

NRM COMMUNITY COLLABORATION IN ALICE SPRINGS

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With the registration of the Desert Knowledge Precinct as a Land for Wildlife property in 2014, Desert Knowledge Australia (DKA) became consciously involved in NRM activities, and is keen on learning from other NRM-related organisations in Alice Springs. As the Precinct is set up to encourage knowledge creation about desert and arid lands, it lends itself to collaborative projects and processes, which are currently being tested in the NRM space.

DESERT KNOWLEDGE AUSTRALIA

Desert Knowledge Australia (DKA) is a statutory corporation of the NT, established in 2003 to identify opportunities and facilitate partnerships for social and economic growth in desert and arid lands.

DKA manages the Desert Knowledge Precinct, and works across sectors and borders to help build resilient desert communities and to promote investment and development in desert Australia.



Buffel Grass eradication chemical efficacy trials on the Desert Knowledge Precinct.



The Desert Knowledge Precinct, looking north to Alice Springs.

DESERT KNOWLEDGE PRECINCT

The 73ha Desert Knowledge Precinct hosts St Mary's Creek, an integral ephemeral ecosystem that is part of the local bioregion.

DKA has collaborated on the Precinct by:

- Partnering with local organisations to develop a land management plan for the Precinct
- Partnering with the Centre for Appropriate Technology (CAT) to deliver on-the-ground works for our Buffel Management Plan.
- Partnering with TNRM and the NTG Weeds Management Branch to test the efficacy of different chemicals on Buffel grass.

CHALLENGES FOR COMMUNITY NRM GROUPS

- Limited funding across state, federal, private and philanthropic sectors
- Time constraints – organisations operating with a small pool of staff must prioritise areas of work
- NRM groups have to maintain a balance between environmental, pastoral and government expectations and interests
- Often cover extremely large areas with limited staff and resources

These are just a few challenges that NRM groups face in Alice Springs and Central Australia. The establishment of a working group, driven by one or two people, is a key component to achieve the group's goals.

More readily used in social sectors, the Collective Impact methodology is proving to be useful for NRM groups. For more information, please see the Arid Lands NT NRM Plan 2016-2020, p. 1.

THE LAND MANAGEMENT HUB

The vision:

To establish an innovative land management focal point that captures best practice scientific techniques in looking after and developing the fragile desert ecosystems of Central Australia.

The wide-ranging activities of the organisations that focus on conservation and natural resource management offer an opportunity to create a unique site that will contribute to environment, economic and social benefits to Central Australia.

Next steps:

- Attracting and locating NRM organisations in a central space – the Desert Knowledge Precinct
- Establishing an NRM 'co-working space'
- Developing collaborative partnerships among NRM organisations to reduce the impact on small budgets
- Developing innovative solutions for NRM problems.

DKA believes that the physical presence of organisations located in a central location together is ideal for fostering collaboration.



Alice Springs public taking a tour of the Desert Knowledge Precinct.

CASE STUDY: ALICE SPRINGS GREEN ARMY

In May 2016 DKA, together with TNRM, Arid Lands Environment Centre (ALEC) and Alice Springs Town Council (ASTC) submitted an application for a project across three different locations – The Desert Knowledge Precinct, Ilparpa swamp, and the Todd and Charles Rivers.

DKA contributed to writing the application, as well as providing in-kind support for both project development and planned activities within the Green Army program.

The application has benefited from:

- Strong regional partnerships
- A passion for NRM projects in Alice Springs
- Continued community support
- Attracting the right people to undertake NRM work
- In-kind and monetary support from a variety of organisations to develop project proposals and grant applications.

Note: at the time of writing, this application is still being assessed by the Australian Government.

