

Chapter 3.

Realising opportunities and recognising constraints: Jointly managed parks in the Northern Territory

Fiona Fraser

Northern Land Council

Paul Donohoe

Northern Land Council

Peter Donohoe

Central Land Council

***Abstract.** Joint management has the potential to provide significant social, cultural and economic opportunities for Aboriginal peoples in the Northern Territory. Realisation of these opportunities requires commitment from government and other organisations for it to have a chance of delivering the two expectations of joint management widely expressed by Traditional Owners in the Northern Territory that are consistent with legal instruments and which joint management could be reasonably expected to provide (1) equitable governance arrangements that deliver real control in relation to decision making on parks and reserves, and (2) improved training and employment opportunities now and for future generations. Current practical examples are used to explore some ways in which joint-management arrangements can meet these two expectations, and to seek answers to these questions: (1) What can be done well with current resources? (2) How could we improve? (3) What else is needed (and often lacking) to ensure that joint-management processes and outcomes can really deliver for Traditional Owners?*

3.1 Introduction

The Northern Territory is undergoing an exciting and unprecedented period in relation to jointly managed parks. The Ward High Court decision¹ in 2002 led to negotiations between the Territory government, land councils and Traditional Owners that resulted in an additional twenty-seven parks or reserves coming under new joint-management arrangements. A further 17 364 square kilometres of land has come under Aboriginal control in the Northern Territory, and the joint-management estate of the Territory government's parks and reserves system has doubled in area. Sixty percent of the Territory government's parks estate is now jointly managed.

Joint management has the potential to provide significant social, cultural and economic opportunities for remote area Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory. Traditional Owners involved in new jointly managed parks expect to benefit from arrangements that for the first time formally recognise Aboriginal ownership or rights over these estates. The basic legal framework supporting joint management has been established and a modest annual budget of \$3 million currently is available to

¹ The Ward High Court decision found that Keep River National Park and potentially forty-eight other parks in the Northern Territory had been declared invalidly between 1978 and 1998 in the event that native title rights and interests existed over these parks. An analysis of this decision is available at ntru.aiatsis.gov.au/research/ward/ward.html

support implementation of new joint management. Now the challenging task of developing and implementing appropriate structures, processes and human capacity to engage in joint management across twenty-seven parks and reserves is underway.

In developing new joint-management arrangements there are important lessons, good and bad, that can be learnt from pre-existing jointly managed parks, particularly in the Northern Territory.

The two expectations of joint management widely expressed by Traditional Owners in the Territory which are consistent with legal instruments and which joint management could be reasonably expected to deliver are:

- Equitable governance arrangements that deliver real control in relation to decision making on parks and reserves; and
- Improved training and employment opportunities now and for future generations.

We discuss actions, mechanisms and policies which can, or are being, implemented to fulfil these expectations and also explore some of the current or anticipated barriers to effective joint management. We draw upon real scenarios and practical examples relating to joint-management implementation in new jointly managed parks and reserves in the Northern Territory.

We recognise that parks agencies alone, while an important conduit to other branches of government, cannot service independently all Traditional Owner requirements and expectations, and so we also discuss the need for the joint-management partners (government and Traditional Owners) to develop and carefully manage partnerships with other government and non-government organisations.



Figure 3.1: Traditional Owners of Gurig Gunak Barlu National Park attending the Traditional Owners-only day preceding the full Board meeting. The meeting is being held outdoors at Black Point within the park. Traditional Owner observers and NLC staff member are also in attendance.

3.2 Roles of the Land Councils in new jointly managed parks and reserves

A brief description of the legal framework and management arrangements for new jointly managed parks in the Northern Territory is provided in Chapter 2. There are currently two Aboriginal land councils involved in jointly managed parks or reserves in the Territory, the Central Land Council (CLC) and the Northern Land Council (NLC). There are twenty new jointly managed parks or reserves totalling over 3000 square kilometres in the CLC region. Ulura Kata-Tjuta National Park has been jointly managed by the Anangu Traditional Owners and the Commonwealth government since 1985. In the NLC region there are seven parks coming under new joint-management arrangements totalling close to 14 000 square kilometres. There are also four pre-existing Northern Territory jointly managed parks including Djukbinj, Nitmiluk, Garig Gunak Barlu and Barranyi National Parks, as well as Kakadu National Park which is jointly managed by Traditional Owners and the Commonwealth government.

All joint-management partnerships in the Northern Territory are between two parties, the Aboriginal Traditional Owners and government. The land councils are not one of the joint-management partners; rather they have a formal role to support Traditional Owners in joint-management arrangements. Governments recognise that there is a huge power imbalance between Traditional Owners and their joint-management partners in government, and land councils' roles can be described as working to address that power imbalance. Land council functions in relation to new jointly managed parks are taken from the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* (ALRA), and are set down in amendments to the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* (TPWC Act). These functions include:

- To identify and consult with Traditional Owners about management and use of a park;
- To protect the interests of Traditional Owners in a park;
- To negotiate with outside parties (e.g. business proponents) on behalf of Traditional Owners; and
- To distribute income generated from a park to Traditional Owners.

3.3 Development of governance structures in new jointly managed parks

New jointly managed parks in the Northern Territory are currently operating on a business-as-usual basis. While new legislation has established which parks will come under formal joint-management arrangements, the actual working arrangements are not finalised until Joint Management Plans for each park are in place. In the meantime, identified parks are to be managed in accordance with the Joint Management Principles. The process of working together to develop joint-management plans is a crucial time for relationship-building between the joint-management partners. It is also a time where appropriate and effective future governance and decision-making arrangements are explored with the view to ratifying these arrangements in a Joint Management Plan.

In recognition of the power imbalance between the joint-management partners, effort is being devoted towards developing governance structures that will strengthen the decision-making power of Traditional Owners. The first level of governance or decision-making is the park-management level. This could be a park Board or management committee comprised of joint-management partner representatives that is responsible for development and implementation of the park's Joint Management Plan. The second is the Traditional Owner-level of estate management (families, clans, language groups). The emphasis here is on ensuring that clear, effective and culturally appropriate processes are developed for consulting with Traditional Owners and

communicating their views to the park. Here we focus on these two levels of park management; however, the legislation allows for flexibility in governance arrangements, and it is expected that variations or combinations of these two levels will be adopted over time in some parks, depending on local needs and circumstances.

An equitable partnership

Equality between the joint-management partners goes to the heart of joint management. This is reflected in the TPWC Act, which states that the objective of joint management is to 'jointly establish an equitable partnership to manage and maintain the park or reserve ...'. An equitable partnership does not imply that both parties are the 'same'. Rather, it refers to just or fair arrangements that incorporate and acknowledge the different skills and knowledge held by both parties.

There are inherent inequalities in the relationship between government and Traditional Owners. For example, the Territory government's Parks and Wildlife Service (NT Parks) is a relatively powerful organisation with the capacity to provide a well-informed and unified position when it comes to decisions. The experience of engaging in joint-management can be overwhelming for some Traditional Owners: unfamiliar government processes, large amounts of complex information, and short time-frames for decisions are some of the hurdles to be addressed if Traditional Owners are to be well-informed and engage in the relationship with confidence. Further, where there are estate or clan groups within a park it is not uncommon to find diversity or even conflicting views among Traditional Owners in relation to some management issues.

Means of attaining an equitable relationship within formal governance arrangements are set down in the legislation itself, most pertinently:

- That Aboriginal culture, knowledge and decision-making processes must be recognised, valued and incorporated;
- That the combined land-management skills and expertise of both joint-management partners must be utilised; and
- That the need for institutional support and capacity building of the joint-management partners must be addressed.
- The active use of techniques and processes that assist bridge the capacity gap and cultural barriers between the joint-management partners will be essential for development and advancement of equitable partnerships in the Territory.

Methods of developing appropriate governance structures

As part of the new joint-management planning process, the land councils and Parks have been meeting with Traditional Owners to decide on what types of governance structures and decision-making processes might be appropriate within certain parks. It is expected that, at least in some parks, the decision-making structures developed during the planning phase will require review over time as both partners build their capacity and understanding of how most effectively to manage the park together.

Ensuring that these planning exercises are effective has required a strong co-ordinated approach within and between land councils, NT Parks and Traditional Owner groups. For example, detailed anthropological advice about the Traditional Owner group and key individuals within that group who have decision-making responsibilities or management roles is crucial. Some effort may be required to ensure certain individuals of authority attend a meeting, without whom other Traditional Owners would not be confident to participate in the meeting. An understanding of historical or current socio-cultural issues or conflicts can assist in ensuring a more productive

meeting. Knowing where individual Traditional Owners are currently residing, and contacting them (many do not have telephones or vehicles) to arrange meetings requires tapping into informed local networks. Being clear about the meeting purpose and desired outcomes is important. The land councils use a multi-disciplinary team approach to co-ordinate these issues.

A clear understanding between land councils and NT Parks regarding meeting purpose and desired outcomes and the most appropriate ways to organise and conduct the meeting is also crucial. For example, land councils are of the view that joint management does not always mean both parties doing things together. Indeed parks agencies generally operate without iterative involvement of Traditional Owners. Due to distance and lack of transport, Traditional Owners may not meet often, if at all, as a group outside of formal government-initiated meetings. It is essential that, for some issues, Traditional Owners are able to meet and speak freely, organise their ideas or sort out their disagreements uninhibited by the presence or views of parks staff or other outside parties. This necessarily involves excluding or minimising NT Parks presence and, while this is the exception rather than the rule, attempting to conduct meetings in this fashion can and has led to misunderstandings between land councils and NT Parks.



Figure 3.2: Traditional Owners of East Gregory National Park using a helicopter to visit long-unvisited cultural sites and teaching about Country to younger generations.

Park-management-level decision making – examples and considerations

The TPWC Act states that the ‘joint management partners are together responsible for the management of the park and reserve’ but the Act does not prescribe how governance arrangements are to be structured within each park. This is to allow for governance to accommodate the systems and values of the Traditional Owners of each park. The risk

of having non-prescriptive legislation is that it is open to interpretation. The diversity between parks in social, cultural, land-use, biodiversity and tourism factors requires a flexible approach that is based on the local context and decision-making processes.

Governance structures to oversee the implementation of Joint Management Plans and make decisions about management of new parks are still being determined. However, it is likely that within each park a Board, committee or representative group comprised of Traditional Owners and NT Parks representatives will be required to meet two or more times each year to consider and make management decisions, including implementation of the Joint Management Plan. For the sake of simplicity, we will refer to these decision-making forums at this level as park-management committees, recognising that the actual format may vary between parks.

In drawing upon experiences in existing jointly managed parks in the Northern Territory and elsewhere, it is clear that there are many ways of assisting Traditional Owners to participate effectively at the park-management level. Here we explore some of the practical approaches and challenges in ensuring effective participation of Traditional Owners, and consider what is needed for the long-term sustainability of strong and functional park-management committees.

The way in which meetings are run (Western-style), information is presented and discussed, and the way in which decisions are made at management level does not mesh well with traditional Aboriginal decision making. While there is scope for ensuring traditional decision-making informs park-management decisions, the prospect of an individual representing their clan and discussing important issues, and sometimes making decisions about issues without reference to clan members, remains problematic. It must also be kept in mind that Traditional Owner representatives at a management level will not necessarily present a unified view on particular issues. Diversity of opinion, or even conflict, among Traditional Owners on issues should be expected at times; this contrasts with the parks representatives who are required to present a single view consistent with government policy. Furthermore, Traditional Owners are often not practiced in, or culturally comfortable with, some sets of skills that government officials draw upon to influence meeting outcomes; for example, the capacity for confidently, strongly and consistently advocating a position or pushing a particular issue.

The importance of ‘confidence in numbers’ – stated by Justice Woodward in the Commissioner’s report – that guided the development of joint management in Kakadu National Park and ensured majority Board membership for Traditional Owners remains fundamental. A park-management committee or board of management is a forum in which many Traditional Owners may feel uncomfortable or unconfident participating; a focus on written information, meetings conducted in English and working with government professionals well-versed in meeting procedures can exacerbate a lack of confidence in Traditional Owner representatives. Having the confidence provided by being in the majority can assist Traditional Owners to manage the pace and format of meetings but is certainly not a guarantee. Traditional Owners representatives on existing joint-management Boards or committees in the Territory have either a majority representation or the casting vote. All boards are chaired by a Traditional Owner representative. It is essential that new jointly managed parks pursue the same approach to Traditional Owner representation at the park-management level.

Having majority Traditional Owner representation in park management is important but cannot ensure that Traditional Owners have a ‘strong voice’ at this level. There are many other practical approaches, including those explored below, which can and should

be used to help Traditional Owners increase control and understanding of park-management decision making.

Meetings at which only Traditional Owners and their advisors are present and held days prior to board meetings, such as currently happen at Gurig Gunak Barlu and Kakadu National Parks, can be highly beneficial. It is often the case that Traditional-Owner members cannot or do not communicate regularly between meetings – they may live far from one another, may have limited access to phone or vehicle, or there may be conflict within or between relevant families. Meetings at which only Traditional Owners are present allow them to familiarise themselves with agenda items, discuss concerns and issues and to raise additional items, as well as to work through internal disagreements without the other partner present. If land council staff attend there is the opportunity for professional advice to be provided and considered by the Traditional Owners.

A challenge for parks agencies in current jointly managed parks in the Northern Territory appears to be management of the meeting agenda. For example, it is not uncommon for a Board agenda and papers to be circulated within a few days of an upcoming Board meeting, if not on the day itself. This causes frustration for Traditional Owners as they are pressured to read and understand large volumes of information (generally this simply is not possible) and sometimes to make decisions with little opportunity to consider the information provided. It is also unsatisfactory for land council advisers who have insufficient time to undertake research in order to provide informed advice. Furthermore, opportunities for Traditional Owners to have input into the agenda and to prioritise agenda items need to be provided. For example, the Kakadu National Park Board Secretariat and NLC officer endeavour to visit the Chair and other Aboriginal Board members to discuss important upcoming agenda items. Unfortunately, late agenda items and limited time means that this does not always happen.

An approach to meetings that allows for and encourages Traditional Owner space is important. Traditional Owners at the Gurig Gunak Barlu National Park Board meetings regularly ask non-Aboriginal members to leave the meeting so they can work through an issue in private. Land council staff may or may not be asked to leave, depending on the issue. Non-Aboriginal members of this particular Board are currently supportive of and understanding of these requests. The pace of discussion can also be important. If response or strong discussion around an issue is not immediately forthcoming, it should not be assumed by non-Aboriginal members to be a signal that there are no queries or even concerns, and certainly should not be interpreted as consent. The phrase ‘there were no objections’ unfortunately still gets used as an indication of consent by some park representatives. Those less comfortable or familiar with meeting process, and not having English as a first language, will need more time to consider and formulate replies, and pauses or silences (that is, when non-Aboriginal members stop speaking!) to allow for this are needed.

There are many other practical means of building the capacity and encouraging the engagement of Traditional Owners in park-management meetings. Allowing for and encouraging attendance of Traditional Owner observers at meetings can build a strong Traditional Owner presence and also aid communication within and between Traditional Owner groups. Working together to ensure that the Aboriginal chair or deputy maintains control of the agenda and pace of a meeting is important; it is not unusual to realise part way through a meeting that a parks representative has gradually assumed control of the agenda, which is no longer going through the chair. Holding meetings in appropriate locations, using interpreters where necessary and using straightforward language and

visual tools to convey information are useful means of engaging Traditional Owners. Ongoing training for both parties is also important. For example, training in governance structures and processes can benefit Traditional Owners, while many non-Aboriginal board members require training in cross-cultural awareness.



Figure 3.3: Women from Rainbow Valley Conservation Reserve work-shopping joint-management plan ideas

It is crucial that any governance structure is allowed to adapt, evolve and change over time. In the early stages of trialling the new joint-management arrangements it is important to review constantly governance arrangements and to allow Traditional Owners to control how their concerns, responsibilities and priorities are addressed. An independent monitoring and evaluation program is being established to help monitor joint management in new jointly managed parks in the Territory, including governance arrangements. It is anticipated that this program will provide useful feedback on success (or otherwise) of governance structures in case study parks.

Traditional-Owner-based decision making – examples and considerations

While having strong park-level management structures is important, in many parks it will not be possible for full representation of Traditional Owners at this level. Clear processes for ensuring that Traditional Owners are consulted about parks activities on their traditional estates must be developed, and it is crucial that Traditional Owners make park-management decisions, and what issues require specific consultation with Traditional Owners. There will also be many day-to-day decisions that are made by park staff, and Traditional Owners must be clear about which issues fall in this basket. When the link between park-level management and the wider Traditional Owner group is unclear with regard to decision making, it can lead to anxiety, uncertainty (for Traditional Owners and other parties) and can waste time and scarce joint-management resources. Under the new joint-management arrangements there is an opportunity to

develop culturally appropriate, effective and clear consultation and decision-making processes to enable Traditional Owners to make decisions regarding their estates. The TPWC Act outlines land council responsibilities to identify and consult with Traditional Owners over park-management issues. This will ensure that structures that reflect local Aboriginal decision-making processes are incorporated into park management.

In order for Traditional Owners to have effective decision-making powers it is important for parks staff to have well-developed cross-cultural skills. Where parks staff are used to working in an environment that does not require formal consultation with Traditional Owners, and where the reasons such consultation is needed is not fully appreciated, this additional layer to park management can cause frustration. Good habits, such as respecting Traditional Owner decision-making processes, can require cultural change within a park agency or by the particular personnel. Addressing and educating staff about this as early as possible in the joint-management process is crucial. Policy approaches and a workplace culture that encourage non-Indigenous staff to spend time talking with local Traditional Owners, and that value formal inclusion of Traditional Owners in day-to-day management of the park, are key elements of joint management which can greatly facilitate the understanding of both partners.

3.4 Development of training and employment opportunities

Remote area employment is a critical issue for both Aboriginal peoples and governments in northern Australia. A reasonable expectation of Traditional Owners is that they, and their future generations, will have increased employment opportunities through new joint-management arrangements. During the negotiations for new jointly managed parks in the Northern Territory, senior Traditional Owners often have stated the importance of providing employment opportunities for their children as the main outcome they would expect from joint management. Employment provisions for existing and new jointly managed parks are currently contained in legal instruments such as park leases and the new Joint Management Agreement, with further detail provided in joint-management plans. The land councils' focus with regards to Aboriginal employment on parks is not primarily to increase Indigenous employment per se, but rather to increase employment opportunities for Traditional Owners or other Aboriginal persons with cultural links to the park or region in question.

Direct employment with Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Service

During the negotiations for new jointly managed parks it was often stated as a long-term vision to have Traditional Owners highly represented in all levels of the park management from trainee rangers through to park managers and also within the administration. In existing jointly managed parks, jobs at all levels of management remain a priority for Traditional Owners, and the difficulty in realising this is often a source of disappointment and frustration.

In many remote parts of the Northern Territory where there are limited employment opportunities, parks agencies have potential to provide a range of remote-area jobs for Traditional Owners in the short term and, with training, more opportunities to be taken up over the long term. However, a lack of resources in NT Parks means that numbers of on-park staff (rangers) can be low. There are two obvious consequences of this: first, the more poorly staffed parks cannot offer a range of employment opportunities to Traditional Owners – there simply are not many jobs in these parks; second, park management is unable to fulfil basic functions relating to management of natural and cultural resources and tourism, which has a direct impact on joint-management outcomes and the joint-management relationship.

While it is important as a long-term goal, without increased resources for staffing in some parks, direct employment with the NT Parks is unlikely to be a significant source of employment for Traditional Owners in the short term.

A current example is Gregory National Park. It is the largest jointly managed park managed by the Territory government; it covers an area of 13 016 square kilometres and the estates of around seven Aboriginal language groups comprised of hundreds of Traditional Owners. There are currently nine rangers employed to manage this park. Even if the lease provision for Gregory (which provides for majority Aboriginal employment) was met, at current staffing levels this would entail jobs for only four Traditional Owners. However, staffing density is higher in some other jointly managed parks where opportunities for local Traditional Owners in theory are greater.

While understaffing is an obvious barrier in some regions, simply increasing the number of jobs available in a park will not necessarily result in improved Aboriginal employment. Aside from the clearly identified need to ensure that government policy is addressing remote area socio-economic disadvantage, the importance of park agency working culture cannot be underestimated. The combination of workplace culture and a strong policy and senior management commitment to maximising Traditional Owner employment is integral to improving outcomes on the ground. Kakadu National Park is an interesting example. The park is 20 000 square kilometres in size, has an annual budget of over \$17 million, and is the traditional lands of hundreds of Traditional Owners. The Kakadu leases stipulate majority Aboriginal employment, but after almost thirty years of joint management of this iconic area with all the public and policy attention it attracts, at any given time the proportion of Traditional Owners is likely to be far less than one quarter of a core staff of about 80. While there are many factors influencing Aboriginal employment in the Kakadu region, it is reasonable to question the extent to which maximising employment for Traditional Owners in the park has been a priority for the Commonwealth government.

While social, economic and educational inequalities in remote areas continue, it is difficult for Traditional Owners to secure any mainstream employment opportunities. However, there still exists scope for increasing mainstream employment with parks agencies, and for ensuring employment with parks is an attractive option to Traditional Owners through measures including:

- Increasing funding to create more jobs within parks;
- Formal recognition of the skills Traditional Owners can bring to park management through recruitment guidelines;
- Increased resources in order to provide adequate support and tailored training for Traditional Owner staff, including appropriate mentoring programs;
- Increased training of non-indigenous staff in cross-cultural awareness.

With adequate resources for employment, training and staff development, suitably qualified teams of rangers with the required suite of skills (including traditional skills and knowledge) could be an effective and inclusive means of ensuring expert management of jointly managed parks.

Indigenous ranger model of employment

Direct employment with parks agencies can have limitations for some Traditional Owners; lack of flexibility in employment conditions and a challenging and unfamiliar workplace culture are examples. Other models of employment can be better at providing wider benefits to Traditional Owners, and may be appropriate for a broader suite of Traditional Owners than those interested in and/or eligible for mainstream employment.

Flexible employment arrangements are based around an Indigenous community ranger model which has been supported by the land councils over the past decade.

Indigenous rangers, usually employed by Aboriginal community councils or Indigenous land- and sea-management organisations, undertake activities such as cultural and natural resource management work in their region, contract work (e.g. weed and fire management for other landowners, or provision of horse pet meat to local meatworks), or self-managed enterprises (e.g. crocodile-egg collection and sale) to supplement wages provided by Community Development Employment Project (CDEP) funding. More recently, the Australian Government's Working on Country program has also provided valuable financial support to Indigenous ranger programs and their staff in recognition of the environmental outcomes delivered by these programs. The abolishment of CDEP in 2007 jeopardised this proven and successful employment model. It is hoped that current Commonwealth government policy and funding arrangements with regards to CDEP and related funding programs will assist re-establishing and more strongly recognising and supporting Indigenous ranger programs, although there remains some uncertainty regarding the future of CDEP.

Indigenous ranger programs can provide a flexible, local and Aboriginal-friendly means of employing Traditional Owners in meaningful jobs on their own Country. These models provide a range of training and a means of building confidence and skills of remote-area Traditional Owners. However, to become established, to purchase necessary equipment and to get adequate administration, Indigenous ranger groups invariably require significant additional funding above and beyond what can be generated through local work.

In the NLC region there are over thirty community-ranger programs operating. Three established programs are in the vicinity of existing or new jointly-managed parks. There is also strong interest from other areas with jointly managed parks to establish such programs. Support from parks agencies for these programs can further remote area employment opportunities for Traditional Owners. Importantly, the benefits are two-way, with the parks agency able to tap into a locally available labour source with knowledge of the region – a significant factor in remote areas.

There is emerging recognition within NT Parks of the value of these Indigenous ranger programs (for both joint-management partners), with contract work having been carried out successfully on several jointly managed parks. Policy and resources directed at providing ongoing support through contract work, training and other means, including assisting the establishment of new programs, are crucial. The Tjuwanpa Ranger Program has received some seed-funding to establish and has successfully tendered for parks-based contracts. The emerging Wulna Ranger Program from the Adelaide River parks area has received support through provision of equipment and staff and has been assured of future parks-based contract work. Over recent years, the Ngaliwurru rangers have undertaken contract work on Gregory National Park. Where these relationships are working successfully they are a great way for the joint-management partners to build and maintain a productive working relationship and the park-based work contributes to the overall viability of the community ranger program. Further, support from parks agencies can provide an incentive to other funding providers to contribute. The possibilities of substantially expanding and improving upon these models are exciting.

3.5 The importance of outside partnerships

It was well recognised that when the new joint-management deal for Northern Territory parks was being negotiated that opportunities would be limited with the current levels of funding for NT Parks and their capacity to provide the social, economic and cultural benefits that remote area Aboriginal communities require. However, the joint management deal was seen as a way to increase the Traditional Owners' ability to create partnerships with other organisations in order to achieve what they want. Through joint management, Traditional Owners should be able to derive benefits from tourism, other land-management and cultural-heritage funding agencies, and through the provision of environmental services in their surrounding areas.

It is important to see relationships and partnerships as vital to the success of joint management and to put in the time and effort for relationship building not only between the joint-management partners, but also with outside stakeholders. This will help re-inforce individual and organisational roles and build a team-orientated approach to achieving common goals even amid local disputes or different opinions. It must also be recognised that for parks in preliminary stages of joint management there is a need to concentrate on building capacity of the partners, with a focus on establishing good processes (and not just looking at outcomes) and in building good joint-management structures. It is important to provide opportunities both for Traditional Owners to have time alone on Country, and also to spend time together with parks staff. The effort in creating a respectful and equitable joint-management structure will allow the joint-management partners to deal with other stakeholders in a unified way.

The pressure mounting on NT Parks is significant, with an annually shrinking budget ('efficiency dividends' cuts) at a time when the costs of running parks is increasing. While outside partnerships cannot assist with the core park functions, effective partnerships could channel additional resources to provide wide-ranging economic, social and cultural benefits if developed and managed properly. Other agencies, such as Indigenous organisations, other government agencies, resource companies and tourism companies, can provide input into joint management and can alleviate some of the funding short-falls.

The Joint Management partners should strive to develop partnerships with other stakeholders and agencies. However, having these outside partnerships contribute effectively to joint management requires careful negotiation and management. Benefits and detriments of outside partnerships need to be carefully considered on a case-by-case basis, and the effort in pursuing and developing partnerships should be invested astutely. Positive partnerships, bringing the right mix of persons together, with resources and expertise are necessary for effective joint management.

Fiona Fraser
Canberra
<mullen21@bigpond.com>

Paul Donohoe
Northern Land Council
<DonohP@nlc.org.au>

Peter Donohoe
Central Land Council
<Peter.Donohoe@clc.org.au>