

Looking After Country Together

Looking After Country Together is an initiative under *Partnerships Queensland: Future directions framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policy in Queensland 2005–10*.

It provides a whole-of-government strategic policy framework to improve Indigenous participation in caring for country. The Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM) is responsible for leading the work across government.

The Looking After Country Together vision is 'by 2011 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders will have more opportunities to access and manage their traditional land and sea country, in partnership with governments and other stakeholders'.

Policy objectives

The strategy's three objectives are to:

- increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander access to traditional land and sea country
- strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander involvement in the management of traditional land and sea country
- strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander involvement in and influence on broader natural resource planning and policy development.

An independent assessment will be conducted at completion in 2010.

Benefits for Indigenous communities

Looking After Country Together recognises past dislocation from land and sea country has contributed to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social, economic and cultural disadvantage.

Increasing access to, and management of, traditional land and sea country is expected to improve the overall wellbeing of Indigenous Queenslanders, as well as achieve better natural resource management outcomes.

Participating agencies

The following Queensland Government agencies are committed to the Looking After Country Together strategy:

- Department of Environment and Resource Management—lead agency
- Department of the Premier and Cabinet
- Department of Education and Training

- Queensland Health
- Department of Transport and Main Roads
- Department of Communities
- Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI)
- Department of Infrastructure and Planning.

How it will be achieved

Looking After Country Together is a strategic framework that aims to deliver positive outcomes by undertaking:

- policy development to increase Indigenous participation in land and sea management
- community capacity building to assist Indigenous people to strengthen their role in land and sea management, planning and policy development
- review and evaluation of the Looking After Country Together strategy to identify relevant new policy areas and initiatives.

DERM is leading improved coordination across government agencies through the Steering Committee and Policy Coordination Group and development of effective performance measurement tools.

Examples

There are many positive initiatives emerging from the Looking After Country Together strategy including:

Wild Rivers Rangers Program—the Queensland Government has provided funding over two years to employ 20 Aboriginal rangers in Cape York Peninsula and the Gulf of Carpentaria. This DERM program aims to maximise the benefits of wild rivers for communities by encouraging the development of local economies based on ecosystem services.

Supporting Animal Management in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Local Governments Initiative—a joint Queensland Health and DEEDI project aimed at providing Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island councils with the support and capacity to manage feral and domestic animal issues within their communities. To date, funding provided to participating councils has led to the recruitment of 28 animal management workers (AMW). Through training provided by Queensland Health, 27 AMWs have gained their Certificate II in Rural Operations qualifications.

Alliance Model—created by the Department of Transport and Main Roads, this innovative model was developed to provide capacity building, training and

employment opportunities in remote and rural areas through engaging Indigenous organisations as partners on construction projects. In recognition of the success of the project, the Split Rock Inca Alliance received the 2007 Premier's overall award for business reconciliation.

Land Trust Capacity Building Program—a DERM program designed to meet the specific needs and unique circumstances of individual land trusts. DERM officers engage with land trust members and provide training in a practical and interactive manner to increase the skills and capacity of land trusts in areas of governance and land management, and broker support for trustees with other Indigenous agencies for funding, training and developing opportunities.

Vegetation management pilot projects—DERM is currently implementing two pilot projects in Cape York focused on training and capacity building of Indigenous people in native forest management. The pilot projects also identify sustainable economic development opportunities for Indigenous communities through the proactive consideration of land capability, business development prospects and community aspirations.

Both of these projects are initiatives that have evolved from the recent introduction of the *Cape York Peninsula Heritage Act 2007* and the *Vegetation Management Act 1999*, and have been developed in consultation with Indigenous organisations and other government departments.

Pilot training and employment programs—DERM, in cooperation with Department of Education and Training and DEEDI, is currently implementing pilot programs for Indigenous people to receive training in the areas of project management, business administration, and conservation and land management. The goal is to assist Indigenous people to start a career in natural resource management and find long term employment.

Further information

Information on Looking After Country Together can be found on the DERM website <www.derm.qld.gov.au> or by contacting the Indigenous Natural Resource Management Policy Unit on 1800 500 037.

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For further information phone 13 13 04

For general enquiries contact the
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or visit www.derm.qld.gov.au