

Australia's Submission to CBD Notification 2016-078

CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (CBD) NOTIFICATION 2016-078

Biodiversity for Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development

Submission by Australia

Notification 2016-078 – Biodiversity for Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development

Australia is working to close the substantial gaps in outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians. Ending Indigenous disadvantage and disparity is a complex and challenging task that is shared among national and sub-national governments, communities, businesses and individuals.

Australia's *Indigenous Advancement Strategy* ([link](#)) is the framework under which the Australian Government funds and delivers a range of programs targeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The Strategy encompasses five broad-based program: Jobs, Land and Economy, Children and Schooling, Safety and Wellbeing, Culture and Capability and Remote Australia. The Strategy's flexible structure supports the new way of working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, allowing for joint development of solutions that will work over the long term.

The Indigenous Protected Areas (IPA) and Working on Country (WoC) programs form part of the suite of approaches that contribute to the Strategy's priorities, including providing economic opportunities, education, employment pathways and engagement with community and culture. Previous Australian Government submissions to the CBD have provided extensive information on these programs¹ and detailed how these programs promote a balance between conservation and other sustainable uses whilst integrating traditional and contemporary knowledge into a robust and flexible approach to land and sea management. This submission provides some additional perspectives regarding their contribution to social and economic advancement for Indigenous communities.

Indigenous Environment programs generating social, cultural and economic benefits

There has long been an understanding among Indigenous communities and IPA practitioners that a wide range of positive economic and social changes are generated by the IPA and WoC programs. However, most of the previous reporting has been focused only on their environmental outcomes. The broader benefits of these programs have recently been investigated and articulated in the *Social Return on Investment Report on Indigenous Protected Areas*.

The Report found the IPA and WoC programs are:

- Engaging Indigenous Australians in meaningful employment to achieve large-scale conservation outcomes;
- Facilitating reconnection with country, culture and language to achieve exceptional levels of engagement among Indigenous Australians, which is driving positive social, economic, cultural and environmental outcomes; and
- Helping to catalyse the development of an Indigenous land and sea based economy, empowering Indigenous landowners to manage their country in accordance with their priorities.

The Report concluded that between 2009 and 2015, an investment of \$35.2 million AUD has generated social, economic, cultural and environmental outcomes with an adjusted value of \$96.5 million AUD. This indicates the programs have succeeded across a broad range of outcome areas, effectively overcoming barriers to addressing Indigenous disadvantage. It also indicates the programs have assisted Indigenous Australians transfer knowledge and have supported their pursuit of self-determination regarding management of their country and economic development.

The full report, which discussed the social return on investment methodology and the range of benefits in greater detail, is available on the Australian Government Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's webpage, at: https://www.dpmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/SROI-Consolidated-Report-IPA_1.pdf.

¹ Including submissions in response to notifications 2015-012, 2015-043 and 2015-132.

Indigenous Partnerships Program

Closely linked to the above programs, is the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's (GBRMPA) Indigenous Partnerships program. The *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975*, specifically provides for partnership with traditional owners in management of marine resources. This is delivered through Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreements (TUMRA) which are developed by Traditional Owners and formally accredited by the Australian and Queensland Governments. These agreements provide recognition of traditional lores and customs and co-management pathways. The TUMRA program provides funding for employment of coordinators gets people back on country, compliance training, career pathways, transfer of traditional knowledge and sustainable hunting management systems.

In 2015, The Australian Government supported the GBRMPA to develop and deliver a specifically tailored Indigenous ranger compliance training program. This program integrates with the above mentioned Indigenous Ranger programs. Some 24 rangers are being supported to complete a Certificate IV in Government (Statutory Compliance). Interviews with participants to date have highlighted the social benefits flowing from this training including a feeling of pride from their communities and families that they will be able to come back and help protect their sea country. Rangers learn skills on country with marine park agencies (e.g. sea and air patrols, evidence collection, court workshops) as opposed to sitting in a classroom.

Rangers who complete the program will be eligible and supported to apply for consideration to be appointed as authorised officers (inspectors) under Marine Park legislation. If successful, Rangers will be entitled to exercise powers under both the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 2000* and the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975*. This will include the suite of powers of an authorised officer within the Marine Park area. The powers will be consistent with the broad range of inspectors working in the Marine Park and are likely to increase the Rangers employment options.

Update on the Australian Government Green Army Programme

The Australian Government is committed to engaging Indigenous participants and Project Hosts in the Green Army Program. The Green Army is a hands-on, practical, environmental action program that supports local environment and heritage conservation projects across Australia.

The Green Army has achieved its target of engaging 1,000 Indigenous participants in the first five years of the program. By the end of June 2016, less than three years into the program, 1,225 Indigenous participants have been involved, representing 17.3 per cent of all Green Army participants. There are 19 Indigenous organisations involved as Project Hosts for 86 approved projects.

The Green Army can support participants and projects in remote communities and provide targeted training and ways to connect Indigenous Australians with their country, identity and culture. For Indigenous participants, the Green Army can provide the opportunity to work on projects that include preserving Indigenous heritage values, carrying out traditional land and sea management using traditional knowledge, and protecting and managing cultural sites. For example, the Bundaberg Region Coastal Catchment Restoration Initiative, hosted by the Gidarjil Development Corporation Ltd, is assessing, documenting and monitoring culturally significant areas, including shell middens and burial sites, adjacent to the World Heritage listed Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. The Green Army Balu Buru team, hosted by the Mamabulanjin Aboriginal Corporation, is working to actively protect the biodiversity of Roebuck Bay as a significant site for migratory wading birds and other rare and endangered aquatic species.

Indigenous participants can learn directly from Working on Country rangers and supervisors; and the experience they gain and skills they learn provide a stepping stone for future job opportunities in the land and sea management sector.

Case studies of the National Landcare Programme

Through the National Landcare Programme, the Australian Government is investing over \$50 million on Indigenous Natural Resource Management projects. This includes the employment of over 50 Indigenous people, Indigenous traineeships and support for on country businesses. Some examples of projects are:

- The Rangelands Natural Resource Management organisation and Gondwana Link (a landscape scale connectivity and wildlife corridor conservation project in South West Western Australia) are working in partnership with the Ngadju people on a conservation programme which put 'eyes on the ground' over a vast area of southern Western Australia. The programme focuses on capacity building and project implementation to protect endangered species such as the malleefowl, as well as the woodlands from invasive weeds. It has led to more employment opportunities and has given the local Njadju people the skills they need to run their own programmes.
- Another great example is in north western Victoria where a new traineeship with the Mallee Catchment Management Authority aims to use natural resource management initiatives to drive progress to help close the gap for Aboriginal people. The 15-month traineeship involves a mix of formal certified training and on-the-job learning and then progress to a full Indigenous Support Officer position.