



# CAPACITY BUILDING



## Capacity to manage natural resources

### Principle:

*The development and maintenance of local capacity is fundamental to achieving strategic long term natural resource management outcomes.*

Natural resource management has become a major focus for landowners on the Tiwi Islands. Global trends for improved environmental management, the urgent need for economic opportunities, and maintenance of cultural and lifestyle values are all issues that need to be balanced and actively managed. Efficient and effective management of the region's natural resources will only be achieved if the major stakeholders play a lead role, and the development and maintenance of local capacity is fundamental to natural resource management outcomes. Methods to increase the capacity of landowners to undertake these management responsibilities include public awareness, education and training; adequate human and financial resources; and effective co-ordination between groups.

A number of opportunities have been identified for improving information, including identified research priorities, development of a Tiwi GIS, maintaining a central library for natural resource information, and accessing information held within other organisations. Public awareness activities involve dissemination of appropriately targeted information and access to information sources. A local area network has recently been established that provides an IT link to all communities within the region, and it is anticipated that natural resource information will be accessible to the broader community through this medium.

The Tiwi Land Council currently writes an environmental management column for the monthly news sheet *Tiwi Times*, and each month targets priority natural resource management issues. Issues covered to date include cane toads, quarantine, feral pigs, feral cats, feral ants and current environment projects. Brochures on environmental management and quarantine have been produced and widely distributed, and the Tiwi Land Council Environment Officer regularly visits communities to discuss natural resource management issues with community members.

Schools are a major focus in communities for creating greater awareness and education about natural resource management issues, and may also provide a resource for community based environmental management and monitoring. School activities have been ad hoc in the past, and the potential to include natural resource management activities as part of school programmes should be further explored. *Waterwatch*, for example, is a programme that could be used within schools to monitor vegetation and river health.

The Tiwi Land Council has recently produced a CD-Rom that addresses natural resource management issues through Tiwi and English narrations, and attention catching fly through images and graphics. Timed release of the CD and other innovative natural resource management material could form the basis for structured resource management activities within schools.

Local council staff and Community Development Employment Programme (CDEP) participants are responsible for the management and maintenance of community areas and infrastructure such as roads, road reserves and open space areas. Given the importance of these areas as vectors for resource management threats, staff training in identification and management techniques should be encouraged.

Training could include weed identification and control, revegetation techniques for disturbed sites, equipment hygiene to minimise transport of weeds and diseases, road maintenance and erosion control techniques, materials extraction and handling techniques, and the operation and rehabilitation of extractive sites. Training should also include the use of GPS technology so that information can be included in regional strategic planning and management. Where practical, joint training opportunities should be explored between organisations, and this could be facilitated through field days and on-island training opportunities. Field days could also be used to educate the broader community about natural resource management issues.

The sharp end of natural resource management is made up of on-ground activities, and natural resource management outcomes cannot be achieved without these activities being carried out. Similarly, natural resource management

projects that do not involve major stakeholders are unlikely achieve long term results. Nor will activities that are ad hoc, and not part of a larger strategic programme. Short term grant funding for specific projects, while useful, does not build capacity within the region, and often addresses symptoms rather than causes.

Successful strategic natural resource management requires a living plan, core staff, operational capacity and maximum involvement of stakeholders. It also requires ongoing mentoring and training. The Tiwi Land Council currently employs an Environment and Heritage Officer, whose role is to address natural resource management issues under the direction of the Land Council. The operation of this position alone does not give any depth to natural resource management within the region, and limits sustainable outcomes.

An additional, local trainee Environment Officer supported by small, resourced on ground teams will provide a rounded and sustainable natural resource management capability. Funding for the programme could be sought from a mix of sources including economic activity on the islands, CDEP, private sponsorship, representative aboriginal corporations, and local, territory and federal governments. Long term success of the programme will rely on secure, recurrent funding and ongoing support from relevant organisations.

There are a number of organisations represented within the region that are either intimately involved in, or interface with, natural resource management. They include the Tiwi Land Council, Tiwi Islands Local Government, Community Management Boards, Tiwi Health Board, Tiwi Islands Training and Employment Board and private industry. To varying degrees, each of these organisations are involved in, or affected by natural resource management decisions. Lack of coordination between these groups can lead to duplication of effort, inefficient use of resources, failed projects and a community that is not engaged.

For efficient and effective ongoing natural resource management outcomes, it is vital that consultative and cooperative mechanisms are in place to guide natural resource management decisions and activities within the region. The creation of a broadly represented natural resource

management committee will ensure that all stakeholders are informed and involved with the natural resource management of the region.

The Commonwealth and Territory Governments also have roles and responsibilities to do with natural resource management. Cooperation between a Tiwi natural resource management committee and all tiers of government, with a common goal to maximise local capacity, will go a long way to achieving sustained regional outcomes.

**Outcome:**

Community ownership of natural resource management within the region.

**Objective:**

19. Develop and implement processes and procedures that build community capacity in natural resource management.

**Recommended Actions:**

- 19.1 Investigate and implement methods of including natural resource information into existing community information technology communication links.
- 19.2 Encourage, support and facilitate school based natural resource management activities and projects.
- 19.3 Develop and implement staff training in natural resource management information and techniques, including field days.
- 19.4 Facilitate Tiwi involvement in mainstream natural resource management training and educational programmes.
- 19.5 Develop and resource a natural resource management team consisting of Environment Officer, Trainee Environment Officer and small on ground teams.
- 19.6 Form a regional natural resource management committee from representatives of relevant Tiwi organisations, and develop formalised communication links between organisations.
- 19.7 Develop and maintain communication links between the Tiwi regional natural resource management committee and government.
- 19.8 Continue to access short term grant funding for on-ground projects within a regional context.

