

Workshop 3 participants discussed various aspects of the threshold statement process including: community education and capacity building; agreement making between Traditional Owner groups and the potential role of the Right People for Country project; authorisation processes; prioritisation principles; shared, collaborative and Traditional Owner-led research processes; and the notification process following submission of a threshold statement.

Outcomes from the workshop series will inform further collaboration between native title stakeholders in Victoria to develop a *Towards Threshold Guidelines* document articulating the requirements of a Traditional Owner threshold statement.

Foundations of the Kimberley Aboriginal Caring for Country Plan — Bungarun and the Kimberley Aboriginal Reference Group

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The idea of a Kimberley Aboriginal Caring for Country Plan came from Kimberley Traditional Owners at a meeting held at Bungarun in 2004. It was at this meeting that Traditional Owners identified how particular areas of country would be separated into categories that represented how people related to different regions and different types of Country; Fresh Water, Salt Water, Desert and Cattle and Rangelands. They also decided on what principles would guide Caring for Country in the Kimberley. These 13 core principles have guided the creation of the Caring for Country Plan;

1. Aboriginal people are committed to caring for Country.
2. The diversity of Aboriginal land, law language and culture is highly valued.

3. Land, law, language and culture are totally connected and underpin Aboriginal peoples' perspectives of 'healthy country'.
4. Aboriginal Knowledge must be maintained, protected and valued.
5. The transmission of language, cultural skills and practices from elders to younger generations is vital.
6. Improved collaboration requires appropriate consultation, engagement and communication processes.
7. The ways that Kimberley Aboriginal people like to do business must be adopted and maintained.
8. Creating employment and building empowerment in businesses, especially on Country, is essential.
9. Recognising Aboriginal ownership of land and the need for people to be on Country is critical to achieving Healthy Country and Healthy people.
10. Language is a critical part of Aboriginal engagement with the landscape.
11. Aboriginal livelihoods and community capacity can be encouraged and empowered by caring for Country.
12. Caring for Country has a vital role in building leadership and instilling cultural, political and social values in younger generations.
13. Kimberley Aboriginal people need to establish ways to get control over their future by improving social, cultural, environmental, language and economic positions.

Traditional Owners called for a plan to:

- help government and non-government agencies understand Aboriginal priorities and values;
- show the work already being done; and
- build relationships through agreements and protocols to work together.

It was from this meeting that the Kimberley Aboriginal Reference Group (KARG) was created, comprising four representatives from each of the four types of Country, and also each of the four peak regional Aboriginal organisations; the Kimberley Land Council (KLC), the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre (KALACC), the Kimberley Language Resource Centre (KLRC) and Kimberley Aboriginal Pastoralists Incorporated (KAPI). KARG's role was to; represent Indigenous interests on the Kimberley NRM Board, seek secure funding for Aboriginal people to participate in NRM activities, engage with Kimberley Aboriginal

NRM stakeholders, and, develop a Kimberley Aboriginal Caring for Country Plan.



Kimberley Rangers monitoring Turtle and Dugong

The Aboriginal Chapter and the Collaboration Working Agreement

In 2005, KARG prepared the Aboriginal Chapter of the Kimberley NRM Plan under the guidance of the Kimberley Indigenous Land Management Facilitator (ILMF). In 2006 the Aboriginal Chapter was revised by the AIATSIS Visiting Research fellow in Land, Law and Country, Steve Kinnane. Between 2006 and 2008 the landscape of NRM funding was changing with an emphasis toward developing Rangers and the Working on Country Program. The Kimberley ILMF and KARG used this opportunity to develop a Collaboration Working Agreement between the peak regional Aboriginal organisations.

The Collaboration Working Agreement outlined key values and principles for Caring for Country peak regional Aboriginal organisations. The Agreement was signed in May 2008 by the Chairpersons of the KLC and KLRC, KALACC Executives, and by the Chair of KAPI. It is a seminal document for any future collaboration to Care for Country in the Kimberley.

The Collaboration Working Agreement defined how the four peak Aboriginal organisations in the Kimberley would work to create the Kimberley Aboriginal Caring for Country Plan.

The aims of the Plan from the Collaboration Working Agreement were;

- to 'respond to environmental, social, cultural, language and economic priorities for Aboriginal people by focusing on outcomes delivered through appropriate management strategies in

the natural and cultural resource management sector'.¹

- to 'coordinate a strategic regional approach for Aboriginal land, sea and water management',²
- to be based in, 'Aboriginal perspectives of sustainability...in relation to the opportunities of Aboriginal management of land, sea and water'.³
- to 'be underpinned by local and sub-regional country-based plans, and,
- to 'actively engage young people and old people together for the future'.⁴

In December 2008 the KARG approached the Nulungu Centre for Indigenous Studies (Nulungu) at the Broome campus of the University of Notre Dame Australia to undertake the research, facilitation and writing of the *Kimberley Aboriginal Caring for Country Plan*. Funding was allocated from transitional funds from the National Heritage Trust (NHT) II Program to the National Caring for Our Country Program of the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) through Rangelands NRM.

Making the Plan

The *Kimberley Aboriginal Caring for Country Plan* then developed into a major collaborative research project undertaken by Nulungu between January 2009 and February 2011.

The key project partners were the KLRC, KALACC, the KLC and KAPI. These four peak regional Aboriginal organisations represent the rights and interests of the majority of Kimberley Traditional Owners and land managers.

Following extensive community consultation with Kimberley Traditional Owners and key regional stakeholders, Nulungu successfully delivered a *Kimberley Aboriginal Caring for Country Plan*. This plan is now being implemented by the peak regional Aboriginal organisations across the Kimberley.

Under the direction of Bruce Goring, Research Coordinator for the Nulungu Centre for Indigenous Studies, the community consultation team comprising Erica Spry (Researcher), Anna Dwyer

¹ Rangelands NRM Coordinating Group Project Brief 2008/2009, p 1.

² Caring for Country in the Kimberley, Collaboration Working Agreement, KLC, KALACC, KLRC, and KAPI, May 2008, p 2.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

(Community Consultation Specialist), Sharon Griffiths (Specialist Community Researcher) and Lilly Cox (Community Consultation Specialist) criss-crossed the Kimberley completing consultation through dozens of community meetings with over four hundred Traditional Owners throughout the region.



Kimberley Aboriginal Pastoralists

Working with the support of the KLC's Land and Sea Management Unit, the consultation process engaged with reaffirmed cultural blocs based on formations of Aboriginal cultural governance.

This process has since become the foundation of a range of new models of community engagement across the Kimberley by Traditional Owners, Aboriginal organisations, government agencies and non-government organisations and shows that if done properly, appropriate and respectful consultation leads to outcomes that are owned and valued by community members.

An important value of the *Kimberley Aboriginal Caring for Country Plan* is: 'Right People, Right Country, Right Way'. This sums up Aboriginal approaches to managing specific rights and responsibilities to Country within a complex and inter-linked system of cultural governance, Indigenous knowledge and values.

At the completion of the extensive community consultation process, Sharon Griffiths and Steve Kinnane (Senior Researcher) completed the writing of the plan with direct involvement of the KARG.



Elders working with young people – the Yiriman Project

How the Plan will be used

The final plan was accepted at an Annual General Meeting of the peak regional Aboriginal organisations in 2011. It has also been accepted and adopted as a blueprint for a ground-breaking partnership between Aboriginal community organisations and government agencies known as the Kimberley Futures Forum. Within this process, the portfolio of Cultural and Natural Resource Management will now oversee the implementation of the *Kimberley Aboriginal Caring for Country Plan*.

A copy of the *Kimberley Aboriginal Caring for Country Plan* can be located at: http://www.klrc.org.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=75&Itemid=68