

Protecting Rivers, Supporting Communities

A report series by The Wilderness Society for the House of Representatives Economics Committee's *Inquiry into issues affecting Indigenous economic development in Queensland and review of the Wild Rivers (Environmental Management) Bill 2010*

Cape York Peninsula Policy Settings

Report 4 of 6 – Feb 2011



Summary

This report provides an overview of the relevant policy settings for Cape York Peninsula, including key legislation and agreements that have sought to resolve long-standing tensions and competing visions over the future of the region. A brief summary of each section of this report is as follows:

Reconciling Competing Visions: Reconciling competing visions for land use and sustainable development on Cape York Peninsula has occupied the minds of the local community, policy makers and decision makers since the mid 1980's. There is now in place considerable dedicated enabling legislation and policy frameworks specific to Cape York Peninsula at the state level to support sustainable development, conservation and land justice.

Cape York Heads of Agreement: The Cape York Heads of Agreement (Heads of Agreement) was signed by conservation, Indigenous and pastoral parties in 1996 and by the Queensland Government in 2001. It addressed issues of economic development, resolution of native title issues, Indigenous advancement and conservation in the region.

Cape York Peninsula Heritage Act 2007: The Act was designed to resolve the problems of the Cape York Heads of Agreement and ongoing conflict surrounding Wild Rivers and laws controlling land clearing. The Act facilitates both the advancement of work towards recognising and protecting the region's World Heritage values, and also the capacity to undertake sustainable economic activities in support of Indigenous development. Importantly, the Act confirmed the protection of Native Title rights in Wild River declarations, facilitated special Indigenous water reserves, and created a process for Indigenous Community Use Areas to advance Indigenous economic development.

Cape York Tenure Resolution: Created in 2004, the Cape York Tenure Resolution Group process seeks to deliver both land return (and land justice) to Cape York Traditional Owners and the creation of new National Parks (Cape York Peninsula Aboriginal Land) to protect high conservation value areas in the region. So far 1,546,849 hectares of land have been acquired for conservation and cultural outcomes since 1994, with 575,000 hectares of new National Parks created, and 617,000 hectares converted to Aboriginal tenure (of which 90,000 hectares is subject to a nature refuge agreement) through the Tenure Resolution Group process.

Other Legislation and Policy: There are several other pieces of other legislation which either relates to or focus exclusively on Cape York Peninsula. These include: the *Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008*; the *Commonwealth Aluminium Corporation Pty. Limited Agreement Act 1957* and the *Alcan Queensland Pty. Limited Agreement Act 1965*; a suite of welfare reform, education and social policy initiatives, and alcohol management laws. In addition, the Queensland and Commonwealth Governments provide significant public funding to the Cape York Institute and Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation to undertake a range of related activities.

How this report relates to the Terms of Reference of the Inquiry

This report addresses the following components of the Terms of Reference:

- [The Committee should consider:] existing regulation, legislation in relation to mining and other relevant legislation including the *Wild Rivers Act (Qld) 2005* and the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*
- [The Committee should consider:] options for facilitating economic development for the benefit of Indigenous people and the protection of the environmental values of undisturbed river systems.
- [The inquiry should pay particular attention to the following:] The nature and extent of current barriers to economic development and land use by people, whether Indigenous or non-Indigenous, including those involved in the mining, pastoral, tourism, cultural heritage and environmental management
- [The inquiry should pay particular attention to the following:] Options for overcoming or reducing those barriers and better facilitating sustainable economic development, especially where that development involves Indigenous people
- [The inquiry should pay particular attention to the following:] The impact of existing environmental regulation, legislation in relation to mining and other relevant legislation on the exercise of native title rights and on the national operation of the native title regime and the impact which legislation in the form of the *Wild Rivers (Environmental Management) Bill 2010* would have on these matters

Reconciling Competing Visions

The reconciliation of competing visions for land use and sustainable development on Cape York Peninsula has occupied the minds of the local community, stakeholders, policy makers and decision makers since the mid 1980's, with a range of initiatives being developed seeking to address land use and ownership, poverty and disadvantage, education and health, environmental protection and economic development. This has intensified over the last five years or so, with Government's investing significant public funding, legislative responses and policy effort aimed at supporting local communities and addressing major challenges.

In the context of the current Parliamentary Inquiry there may be a perception that what the Cape needs is a set of dedicated legislative and/or policy instruments to resolve the vast array of complex and competing issues. The reality is that there are already considerable dedicated enabling legislation and policy frameworks specific to Cape York Peninsula at the state level to support sustainable development, conservation and land justice. It is important to have a clear understanding of what legislation, policy and agreements already exist when it comes to Cape York Peninsula, as there have been numerous attempts to address major policy challenges as well as mediate competing agendas and resolve policy conflict.

However, there are outstanding steps in fully realising the goals and potential of some of these, including ensuring they are fully implemented and supported (both in principle and policy) by the Federal and Queensland Governments and the regional Indigenous organisations, who are publicly funded to deliver Cape York Peninsula policy and land use initiatives. And as Report 5 of this submission indicates, there is an absence of a clear sustainable economic plan for Cape York Peninsula as a remote region where 'mainstream' markets and economic conditions do not generally exist.

Cape York Heads of Agreement

The first major attempt at reconciling competing visions for Cape York Peninsula was the Cape York Heads of Agreement (Heads of Agreement), signed in February 1996 by the Cape York Land Council, the Peninsula Regional Council of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, the Cattlemen's Union of Australia, the Australian Conservation Foundation and The Wilderness Society, with the Queensland Government becoming a party in 2001.

This was developed in response to escalating conflict over the future of region, as well as some emerging areas of common interest between various interests. Among these triggers include the pastoral sector's approach to native title rights and conservation, and questions of how conservation and Indigenous land justice would coexist. The latter was particularly relevant on the back of highly successful cooperative work from Indigenous and conservation groups (including the Cape York Land Council and The Wilderness Society) to secure the protection of Indigenous homelands for the dual purpose of conservation and return to Traditional Owners.

The Heads of Agreement was also developed in tandem with a major land use planning process, the Cape York Peninsula Land Use Study/Strategy (CYPLUS), overseen by the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments and the local community. This included policy development on land tenure reform, and emergent recognition of the extensive World Heritage values (natural and cultural) present on Cape York Peninsula (see Abrahams et al 1995).

The extraordinary nature of Cape York Peninsula

Cape York Peninsula is home to one third of Australia's mammal species; a quarter of the frog and reptile species; and half of the country's known bird species. Its intact landscapes and connected habitats include tropical rainforest, wild rivers, open forest and woodlands, grasslands, white sand dune country, mangroves, and fringing coral reefs. For this reason the protection and management of this special region has been a central consideration in the Cape York Peninsula Land Use Study/Strategy, and the Cape York Peninsula Heads of Agreement.

"...there are already considerable dedicated enabling legislation and policy frameworks specific to Cape York Peninsula at the state level to support sustainable development, conservation and land justice."

The core principles negotiated in the Heads of Agreement were:

- Agreement between parties to work together and with Governments to reach mutually beneficial outcomes;
- Recognition that competition over land use and resolution of native title issues would best be achieved through goodwill negotiations, rather than litigation;
- Recognition of the outstanding natural and cultural conservation values of the region, including World Heritage values, and the need to ensure protection of these values; and
- Recognition of the need for sustainable development opportunities.

It is clear that the Heads of Agreement parties understood that environmental protection was a primary responsibility of Government:

“The parties acknowledge that there exist on Cape York Peninsula, areas of significant conservation and heritage value encompassing environmental, historical and cultural features, the protection of which is the responsibility of State and Federal Governments in conjunction with the parties” (Clause 3)

And that this would lead to the identification and protection of areas of national and international significance:

“The parties agree that areas of high conservation and cultural value shall be identified by a regional assessment process according to objective national and international criteria. There shall be an independent review acceptable to all parties in the case of dispute as to whether the values are consistent with the criteria. Where such areas are identified, the landholder shall enter into appropriate agreements to protect the area under State or Commonwealth provision which may include World Heritage listing. As part of such agreements, funds shall be provided for management of the area, monitoring of agreements and equitable economic and social adjustment.” (Clause 13)

In 2001, the Queensland Government commissioned a report in response to clause 13 of the Heads of Agreement. The commissioning of this report was endorsed and supported by the parties to the Agreement. This report, *The Natural Heritage Significance of Cape York Peninsula* (Mackey et al 2001), identified the health and relationship between the rivers, groundwater and wetlands of Cape York Peninsula as being key to maintaining the ecological integrity of the region and as a value of outstanding conservation significance. The identification and protection of the outstanding conservation significance of the vast network of river systems on Cape York Peninsula was one key recommendation of the report.

Negotiations Break Down

From 1996, parties to the Heads of Agreement met regularly to discuss progress in the implementation of the principles and the responses of both the Queensland and Commonwealth Governments to the Agreement. The decision in 2001 of the Queensland Government to become a formal party to the Heads of Agreement heralded an era of high level negotiations between the parties in support of the implementation of the principles of the Agreement. These negotiations were facilitated by Mr Rick Farley, who had assisted the negotiation of the original Heads of Agreement in 1996.

“The negotiations made some progress but were bedevilled by a lack of clear and agreed implementation agenda, and disagreement between the parties about fundamental issues, in particular opposition by pastoral interests for the control and regulation of broad scale land clearing across key regions on Cape York Peninsula.”

The negotiations made some progress but were bedevilled by a lack of clear and agreed implementation agenda, and disagreement between the parties about fundamental issues, in particular opposition by pastoral interests for the control and regulation of broad scale land clearing across key regions on Cape York Peninsula. The negotiations formally broke down when Mr Noel Pearson stormed out of a meeting of the non-government parties to the Agreement in response to the pastoral representative’s failure to support a compromise position on land clearing issues.

As a result of this breakdown, the Queensland Government reconstituted a negotiation forum which included three Government Ministers, and representatives of conservation groups (Australian Conservation Foundation and The Wilderness Society) and Indigenous groups (Cape York Land Council and the Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation). These groups formed the Cape York Tenure Resolution Implementation Group (explained later in this report).

Following the 2004 Queensland Election, the Tenure Resolution Group discussed Queensland Government policy initiatives including the state wide ban of broad scale land clearing of remnant vegetation, and the protection of Wild Rivers.

However, by 2006, the Cape York Land Council and Balkanu had commenced a public campaign against the Wild Rivers and land clearing initiatives. In response, the Queensland Government convened a new round of negotiations between the parties, and expanded to include mining and pastoral interests, and local government, to resolve these outstanding issues. This led to the development of the *Cape York Peninsula Heritage Act 2007*.

Cape York Peninsula Heritage Act 2007

The Cape York Peninsula Heritage Act 2007 (Heritage Act) was developed to resolve the problems that had plagued the implementation of the Heads of Agreement. The negotiations were initially proposed by Noel Pearson and supported by conservation groups. These negotiations involved a series of bilateral negotiations between competing interests. In a sense, its development represented a dramatic evolution of the Heads of Agreement, and created an amended set of processes for the negotiation and implementation of conservation and development on Cape York Peninsula.

“This new legislative framework is a step in the right direction. It provides indigenous communities with the key to the door when it comes to finding real jobs and pursuing enterprise” – Noel Pearson, 2007

The formulation of the legislation was driven by the former Director-General of the Premier’s Department in Queensland, Ross Rolfe, and involved full participation of the Cape York Land Council, Balkanu and Noel Pearson, mining and pastoral interests, and The Wilderness Society and the Australian Conservation Foundation. It was a negotiated outcome, based on a series of bilateral dialogues and consultations, and subsequent agreement.

The Cape York Peninsula Heritage Act 2007

The objects of the Heritage Act are:

- (a) to identify significant natural and cultural values of Cape York Peninsula;
- (b) to provide for cooperative management, protection and ecologically sustainable use of land, including pastoral land, in the Cape York Peninsula Region;
- (c) to recognise the economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations of indigenous communities in relation to land use in the Cape York Peninsula Region; and
- (d) to recognise the contribution of the pastoral industry in the Cape York Peninsula Region to the economy and land management in the region.

These objects are to be achieved primarily by providing for:

- (a) the declaration of areas of international conservation significance;
- (b) the cooperative involvement of landholders in the management of the natural and cultural values of Cape York Peninsula;
- (c) the continuance of an environmentally sustainable pastoral industry as a form of land use in the Cape York Peninsula Region;
- (d) the declaration of indigenous community use areas in which indigenous communities may undertake appropriate economic activities; and
- (e) the establishment of committees to advise the environment Minister and vegetation needs management Minister about particular matters under this Act.

The Heritage Act led to amendments:

- to the *Vegetation Management Act 1999* concerning tree clearing for Indigenous communities;
- to the *Wild Rivers Act 2005* to clarify and confirm that the Act is not intended to affect native title;
- to the *Water Act 2000* to provide for specific Indigenous water reserves in declared Wild River areas; and
- to the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* regarding the creation of a model of National Park tenure and management on Cape York Peninsula founded in Aboriginal ownership of the land.

Indigenous Community Use Areas

The Heritage Act legislates a process to allow some areas of Cape York Peninsula to be declared “Indigenous Community Use Areas” (ICUAs), following an assessment and a decision by the Minister responsible for native vegetation management (currently the Minister for Natural Resources and Water). This measure was an important initiative to enable Indigenous development, and a major concession by conservation groups regarding vegetation management in Queensland. It was designed to work in combination with the other sustainable development features of the Heritage Act, and the Indigenous water reserves provided via Wild River declarations – the first statutory Indigenous water reserves in the country.

“Apart from these very important ecological and sensible parameters, there is nothing in the Heritage Act that stops or hinders development on Cape York Peninsula outside of Areas of International Conservation Significance.”

ICUAs may involve vegetation clearing, subject to a special Cape York Peninsula code under the *Vegetation Management Act 1999*. The Heritage Act outlines the ICUA process: the applicants for a development in an ICUA must show that allowable vegetation clearing is necessary and that alternative locations are not available. Any proposed clearing for development must also be “of a minor nature” (such as small area for farming), and must “not have a significant impact on the natural values of the area”. There are specific restrictions on the vegetation clearing if it involves an “endangered” regional ecosystem, an “of concern” regional ecosystem, or planting a high risk species or trees to make woodchips for export.

Apart from these very important ecological and sustainability parameters, there is nothing in the Heritage Act that stops or hinders development on Cape York Peninsula outside of Areas of International Conservation Significance (see below). The importance of this agreed initiative is that it constructed a framework for genuinely sustainable development, one that also preserves the extraordinary natural and cultural values of the region, which alone are the basis for significant economic opportunities. It clearly advanced this framework in a context of reconciling various rights and interests.

Areas of International Conservation Significance

The concept of “Areas of International Conservation Significance” (AICS) under the Heritage Act was designed to acknowledge that Cape York Peninsula contains extensive and world class natural and cultural values, which should be assessed under World Heritage criteria and declared spatially, as a precursor to a nomination for World Heritage listing of the region. AICS provisions were based on an expectation of World Heritage nomination processes being advanced. The provisions in the Act include the opportunity for pastoral lease holders to extend their lease to 75 years if they agree to become part of the AICS (the maximum lease term is currently 50 years).

Special Committees

The Heritage Act established two Committees, the Cape York Peninsula Scientific and Cultural Advisory Committee (SCAC), and the Cape York Peninsula Regional Advisory Committee (RAC - made up of 50% Indigenous interests, as well mining, agricultural, conservation and local government representatives), to provide advice to the Queensland Government on matters arising from the Act.

To date, the bulk of the work undertaken by these Committees has concerned the AICS process, and how this relates to the development of a World Heritage nomination (including the placing of Cape York Peninsula on the National Heritage Register, and the tentative list for World Heritage). This work is now being conducted under the auspices of a SCAC and RAC endorsed joint Commonwealth and State Government “road map” for progressing World Heritage.

Other business discussed by the Committees includes matters related to ICUAs. However, it remains unclear how advanced any such ICUA proposal is, and what effort (if any) has been put into formalising the necessary approval processes by those closely connected to the Heritage Act negotiations and final agreements, such as the Cape York Land Council or Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation, in support of local Indigenous communities.

Aboriginal-owned National Parks and Joint Management

A breakthrough reform enabled by the Heritage Act is the negotiation and creation of a new form of National Park - one with an underlying Aboriginal land tenure and guarantee of joint management arrangements between the relevant Traditional Owners and the Queensland Government. This means that all new National Parks created on Cape York Peninsula will have joint management arrangements. The Queensland Government is also now going through a process of converting existing National Parks on the Cape to this more progressive, and Indigenous-centred form of protected area.

An Intended Settlement to Competing Agendas for Cape York Peninsula

The Heritage Act delivered the potential for sustainable development and conservation for a region of international significance, and a sensible political compromise (for example, conservation groups agreed to relaxing vegetation-clearing laws in certain areas; Indigenous leaders accepted that Wild River nominations on Cape York Peninsula would proceed). It was intended by the parties that the legislation represent a settlement of competing agendas for Cape York Peninsula as first identified through the Heads of Agreement and compounded by the Wild Rivers debate.

“The original wild rivers legislation that threatened to frustrate indigenous economic development will be amended to protect native title rights and interests and to provide for mandatory water allocations for indigenous communities in each of the catchments affected by a wild river declaration” – Noel Pearson, 2007

The Wilderness Society welcomed the Cape York Peninsula Heritage Bill’s introduction, saying it:

“(The Bill provides) formal recognition of Native Title in the Wild Rivers Act; and an Indigenous economic and employment package, including confirmation of Indigenous ranger positions and support for Indigenous arts, culture and tourism enterprises. Achieving agreement on conservation and ecologically sustainable land use on Cape York has long been the objective of The Wilderness Society. Today’s announcement is a breakthrough that provides a new cooperative framework for the current and future needs of the region....”

Similarly, Noel Pearson in an opinion piece for The Australian at the time said,

“...the Cape York Peninsula Heritage Bill ... represents our best opportunity to strike a balance between conservation and development for the future of this region. This law has the potential to ease Cape York people’s struggle to reconcile conservation and development...”

“The new law provides for joint management of Cape York’s national parks between the state Government and the traditional owners. The original wild rivers legislation that threatened to frustrate indigenous economic development will be amended to protect native title rights and interests and to provide for mandatory water allocations for indigenous communities in each of the catchments affected by a wild river declaration. Indigenous communities will be able to make applications for vegetation clearing on Aboriginal land for sustainable agriculture, aquaculture and animal husbandry.

“This new legislative framework is a step in the right direction. It provides indigenous communities with the key to the door when it comes to finding real jobs and pursuing enterprise.” (Pearson 2007)

Indeed, the finalisation of the bill and its introduction was welcomed by representatives of Indigenous, mining, pastoral and conservation interests and the Queensland Government as a breakthrough and the best opportunity to resolve growing conflict around Wild Rivers and development issues.



Press conference at tabling of the *Cape York Peninsula Heritage Bill*, 7th June, 2007. Next to then Premier Peter Beattie are Noel Pearson (left) and Lyndon Schneiders from The Wilderness Society (right). Also present are several Queensland Government Ministers and MPs, Gerhardt Pearson (Balkanu), Richie Ah Mat (Cape York Land Council), the Director-General of the Department of Premiers and Cabinet, Anthony Esposito (The Wilderness Society) and representatives of the Queensland Resources Council and AgForce.

In response to recent media commentary of Wild Rivers, former Premier Beattie published an article on the Cape York Peninsula Heritage Act negotiations, which stressed that:

“The broad principles of this legislation were developed in consultation with the Cape York Land Council, the Wilderness Society, Agforce and the Queensland Resources Council. The act provides for the transfer of underlying ownership of existing national parks to traditional owners, a relaxation of restrictions on land clearing to facilitate development on indigenous land around communities and a sound basis for managing any future area identified for World Heritage nomination.”

“With respect to wild rivers, the new act mandated that water allocations be made available “for the purpose of helping indigenous communities achieve their economic and social aspirations”. It also confirmed that the Wild Rivers Act 2007 does not affect or override native title rights nor does it control the exercise of those rights. In other words, my government was committed to indigenous economic development in the Cape in a balanced and environmentally sustainable way.” (Beattie 2010)

Outstanding implementation issues with the Heritage Act

The Heritage Act facilitates both the advancement of work towards recognising and protecting the region’s World Heritage values, and also the capacity to undertake sustainable economic activities in support of Indigenous development. Work is now underway, albeit slowly, to formalise the recognition of AICS on Cape York Peninsula, and progress a World Heritage nomination development roadmap.

Other outstanding tasks include completing the ICUA code, and government and regional organisations’ facilitation of economic activities, which were part of the package.

Cape York Tenure Resolution

The land tenure reform process for Cape York Peninsula, which became the Cape York Peninsula Tenure Resolution Implementation Group initiative, emerged from the Heads of Agreement. Created in 2004, the Tenure Resolution Group process seeks to deliver both land return (and land justice) to Cape York Traditional Owners and the creation of new National Parks (with underlying Aboriginal tenure) to protect high conservation value areas on the Cape. It essentially evolved from former Queensland Premier Wayne Goss’ “east coast wilderness zone”, which began as compulsory land acquisitions and later became a voluntary program.

Properties are purchased or acquired voluntarily, and Traditional Owner consultations and Indigenous Land Use Agreements under the *Native Title Act 1993* are used to convert the tenure of the land on a roughly 50% Aboriginal Freehold, 50% Aboriginal owned and jointly managed National Parks basis. Land Trusts are established and Indigenous Management Agreements created to assist with ownership and management issues. This model will also be applied to all the existing National Parks in Cape York Peninsula resulting in a vast, Aboriginal-owned conservation estate.

The Tenure Resolution Group group is made up of three Queensland Government Ministers, Cape York Land Council, Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation, the Wilderness Society and the Australian Conservation Foundation.

Key achievements of the Tenure Resolution Group:

The Tenure Resolution Group process on Cape York Peninsula is unparalleled anywhere in Australia. Nowhere has there been such a significant and successful program of land return to Traditional Owners combined with conservation outcomes. The key achievements of the process are below (oringal property names are given with approximate area of land):

- Aug 2005: Marina Plains - 6,800 ha (950 ha Aboriginal freehold land; 5,900 ha extension to Lakefield National Park)
- Dec 2005: Kalpowar - 400,000 ha (200,000 ha Aboriginal freehold land; 200,000ha new Jack River National Park)
- Aug 2006: Green Hills - 9,700 ha (1,700 ha Aboriginal land; 8,800 ha new Annan River National Park)
- Nov 2006: Melsonby - 19,700 ha (10,710 ha Aboriginal freehold land; 8,990 ha new Melsonby (Gaarraay) National Park)
- July 2008: Running Creek and Lilyvale - 110,500 ha (74,940 ha Aboriginal freehold land; 35,560 ha new Lama Lama Aboriginal National Park)
- Aug 2008: McIlwraith and Mt Croll - 375,000 ha (856 ha Aboriginal freehold title; 160,000 ha new Kulla (McIlwraith Range) Aboriginal National Park)
- Oct 2009: Mitchell-Alice Rivers National Park - 38,000 ha (38,000 ha conversion to new Errk Oykangand Aboriginal National Park)
- May 2010: Kalinga and Mulkay - 79,500 ha (37,00 Aboriginal freehold land; 42,500 conversion to new Alwal Aboriginal National Park)
- Oct 2010: Mungkan Kaanju National Park - 457,000 ha (75,500 ha Aboriginal freehold land (via excision of National Park, with nature refuge covering 32,200 ha); conversion of entire area to Aboriginal National Park)
- There are many additional properties to be returned to Traditional Owners as part of the process, including a number of existing National Parks due for conversion into Aboriginal National Parks in the coming years.
- **In total 1,546,849 hectares of land have been acquired for conservation and cultural outcomes since 1994, with 575,000 hectares of new National Parks created, and 617,000 hectares converted to Aboriginal tenure (of which 90,000 hectares is subject to a nature refuge agreement) through the Tenure Resolution Group process**

Other Legislation and Policy

There are several other pieces of other legislation which either relate to or focus exclusively on Cape York Peninsula. These include:

- *The Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008*, which established the Family Responsibilities Commission. It operates in the Cape York Peninsula communities of Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge and is an initiative of the Queensland and Australian Governments and the Cape York Institute
- *The Commonwealth Aluminium Corporation Pty. Limited Agreement Act 1957* and the *Alcan Queensland Pty. Limited Agreement Act 1965*. These co-called “Special Agreement Acts” grant extraordinary rights to resources in certain parts of Cape York Peninsula, including almost unrestricted allocation of water including from river systems declared under the Wild Rivers Act 2005.
- A suite of welfare reform, education and social policy initiatives, largely driven by the Queensland and Australian Governments and the Cape York Institute
- Significant public funding packages to the Cape York Institute and Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation to undertake a range of activities, presumably including the facilitation and promotion of sustainable economic development in the region, although it is unclear what has actually been achieved or delivered in relation to sustainable economic development plans, projects, or businesses.

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Wild Rivers Act 2005

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Front page image: Fruit Bat Falls on Cape York Peninsula, by Kerry Trapnell.
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