should also be assisted to develop or document existing methods for assessing landscape health.

   ♦ Advocacy that supports Traditional Owners' involvement in projects that integrate

Indigenous Knowledge with western knowledge in land and sea management needs to be supported and strengthened.

♦ Stronger and more coordinated advocacy by Traditional Owners for greater recognition of land and sea management as a 'real job', and the development of suitable incentive structures to reward training achievements and experience might be targeted at the Australian Government. This might be facilitated by the development of more formal avenues to ensure a stronger Aboriginal voice on land management within the Land Councils and in relation to government and other key stakeholders.

♦ Traditional Owners and ranger groups (in some cases with the support from the Land Councils) would valuably

♦ Strengthen relationships with host agencies through the development of clearer guidelines about the nature of support delivered and the host agencies' roles and involvement in decision making over land and sea management.

♦ Review existing governance arrangements for land and sea management with a view to streamlining roles and responsibilities of key structures like ranger groups, the CFCU and related structures. For example, there is need to review current procedures and processes for forming ranger groups to ensure that the right people are involved and consulted.

♦ A long term program that focuses on mentoring key leaders among Traditional Owners and rangers involved in land and sea management will support the ongoing viability of this sector.

4.13.2 Specific recommendations for Aboriginal land and sea managers:

♦ Integrate Traditional Owners who are not actively involved in the land and sea management group into everyday activities of the ranger group so as to achieve stronger ownership of the program and increased opportunities for the exchange of Indigenous Knowledge.

♦ Regularly review your plan of management to ensure that project proposals remain aligned with community aspirations.

♦ Regularly review the performance of your land and sea management group, and assess performance issues in the group. Some ranger groups and Traditional Owners might identify incentives that could be used to strengthen the work ethic within the group.

♦ With the assistance of support agencies, seek opportunities to advocate for long term funding and more realistic timeframes for project proposals and funding cycles.

4.13.3 Recommendations for key stakeholders involved in the sector

Our primary focus in this evaluation was the relationship with the NLC which is covered in Section 5 of the report. Other comments and views on other stakeholders are therefore limited in scope and detail. We recommend:

♦ Strengthen existing avenues for Traditional Owners and rangers to participate in policy discussions and decision making related to land and sea management. Stakeholders must create avenues to enable direct consultations with people on the ground, rather than rely primarily on intermediaries.

♦ Stakeholders need to articulate their interests and expectations of outcomes and outputs from land and sea management in ways that allow for Traditional Owners and rangers to realize their own aspirations for land and sea management to remain locally driven and owned.

♦ New strategies and conditions to ensure effective and continuous support based on relationships of trust require that key stakeholders review their employment conditions and encourage high staff retention rates so that there is minimum disruption to the operations of groups and to the continuity of land and sea management activities.

♦ Stakeholders involved in land and sea management must develop a coordinated support framework in consultation with Traditional Owners and ranger groups.

5.   THE ROLE OF THE NORTHERN LAND COUNCIL IN ABORIGINAL LAND AND SEA MANAGEMENT

"People do underestimate the importance of Aboriginal land and sea management as an industry and as an asset. This program is really about creating livelihoods and futures and it's working." (Government: 17-03-2006).

There is wide acknowledgement that Aboriginal land and sea management is a hugely successful program and the role of the NLC is acknowledged among the key stakeholders. The program has become a model for other land councils within the Northern Territory and in other states and territories. In this chapter we first provide the context within which the program has been developed and is undertaken. The performance of the NLC Caring for Country Unit (CFCU) is then appraised against the NLC's *Caring for Country Strategy 2003-2006*.

Comments from respondents across all stakeholder groups during this evaluation underlined the value of the support received from the NLC particularly in the areas of fundraising and networking. These comments were often qualified with concerns that the level of support for some ranger groups and Traditional Owners was weak. Overall Traditional Owners consulted want to see the NLC strengthen its capacity to deliver a dynamic and effective service. A number of key issues that were identified from consultations as limiting the effectiveness of the delivery of the support from the NLC are described in this chapter, and some directions to address them are put forward.

5.1   The NLC's Caring for Country Program

The NLC is ideally positioned to assist communities in developing land and sea management programs (White, 2001). The NLC is a statutory authority established under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act* 1976 and it is also a representative body for the purposes of the *Native Title Act*, 1993. It is the principal representative body for Aboriginal people in the Top End of the Northern Territory. In 1996 the NLC set up the CFCU to support Aboriginal land and sea management, as part of the overarching mandate to help its Aboriginal constituents build suitable lives on their own lands (NLC, 2006:3).

The role of the CFCU is to broker delivery of appropriate advice, education and training and finding resources for Aboriginal land and sea managers (NLC, 2004a). This has translated to the CFCU assisting Traditional Owners to form ranger/or similar groups to deal with major issues such as weeds, fire, marine debris, wildlife monitoring (e.g. marine turtles), marine surveillance and feral animals. The Unit has facilitated the development of over 35 formal Aboriginal natural resource management focused ranger groups in partnership with other stakeholders (Figure 3.1).

The NLC supports ranger groups in many ways. For example:

- ♦   NLC is involved in the initial consultations about land and sea management issues;
- ♦   NLC then undertakes wide consultations needed to establish the programs (the

NLC provides anthropological advice to this process to ensure that requirements of the Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act 1976) are met;

♦ NLC looks for funding to support the individual ranger groups; and NLC provides in kind resources such as staff time and NLC vehicles.

Components of the Caring for Country program also include the Aboriginal Women's Land Management (AWLSM) Program, Sea Ranger Program and the Enterprise for Country Program. The establishment of the Enterprise for Country Program is relatively recent and much smaller compared to the other two programs. The program was established in 2005 and currently involves the development of opportunities and enterprise projects with 4 ranger groups.

The formal women's program was established in 2003 following the appointment of the Aboriginal Women's Land Management Facilitator. The sea country program was developed in 2003 following the completion of the Sea Country Action Plan. The sea country program boasts 14 marine ranger groups (see Northern Territory Fisheries Booklet, 2006; NLC, 2006). On ground work for sea country is developed in relation to the Sea Country Action Plan (NLC, 2003b). Four of the ranger groups have developed plans to develop enterprises. There are other groups awaiting NLC facilitation to assist them in planning and forming a ranger group. Through the operation of these groups it is estimated that 350 Aboriginal people bring about 50% of the Aboriginal owned land area under formalized regimes (NLC 2004:7).

Activities undertaken by the Traditional Owners and ranger groups are negotiated under several key agreements. These agreements are negotiated with government but resources are sent to the groups. The NLC is directly involved in brokering the relationships and coordinates implementation. Some of the big formal programs have been negotiated by Traditional Owners with the support from the NLC (Table 5.1).

The current three year *Caring for Country Strategy 2003-2006* represents a long term commitment by the NLC to effectively support Traditional Owners who are interested in implementing land and sea management programs on their country (NLC, 2005). Priority areas for the Strategy include increasing the involvement of women and children in land and sea management activities.

Table 5.1 Examples of key agreements for land and sea management brokered by NLC

Agreement	Date	Partners	Impact
Contract Employment Program for Aboriginals in Natural and Cultural Resource Management (CEPANCRM).	1987 to 1996	Environment Australia.	The program funded short-term Indigenous contract employment for over 10 years and succeeded in employing Aboriginal people on 932 natural and cultural resource management projects.

Top End Aboriginal land management and Employment strategy (TEALMES).	1996	Funded by Australian Nature Conservation Agency under the national wetlands program.	Implemented to help Aboriginal people prepare management plans for each catchment. This agreement included the Liverpool-Thomkinson, Blyth and Cardell river systems; the Arafura swamp and its catchment; Baniyala and Blue Mud Bay and Crocker Island.
Mimosa control agreement.	1998	Indigenous Land Corporation, Northern Land Council (NLC), White Eagle Aboriginal Corporation.	Provided high technology solution to weeds and was successful in treating the infestation but not in building local capacity (Storrs *et al.* 2003).
The West Arnhem Fire Management Agreement (WAFMA).	2006	WAFMA is a partnership between Conoco Phillips (owners and operators of the Darwin Liquefied Natural Gas plant), the Northern Territory Government, NLC and relevant Aboriginal Traditional Owners and Indigenous representative organisations.	The partnership was formed to implement strategic fire management in the 28,000 km^2 West Arnhem Land Fire Abatement project area for the purposes of offsetting greenhouse gas emissions from the Liquefied Natural Gas plant at Wickham Point in Darwin Harbour.
Community Development Employment Project (CDEP).	1977	Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) through various CDEP providers.	300-350 ranger positions on CDEP.
Aboriginal Landcare Education Program (ALEP).	1994	NLC, Greening Australia.	Provides important extension and training services among Aboriginal people (ALEP Report, 2005).
Indigenous Pastoral Program (IPP).	2005	Memorandum of understanding between the NLC, Central Land Council, NT Department of Business, Economic and Regional Development and Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC).	Increase capacity of Traditional Owners to establish community based pastoral enterprises.

5.2   Partnerships in land and sea management

The NLC has actively sought partnerships with potential collaborators in developing programs that support the objectives of the Caring for Country Program. Two examples, outlined below, are the Aboriginal Landcare Education Program (ALEP) and North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA).

5.2.1   Aboriginal Landcare Education Program (ALEP)

In 1994, the NLC and Greening Australia established the Aboriginal Landcare Education Program (ALEP). The objectives of ALEP were to work with Aboriginal communities and build their capacity for natural and cultural natural resources management. The Partnership Agreement (signed in 2003) notes that the objective of ALEP is "*to complement the activities of the CFCU and other Aboriginal Community initiatives, by providing on ground vegetation oriented services within community areas, including outstations*". The main distinction of the ALEP and the NLC CFC programs was related to the scale and location of their activities. According to the same agreement CFCU was "*to concentrate on land management issues, initiatives and on-ground work at the large landscape, catchment and estate scales*". The agreement also notes that both partners recognised the likelihood of competition for limited funding and that ALEP would focus its efforts to source funding specifically for provision of vegetation based funding around the vicinity of the communities. ALEP works through a number of ranger groups and communities in the Top End (ALEP, 2005). The respondents in the CFCU indicate that ALEP and CFCU are increasingly working on similar issues which have created competition between the organisations. This partnership was discontinued in 2005. Though there is now no formal relationship between ALEP and the NLC there are indications that CFCU and ALEP still cooperate in a number of areas, particularly small scale plant based enterprises.

5.2.2   North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA)

The NLC was instrumental in the development and formation of the North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA). NAILSMA is described as a bioregional forum for Indigenous land and sea management across North Australia (Armstrong, 2004). At the Mengen Forum in 2004, it was agreed by partners in the Alliance that "*all work undertaken by NAILSMA should be cross jurisdictional and have a north Australian focus and that regional projects should be undertaken by regional organisations or groups*" (Armstrong, 2004). The involvement of NAILSMA in Aboriginal land and sea management while clearly defined under the partnership, has raised some concerns related to overlap of roles and need to further streamline operations between the NLC and NAILSMA. Since its formation NAILSMA has successfully sourced land and sea management funds, some which have been given to ranger groups and Traditional Owners in the NLC region. In addition NLC and NAILSMA have collaborated on key projects focusing on Indigenous Knowledge (IK).

5.3   Performance appraisal

The performance of the NLC's CFCU is appraised here against the goals, principles and objectives set out in the *Caring for Country Strategy 2003-2006*. The appraisal examines only those objectives where the evaluators felt they had sufficient information.

To supplement this, Annex 9 presents a summary of outputs from the Caring for Country Program measured against the objectives of the CFC Strategy.

Objective 1.   Increase participation of Aboriginal families in land and sea management.

At a program level there has been tremendous growth over the last ten years. Thirty-six groups have formed with others interested in forming. An analysis of the data for 26 ranger groups consulted in the evaluation (Annex 7) shows that over 70% of the ranger groups were formed between 2000 and 2003 and the remainder in the 1990s. This massive growth post 2000 highlights the growing interest and enthusiasm of Aboriginal people to be involved in NRM.

There are now 14 sea ranger groups and seven women-based groups. In some groups, women work in groups with men. Many Aboriginal people regard the increase in involvement by women as a much needed complement to male roles in Aboriginal land and sea management.

The number of Traditional Owners employed under the program has risen and is projected to rise further. In mid 2007 employment in the land and sea management program was estimated to be between 300 and 350 on CDEP funding, with some rangers also receiving 'top up' money. There were a total of nine full time salaried positions across the ranger groups. There were 41 Traditional Owners seasonally employed in the IPP and 23 positions in the IPA program. These programs are projected to grow as more Traditional Owners formalise their programs. Such high demand raises questions about the ability of the CFCU to deal with requests given its current structure.

Objective 2.   Establish best practice approaches to the awareness, conservation and use of Indigenous Knowledge.

There have been few initiatives focusing on the conservation of and application of IK in the program. The primary reason for the low activity in relation to this objective is lack of funding. Traditional Owners have been concerned at the level of action related to this objective and want more effort put towards sourcing funds for projects and programs related to IK (see Section 5.4.2).

Objective 3.   Increase access to effective training and education of sea rangers.

Coordinating training is one of the key objectives of the Caring for Country Strategy. The cessation of funding by Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) for the position of training coordinator within the CFCU has created issues. Lack of funding to support a training coordinator in the CFCU makes coordination difficult, and this capability in particular requires strengthening (see Section 5.4.9). Despite the challenges presented in the coordination many Traditional Owners continue to attain skills and qualifications in many areas related to land and sea management. Some of these skills have wider application beyond the Ranger Groups or the program.

Objective 4.   Enhance communication networks to support Aboriginal land and sea management initiatives.

The NLC has been commended by key stakeholder groups for facilitating annual conferences for Traditional Owners involved in land and sea management (See Section 5.4.12). While the annual women's conferences have continued uninterrupted since the women's program started in 2003, general ranger conferences have not been held for a few years due to lack of funding. Traditional Owners and rangers are concerned that these general conferences have stopped and

argue that more effort should be placed towards finding funding for them. Many Traditional Owners would like to see the conferences reinstated.

Many reports and documents have been prepared in the course of the 10 years of the program. There is a dominance of pictorial booklets and workshop reports. Some of these reports hold little substantive information. Key documents supporting the CFC Strategy are quite substantial and provide a wealth of background information about the environment and the people in the NLC region. Over the years collaborations with researchers have yielded scientific reports and other material which have been useful to inform the public about the program. The Land Rights News carries regular articles showcasing the work of the program. Staff in the CFCU also contribute articles to other publications and have made presentations at conferences, outlining the work of the Unit.

Objective 5.   Delivery of dynamic and effective service by the CFCU.

Over the past ten years the CFCU has successfully negotiated a number of agreements that have seen ranger groups get involved in key areas of NRM in the NT (see Table 5.1) . Some of these programs have demonstrated the value of a collaborative approach to NRM and also the importance of addressing environmental problems across tenures. In some of the programs there has been relatively good documentation of impact, although this can be improved. There is agreement among researchers and evaluators of the significant outcomes that the CFC program has assisted in delivering, including the control of weeds and feral animals, fire management, the removal of marine debris, preservation of threatened species and bio-security. The NLC has been very strong at negotiating contracts for the program including the WAFMA agreement for greenhouse gas abatement in West Arnhem Land. The latest agreement – *Schedule 2.5 Healthy Country, Healthy People* of the *Bilateral Agreement on Indigenous Affairs* is one of many initiatives in progress to establish a stable funding base for the program. The NLC spends a significant proportion of staff time on fundraising for programs (See Section 5.4.5). There are many ranger groups and Traditional Owners whose funding is sourced directly through the unit. Generally Traditional Owners were happy with the role of the CFCU in brokering funds for the program.

Some Traditional Owners stated that they were not satisfied with the level of coordination in the program. Many groups noted that the presence of the NLC was limited (See Section 5.4.8). While the number of ranger groups has increased significantly, the size and scope of the Caring for Country Unit has not grown to meet the demand (see Section 5.4.5). However, the turnover of staff has had impacts on relationships with some of the groups (see Section 5.4.6). While the staff to group ratio is very low, the Unit is developing more cooperative arrangements with other organisations to streamline its role and reduce duplication (see Section 5.4.11).

Though many of the agreements have been brokered with other partners, there are challenges maintaining strong networks and collaboration. The NLC's relationships with other stakeholders (see sections 5.4.11and 5.4.13) need to be clarified and in some cases streamlined to avoid overlaps and tensions.

5.3.1   Progress towards achieving the goal of the program

The goal of the NLC's CFCU is to develop the capacity of Top End Aboriginal organizations to plan, design and implement integrated natural resources management strategies on their land, through regionalized mechanisms (NLC, 2003a). Further, the NLC aims to achieve demonstrable improvements in the environmental and economic sustainability of Aboriginal owned land in the Top End. This will be achieved through improved coordination and delivery of selected government and non government programs. This will be complemented by the

enhanced capacity of Aboriginal organizations to determine their own needs through integrated caring for country. According to Whitehead (2002) organizations such as the CFCU offer a capacity to translate the aspirations of Aboriginal people and their customary leaders into forms that are accessible to representatives of the bureaucracy and markets and vice versa. This is a long term vision and by all accounts, the CFCU remains focused in its attempt to realize it. In this section we consider the data that has been presented and determine the extent to which this vision is likely to be realized.

Outcome 1. *Develop the capacity of Top End Aboriginal organizations to plan, design and implement integrated natural resources management strategies on their land, through regionalized mechanisms.*

Much planning over the last ten years has been undertaken through facilitated consultations led by the NLC. As mentioned previously, the capacity to facilitate participatory planning within the CFCU is variable and there has not been an attempt over ten years to develop local capacity for participatory planning. Questions have been raised about the nature of NLC planning processes and whether they truly capture local aspirations (see Section 5.4.3). The CFC Strategy does not appear to be linked to the management plans developed with the ranger groups.

Outcome 2. *Achievement of demonstrable improvements in the environmental and economic sustainability of Aboriginal owned land in the Top End.*

There is no disputing that the on-ground work being undertaken by the ranger groups has a significant impact in reversing some of the environmental threats in the NLC region, but lack of consistent documentation of work undertaken makes it difficult to establish to what extent current effort have delivered 'demonstrable' achievements. Without adequate documentation most of the impact of the program remains anecdotal and difficult to validate. However some of the key programs are starting to document their efforts more systematically.

Outcome 3. *Improved coordination and delivery of selected government and non government programs*

NLC has a long history of developing agreements with government and non government organizations for the program (See Table 5.1). However, the data also shows that the NLC needs to increase the level of awareness among key stakeholders and strengthen existing relations (see Section 5.4.7). Traditional Owners feel coordination within the NLC and among the stakeholders is essential for the program and will improve efficiency.

Outcome 4. *Enhanced capacity of Aboriginal organizations to determine their own needs through integrated caring for country.*

Traditional Owners recognize the need for multi-stakeholder collaboration over land and sea management but acknowledge that funding requirements can subsume their own aspirations and priorities. There are indications that there are enough Traditional Owners and ranger groups within the program to be able to ensure that the needs of Traditional Owners drive the agenda *(*See Section 5.4.10*)*

5.3.2 Measuring performance of the program against principles

Principle 1. *Be proactive and responsive to the expressed land and sea management needs and aspirations of Aboriginal people as required by the Aboriginal Land Rights Act (NT), 1976 and the Native Title Act, 1993.*

There are perceptions among Traditional Owners that the rapid growth of the program has outstripped the capacity of the CFCU (see Section 5.4.8). Many respondents used the term 'saturation' to describe the ability of the CFCU to deliver service to Traditional Owners and ranger groups. The NLC also recognises the tremendous challenges placed on their existing capacity but are severely constrained by the funding environment (see Section 5.4.5). The majority of positions are externally funded and funding is often short term, offering little job security. Consequently, the NLC finds it hard to recruit staff and retain them. In Section 5.4.6, we discuss some of the impacts that a high turnover of staff has on the program. Staff deficit issues significantly constrain the NLC in its efforts to deliver a dynamic and effective service.

Much of current effort of the CFCU is reactive rather than proactive because of high burdens on staff (see Section 5.4.8). For example, staff in the sea management unit work with about 13 ranger groups, while the women's land management coordinator works with more than eight groups. The number of groups and of Traditional Owners that each staff member works with on average is very high. This underlines the mismatch between demand and supply of service in the unit. Support for staff positions continues to rely on external sources and the NLC has not grown its own investments to meet the growing demand. Much of the data presented by ranger groups indicates that most people perceive that there has been a decline in the contact between the CFCU and the ground, with ranger groups calling for more visits and more consultations. Many of the respondents in the ranger groups are aware of the challenges that the CFCU faces and would like the NLC to dedicate more support to the CFCU or to more vigorously seek funding to adequately resource it.

Section 5.4.10 presents some of the comments that respondents made regarding the nature of and direction of the current land and sea management program. Many of the ranger groups believe that they are implementing a government-driven program. Traditional Owners believe that their aspirations are ignored or overshadowed. Many respondents observe that the NLC through its advocacy for particular types of funding is inadvertently legitimating that loss of control over the program. There is a strong push among the ranger groups and Traditional Owners to refocus the program and for ranger groups to start aligning the program with aspirations of the Traditional Owners. This realignment, if achieved, will go some way towards resolving some of the underlying tensions that can be seen among some of the Traditional Owners involved in the program.

Principle 2.   *The land needs its people. Pursue the philosophy of extending Aboriginal people's capacity to look after their land and sea country (which is empowering) versus the philosophy of setting up an agency to look after the land and sea on behalf of the people (which is disempowering).*

The most effective response to natural resource management issues in northern Australia and within the NLC region is one centred on the land owners and the local community. White (2001) argues that to achieve success in this type of management, there must be a more deliberate and purposeful structuring of relationships to limit the loss of control, take account of the socio-political context, respect local knowledge and traditions, and effectively respond to contemporary environmental problems.

The groups that are being supported are varied in their structure and composition, ranging from individuals, family groups and in some instances community groups. This variability makes us question references that we see to Aboriginal land and sea management as a 'community based natural resources management program'. The term 'local' may be more appropriate than 'community' as it does not imply that the social unit doing the management has a particular structure or composition.

In theory the CFCU is able to say they have been able to facilitate and extent people's capacity to look after their land and sea country. How have they achieved this? The role and presence of facilitators both from community, the NLC and the government is crucial to understanding to what extent people have capacity to drive and implement their own program. Many people challenge the preoccupation with codification of plans, conforming to the conventional conservation management models. Aboriginal land and sea management is a lived experience: its traditions are constantly being adapted and changed as people interact with the landscape. Codifying these plans loses the flexibility and dynamism of the Aboriginal practice and, by all accounts, the essence of people's aspirations. People are not familiar with their written-up plans or with the larger CFCU strategy.

The involvement of facilitators in brokering projects and other funding and their control over the means to engage in land and sea management - such as holding the keys to the troopie, the shed and the ranger office; the password to the computer; and signing the time sheets - indicates that the facilitator is in control over the program. The perceived control by the facilitator brings into question prospects for empowerment and indeed the process to achieve that. Currently there is a perception that the need for a 'buffer' against local humbug and other issues proffers control over the program to facilitators or other outsiders. But, if empowerment is happening or is likely to happen, then more Aboriginal people should be taking charge of the programs and more Aboriginal people should be working in the CFCU. Currently Traditional Owners recognise the need for having a 'buffer' but feel they might never be able to gain full control of their programs.

Principle 3. *Respect and apply both traditional Aboriginal knowledge and contemporary science-based knowledge to promote and ensure best practice land and sea management.*

There is much acknowledgement across all stakeholder groups of the importance, relevance of and need to protect Indigenous Knowledge (IK). Many respondents are not satisfied with current levels of support for IK related projects. Traditional Owners were also concerned that integration of IK has not really occurred to the levels that they hoped to see.

Principle 4. *Promote the intrinsic and economic value of ecologically and culturally intact landscapes for Aboriginal people's customary and commercial uses of their country.*

Most of the programs being delivered by the CFCU have delivered significant benefits to the environment in a number of areas and the intrinsic value of the environment has been enhanced. The Enterprise for Country program is relatively recent and involves a small number of plans and trials with some of the ranger groups. The performance of the program in terms of delivery of benefits to Aboriginal people is not yet established.

Principle 5. *Promote and facilitate partnerships and collaborations to achieve positive land and sea management outcomes.*

Relationships among stakeholders in the land and sea management are not always easy (see Section 5.4.11). Further, there are also within agency variations in attitudes and approaches to delivering support to Aboriginal land and sea management. Examples of collaborations among key stakeholder groups shows that key stakeholders still find ways of working around the difficult relationships and generally negotiate agreements that have been very good to the program.

5.4 Key issues limiting effective delivery of support by the CFCU to Aboriginal land and sea management

This section draws on the data gathered from the consultations to highlight some of the key issues identified by the stakeholders. The diversity of the groups, their needs and circumstances influenced the range of issues that were identified.

5.4.1 Limited awareness of and application of the CFCU Strategy

Within the NLC, in the various divisions, respondents acknowledged that they were not familiar with the Strategy. Some of the staff in the CFCU also acknowledged their limited knowledge and use of the Strategy as a defining framework for their activities. One staff member observed that their limited use of the Strategy was related to their perception of its limited relevance among Traditional Owners and the programs that are underway. Taylor (1995) recommends that the recruitment of appropriate staff with a sound understanding and commitment to the objectives of the Strategy as critical to the success of the program yet few of the existing staff are aware of the Strategy or referred to the Strategy. Taylor (1995) saw the implementation of the Strategy as a responsibility shared among various divisions of the NLC including the Natural Resource Branch, Anthropology Branch and the Regional Services Branch. Staff interviewed from the Anthropology and the Regional Divisions state that they have very little involvement in the implementation of or the development of CFCU programs. However anthropologists are involved through their development of Land Interest References.

The Strategy was developed through wide consultations with the key stakeholder groups, but few individuals remain in the key agencies that have seen or know what is in the Strategy. Though ranger groups were involved in the development of the Strategy at various stages through its development, very few respondents remember or have seen the Strategy. Ranger groups have their own plans and strategies and there is little attempt to link these ground level strategies with the larger CFC Strategy. Even when the participatory planning process takes place with groups, there is no attempt to refer or counter reference the Caring for Country Strategy, with the effect that the Strategy is seen very much as a CFCU document while the management plans developed by groups are seen as community programs separate from the "Caring for Country Strategy[101]."

Ranger groups consulted in the evaluation have neither seen or received copies of the Strategy. Due to the high turnover of facilitators and coordinators, few have been involved in developing the Strategy and many are unaware of its existence. In contrast to the Strategy being targeted for its limited application or relevance, some Traditional Owners, respondents in government and researchers view the increased focus on strategies, plans of management and formation of ranger groups as a degree of formality that will undermine the flexibility and organic nature of Aboriginal land and sea management.

5.4.2 Limited transfer and application of Indigenous Knowledge

The NLC's 2004 Annual Report states that a key element of the CFCU's approach is to recognize two kinds of knowledge – western science based knowledge and Indigenous

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[101] *"The NLC is out there crazily developing strategies for country yet them mob out there are saying that's not what we want, they produce fancy photos and reports that traditional people don't see as important "* (Facilitator: 8-07-2006).

traditional knowledge. There are a few programs in which recognition of both kinds of knowledge has been a key objective, and in which the CFCU has been a partner.

The first is the West Arnhem Plateau Indigenous Knowledge Project, in which Traditional Owners, through the NLC and Tropical Savannas CRC have worked with researchers since 2001 on the conservation of IK (Cooke, 2006:1). The project report states that *"We have brought together research findings and local knowledge to create useful NRM information resources and tools and have made them available to the plateau owners and managers….. Our collective of Aboriginal experts and younger generation Indigenous managers, together with scientist and scientific fellow travelers, has been successful in creating novel and innovative approaches to landscape management."*

Another is the Tropical Savannas CRC/NAILSMA Indigenous Knowledge project which has enabled a return to country by Traditional Owners. A Tropical Savannas CRC funded workshop in 2002 concluded that the best form of knowledge conservation is to have both young and old Indigenous people together on country so that knowledge can be passed on. Many of the respondents are concerned about the degree to which the ranger structure allows this interaction to take place.

These two projects are very important and have been significant in defining the scope of work on IK in North Australia. However, Traditional Owners have expressed concern that the number of projects such as bush camps, which Traditional Owners see as an important medium for transferring IK, has been limited over the past 10 years. Further, some Traditional Owners have indicated that although there is an appearance of excitement and support for IK by government agencies, there has been limited application of IK in contemporary land management regimes. More recently, this issue has been compounded by delays in the release of funding from Natural Heritage Trust Extension Phase 2 (NHT2) for IK projects. However, following the development of a strategy for protection and use of IK, stakeholders are hopeful that more money will be available in the future to support projects related to IK. Funding allocated to IK projects in 2008 under NHT2 provides a starting point for much needed attention in this area.

5.4.3   Concern over the appropriateness of qualifications of CFCU staff

Many CFCU staff have received training in natural resource management with a bias towards biophysical sciences. The limited disciplinary diversity in the CFCU is perceived by some respondents to limit the capacity of staff to deliver appropriate programs which integrate biophysical as well as social needs of the Traditional Owners. Staff have differing levels of experience working with Aboriginal people, with some holding many years of on-ground experience. Training in community development or participatory approaches to planning might be beneficial to all staff, and future opportunities to participate in participatory planning training such as that reported on by Taylor-Hunt (2000) should focus on the specific requirements of staff rather than community-based facilitators. It was noted that some of the staff in the unit have received or been exposed to similar training in other organizations. However the overall competency and capacity of the staff is varied.

5.4.4   Low level of Aboriginal employment in the CFCU

Among key Aboriginal respondents one of the main issues raised in relation to the NLC was the low level of Aboriginal employment within the CFCU. At the time of this evaluation there were three Aboriginal staff members working in the land and sea management area of the NLC. This number comprised two facilitators and the manager of the Land and Sea Management Branch.

Aboriginal people have been employed on a casual basis as consultants in some of the programs but this type of employment tends to be underreported and is often invisible. There continues to be an issue in attracting Aboriginal people with the required skills to undertake these roles.

While qualifications were cited as the main limiting factor to Aboriginal employment in the CFCU, other factors were also identified. Some of the Traditional Owners perceive jobs in the CFCU to be about '*pushing paper all the time'*. Most of the Traditional Owners have a preference for fieldwork. Interviews with Aboriginal people who previously worked in the unit indicate that reasons for leaving are varied. Some respondents cited weak mentorship arrangements as the main constraint, while others cited isolation due to lack of other Aboriginal people in the unit as another key issue. On a personal level, some of the respondents indicated that they felt inadequate as they could not cope with the 'pace' in the CFCU.

5.4.5   Heavy reliance of the CFCU on external funding

Three funding-related concerns were raised in the consultations. The first relates to the high dependency of the NLC on external grant support for the CFCU and its operations. Respondents in the NLC acknowledge that financial support for the unit is limited and is unlikely to increase in the long term given other core demands in the organization. Further, the NLC acknowledges that operating costs for most of its programs in the CFCU have increased and adjustments to its provision of core funding have been made relative to availability of funds for the CFCU. For example, support for the Aboriginal Women's Land and Sea Management Program has increased over a four year period from $15 000 in 2000 to $20 000 in 2004, and $25 000 in 2005.

As well as financial support, NLC provides other types of logistical and administrative support for the CFCU. An NLC report (2006:15) states that "*only a limited proportion of this work can be funded and resourced by the NLC from its own revenue… since it was created in 1996, the NLC has existed largely on grant funding"*, much of which has been of a short term nature. Key sources of funding for the CFCU have included the ILC, NHT, DEWR and the NLP. There is support from the government for two staff positions seconded to the NLC. The unit also hosts the Indigenous Land Management Facilitator position which is funded by the NHT. One of the major challenges for the NLC is to maintain stability in the CFCU and Aboriginal land and sea management given this reliance on external funding.

The second concern highlighted in the consultations relates to the amount of time spent seeking grant support for staff and the programs. Much time is spent by the CFCU obtaining funding. Staff respondents suggest that the high diversity of funding sources supporting program activities indicates the volatility of the funding environment and also the high burden on each individual staff member. Further, respondents also point to the variability of the grant size to highlight the challenges present in the program. For example, approximate figures provided from the Aboriginal Women's Land and Sea Management Program show a grant range from $6 000 to $402 000 (Table 5.2).

Table 5.2 Funding raised for Aboriginal women land and sea management groups (based on estimates provided by NLC CFCU - October 2006).

Funding source (2006)	Approximate amounts ($A)
Indigenous Land Corporation	402 000

Natural Heritage Trust	174 000
Aboriginal Benefits Account	25 000
Department of Employment & Workplace Relations	380 000 to 500 000
National Landcare Program	11 231
Department of the Environment & Heritage	18 000
NAILSMA (Study assistance)	65 000
Farmbiz	6 306

Some staff observed that at times the burden of fund raising takes up most of their time. For this reason respondents from the CFCU indicated that they try to limit the amount of time spent on very small grants, although they recognize the value of the small grants in leveraging further support.

A third funding concern relates to the perception among ranger groups and other stakeholders that the CFCU is reliant on the same sources of funding as the ranger groups, and as such is perceived to be a direct competitor to the ranger groups[102]. This may reflect a lack of communication in some cases between the CFCU and Traditional Owners and ranger groups. Some respondents in the CFCU were concerned that the unit could end up securing resources that should be going to the ranger groups[103]. This perception is common among ranger groups, facilitators and among some government respondents[104].

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[102] "*We have to go to the NHT for money……..The CFCU competes with us for the money. The CFCU is not transparent. I don't know where the money goes. The CFCU have their hands in the pocket. My big question is who gets what money? They still refuse to pay consultations like other organisations have started to do, why? Shared agreements might be okay, because they cut the NLC out.*" *(Traditional Owner: 19-03-2006).*

[103] *Regional delivery is a good model but the Australian Government seems to be moving further away from the community in its processes. It is really about peak bodies and representative bodies, also there is lots of money going to agencies, big landcare groups, Land Councils etc. It's going upwards in terms of community contact. Partly because the application and reporting process is so complex that smaller groups struggle to handle it. The forms are so complex and bureaucratic we seem to have lost the capacity to make it easier for on-ground actions. It seems about ½ our money has gone to peak groups and half to NRETA. The smaller groups have dropped out (Government: 20-03-2006).*

[104] "*Aboriginal people need special funding, tailor made programs with in-built flexibility. People must be able to adjust to community capacity. A clearer support structure is needed that is resourced over 5-10 year timelines. Also Land Councils may compete with resource centres sometimes. That should be clarified beforehand. The ILC is another player-its input needs to be coordinated better.*" *(Government: 16-3-2006).*

5.4.6 Adverse effects of staff turnover on the delivery of service to Traditional Owners

Traditional Owners and ranger groups[105] hold the perception that the turnover of staff is high. Six CFCU staff members left the organization during the evaluation[106], although it is important to note that the staff turnover evident in the two years of the evaluation is not a normal trend in the unit. The high turnover of staff is attributed to a number of reasons. Insecure tenure is proposed by the NLC as one of the main factors. Most of the staff who left the CFCU in the last 2 years cited stress as one of the key reasons for leaving[107].

Vacant positions and turnover limit the ability of the unit to deliver effective service to Aboriginal land and sea management. Staff turnover impacts on relationships with Traditional Owners in many different ways. Some Traditional Owners indicated that they find dealing with new staff unsettling and need time to build new relationships. Some Traditional Owners indicate that they don't always understand why staff leave, and are often disheartened when a good staff member leaves. For most groups, departure of the staff means disruption of their program and both temporary and long term loss of contact with the CFCU while another person fills the position. Traditional Owners also indicate that they have preferences for the styles of engagement applied by particular staff and find it hard to adjust to a new style. The departure of some of the long serving and experienced staff mean that long established ties have been broken and relationships with the NLC have become interrupted. For new staff, the task of building new relationships is significant and, as stated by many respondents, time consuming.

5.4.7 Limited awareness of the role and activities of the CFCU within the NLC

Sections of the NLC are not aware of what the CFCU is or what it is doing. Some of the members of the NLC executive interviewed for this evaluation acknowledged their limited knowledge and interactions with the unit[108]. Most of the respondents interviewed in the CFCU

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[105] *" We are concerned that staff are leaving, what's going on in the NLC, there are tensions in there, things must be worked out, because it affects us mob, we need to talk to the NLC and help them mob in there, tell me are you (CFCU staff) happy in there?" (Traditional Owner: 8-07-2006).*

[106] *" A lot of good staff members, but people leaving because of pressure, staff members always leaving, A lot of good staff members are disappearing, there is no support to the CFCU. Traditional Owners are trying to help, but what can we do, would we move them out to other places? We want them to be comfortable so they can help us more." (Traditional Owner: 19-03-2006).*

[107] *"…No I am not happy, I don't feel well supported by the organisation, In fact, I feel we are undermined. I get frustrated by that stuff we are talking about; it is like trying to fit square pegs to round holes. Funding doesn't match what is culturally appropriate; I am just worn down by the frustrations not getting the formal recognition or legitimacy for the groups. One gets a lot of moral support but no real support, while the government support the ranger groups, they don't resource them adequately." (NLC: 17-10-2005)*

[108] *"They haven't brought a lot of information to our attention. We were not aware of or are involved. How can we support the CFCU if we don't know the issues? They must recognise that to a certain degree they have been a detriment to themselves. I do support CFCU, against a lot of odds, I admire them especially some staff. I have recently been appraised of the programme. I had to take my hat off at the*

hold the view that the CFCU is not adequately supported within the NLC[109]. It is important to elaborate that the kind of support being referred to is of a financial, political and moral nature.

Some of the respondents in the regional offices indicated that they have limited interactions with the CFCU even though members of the unit periodically come and go from the regional offices. Some of the officers in the regional offices indicated that they were not aware of which or how many ranger groups were in their areas and are frustrated when Traditional Owners come in expecting them to address issues raised in relation to the CFCU. Respondents also observed that communication and collaboration between CFCU and other NLC divisions is limited. Anthropologists interviewed for the evaluation stated that they have little contact with the unit. Council members also stated that they have little awareness of the CFCU.

From discussion it was determined that the awareness and knowledge of the CFCU is generally low among the Traditional Owners, rangers and respondents from local community organisations such as resource centres and community government councils. Ranger group facilitators are more aware of the operation of the unit, as they interact directly with unit staff. In ranger groups that have received support from the NLC in the past, the rangers demonstrated low awareness. One of the reasons put forward for the low awareness is that NLC staff develop personal rather than institutional relationships with the Traditional Owners. Some of the CFCU staff indicated that they are identified as 'NLC' when on the ground hence the low awareness of the CFCU. Further, there is high turnover in some of the ranger groups so that new rangers may not be aware of the CFCU. Nevertheless, the general level of awareness of and knowledge of staff from the CFCU across ranger groups and among Traditional Owners can be improved.

5.4.8 Limited on ground presence by the CFCU

Aboriginal land and sea management has grown rapidly over the last ten years. The NLC acknowledges the significant demand for support that now exists among the Traditional Owners. At present the NLC estimates that the CFCU is meeting approximately 70% of the demand, yet the majority of Traditional Owners and rangers in the 26 groups who were consulted felt that demand from existing ranger groups, or from those that have indicated

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way they brought the program together. All the work the staff are doing…I sit in awe, wow $1.1 million on a project. Had I known about this 3-4 years ago things would have been different." (NLC: 21-03-2006).

"CFCU is failing a bit. Within the NLC, there is a problem. Perhaps there should be a review of the CFCU structure, what has been a success and what hasn't. Where they are the CFCU does not get enough support. Communication within the NLC is a problem, at the moment the NLC thinking of development and not looking at Aboriginal NRM. They don't look after the people, too much in-house fighting and we get caught in the between, we always get caught in between." (Traditional Owner: 18-03-2006).

[109] *"CFCU has become really big now, they set up the ranger conferences and a lot of people used to share ideas, but then again it is not there anymore. Things are not going well. I think it is because of the infighting in the CFCU, the other Land Council mob are not listening. In the NLC there is a lot of interference with CFCU and how it gives us mob service on the ground. This is frustrating to me, it like we are dealing with a go slow" (Traditional Owner: 23-02-2006).*

interest to form, was not being met[110]. Respondents observe that the demands from groups outstrip the current capabilities and capacity of the CFCU[111]. Overall Traditional Owners want on ground contact with the CFCU to increase.

Where statements were made by ranger groups in regards to more support, these need to be considered carefully as they incorporate a range of requirements which reflect the individual groups. For some groups the need for mentoring support was discussed, while for other groups the role of the NLC as mediator in disputes with local councils was desired. The majority of groups also wish to have more support with fundraising and administration. Level of support needed at different times also varies considerably across the program. Some issues and ideas put forward by Traditional Owners about levels of current support are listed in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3 Some of the comments from Traditional Owners about limited NLC support

Long waiting periods before response from the CFCU.
Ranger groups that had been waiting a long time for a planning meeting, a facilitator, promised vehicle, or boat from the CFCU.
No response from the CFCU to some groups, who felt ignored.
Groups that did not have any funding or resources to get started.
Groups that were struggling because of difficult relations with the host organisations who felt the NLC could and should intervene.
Groups that have misunderstandings with some CFCU staff and did not feel these were being addressed in a transparent fashion.
Groups that have been reliant on a particular individual and did not feel they would get the same amount of attention from another individual.

While some ranger groups want a lot more support from the NLC, others want very limited support and some want no support. Demands for different levels of support are attributed to various factors including maturity of the group, presence of another organisation or individual providing similar support or in some cases the requirements of the activities the group is involved in. For example, groups that are involved in programs that are coordinated by the NLC like the West Arnhem Land Fire Abatement Project, Gulf Fire project and TEALMES are connected directly to the CFCU.

Some groups acknowledge awareness of the CFCU but have chosen to work outside the program and have sought other partnerships, such as with government[112].

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[110] *"CFCU set up well to deal with that kind of program, but the CFCU has come to a point where it is saturated. The growth out bush is more than the NLC can handle. Maybe NAILSMA can handle the excess" (Aboriginal Voices Workshop: 12-02-2006).*

[111] *"Before, NLC used to visit; now you can't see anyone coming out here. There is a problem in there that needs to be worked out. How can we get CFCU more support so we can see them more? People are slow to adapt to all these changes, and often we don't know what's going on. There is no communication between people and the NLC executive. I would like to see people and the NLC working together more" (ALSMART meeting: 19-03-2006).*

Respondents in the CFCU indicate that delays in the delivery of services must be understood in relation to the prevailing staff situation in the unit and in relation to the donor-driven funding cycles which creates delays in the provision of resources or materials to groups. While acknowledging that the number of staff positions available in the unit is dependent on external funding, respondents empathize with the individuals working in the unit whose role it is to support many ranger groups. Because there are so few CFCU staff to support the 36 ranger groups in operation, adequacy of the support to ranger groups and Traditional Owners is an ongoing issue. Concerns were raised in relation to the Aboriginal Women Land and Sea Management Program and to the Sea Ranger Programs where staff members are perceived by Traditional Owners to carry huge burdens. Those staff supporting three to four ranger groups or Traditional Owner groups felt that this ratio was more manageable to ensure effective service delivery.

Among the key factors determining measure of effectiveness by the CFCU as defined by Traditional Owners, is presence on the ground defined by:

- ♦ Length of time in the program;

- ♦ Nature of relationships with communities; and

- ♦ Amount of time spent with rangers and Traditional Owners. While generally all staff spent a high percentage of their time on country, on a group by group basis, time spent with individual ranger groups or Traditional Owners is limited.

Many ranger groups and Traditional Owners indicated that the time lag between visits from staff in the CFCU is too long. There is also a perception among Traditional Owners including rangers that CFCU favours a few already well-established groups[113]. At the Sea Management Conference held at Maningrida in July 2006, groups urged the CFCU to broaden its support to different ranger groups, specifically those that need attention.

Some of the respondents have observed that the current complement of staff have different approaches to engaging with Traditional Owners. One respondent described these differences in terms of 'bushies and townies'[114]: Bushies received very positive assessments from the

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[112] *"Each program is different. We don't want badges, we just want to be a family group but achieve outcomes. There are many systems you could try to make them work out for you, but some may not work for you……So we joined forces with government, to prove that what we are doing is valuable Indigenous Knowledge. We set out transects, satellite images of different grasses by different colour, we put the burns in, dry/wet season monitoring. We monitor turtle and fish. We have been doing that for 5 years. We have reinstalled the value for us. As we burn we have done it without too much hassle. It's about managing country how you want to. Now everyone says it was a success, now they want to expand it."* (Traditional Owner: 23-05-2006)

[113] *"There must be more consultation between NAILSMA and CFCU. Traditional Owners have a lot of concerns. The NLC can and should fight for our interests. In some communities they leave some groups out. As far as I am concerned it should be all of them or nothing."* (Traditional Owner: 19-03-2006).

[114] *"The CFCU in its urban environment doesn't understand how the big picture is not as important as the small mundane things that communities feel are more important."* (NLC: 19-09-2006).

communities[115] and comprise a small proportion of the total staff in the unit (based on Traditional Owner definition of "*good bloke*", "*he is a good one*"). The other staff members are seen as 'townies'. It is important to note that attributes provided to differentiate between bushies and townies go beyond the number of field visits. They also include behaviour of the individual, general approach when dealing with Traditional Owners, and nature of relationships with Traditional Owners. While acknowledging that there are high demands for staff away from the field, Traditional Owners still have high expectation for levels of on ground support from the CFCU. Some respondents have suggested a decentralised structure of CFCU in the regional offices would increase the accessibility of the unit to Traditional Owners.

Concerns about inadequate delivery of support to the groups are qualified by a greater concern that the CFCU could evolve into a huge bureaucracy[116]. Taylor (1995) warns against the "*danger of creating an unwieldy bureaucracy which will end up mimicking the inefficiencies already seen in government program delivery.*" There are mixed opinions within and outside the NLC about what form and size the CFCU should be. Some respondents believe it should be a small structure that does not compete excessively with the ranger groups and Traditional Owners for funding. Other respondents argue that the role and scope of the unit has broadened and thus it must build the necessary critical mass in order to be effective. Rangers and Traditional Owners cautioned that any thinking about making the CFCU more responsive must be carefully considered in order to build an effective structure. There is growing recognition among government agencies that Aboriginal land and sea management needs sustained support.

5.4.9 Limited coordination of training for Aboriginal land and sea management

Coordinating training is a very important part of the NLC's role in the program and it is one of its stated objectives in the CFC Strategy. Since funding from DEWR for the training coordinator ceased, individual staff members in the CFCU have been organizing training for the groups they are working with. There are no records kept by the Unit of training undertaken within the groups. This sometimes results in confusion about which training ranger groups and Traditional Owners should be undertaking[117]. Ranger groups are also liaising directly with training providers and making requests for training. Groups have preferences[118] of providers.

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[115] "*The CFCU is involved in a number of things, a mixture and so they have a range of things that they do. At the end of the day I am concerned with the sustainability of the unit, about getting people jobs…we want our mob to have a choice, determine what they want to do – that choice was very limited in the program but over the last 5-10 years this land and sea management has become a significant opportunity and different range of occupations are now being pursued. Looking at what has been developed, this is good*" (NLC: 21-03-2005).

[116] "*If they had more staff and more money they could do the right things, today it is not happening, there are big issues with the marine rangers, people want enforcement powers its not happening*" (Traditional Owner: 23-02-2006).

[117] "*I signed one group and then someone in the CFCU then took another trainer from Batchelor to the same group and I said, 'what is going on?'*" (Trainer: 7-09-2005).

[118] "*There is a lot of ping pong going on, students being registered with CDU then they are moved to Batchelor or vice versa and then there is credit transfer, the paperwork is getting lost along the way.*

However often these preferences are not known to the CFCU staff and staff make arrangements with providers they prefer. There is confusion and often duplication of requests to the training providers who feel there should be better coordination. For example, within Charles Darwin University (CDU) the School of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (SAIKS) has responsibility for NRM training, but there are some overlaps with other faculties also providing training that fits into NRM.

The multiplicity of providers delivering similar programs has resulted in the duplication of roles which has frustrated both the trainers and the Traditional Owners. CFCU and the rangers are equally frustrated by the CDU and BIITE as these organizations have perennial problems of maintaining staff skilled in NRM. Often the trainers do not meet training quotas, do not arrange funding, and sometimes do not turn up for training and or award the certificates. Trainers involved in the evaluation often feel overwhelmed by the requests for training, and the distances that need to be travelled to reach groups makes their task more challenging.

5.4.10 Limited support for advocacy on land and sea management

Many Traditional Owners and rangers felt the NLC should be taking a lead role in advocating for better support for the ranger groups with the Northern Territory Government (NTG) and the Australian Government (AG). Some groups felt let down by the NLC in some of the media campaigns they have led or participated in.

Currently well resourced groups do their own campaigning but feel their 'voice is weak'. Most ranger groups identified a need for a stronger voice in the NLC and a stronger voice with government. Most respondents felt the ranger groups and Traditional Owners involved in land and sea management should come together and speak with one voice. Current discussions between Traditional Owners, rangers and the NLC are focussing on how to strengthen the advocacy of groups. Traditional Owners proposed the development of a representative committee of strong leaders in the program at the Sea management workshop held at Maningrida, in July 2006. The formation of a committee was explored further at a consultative meeting with senior rangers hosted by NLC at Crab Claw Island in October, 2006. Respondents in the NLC indicate that many Aboriginal land and sea management activities are showcased or reported in the 'Land Rights News' produced by the NLC. Other articles appear in 'Common Ground' and 'Kantri Laif'. Generally, Traditional Owners felt that support from the NLC in media was limited, but acknowledged that more formal advocacy to government at both State and Territory levels was stronger.

Some of the key advocacy messages that ranger groups and Traditional Owners identified include:

♦ The recognition of ranger work on Aboriginal land as a real job;

♦ Payment of real salaries not CDEP and top up;

♦ Payment for environmental services to Traditional Owners deriving from the conservation work that has public benefit;

♦ Devolution of adequate enforcement powers to strengthen local capacity to look after country;

♦ Adequate support for protection and transfer of IK and traditional practices;

CFCU provided me with a list of what they thought the group had done, that won't do, we need proper records, so it is frustrating sometimes." (Trainer: 2-10-2006).

♦ Provision of reliable and long term funding specific to Aboriginal land and sea management.

The NLC has recently celebrated ten years of its Caring for Country Program by producing a booklet that outlines the progress of the program and current state of play, including a profile on each of the land and sea management groups in operation. This is an important publication as it provides a succinct overview of the program with on-ground examples of what Aboriginal land and sea management is contributing and achieving in this region, and is a clear act of advocacy.

5.4.11 Overlap of roles and responsibilities among stakeholders

Some respondents were concerned with the degree of overlap in roles and support provided by the CFCU in relation to other key stakeholders such as government, NAILSMA, ALEP and facilitators based with the ranger groups[119]. There are multiple layers of organisations and structures within government now engaging with ranger groups on Aboriginal land and sea management. Some of the staff in the CFCU indicated that they tend to focus on groups which are not receiving support from other agencies. However, there is a perception among Traditional Owners and rangers that the CFCU prefer to work with older and more experienced groups which already have well developed structures. Some of the respondents in the CFCU observed that the multiplicity of stakeholder involvement can also be confusing to Traditional Owners. Respondents among government agencies and in the NLC underlined the importance of streamlining and coordinating support to ranger groups and Traditional Owners.

Other comments were made about the confusion over roles and responsibilities and jurisdiction in regards to the program. Some of the confusion identified by Traditional Owners relates to the roles of different Aboriginal organizations (NAILSMA and ALEP) involved in Aboriginal land and sea management (See Section 5.2). Traditional Owners also commented on confusion surrounding the coordination role of the NLC and some of the structures that have been set up by government.

The relationship between different layers of government facilitators and the NLC staff was identified as an area requiring clarification of roles and coordination[120]. Awareness of the role of the NLC is more of an issue at the AG level than at the NTG level. Generally government respondents were not sure who was in the unit and what the roles and responsibilities of different people were. Key stakeholders such as trainers and other relevant people also demonstrated low levels of awareness of the unit.

Some of the respondents have noted that as the number of stakeholders involved in the program has increased, Traditional Owners have started to worry that the control over the program is 'slipping away from their grip'. The issue of control over the program was raised in relation to

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[119] *"There are too many bodies, now NAILSMA which is also connected to the NLC. Funding will stop at the organisations. You look at government now – you can only be on CDEP for 12 months, the government has already pushed up a lot of factors, there is few options for us that we can consider."* *(ALSMART Meeting: 19-03-2006).*

[120] *"How do we improve collaboration? There should be more coordination between Caring for Country and NAILSMA. From an Aboriginal perspective if there was a more centralised delivery of support that would support capacity. There should be more streamlining and systemisation of support services. Maybe there could be some level of central coordination on delivery of land management on Aboriginal lands that linked up CFC, NAILSMA, and government etc."* *(Governrment:12 -04-2006)*

different categories of stakeholders for particular program components of the CFCU Strategy. Many respondents argued for greater support of existing local structures and greater control of program direction by Traditional Owners.

The most common partnerships discussed in the consultations were the relationships between the government agencies involved in Aboriginal land and sea management and the NLC. Government agencies include those from the NTG and the AG. There are several examples of successful collaborations between the NLC and government in regards to Aboriginal land and sea management. But these collaborations are not always easy.[121] Respondents in both the government and NLC recognised that at times relationships are difficult. Respondents acknowledged the prevalent underlying tensions in some of the negotiations and joint programs that are in place. NLC staff acknowledged being frustrated when their role is rendered irrelevant in certain processes, initiatives or discussions. Despite the difficulties and challenges of the relationship, many in government acknowledge the importance of the role of the NLC in the program and acknowledge the valuable contribution the NLC has made in progressing Aboriginal land and sea management.[122] This achievement is made more impressive considering the conditions within which the program has developed.

Another important concern highlighted in the consultations was the lack of clarity regarding relationships between the CFCU and the host agencies for Aboriginal land and sea management (councils, resource centres and associations). Most respondents from these host agencies stated that they have little knowledge of CFCU or what its role and relationship is with ranger groups. This lack of knowledge is not unexpected as many of the host organisations experience a high staff turnover regularly. However, within relatively stable organisations where staff remained for up to two years in the organisation, there was still relatively little awareness of the CFCU. Some host organisations observed that they only become aware of the CFCU when issues or conflicts arose which had to be resolved, and even then the role of the CFCU was not always clear.

5.4.12 Opportunities for networking and sharing

One of the key successes of the program has been its ability to continue to host annual land and sea management conferences[123]. The Caring for Country Strategy lists annual conferences as an important aspect of the program. Getting together, sharing and exchanging views at annual

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[121] *"CFCU are highly committed to working in a bureaucracy that does not support them and are driven by donor." (Government: 14-10-2005).*

"I don't think government interact with the Indigenous people, people in government flying in talking with the Whitefella and going back to tell the powers in the office. If you want government to be serious people in decision making positions need to go out and spent time in a community, just listen and watch what is going on." (Trainer: 8-03-2006)

[122] *"One of the broad reasons we are seeking more collaboration is to try to make sure that our society is able to gain inspiration from Indigenous traditions. We have to be able to engage with Traditional Owners in a way that makes the collaboration workable. We have to build genuine relationships. We need to set up the circumstances for this to happen –this is the bigger outcome we are aiming for." (Government: 4-07-2006).*

[123] *"Networks are important also. The CFCU has networked a lot of Aboriginal people around Land and sea management. The NLC is picking up jobs that they may not be funded or supported to do." (Government: 11--05-2006).*

conferences for Traditional Owners and ranger groups is seen as a key driver for the rapid growth of the land and sea management groups over the last ten years. The annual women's ranger conferences have continued uninterrupted and they are generally well attended. Traditional Owners are concerned that these annual workshops have stopped and many respondents urged the NLC to find resources to continue to fund the workshops.

Most women respondents acknowledge the value of "*being somewhere else on someone else's country and seeing how many other women are becoming strong for their country*". For some women respondents, attendance of the CFCU conferences is identified as a turning point for groups in their decision to engage in land and sea management. Some respondents indicate that conferences are the cornerstone of the program and provide opportunities for stronger working relationships between the Traditional Owners and the NLC. Some Traditional Owners expressed a desire for the resumption of annual conferences and stressed the significance of the conferences for learning, networking and communication among the Traditional Owners and with the NLC.

Rangers observed that as well as CFCU organised events, Traditional Owners also attend other land and sea management related events and conferences. Some groups have also been invited to special events, forums and meetings hosted by government. Also, project related activities such as meetings and seminars provide opportunities for individuals from ranger groups to contribute to discussion. Some Traditional Owners find that they are invited to too many workshops and meetings and indicate that the burdens on an individual can be huge. Some of the Traditional Owners cautioned against too many conferences or workshops, arguing that these events can become '*too much*' and compete with the time Traditional Owners or rangers want to spend caring for country.

5.4.13 Relationships between facilitators and the CFCU

NLC respondents observed that communication with the ranger group or Traditional Owner frequently occurs through the facilitators. There are different needs for facilitators among the Traditional Owners and ranger groups (Table 5.4).

Table 5.4 Ranger group expectations about facilitators at different stages of group establishment

Stage of establishment	Expectations about facilitators
Groups that are just starting	Want a facilitator; believe you have to get a facilitator to get started; they have seen other groups with facilitators and so they generally ask for one, but are not sure what the role of that person will be.
Groups that are dormant or near collapse	Situations often characterised by the fact that a facilitator was around for a very short time and has left. These groups expressed scepticism about the 'facilitator'; they feel dispirited, angry or let down.
Groups operating without facilitator	These are groups that have been operating for a while, they know what they are doing, there is a strong local leader, but they realise they need a facilitator for the paper work and funding. They don't want the facilitator to lead, or do any ground work, they want the facilitator to find money and make strategic partnerships for them and mostly they

	want a buffer against the humbug and conflict with the local organisation and the community.
Thriving	The group has a facilitator who has lasted a long time and has developed good relations with the group. This facilitator may work in the background and assist rather than to drive the program. Some of the groups are strong enough to dictate to the facilitator what they want.

Most facilitators working in ranger groups see themselves as employees of the community and the community host organization that the ranger group falls under. Other facilitators are attached to ranger groups but are seen as NLC facilitators. Facilitators generally rely on their personal connections with individuals in the NLC to obtain resources or advice. NLC sometimes provides support to the facilitators by assuming the role of mediator between the ranger group or Traditional Owners and the host organisation**.**

Some facilitators provided positive feedback about their relations with the NLC, while just as many were not happy about their current relationship (Table 5.5). Some facilitators wanted more support from the NLC especially in the early stages of their new position. Most facilitators find that as they become more familiar with the program their reliance or expectations of the NLC decline. Most of the facilitators that fall into the latter group are not employed by the NLC, even though some of the funds for their employment were negotiated through the NLC. Attitudes towards the NLC are variable among the facilitators. Views were more positive and accommodating among facilitators who had been in the program for many years[124].

Table 5.5 Facilitator concerns in relation to the NLC

One third of the facilitators believe the CFCU do not always listen to groups and feel that staff in the CFCU are not always aware of the issues and priorities of groups[125].
Some facilitators believe that the NLC has too much control over the groups
Some facilitators believe that the presence or connections of some groups with the NLC interfere with their own attempts to develop good relations with the ranger group.
There is no clear channel of communication in the CFCU so facilitators just target those they

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[124] *The caring for country has pretty good opinions, they are dedicated and they work hard. I wish they were more focused on (but they are tied down by the system) or spent time on empowerment. They have these outside pressures on outcomes. Some of the people work very hard, when I met one of them I thought they were going to burn out. I have been so busy here, I have no time I have very little basis to judge them. I wish they had a manual to tell you what to do (facilitator: 15-01-2006)*

[125] *"As a unit they could be more effective, but they get lost in the busy work and they could be more involved. They come up with ideas, models of things, started as a vision, now they get so bogged down with running them they have lost their role, they are the visionary. They need to stand back and say what we are about, is it about establishing groups. At the CFCU meetings people tell them but they don't change, so that's why I stopped going." (Facilitator: 7-7-2005)*

already know or who are friends.

Some facilitators have not always found the NLC supportive of them and their groups in times of crisis[126].

Facilitators also felt that some CFCU staff act in a way that suggests that they hold the answers when they don't have the experience. Some feel that the advice that they get from the staff indicates this lack of experience and knowledge of how one lives and manages local politics for Indigenous NRM.

Many facilitators have admitted that they felt overwhelmed and in the first few weeks of their stay many wanted to leave and they did not feel they had the necessary support[127].

Some facilitators found the presence of the CFCU intrusive and taking up too much of their time.

Some facilitators have been concerned with the nature of and types of consultations undertaken by some of the CFCU staff.

Some facilitators observed that the dominance of biophysical scientists in the CFCU meant that social aspects of the program were not receiving as must attention.

Facilitators felt the CFCU could assist in developing an information pack which would be helpful to guide the facilitator.

Some facilitators believe that there is little understanding of proper facilitation.

There is general agreement among the facilitators that NLC is effective in assisting ranger groups and Traditional Owners find funding. However, since the introduction of government facilitators, some of the ranger group facilitators working on the ground are going directly to the funding source and getting advice from the government facilitators.

5.5   Overall assessment of the CFCU

The performance of the program has been assessed against the *CFC Strategy 2003-2006*. Its achievements have been made under very highly constrained conditions and in an uncertain funding environment. For three objectives the CFCU is performing extremely well, while two achievements have been rated as 'moderate', and for IK the rating was 'low achievement'. For one of the areas of the Strategy the information available was not adequate to make a judgement on the performance of the program. In Table 5.6, the NLC's CFCU and its activities are

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[126] *"We liaise with the facilitators, but we haven't given them much support." (NLC: 17-10-2005)*

[127] *"The first week I was here I almost quit, I didn't think I could handle it. If I could barely handle it with a degree then how do these guys handle it. None of these guys could do this job, things would have to change a huge lot before empowerment happens. I cant get away from the paperwork, I don't have any choice about it, but I gotta not let that become the core, I wanna keep that in mind and not lose what I am about, I don't wanna burn out." (Facilitator:15-01-2006)*

"I think it is hard for anyone who has lived in an urban environment to understand the cross cultural politics in the place , the welfare state, and really if you just live in town unless you are blessed with extraordinary empathy I don't see it unless you travel on life experiences what's works with me and my people may not work with everyone else." (NLC: 19-09-2006)

assessed against the four point achievement scale introduced in Section 4 (see Table 4.7). Overall the rating of the NLC was positive though areas for action were identified that could strengthen the program further.

Table 5.6 Rating the achievements of the NLC Caring for Country Unit

Objectives of the program	Rating of achievements
Increase participation of Aboriginal families in land and sea management.	Significant achievement: The growth in the program has been remarkable since the number of Traditional Owners involved in both formal and informal dimensions has increased despite the highly constrained environment under which the program operates.
Establish best practices approaches to major environmental threats particularly weeds and feral animals.	Significant achievement: A number of key programs focusing on weeds, fire, feral animal control, coastal surveillance have done much to underline the significance of the work Aboriginal people are doing in the program.
Establish best practice approaches to the awareness, conservation and use of Indigenous Knowledge.	Low achievement: Most Traditional Owners felt this aspect of the program was the weakest and under resourced. Most Traditional Owners would like to see more advocacy and project proposals developed by the NLC in support for Indigenous Knowledge.
Increase access to effective training and education of rangers.	Moderate achievement: Achievement has been undermined by the weaknesses in coordination among the key stakeholders (training providers, NLC and others) and perception held by Traditional Owners that government agencies do not recognise training.
Enhance communication networks to support Aboriginal land and sea management initiatives.	Significant achievement: Annual conferences have been identified as one of the strongest elements of the CFCU coordinated program particularly for the AWLSM. Reports and other documents are not as important among the Traditional Owners.
Improve access of Aboriginal people to quality information about environmental impacts.	Information made available on this objective to limited to give a rating.
Develop a dynamic and effective service.	Moderate achievement: While the CFCU believe their delivery of service is high, most Traditional Owners considered it low and want to see the NLC strengthen its capacity to deliver a more effective service.

5.6 Specific recommendations for strengthening the role of the NLC

♦ NLC needs to increase awareness of and application of the CFC Strategy within the

organisation as well as regularly review the Strategy against local aspirations to ensure continued alignment with Traditional Owners priorities. Further, NLC might benefit from developing a reporting framework (system of data capture) to capture progress and outcomes aligned with specific objectives of the CFC Strategy to be able to clearly show outcomes of the program. However, this would require ongoing resourcing.

♦ NLC identify ways in which the capacity of the CFCU may be strengthened to provide a responsive framework for providing support against current and projected demand for participation by Traditional Owners in land and sea management.

♦ The NLC should identify ways of supporting calls by Traditional Owners for a stronger voice on land and sea management within the NLC, including support for advocacy campaigns initiated by Traditional Owners and ranger groups. This might also require improving communication between the CFCU and the rest of the organization including regional offices.

♦ NLC in consultation with other key stakeholders should clarify its roles and responsibilities in relation to Traditional Owners and other stakeholders involved in the program to ensure stronger collaborative arrangements for land and sea management. Further, NLC should continue to work on creating partnerships with key stakeholders including government agencies to forge support for Aboriginal land and sea management. In some cases, this may require a clarification of the relationship through formalized arrangements, agreements or Memoranda of Understanding for stronger more effective coordination of land and sea management.

♦ NLC should continue to lobby support for annual ranger conferences to enable networking and communication opportunities to continue among Traditional Owners and ranger groups.

♦ NLC should consider facilitating discussion between Aboriginal land and sea managers and coordinators at the outset of a partnership to ensure roles and responsibilities in relation to a program and to the wider Aboriginal land and sea management are clear to both the facilitator and Traditional Owners.

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8. Traditional Owners consulted during the evaluation
9. Outputs and outcomes for objectives of the NLC Caring for Country Strategy
10. Outcomes from land and sea management groups at different stages of establishment
11. Participatory Evaluation in the Top End: An Emerging Prototype (Poster presented at the Australasian Evaluation Society International Conference, 4-7 September 2006, Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia)

Annex 1   Brochure about the evaluation

A participatory evaluation of the land and sea management programs in the Top End

Across the Top End in the Northern Territory, Aboriginal people are involved in land and sea management programs. Policy makers, other Aboriginal groups, researchers and the public are very interested in these programs, but there is little documented information available. Few of the existing programs have been documented, while many remain invisible.

The objective of the project is to incorporate Aboriginal people as research partners in a process to document land and sea management programs and to define ways that Aboriginal people and other stakeholders access these programs. Fourteen Aboriginal NRM practitioners are participating as evaluators of the land and sea management program. The group is called the Aboriginal land and sea management Review Team. Involving Aboriginal partners in this evaluation provides opportunities for Aboriginal people to drive and own the evaluation process. In addition, it provides an ongoing opportunity for interaction and exchange of ideas and experiences among participating research partners that can in turn inform local processes in their groups or areas where they work. Building capacity among the research partners for evaluating their programs leads to self reflection which ensures that adaptive behaviour is incorporated in Aboriginal land and sea management.

Aboriginal land and sea management is not new. Some programs are run by ranger groups and others are run by families, individuals and or clan groups. New challenges in natural resources management have placed particular demands on the capacity of Aboriginal people to do land and sea management without outside support. This project will also document suggestions and recommendations for strengthening Aboriginal land and sea management programs.

Aboriginal land and sea management review team:
CSIRO (Dr Bevlyne Sithole, Hmalan Hunter-Xenie, Lorraine Williams, Jonnie Saegenschnitter, Donna Jackson) and Traditional Owners (Dean Yibarbuk, Matthew Ryan, Balupalu Yunupingu, Wanyubi Marika, Elaine Watts, Grace Daniels, Cherry Daniels, Mona Liddy, Peter Christophersen, Victor Cubillo).

For further information please contact   Dr. Bevlyne Sithole, Project leader
Bev.Sithole@csiro.au
Tel: 08 89 46 6570

A participatory evaluation of the land and sea management programs in the Top End.

Different methods will be used in the project to gather information, including literature reviews, questionnaire surveys, key interviews and group discussions. The project will progress in steps, starting with identification of ten Aboriginal research partners drawn from various regions of the NT. Four Indigenous researchers based in Darwin will provide backup to the field research partners and participate in project activities.

- Holding wide consultations (interviews and group discussions) with different stakeholder groups to identify key issues and concerns for land and sea management programs in the Top End.

- Developing a list of criteria and indicators for sustainable Aboriginal land and sea management which is informed by Aboriginal people and related stakeholder groups.

- Documenting stakeholder perceptions of Aboriginal land and sea management based on interviews and discussions.

- Documenting stakeholder perspectives on the role of the Caring for Country Unit in the NLC.

At the end of these activities the research group will organise a series of events to feedback some of the findings to the Aboriginal groups and other stakeholders. The research groups will also reflect on the similarities or differences between Aboriginal land and sea management with others elsewhere in Australia and around the world.

For more information about the evaluation or the Aboriginal land& Sea Management Review Team, please call Dr Bev Sithole at CSIRO, TERC: PMB 44 Winnellie, NT 0822, Australia
Phone (08) 8944 8400 Fax (08) 8944 8444

Annex 2   Article posted in *Kantri Laif* to inform Traditional Owners about the evaluation

Finding the footprints:
A Participatory evaluation framework for the Aboriginal ranger programs in the Top End.
By Bev Sithole[128] and Wayne Barbour[129].

Many people here in the Northern Territory and in other parts of Australia have been paying particular attention to how Aboriginal people here care for their country. Many know about the CFCU at the Northern land Council (NLC) and the associated Aboriginal Community ranger groups who have been working out bush to make country healthy.

Certainly, events in the past ten years show that ranger groups are popular among communities and more new groups are forming everyday. So people in government and those working in community development have started asking questions. What are these community ranger groups? Why is there such enthusiasm about these groups? How do they operate? What impact have they been having on country and the wellbeing of Aboriginal communities out bush.? All these are very important questions but few answers are available.

Very little has been written about the community ranger groups. The research that is available now tells only part but no where near the whole story. It is hard to tell stories that ranger groups will read and say yes this is our story, we see what we do in that story, you have told it just as we would have told it.

Your work on country is leaving footprints. We want to look for these footprints with you and we want you to explain them, to show where in your management these footprints come out clear and where they sometimes are much harder to see and to read. We plan to visit women's and men's ranger groups. We also plan to visit and talk to the Traditional Owners and talk to them about managing country, listen to their stories and find out about their hopes and expectations for the future.

If we tell the caring for country story well, we hope that others especially those government will see the opportunities and support your efforts to care for country.

Our group will start work in January 2005 and finish in December 2006. To be able to do this work we have received money and other kinds of support from Commonwealth Science Institute Research Organisation (CSIRO), NLC, the Key Centre for Tropical Wildlife Management at Charles Darwin University and the Northern Territory Innovation Fund of the Northern Territory Government. For further information or contributions to this project please contact:

Bev Sithole at CSIRO PMB 44 Winnellie NT 0822, Tel. 08 8944 8400. bev.sithole@csiro.au: or Wayne Barbour at the NLC Casuarina, NT 0909, Tel. 08 8920 5100 wayne.barbour@nlc.org.au

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[128] Social scientist working at CSIRO.
[129] Former NHT Indigenous Land Management Facilitator for the Top End (NT).

Annex 3   Questions for the evaluation submitted by the NLC's regional division

1)   When a land care facilitator leaves a group why in some instances does the group fall over?

viii)   Regardless of how well qualified a Landcare facilitator might be, are they the right person for some areas, e.g. gender, age, dress codes, and relationships.

ix)   Did the initiative come from Indigenous people – resulting in a sense of ownership?

x)   Did the initiative come from non-Indigenous people with good intentions – resulting in a sense of being told what is needed?

xi)   Are local politics between clan, family groups in dispute, clan rivalries considered? Or is contact premised on who they know in the community – be they the "right" person (s) or not.

xii)   Why is it the case that if/when extra funds are generated they are used to employ more none Indigenous people rather than Indigenous people 9 who may come on under CDEP?

xiii)   Does 2 year funding allow sufficient time for everyone's different learning levels and needs?

xiv)   Is it too long? Where groups and individuals feel they are ready to take over but are constrained because they never seen an opportunity like when this will occur.

xv)   We all know that knowledge is power – are the participants drip fed to fit in with other people's agendas?

xvi)   Are participants overwhelmed with too much information/knowledge in too short a time frame?

xvii)   Do they see a light at the end of the tunnel when they might come off CDEP and have a proper job?

xviii)   Are there moves afoot to reclassify CDEP positions to labour market positions are they part time or full time, but inclusive of sick leave, superannuation, annual leave, long service leave (full time or pro-rata)?

xix)   Are the programs set up to allow for the long term where they may be self funding through winning contracts?

xx)   Is it training?

-    Have they had any training – too much-too little- in some instances the more experienced people feel that they are being told how to suck eggs, the less experienced may be overwhelmed.

-    Is it seen by the participants as just another training course like the many others the last 30 years or so.

-    Is it training just to get the training dollars?

-    Too much of the same thing, so that the participants switch off.

-    Is it appropriate/relevant training (e.g., besides the practical hands on stuff like use of chemicals etc, inclusive of decision making , delegation, leadership, teamwork, staff supervision, report writing skills, basic repairs and maintenance of vehicles, equipment basic bookkeeping - wring up purchase orders, paying tax invoice, paying on time, the need to get quotes, cheapest not always the best.

-    Submissions for funding –how to write one, what to include, where to sent, knowledge of funding bodies, acquittal of funds, conditions of grants.

-    Governance- accountability, openness, transparency, equitable people's needs.

Annex 4 Criteria and indicators for assessing outcomes from Aboriginal land and sea management

Based on Sithole (2007).

Indigenous and local aspirations (based on Aboriginal Voices Workshop – 12 & 13 January 2006, CSIRO - Darwin).	Government and external aspirations (based on key interviews)
HUMAN ASSETS	
"You can never end up with too much training, but if that's all you ever end up with then it is no use."	Build local capacity for NRM.
"You get your certificates, makes you feel proud but where do you go from there, we had people train up for things that they been doing for a long time, they get sick of it. No recognition, it is just another piece of paper."	Incentives to trained Indigenous people.
"Women need to be involved to look after country, they have their places too, they know country."	Wider participation in Aboriginal NRM.
"We need to stand on our own two feet and gotta take power for our land, we gotta have power to sort it out with fisherman. We will be stronger, we should have a voice and speak together."	Strong articulation of local aspirations for NRM.
SOCIAL ASSETS	
"Getting recognition from government or the importance of our contribution to NRM in our areas and for Australia."	Provide adequate and appropriate (flexible and long term) support for Aboriginal NRM.
"I would like see my own people become facilitators and coordinators of this program and get paid like them mob. Then I will be happy."	Empower communities and create opportunities for communities to retain control over NRM.
"We need one person to liaise with, not many people to go to, its really hard at the level where we work… there are too many departments."	Coordinated Government approach to NRM.
"We want governance structures that work for us, what's going on."	Strengthen and support functional local structures for NRM.
"Self interest doesn't represent community feelings, the community gets unstuck by alliances with outsiders, elders must lead the way."	Strong local institutions and local networks.

Indigenous and local aspirations (based on Aboriginal Voices Workshop – 12 & 13 January 2006, CSIRO - Darwin).	Government and external aspirations (based on key interviews)
"You gotta have power to arrest people, Always frustrating for us, we try to negotiate how we can work together better."	Devolution of control and necessary entitlements to communities.
FINANCIAL ASSETS	
"I want real job and real salary not CDEP."	Provide incentives for NRM.
"What criteria do you need? There must be thousands of Indigenous people out there, why don't they give them jobs?."	Employment opportunities from NRM.
"NHT funding, government took it and we just got a few drops."	Increased funding for communities involved in Aboriginal NRM.
PHYSICAL ASSETS	
"We have many problems, we report it and there is no action, now 2006, no sign of the chemical shed, we need some support, They don't do nothing, so who should we turn to, we are pretty well frustrated!."	Provision of adequate support.
"Trouble with gamba grass, whole paddock of the stuff across the road, I am alone, I cant do it, I need back up!"	Provision of equipment and materials for weed control.
NATURAL ASSETS	
"When country is healthy and it can look after you, I was born with an obligation to look after it."	Maintenance of ecological condition and productivity.
"We have strong relationships with country, with animals and plants, we must look after them, they are important for who we are, we need to look after our totem and for ceremony too."	Preservation of threatened species.
"Unless you monitor and enforce it doesn't mean nothing, We should be monitoring and enforcing to make sure the rubbish doesn't get dumped out. Otherwise we are just cleaning up someone else's rubbish."	Rehabilitation of degraded landscapes.
"Some of these plants are rubbishing country, we don't know where they are coming from, we need to remove them."	Control of weeds.
"Some of the animals are good to us because some that we used to eat are gone, but pigs, they cause big mob problems for us."	Control of feral animals.

Indigenous and local aspirations (based on Aboriginal Voices Workshop – 12 & 13 January 2006, CSIRO - Darwin).	Government and external aspirations (based on key interviews)
"Today knowledge has been lost, there is no one left to go to, how can we manage country well when knowledge is being lost."	Protection and preservation of Indigenous Knowledge.

Indigenous and local aspirations (based on Aboriginal Voices Workshop – 12 & 13 January 2006, CSIRO - Darwin).	Government and external aspirations (based on key interviews)

Annex 5   Aboriginal Land and Sea Management Review Team (ALSMART)

Overview

The Aboriginal land and sea management Review Team was formed out of three key concerns raised by Traditional Owners:

- That evaluations often fail to involve Traditional Owners in a meaningful way;

- Evaluations are controlled by outside agencies and never really come back to the community, and

- Evaluations sometimes miss the real views and aspirations of Traditional Owners.

Traditional Owners saw this evaluation as an opportunity both to review Aboriginal land and sea management to 'make it strong' and to take ownership of the process and outcome of the evaluation. The ALSMART saw the evaluation as a community driven process where views and aspirations that had been hidden, misinterpreted or discounted would be heard for the first time. This evaluation for many Traditional Owners had the authority "to tell the story of land and sea management" from the Aboriginal point of view without neglecting other views from other stakeholders. Traditional Owners were reluctant to participate in a multi stakeholder group preferring other stakeholders to be coopted into the evaluation through other mechanisms.

How was ALSMART formed?

The ALSMART held a good representation of men and women from all the different areas that the NLC covers;
3 – Central Arnhem
2 – East Arnhem
2 – South Arnhem, Roper River area
2 – West Arnhem
4 – Darwin/Daly region &
1 – Victoria River District
Three members of the group were employed by CSIRO as Research Associates and based at the CSIRO labs in Darwin with the project supervisor, Dr Bev Sithole. The other members of the ALSMART were based in their communities and with the support from Bev and the ALSMART members based in Darwin they helped to gather data for the project.

Step 1: Planning

As participatory research methods were being applied in the project extra funds were sought to help train members of the ALSMART in participatory research methods and some funds were sought to help pay for our time spent doing research related activities. But before any research could be done research ethics needed to be completed. A research permit with the NLC was completed, some of the individual ranger groups had their own procedures that needed to be completed and this was done also. Even though the NLC was a partner of the project permission to be on Aboriginal land had to apply for though the NLC, this was done several times throughout 2005/2006. Permission was also sought through the Anindilyakwa Land Council on Groote Eylandt and the Tiwi Land Council as consultations required.

Step 2: Consultations with stakeholders

While permits were being issued allowing us to be on Aboriginal land key stakeholders in urban areas and communities in the Top End were listed. Those key stakeholders that were in urban areas could be easily contacted in person or by telephone, email, fax or post. Most of the consultations especially with government agencies were done by Bev and the ALSMART members in Darwin.

For those key stakeholders in the communities our approach had to be different. Before visits to communities many were contacted prior by the ILMF, Mr Wayne Barbour, and he was able to make them aware of the project and jotted down their interest in being involved. Contacts for key individuals in the communities were provided by the ILMF, NLC's Caring for Country Unit staff, Northern Territory Government employees and others. These key individuals were then contacted by phone, email, fax or post and were informed of the project and arrangements were made to meet. When in the communities many different people were consulted, these included;

- The elders within the community.

- The rangers and/or those participating in land & sea management projects, council members

- Staff within resource centres.

During the first introductions and consultations in the communities people were asked if they would like to be involved in the project more fully, if they would be interested in learning and applying participatory research methods. Some elders within communities elected a person, some ranger groups/communities elected a person and sometimes an interested person would elect themselves to be a part of this group. This is how the ALSMART came about.

Step 3: Identifying criteria and indicators for program success

Now that the ALSMART was formed we kept in regular contact by phone, email and post. Meetings for all members of the ALSMART to meet and exchange information were held both in Darwin and on communities. Where further training in participatory research methods were sought, a week long training workshop was held for members of the ALSMART in Oenpelli, this made possible by the Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) through use of their flexible training funds.

Regular contact with other stakeholders, such as the Australian Government (AG) and Northern Territory Government (NTG) was maintained using various methods. A project multi-stakeholder group (Government officials, university professors etc) was also formed in addition to the ALSMART and they too provided advice and direction for the project. As mentioned before many of the ALSMART members also sit on other boards relating to NRM in the Top End so they were able to assist Bev in informing other stakeholders of the project.

These consultations with stakeholders helped for the project to meet its initial aims and to find out further information for areas were importance was increased as primary sets of data were being collected and analysed.

Step 4: Collaborative knowledge production

The ALSMART members helped to collect and analyse data. In some cases members of the ALSMART based in the communities would call the ALSMART members based in Darwin and their research data would be recorded through verbal communication. Different members of the ALSMART were able to attend different meetings, conferences and the like and the information learnt was then shared to the other members of the ALSMART. Information related to the project was

shared very freely between all members; gender did not hinder this process. From the beginning of the project it was made known that all information would be shared and that the contributions from members of the ALSMART would be noted on all publications related to the project. This helped people feel an increased sense of ownership on the project. Because of this joint ownership of knowledge some members of the ALSMART have assisted Bev in highlighting the methods used in this project at meetings and conferences outside of the Northern Territory.

Step 5: Disseminating of our findings and recommendations for action

Some members of the ALSMART were able to present papers at conferences in Darwin, Perth & Adelaide. As some of the members of the ALSMART were not able or interested in writing up of documents they assisted by looking over documents and providing comments. Members of the ALSMART continue to communicate with each other and continue to show interest in research related activities.

Aboriginal Land and Sea Management Review Team.

Members of ALSMART	Region	Position and interests
Dean Yibarbuk	Central Arnhem	Senior Ranger, Elder, Fire ecologist. As a founder of the Delk Rangers, Dean is a key leader in Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM). Dean has co-written papers and has presented at conferences on a national and international level.
Elaine Watts	Victoria River District	Senior Ranger NLC Facilitator. Elaine Watts is the facilitator of a women's ranger group in Timber Creek. Elaine has connections in the Katherine region and has extensive knowledge of land management practices.
Matthew Ryan	Central Arnhem	Senior Ranger Coordinator. Matthew Ryan is the Djelk Ranger supervisor. Matthew has connections to 'Kune Country' and is based in Maningrida. Matthew has extensive land management knowledge and is vocal on issues of CBNRM.
Grace Daniels	South Arnhem	Senior Ranger, Elder. Grace Daniels, an elder in the community of Ngukurr on the Roper River, is a senior ranger of the Yugul Manggi women's ranger group. Grace is a leader in helping to empower women and is a leader in the ranger movement in the Top-End.
Otto Bulmaniya Campion	Central Arnhem	Senior Ranger, Fire ecologist Otto Bulmaniya Campion is a key leader in CBNRM. Otto has presented at conferences on a national and international level. Otto's country is south east of Maningrida and he has worked extensively throughout central Arnhem Land.
Mona Liddy	Darwin/ Daly	Land Manager, Elder Mona Liddy (Wagiman) is a key leader in land management, community development, leadership and women's rights and issues. Mona is vocal on issues of governance and has been instrumental in the Aboriginal Reference Group for the Daly River.

Members of ALSMART	Region	Position and interests
Victor Cubillo	Darwin/ Daly	Land Manager, Elder Victor Cubillo is interested in developing land management/ranger programs for his coastal community at Bulgul south west of Darwin. Victor has worked extensively throughout the Territory in various positions and is now working in his community on land management issues.
Wanyubi Marika	East Arnhem	Senior Ranger, Coordinator Wanyubi Marika (Rirratjingu) is a founder of the Laynhapuy Rangers in the East Arnhem region. Wanyubi has lived and worked extensively in this region and as the ranger coordinator manages an area of land that is a declared Indigenous Protected Area (IPA)
Cherry Daniels	South Arnhem	Ranger Coordinator, Senior Ranger, Elder Cherry Daniels is Ranger Coordinator for the Yugul Manngi women's ranger group of Ngukurr (Roper River). Cherry has been instrumental in the women's ranger movement in the Top End and is a key leader in CBNRM.
Peter Christopherson	Kakadu/ West Arnhem	Land Manager, Fire ecologist Peter Christopherson (Murran) is a key leader in natural resource management. He has worked extensively in Kakadu National Park, and has a special interest in fire management.
Balupalu Yunupingu	East Arnhem	Senior Ranger, Elder Balupalu Yunupingu (Gumatj) has lived and worked extensively in the East Arnhem region. He is a senior Dhimurru ranger.
Lorraine Williams		
Jonnie Saegenschnitter		
Donna Jackson	Larrakia	
Eddie Shields		
Wayne Barbour		

Annex 6   Key messages: Aboriginal Voices Workshop, 12-13 January 2006.

There are many challenges to land and sea management, some of these challenges are more pressing than others. The workshop style was relaxed, allowing people time to dwell on those issues they felt were most important. These voices are captured on the coloured papers that were circulated during the workshop. They form the basis of some of the key messages coming out of the workshop.

- Land management needs to pay for itself

- Land management at different levels needs to be driven by land owners and must involve all the key people.

- Rangers want real pay for the real jobs they perform in land and sea management.

- Need for more streamlined government service to facilitate better engagement with communities over land and sea management issues.

- Need for more effective feedback loops among stakeholders and Aboriginal people involved in land and sea management.

- Recognition and incentives are necessary to make training relevant.

- Facilitators need to transfer their skills to a local person.

- Government needs to recognize and support the work that Aboriginal people perform in land and sea management.

- Caring for Country Unit needs to provide effective services and coordination to groups.

- Greater clarity of roles is needed to understand the differences and roles of different organizations involved in land and sea management.

- The need to evolve effective governance structures for land and sea management.

Annex 7   Ranger and Landcare groups consulted during the evaluation

Host agency	Group	Date formed	Composition	Area covered	Focus of activity	Funding sources
Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation	Djelk rangers Sea rangers Land rangers Women rangers	1995	Facilitator (male and Aboriginal) 3 coordinators (2 males and 1 female, all Aboriginal)	Bawinanga outstation services areas approx 10,000 km^2	Weeds, feral animals, monitoring and survey work, research, enterprise	4 salaries, CDEP and Top up, BAC and NHT, Customs providing salaries
Benang Association, Pine creek Aboriginal Advancement Association	Wagiman rangers -Men -women	2002	1 coordinator, 8 rangers	Wagiman and upper Daly Aboriginal land trust 4.5,000 km^2	Weeds, fire, cattle, feral and enterprise (soap business), Cultural training, Tourism	ILC and Stronger Families, CDEP
DEMED Association	Adjumalarl rangers	2000	1 coordinator, 1 senior ranger, 12 rangers	2000 km^2	Weeds, fire, feral animals, enterprise (crocodile egg harvests)	CDEP, No top up coordinator salary from ILC
DEMED Association	Manwurkk rangers	2002	1 coordinator, 6 rangers	Arnhem land plateau especially around the Liverpool and Mann rivers based at Kabulwarnamyo, 2,000 km^2	Fire work	CDEP, operational costs covered by the Arnhem Land Fire abatement project partly funded by ILC and NHT

Host agency	Group	Date formed	Composition	Area covered	Focus of activity	Funding sources
Dhimurru Land Management Aboriginal Corporation	Dhimurru rangers	1993	Director, 5 fully trained rangers, 2 office staff, Chief executive officer, senior rangers	Areas of Northeast Arnhem land (estimated area 1,000 km^2)	IPA, weeds, coastal surveillance, marine debris project, crazy ants, coastal stabilisation work	CDEP, Nabalco mining company grants, IPA
Kardu Numida Inc	Thurmurrur rangers -Men -Women's group	2002	Manager, projects manager, senior rangers, 25 rangers	South Daly River/Port Keats Aboriginal land trust approx 2,000 km^2	Weed control, coastal surveillance, fire and enterprise (women soap making and collection of Billy goat plum	CDEP, coordinator and equipment funded by ILC, DEWR paying Aboriginal supervisor top up
Larrakia Nation	Larrakia Nation land and sea management	2001	27 rangers, 1 facilitator	Darwin (500 km^2)	Weeds, rehabilitation, revegetation, harbour and marine management, contract work	CDEP
Mabunji Resource Centre Aboriginal Association	Lianthrawirrya	2002	1 coordinator 2 rangers	Borroloola Aboriginal land 5,000 km^2	Coastal surveillance, Marine debris, monitoring turtle and dugong populations, commercial and recreational fishing, managing tourism impacts	CDEP with coordinator paid for by ILC and DEWR
Marthakal Homelands Resource Centre	Marthakal rangers	2004	7 rangers	Galiwinku and associated islands and mainland areas (Approx 500 km^2)	Threatened species, and coastal and marine surveillance	CDEP, NT Parks, NT Fisheries, Ghost Nets program

Host agency	Group	Date formed	Composition	Area covered	Focus of activity	Funding sources
Malak Malak Association	Malak Malak rangers	2000	1 Aboriginal supervisor, 2 rangers (NHT funded coordinator for Wangamaty works closely with the group).	Malak Malak Aboriginal Land Trust – lower Daly River (approx 500 km^2)	Weeds, fore, river bank rehabilitation, feral animal control	CDEP, equipment funded by the ILC
Minyeri Resource Centre	Minyerri ranger group -men -women	2003	1 Facilitator, 3 male rangers and 5 female rangers	Alawa land trust (approx 1,600 km^2)	Weeds, ferals, fire and nursery	CDEP, Contract with Roper River land care group
Ngaliwurru Wuli Association	Timber Creek Land Management -men -women	2001	1 Facilitator 10 male rangers 6 women rangers	Ngaliwurru/Nungal ALT Bradshaw Station (approx 5,000 km^2)	Weeds, fire, feral animal control, contract work, cane toads	CDEP, Coordinator paid for by ILC
Ngatpuk Aboriginal Association	Ngatpuk land management	2001	1 Supervisor, 3 rangers, 1 elder	Western Waigait	Weeds, fire, coastal surveillance and tourism impact	CDEP
Ramingining Homelands Resource Centre	Wanga Djakkamirr	1998	1 facilitator, 4 rangers	Ramingining and NW Arafura Swamp homelands (approx 4,000 km^2)	Weeds, fire, feral animal control	CDEP and NHT and ILC operational funding

Host agency	Group	Date formed	Composition	Area covered	Focus of activity	Funding sources
Yirrkala Dhanbul Community Council	Mawalan (1) Gamarrwa Nuwul Landcare Department	1995	1 senior cultural advisor, 1 coordinator, project person, 12 staff	Yirrkala community and surrounds, Rirritjingu clan lands (approx 500 km²)	Cleanups around the community, weeds, nursery, rehabilitation and revegetation, community education and awareness	CDEP, NHT
Yugul Mangi Community Government Council	Yugul Mangi Landcare and Yugal Mangi women rangers	1997 and women rangers established 2002	3 men in Landcare group, 14 women in ranger group (4 senior rangers)	Ngukkur and NW towards Bulman, North towards Walker River 15 000 km²	Weeds, fire, tourism on the roper river, pest ants	CDEP, NHT (ILC funding for coordinator)

Annex 8   Traditional Owners consulted during the evaluation

Outstation/community	Composition of the group	Focus	Source of funding
Kolabidhadha	Clan members.	Buffalo and kangaroo research.	Research money from CDU pays CDEP rates and top up to two members.
Barunga	Women from the clan group.	Fire and feral animal control and transfer of IK, Nursery.	
Manyallaluk	Family group.	Feral animal control. Tourism and Intergenerational transfer of knowledge.	Some self generated funds through tourism operators and arts and craft sales.
Ramingirr (Gapuwiyak)	Women group.	Hunting and gathering.	No funds.
Yalakun (Gapuwiyak)	Women group.	Hunting and gathering.	No funds.
Rum Jungle	Family group.	Weeds.	No funds.
Crocker	Clan groups.	Weeds, fire in the park	No employment.
Kakadu	Family group.	Wetland management.	Bushfires Council, AG, CSIRO.

Annex 9   Outputs against objectives of the NLC Caring for Country Strategy

Based on information made available to evaluators, or mentioned in interviews.

Objectives	Progress
Increase participation of Aboriginal families in land and sea management	
Number of relevant CFCU action plans: i) developed and ii) implemented.	CFCU Strategy 2003-2006 CFCU Sea Country Action plan Ranger group management plans developed as a result of NLC participatory planning sessions Over 30 land and sea management plans (each ranger group has a plan). 8 sea country plans 4 enterprise development plans for 4 groups TEALMES plans (8) Arnhem Fire Abatement Program 3 Turtle and dugong monitoring plans.
Number of Aboriginal people participating in community-based land and sea management programs by gender and age.	Over 35 ranger groups 8 Women groups; 14 Sea ranger groups; 4 Indigenous Pastoral Program projects Over 300-350 people employed under CDEP (some get top up and in a few groups more than 10 rangers get a full salary)
Number of formal Aboriginal Community-based land and sea management programs: maintained and new.	Over 35 ranger groups (see NLC 2004; NLC 2006; Fisheries 2006) and information sourced from CFCU. Over 35 ranger groups (8 Women groups; 14 Marine sea ranger programs) 4 Indigenous pastoral programs Aboriginal reference group (ARG)

Objectives	Progress
Amount of resources available for new and existing programs.	There are many funding agencies. Some of these are ILC, Community Development Employment Program; Natural Heritage Trust, Aborigines Benefit Account, Northern Territory Government, The Christensen Fund.
Number and status of collaborative natural resource management agreements between Traditional Owners and government agencies.	Some of the regional projects that have been brokered by the CFCU are: *Mimosa pigra* Control Agreement 1998 TEALMES CEPANCRM Marine Turtle and Dugong project 2004 Carpentaria Ghost Net project 2004 Arnhem Land Fire Abatement project 1997 Indigenous Pastoral Program 2005 Aboriginal Reference Group 2003 Gulf fire project 2002 Schedule 2.5 of the Bilateral Agreement on Indigenous Affairs 2006
Number of Aboriginal people employed in protected area management and associated "mainstream" activities.	Dhimurru IPA 5 positions Laynhapuy IPA 18 positions
Establish best practice approaches to major environmental threats , particularly weeds, feral animals and fires	
Inventory of environmental threats.	See NLC (2004b).
Status of weed management programs	See Storrs *et al.* 2003; Gardener 2005; Storrs *et al.* 1999.
Status of feral animal management	Buffalo project with School for Environmental Studies (underway)
Status of fire management programs.	Arnhem Plateau Fire Abatement project Gulf Fire Management Project
Status of rare and threatened species.	Golden bandicoot program undertaken by the Marthakal rangers Marine Turtle and Dugong project (Lianthrawirrya, and Dhimurru, Numbulwar)

Objectives	Progress
Development of strategies and participation on management committees and Boards.	Participation on the NAILSMA Board
	Participation on the ALEP committee (discontinued in 2006)
	Participation on the operational group for Schedule 2.5 of the Bilateral Agreement on Indigenous Affairs
	IPP working group and IPP steering committee
Establish best practice approaches to the awareness, conservation and use of Indigenous Knowledge	
Development of a north Australian Indigenous Knowledge Strategy.	Indigenous ecological knowledge: A Northern Territory scoping study (Johnson *et al.*, 2006)
	Northern Australia Indigenous Knowledge Strategy development by NAILSMA
	West ANU/ Manwurkk project: Arnhem Plateau Indigenous Knowledge project
Status of level of support for Indigenous Knowledge conservation programs.	NHT funding NAILSMA North Australia Indigenous Strategy project
	Northern Australia Indigenous Knowledge scoping study
	West ANU/ Manwurkk project: Arnhem Plateau Indigenous Knowledge project
Number of Indigenous Knowledge projects operating.	3 big projects that ALSMART is aware of
Progress toward the protection of cultural and intellectual property rights.	Information not available
Create a suitable service and enterprise based economy to support land and sea management activities	
Number of employment opportunities for Aboriginal people in natural resource-based enterprises.	Employment opportunities through Fee for service agreements (15)
	Employment in mainstream industries (Indigenous Pastoral Program – 47 in seasonal employment
	Small scale industries (still supported by CDEP)
	Ranger positions - 300-350 CDEP positions
	More than 10 rangers on full salaries
Number of financially viable and environmentally sustainable small-scale resource-based Aboriginal enterprises.	4 Plans for enterprises are still being developed with groups with trials underway.

Objectives	Progress
Status of bio-prospecting policy development and implementation	Information not available.
Level of financial support contributed from Aboriginal people for land and sea management activities.	3 ranger groups indicated that they have been supported by royalties and revenue. 3 groups are involved in enterprises that are contributing income used to support some of the group activities.
Level of funding support for land and sea management activities for Aboriginal people who elect not to develop their resources.	Information not available.
Increase access to effective training and education of sea rangers	
Training and Education Action Plan developed and being implemented.	Not yet developed.
Number of participants in training.	Cert 1 in resource management 32 Cert 2. certificate II in fisheries Compliance 80 Coxswain and first aid 28 Indigenous pastoral project 61 BIITE Conservation and land management certificate 50 Apprentices 6
Numbers graduating.	No figures available
Number of training programs that incorporate appropriate Indigenous Knowledge.	Information not available.
Number of school- based Ranger programs, and incorporation of IK into school curricula.	Many ranger groups interact with the school but many of these programs are informal. Few ranger groups have formal programs including ALEP.
Number of training programs leading to employment or enterprise development outcomes.	Information not available.
Enhance communication networks to support Aboriginal land and sea management initiatives	

Objectives	Progress
Number of workshops and conferences held.	**Women :** - Ngalmuka land management conference 2002 - 2003 women's land management conference 27-29 May 2003; - Daluk (women's land management conference 2004; - Timber creek annual women's land and sea management conference, - Miyalk annual women's conference, Gulkula, September 2006. **General conferences:** - Nimirrilli (Bringing Bininj Yolngu ranger programs together) July 1999; - Bindaluk –Mann River camp, September 2000; - Caring for country annual workshop April 2005 - Maningrida, Crab Claw **Planning workshops** - Caring for country workshop April 1996 - The south Alligator land and coastal management planning workshop, 17-21 June 1996 - Participatory planning with Aboriginal people, NLC (2000) - CFCU Envisioning workshop 25-27 February 2003 (3 reports) - Caring for country workshop proceedings, 28-29 April 2004 - Mt Bundy station retreat

Objectives	Progress
Number of reports produced following activities such as planning meetings and workshops.	Most of the reports mentioned by the respondents though most were not made available to the evaluation group. We believe there to be more reports than indicated below, including over 35 plans of management for ranger groups facilitated by the CFCU - TEALMES plans - Enterprise development plans - Activity reports for Sea rangers - Arnhem fire abatement reports - Gulf fire project (reports) - Annual ranger conferences (7 VHS videos for the women's conferences made available) - Large pictorial booklets for the Aboriginal land and sea management conferences - reports of the annual ranger conference - Evaluations of CEPANCRM - Workshop reports (numbers unknown) - CD - CFCU workshop reports - Numerous articles in the Common Ground, Kantri Laif and Land Rights News. - Conference presentations (numbers unknown) - Published papers (list unavailable)
Number of newsletters produced.	The unit does not produce a newsletter but articles and contributions from staff are submitted to *Common Ground*, *Land Rights News* and *Kantri Laif*.
Number of proactive media reports facilitated.	Out of reports in the NTG media release, *NT News*, *Land Rights News* and *Common Ground*, NLC is mentioned in 44 and not mentioned in 36 relevant pieces, over a 1 year period.

Objectives	Progress
Number of briefings and conference talks given.	List based on information made available: - Indigenous Economic developments Taskforce 2005, - Wetlands workshop Capacity building for Indigenous Economic development, A briefing for the Indigenous Economic development task force, prepared by the NLC: 2004, - Production from marginal lands: sustainable Indigenous enterprise development and commercial use of wild life, 2005.
Developed and implemented CFCU Communication Strategy.	Not yet developed.
CFC GIS capacity enhanced.	No appointment as yet of GIS personnel in the Unit. However, CFCU staff access the NLC GIS staff.
Amount of research input from partner agencies.	No comprehensive data base available with all papers and reports prepared in collaboration with the Unit.
Improve access for Aboriginal people to quality information about environmental impacts of development activities	
Inclusion of appropriate and specific environmental protection and management protocols in Land Use Agreements and licences.	
Interpreting and translating environmental protocols described in land use agreements for Aboriginal people.	NLC is building more environmental conditions into land use agreements such as those developed in the Indigenous Pastoral Program. 3 groups covered under the evaluation mentioned environmental conditions in land use agreements, but the level of management is determined by access to funds and some groups are waiting on the arrival of a facilitator.
Documented evidence of compliance by proponents and developers with above protocols.	No information available.
Reports of illegal access and/or development activities that are destructive to the environment.	Reports are submitted to the relevant agencies or the community government councils. Records were not available.
Evidence of improved processes of consultation with Aboriginal stakeholders by government	In a number of key areas there is evidence that government agencies are now engaging better with Traditional Owners through representation on committees, direct consultation (e.g. Trip by

Objectives	Progress
and other development proponents.	Australian Government Officials to Gove) and the Daly River Aboriginal Reference group's participation in planning processes.
Development of (proactive) regional, catchment or local plans which responsibly guide the management and use of natural resources.	Daly River Aboriginal Reference Group (ARG) Indigenous Management Framework.
Delivery of dynamic and effective service by the CFCU	
Achievements toward staffing goals.	14 staff positions (2 on ABA core funding, the rest on external funded positions
	Rangeland management coordinator (secondment from NTG initially funded by DPIFM and DBERD; now by ILC).
	Pastoral planning officer
	Enterprise development officer appointed and developing enterprise programs with groups.
	Recruiting for ILMF position
CFCU staff work plans developed and up-to-date.	CFCU Planning notes 8 May 2003
CFCU staff personal development plans developed and up-to-date.	See CFCU planning notes 8 May 2003
Status of CFCU funding and support.	ILC, NLC, NHT and NTG secondments
CFC Program direction-setting activities undertaken.	CFCU strategy 2003-2006
	Sea country action plan 2003
CFC Program evaluation activities undertaken.	Participatory evaluation by CSIRO with the ALSMART (2005-2006)

Annex 10 Outcomes from land and sea management groups at different stages of establishment

STAGE	Not operating, dormant,	Hanging in there	Consolidating	Thriving	Independent
Outcomes delivery					
Outcome delivery potential	Not much by way of ecological, social, political outcomes from ranger groups at this stage. Their outcomes tend to be human outcomes i.e. development of capacity, creation of institutional structures, consultations in the community.	There is very little being delivered in this group by way of ecological outcomes. Ecological outcomes are tied to the training as these ranger groups do not have resources to undertake on ground work.	Measurable outcomes from activities, though the scale is still limited and dependent on access to vehicles, equipment and funds to undertake the program	Considerable outcomes in a number of areas covering a host of environmental problems. This may be outcomes from fires or weed work. These ranger groups will have at least 3-4 programs operating.	Higher diversity of environmental outcomes delivered on many environmental problems. These are ranger groups that have a women's program, a sea and a land program.
Group characteristics					
Capacity	Improvements in the literacy levels among the ranger group and enrolled in a training course but not year complete. Erratic delivery of courses by the training providers and sometimes rangers in this ranger groups are still waiting for enrolment.	Few of the rangers have completed or are working towards attaining cert 1-3 in NRM training. Many will have completed their numeracy and literacy tests. Some will be working towards attaining other skills, like driving.	A significant number of rangers have completed cert 1-3, one or two are registered for 4. If relevant, some have registered for temporary coxswain certificate.	Diversified skills base available in group.	Diversified skills base available in the group at advanced levels (Cert 4 for NRM, several people, with full Coxswain certificate, degree etc).
	Mostly talking about cultural obligations and wanting to do more about country	High commitment to meeting cultural obligations but frustrated by lack of	Meetings some of the cultural obligations and getting recognition among the elders	Consolidating role with children and elders as facilitators of opportunities	Have functioning undertaken projects, bushwalks or a supporting a

STAGE	Not operating, dormant,	Hanging in there	Consolidating	Thriving	Independent
		resources.	for work on country.	for IK transfer.	functioning junior programs actively promoting
	No facilitator	Don't have continuous presence of facilitator, therefore get inadequate attention from CFCU or from facilitator in neighbouring group	Facilitator (community) present and increased contact with government facilitators and CFCU.	Group has gone through a few facilitators. Sometimes ranger groups are deeply affected by the departures. Most rangers at this point are confused about how they feel about facilitators.	The facilitator is relatively stable, group is very clear on what the role should be and there is a strong relationship of mutual respect...
	Little or no contact with outside agencies	They haven't really seen many key stakeholder or government people. There is little interest so there is no collaboration	Contact with outsiders has increased quite dramatically. Rangers are not sure what to do with the increased attention, they start to feel 'humbugged'	Increased number of contacts with outside stakeholders and increased movement by rangers	Increased number of contacts with outside stakeholders and increased movement invitations to rangers to sit on committees or sit on meetings
	Application of IK, no western knowledge.	Low application of IK	Some IK being applied. Western knowledge being applied	Low application of IK Western knowledge being applied	Moderate application of IK Western knowledge being applied
	Getting every member motivated to be involved.	Group consolidation, members starting to get used to their role and responsibilities	High level of enthusiasm, staff taking on more responsibility, getting on with the job with little supervision	High level of commitment and enthusiasm but moderate stuff turn over	High level of commitment and enthusiasm but very low staff turn over

STAGE	Not operating, dormant,	Hanging in there	Consolidating	Thriving	Independent
	Presence on country but radius of operation very limited because of no or limited vehicular access	Presence on country but radius of operation very limited because of no or limited vehicular access	Expanded zone of operation, still insignificant in relation to area of cover.	Significant zone of operation in relation to area of cover.	Very significant areas of country under management (more than 60% for some groups)
Administrative capacity	Sometimes administration has many problems, doesn't recognise NRM.	Weak relationships with host organisations so not much work being undertaken. Also limited support from government and land councils.	Strong administrative support through the facilitator.	Strong administrative and facilitator support. Access to government and related stakeholders. Community support	Very strong administrative support. Long term facilitator presence. Access to government and other stakeholders. Strong support from communities
	No CDEP contract.	Limited CDEP positions on contract, level of truancy, limited supervision of CDEP.	Rangers receive CDEP and top up	Ranger positions take up a significant proportion of the CDEP positions. Rangers receive CDEP and Top up and some rangers want salaried positions	Ranger positions take up a significant proportion of the CDEP positions. Rangers receive CDEP and Top up and some rangers want receive salaries
Funding availability	No funding for basic essentials.	CDEP.	Projects funds. CDEP Few enterprise projects	CDEP and TOP up, Projects Revenue from other sources	Grant money for projects (secure revenue base) Royalties contributions, Projects, IPA funding, Fisheries funding, fee for service arrangements Salaried

STAGE	Not operating, dormant,	Hanging in there	Consolidating	Thriving	Independent
					positions
	Limited local support or awareness of the program	Fragmented support for the program	Growing support for the program as people see outcomes	Significant support for the program as people see outcomes but simmering tensions	High support for the program as people see outcomes but still some simmering tensions especially related to governance issues
	No outcomes as no options have been developed or explored	Enterprise options being explored.	Several enterprise options, but no real profits	Several enterprise options, but no real profits, still dependent on CDEP	Several enterprise options, but no real profits still dependent on CDEP
Access to infrastructure	No access or very limited access to vehicles, means of communication or services required for machinery. No skills acquired	Very limited have access to vehicles, means of communication or services required for machinery. Rangers in training to drive the vehicles and boats also to use computer and other office related services	Adequate infrastructure and services available for the group. Good access to equipment. Skills acquired to use equipment.	Good access to equipment and infrastructure	Good access to equipment and infrastructure

Annex 11   Participatory evaluation in the Top End: poster

Participatory Evaluation in the Top End: An Emerging Prototype. Poster presented at the Australasian Evaluation Society International Conference, 4-7 September 2006, Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia.

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