

CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (CBD) NOTIFICATION 2015-043

Request for Information on the Contribution of Collective Action to Biodiversity Conservation, Including on Experiences and Lessons Learned in Applying Pertinent Methodologies.

Submission by Australia

NOTE: All information provided in this response has been drawn from Australian Government agency inputs only. No consultation with State and Territory governments was possible for this notification due to the deadline for the response.

Notification 2015-043: Contribution of Collective Action to Biodiversity Conservation

This paper is Australia's submission to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Secretariat regarding notification 2015-043 on the contribution of collective action, including by Indigenous peoples and Local Communities and non-market based approaches, including community-based natural resource management, shared governance or joint management of protected areas and Indigenous and community conserved areas.

The contribution of collective action to biodiversity conservation can be significant, especially where government support and funding is targeted to leverage additional mobilisation of resources from other sectors of society. The Australian Government implements a number of programmes that support and encourage collective action, including by Indigenous peoples and Local Communities.

GREEN ARMY

The \$525 million¹ Green Army is an environment and heritage conservation programme engaging young people (aged 17 to 24) in improving their local communities. Green Army teams are comprised of nine participants and one team supervisor. Organisations such as local community groups, regional natural resource management groups, indigenous landowners, local and state government agencies put forward potential projects for one or more Green Army teams to implement.

Green Army Projects will encourage hands on, practical environmental outcomes that align with national environmental challenges while delivering on community priorities.

Projects may include propagation and planting of native seedlings, weed eradication, protecting beaches from erosion, rehabilitation and revegetation of creek banks, foreshores and riverbanks to improve water quality, building boardwalks and walking tracks to protect local plants and wildlife, maintaining and protecting locally significant heritage sites and habitat protection. 548 projects have now been announced in two rounds across Australia and assessment of a third round of projects is currently being carried out.

There is a target of 1000 Australian Indigenous participants in the Green Army programme over four years. To date, the programme has engaged 186 Indigenous participants, 13.48% of the target.

LANDCARE

The National Landcare Programme is comprised of two funding streams: national and regional, that will invest \$1 billion over four years in projects that address environmental and sustainable agriculture issues.

The national funding stream supports continuing commitments; a number of other initiatives, including to manage and rehabilitate important coastal rivers, threatened species and ecosystems; and the 20 Million Trees Programme. Part of the national funding stream is the ongoing support of the Indigenous Protected Areas programme, which is discussed later in this submission.

The regional funding stream will invest \$454 million through Australia's 56 regional natural resource management organisations over four years to deliver local and regional activities that support environmental protection and sustainable agricultural practices and strengthen the capacity of communities to care for their environments.

Among other activities, these regional natural resource management organisations are expected to increase engagement and participation of the community, including landcare, farmers and Indigenous peoples, in sustainable natural resource management. This occurs through brokering partnerships, collaborating with networks and supporting local stakeholders in delivery of regional natural resource management activities and through building local community and industry engagement, skills and capacity in natural resource management.

¹ Please note that all references to expenditure in this document are in Australian currency (AUD).

The National Landcare Programme will invest in a diverse range of Indigenous-related activities, including employment, natural resource management consultation/planning, training and enterprise development, on-ground delivery of biodiversity outcomes, recording and utilising Indigenous ecological knowledge, fire management, junior ranger programmes and sustainable agriculture.

Data on the scale and extent of activities implemented under this programme to date are not yet available, but will be compiled throughout the four year timeframe of the programme.

CARBON FARMING INITIATIVE

Australia's Indigenous peoples have long used fire to shape the landscape and traditional burning remains an important part of achieving social, economic and spiritual wellbeing¹. Fire management in savanna landscapes, which integrates traditional knowledge and western science can lead to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, improved biodiversity values and supports sustainable livelihoods for Indigenous peoples living on country.

Savanna fire management projects restore traditional land management practices and involve a program of early dry season burning to reduce fuel loads and create fire breaks in the landscape. These fires can be lit from aircraft, vehicles or on foot, depending on the country. Projects allow elders to share their traditional knowledge with young people and maintaining and strengthening connections to their traditional country.

The Australian Government continues to invest in the development of the Savanna Burning Methodologies. Methodologies for emissions abatement have been developed in collaboration with the Northern Australia Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAISMA), the Commonwealth Science and Industry Research Organisation (CSIRO), Indigenous peoples, land managers, scientists and government agencies. The latest methodology approved under the Emissions Reduction Fund (ERF), can be applied to eligible vegetation fuel types in savannas in a defined rainfall zones (>600 mm annual average rainfall).

In 2011, the Australian Government consulted with Indigenous peoples on enabling their participation in the Carbon Farming Initiative (which has transitioned into the ERF) and subsequently provided grants through the Indigenous Carbon Farming Fund to enable that. Grants have supported the increased uptake of methodologies for abatement activities with high Indigenous participation, capacity building and business support. Initiatives supported by the grants include the North Australia Fire Information service which provides fire scar maps necessary for implementation of the carbon farming methodologies.

Indigenous groups have implemented the methodologies in approved projects to generate carbon credits which can be sold to stakeholders wishing to offset their emissions. There are currently 14 indigenous savanna fire management projects registered under the ERF.

TUMRAS

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) empowers Indigenous Traditional Owner groups to manage traditional use of sea country through the development and implementation of Traditional Use of Marine Resource Agreements (TUMRAs).

The development and implementation process for TUMRAs form a part of contemporary sea country management - recognising and respecting traditional governance and leadership within groups relating to customary use and traditional occupations.

Traditional Owners, through the TUMRA, discuss and make decisions around complex matters such as maritime estates (where lore governs boundaries), protocols and principles, sea country planning, no-take areas, community permits, management of cultural use activities (including the elimination of unauthorised practices such as poaching), cultural heritage management and the identification of economic development opportunities, such as the delivery of ecosystem services and tourism. This process provides better practice decision making and promotes higher order certainty amongst stakeholder groups, including government, as major investors.

Currently, seven formal TUMRAs exist, covering 47,810 square kilometers of sea country and involve multiple Traditional Owner groups. There has been a steady increase in the accreditation of TUMRAs, with interest in the programme continuing to grow.

INDIGENOUS PROTECTED AREAS

Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs) are one of Australia's most successful integrated conservation and indigenous community development initiatives. IPAs can be declared on Native Title areas (landscapes owned and managed by Indigenous peoples). IPAs protect culture and country and promote sustainable economic development and provide employment opportunities. IPAs are not a statutory instrument and multi-tenure IPAs require voluntary, formal agreements with key stakeholders to implement cooperative management arrangements. Each IPA has a Management Plan that describes how the Indigenous landowners will manage the landscape, using a combination of traditional knowledge and contemporary western science. These plans identify an International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) protected area category, to ensure that management is in line with international standards.

JOINT-MANAGEMENT OF PROTECTED AREAS

Many protected areas in the National Reserve System are jointly managed with traditional owners. The Commonwealth and most State and Territory Governments of Australia have some jointly managed National Parks including Booderee, Kakadu, Uluru-Kata Tjuta, Nitmuluk, Barmah and Mungo National Parks. Joint management is about Indigenous peoples and communities and government agencies working together, solving problems, sharing decision-making and exchanging knowledge, skills and information². Joint management also provides opportunities for richer visitor experiences, social development, sustainable economic development and enhancing connections to country. Joint management arrangements are also in place for protected areas encompassed by other international agreements, such as Ramsar wetlands and parts of World Heritage Areas.

There is no generic model or blueprint for successful joint management and each agreement must be separately negotiated and must be responsive to the needs and aspirations of each local community³. State and Territory joint-management arrangements are different to joint-management of Commonwealth protected areas, which are underpinned by individual lease arrangements, which are embedded in National Environmental Law, through the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).

AUSTRALIAN BUSINESS AND BIODIVERSITY INITIATIVE

The Australian Business and Biodiversity Initiative is an alliance of organisations and individuals from business, government, academia and civil society. The Initiative includes the Australian Government and the Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC) as signatories. The ILC is a corporate Commonwealth entity, established to assist Indigenous peoples acquire and manage land to achieve economic, environmental, social and cultural benefits.

Signatories to the Initiative are involved in collective action to: raise awareness among Australian businesses of how the loss and degradation of biodiversity and ecosystem services is a critical risk to their day-to-day activities and long-term future; support the development of practical solutions that integrate consideration of biodiversity and ecosystem services into business decision-making; and ultimately improve the health and resilience of Australia's environment and economy.

¹ North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA), 2012. *Carbon Project*. URL: <http://www.nailsma.org.au/hub/programs/carbon-project>. Accessed 26 March 2015.

² Department of the Environment, 2015. *Park Management (Kakadu)*. URL: <http://www.environment.gov.au/topics/national-parks/kakadu-national-park/management-and-conservation/park-management>. Accessed 26 March 2015.

³ Lawrence, D., 1997. *Managing Parks/Managing Country: Joint Management of Aboriginal Owned Protected Areas in Australia – Research Paper 2*. URL: http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/RP9697/97rp2. Accessed 26 March 2015.