



SUBMISSION 27

CAPE YORK SUSTAINABLE FUTURES Inc.
Inquiry into Indigenous economic development
in Queensland and review of the Wild Rivers
(Environmental Management) Bill 2010

Submission to Parliament of Australia House of Representatives House Standing Committee on Economics

Inquiry into Indigenous economic development in Queensland and review of the Wild Rivers (Environmental Management) Bill 2010

Presented by Cape York Sustainable Futures





CAPE YORK SUSTAINABLE FUTURES Inc.
Inquiry into Indigenous economic development
in Queensland and review of the Wild Rivers
(Environmental Management) Bill 2010

BACKGROUND –CYSF POSITION STATEMENT ON WILD RIVERS

Cape York Sustainable Futures believes that there is already sufficient legislation in place to protect Cape York Peninsula's important conservation and environmental values. We do not agree that Wild Rivers legislation is necessary to protect these values.

Cape York Sustainable Futures suggests that no one is in a better position than the people of Cape York Peninsula to determine what is best for their region as they have been looking after their country and managing their land in some cases, for thousands of years.

There is no doubt that Cape York Peninsula residents would agree that there could be some areas of our region that may require some protection but we believe that "blanket listing" our rivers will impede sustainable livelihoods for our residents. At the same time we are concerned as to what the Government is trying to protect and suggest that it is nothing other than bowing to the green minority groups from outside of Cape York Peninsula.

We see the implementation of the Wild Rivers legislation and more particularly the codes that govern them as a huge impediment and deterrent to the development of future enterprises on Cape York. This along with no security of land tenure creates uncertainty among our residents. It should be recognised that without sustainable development opportunities there will be long term social and economic implications for the people of Cape York and its surrounds. Developing strong social infrastructure through the creation of a sustainable and strong economic base is the only way we can achieve a sustainable cohesive and empowered Cape York community.

People from outside the region are of the belief that tourism is the panacea for all development activity, community growth and future job creation on Cape York. This is definitely not the case and residents of the region want the same opportunities afforded the rest of the country. Some people may interpret the word development to mean large scale activity such as mining which we must point out is exempt from this legislation in certain areas.

Cape York Sustainable Futures believes that stewardship and ecosystem services concepts should be recognised and funds promptly provided to wild rivers landholders by the State of Queensland to assist landholders achieve the desired outcomes. Incentives for positive improvements in land management should also be made available.

In closing these are just some of the general feelings of CYSF members who come from across Cape York Peninsula and from all walks of life (Indigenous and non-Indigenous). Other major concerns that Cape York people have with the Wild Rivers legislation and its implementation are:

- The process was rushed and the legislation was poorly drafted.
- Communication was nonexistent
- What communication there was consisted of government people trying to sell the unsellable with no thought to how the legislation would affect the people of the region
- At no time did any government official take into account any objection, concern or protest about the legislation
- The so called consultation consisted of this is what we are going to do and you can like it or lump it
- The aspirations of traditional owners, pastoralists, local governments and the community in general was ignored



CAPE YORK SUSTAINABLE FUTURES Inc.
Inquiry into Indigenous economic development
in Queensland and review of the Wild Rivers
(Environmental Management) Bill 2010

CAPE YORK PENINSULA OVERVIEW

Cape York Peninsula is home for 15,000 people, almost three quarters of whom are Indigenous Australians. Their future, their concerns and aspirations must be an integral part of future planning, alongside issues of environmental and heritage conservation. These interests, human and environmental, should not be seen as being conflicting or incompatible.

Despite the existence of cattle grazing for around 150 years, Cape York Peninsula has a well earned reputation as a 'pristine wilderness', corroborating that the region has been exceptionally well managed for several thousand years. We not only have Wild Rivers legislation but more recently a proposed nomination of Cape York Peninsula for World Heritage status. This creates uncertainty amongst our residents, restricts their economic viability causing social stress.

The preservation and conservation of Cape York Peninsula's environmental and heritage values is the lynch pin of World Heritage focus. However communities of people cannot be 'preserved'. On Cape York Peninsula we are dealing with dynamic and changing societies endeavouring to cope with the trials and pressures of the 21st Century. The right of the 15,000 residents to a positive and productive future on Cape York Peninsula and enhanced liveability of their communities are issues of social justice which cannot be disregarded.

The regional economy of Cape York Peninsula relies on primary industries and resources. Mining, cattle grazing, fishing and cropping are the main private sector industries. The public sector is the dominant employer via public administration, defence and community services. Tourism is perceived as an increasingly important source for sustainable economic development with significant investment by the Queensland Government in the Cape York Peninsula and Torres Tourism Development Action Plan 2008, which has initiated a number of tourism proposals and initiatives but with no money available for implementation.

Transport is a key component and major determinant of economic development on Cape York. Reliable, adequate, efficient and consistent transport systems are essential for significant business and industry development. Because the Wet Season closes roads for up to 4 months each year, Cape York relies heavily on air and sea freight and although the Peninsula Development Road is maintained by the Department of Transport and Main Roads, repairs wait upon the return of the dry. **This means that all economic activity including tourism in Cape York Peninsula is limited to May through to October each and every year.**

Provision of infrastructure is a major challenge, and offers an immediate opportunity for investment. The majority of Cape York's communities rely on major diesel power generation systems with only the townships in the far south-east of the region connected to grid power.

Mobile phone and internet coverage is also accessible in most settled areas of the Cape. Telstra 'Next G' network has coverage within proximity of most towns and beyond that, satellite phones are necessary due to the remoteness created by vast uninhabited distances.

Cape York is overlaid by a legislative framework of Acts and Regulations that place clear guidelines on development. Existing and pending legislation are important control mechanisms, but does sometimes form significant hurdles to regional development.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The future significance of Cape York Peninsula to the Australian and international community lies in ongoing and successful custody and stewardship of its environmental and heritage values while at the same time providing for the economic and social wellbeing of Cape York Peninsula residents.

Cape York Sustainable Futures (CYSF) recognises that the sustainable future of the region demands a strategically planned and coordinated approach to investment compatible with the retention of its environmental and cultural values. This is in accordance with this organisation's stated objectives.

CAPE YORK SUSTAINABLE FUTURES VISION STATEMENT

Cape York Sustainable Futures will foster:

- An ecologically, economically and culturally sustainable environment in Cape York Peninsula;
- A cohesive viable community with improved quality of life for residents, and,
- Broad promotion and representation of the priorities and values of Cape York Peninsula

In late 2010 CYSF produced an Investment Prospectus which identifies potential avenues for sustainable development on the Peninsula which would be compatible with environmental and heritage imperatives. Small business was a key area of growth identified for the region, particularly activities associated with service industries, accommodation and tourism.

Cape York has significant national interest - mineral resources, pristine environment, indigenous culture, quarantine buffers and sustainable development opportunities e.g. eco-tourism, livestock, horticulture, forestry, arts and craft.

Over the years a multitude of reports and studies have been undertaken on Cape York Peninsula but none of them have been implemented. There are various reasons ranging from constraints, disagreement on how to address some of the issues, and the lack of capacity on ground.

Some of the serious impediments are:

- Uncertainty surrounding Land Tenure
- Access - all roads north of Laura are unsealed (unusable in wet season).
- High Freight and travel costs
- Wild Rivers, other legislation and environmental management issues.



CAPE YORK SUSTAINABLE FUTURES Inc.
Inquiry into Indigenous economic development
in Queensland and review of the Wild Rivers
(Environmental Management) Bill 2010

These are difficult issues and numerous investments and jobs are being thwarted as a result. In support of this argument several reports are attached. These are:

- CYP Economic & Infrastructure Framework Project – Kleinhardt Business Consultants Nov 2007
- Cape York Indigenous Employment Strategy Kleinhardt & Business Mapping Solutions Nov 2005
- New Horizons & Opportunities Cape York Peninsula – CYSF Sept 2010
- Cape York World Heritage Discussion Paper prepared for CYSF – EcoSustainAbility Nov 2010
- CYSF Wild Rivers Submission to the Queensland Government – Nov 2008

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Work is well under way within our office to promote the implementation of our Investment Prospectus and this includes the following:

- A best practice framework for land tenure, environment and biosecurity - other projects flow once a framework is in place.
- Improved road and aviation access.
- An 'Open for Business' approach, including investment promotion and a strong eco-tourism campaign based around the Cape's unique assets and wilderness aspects.
- Collaboration with Atherton Tableland and Cairns on agrifood and tourism supply chains.
- Trade and investment opportunities with PNG and possibly Pacific Island nations.
- Regular federal/state officials tours.
- Annual federal/state ministers and MPs tour.
- The development of a Cape York Champions program
- OECD Expert Study Group – to identify best practice approaches.

There are some major changes required in order to obtain some real economic development outcomes for Cape York Peninsula and these include land tenure issues being finalised to include 99 year lease options. This is to enable home ownership to occur and also give people access to bank finance.

The present population is not sustained by internal economic activity with a major proportion of the population reliant on welfare, unemployed or underemployed and with many small businesses barely viable.

Our recent investment document shows that there are development opportunities in:

- Accommodation
- Agribusiness
- Airport Upgrades
- Feral Animal Management
- Marina Facilities

With some specific opportunities being:

- A marina at Weipa



CAPE YORK SUSTAINABLE FUTURES Inc.
Inquiry into Indigenous economic development
in Queensland and review of the Wild Rivers
(Environmental Management) Bill 2010

- solar and windfarms
- eco-lodges
- super yacht tours
- timber and biofuel plantations
- A feral animal abbatoir
- tropical & exotic fruit production
- a creative arts centre
- environmental and eco-system services
- A Cape York Brand

Cape York needs a diversified economy in order to prosper and create wealth amongst its residents however there needs to be a ground up approach with ownership of ideas resting in the community. There are many layers of legislation affecting land use in Cape York Peninsula and protecting Cape York Peninsula's important conservation and environmental values without the added complexity of the Wild Rivers Act.

CYPLUS's Economic Vision for Cape York still applies today. Whilst there has been much achievement toward the vision, with major initiatives such as the upgrading of roads and tenure resolution, there is still a long way to go.

Cape York Sustainable Futures supports the Anglican Church position statement and their report completed in September 2010.