



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

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Ms Joanne Towner  
Committee Secretary  
Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Towner

**House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs' Inquiry into Indigenous employment.**

Please find attached the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs' Inquiry into Indigenous employment.

The Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's submission includes a summary of programs within the portfolio that encourage employment and economic opportunities for Indigenous communities. These programs include the Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy, Indigenous Aquaculture Strategy, the National Indigenous Forestry Strategy and the National Landcare Program.

Should you wish to discuss the submission, please contact Ms Kate Ross on 02 6271 6437.

Yours Sincerely

David Williamson  
General Manager  
Rural Support and Adjustment

30 June 2005

13 JUL 2005



BY: ATSA

Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

**Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Submission  
to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait  
Islander Affairs**

**Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy**

The Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) has developed the Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy (NAQS) to protect northern Australia, from Broome to Cairns including the Torres Strait, from the entry of exotic pests, diseases and weeds. The program identifies and evaluates quarantine risks facing northern Australia, and provides early detection and warning of new pests through a program of scientific surveys and monitoring, border activities and public awareness activities.

The NAQS program employs staff in Broome, Darwin, Weipa, Bamaga, Mareeba, Cairns, Torres Strait Islands and Canberra and relies heavily on the help and support of northern Australian Indigenous communities to do its work.

To assist with its programs NAQS currently employs 23 Indigenous officers in the Torres Strait, two on Cape York and two in Darwin. These officers provide quarantine services in the Special Quarantine Zone and the Protected Quarantine Zones. In Darwin, the Indigenous Community Liaison officers are employed to facilitate communication and cooperation with local communities and Indigenous ranger groups. NAQS scientific officers work with rangers and communities to survey land controlled by Indigenous landowners, and train rangers in quarantine surveillance.

NAQS has a policy of close collaboration with local communities. Community ownership translates to a high level of quarantine awareness and support, which in turn has benefited all Australians by minimising incursions of exotic pests. In this way, indigenous communities are a vital element of the NAQS Strategy.

**Indigenous Aquaculture Strategy**

The National Aquaculture Development Strategy and management framework was developed to step up the involvement of Australia's Indigenous communities in aquaculture.

Through development of sustainable ventures, aquaculture can make a positive contribution towards improving the social and economic circumstances of many Indigenous communities – providing new employment and training opportunities in remote areas, preventing the movement of people from communities, increasing food production and achieving a level of self-sufficiency and food security, supplementing and replacing capture fishery production.

Aquaculture development has the potential to significantly benefit many Indigenous communities. For aquaculture to be successful, it has to take place with the active participation of Indigenous communities and accommodate their social, cultural and economic requirements.

Currently funded Indigenous aquaculture projects include a Northern Queensland Aquaculture Scoping document, the Illawarra Regional Aquaculture Development Strategy, a Sponge Development Project in Arnhem Land, a Northern Queensland Aquaculture Workshop, a Pandanus Park Aquaculture Project and the Kimberley Aboriginal Aquapack.

### **National Indigenous Forestry Strategy**

The National Indigenous Forestry Strategy is being developed to provide a national strategy and framework for encouraging greater Indigenous participation in the forest and wood products sector, to identify opportunities for Indigenous people to participate in the growth of Australia's forest and wood products sector, and to develop a means of support for Indigenous people to participate in these activities, especially where they promote the economic independence of Indigenous communities.

The outcomes sought for Indigenous communities are:

- improved economic and social independence through increased job opportunities in the forest and timber industry; and
- improved consultation processes in managing resources and developing policy.

### **National Landcare Program**

The National Landcare Program (NLP) seeks to engage industry and resource users, including community Landcare groups, in sustainable agriculture and Natural Resource Management (NRM) activities. Indigenous communities have a long history of engagement in projects funded through NLP.

NLP Community Support investments target local and regional activities consistent with regional NRM priorities. Funding for NLP Community Support projects that are being undertaken by Indigenous communities or have links to Indigenous communities or lands amounted to \$1.085 million for 11 projects in 2003-04 and \$1.621 million for 19 projects in 2004-05.

Projects funded under the NLP enhance employment opportunities for Indigenous people by providing education and training in NRM, assisting with the development of sustainable and productive enterprises managed by Indigenous communities and improving resource conditions and productivity on Indigenous managed lands.

Examples of currently funded projects include:

- Sustainability of agriculture on Indigenous managed lands near St George and Dirranbandi through targeted on-ground works in Queensland;
- Development of sustainable agriculture in Aboriginal lands in South Australia;
- Creation of small-scale enterprises based upon the utilisation of wildlife to achieve employment and natural resource management outcomes in the Northern Territory; and
- Implementation of sustainable productivity on a unique Aboriginal farming enterprise in Tasmania.

Under the national component of the NLP, \$200,000 per annum is being provided over the next three years to support the Indigenous Land Corporation's Indigenous Pastoral Program. The NLP funding will be used to expand the Program and will improve the management of Indigenous pastoral lands in the Northern Territory. This project will provide skills training in areas such as pastoral production practices and NRM and employment opportunities through training and the establishment of a mentoring program.

### **Natural Heritage Trust**

Under the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) program managed jointly by the Department of Environment and Heritage and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, there has been considerable action to improve Indigenous community opportunities and participation. One of the seven national objectives for regional Natural Resource Management (NRM) plan development is to "*Promote Indigenous community participation in planning and delivery of the Regional NRM outcomes*". Specific examples of Indigenous engagement in delivery of the NHT program include the Enhancing Indigenous Engagement initiative (\$1m) and the Indigenous Community development of Turtle and Dugong threatened species management (\$3.8m) projects.

The local small grants component of the NHT program, the Australian Government Envirofund, has funded approximately 4,700 projects totalling nearly \$70 million in six rounds of funding since 2002-03. About 4 per cent of those successful projects have been or are being undertaken by Indigenous groups.

In addition, there are multiple regional projects around Australia that have originated in and are managed by Indigenous communities. Regional NRM plans and investment strategies are reviewed for Indigenous consultation and participation before approval.

### **Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Indigenous Employment Opportunities**

The Department provides employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians, including the National Indigenous Cadetship Program, the Graduate Development Program and general recruitment processes.

The National Indigenous Cadetship Program (NICP) is administered through the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. The NICP supports Indigenous undergraduates by providing them with financial support, a twelve week work placement and full-time employment at the completion of their studies. Four Indigenous cadets were recruited in 2004 and it is anticipated a further three will be recruited in 2005. At the successful completion of their study, the Indigenous cadets will be encouraged to apply for this Department's Graduate Development Program (GDP).

The Department's GDP employs 30 – 40 tertiary graduates each year. The 2006 Graduate Recruitment Campaign has specifically targeted Indigenous students through promotional material, campus visits at university Indigenous centres and through the Indigenous media.