

Aboriginal land management services as fee for service - a business approach to land management

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Structure of presentation

1. Background information (context)
 - importance of Indigenous land management in the Northern Territory
 - need for appropriate employment 'on country'
2. How structure and nature of Indigenous land and sea management has changed over recent time (policy and legislative change)
3. Building a framework to grow land management as a business
 - communication, capacity building and clearing house
 - need for endorsement
 - how research can contribute



Context

What do remote NT landscapes have of value?

- a vibrant, unique and largely intact culture with it many dimensions of connectivity: totems, kinships, ceremony, language, art
- healthy country. A diversity of plants and animals (many of the unique and found only in this country)
- diverse stakeholders: mineral resources, pastoral properties, tourism opportunities
- traditional landowners and land managers who are still involved in decision making and management of their country
- Indigenous Rangers trained to link between Traditional ways and Western ways to manage country



Land Management in Northern Territory

The way land management is delivered has changed considerably over the last 200 years:

Pre- colonisation:

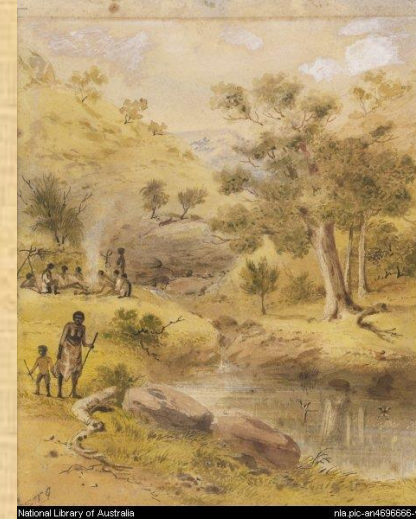
- fire stick farming (Aboriginal clans managing land on a fine scale)

Post colonisation:

- continued land management through customary obligation
- significant reduction of people on country
- broad-scale management (major fire and feral plant and animals problems)
- 1990s emergence of Indigenous Ranger Program (old ways/new ways)

Currently:

- a movement away from program based funding
- less cultural input into land management contracts
- a possible further reduction of people on their country
- more prescribed approach to land management



Distribution of Indigenous population

- ~200 communities in Northern Territory
- range in size from a few small family groups to over 2000 people

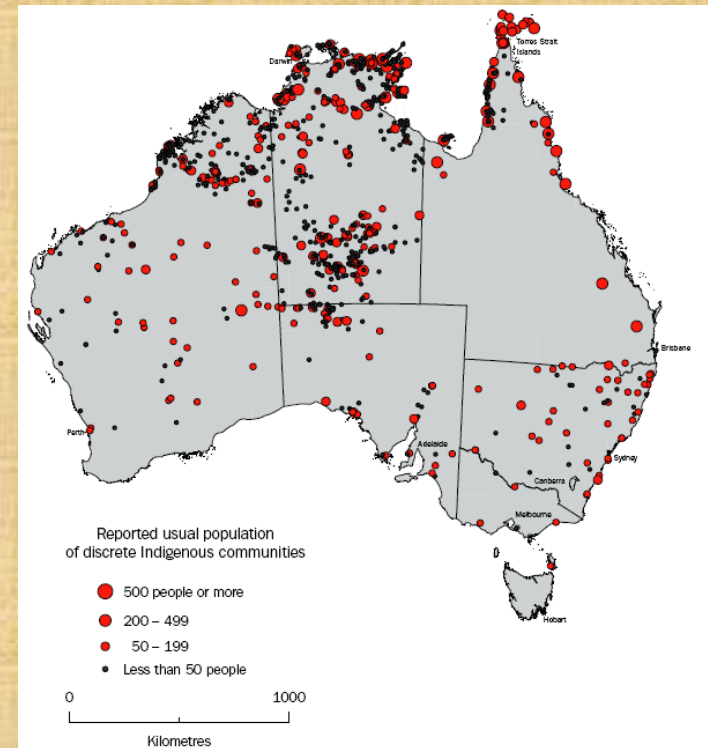
Population density
~ is 0.1 people per km²

Implications of low density:

- broad scale management of country
- wild fire, late detection and control of weeds/ferals

Remote Aboriginal Communities generally have:

- high levels of unemployment
- little infrastructure
- poor education and health
- few economic development opportunities



How is Natural Resource Management on Aboriginal land conducted?

Informally through:

Cultural land management practice:

Customary land management practice by those still living on their country



Formally through:

Indigenous Ranger groups

- merge of traditional and non Indigenous methods of management



Indigenous Protection Areas

– now over 40 declared IPAs (8 in NT) making up over 23% of Australia's National Reserve System

Joint management of National Parks and Reserves

(34 in the NT in future)

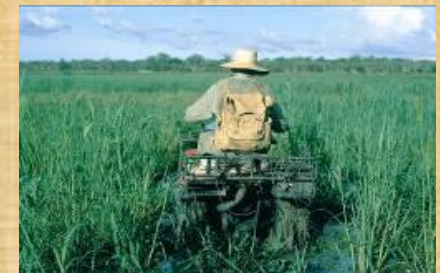
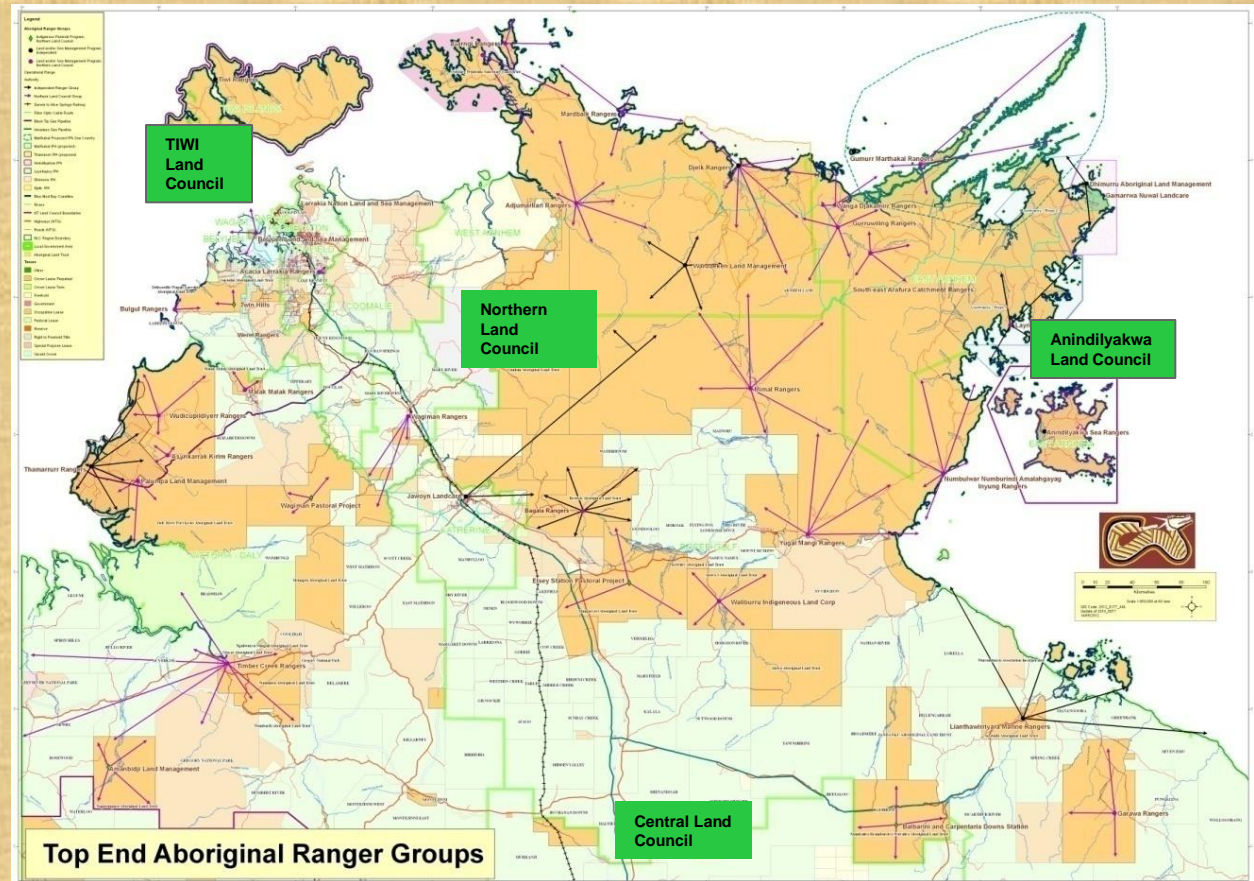
– land owners paid for certain services and involved in management decisions



Land Management: Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger groups

The NT is 1,346,200 km² of which ~50% is Aboriginal land trust and 47% pastoral

30+ Indigenous land and sea ranger groups employing around over 400 Aboriginal people



NRM activities conducted by Indigenous Ranger groups across the Top End

Many land management activities are now done as Fee for Service
- move towards specific activity rather than generic program based funding

Current FFS Ranger Activities

- Fire management (abatement, reduce carbon)
- Feral animal control
- AQIS - mosquito/blood
- Coastal surveillance
- Illegal foreign fishing vessel surveillance
- Ghost net surveillance
- Feral ant management
- Fauna and flora surveys



Most of these activities are facilitated through Government departments who can bear the high transaction costs in facilitating Indigenous Rangers to do this work.

How can this model of land management be expanded to benefit Aboriginal landowners?

- identify additional buyers of Aboriginal land management services which could be offered as fee for service (each region will be different)
- allow better ways (lower transaction costs) of buyers of Indigenous land management service delivery linking with providers
- encourage more local ownership in defining these fee for service activities (ensure cultural input – when activities happens and by whom does it)
- build capacity of local groups to be able to supply services in a business framework

Much broader suite of activities on or around Aboriginal land that could be provided as fee for service activities

Potential buyers

Activity

Local - in area

Pastoralists

Weed management, fire breaks, feral animal control, fencing

Joint Managed Parks

Weed management, fire breaks, feral animal control, fencing
water monitoring, maintenance recreational areas

Regional

Research organisations

Cultural guides, research assistant, IEK

Government orgs

PES activities, coastal surveillance, AQIS, fire abatement

Shires/councils

Weed management, fire breaks, feral animal control, fencing

Mining companies

Revegetation, weed control, fire breaks/management

Telstra

Weed management, fire breaks, feral animal control, fencing

Power and Water

Weed management, fire breaks, water level monitoring

National/International

Philanthropist

Specific i.e. manage a particular area

Conservation agencies

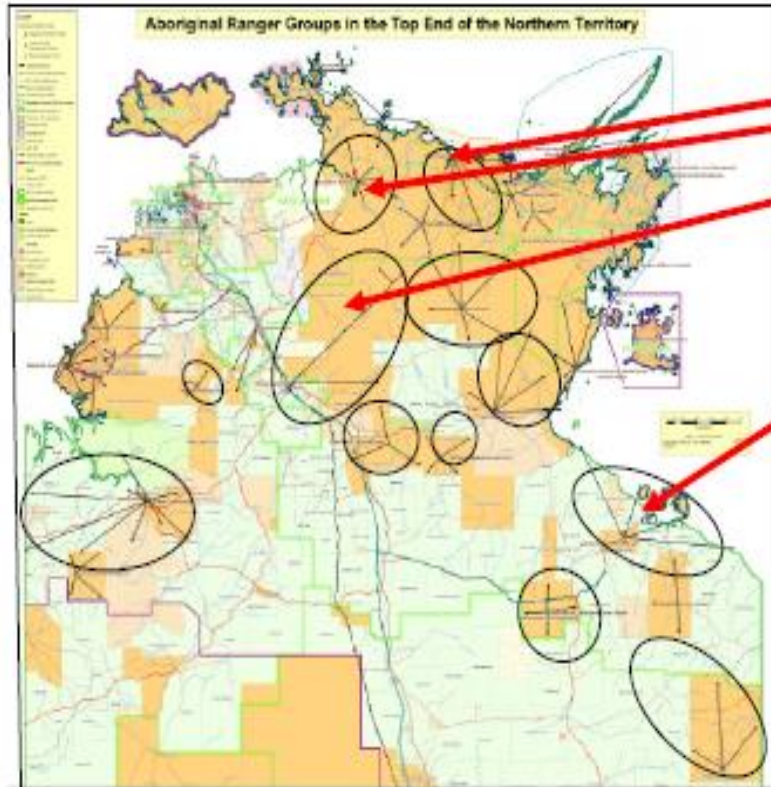
Specific i.e. manage a particular area

EPA – bio-trading

Specific i.e. sacrifice areas for management of equal area

Figure 1: Current system of organising cost recovery contracts

Ranger Groups in the NT

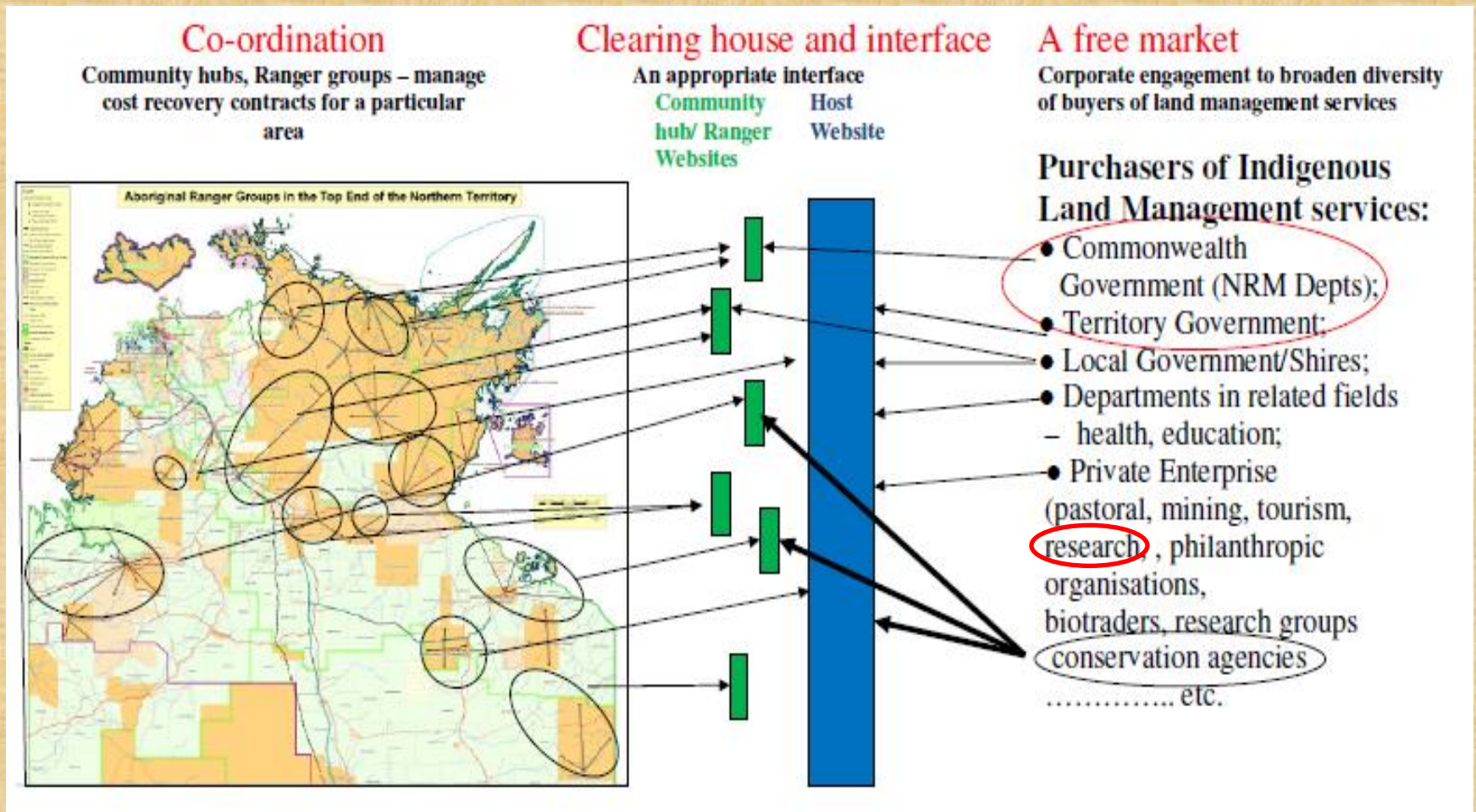


High transaction costs
- remoteness
- language
- cultural understanding
- connections/trust

Current Purchasers of Indigenous Land Management services:

- Commonwealth Government
- Territory Government
i.e. NRM Departments, AQIS, Fisheries, customs
- Mining Companies
(Conoco Philips - WALFA)
- CSIRO etc

Figure 2: Framework to link a broader suite of buyers with providers of land management services



Steps in building the framework:

1) Determine Aboriginal aspirations and capacity

- do Indigenous communities want to provide land management services as FFS?
- need to identify and package specific land management activities for each area
- identify of the right 'model' for that community (i.e. who controls?)
- capacity building in quoting, reporting, bookwork etc

2) Identify markets and develop a strategy to engage them

- different strategies for different groups
- interface and communication (website to advertise FFS activities) to minimise transaction costs

3) Support agency or clearing house

- in some instances there may be need for a supporting agency to act as the go between to help negotiate and finalise contracts i.e. one buyer over multiple areas

Aboriginal land management service as fee for service

Example - Telstra

- a significant number of network sites located in regional and remote areas across northern Australia (radio towers, mobile base stations and exchanges)
- many sites are not being serviced regularly due to remote location
- uncontrolled vegetation making it difficult for service personnel to access some sites (by helicopter) and vegetation could grow over solar panels and transmitters blocking signals

Telstra wanted to partner with local Indigenous groups to undertake ground maintenance of these assets. They need it to be commercially competitive:

- need to comply with their Procurement and OH&S guidelines and be commercially robust
- can't afford transaction costs of connecting with individual ranger groups so needed to work through a 'clearing house'

Some NLC supported Ranger groups could meet their level of procurement of service (quotes, reporting etc.) and there is a pilot project happening to grow this. Generates extra income for this group to grow service delivery model.

What are the incentives for NRM to work in this way?

- Government will benefit because this scheme will **generate other income/employment** for communities and NRM
- Aboriginal people have an opportunity to gain **more control** of managing their country (what, who, when, \$)
- Service delivery buyers would be able to have more **direct contact** with land managers and negotiate land management activities and conditions in a way which they are comfortable.

All of this will benefit ecological and cultural values because this will produce \$ and jobs and keep people on their country

Conclusion

We need to think outside the square and come up with models for landscape management which tackle problems in a holistic manner and involve people and their interactions.

The biggest threat to the landscapes of the Northern Territory is the de-population of country. Give Aboriginal people opportunity to earn a living and remain connected to their traditional estates and the cultural and biodiversity values of the NT will be maintained



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References:

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