



Australian Government
Indigenous Land Corporation

23 May 2005

Mr Ian Dundas
 Secretary
 Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
 House of Representatives
 Parliament House
 CANBERRA ACT 2600

Secretary:*Rebecca*.....

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
 STANDING COMMITTEE ON
 AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES
 AND FORESTRY

Dear Mr Dundas

I refer to the Committee's inquiry into rural skills training and research. The Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC) is pleased to make the following submission to the Committee's inquiry.

1. Legislative and Policy Framework

Under s.191B of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act 2005* ('the Act'), the ILC is required to assist Indigenous people to acquire land and manage Indigenous-held land for the purpose of delivering cultural, social, environmental and economic benefits to Indigenous people. The ILC views the development of the capacity of Indigenous land owners as central to achieving this statutory purpose.

One of the key principles which form the basis of the ILC's national strategy is that the ILC will operate to ensure that the capacity of Indigenous land owners and managers is of a high standard so that they are able to achieve sustainable benefits from land ownership and management. Many ILC purchased properties and other Indigenous-held land are in rural or remote areas and have traditionally been used for agricultural purposes. Therefore, the ILC is keenly interested in the adequacy of education and training available in the agricultural sector.

The ILC's land acquisition and management programs require applicants to demonstrate that they have the capacity to achieve their aspirations. When the ILC acquires land, the ILC retains title and applicants are asked to enter into a lease. The lease sets out a staged work plan, which includes ongoing capacity development activities and the refinement and implementation of a property management plan. Grant of the land to the applicants is dependent on the achievement of negotiated milestones and successful completion of the work plan. The land management application process similarly requires applicants to enter into a land management agreement that includes a detailed work plan and

reporting requirements. These mechanisms ensure that measures to enhance the capacity of Indigenous land owners are integrated into the ILC's funding programs.

2. The availability and adequacy of education and research services in the agriculture sector, including access to vocational training and pathways from vocational education and training to tertiary education and work

Barriers to Indigenous people accessing mainstream education and training

Indigenous students face particular barriers to enrolment and successful completion of tertiary education such as courses offered through agricultural colleges. These include:

- the difficulty some Indigenous students experience being away from their community;
- the financial burden of attending college;
- Indigenous students not successfully completing base level qualifications which are a requirement for entry to higher education;
- health and other community-centred issues;
- difficulties in adapting to the cultural environment of colleges;
- the limited mentoring and counselling services available to Indigenous students;
- the difficulty in establishing pathways between school, the vocational education and training sector and tertiary education;
- the lack of partnerships between communities and corporate and private landholders that would provide support for students.

Similar social and cultural barriers have historically inhibited the access of Indigenous land owners to mainstream vocational education and extension programs. In addition, Indigenous land owners often have a raft of family and community responsibilities that limit their capacity to devote time and resources to undertaking training or extension activities.

There are a number of complex issues to be addressed in developing appropriate training and education packages for Indigenous land owners. These include:

- the remote location of many groups who require training and education;
- the limited numbers of students;
- the limited number of skilled trainers who are also able to deliver programs in a culturally appropriate manner;
- that English is the second or third language of some Indigenous land owners;
- the need of many Indigenous students to stay in their local area; and
- lack of access to resources including equipment required for training purposes, computers, the internet and local libraries.

In addition, the ownership of the vast majority of Indigenous lands is through Indigenous community organisations. This means that those managing this land are subject to a range of different governance and managerial regimes that do not

apply to those managing land held individually or through mainstream corporate structures. As a result, decision-making in relation to Indigenous lands is likely to be more complex, occur more slowly and be driven by a broader agenda than simply making the most economically productive use of land. Education, training and extension services provided to Indigenous land owners need to reflect these complexities and equip Indigenous land owners to deal with these issues.

In terms of pathways from vocational education and training to tertiary education, a key issue for Indigenous land holders is the shortage of qualified people within Indigenous communities. Having undertaken basic vocational training individuals are often so desperately needed in their communities (often on an unpaid basis) that they are unable to pursue further tertiary education.

Agreements with FarmBis

The ILC has been working with other agencies to address these issues and the general lack of appropriate training available to Indigenous land owners. In South Australia, the Northern Territory and Victoria, the ILC has formal agreements with FarmBis (Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry) to finance the training of Indigenous farmers in business management and land managers in natural resource management. In South Australia alone, over 300 Indigenous land managers have participated in formal training through this partnership. ILC land management funds provide the contribution sought from FarmBis participants. The ILC has also worked with other agencies to ensure that corporate governance training is provided to Indigenous land owning groups.

Proposed Indigenous Pastoralists Training Centre

The ILC proposes to establish an Indigenous Pastoralists Training Centre on Roebuck Plains Station near Broome and has recently undertaken a scoping study in relation to this proposed project. The overall finding of the scoping study is that there are sound reasons for the ILC to proceed with the concept. In particular there is:

- wide spread support from potential stakeholders for the concept of an Indigenous training facility providing short-term, live-in facilities catering to the needs of the pastoral and other land based industries;
- apparent demand for practical on-property training facilities from a range of interests including schools, Broome TAFE, Kullari (Broome) Community Development and Employment Project (CDEP), Broome prison, Indigenous training providers and Indigenous and non-Indigenous landowners;
- an opportunity for the ILC to deliver direct benefits to Indigenous people including training, employment, employment assistance, life and work ready skills and school to work transition; and

- interest from Indigenous and non-Indigenous employment services to assist successful graduates to secure employment in the pastoral and land-related industries.

Suggestions to improve Indigenous peoples' access to mainstream services

The following suggestions are offered to improve Indigenous peoples' access to mainstream rural training, education and extension services:

- Indigenous people should, where possible, be involved in the design and delivery of extension, training and education services to Indigenous land owners so that services are provided in a culturally appropriate manner. In particular, where possible, extension, training and education activities should take place on the property of the Indigenous land owners. The use of local Indigenous mentors for trainers is another means of ensuring training is delivered in an appropriate manner.
- Service providers need to take into account the different range of Indigenous learning styles and differences in language, literacy and numeracy levels.
- All training, wherever possible, should be mapped to competencies and delivered according to carefully mapped training plans.
- Training blocks do not need to be assessed at the time, but as capacity increases, the opportunity for trainers to recognise prior learning (RPL) and current competencies (RCC) should be utilised for the benefit of the trainee.
- The content of extension, training and education courses offered to Indigenous land owners needs to reflect the different decision-making structures Indigenous land owners operate within and the likelihood that Indigenous groups will seek a broader range of benefits from their lands than non-Indigenous owners.
- Service providers need to consider the aspirations, level of commitment and capacity of the Indigenous land owners when establishing timeframes for training.
- There should be more capacity to recognise informal or "on the job" training, and more resources to provide bridging courses to assist Indigenous people to make the transition into the academic or training environment.
- Government departments with responsibility for rural extension, agricultural research and land management should expand Indigenous traineeships and cadetships.

The Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education in the Northern Territory structures many courses in a flexible or "mixed mode" fashion so that, for example, the bulk of course work can be undertaken through community-based study. The Institute primarily delivers education and training in the areas of community development, teaching and community health. However, there does not seem to be any reason that a similar approach should not be adopted by other

training providers in relation to rural industry training provided there is access to appropriate hands on work within the particular community.

3. The skills needs of agricultural industries in Australia, including the expertise and capacity of industries to specify the skills-sets required for training, and the extent to which vocational training meets the needs of rural industries

Indigenous land owners have a raft of skill requirements to enable successful management of their land. These requirements are a mix of generic property management skills and skills that are specific to the Indigenous land management context. Hence there is a requirement to ensure that there are adequate programs and appropriately skilled trainers to incorporate these specific Indigenous land management aspects into generic training in relation to:

- operational skills and maintenance;
- rural property management;
- business management, including:
 - business planning;
 - financial management;
 - accounting;
 - managing employees; and
 - workplace health and safety; and
- corporate governance, including:
 - how to incorporate;
 - reporting requirements;
 - leadership training; and
 - facilitation and consultation skills.

The factors militating against mainstream vocation training courses meeting these needs and possible solutions have been outlined above.

4. The provision of extension and advisory services to agricultural industries, including links and coordination between education, research and extension

The ILC provides some extension and advisory services directly to Indigenous land holders. The issues in relation to the appropriateness and accessibility of mainstream extension services for Indigenous land owners are similar to those outlined in relation to the previous terms of reference. However, two positive recent developments are that:

- Indigenous knowledge in relation to land management is increasingly being acknowledged and incorporated within extension programs; and
- the participatory nature of extension programs is able to more easily accommodate the different needs of Indigenous land owners.

5. The role of the Australian Government in supporting education, research and advisory programs to support the viability and sustainability of Australian agriculture

The ILC has worked in a collaborative way with Indigenous groups, other government agencies and the private sector to ensure Indigenous land owners receive appropriate extension, training and education. For example, at Yappala Station, South Australia, the Indigenous land owners have successfully undertaken governance training to diploma level. This project has involved a number of vocational education and training agencies and is a precursor to ILC assistance for the development of a small cattle enterprise and the establishment of a pilot bush foods plot.

In Queensland, Gaythorne and Hillgrove Stations are ILC purchased properties which were divested to the Gidarjil Land Development Corporation during 2003/04. The properties include eucalyptus hardwood timber plantations under lease to an agro-forestry operator. The lease includes a provision to provide employment and training to Indigenous trainees each year. The training program was developed in association with Bundaberg TAFE and the Queensland Department of Employment and Workplace Relations.

Another example is the Top End Aboriginal Land Management and Employment Strategy 2004-2006, which aims to improve the potential of Aboriginal land for a range of activities, including enterprises, by removing weeds and feral animals and by addressing infrastructure needs such as fencing and site rehabilitation.

The strategy involves collaboration between a range of agencies including the ILC, the Northern Land Council, the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service, the Northern Territory Departments of Infrastructure Planning and Environment and Employment, Education and Training, the Aboriginal Benefits Account and the National Heritage Trust. These agencies have committed more than \$5 million over three years to implement the strategy. The strategy aims to decrease reliance on government service providers and involves nine Indigenous communities and more than 80 individuals who have completed or are undertaking accredited training. Utilising the skills acquired through this training, nine Indigenous work gangs have begun tendering for commercial contracts with:

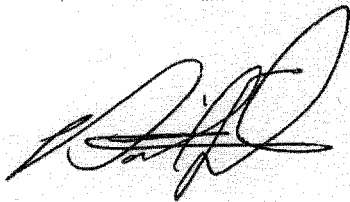
- local pastoralists (weed control, fencing, mustering, etc);
- the Northern Territory Government (roadside spraying); and
- mining companies (site rehabilitation).

Twenty-five participants have derived full or part-time employment from these enterprise activities.

These examples reflect the ILC's commitment to the view that Australian and State Government agencies should take a proactive role in improving the access of Indigenous land owners to mainstream education, training and extension services.

I am able to appear before the Committee if required. Should you have any queries regarding this submission please do not hesitate to contact Mr Paul Jenkins (Manager, Policy and Research) on 08 8100 7121 or at paul.jenkins@ilc.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Galvin', written in a cursive style.

DAVID GALVIN
General Manager