

A man wearing a red long-sleeved shirt and a light-colored cowboy hat with a colorful band stands in a corral. He is leaning on a white metal railing. In the background, there are several cattle of various colors (white, brown, black) in a sandy enclosure. The sky is bright and hazy.

breaking new ground

INDIGENOUS PASTORAL PROGRAM, NORTHERN TERRITORY

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are warned that this publication may contain images of deceased persons.

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foreword

Indigenous people in the Northern Territory own or control nearly 50 per cent of the land, predominantly under pioneering land rights legislation established in 1976. This unique system of land tenure has resulted in the transfer of significant areas of pastoral land, Crown land and other unallocated land to Indigenous ownership supported by the Territory’s two land councils.

Although a percentage of this land has remained under pastoral production, significant areas have left the pastoral industry for a variety of reasons. Additionally, there are substantial areas of land across the Territory which have no historic connection to the pastoral industry, but have the potential to be developed.

While there are many Indigenous land owners in the Territory who have experienced more than 20 years of land ownership, there has been a growing realisation that economic solutions to environmental and social problems need to be found through the development of a more effective pastoral industry on Indigenous land.

In recognition of this, back in 2003 the Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC) joined forces with the Northern and Central Land Councils and the Northern Territory Department of Business, Industry and Resource Development to establish the Indigenous Pastoral Program (IPP).



The Program has been hugely successful, delivering serious outcomes not only for Indigenous land owners and the pastoral industry, but also for the Territory as a whole.

It has been very satisfying for me as Chair of the ILC to have been involved in overseeing the Program to this point. This publication gives the reader a ‘taste’ of what has been achieved so far and I look forward to the Program developing further in the years to come.

Shirley McPherson, Chair, ILC



the indigenous pastoral program

indigenous pastoral

What is the Indigenous Pastoral Program?

In essence, the Indigenous Pastoral Program (IPP) is all about increasing the participation of Indigenous people in the Northern Territory's pastoral industry.

The Program's key objectives are to help Indigenous land owners implement sustainable pastoral enterprises and increase pastoral production from their land.

In achieving these objectives, the key outcomes are:

- to increase cattle numbers on Indigenous land; and
- to expand Indigenous participation in the pastoral workforce.

It is the unique partnership between Government, non-government and the community sector that is driving this innovative project.

A bit of history ...

In February 2003, the IPP came into being when a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed by four key stakeholders – the federally funded Indigenous Land Corporation, the Northern Territory's Northern and Central Land Councils and the (then) Northern Territory Department of Business, Industry and Resource Development (recently restructured to the Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines).





“the program is driven by Traditional Owners to achieve their pastoral aspirations”

The ILC has part-funded four three-year positions to implement the IPP – two within DPIFM, and one each at the two land councils. The Program has already produced some significant outcomes, which will be built on into the future:

- ten-year land use agreements completed on Amanbidji, Eley, Balbirini, Wagaman and Hooker Creek country.
- Significant increases in the number of cattle on Indigenous land.
- Seasonal stockcamp positions are being filled by Aboriginal people at various locations.
- Two successful Indigenous Cattlemen’s Workshops held in Alice Springs.
- Numerous short-term positions using Indigenous people in fencing contracts.
- A number of young Indigenous people employed, or to be employed, in the Indigenous Pastoral Apprentice Scheme.

The guiding principles

The Indigenous Pastoral Program is guided by seven key principles:

- The Program is driven by Traditional Owners to achieve their pastoral aspirations.
- That the process of planning, development and implementation of any enterprise requires the approval, participation and commitment of the land owners in accordance with the requirements of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act 1976* and, where relevant, *the Native Title Act 1993*.
- That the project achieves sustainable development outcomes and accommodates multiple land use aspirations, but with a focus on pastoralism.
- The preferred development model for this Program is one which achieves economically, ecologically, socially and culturally appropriate participation in the management and operation of pastoral enterprises.
- The Program maximises Indigenous employment and training outcomes.
- The project will focus on maximising the coordination of resources from key agencies, business and industry.
- The Program will use adaptive management based on continual improvement principles to achieve industry best practice outcomes.

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the key players

key players

Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC)

The Indigenous Land Corporation is an Australian Government statutory authority with responsibilities across land management on Indigenous land and land acquisition. Over the past seven years the ILC has made a significant investment in tackling serious environmental issues, including the management of feral animals and weeds.

The ILC's role in the Northern Territory has expanded over the past five years to include the development of Indigenous land for economic activities, particularly pastoralism. This new priority was formalised in 2003 with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the ILC, the Northern Territory Government and the Northern and Central Land Councils to establish the Indigenous Pastoral Program.

The Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines (DPIFM)

The Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines (formerly DBIRD) plays a vital role in the IPP. It provides expertise and advice in pastoral production, including the production capabilities of various land types (in conjunction with water availability) and the provision of a range of options for pastoral production.

Additionally, the Department has worked to involve other Government agencies in the IPP engaging their core business services as required. Another key role of the Department is to coordinate business partnerships with industry through the networks established within the Department under its primary role of service delivery to Primary Industries, Fisheries and Mines.





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Northern Land Council (NLC)

The Northern Land Council (NLC) is a statutory authority established under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* and represents the Aboriginal people in the north of the Northern Territory. The NLC is also a representative body for the purposes of the *Native Title Act 1993*.

The Land Council has 78 elected members and represents Traditional Owners from communities throughout the Land Council’s region. The region is large – approximately 562,700 sq km – and includes the Darwin/Daly, West Arnhem, East Arnhem, Victoria River District (VRD), Katherine, Ngukurr, and Borroloola/Barkly regions.

Central Land Council (CLC)

The Central Land Council (CLC) is a representative body promoting Aboriginal rights and is a statutory authority under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*. It also has functions under the *Native Title Act 1993* and the *Pastoral Land Act 1992*.

The CLC region covers 771,747 sq km of remote, rugged and often inaccessible areas. There are 15 different Aboriginal language groups in Central Australia and the CLC region is divided into nine regions based around these language groups. Today, Aboriginal people make up 27 per cent of the Territory’s population with 18,000 living in Central Australia. They own around 49 per cent of the land in the Northern Territory.

Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association (NTCA)

The NT Cattlemen's Association is the Territory's peak primary industry lobby group representing more than 90 per cent of the region's 1.9 million-strong cattle herd. Its members manage more than 620,000 sq km of Territory land and produce more than half a million cattle a year for both domestic beef and live export markets.

The industry directly generates 2000 jobs for mostly rural Territorians and is a major regional economic driver.

The NT pastoral industry generates over \$330 million directly and over \$880 million indirectly into the NT economy.

By area, employment and economic contribution the pastoral industry is the dominant industry in land management in the NT, with a predominate focus on long-term regional sustainable development.

the hooker creek aboriginal land trust

hooker creek

The partnership

In 2005, Gurindji Traditional Owners of the top north-west corner of the Hooker Creek Aboriginal Land Trust reached an agreement with the neighbouring Riveren Station to lease 500 sq km of their land for grazing. The agreement marked the culmination of considerable planning and decision-making on the part of the Central Land Council and the Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines.

How it works ...

The Indigenous Land Corporation provided assistance for the development of essential infrastructure, including 98 km of fencing and the construction of a turkey nest dam. This work was undertaken by the owners of Riveren Station – the Underwoods – in partnership with their Indigenous land owners. The Central Land Council was also involved in removing feral animals from the land.

Under the terms of the agreement with land owners, approximately 50 per cent of the cost of this infrastructure will be repaid to the ILC from the rental income (grazing licence) paid to the Gurindji. Additionally, the land owners will invest rental income for future capital replacement and currently all other surplus funds are also invested for future economic and social purposes.





“the groundbreaking Hooker Creek agreement will have significant benefits for both the Gurindji and the owners of Riveren Station”



The benefits

The groundbreaking Hooker Creek agreement, which spans 10 years (with a five-yearly review), will have significant benefits for both the Gurindji and the owners of Riveren Station.

The Gurindji will benefit from the agreement by having their land improved and managed by experienced pastoralists. They will learn much about cattle and land

management strategies through their work with the Underwoods, who will also provide opportunities for various seasonal pastoral employment for the Gurindji community.

The owners of Riveren Station will have access to 500 sq km of land, including the new essential infrastructure, for up to 10 years. Their partnership with the Gurindji will also mean they get seasonal help on the land when they need it.

“in 2004, the Mangarrayi Aboriginal Land Trust granted the Aboriginal-owned Banabi company an innovative ten-year pastoral land use agreement”

mangarrayi aboriginal land trust (elsey station)

mangarrayi

The partnership

In 2004, the Mangarrayi Aboriginal Land Trust (Elsey Station) granted the Aboriginal-owned Banabi company an innovative ten-year pastoral land use agreement. The agreement enabled Banabi to negotiate grazing licences with other parties. Banabi receives fees from those licences and in return they are required to look after licensee cattle, control fire, feral animals and weeds and complete all the corporate governance requirements of their organisation.

How it works ...

The improvements to the land at Elsey Station were funded through the Indigenous Land Corporation, who provided capital development assistance on a dollar for dollar basis. This has seen Elsey Station's carrying capacity expand, which has enabled Banabi to establish grazing licences with outside pastoralists. Elsey Station not only derives an annual fee from the licences, but also manages their herds under contract.

This is the pinnacle for Aboriginal pastoralism – an Aboriginal-owned company managing other people's cattle in return for lease fees and cattle management fees, as well as achieving significant job outcomes and land management improvements.





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The benefits

Approximately 50 per cent of previously dormant land at Eley Station now supports stock and creates income for Banibi and the Mangarrayi Traditional Owners. Improvements include several hundred kilometres of fencing, many additional water points and turkey nest dams, and improved access tracks.

Improvements in land management include better fire management through improved fire breaks and fire control, improved control of feral animals by establishing fencing to prevent feral animal movement into paddock areas, and improved management of weeds by creating additional enterprise income to resource control activities. These improvements not only benefit the Traditional Owners, but also neighbouring stations that also deal with these cross-boundary issues.

The Traditional Owners have also benefited directly through employment. All the new pastoral infrastructure was erected by them and Banibi’s management of the cattle as part of the grazing licences means more jobs for Traditional Owners within the enterprise.

learning the ropes

learning the ropes

The Indigenous Cattlemen's Workshop

The Indigenous Cattlemen's Workshops are designed to introduce Indigenous people involved – or wanting to become involved – in the pastoral industry to a broad range of skills and knowledge. Run over three days, they also provide invaluable networking opportunities for the participants with pastoral staff from the Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines, as well as the wider industry.

The workshops focus on the importance of natural resources for sustainable cattle enterprises and deal with vital issues such as herd management, animal nutrition, pasture management, pests, fire management and water management and planning.

Getting business involved

The Indigenous Cattlemen's Workshops are enthusiastically supported by local businesses through sponsorship of the event and their active participation in the workshops. In addition, groups such as FarmBis, the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association, the Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training, the Bushfires Council, Parks and Wildlife, and local businesses such as Elders and Wesfarmers, are keen supporters of the workshops.





“in ten years time, stockcamps will be predominantly Indigenous”



The outcomes

The Indigenous Cattlemen’s Workshops continue to generate many positive outcomes. In particular, participants take away up-to-date information about a range of pastoral issues and an appreciation of the factors that drive the contemporary pastoral sector.

The workshops also give participants greater access to a number of important support mechanisms – a vital step in further incorporating Indigenous people into the wider pastoral industry.

Indigenous Stockmen’s Apprentice Scheme

One of the major challenges now facing the pastoral industry is to find suitable workers for stockcamps and other positions.

Many believe the answer to this labour problem lies within the Indigenous communities that border many of the Territory’s pastoral enterprises. In these communities there is a significant number of young unemployed people whose talents have the potential to be put to good use by the pastoral sector.

Many believe that Indigenous people will again make up a significant portion of the stockcamps of the future and that, in ten years time, stockcamps will be predominantly Indigenous.

The way ahead

In 2004–05, the (then) Department of Business, Industry and Resource Development took steps to address the vital issue of pastoral employment and implemented the innovative Indigenous Stockmen’s Apprentice Scheme. The scheme, which targets young Indigenous people interested in developing a career on the land, was piloted in the Barkly region and involved training, job placements and mentoring.

The results from the pilot were highly encouraging. Of the 15 young people from the initial apprentice intake, 11 were placed on pastoral stations and five remained in the industry at the end of the program. In addition, two of the participants were employed elsewhere and two were wanting to return to the industry pending further assistance.

“long-term success is dependent on even more involvement from business and industry in the Territory”

the way ahead way ahead

Broadening the partnership

The future looks bright for the Northern Territory's Indigenous Pastoral Program.

The tremendous work that has been undertaken over the past two years – work such as the groundbreaking agreements at Hooker Creek and Elsey Station – represents an investment in the future of the Territory's pastoral industry. Pastoral enterprises like these are set to reap significant economic and social dividends for many years to come.

The IPP is also transforming the lives of many Indigenous Territorians and the communities they live in.

Pastoralism has given a number of the Territory's Indigenous communities improved employment opportunities and a sound economic base for the future. Young Indigenous people are learning valuable skills and shaping meaningful careers on the land for themselves through IPP initiatives such as the Indigenous Stockmen's Apprentice Scheme and the Indigenous Cattlemen's Workshops.

The long-term vision of the IPP is all about bringing more land into cattle production and building Indigenous wealth and employment – and that is central to boosting economic development and building the capacity of regional and remote communities across the Territory.



The partnerships that have been forged through the IPP are the foundation on which the Program's future will be built. But its long-term success is dependent on even more involvement from business and industry in the Territory, as well as ongoing support from the wider community.

That is our challenge.





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www.clc.org.au



Australian Government
Indigenous Land Corporation

www.ilc.gov.au



Northern Territory Government
Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines

www.nt.gov.au/dpifm



www.nlc.org.au



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