



"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."

— Mark Twain

"Most of the (WCCCA) money gets locked into very safe and secure investments for 20 years. .... everything we do from here on in is a trial for 20 years time"

- Geoff Milgate - WCCCA

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# WEIPA

## TOURISM NEEDS ASSESSMENT

prepared for  
TOURISM QUEENSLAND

May 2004



## Methodology



It is not possible to acknowledge everybody individually who contributed to this report, however special acknowledgement goes to Peter McCulkin – Senior Project Officer (DPI Weipa) for initiating and facilitating this project.



Consultant records interview with Boydie Heinemann near Bushman's Hole on Billy's Lagoon Station.

This is a preliminary document to contribute to the process of advancing tourism in the Weipa region. It is a Base Document to assist individuals, indigenous communities, industry and government to gain insight into where the industry is at the moment and how it may evolve in the future. This information may be used to inform the Terms of Reference for a comprehensive Weipa Regional Sustainable Tourism Development Plan (WRSTDP) through Tourism Queensland.

The 'Cape York Peninsula Land Use Strategy', 'A Strategic Tourism Management Plan for Cape York Peninsula' and the 'Cape York Tourism Places Resource Inventory' have accumulated comprehensive data on the resources of Cape York Peninsula. All of this data is a valuable contribution to the bank of knowledge about what exists on Cape York Peninsula and how things may evolve in the future.

This particular report was initiated through discussions between the Department of Primary Industries (DPI Weipa) and Tourism Queensland. DPI Weipa arranged the Western Cape interviews and the consultant sourced other relevant interviews outside the region.

It wasn't possible or necessary, within the scope of this study, to interview everybody in the Western Cape Region who is already involved in tourism or who wishes to become involved. Those people who were interviewed were digitally recorded and photographed with their permission.

The information gained through one on one on-site interviews was then applied to known markets and factors outside the region to arrive at viable options to suggest priorities for a possible Weipa Regional Sustainable Tourism Development Plan.

It was known before the interview process began that planning for some concepts was already underway and, in the interests of reasonable expediency, recommendations have been made on those where possible.

Noting that "facts without context deliver paralysis"<sup>1</sup> it was felt that, in order for the broadest possible extent of people to engage meaningfully with tourism in the Western Cape region, it was necessary to produce an end document that gave context to the data and was presented in a way that encouraged maximum regional readership and 'painted a picture' for decision makers outside the region. This is not a Business Plan. Commercial projects that begin as a result of this study should undertake specific due diligence studies.

Felan Consulting and Event Services

John Felan – 11 May 2004

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Qantas currently has two flights per day for five days a week and one flight on the other two days.



The flight time from Cairns is one hour and forty minutes in a 50 seat Dash 8 QantasLink aircraft.

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Immediately on leaving the airport, visitors are reminded of the alcohol ban in Napranum Community in accordance with the Alcohol Management Plan. There is no prospect of a viable tourism industry in the region unless tourism accommodation entities are permitted to have Residential Liquor Licences.

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The view has been expressed that more blues and greens need to be used in tourism promotional material to better reflect the seas and landscapes rather than bauxite colours.

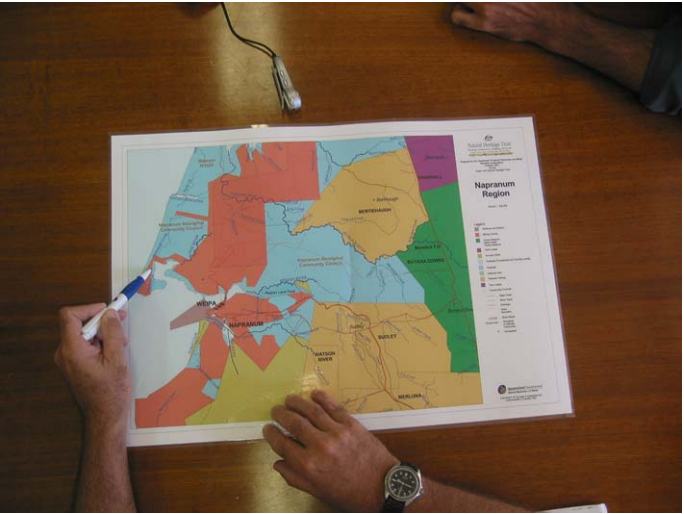


“Regarding the Cultural Centre, there is a feeling that the architects, who have considerable experience in the NT desert context have tried to apply the same thinking here” – Prasser.



Agreement on relevant destination branding will deliver more continuity in signage and better reflect people and place.

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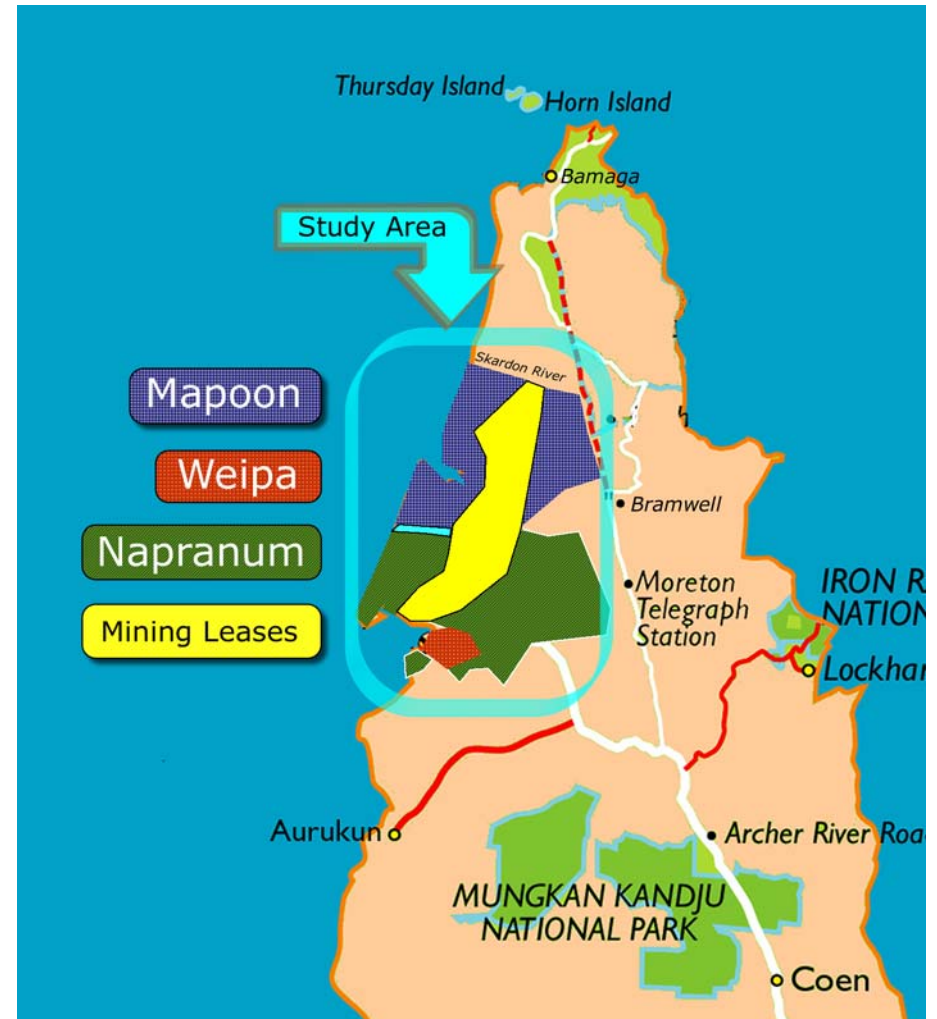
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## The Study Area

The study area is limited to the DOGITs of Mapoon and Napranum and the township of Weipa. Aurukun is also an integral part of a potential Western Cape York tourism industry but was not within the Terms of Reference for this study.





## Executive Summary

<p><b>Background</b></p>	<p>The town of Weipa is located on the western side of Cape York Peninsula around 300 kms by road from the 'tip' of Cape York. It is recognised as the place of 'First Contact' in Australia between Europeans and Australia's aboriginal people.</p> <p>Non indigenous people were granted leases for pastoral purposes from the 1860s and they laid claim to all productive grazing land on the northern Cape. Indigenous people who survived through to the turn of that century were moved to a mission on York Downs Station, The Embley River Mission, until 1932 when the mission was then moved to Jessica Point in Weipa.</p> <p>These days, eleven different Traditional Owner groups are recognised as representing the indigenous people of the region and, as a result of successful native title claims and the creation of many Deed of Grant in Trust tenures, the vast majority of the land on the northern part of Cape York Peninsula is either already under aboriginal control or will be in the near future.</p> <p>Bauxite ore was identified as occurring in profitable quantities in the 1950s and in 1957 the Commonwealth Aluminium Corporation Pty Ltd Agreement (QLD) was passed to grant a bauxite mining lease. In 1958, Weipa Aboriginal Reserve was reduced from 647,000 hectares to 124 hectares through loss of land to Comalco's Special Bauxite Mining Lease.</p> <p>Comalco is a wholly owned subsidiary of Rio Tinto, a major international mining company. Through its mining, refining and power generation activities, Comalco in 2002 earned \$365m for its parent company. Production is set to double at Weipa from 2005 and as long as there is profitable demand for bauxite ore, the mine can continue through to 2062 on the current lease and reserves are estimated to be able to keep the mine in operation for 250 to 300 years.</p> <p>Weipa town, which now has a population of around 3,000 people, is owned by Comalco and Comalco has funded the vast majority of the community infrastructure. The town is very attractively laid out and generally speaking the mining operations do not interfere adversely with the amenity of the town. Large numbers of visitors travel on the mining tours.</p> <p>Tourism is a relatively small but expanding part of the town economy. The major tourism products include accommodation at the camping ground, the two Weipa Hotel/Motels, outstanding sportfishing, self drive 4WD trips "to the tip" and adventure tours on trail bikes and jet skis. There are also houseboat operations.</p>
<p><b>Study Perspective</b></p>	<p>The Western Cape is part of Cape York Peninsula and as such is subject to previous agreements that have been established in respect to tourism development on Cape York Peninsula. The broad vision for the Cape has already been articulated in the Heads of Agreement – Tourism in Cape York document signed on 12 March 1997 between the Cape York Peninsula Development Association</p>

	<p>(CYPDA), Cooktown Shire Council (CSC), Cape York Land Council (CYLC), the Aboriginal &amp; Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) and Balkanu.</p> <p>This document is also acknowledged in the CYPDA Strategic Tourism Management Plan for Cape York Peninsula. In the executive summary of that document it is stated that “in terms of tenure and therefore of access rights for tourism, Aboriginal people will own most of the land on the west and east coasts and comprise the majority of the Cape York population.”</p> <p>Macro economic, social and environmental circumstances need to influence the perspective of base documents like this one so that information is gathered, ordered and presented within the most relevant context. The Mark Twain quote, on the cover of this study, has been selected for its relevance to the macro economic environment of the Western Cape York region – and that is the fact that there will be plus or minus \$120 million available in the WCCCA Trusts by the year 2021. A little less than 20 year’s time.</p> <p>As the CEO of the WCCCA Trusts – Geoff Milgate said, “everything we do from here on in is a trial for 20 years time”. As far as tourism is concerned, this suggests that a plan needs to be developed that takes account of this fact. In other words, should the economic tourism assessments suggest that the region does have a sound tourism future, then regional planning and product and market development should be shaped to engage optimally with these tourism product genres.</p>
<p><b>The Markets</b></p>	<p>This report concludes that the Western Cape York Peninsula region can have an outstanding tourism future. This is because of its relative accessibility in spite of its remoteness. The appeal to the visitor is its remoteness and wildness and its outstanding recreational fishing and hunting opportunities together with its unique natural beauty.</p> <p>The Weipa infrastructure provides a base from which tourism operations can take place or be serviced. QantasLink have upgraded flights to two a day five days a week and one a day two days a week.</p> <p>Product needs to be very carefully tailored to markets however. Generally speaking, there is the land-borne market arriving by road as 4WD self-drives or on 4WD accompanied tours and there is the airborne market arriving in 50 seater QantasLink aircraft or by charter flight from Cairns. The airborne market spends up to 10 times per day more than the land-borne market. As elsewhere, both groups look for value for money but the concept of value can be flexible at the higher end of the market. It would seem that there is no ‘middle ground’ in the marketplace. Product that positions itself in the middle of the market is unlikely to succeed.</p> <p>The busiest market sector in terms of numbers is the 4WD self-drive market and that market is essential to the Camping Ground, some of the Fishing Guide operations, the Mine Tours and those businesses which provide road travellers with general supplies and services. The visiting 4WD tour companies also make use of hotel and motel accommodation. While this land-borne market may</p>

represent the largest numbers, it is believed that it is unlikely that there would be a reasonable return on investment in initiating a marketing campaign to attract more of this group to visit the northern Cape because of the low daily spend, although more may be able to be done to attract those who are already travelling to the tip to include Weipa in their itinerary.

The sector of the market that offers the best opportunity in all respects for sustainable tourism growth is the airborne market. This market can range from the keen domestic angler who is price sensitive but will put aside up to \$4,000 for the week to get him from Melbourne to Weipa and back including all flights, meals, fishing and extras, to high end corporate individuals or incentive groups that will pay whatever is necessary consistent with value. Many destinations don't have what it takes to reach this market. Western Cape York has what it takes in terms of the resource and it is very accessible to the Sydney/Canberra/Melbourne triangle via Cairns, not just in terms of geography but also in terms of flight frequency and flexibility. This is critical for this market.

As a matter of policy, and as quality tourism product in the communities emerges, it is conceivable that there is a local Weipa market for certain types of product and it is suggested that 'locals rates' be introduced as a consistent market strategy. This will allow businesses to maximise their margins for non-locals while maintaining good local community relations and making profitable use of unused capacity.

Subject to attractive stand-by rates being struck, there is a Weipa market that will book a quality accommodation experience. There are many families living in Weipa. A typical market for an appropriately designed (rustic/romantic) nearby accommodation product would be couples celebrating wedding anniversaries for example. Stand-by rates can be 50% to 65% cheaper than rack rates yet still contribute significantly to annual profit by maintaining occupancy levels in quiet times. Shift work also means that there is a mid week market as well as a weekend market.

Once again, subject to the right quality of accommodation being built, it is likely that visiting Comalco executives may be encouraged to extend their stay to include a remote lodge-style sportfishing experience. It may also be able to be offered as a Performance Incentive throughout Rio Tinto for example.

Being low volume - high yield, this market also merges well with the expressed aspirations of indigenous communities that are looking to make good returns from tourism but in ways that are beneficial to the social ambience of the respective communities. Specifically, it is recommended that a quality fishing lodge be built in Weipa on waterfront at Evans Landing either on the Malaruch land or on Port Authority Land. It is also recommended that the Malaruch land at Evans Landing be the subject of a comprehensive plan for a camping/caravan park/cabin precinct.

There are specific recommendations for a very high quality fishing lodge at Mapoon and a tented camp at Bushman's Hole on Billy's Lagoon Station and a strategy for combining them in the marketplace. It is also thought that the Cultural Camps conducted by Thancoupie at Bowchat should be supported with appropriate infrastructure.



<p><b>Business Models</b></p>	<p>The business model recommendation for quality tourism accommodation in indigenous communities is the same as that currently occurring widely throughout the rest of Australia and the rest of the world for that matter. It is a landlord/tenant relationship. Travel marketing has become so specialised and consolidated that it makes better business sense for hotel owners, for example, to lease their property out to an appropriate operator that markets to a specific market segment who then pays a flat rent or rent plus percentage of turnover to the landlord.</p> <p>It is not recommended that joint ventures, in the normal sense of the word, take place as joint venture partner arrangements can be unwieldy to manage and the special circumstances associated with DOGIT or Land Trust tenures can stand in the way of negotiating good arrangements. Memoranda of Understanding can govern matters not normally contained in a landlord/tenant agreement. The Memoranda may address employment, training, protocols and branding strategies.</p> <p>Once quality tourism accommodation facilities are established in communities independently owned small businesses can start up that service the accommodation nodes.</p>
<p><b>Alcohol Management Plan</b></p>	<p>This report has no competence to assess the general social consequences of the Alcohol Management Plan except to observe that anything that contributes to peace and harmony at a destination is always clearly an advantage.</p> <p>The Alcohol Management Plan does need to be addressed however in respect to tourism matters. It is understood that some amendments have already been granted to some tourism operators on Cape York to maintain their existing services to passengers or guests in terms of alcohol service. The success of all accommodation options recommended in this report (with the exception of Bowchat and Vyce's Crossing deep-cultural experiences) will depend on Residential Liquor Licences being granted to those entities. There is no known way to make a success of a remote lodge-style tourism operation without alcohol service.</p> <p>If Alcohol Management Plans are not amended to permit Residential Liquor Licences to be issued to bona fide lodges and fishing camps there is no prospect of a viable tourism industry developing in the region.</p> <p>Given that tourism is the only other viable industry that can be established in the Western Cape Communities, decisions on whether to grant necessary licences are, to all intents and purposes, decisions on whether business and employment options other than mining will be available to indigenous communities.</p>
<p><b>People and Decision Making</b></p>	<p>This is regarded as one of the biggest challenges facing the region. Even destinations that have evolved harmoniously over centuries have differences of opinion as to who they are and how they should market themselves. In the Western Cape, there is the dislocation of identity and social structure of indigenous people over the past 150 years combined with a recent return to a form of ownership of country by them. There is also the fact that the presence of the mine has had a huge</p>

	<p>influence on the culture of the region. Recent census figures show that Weipa has the highest proportion of qualified tradespeople in the country. Essentially these are the employees and contractors servicing Comalco.</p> <p>Non-indigenous people outnumber indigenous people two to one in the Western Cape. So on the one hand there is a highly motivated, skilled, qualified, experienced, young, non-indigenous community in Weipa keen to 'do things' and then there is an outnumbered indigenous community, comprising eleven Traditional Owner Groups, who are only just beginning to re-establish themselves on country.</p> <p>Generally speaking, it is the Traditional Owners however who control the access to future tourism projects and they have proven to be cautious in negotiating business arrangements that grant access to their resources. Given this scenario, it is inevitable that some projects in the past have not made it past the early discussion stages.</p> <p>In view of the above, it is recommended that there may be a need for professional facilitation using contemporary problem resolving techniques to offer alternative perspectives and independent arbitration. A number of the today's decision makers in Weipa, both indigenous and non-indigenous, went to school together and often habits and opinions formed in the playground play themselves out again in the adult arena – sometimes not in the best interests of both parties and the communities they represent.</p>
<p><b>Destination Design &amp; Implementation</b></p>	<p>The priority now is product not promotion. The region needs to go through a process of marrying resources and product with existing and new markets. Good research will help that process but it is unlikely that it will be (to quote de Bono) one of moving from "certainty to certainty to certainty". Market research and theoretical modelling will only take the process so far and it is suggested that sufficient knowledge exists to trust some judgments and make some decisions now by way of infrastructure; a good example being the Mapoon Fishing Lodge.</p> <p><b>The CEO of Weipa Town Ian Pressley said:</b>  <i>"There are a lot of organisations who come here and tell us what we should and shouldn't do but I don't think that there is any real plan in place to carry it forward. I have been amazed since I have been here for the past two years that here we have a town like Weipa which has the potential to be a wonderful tourism destination for fishing, camping and hunting or whatever it is but there doesn't seem to be a plan for that. There are different groups promoting their own interests but there is no cohesion for future planning in all of their interests."</i></p> <p>This document recommends that a Weipa Regional Sustainable Tourism Implementation Plan is undertaken and application made through the Australian Tourism Development Program for that purpose. It is considered that the region has enough experience and background to implement the recommendations in this report.</p>

	<p>The Western Cape Regional Consultative Group, which is widely representative of the region, is the lead body to take on this role. It needs an experienced Executive Officer who has a keen understanding of the new markets in particular, as well as the existing markets. While profitability is essential in the medium to long term, the officer would still need to have a sound appreciation of how the indigenous communities will benefit into the future.</p>
<p><b>Conclusion</b></p>	<p>For any destination to succeed in tourism there needs to be adequate investment. Most indigenous communities in Australia that are interested in tourism are very limited in what they can invest themselves because of lack of capital and/or collateral. In the case of the Western Cape Indigenous Communities, they have a considerable advantage in that the Western Cape Communities Co-existence Agreement makes some capital available now and a significant amount in 20 years time.</p> <p>It is recommended in this report that the Trustees and Administrators of the fund give priority now to investing in quality medium to long term tourism projects for the region that position the destination to take appropriate advantage of the extent of funds that will be available to the next generation. In 2021 it will be too late to change course. The market perception of the Western Cape's status in tourism will be well established by then.</p> <p>It is specifically recommended that all appropriate individuals and groups support an Australian Tourism Development Program Category 2 Implementation Application. "Category 2 applicants are not required to demonstrate secured dollar for dollar matching cash funding. However, potential applicants should note that in considering the relative merit of Category 2 applications preference will be given to those applicants who can demonstrate that they have such resources."</p> <p>Weipa and the Western Cape have what it takes in the way of natural and cultural resources to build a very successful tourism industry. The Comalco mine and associated infrastructure are complementary to the industry. The proximity to Cairns provides significant access to markets. They are markets that can be high yielding if the right approach is taken to planning and positioning the destination in the marketplace. Existing traditional markets will continue to grow as long as new infrastructure can be built that is profitable.</p> <p>Apart from mining, it is considered that tourism is the only other significantly viable industry that can be developed in the region. If product is created for identified target markets; if good business relationships are established between land owners and operators; if local seed funding is made available via the WCCCA; if appropriate amendments are enacted for the Alcohol Management Plan to permit Residential Liquor Licences to be granted, it is considered that the region can look forward to an outstanding tourism future.</p>



## Introduction

### What is this document?

This is a Tourism Needs Assessment Base Document from which a proposed “Weipa Regional Sustainable Tourism Development Plan” (WRSTDP) may be commissioned. The project brief limited the reference region to Mapoon, Weipa and Napranum; however Aurukun may easily be integrated into a WRSTDP if it proceeds.

The fundamental purpose of this document is therefore to provide a foundation for future tourism planning by *pointing the way* to potential opportunities for tourism development in accordance with sustainable tourism practices – as they specifically apply to the people and land of the Greater Weipa Region and more generally to Northern Cape York Peninsula.

At its simplest level, all destinations have some form of tourism visitation. Some destinations however, because of their natural or man made attractions, can develop tourism beyond the provision of basic utilitarian services for visitors.

The Weipa region is currently offering an increasing range of more developed tourism activities and more are planned for the future. Consequently, opinion has been expressed that the tourism sector should consider a more planned evolution of the industry from this point forward.

There is an adage in tourism that, “if you don’t manage tourism, tourism manages you”. A TNA is the first step for a destination to take if it is to shape and influence the evolution of a future tourism industry. A TNA seeks to begin the process of identifying the community needs of the destination in terms of tourism issues and related social, environmental and economic matters and make recommendations that meet those needs in a way that doesn’t compromise the future quality of life to which the community aspires.

Most interviews were digitally recorded throughout the information gathering process and exist on file in both edited and original versions. While inevitably a subjective process the context, status and relevance comments that have been included in this document have been carefully, albeit subjectively, considered.

### What are the social needs?

A Tourism Needs Assessment which meets the compulsory sustainability guidelines seeks to identify what is *needed* to address and improve tourism activity that improves the quality of life of local people while maintaining or enhancing the natural environment.

The *needs* of local people vary and the ability of individual people and organisations to have their needs met eventually depends on their legal standing to protect or advance those needs. The most clearly defined differences in perceptions and values are between the indigenous and non-indigenous communities.

*“For years it was the white man’s way and aboriginal people were trodden on. Now the pendulum has swung the other way and there is a lot of division in the community.”*

	<p>Within the indigenous communities there are also differences between clan groups and younger and older people.</p> <p><i>“This town (Weipa) is a lot to blame for a lot of disruption to the communities. What’s happened is you’ve got a lot of younger ones coming through that want sustainable development for Weipa. We’ve had the elders promoted to a situation here in Weipa where we can’t vote.</i></p> <p><i>They have to give approval for everything so the younger generation coming through is being stifled because you’ve lifted them up to a degree where they’re not supposed to be. The cultural responsibilities are different from business responsibilities and now you’ve got younger generations coming through with the opportunity of the WCCCA who want to engage, who want to develop. Times are starting to change.”</i></p> <p>With so many varying concepts on what constitutes progress, specifically in respect to tourism, the biggest challenge in development of a sustainable plan will be in paring away the irrelevancies that stand in the way of good communications.</p>
<p><b>What are the economic needs?</b></p>	<p>Any sustainable tourism strategy needs to be profitable in the medium to long term, so any recommendations in terms of the economic aspects of sustainability in this assessment are based on profitability rather than increased numbers of visitors or simply an increase in revenue. This is important anywhere, but even more so in remote destinations where basic community infrastructure and utilities are expensive to establish and maintain and have to be paid for one way or another.</p> <p>Before a strategy can be developed to improve the profitability of tourism to a destination, it is necessary to investigate and understand the reasons why, with appropriate marketing, improved tourism profitability can occur. This involves having an understanding of the needs of the existing and potential tourism client base and successfully marrying the needs of that market with appropriate existing or potential tourism product at the destination.</p>
<p><b>What are the environmental needs?</b></p>	<p>In an area that depends for its tourism success on natural resources and attractions, it is clear that apart from anything else, it is just simply good business sense to preserve and enhance the natural environment. Although the Weipa region is sparsely populated and remote, there are already a number of negative environmental impacts that threaten the amenity of the destination and well structured tourism can become a means to reversing those trends and integrating benignly with the environment for any future tourism development.</p>

## Napranum

### Background



Napranum Beachfront on Weipa Harbour. An idyllic scene, however it is too dangerous to swim because of the risk of crocodile attack and the Napranum community has better tourism options to explore in the short to medium term rather than trying to bring tourists directly into their township.

Napranum DOGIT extends across a number of discrete areas to the south, east and north of Weipa township. The main township is just 8 kms south of Weipa itself on the Embley River.

Napranum was formerly known as Weipa, and was established in 1898 by the Moravian missionaries on behalf of the Presbyterian church. The Protector at the time, Archibald Meston, protested against the mission on the grounds that the people were healthy and could adequately sustain themselves. Despite this the mission went ahead inland near York Downs station to avoid contact with luggers who notoriously kidnapped Aboriginal people to use for their diving operations. In 1932 they had to relocate to Jessica Point, the present site, because of malaria. At this time most of the people were Awngthim but soon people were brought from Mapoon (when it closed) and other communities.

Bauxite was found on the reserve in the 1950s with the Comalco Act of 1958 revoking the reserve status and allowing mining to commence in 1960. The mission became a government settlement in 1966. The company then built a new town for its workers on the other side of the bay. Napranum eventually received DOGIT status, and has its own community council. The Napranum Deed of Grant in Trust (DOGIT) covers 201,447 hectares. The Napranum Community has a population of approximately 789 (as of June 2001), with about 95 per cent of the total population being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin.<sup>2</sup>

### Current Tourism Operations

Existing tourism operations are limited to issuing permits for camping within the Napranum DOGIT.

### Influences on Tourism Operations

#### **Napranum Community Alcohol Management Plan**

Effective from August 2003

The Napranum Community Area is subject to the following alcohol restrictions:

Restricted Area: The Entire Community Area

Exclusions: The Napranum Tavern and Peninsula Development Rd

Liquor Restrictions: The possession of liquor in the restricted area is prohibited.

As the Napranum Tavern is not a tourism facility, the effect of this legislation in terms of tourism is that (apart from the Peninsula Development Road itself), tourists will not be able to carry or consume alcohol anywhere within the Napranum DOGIT. This includes waterways that are bounded by the Napranum DOGIT.



In the interests of representing a dissenting view on the enactment of an Alcohol Management Plan for Napranum in its current form, the following petition to parliament is re-printed here.

### **Petition to Queensland Parliament 30 April 2003**

Because many of the customary recreation places around Weipa are within the Napranum DOGIT, there is opinion among some Weipa residents that the restrictions are too extreme. A petition was presented to Parliament in the following terms. The legislation was not amended but it may be presumed that the amendments recommended would still be favoured by the petitioners.

Principal Petitioner Michael Rowland – 568 signatures.

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland. The petition of electors of the Division of Cook draws to the attention of the House the infringement of the rights of the people of Weipa and the negative impact on tourism and subsequently the economy of Weipa that will occur if the Draft - Napranum Community Alcohol Management Plan (Draft NCAMP) is accepted and implemented. Your petitioners therefore request the House amend or delete the following paragraphs from the Draft NCAMP:

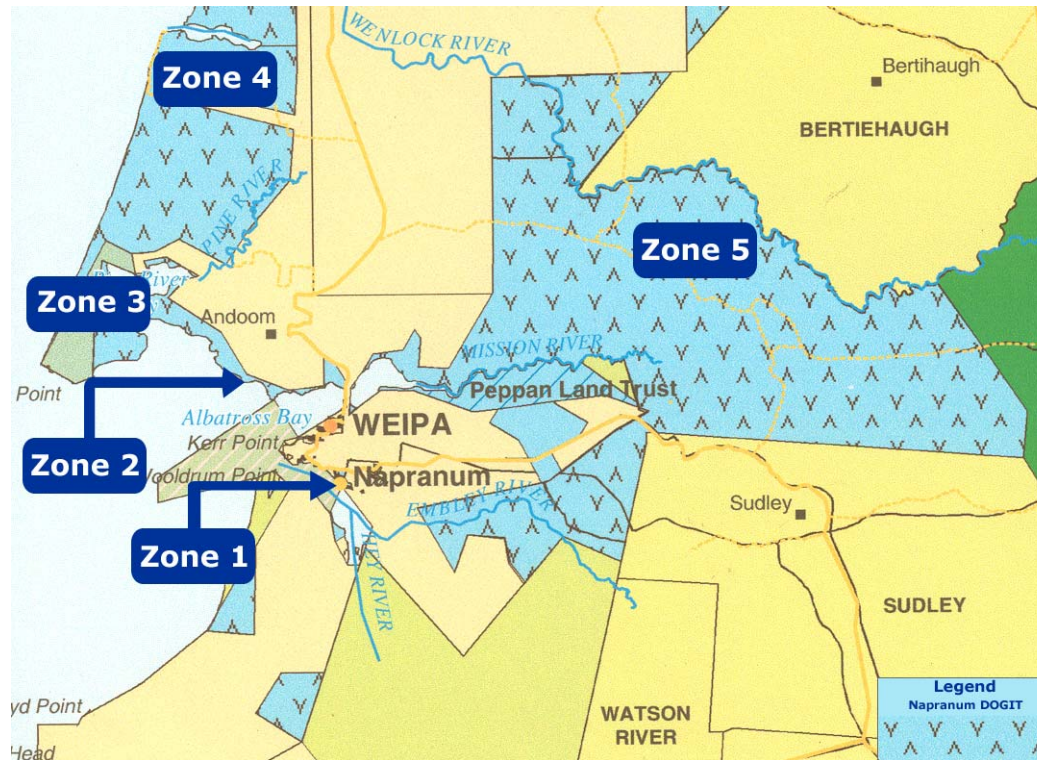
1. That paragraph 1 be amended to read: The Deed of Grant In Trust area of the Napranum Community is to be a dry area with the exception of those recognised camping, fishing and recreation areas, including their access routes. Those areas to be excluded are: Pennefather, Stones Crossing, Red Beach and Bouchat.
2. That paragraph 2.15 is deleted: Unless a map highlighting the identified areas is provided and accepted by the people of Weipa.
3. That paragraph 2.16 is deleted: Restrictions on the sale and consumption of alcohol through Weipa's liquor outlets is an infringement of our rights and is not consistent with other parts of Queensland.
4. That paragraph 2.18 is deleted: Closure of the Shopping Centre liquor outlet will be an inconvenience for the locals and tourists alike. It provides the "one stop" convenience for locals and the 500 campers located in the nearby camping ground. Furthermore, there is no evidence to suggest that this outlet causes problems.

## Future Tourism Options

The Napranum DOGIT is split into a number of discrete areas. For the purposes of this study, they have been identified as Zones 1 through 5.



Roy Jingle – Immediate past Chairperson - Napranum Community Council. Charlie Hudson is the current Chairperson.



## Zone 1 – Napranum Township



Napranum Township



View of Napranum township from Lorim Point

### Description of location

Zone 1 is Napranum Township itself. The turn off to Napranum township is between the airport and Weipa. Melaleuca and pandanus wetlands flank the entrance to the community. Adjacent to the built up area however are extensive parklands and sandy beaches beside the Embley River – Weipa Harbour. There are business enterprises that are operated by a not for profit Napranum owned enterprise company called Nanum Tawap Ltd. This company operates businesses including a sand quarry; block making plant, sewing centre and saw mill.

### Existing tourism resources

There is an area within Napranum Township known as Cultural Grounds. It is a cleared well grassed area fringed by forest. It is not within sight of the sea however. It is the location for the biannual Ruchook Festival and has been suggested as a possible camping ground. There is a good amenities block and good parking.

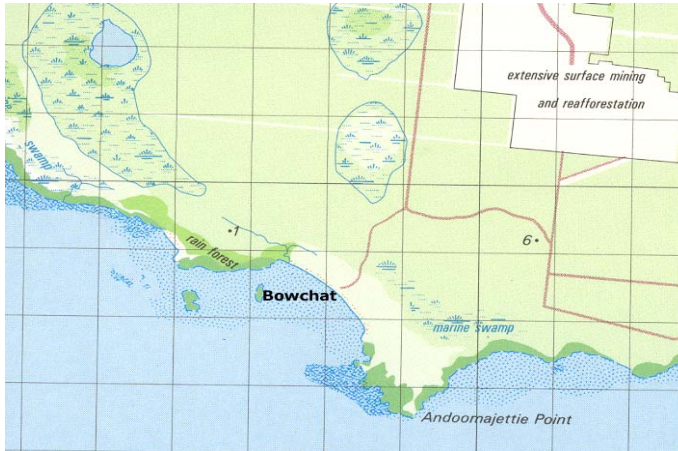
### Recommendations

There are no recommendations for regular tourism within Napranum Township itself. The reasons for this are as follows:

- Because Napranum community owns a number of sites distant from Napranum Township itself, they have a choice as to what are likely to be the best sites to begin tourism operations. Other sites are regarded as having a higher priority than in the township itself.
- The area where the Ruchook Festival takes place has been suggested as a camping ground for 4WD visitors to the Weipa region, it is regarded as unsuitable for general tourism because of its distance from the sea and Weipa Township itself. When tourists have travelled long distances inland and they looking to find a place to camp in a coastal settlement their expectation is that they will be able to camp beside the sea. It is considered that the Ruchook area may be suitable for cultural festivals but not for general tourism.
- Because the Napranum Community Alcohol Management Plan is in effect within the township boundaries, it is considered that this would also be a significant deterrent to visiting campers considering this site.



## Zone 2 – Bowchat



Bowchat is just across Albatross Bay from Weipa



Thancoupie is one of Australia's most renowned artists. She lives in Napranum and hosts Cultural Camps at Bowchat.

### Description of Location

This includes the area known as Bowchat. The area is a wide flat sandy and grassy area facing south and fronting Albatross Bay. It is used by visiting campers to some extent but is best known for being the location where the famous Napranum artist and elder Thancoupie conducts her holiday cultural programs for children.

*"Thancoupie works tirelessly for the Napranum community and she takes a particular interest in arts education for children and young people. Her commitment to educating children about their traditional culture is highlighted by the holiday program run in Weipa. She is a highly respected Elder in her community, and has been involved in the political struggle for native title rights for many years."*<sup>3</sup>

### Existing Tourism Resources and Facilities

There are no tourism facilities at Bowchat. Campers require a permit and then just choose a suitable location and set up camp above the high tide mark.

### Recommendations

This area is clearly of cultural significance to the Thanakwith people and the cultural and art education programs initiated by Thancoupie are important to the enhancement of regional indigenous culture. It is recommended that:

- Consideration be given to the construction of an appropriate accommodation, catering and ablution facilities which will allow these activities to continue and prosper.
- Design and planning will require the skills of professional designers working closely with Thancoupie and her people.
- It is not considered that this area is suitable for general tourism purposes although specialised needs, such as the currently proposed turtle conservation program, may be able to make use of such a facility subject to traditional owner agreement.

### Zone 3 – Duyfken Point Region



Duyfken Point has outstanding prospects



Charles Budby – Community Director Na-Kuraga Limited

### Description of Location

Duyfken Point is around 25 kms WNW of Weipa across Albatross Bay. The point itself faces due South. This location was not visited during the surveys to the region, however it has been described as being an excellent location for a quality fishing lodge and nature based tourism operation by both Napranum people and Weipa fishing guides. It is understood that temporary fishing camps have been established there from time to time in the past.

### Existing Tourism Resources and Facilities

There are no built tourism facilities in the Duyfken Point area and there is no road access.

### Recommendations

Although not visited on the survey, anecdotal comment from a number of interviewees suggests that the region be regarded as being of high priority for any future tourism study or development.

- As this location can only be accessed by sea, it is regarded as essential that any operation established there has a sound marine operations base and infrastructure in Weipa itself. This suggests that any venture partner in this enterprise would need to be a Weipa based business. Even without the benefit of a visit to the location, it would seem that some form of accommodated recreational fishing experience would be an essential element of any proposal.
- Establish the wishes of the relevant indigenous reference group and any other entities which have an interest in the tenure or administration of the location. In particular, the Alcohol Management Plan would need to be amended for this location to permit the approval of a Residential Liquor Licence. A fishing lodge will not succeed without a liquor licence.
- Having regard to the opportunities and constraints afforded by that process, advertise and consult locally for expressions of interest from relevantly qualified local businesses.
- Develop a business plan as a consequence of the preceding initiatives. This may require independent professional mediation and facilitation regarding social, legal and accounting issues.



## Zone 4 – Pennefather Region



The Pennefather River area has been a popular fishing and camping location for Weipa residents and visitors for many years.



Vance Wallin – Carpentaria Contracting – is a typical example of local trade and business experience which can benefit tourism.

### Description of Location

The Pennefather River is around 40 kms north of Weipa on the road to Mapoon. This area was not visited as part of the survey but is known to be a very popular fishing and camping area for all residents of the region and visitors to the area. It is known that the area is of considerable interest to researchers in respect to the natural sciences and there are a number of research projects underway in the area.

### Existing Tourism Resources and Facilities

It can be taken that the natural resources are extensive. There are designated camping places but no infrastructure facilities.

### Recommendations

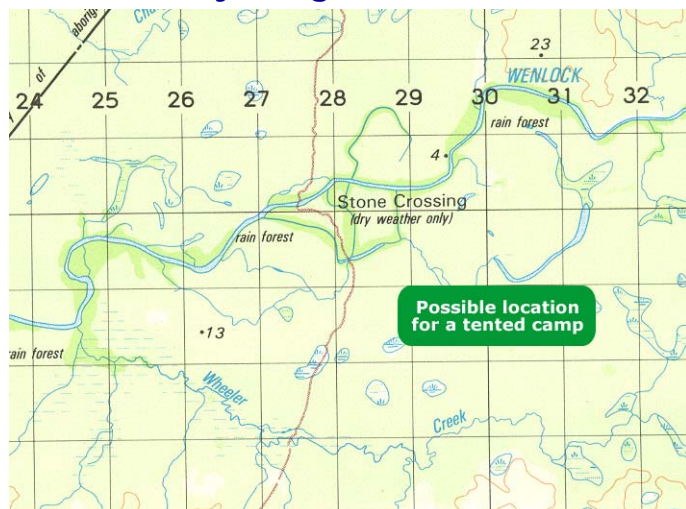
It is recognised that this is an area of important recreational significance to indigenous and non-indigenous residents of Weipa and for 4WD tourists to the region.

- In the first instance, in-principle decisions on how the area should be managed into the future need to be made by the traditional owners and these decisions need to be respected and incorporated into future planning.
- The traditional owners and any other agreed bona fide indigenous reference groups appoint specialist consultants to draw up a comprehensive plan of options for the Pennefather and Pine Rivers area.
- This plan should take account of the traditional needs, recreational needs of Weipa residents and visitors to the region.
- The plan should recognise that the area is large enough to accommodate a diversity of different types of user groups and investigate various access options that may allow for a variety of interests.



This is not to suggest that any or all of these options need to finally go forward, but in the interests of regional social harmony and possibly outstanding economic and employment opportunities into the future, it is considered essential that the decision makers have comprehensive information and recommendations on which they can base their decisions.

## Zone 5 – Billy's Lagoon Station



A few kms by 4WD from Stone Crossing is an outstanding fresh water lagoon teeming with fresh water species. It is considered that a tented camp here would combine well with a permanent fishing lodge at Mapoon



Stone Crossing is the limit of tidal influence in the Wenlock

## Description of Location

Billy's Lagoon Station covers some 170,000 hectares, is largely undeveloped and lays some 80 kms east of Weipa. It is currently managed by the Napranum Aboriginal Community Council (NACC) as Trustees for the indigenous community. In 2003 NACC advertised for Expressions of Interest from any entities interested in operating agricultural or tourism enterprises on the Station in a joint venture or other negotiable arrangement. There was interest both in respect to tourism and various agricultural options including extensive horticulture.

At the time of the writing of this report, one of the agricultural options is being considered but to date no prospective tourism proposals are likely to be accepted. It is thought that the right blend of agricultural and tourism interests can work well together on this property.

Billy's Lagoon is typical of the great sprawling cattle stations of Cape York Peninsula and other parts of remote Australia. It does, however, have a number of other significant advantages.

- It has access to 60 kms of the permanently flowing Wenlock River along its northern boundary.
- Being in the monsoonal latitudes of Cape York Peninsula, the property receives bountiful wet season rains which give rise to permanent fresh water lagoons and promote a variety of ecosystems from rainforest through to dry sclerophyll and savannahs.
- Although remote from large metropolitan areas in a geographical sense, it is only a one hour flight from Cairns either direct to the property by light aircraft or by QantasLink to Weipa and a one hour drive from Weipa.
- One of the areas of particular interest for fishing tourism is a lagoon adjacent to the Wenlock River in the northern part of the station close to Stone's Crossing. This lagoon is regarded as an ideal place for fishing for many fresh water species such as Saratoga and Barramundi. It could link in very well with a fishing lodge which is being recommended for Mapoon.
- Subject to agreement by the Traditional Owners, there are also large numbers of feral pigs and cattle on the property that could be hunted.

## Recommendations

It is considered that Billy's Lagoon is a critical part of the tourism resource base in the Weipa region. It is recommended that:

- The long lagoon adjacent to the Wenlock River upstream of Stone Crossing, possibly known as Bushman's Hole, be recognized in particular as being important to future tourism needs and be set aside for that purpose.
- Consideration be given to constructing a seasonal tented bush camp on the southern bank of the lagoon which would more than likely comprise tents on timber platforms. This camp should





Boydie Heinemann – Billy's Lagoon Station Manager at a possible location for a tented camp



A visit to Billy's Lagoon can be a diverse experience

tie in with the proposed Mapoon Fishing Lodge and initially be an add-on to that experience. Guests would fly in, boat up the Wenlock to Stone Crossing and transfer by 4WD from there or drive in from the Peninsula Development Road. The reason that it is being recommended initially as a pre or post Mapoon Fishing Lodge experience, is that the area is comparatively remote and setting up infrastructure for long term stays would be an expense risk until the market has been properly assessed. The investment needed for a bush camp, where most guests stay just one or two nights, is regarded as reasonable and feasible.

- Pig and other feral animal hunting be considered.
- Unique cattle station activities, observing the catching of scrub bulls, be made available for guests. There may be public liability insurance issues to consider here and premiums would need to be weighed against the benefits.
- A cruise down the Wenlock River from upstream be made available from May through to July or whenever the river stays at a suitable height for the activity.
- It be recognised that at some time in the future it may be that a general camping area be made available on the banks of the Wenlock.
- Consideration be given to exempting an appropriate area from the Napranum Alcohol Management Plan to allow for the consumption of alcohol by guests only.

## Mapoon

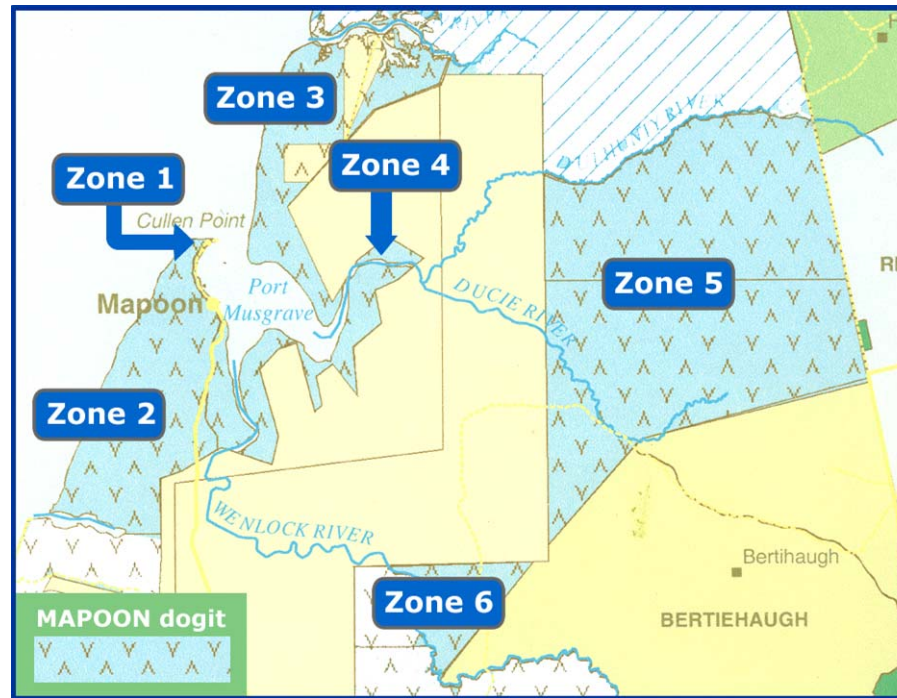
### Background



This now abandoned house survived the burning of the houses in 1963. Charred house stumps nearby are a reminder of the events of that period.



This is the mission site at Cullen Point. The original mission building stood until termites claimed it in 1991.



Mapoon is located north of Weipa on the western side of Cape York. In the 1950s, bauxite discovery led to mining leases being granted to mining companies. The Comalco Act of 1958 revoked reserve status and allowed mining on the Mapoon reserve. The mission announced closure and residents were instructed to move elsewhere, but many refused to go. In 1963, the Department of Native Affairs deployed police to burn down houses and remove people to New Mapoon at the tip of Cape York.

From the early 1970s, people started to return to the site, which became known as Old Mapoon or Marpuna. With the council elections in March 2000, Mapoon was formally recognised as a DOGIT community.

Mapoon is situated approximately 960 kilometres north west of Cairns, with the last stretch consisting of an all year access road, a distance of 86 kilometres from Weipa on the Gulf of Carpentaria.

Mapoon was Deed of Grant in Trust (DOGIT) declared in 1998 and is held by a group of nominated trustees. An August 2001 Census stated that 197 persons gave their address of usual residence as Marpuna Community with about 92 per cent of the total population being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin.

Mapoon community is situated on the traditional lands of the Tjungundji people. A church mission commenced near Trathalarrakwana (unconfirmed spelling of a Tjungundji word meaning





Jason Pfingst is CEO of Mapoon Aboriginal Council



The new Mapoon Council building is just one of a number of infrastructure improvements within the community.

'Barramundi story place') or Cullen Point on 28 November 1891. Mapoon Mission was established under the name Batavia River Mission by Moravian missionaries on behalf of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, with Queensland Government financial assistance, on land reserved by the Government under the Crown Lands Act of 1884.

Within a few years the mission became known as Mapoon, a Tjungundji word meaning 'place where people fight on the sand-hills'. Mapoon is also known as Marpuna. As the influence of the mission widened in the surrounding lands, the reserve was extended south to the Mission River near Weipa. Some of the traditional owner groups who eventually came to live at Mapoon included the Mpakwithi, Taepithiggi, Thaynhakwith, Warrangku, Wimarangga and Yupungathi people.

For about the next thirty years, many mixed-descent children were removed from their families on stations and towns, such as Burketown, Croydon and Normanton, in the Gulf country and sent to Mapoon to be raised by the missionaries. Many of these removed people were also "adopted" by the traditional owners to give them a safe home in traditional country which was foreign to them.

To assist the missionaries to train Aboriginal people in agriculture, carpentry and other pursuits, South Sea Island people were brought in to the mission from Samoa, the New Hebrides (now Vanuatu) and the Solomon Islands. Some of their descendants, along with the descendants of Aboriginal people removed from the Gulf region, live in the Mapoon community today.

Between 1954 and 1963, a number of reasons were advanced by the Presbyterian Church for the proposed closure of the mission, including unavailability of local alternative land sites, lack of water supplies, poor soils for agriculture, low potential for alternative industry and the need to assimilate Aboriginal people into Australian society. By June 1963, the Australian Presbyterian Board of Missions had reduced these reasons to three, namely 'poor accessibility in loading and unloading boats; poor communication on land because of heavy sand and indifferent soil for gardening. Both the Presbyterian Church administration and the Queensland Government refused to listen to the people's requests to keep operating the mission or to move it to a place of the people's choosing.<sup>4</sup>



## Current Tourism Operations



Cullen Point camp ground faces south east and there is a boat ramp adjacent to the camp site.



Some fishermen return year after year.

## Camping Ground – Cullen Point

Mapoon Community Council operates a camping ground at Cullen Point. Port Musgrave and the rivers and seas around Cullen Point provide some of the best fishing in Australia and the area has been popular for many decades as a place to set up a bush camp and enjoy the remoteness and the superb fishing.

The actual site is 6 kms north of Mapoon Community itself and the on-site ranger's house is adjacent to the area. There is a boat launching ramp and the National Heritage Trust has recently invested in environmental measures to protect the foreshores and control usage of the area.

The cost for campers is \$30 per vehicle per week and \$5 per person per night (as advertised on the community website). It is reported that turnover in the year ending 2002 was approximately \$20,000. There is no doubt that the area has a strong following in north Queensland generally with local fishermen from the Cairns area and further south often planning annual trips there in the dry season. It is also very popular with Weipa fishermen. There are basic toilet facilities provided.

It is suggested that any future tourism strategy for Mapoon objectively assesses the nett financial returns to the community from the operation of the camping ground so that decisions can be made based on the real return.

Given the indicated annual turnover, it would seem unlikely that the operation would return a nett profit. Profit may not be a priority for this business but it needs to be addressed so that future investment decisions for the community on how to allocate available development funds are based on sound data.

Typically, most fishermen who are heading to remote locations to fish for upwards of a week or two usually carry relatively large quantities of alcohol.



With the Alcohol Management Plan being implemented in Mapoon on April 14, 2004, this will undoubtedly discourage many fishermen from camping at Mapoon. Even if the Community Justice Group is successful in persuading the government to increase the carriage limits, it is still very unlikely that even these higher limits will meet the needs of the majority of fishermen who use this site. Typically, fishermen going away together and camping in remote locations take a considerable amount of alcohol. That is part of the 'culture' of the experience.

## Influences on tourism options



Steven Madua will be starting work around about the time that the WCCCA Lump sum of approx \$120m will become available. What tourism infrastructure and cultural, social and natural environments will exist in Mapoon by that time to ensure a balance between employment opportunities and quality of life?



What can be done now in the way of tourism development that will provide young Mapoon men and women with interesting, rewarding work choices at the community?

## Town Planning and Carrying Capacity

Maintaining a comfortable level of privacy within the township itself and 'community only' access to certain areas has been indicated as being a priority into the future. The natural values and fishing popularity of the Mapoon Peninsula are such that it can be anticipated that, as the years go by, more and more 4WD visitors to the Cape will wish to access Mapoon – even without any publicity or promotion.

The community can make decisions now that will affect the quality of life for future generations of Mapoon people. This report will be recommending that a future study takes account of the quality of life of Mapoon people into the future in a way that presents a full option of relevant scenarios. Employment and economic advancement is critical but Mapoon people do have control over how that happens so that the cultural and natural values of their community are maintained or enhanced.

## Alcohol Management Plan

Alcohol restrictions were introduced into Mapoon on 14 April 2004. From that date, the carriage of alcohol in the community was restricted to 9 litres (one standard carton/24 cans) of light or mid-strength beer, and 2 litres of wine.

Unlike many of the other Cape York communities that have introduced Alcohol Management Plans in accordance with the recommendations of the relevant Community Justice Groups, in the case of Mapoon, the government decided to enforce a lower carriage of alcohol limit than that recommended by the local Community Justice Group. This has resulted in the Mapoon Community Justice Group, together with other groups and individuals, appealing against these regulations.

In reality, tourism is the only possible profitable enterprise that can have a large economic benefit to this community into the future and, as will be seen further in this report, that could be a significant industry indeed both in terms of employment and stimulation of associated independent business enterprises. Should the restrictions imposed from 14 April 2004 remain in force unamended, it is unlikely that even quality lodge style tourism enterprises, requiring a Residential Liquor Licence, are likely to be approved as transporting inventory to the property would be illegal.



If this study is to examine all of the tourism possibilities, it needs to assume that there will be some amendments that will take place in the future to allow for the granting of Residential Liquor Licences without which there is no prospect of meaningful, profitable tourism development and employment.

## Future Tourism Options



Peter Guivarra – Chairperson Mapoon Community Council and Chairperson of the Western Cape Regional Consultative Group



Senior Ranger Laurie Booth lives adjacent to the Cullen Point Camping Ground.

*"Though only a small community we have responsibility for over 183,000 hectares of DOGIT land. Our primary aim is a safe, healthy and prosperous community. We are committing ourselves to the future through our emphasis on programs for young people.*

*We have a strong commitment to living on our traditional lands and making a future for our children and grandchildren. Our history has been hard at times, but the strength and vision of our elders has ensured that we never lost sight of our connection to this country. We have a beautiful piece of land, rich in natural and cultural resources. Many visitors come to enjoy this piece of paradise and we are pleased that we can open our country and our culture to these people."*

*Peter Guivarra – Mapoon Aboriginal Council Annual Report 2002*

## General

When considering tourism options that meet benchmark standards in terms of profit and social and environmental considerations, it is clearly essential to marry the product effectively to its market. As has been mentioned elsewhere in this report in regard to the Western Cape generally, there are effectively only two tourism markets (plus a major sub-market which will be addressed later) for Mapoon. Those markets are the 4WD tour/self drive or the fly-in sports fishermen. There is no quantifiable market or potential market between these two for the foreseeable future. The self drive/accompanied market has an average spend of between \$50 and \$150 per person per day and the fly-in market has an average spend of between \$500 and \$1,000 per day.

Whatever market is catered for, the business servicing that market needs to generate enough revenue to provide a foundation for profitability. Most commonly in the travel industry this means that, in general terms, if the business is dealing with low numbers of customers then the unit cost has to be high and if it is dealing with high numbers of customers then the unit cost can be low.

At Mapoon, the self drive market is already being serviced by the Cullen Point Camping Ground and any future tourism study should objectively examine its contribution to profitability and employment and what future investment may be required in the way of infrastructure and other costs to meet the needs of this market. This study has no further recommendations in respect to the camping ground except to note that typically, the cost of profitability in this sort of enterprise is going to mean either significantly increasing the number of visitors or significantly increasing the camping charges.



## Zone 1 – Cullen Point



This is one of Australia's best fishing locations



Fishing Lodge site survey party assessing a number of possible locations along Cullen Point in September 2003.

## Description of Location

Cullen Point is the northernmost point of the Mapoon peninsula. It is approximately 6 kilometres north of Mapoon township itself. The eastern (Red Beach) side forms the western shore of Port Musgrave into which the Ducie and Wenlock Rivers flow and north of the township the peninsula is around 2 kilometres in width. Long wide sandy beaches extend all around the peninsula. The rivers that flow into Port Musgrave are 'sand rivers' and there are coral reefs offshore. This is a distinctly different marine regime from the extensive mangrove mud shores found further south along the Western Cape. One of the most noticeable legacies of this is that the beaches are turtle rookeries at the appropriate time of year.

The Mapoon Peninsula generally is just a few metres above sea level and extensive fresh water melaleuca and pandanus wetlands extend through the centre and along the western shores. Birdlife is prolific with resident populations depending on migratory patterns and seasonal conditions. Feral horses and pigs are in large numbers as well as native macropods and reptiles.

When considered in conjunction with the rich indigenous culture of the area, Mapoon has quite outstanding values for visitors from all natural and human history perspectives.

## Recommendations

The only areas visited on the Mapoon survey were the township itself, the northern and eastern shores of Cullen Point and part of the wetlands. So while it is recommended that any future study consider the Mapoon DOGIT in its entirety, these detailed recommendations have been limited to a Fishing Lodge at Mapoon as this particular project has been identified by Mapoon people as having a priority.

- It is recommended that an appropriately experienced consultant be appointed to implement the construction of a Fishing Lodge at Cullen Point.



Traditional Owners, Mapoon Community Council, Department of Primary Industries, Tourism Queensland and Felan Consulting meet and discuss possible site for new Fishing Lodge.



Tjungundji Traditional Owner Alma Day expresses her approval for a Fishing Lodge to be built at this location.

### ***Mapoon Lodge - Site and Location***

- Discussions on site with Traditional Owners indicate that at least one appropriate beach front site is available. It is the opinion that this site is suitable for any quality of lodge agreed on. It may be taken that the project has in-principle approval from Mapoon Community Council and the Traditional Owners, subject to agreement on the detail of any final proposals and designs.
- Given that the quality of the natural location, its atmosphere and practical suitability is established, the next thing to consider is its proximity to a viable market. This tourism needs assessment base document doesn't have the resources, or the brief, to conduct extensive product/market research for individual projects; however in the interests of responsibly expediting this project, the concept of building a lodge at Mapoon is explored in more detail here.

*"More general trends include an increase in demand from consumers seeking more boutique or personalised services whether it be upmarket lodge-style accommodation or chauffeured day touring."<sup>5</sup>*

*Current Research – Western Australian Tourism Commission*





A 50 seat QantasLink Dash 8-300 flies from Cairns to Weipa every day of the week with two flights on five days and one flight on the other two days of the week providing a total weekly return capacity of 600 seats per week. Flight time is one hour forty minutes and a typical return fare booked a few weeks in advance is AUD\$350 and a fully flexible fare is AUD\$472 return as at April 2004.



Mapoon and Billy's Lagoon both have good quality light aircraft landing strips. There are excellent light aircraft charter services out of Cairns and this is another arrival option for a group of guests travelling together. It is also a convenient airstrip for the Royal Flying Doctor Service should a patient require transportation direct to Cairns rather than to Weipa Hospital.

### *Mapoon Lodge – Proximity to Market*

- It is suggested that a Mapoon Lodge experience that is tailored to its markets will be successful. Here are some examples of identified viable markets for Mapoon Lodge:
  - A significant proportion of the existing sportfishing market that is already visiting Weipa and pays up to \$5,000 for one week all inclusive - excluding flights.
  - A new domestic corporate market that would use the destination if the necessary accommodation standards and overall experience could be delivered. This business would be typical of the business currently being serviced by Cape Don on the Cobourg Peninsula.
  - A small, but important, proportion of the high end incentive market which stays in Port Douglas. This business would typically be sourced through companies like Managing Australian Destinations.
  - The international sportfishing/hunting market similar to that business currently enjoyed by New Zealand. This market is relatively easy to identify and access and is not price sensitive.
  - The high end of the nature based lodge market such as that serviced by a number of niche Australian inbound operators. Abercrombie and Kent, Air Cruising Australia and Australia Less Travelled would be typical sources of this business.
  - Rio Tinto/Comalco visiting executives and their colleagues for some quality recreation to coincide with their business visits.
  - Personalised Cape York fishing safaris such as operated by Dennis Wallace of Brazakka Helicopters.
  - An excellent stand-by market of Weipa residents and 4WD Cape York travellers who will stay if the quality of experience can be delivered and the stand-by price is within their budget.



"A mothership is a lodge that floats and 'Eclipse' wears that mantle proudly. A brilliant operation. Very professional, and I will fish with them anytime." – (Author/photographer – John Mondora)



The western side of Cape York Peninsula enjoys spectacular sunsets over the Gulf of Carpentaria. Guests staying at a water front lodge in this location can enjoy this timeless pleasure. Given that most of the market is east coast domestic where people see sunrises, this in itself is an extra dimension to the complete fishing experience that they can only fully enjoy at a purpose built nature based lodge on the waterfront.

### **Mapoon Lodge – Professional Local Opinion 1**

*Dick Foster – Eclipse*

*"I looked at it 6 years ago. You can see the potential. I'm not a dreamer. Whatever we do we're pretty positive about and we're pretty cautious about it too. We'd like to express our interest and what is being proposed is more than interesting."*

*"We only take 6 guests. Partially guided is \$3,000 and fully guided is \$4,000 per person for 7 days. Our business is running at 100%. We operate from February through to December. Clientele is 95% domestic. We don't involve ourselves in hunting. We are more the ecotourism style of things. We'll take people into the wetlands on the Skardon ..... I'm not interested in hunting."*

*"We had two whale watching boats in Hervey Bay including Eclipse which has been operating since 1981. I was involved in the Hyatt in Sydney for 12 years. I owned the maintenance company that contracted to Hyatt and Birkenhead Point in Sydney. We now have a lot of money tied up in the boat and business so we are looking to do things here."*

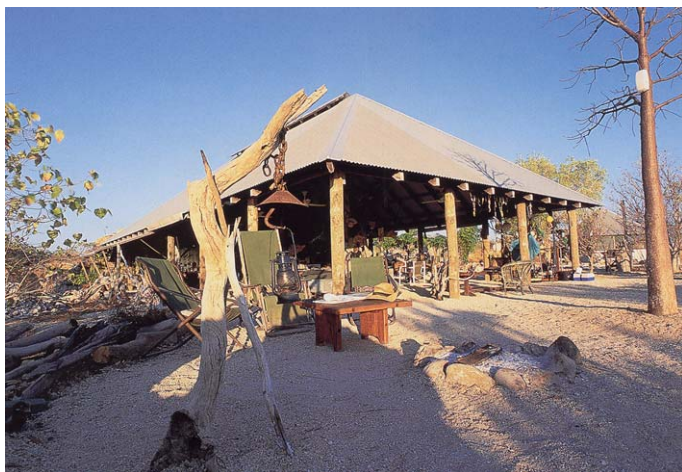
*"We fish the northern rivers. Mapoon lends itself for a number of reasons. I see Mapoon as probably an ideal location. Mapoon has got the access that you need. It's got an airport. You have a good community. You could grow a business there. I don't think that it would be too difficult but with the approval of the key people there."*

*"The obvious site is Cullen Point. It is there. It is established. It is scenic. I see this as not being 100% fishing. It's an area that lends itself to environmental stuff as well for both traditional owners and an operator. We see things like accessing the forest and perhaps an 18 seat boat. I've been fortunate enough to be over it a couple of times in a helicopter and it's an incredible area. It's a beautiful area."*

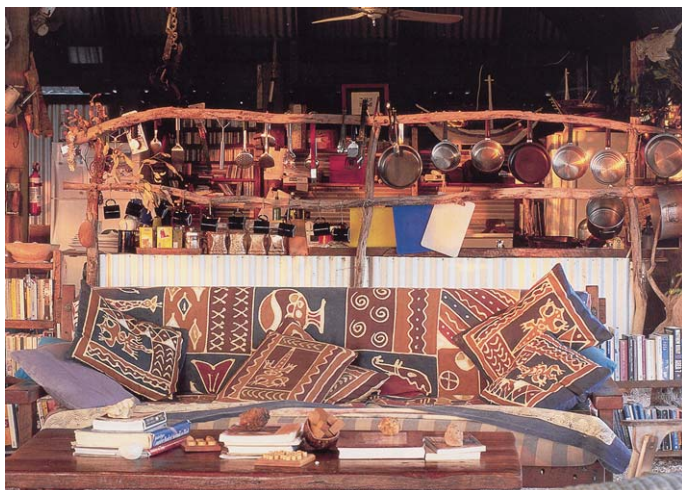
*"We still want to do mother shipping and a base at Mapoon interests us greatly."*







The central guest area at Kimberley Coastal Camp is a large open shelter called "The Shed". "The shed serves as the social nucleus of the camp, seamlessly combining the functions of kitchen, dining room, bar, office, library, fishing tackle room, observation deck, lounge and general meeting room." (Outback in Style – story and photo by Michael Gebicki)



"Décor at the camp comprises an eclectic mix of fishing tackle, books and objects cast up by the sea." (Outback in Style – story and photo by Michael Gebicki). A Mapoon Fishing Lodge could introduce a strong indigenous theme into the lodge.

## Mapoon Lodge – Professional Local Opinion 2

Dave Philliskirk – Weipa Fly Fishing

*"My vision of the thing was that if and when Mapoon ever got a lodge going with some sort of accommodation we could utilise that. I'm looking at opening my scope up instead of just fishing out of Weipa and Albatross Bay."*

*"All we need is good comfortable accommodation, a central large area where you can socialise, drink and have a dinner or whatever. Accommodation that may be just slightly divorced from that."*

*"We would need mosquito screening. Maybe the kitchen at one end and a big central area where you can sit around a huge table or whatever and socialise and talk about what's happened during the day and maybe a little porch out the front. You know a little verandah where people can sit outside and have a smoke if they want to and a deck chair or some way you can lounge around but we also need facilities for boats. We need some sort of all weather boat ramp. We need wash down facilities for the boats. Storage facilities that is secure."*

*"If something did happen up at Mapoon and it was a viable operation then I would be quite happy to build another boat or whatever and place operators there because as soon as you open that up there you have got more options."*

*"I've got quite a varied market to be honest with you. The majority of my clients are up market clients. They are professional people but I've also got quite a few who save up for the fishing trip of their life too. I do a package deal which is meals, accommodation and fishing and the rate per person on a twin share basis is generally around \$450 per day."*

*Question via consultant: "So if you said to all of your current clients. "Look something new has come up. We now have high quality lodge style accommodation at Mapoon and we are going to operate from there, how many of your clients do you think would be happy to switch to an experience like that rather than stay in Weipa?"*

*"I'd say, I don't know, maybe 40% to 50% probably. The other half would probably prefer to stay in Weipa because they know the Weipa fishing and Weipa itself and can go out to dinner at the Bowls Club or the Golf Club or the Albatross. They can eat wherever they want to eat. Some of them do that."*





Photo titled "It's not all fishing" - Weipa Fly Fishing Photo Gallery.



"Yes. I mean you can stick a fly rod onto the back of a 4WD bike and take off down the beach and "oh ... there's a bunch of fish. Have a cast and then run along a little bit further and see a bit more. Go down to Janie Creek or whatever and yes, you could have hire boats there. I think that it would be a good thing to have hire-boats there." – Dave Philliskirk.

*"The thing about a facility as proposed for Mapoon is that it is all part of the experience. At the current Weipa accommodation they are divorced from the experience. Yes the Weipa resorts will cook their catch for them and yes they can talk fishing amongst themselves but there's a whole lot of other people sitting at other tables that have nothing to do with what they're doing and that's the difference."*

*"I think that these ideas are terrific for Mapoon."*

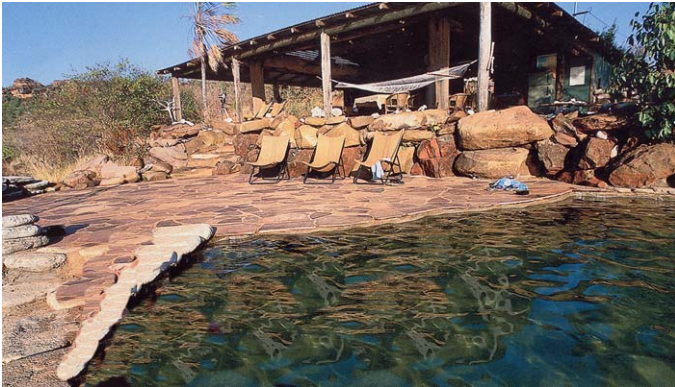
*"Staff accommodation needs to be good as staff are going to be there for a long time. Staff could be there for months. Most of my clients come in for at least a week so they are there for at least a full week and then we might have a day off and then another week. It would have to be comfortable. Similar to the SPQ in Weipa would be good."*

*"5 small cabins by two pax I assume you mean. That'd be good if they were very exclusive. I know how the fishing industry is at the moment and there are so many people out there who have done the Russell Kenny thing. They've done Liverpool River and they've done the Coburg Peninsula. They've done it all and every year they like to go somewhere else and a new camp is always ... 'let's try that'. So there's always a market out there. If you can provide the standard of accommodation and a standard of service you'll always find a market for it. If it's up there it doesn't matter what the cost is. If it's all relative you'll kill it."*

*Question via consultant: "Why do you think no one has started another lodge this side of Pajinka?"*

*"Too hard. How would anybody start a lodge? I told you. I had the best people rooting for me. I had \$300,000 ready to go to start something. I couldn't get it off the ground. I spent nearly two years on it. I couldn't get it off the ground because nobody could make decisions. In the end the investors got sick of bashing their head against the wall and said, 'I think we should forget it'."*





The Bush Camp at Faraway Bay in the North Kimberley is a good example of how to successfully integrate the natural environment with a remote tourism experience. The 6 night all inclusive package including fishing ex Kununurra is \$4,025 per person. (photo by Michael Gebicki)



The dining experience shouldn't be formal service but it should have a distinctive style which blends with the location.

### ***Mapoon Lodge – Design Considerations***

As will be seen further in this report, it is recommended that the operator of the Lodge (in conjunction with the ultimately appointed local indigenous entity) will have input, from the beginning, into the design and operation of the lodge and its associated services. For the purposes of advancing discussion however a few suggestions are made here:

- On the evidence available, the known prime market for the Mapoon Lodge is the sportfishing market. As with any market demographic however, there are variations within that market segment in terms of budget and preferences. While no product can be “all things to all men”, it is regarded as essential that the needs of the primary target market are satisfied completely before the needs of the other markets are met.
- It is suggested that the sportfishing attractions of the region and the proposed general location of the lodge are such that a lodge designed and built to the appropriate standard will attract the high end of the sportfishing market in sufficient numbers to make the enterprise viable.
- Building up to the standard required to meet this market, comparatively, is not as expensive in terms of construction and fit-out as it would be if the top end of the leisure market was being targeted. In other words we are not talking about “gold taps and marble”. It is suggested that the lodge may comprise the following elements:
  - Recognising the indigenous heritage and responding to it within the design vernacular in a mature way. The design needs to reflect the ‘sense of place’, and communicate it to guests from the time they first hear of the property until they return home.
  - Air conditioning. It is essential that guest rooms are air conditioned as well as at least one shared space.
  - Spaciousness. Guest rooms and living areas need to be generous in size.
  - Bathrooms – all ensuite. No ‘gold taps’ but good size and fit-out.
  - All building materials need to be robust and natural.
  - A swimming pool of appropriate design. It is suggested that this pool is more likely to be a place where guests just relax and sip a drink rather than be an active ‘swimming type’ pool. Subject to pool size and power generation costs, consideration should be given to cooling the water to a comfortable temperature. This is a point of difference that would feature well in the media reviews of the property and may have appeal to stand-by guests from Weipa – especially in summer.
  - One of the advantages of the ‘lodge’ concept is that it is possible to build all of the accommodation and catering facilities within the one structure. There are considerable savings in construction and operating costs in this design style compared to building individual cabins. The recommended design would be a two storey structure. Some



	<p>advantages include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Much lower plumbing installation and maintenance costs</li><li>➤ Much lower electrical installation and maintenance costs</li><li>➤ Better central air conditioning management</li><li>➤ Much lower per guest room construction costs</li><li>➤ More efficient, easier and lower housekeeping costs</li><li>➤ Better weather protection for guests</li><li>➤ Better security</li><li>➤ More efficient catering service in any weather</li><li>➤ More space to create the 'sense of place' and lodge atmosphere</li></ul>
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Cape Don on the Cobourg Peninsula in the Northern Territory is an example of a product tailored to its client base and expertly marketed domestically and internationally. The 7 night fishing package ex Darwin is \$4,925 per person on a twin share basis.

It is suggested that because of Cape York's proximity to the much busier and more flexible Cairns tourism and fishing activity base, that there are even more market opportunities for well resourced, designed and operated Western Cape product providing it is marketed and operated as well as properties like Cape Don.

Average flight costs from southern cities to Cairns are around \$200 per person cheaper than to Darwin and flights from Cairns to Weipa and Darwin to the Cobourg Peninsula are similar.



Aerial View of Cape Don

# CAPE DON

Cobourg Peninsula  
Northern Territory

*"Fishing as wild and untouched as the area"*



Packages (Per Person)	*Quad share	Triple share	Twin share	Single
<b>3 Nights</b> Wednesday to Saturday	\$1825	\$2125	\$2425	\$3250
<b>4 Nights</b> Saturday to Wednesday	\$2250	\$2650	\$3050	\$4150
<b>7 Nights</b> Saturday to Saturday	\$3525	\$4225	\$4925	\$6850
<b>Daily Rates</b>	\$425	\$525	\$625	\$900

- Rates valid from 1st April 2004 to 31st March 2005
- Rates includes GST
- All the above package prices include airfare ex Darwin return, all meals, park entry permits, personal guided fishing and wildlife tours, modern fully equipped boats, 4WD excursions and fishing tackle on a replace if lost or damaged basis.
- Sat and Wed flights depart Darwin at 15:30pm and return to Darwin at approx. 17:30pm. A surcharge of \$100 p/p may apply if flights are requested outside the regular flight schedule.
- \* Quad share is 4 to a boat and twin share accommodation
- **Please Note:** The Lodge is closed January and February each year.

## SPECIAL OFFERS

- Eco-tour, non fishing packages also available for \$425 p/p per day. (min 2 pax)

### MAPOON LODGE Typical relevant flow chart

This flow chart presumes that Mapoon Lodge will be able to acquire a Residential Liquor Licence, without which it is not considered that this or any similar project will be viable.



Develop Terms of Reference for consultancy and appoint consultant.



Appoint project solicitor and accountant.



Secure in principle approval from Traditional Owners and Mapoon Community Council in respect to the fundamental business relationship between the landlord and the operator.



Establish Local Ownership Entity and incorporate.

### *Mapoon Lodge – Best Business Model*

Operating an accommodation facility of any type requires relevant knowledge and experience. In the case of a Sportfishing Lodge, it is a specialist skill that requires an intimate understanding of the Sportfishing culture which can only be gained through long association with, and experience in, that particular industry.

Sportfishing may be Mapoon's most profitable and amenable industry into the future and Mapoon people, through this lodge, have the opportunity to learn the full range of diverse skills associated with this industry on site; at home. It is an exciting, interesting and rewarding business conducted in a natural and sustainable environment. It is likely to be an excellent fit with the future aspirations of a community like Mapoon and the prospect of enabling a profitable mainstream industry like this within the community, with other locally independently owned businesses servicing relevant aspects should be attractive.

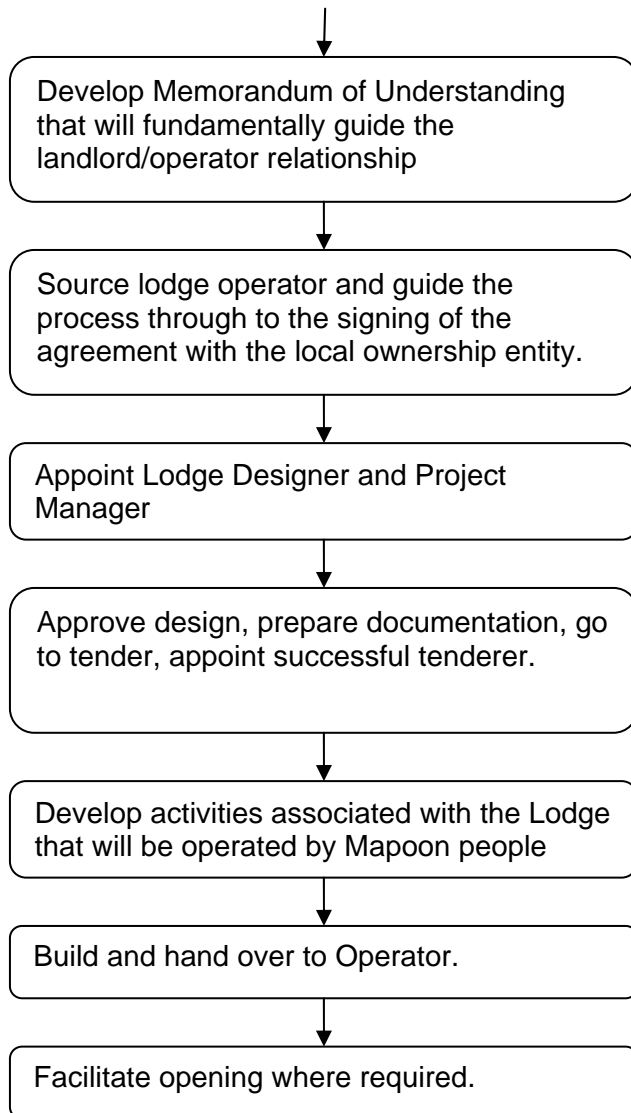
The management and operational skills do not yet exist within the community, so it is suggested that, if such a venture is to proceed, a Memorandum of Understanding and Business Plan needs to be developed that will satisfy the aspirations of the relevant community individuals and reference entities and those of a suitably qualified operator.

This is a critical part of the Fishing Lodge consultancy as it needs to successfully facilitate and negotiate the balance between the interests of the Traditional Owners, Mapoon Community Council and the successful Lodge operator while delivering the best possible outcome into the future for the community generally.

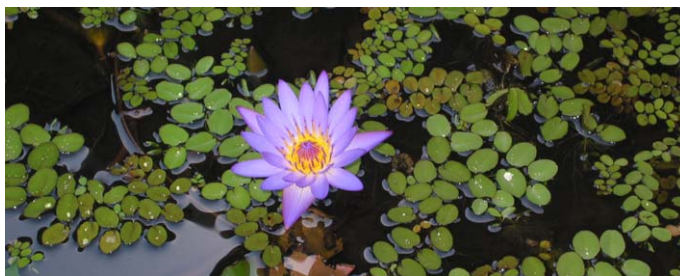
Any operator that is likely to meet the standards required for an operation such as this is going to consider the investment decision based on diligent and prudent business principles. This means that they will be looking for a fair return on their investment and an appropriate tenure arrangement. While it would be part of the Terms of Reference of the consultancy to address this matter thoroughly, it may be assumed that in order to attract a quality operator, the leasing entity (whatever that finally is) probably needs to be prepared to consider leases in the order of 15 to 20 years. Returns to the operating entity may be a rental plus percentage of turnover or some other equitable arrangement.

In return, the operator would be expected to meet certain benchmarks in terms of training and assistance in providing business to independent Mapoon people who may wish to provide services to guests in any number of ways including, guiding, boat tours, ATV tours, bus transfers, provision of seafood and other foods, entertainment, arts and crafts and other possibilities.





## Zone 2 – Mapoon Peninsula



Wetlands = birdlife, biodiversity, stories = ecotourism

### Description of Location

Apart from the township itself, the main road and Batavia Landing, this area was not visited in any detail during the survey. It is understood however that it comprises wattle and eucalypt woodlands, grasslands, wetlands and creeks including Janie Creek.

The eastern boundary is the Wenlock River which is wide and rich in marine and riparian biodiversity including significant numbers of crocodiles. The river itself is navigable for up 40 kms upstream.

### Recommendations

This area needs to be included in the overall tourism and town planning strategy for the community so that future community access needs can be balanced against tourism needs.

It may be that parts of Zone 2 are suitable for wetlands walks and ATV excursions. It is suggested that, should this be the case, an ATV and/or walking tour be developed that is operated by Mapoon guides. It is self evident that it should only be Mapoon guides who operate this type of tourism experience. They know their land and they know their stories. For a good tourism operation to work however it also requires equal understanding of the people who will be booking on these tours. Good tour guiding is a skill that requires equal understanding of the subject and the audience. There are now a number of successful indigenous walking tours operated by people like Hazel Douglas at Mossman, Willie Gordon at Hope Vale and the Walker sisters at Wujal Wujal.

There is also convenient access to the Wenlock River and it is possible that sightseeing cruises could be operated on the river. The feasibility of this option could not be determined without in-depth research and attention to Mapoon's target markets.



One of the critical elements of a sustainable natural experience, such as is possible at Mapoon, is to ensure that the experiences are not trivialised. This can take many forms including obtrusive signwriting, gimmicky names on tourism product such as crocodile cruise boats and contextually incongruous tour content. This approach can permanently compromise and devalue the qualities of a natural destination.

### Zone 3 – Skardon River Region



Cullen Point is just 4 kms across the bay from the sandy beaches leading up to the Skardon River. Note the extensive mangroves lining Namaleta Creek.

## Description of Location

This area was not visited during the survey. It is approximately 4 kms across the bay from Cullen Point. In effect, it is the entrance to Port Musgrave and the Wenlock River. Sandy beaches extend for approximately 20 kms up to the mouth of the Skardon River and kaolin mining takes place on eastern side of the area, with the Skardon River itself used to access the mining areas.

Just inland of the beach is an extensive mangrove system up to 12 kilometres in length parallel with the beach and draining, via Namaleta Creek, into Port Musgrave. This creek and its associated swamps is no doubt an important nursery habitat for all marine species that depend on this type of regime during their life cycle.

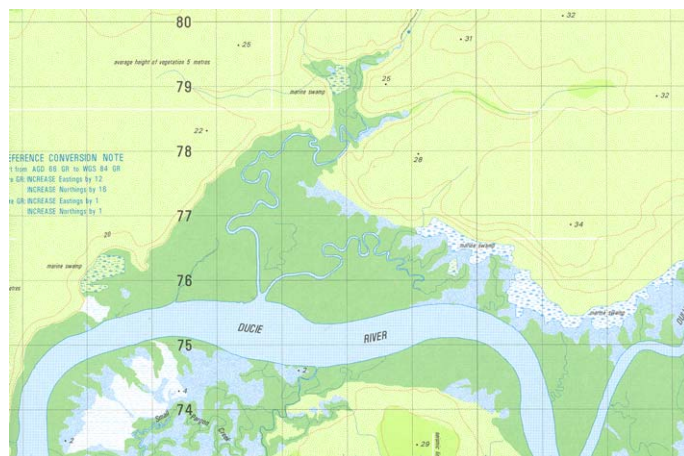
### Recommendations:

This area needs to be addressed in any future tourism study if only to acknowledge its contribution to the environmental integrity and biodiversity of Port Musgrave.

Presumably it is an important sportfishing area and it needs to be addressed appropriately in that context as well.



## Zone 4 – Ducie River



A fishing lodge has already been proposed for the Ducie River.

## Description of Location

This area was not visited during the survey.

Mapoon DOGIT extends up both sides of the Ducie River from Port Musgrave. There are marine swamps on both sides of the river.

## Recommendations:

- Local Weipa business interests have already had detailed plans for a Fishing Lodge on the Ducie River prepared. Should these proponents still be interested in progressing the concept, it is recommended that they be encouraged to engage again in the process subject to agreement in principle by the traditional owners.
- It is suggested that tourism concepts like this particular one could only be successfully operated by well established and resourced Weipa based businesses, as there are significant challenges in operating in marine access only environments like this that require sound infrastructure both at the site and in Weipa itself.

## Zone 5 & 6 – Western Areas

Refer to main DOGIT map. Topographic map to appropriate scale not available.

## Description of Location

These areas were not visited during the survey.

Zone 5 is an area over 150,000 hectares in size bounded by Bertiehaugh Station in the south and the Dulhunty River in the north. Zone 6 is a relatively small triangle of land bordering Bertiehaugh and the Wenlock River separated from Zone 5 by a mining lease.

## Recommendations:

Any recommendation here needs to be evaluated in the knowledge that the area was not part of the survey.

- It may be assumed that the country is good hunting country for feral animals and, subject to traditional owner agreement, it is suggested that this option be addressed in any future tourism study.
- It is understood that the southern boundary of Zone 5 may be able to be used for road access to the north and this should also be addressed in a future study.

# Weipa

## Background



The Traditional Owners of the Western Cape include Taepadhighi, Thanikwithi, Tjungundji, Warranggu, Wathayn, Wik Wik-Way, Peppan, Anathangayth and Ankamuthi.



The replica of the Duyfken arrives off the Western Cape on 9 August 2000. "We have arrived ..... How different is our arrival from Jansz's on the original Duyfken (1606). His log does not survive so we don't know his version of the story, but I am told the local people here have stories that tell of the arrival of the Dutchmen and the trouble they caused. I am looking forward to hearing them. One thing we know is that Jansz sailed away from these shores disappointed. For us that would already be impossible. The people here have put on a welcome for us we will remember vividly forever."

Peter Manthorpe – Master – Ship's Log - 9 August 2000.

## Before Time, Mission Time and Today

It is not within the scope or purpose of this document to provide an historical background of Weipa and the Western Cape, however if some of the current challenges facing the development of tourism are to be understood and addressed now, or in a future study, it is necessary to include social background in so far as it influences current attitudes and cooperative decision making processes.

The following bullet points are taken from the publication notes "Before Time, Mission Time and Today" which outlines the cultural awareness seminars delivered to new Comalco employees by the indigenous community."

1606 – The Dutch Vessel Duyfken lands in the area now known as Weipa. Indigenous people of the region continued to live as they had in the past until the 1860s.

1860 – Frontier period of beche-de-mer, pearling, mining and cattle industry invasion.

1898 – Embley River Mission established at Spring Creek now known as the twenty mile.

1899 – Mrs J.F.G. Foxton officially names Weipa.

1931 – Rev S.E. McKay appointed superintendent and manages move from Spring Creek to Jessica Point.

1955 – Economic bauxite discovered by Harry Evans.

1957 – Commonwealth Aluminium Corporation Pty Ltd Agreement Act (QLD) passed to grant bauxite mining lease.

1958 – Weipa Aboriginal Reserve reduced from 647,000 hectares to 124 hectares through loss of land to Comalco's Special Bauxite Mining Lease.

1965 – New village at Weipa Mission opened.

1966 – Presbyterian Church handed management of Weipa Mission to Queensland Department of Native Affairs and mission re-named Weipa South.

1967 – New township of Weipa North officially opened at Kumrumja (Rocky Point)

1973 – Weipa Aborigines Society formed to assist development of Weipa South.

1988 – Weipa Aboriginal Council issued with DOGIT comprising 201,000 hectares comprising some of the former Weipa Reserve Lands and some of former Mapoon Reserve Lands

Consolidated Zinc geologist Harry Evans is credited with establishing the viability of the Weipa ore body.

“But nothing could darken Evans’s mood. By the time he reached the mission that night he had passed over about 10 kilometres of bauxite in the form of reddish-brown pebbles; these he had sampled at regular intervals. Already he realized that what he had come across might be of great economic significance.”



“The next day, he became even more excited. Standing in front of the mission house in Weipa, he noticed that across the Embley River, south of the mission, red cliffs were clearly visible at Hey Point. Just how far down the coast did these bauxite laden cliffs go?”

“The mine became one of the largest in the world. Bauxite supply contracts were signed with Japanese companies and the first shipments of ore left Weipa in 1963. The modern town of Weipa was established at Rocky Point and officially opened on 2 June 1967”

Alan Trengove – supplement to CRA Gazette – August 1992.



1990 – Name of Weipa South officially changed to Napranum

1990 – Formation of Cape York Land Council. Increase in recognition and legal powers gives indigenous people new status.

1991 - Queensland Aboriginal Land Act (ALA) provides for royalty payments for new mines on Aboriginal Land but expressly excludes Alcan, Comalco and Pechiney leases from its provisions.

1992 - Mabo case decision

1992 - Peppan people granted freehold title under ALA and lease their land to the Commonwealth for RAAF base Scherger. First real compensation to Western Cape traditional owners for use of their land.

1996 – High Court Wik decision confirms validity of mining leases but changes status of pastoral leases.

2001 – Western Cape Communities Coexistence Agreement signed. Expectations of a new consultative and pro-active relationship with miners, where consultation before action includes mine planning processes, cultural heritage and environmental management, training and employment.



## Administration



Ian Pressley – Chief Executive Officer of Weipa Town



Weipa Town Offices, library and other communal facilities.

## Weipa Town – CEO interview (edited and abridged)

### *Administrative structure and normalisation*

*“Comalco are the local authority under the Comalco Act of 1957. It is not a normal town in respect of local government anywhere else. It’s a Comalco position and I know that you are aware that it is a Comalco town.*

*So therefore I represent Comalco and on behalf of Comalco effectively provide the services to the town and I have a small staff to do so. What Comalco have done is set up a committee – Weipa Town Committee, which in the absence of a Council performs that function. The committee is made up of 7 people, 4 of whom are elected. 2 are Comalco appointed people and the 7<sup>th</sup> is a traditional owner. It has given the people of the town more of a say in what goes on.*

*The Chair is elected by the people. Michael Rowland is the chair. They are paid allowances. They are members of the Local Government Association. They are working for the community in their own time. They are paid a fee to attend conferences and meetings.*

*They have been through the process of normalisation for 10 years. It is an interesting read. In the Comalco act there is provision to normalise the town. But that provision is to go to what they term a commission. It is the first step to becoming a Local Authority. That commission would become the local authority. Some members are elected and some are appointed so it is not a true Local Government model but there is provision to do that. In 1997 and 2001 they attempted to normalise the town and go to a commission but both times failed again. There’s various reasons for that. In the Comalco act it’s really Comalco that must initiate the process with the State Government.*

*It’s not just about Comalco handing the town over and getting it off its books. They built the town and infrastructure but it is unlikely that the State Govt would want to take it over if it was going to cost them money. There are many issues. There may be tax implications for Comalco. There is the diesel fuel rebate. If the town separated it loses that rebate for the town. The Federal Govt has looked at that and said that they would overcome it over the next 4 years.*

*It’s not just that. The people have got to want it. In 1997 and 2001 the town wasn’t ready to change but opinion is shifting. 35% of the town are now non-Comalco employees and that percentage is increasing. The new General Manager wants to take a real good look at it and it is likely that Comalco will appoint a manager to lead that process. Once all of the legal, tax and operational implications are resolved as well as they possibly can be the different normalisation models can be considered.*

*It might be that it becomes part of Cook Shire or it might be a Western Cape Shire incorporating*



This recently completed block of units is typical of a new generation of accommodation that is being built by private investors. After a period of lower production, and less demand for accommodation, the mine is now in the process of doubling production and provision of housing and commercial space is critical.

#### One Weipa businessman put it this way:

*"One of the biggest things to deal with in Weipa is staff issues. There are very few experienced casual staff available as there is no accommodation. Here in Weipa, if one of the hotel owners decided to whack another 40 rooms on they would have to think about how many extra staff they would need and that may equate to them having to build another 3 houses. He wouldn't be able to rent them because you just can't get accommodation here. So then he has to make a choice. As well as a \$2million extension will he also have to allow another \$600,000 to build 3 houses? The other choice is to have donga type housing which means that staff don't last. They just move on."*



This was a frequently expressed comment during the course of the consultancy. If one of the main reasons for developing a tourism plan for the region is to provide more indigenous business and employment opportunities, why are local indigenous people not taking up the existing training and employment opportunities?

*Mapoon down to Aurukun. I've mentioned the 1957 Comalco Act but maybe there is a better totally different model. Comalco needs to design this policy and take it to the Government.*

*The town itself is only around 128 hectares. There is no room for any sort of expansion. It has often been talked about that it can be another hub on the Cape where it has a Port, Government Offices. It can't do it in its current form unless it expands. One of the things we have looked at is expanding the town which involves converting some of the mining lease to freehold. It needs to either 1 expand and become a normal place or 2 be absorbed by Cook Shire.*

*It is a lengthy and expensive process to transfer Mining Lease to Freehold. It needs to go through a process initially involving transfer to a perpetual lease called Special Perpetual Mining Purposes Leases (SPMPLs) before it goes to freehold.*

#### Future for Tourism

*The place does need to expand. Unless it does it will impact on other tourism and business opportunities. Talking about the town – not the whole region of course.*

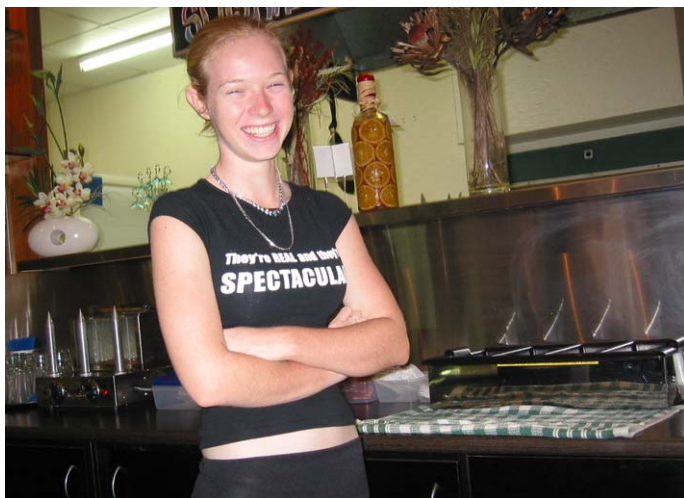
*There are a lot of organisations who come here and tell us what we should and shouldn't do but I don't think that there is any real plan in place to carry it forward. I have been amazed since I have been here for the past two years that here we have a town like Weipa which has the potential to be a wonderful tourism destination for fishing, camping and hunting or whatever it is but there doesn't seem to be a plan for that. There are different groups promoting their own interests but there is no cohesion for future planning in all of their interests.*

*One day Comalco may not be here and clearly tourism is the next most important thing and I am amazed that we haven't really looked at it seriously. Where do we want to be in 2020, 30, 40, 50 or 60 if there is no mine? There are lots of issues. There are the land issues, the traditional owner issues, there's cultures; there are a lot barriers that need to be worked through.*

*Comalco may have built a tourism resort 10 or 15 years ago but not today. They would look to other people to do that. They want to stay in the business of digging dirt and get out of the business of running a town. They want to get out of that all together.*

*10 years ago PEP took place which had a profound influence on Comalco's approach to Weipa and its operations.*

*If you wander round town it is a pretty tired old town. The infrastructure is 40 years old. An analogy is that it is a bit of a used car with a broken windscreen and a couple of flat tyres and it hasn't had any maintenance on it for a couple of years because their focus has been getting on with it. They've realised that they've let it go and are starting to pump a little bit more money back into it and they have to because the infrastructure is old.*



Nanum shopping centre has a modern bistro with quality food, coffee and friendly service.



One of the critical factors that make the significant development of remote tourism possible on the Western Cape is the Weipa infrastructure. It is the fact that Comalco built this town for a population of up to 3,000 people that has laid the foundation for a wealth of other business opportunities. 35% of the population of Weipa are now non-Comalco employees.

*65% of town rates come from Comalco and 35% from non Comalco. It comes to around about \$2m for the year. On top of that Comalco provide the town with other monies because the town can't access State and Federal funding so Comalco provides some other capital funds for roads etc.*

*There is a 5 to 10 year strategic plan. We have some goals that we wish to achieve and we put our bids into Comalco. An example of that would be the swimming pool. It is now 40 years old like everything else in town.*

*Committee saved \$250,000 dollars last year and will probably save \$200,000 this year. Comalco is being asked for \$500,000 and the WCCC has just employed a Sport and Rec Officer for the region and we are asking him to top that up dollar for dollar through State and Federal Funding. Then tennis courts, squash courts, gymnasiums and things off that.*

*The Western Cape Regional Consultative Group is an incorporated non-profit organisation which has been around for 6 years. It was set up because there was a perceived need in the region for a group that looked at the social and economic development of the region and it was in some part to relieve Comalco as being the overriding provider and sponsor and funding organisation for community groups and the like. It committed \$100,000 each year for 5 years.*

*Applications are made and they are considered. School stereo system for example was funded from the WCRCG. Because the town can't hire people, the group has hired an executive officer to run this. This group has the freedom to raise funds from other sources. Given their role in the region they would probably be a good place to start (regarding a regional tourism association) given their charter. The Board is made up of the Chair and CEO of each community including Weipa as well as the General Manager of Comalco.*



*Now there is a housing crisis. Comalco had houses sitting idle so they filled them up with contractors and other government organisations. Comalco are now flying people in because they can't house them."*

This is an edited and abridged record of interview with Ian Pressley in July 2003.



## Weipa Accommodation



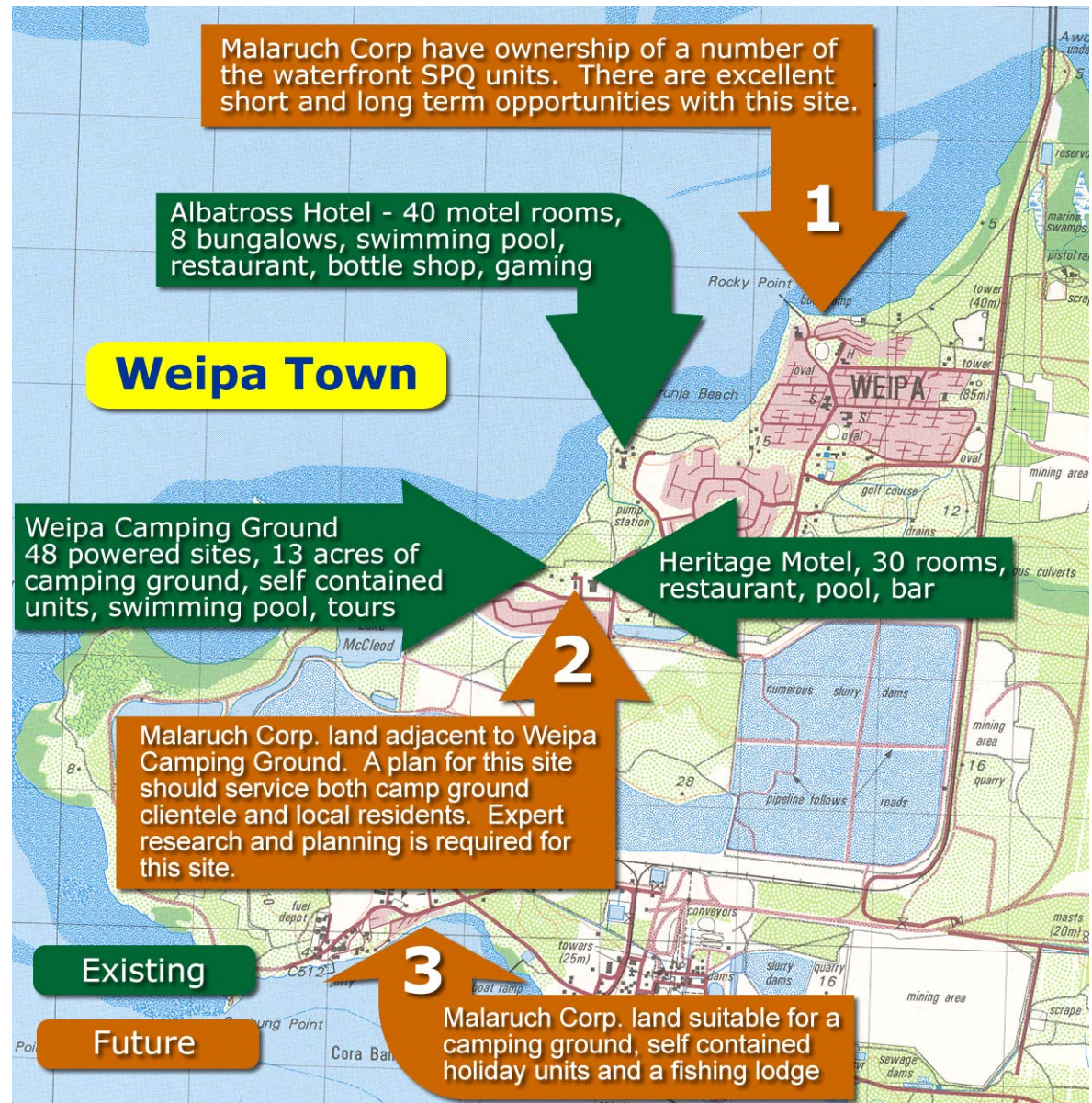
The Albatross Hotel



The Heritage Motel



Weipa Camping Ground







At the time of this survey, Malaruch Aboriginal Corporation was seeking advice on how to refurbish and operate six blocks of SPQ units similar to this one.



"We ran the SPQ for 18 months. 11 trainees went through. They were being trained in cleaning, kitchen and dining hall. During our management it peaked at 88 plus some cultural events such as the Croc Eisteddfod where there were around 680 people to look after. The contract has now been awarded to a different company and there are no trainees. It's a lost opportunity for the community.

The biggest challenge (in Weipa) has been continuity of labour. From Comalco to Woolworths, continuity of labour is a major, major, major problem. The irony is that here is a place that has one of the highest unemployment rates in the country, yet contractors have a serious labour problem."

Graham Moody – Cape Projects Group.

## 1 - Single Persons Quarters (SPQ) site – Rocky Point

The Malaruch Aboriginal Corporation asked that this site be addressed in this Tourism Needs Assessment. This infrastructure was originally built by Comalco to house its single employees. It is divesting ownership of the facility over time and the Corporation, at the time of the preparation of this report, was seeking advice on how to develop six blocks of accommodation units.

Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation has been seeking to develop the site as "The Weipa Multi-Purpose Facility" and the general concept is available on their website at the following URL: <http://www.capeyorkpartnerships.com/project/brief/expo/pdf/09-weipsspq-A4handout.PDF>

The SPQ is Comalco-owned infrastructure that consists of 39 low-set buildings, each containing three to six bedrooms; two double-storey buildings, each containing 16 rooms; a training building containing two training rooms, a conference room and office space; and a large kitchen and dining room (Rocky Point Mess Hall). The SPQ in total is capable of housing 220 people with 1 person in each unit and 370 persons with some units used as twins.

A number of groups and individuals have looked at development of this site including the Cape Projects Group led by Vance Wallin and Graham Moody who operated the SPQ for 18 months and Balkanu's multi-purpose facility concept.

It is the view that this is an outstanding site for tourism accommodation development and, just as importantly, it is considered that the development could be reasonably staged from a capital cost and development point of view.

The reasons that it is regarded as being suitable for tourism accommodation are as follows:

- It is a large waterfront site with significant utility infrastructure already in place.
- The development can be staged so that it combines effectively with existing Comalco and contractor usage.
- The style of the existing infrastructure (refurbished appropriately) suits the needs of existing markets into the region.

## Recommendations

This is a major site requiring specialist design consultancy services.

- It is considered that the priority should be provision of tourism accommodation with training taking place on the job, supplemented with structured hospitality training being delivered locally.



This photo of part of the Evans Landing site taken late in the day doesn't do justice to the beauty of this location. It is an ideal location for a camping ground with waterfront cabins and possibly a quality fishing lodge.



Some of the infrastructure such as roads and other utilities are already in place. Although the concept is not universally popular, it is a possible location for a future marina.

### 3 – Evans Landing Waterfront Harbour Site

This is an impressive waterfront site on Weipa Harbour that previously was used for demountable accommodation by Comalco. The accommodation has been removed but roads and some other infrastructure remain. The Malaruch Aboriginal Corporation has ownership of the site and is looking for advice on its future.

Like the Rocky Point SPQ site, the plans for this site should be developed as a major tourism design consultancy. A likely outcome from this will be that development takes place in a number of different stages over a number of years, serving a number of different market needs. Although it is likely that the evolution of the project will be gradual, it is regarded as essential that a plan for the complete site be developed initially so that later stages merge with the early stages in a planned and predictable way.

Possible future uses that may be identified by a detailed design consultancy include a fishing lodge.

*"Personally, I think that it would be a great idea to have a fishing lodge in Weipa and I think that it would be a fantastic idea if the indigenous people could be involved somehow. Personally if I had the choice of where to build my own lodge it would be right down there at Evans Landing. I think that it needs to be somewhere where you can overlook the water. Not the lake. Lakes are man made. It could also be Rocky Point. Those areas would be perfect. As long as people can see the water and I know that my clients would prefer somewhere where they can sit out and have a beer, look out over the water and talk about the fishing that they've had during the day. It adds to the whole experience. I'm not knocking the Heritage or the Albatross or any other places but personally I think that just getting together with other fishermen and perhaps being away from the four wheel drivers or the company reps would be good."* – Alan Philliskirk

*"I agree with Alan on that but one thing I've found in my years of having people in hospitality is that if you give people a good fishing trip and they get bad meals they won't come back. Or bad service they won't come back. A mediocre fishing trip and you give them good meals and good service, they will come back."* – Dave Donald

*"I think that you had better not get people off side from the beginning. All of the young people have got to be on your side if you're going to push it down this road. Don't worry if it gets transferred from the Council. First thing to put up on the list guys - Fishing Lodge."* – Charles Budby

*"When you talk about fishing lodges you certainly have my support on that point and I'm sure that the other tourist operators see the value in all of that. When you talk about marinas and motels and so on down on the foreshore there it makes you a little bit nervous because it is detracting from the experience."* – Alan Philliskirk





These are the villas at Cairns Coconut Caravan Resort and the peak season rate for deluxe villas is \$145 per night.



The tropical ensuite cabins are \$95 per night. There are other villa, unit and cabin styles as well to suit all budgets. Cairns Coconut Caravan Park is a multi award winner. The owners designed and built most of infrastructure themselves. It would be in the interests of the tourism planner on this project to approach a business like this and invite them to become involved in the consultancy to whatever extent was finally mutually agreed with all parties.

### A multi-functional caravan/camping park.

*"I think that for the facilities that are available here, I think we are at capacity. The only way to increase our capacity would be to have a second caravan park. There is only one caravan park here at the moment and we have had some people unhappy that they haven't had a choice. Technically, for about 4 months of the year, that place is empty. Then the tourism season starts and it just fills up – goes chock-a-block and I think that the facilities are not enough for the number of people who utilise that facility. I think that there is an opportunity for a second one. I've had people coming into the (cultural) centre saying, 'Where's another caravan park? Where else can we stay? We want to stay there.' I think there is a need." – Vaughn Prasser*

*"And basically your tourism season here is very short. The bulk of your tourists come in from the middle of June till the first week of October and then it's dead. That's it. Basically for the past 15 years I have worked at expanding my market into the other times of year when nobody else is here. I try to bring them in then rather than during that June to October season." – Dave Donald*

*"What are you trying to do, get more fishermen in and end up like another Karumba?" – Maree Johnson*

*"Regarding Evans Landing, well with that site we've talked about it for a while now making it a camping ground. For us it would be a chance for us to run our own business." – Patsy Hudson*

### Recommendations

This is a major waterfront site in a town that has a significant future in tourism. There are likely to be considerable issues in terms of how any development on this site interacts with Traditional Owners, Weipa Town, Government Agencies and Comalco activities. It is therefore recommended that this site be regarded as a priority in any future tourism study and an in-depth assessment of existing and potential new markets be examined for this project.



Notwithstanding the above recommendation in regard to long term planning, it is suggested that, subject to a tentative agreement on a broad draft plan for the site, that a local Weipa Fishing Lodge Project Team be convened immediately, tasked with the design and commissioning of a new Fishing Lodge at this site.

## Western Cape York - SWOT



Alfie Blanco – Director of Na-Kuraga.



Bernie Power – Owner of Albatross Hotel with a long standing and continuing interest in all hospitality options in the region.

There are some fundamental factors that attract and influence tourism in the Greater Weipa region. Usually when listing characteristics of a destination the conventional SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis technique is employed.

### **Location**

#### **Location Strengths:**

- Weipa is 820 kms along the Peninsula Development Road from Cairns, the nearest regional city. This road will continue to be 4WD-only for the foreseeable future. (Special Note: This is included here as a strength because there is a strong body of opinion that the challenge of getting to the Northern Cape is part of the appeal.)
- Visitors are always interested in seeing crocodiles in the wild and the presence of significant numbers in the region can be an attraction.
- The waters of the Western Cape are outstanding for sportfishing especially salt water fly fishing. In the vicinity of 40 to 50 species have been caught on fly.
- There is extensive social and industrial infrastructure as a result of the presence of Comalco and its mining operations.
- Weipa Port is regularly serviced by barge and shipping services.

#### **Location Weaknesses:**

- Weipa is 820 kms along the Peninsula Development Road from Cairns, the nearest regional city. This road will continue to be 4WD-only for the foreseeable future.
- During the wet season many roads and tracks around Weipa itself may be impassable.
- The year round presence of crocodiles along the beaches and in the rivers generally prevents people from swimming and snorkelling, although there are some fresh water swimming opportunities if extreme care is taken.
- Because it is a 3 hour detour from the main road north, only around 60% of 4WD visitors to the Northern Cape visit Weipa.
- There is no spectacular or outstanding topographical, natural or cultural feature of the type that appeals to the 'sightseeing' tourism market.

#### **Location Opportunities:**

- Situated as it is, two thirds of the way between Cairns and the top of Cape York on a harbour, Weipa is ideally positioned to be the hub for future tourism development on Cape York.

#### **Location Threats:**

- Most of the future tourism will be on aboriginal land. There may be some challenges in establishing quality tourism enterprises that meet the mutual needs of the indigenous land



Graham Moody – Cape Projects Group & Carpentaria Contracting.



Sandy Callope – Na – Kuraga Director

owners and business operators.

- Because there are no spectacular or outstanding topographical, natural or cultural features (within the study area) that will appeal to the 'sightseeing' tourism market, if the industry is to diversify it needs to design product that 'teaches' visitors how to engage with the landscape.

### ***Tourism Product***

#### **Tourism Product Strengths:**

- The waters of the Western Cape are outstanding for sportfishing; especially salt water fly fishing. In the vicinity of 40 to 50 species have been caught on fly. There are a number of existing quality professional operators operating either from day boats or mother ships.
- Subject to sustainable management of the fishery, continuing high standards of service delivery and access to the fishery, it is considered that the sportfishing industry has a secure future
- There is an existing Camping Ground in Weipa and two hotel/motels.
- There is a tour of the Comalco Mine available
- There is a selection of adventure tours including trail bike tours and jet ski tours
- There are car rental facilities available
- There are regular air services by QantasLink from Cairns.
- There is a houseboat operation

#### **Tourism Product Weaknesses:**

- In the dry season, it can be difficult to find accommodation in the hotel/motels or the camping ground.
- There are virtually no locally made souvenirs including post cards.
- Although there is excellent sportfishing, there are no Sportfishing Lodges.
- Although the area has a rich aboriginal history and a comparatively large aboriginal population there is no tourism product operated by aboriginal people.
- There is no charter helicopter operation based in Weipa.

#### **Tourism Product Opportunities:**

- Fishing lodges at Evans Landing in Weipa and at Cullen Point at Mapoon in the short term.
- A tented camp at Billy's Lagoon that works in conjunction with Mapoon Fishing Lodge.
- The most lucrative and least catered for market is the charter fly-in market. The Cape generally is ideally suited to this market.
- A Camping Ground and quality on-site Cabins on the Malaruch land at Evans Landing.





William Parry – Mapoon Elder – would like to see a fishing lodge on traditional Tjungundji country at Cullen Point.



Lee Ann Beven – Weipa Rent-A-Car. Often the first local face visitors to Weipa see on arrival at the terminal.

- More adventure activities along the lines of existing activities being offered out of Weipa.
- Extended canoeing trips down the westward flowing rivers.
- More local souvenirs including indigenous artefacts and a wider range of postcards.
- Development of a quality feral animal hunting industry.
- Development of a pre-contact aboriginal tourism experience that may include accommodation

#### Tourism Product Threats:

- If Alcohol Management Plans are not amended to permit Residential Liquor Licences to be issued to bona fide lodges and fishing camps there is no prospect of a viable tourism industry developing in the region.
- Tourism Product development is going to depend on specialised quality operators negotiating mutually beneficial arrangements with aboriginal communities, groups and individuals. If arrangements cannot be negotiated that suit both parties then the tourism market will not be a success.
- Tourism product needs to be built according to the needs of identified markets. It is a responsibility of the Trusts, the Operators and the tenure holders to inform themselves about the existing and potential markets and only invest in product that meets the identified criteria for those markets.
- Adequate arbitration protocols to guide tourism business relationships between indigenous and non-indigenous operators need to be implemented. Even well specified business agreements need nurturing along the way because there are often future issues which were not originally anticipated.
- During the wet season some roads and tracks around Weipa itself may be impassable.
- The year round presence of crocodiles along the beaches and in the rivers generally prevents people from swimming and snorkelling, although there are some fresh water swimming opportunities if extreme care is taken.

## Destination Design and Implementation

*"This part of the Cape in general is just superb. I did 12 months voluntary work here as a ranger, when I had a manager running this business so I know the Cape extremely well. You know, we've talked about this forever. I think if road conditions, infrastructure from here to the tip of Cape York. If people were to see images of Captain Billy's Landing, the Jardine River, the Wenlock, Indian Head Falls, Fruit Bat Falls. These are sensational things. I mean you don't see any of that down south.*

*Now if the roads were in good condition people could fly to Weipa for a week for example and stay at the Albatross or Heritage or wherever. You're looking at around 300 kms that takes you about 8 hours to do if the roads are in better condition. You could do a day trip up there. It's no big deal. You could drive out. See those things."*David Khalu – Lifetime Weipa resident – owner Weipa Rent-a-Car

*"So basically, Weipa is just about stuffed as far as any further development; maybe the Malaruch area yeah fair enough, but if there is any development and Tourism Queensland is going to promote the place and bring all of these extra people in they're not going to be able to stay in the Weipa area because there is nowhere left for expansion. There's nowhere to build another motel for instance so unless it goes into the communities, it can't go anywhere else. So that's a big problem. If you're going to bring all of these people in and there's nowhere for them to stay why do it?"*Dave Donald – Dave Donald Sportfishing

### What is the Western Cape experience?

The most enduring destinational tourism perceptions are those which naturally or 'organically' evolve in a region. When we think of Africa we think of animals. When we think of France we think of food, wine and chateaus. When we think of Daintree we think of rainforest. When we think of Egypt we think of pyramids.

All of these places now have many other 'induced' tourism activities and experiences but their core 'organic' attraction is the nucleus on which other satellites of activity depend.

### Priorities

Specific destinations have specific priorities. The priority for 'mature' tourism destinations may be re-visiting advertising and promotional strategies. For 'new' tourism destinations, such as Western Cape York, the priority is product. You can only promote and sell that which is available to promote and sell. From the information gathered during the research for this document, it is clear that it would be an inadequate return on investment to spend on marketing to fill the small amount of excess capacity. This does not take account of the wet season which is a product rather than a marketing challenge.

The biggest tourism challenge facing the Northern Cape Region is developing appropriate tourism and recreational product. Advertising and promotion is not the priority. Providing the product is right, the clients will buy. The priority is creating the right product for the identified markets. With the benefit of the Weipa infrastructure and the relative proximity (by air) to Cairns there are excellent prospects for tourism, providing what is being offered is what the market is looking for.

An objective approach needs to be taken to specifying existing markets, identifying new markets and tailoring product to meet them.



40 years ago these people's families were forcibly removed from Mapoon and their houses burnt. Today there is a modern council building and the Mapoon people are quickly taking on contemporary administrative and management skills.

Given the turnaround in just the last ten years, it is not difficult to picture a totally different economic and social environment throughout the indigenous communities if the right vision is in place and the appropriate 'on-the-job' training provided.

## Design and Implementation?

So is there enough to do and see on the northern part of Cape York to extend the diversity and viability of the existing tourism and recreational industries?

These quotes are typical of opinion in Western Cape York. Individual hospitality and tourism operators are good at what they do; understand their markets and generally operate at capacity throughout "the season". Improving activity outside the season is not so much a matter of better marketing however but better infrastructure to make a visit to the region more appealing to a potential shoulder and low season market.

Meeting the Western Cape York tourism challenge then is not so much a matter of destination 'management' as destination 'design'. From a destination point of view, there simply is not enough product to "manage" but there is considerable scope to "design". A meaningful approach to this needs to be driven from within the region.

The priority in designing any product is to ensure that there are enough buyers prepared to pay enough money to result in a profit for the supplier. Therefore when it comes to 'designing' the tourism infrastructure for the Western Cape York region the perspective needs to be consumer focussed. Tailoring product to consumer needs is a business process that lies at the core of marketing – the advertising and promotion is the froth and bubble at the end. This is very different from community infrastructure planning where the client base is local. The focus here (mainly) is going to be about the needs of the visiting client base and to find out what those needs are appropriate source research needs to be done.

In the interests of emphasising priorities, it is therefore suggested that Western Cape York plan in terms of design first and management later undertaken from within a Destination Design and Implementation framework.



Notwithstanding the above, it is recommended that, subject to Mapoon Fishing Lodge being able to be granted a Residential Liquor Licence, the Mapoon Lodge project be fast tracked in advance of future destination design research. There is already enough support and evidence to demonstrate that this will be a successful venture providing it is built up to the required standard. An operational project like this will also draw out a lot of the challenges that are only discovered by beginning the journey.





Jonathan West – Executive Director - Queensland Department of State Development – Northern Region

The Queensland Department of State Development in conjunction with the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Tourism Queensland is actively engaged in developing a vision for the north and helping to stimulate economic activity.

### Destination Design and Marketing – hand in hand

Sometimes destination marketing is seen as only advertising and promotion. In Australia, for *mature* destinations, such as Sydney, Cairns and the Gold Coast for example, advertising and promotion is definitely the priority. For emerging destinations in Queensland, such as Toowoomba, Bundaberg and Capricorn, more of the marketing effort is devoted to shaping the development of tourism product; together with the advertising and promotion. In a new destination, such as Western Cape York, the advertising and promotional side of the marketing process should have far less emphasis, with most of the effort going into the basics of understanding market needs and catering for them.

The priority then for Western Cape York is to explore and come to understand the context of the cultural, natural and recreational tourism resources that exist and how they may be made available profitably to known markets.

This needs to be a thorough and objective process. Individuals often make decisions based on their own life experiences and values and this may over influence the style of product that evolves in a local tourism industry. The appeal and value of a commodity is decided by the buyer – not the seller - and in the case of rare natural destinations like Western Cape York, it is essential that any study on the direction of tourism for the region should, in the first instance, evaluate the optimal market potential from a consumer's perspective.

In order to evaluate this potential, various possible scenarios may need to be suggested, to give form to future possibilities, so that the client reference panels can form opinion on 'what could be' as well as 'what is'.



Thancoupie conducts a traditional 'welcome to country' for Rowan Foley, Manager Cape York Coordination Unit, Queensland Dept of Natural Resources. There is goodwill on all sides to see the Western Cape reach its full potential.



Stan de Jersey was the first dozer driver for Comalco in Weipa. He married Zoe who is of Aboriginal, Solomon Island and Irish/English descent. Zoe crafts beautiful necklaces from shells found along the seashore as taught to her by her grandmother. She assists Thancoupie at Bowchat.

## People and Decision Making

Although the task of designing and detailing a comprehensive Regional Sustainable Tourism Plan for the Western Cape is a large and challenging project in terms of detailing development options and infrastructure, one of the real challenges is in engaging the people of the region in the decision making process in a climate of mutual respect and recognition. This is not a motherhood statement. It is a critical requirement for the region to prosper and it needs to be addressed as directly and explicitly as infrastructure planning.

The inherent mismatch of a very large profit and production driven enterprise on the scale of the Comalco mine, in a beautiful, remote natural environment which is both a sportfisherman's paradise and home to eleven indigenous clan groups inevitably gives rise to different values and perspectives – not right or wrong – just different. The existence of the mine, and the infrastructure that has been created because of it, makes the servicing of visitors to the region possible. The indigenous people, the sportfishing and the ecotourism values are why they will come.

It is self evident that there are some fundamental differences in customs and perspectives between the Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people of the region. The Comalco mine, which is responsible for most of the non-Aboriginal population being in Weipa, has leases to 2062 and bauxite reserves to last 250 years. Traditional owners have, or will have, ownership or control of all the land in the region outside the 280 hectares that comprises Weipa Township. The mined and re-vegetated areas of the mining leases will revert to Aboriginal ownership over time. Ownership of waterways is currently under consideration.

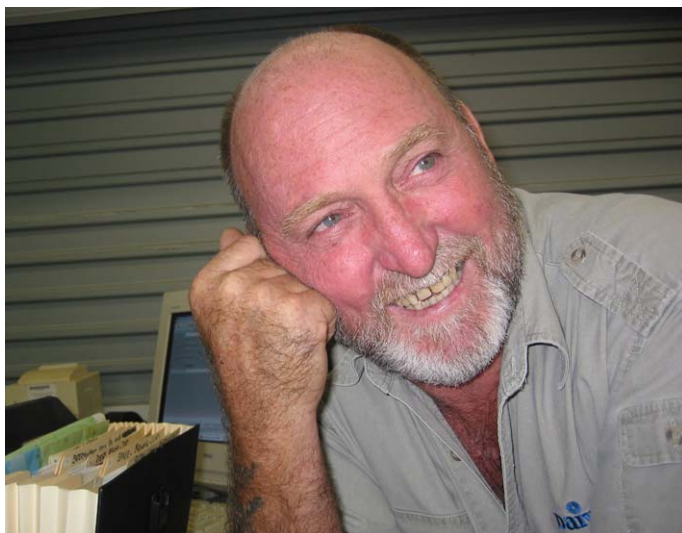
This means that both broad groups of people from different backgrounds are going to be living and working alongside each other for longer than the foreseeable future. A lot of work has already been done in addressing this relationship from a Comalco perspective, through the Western Cape York Communities Co-existence Agreement (WCCCA). This agreement addresses the future relationship between Comalco and the local indigenous communities represented by eleven Traditional Owner groups, four indigenous community councils and the Cape York Land Council. The Queensland Government is also a signatory to this agreement.

Although the Aboriginal people of Western Cape York suffered extreme marginalisation and dislocation over the past 150 years and language and tangible and visual expressions of culture are not obvious to the casual visitor to the Weipa region, there is a powerful sense of Aboriginality about the area. It is only over the last ten years that the traditional owners have been able to engage on better terms with government and industry in influencing their destiny.

Having been displaced over a long period and reunited with country over a short period also means that it is an unreasonable expectation to assume that the indigenous people of the Western Cape will speak with one voice even within individual clan groups. Apart from the eleven different clan groups recognised in the WCCCA, there are different perspectives within those groups depending on



Trevor Snodgrass is CEO of Weipa Earthmoving Pty Ltd.



Bruce Lee – 4WD Spares and Camping Supplies

life experiences and age.

On the other hand, non-indigenous groups, individuals, companies or government agencies, by their nature, are well organised through a long period of common work practice and experience. Their decision making hierarchies have been shaped through skill, social rank, status, money or threats to those mechanisms.

By contrast, indigenous people living and working in their own communities cannot so easily separate home decisions from work decisions, yet that is often the expectation.

*"The problem with the indigenous people is that they are fighting amongst themselves as much as they are fighting everyone else. There's a lot going on behind the scenes that the idealists can't understand or even know unless they go behind the scenes and take a look.*

*Among my clients, the question of Aboriginal whatever would be the most talked about thing that we talk about other than fishing on our trips. So everybody is talking about it and everybody wants to see some sort of solution to it."*

*Dave Donald – Dave Donald Sportfishing*

The process of engagement between all contributors to the Destination Design of tourism in Western Cape York needs to take account of different life circumstances.

Opinion within indigenous communities also differs. There is a view that in the process of modern relationship building between government and indigenous people, that the government has stifled young leadership aspirations by insisting that commercial decisions be ratified by community elders, even if the elders have little commercial experience.

*"This town (Weipa) is a lot to blame for a lot of disruption to the communities. What's happened is you've got a lot of younger ones coming through that want sustainable development for Weipa. We've had the elders promoted to a situation here in Weipa where we can't vote.*

*They have to give approval for everything so the younger generation coming through is being stifled because you've lifted them up to a degree where they're not supposed to be. The cultural responsibilities are different from business responsibilities and now you've got younger generations coming through with the opportunity of the WCCCA who want to engage, who want to develop. Times are starting to change."*

*Charles Budby – Community Director – Na-Kuraga Aboriginal Corporation*





Destinational branding is about creating an immediate feel for the destination. The branding sometimes runs contrary to local or government usage but its purpose is to inspire and invite interest and enquiry.

**BIG  
WEIPA  
TOURISM**

Sometimes simple branding and logo design works best. These draft suggestions are to stimulate discussion. It is important however to make sure that decision making groups in respect to branding are working to very specific guidelines and it is strongly suggested that Tourism Queensland be kept informed of developments so that they can contribute.

*"Brands should not be dissected like frogs in a lab; what matters is execution and delivery."*

## Regional Branding

The process of 'branding' regions for tourism marketing purposes is an accepted and important part of engaging with the Destination Marketing process.

In many locations the process of 'induced branding' hasn't been necessary because common usage has indelibly and *successfully* named the location and it can't be improved on.

In the case of the Cairns region, the Regional Tourism Organisation was originally known as the "Far North Queensland Promotion Bureau" because the region was commonly called Far North Queensland and for tourism promotion purposes it seemed a natural choice.

In the latter part of the 1990s the Bureau undertook extensive research throughout existing and new markets and discovered that while the branding of the destination was well known locally, it wasn't well understood or recognised outside the region. In the northern hemisphere the phrase 'Far North' was associated with arctic conditions and surveys indicated that the word 'tropical' conveyed the nature of the destination far better.

Consequently the Far North Queensland Promotion Bureau became Tourism Tropical North Queensland and the region is now known as Tropical North Queensland.

Another local example being implemented at this time is the change from the Atherton Tablelands to the Cairns Highlands. The new name encourages people, who don't know the geography of the region, to assume that the highlands to the west of Cairns are close enough to visit and include in a holiday. Companies marketing agricultural and horticultural products also are benefiting from the new Cairns Highlands branding because of the market recognition of 'Cairns'.

These were bold marketing strategies that met considerable local opposition when they were first implemented. Time has proven them to be sound decisions however.

Marketing Mapoon, Weipa, Napranum and Aurukun as tourism destinations is going to require a similarly bold approach to branding. While the area has come to be known by government departments as the 'Western Cape', it is suggested that there is no recognition of this branding outside of the region and relevant government departments and the budget required to establish a notable presence in the marketplace is likely to be well outside a reasonable return on investment.

Internationally, Western Cape is best known as the south western side of South Africa. Domestically, it is most likely that the words 'Western Cape' will evoke images of the north western coast of Western Australia.

So, what are the options for Mapoon, Weipa, Napranum and Aurukun to market together as a region? There needs to be more discussion on this matter, however it will be difficult to achieve



*"Perceptions can only be shattered with boldness and even, audaciousness, not half measures, bland interpretations or political correctness."*

anything like consensus locally.

The branding should satisfy these needs:

- It should be bold, inspiring and visionary
- It should evoke powerful emotions in customers
- It should be a strong call to arms for product and marketing innovations
- It should capture exactly what it is that makes it different from its competitors

It is suggested that the word Weipa needs to dominate because, apart from other benefits, it is clearly shown on maps and commonly appears on television weather charts. The Bureau of Meteorology internet radar is also identified as being located in Weipa. Should a marketing campaign evolve promoting the Weipa region, all of this collateral media support will leverage any promotional campaign.



Vaughn Prasser was the Executive Officer, Company Secretary and Treasurer of the Western Cape Regional Consultative Group from March 2003 to March 2004.



As well as many other displays, the Cultural Centre features a ceramic mural which includes the totems, places and rivers of the eleven Traditional Owner groups who signed the Western Cape Communities Co-existence Agreement.

## Implementation

There is a body already in place uniquely qualified to direct and oversee this Destination Design and Marketing role. It is the Western Cape Regional Consultative Group (WCRCG).

*"Western Cape Regional Consultative Group is an incorporated non-profit organisation which has been around for 6 years. It was set up because there was a perceived need in the region for a group that looked at the social and economic development of the region. Comalco committed \$100,000 each year for 6 years. The group has hired an executive officer to run this. This group has the freedom to raise funds from other sources. Given their role in the region they would probably be a good place to start (regarding a tourism group) given their charter."*

*Ian Pressley – CEO Weipa Town*

The Board of WCRCG comprises the Chair and CEO from Mapoon, Napranum, Aurukun and Weipa and the General Manager of Comalco. Peter Guivarra (from Mapoon) is the Chairperson of the Group.

The Executive Officer reports to the Board but day to day contact is with the Weipa Town CEO Ian Pressley. The group has also employed a Sport and Recreation Officer. On an annual budget of \$100,000 per year, the group meets the costs of these appointments and also funds projects as diverse as a new stereo system for the school and the operation of the Western Cape Cultural Centre.

Although the operation of the Cultural Centre is separate from the needs of taking on responsibility for the implementation of a regional Destination Design and Marketing Role, a summary of the status of the Cultural Centre operation as at July 2003 is mentioned here in so far as there are issues that are tourism related.

As it is, the Western Cape Cultural Centre is not a viable business and improving the financial performance of this centre is the current priority for the Executive Officer. Part of the extent of the challenge as the Executive Officer sees it is summarised thus:

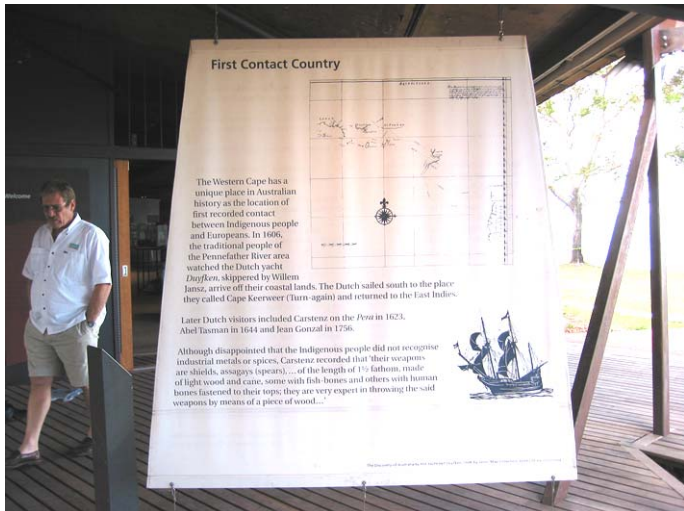
"My brief is to turn it into a self sustaining business."

- The Peat Marwick budget predicted turnover at \$250,000 per annum and turnover in the first year was \$9,000. Running costs are \$50,000 per annum
- There were 3,000 visitors last year. Peat Marwick estimated that 26,000 people would attend per annum. That represents 110% of people who visit Cape York plus everyone in Weipa coming at least once.





This is the entrance to the Cultural Centre. The installation of the ice cream freezer has been a recent inclusion.



The dominant theme of the Cultural Centre is "First Contact Country". It is considered that the arrival here of the Dutch ship the Duyfken (1606) is the first instance of Europeans meeting Australian Aboriginal people in Australian history.

- Some people think that the entry fee of \$2 is too expensive. We still get people walking away at \$2.
- We have to value add to the product to make people come in. Not interactive enough. Children only last about 3 minutes because they are bored.
- There was not a lot of indigenous input. Napranum are talking about putting their own one up which is an indication of the failure of the current centre to engage aboriginal people. I don't want to bag Comalco but it is seen as Comalco.
- There is no tenure. It is likely that no agreement will be reached until 2005. Things like a café have been considered but as no lease can be offered no one is interested.
- The Port Authority has concerns about the safety aspect of the location and would not be upset if it was moved. There is opinion that it would be better located near the mine museum or near the dog kennel on the main road into town.
- There needs to be a proper staff area and the building should be sealed and air conditioned. There are rats, mice and cane toads that live inside. We had a rat plague recently.
- Sea spray during summer months is causing corrosion.
- We would like to look at doing mine tours. There is around \$100,000 turnover in mine tours during the season.
- The promotional slogan is "First Contact Country". It doesn't mean a lot to people.
- Souvenirs are caps, T-shirts, tea towels and one style of postcard. 2,000 postcards were purchased and only 17 were sold in 12 months.
- There is a lot of enquiry for local indigenous souvenirs. I can't find anything local that is suitable. All the souvenirs are made in Perth.
- It would be good to have an aboriginal person behind the counter. A person was funded by Arts Queensland but there were difficulties.
- The Cultural Centre should develop its own tour division with its own bus and indigenous guide going to Mapoon and Stone Crossing etc.

Vaughn Prasser also identifies these other needs for the region:

- More accommodation
- Another caravan park with cabin style accommodation
- Boutique style accommodation that is in an attractive natural setting - something that isn't just a motel but an accommodation experience in the bush or in a beautiful beach situation
- The accommodation needs to be carefully pitched possibly two levels up from what we have now – say in the range of \$200 per night bed and breakfast.



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## Western Cape Communities Co-existence Agreement (2001)



Geoff Milgate is CEO of the WCCCA.

"Total funds going into that system are about \$6 million a year at the moment, which we hope will grow as Comalco expands and that is about to start soon. Comalco pays roughly double what the State Government pays, so to say Comalco pays around \$4 million and the Government around \$2 million would be the approximates. **Certainly tourism is on the list for all sub-regions** as is a huge range of other things. The list is very, very extensive."

## The WCCCA and tourism

### Western Cape Communities Co-existence Agreement (2001)

**Location:** Western Cape York, Queensland, Australia

**Project:** Weipa Bauxite Mine

**Summary:** The signatories of the Western Cape Communities Co-existence Agreement include eleven Traditional Owner groups, four indigenous community councils (Aurukun, Napranum, Mapoon and New Mapoon), Comalco Limited and the Cape York Land Council as the representative body for Cape York under the *Native Title Act 1993*. The Queensland Government is also a signatory and will provide additional financial benefits when the agreement is registered as an Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) under the provisions of the *Native Title Act*.

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### Details

**Reference/Legal Number(s):** Tribunal File No: QIA2001/002

**Status:** Registered with the National Native Title Tribunal on the Register of Indigenous Land Use Agreements.

**Alternative Names:** Comalco Land Use Agreement

### Additional Information

The Western Cape Communities Co-existence Agreement is a comprehensive regional agreement, inclusive of Traditional Owners and Indigenous people with historical connections. It links present and future mine development at Weipa with regional development, employment opportunities, training, community assistance, financial advice. The Agreement encourages:

- Mutual respect and recognition;
- Support for future Comalco mining operations;
- Economic development of Indigenous communities;
- Increased Indigenous representation in consultations about operations; and
- Increased levels of cultural awareness among Comalco employees.

**A Charitable Trust** (controlled by a majority of Traditional Owners) has been set up to



Napranum Elder – Thelma Coconut. “Why do they call them **Charitable Trusts**? Why do they have to call it **charity**? Getting some payment for our own land isn’t **charity**.”

“I would particularly like to express my gratitude for the very kind and warm remarks of Thelma Coconut. I was impressed by the depth of the feeling expressed and the generosity and the spirit of the welcome extended to me when I arrived on the tarmac and also here this morning. She commands our respect and our gratitude.”

John Howard – Australian Prime Minister on the opening of Scherger Air Force Base in 1998.

*“We’ve been talking about the 20 year plan for the Trust. That’s where the money lies for the twenty years and we’re thinking - but it’s not about the money. What are we going to do with this money in twenty years? There is no point in us saying that we are the richest Trust or the \$120,000,000 aborigines. We don’t want to get bogged down in that. We want the meaning. We want it about people – not money.*

*We thought about ourselves as Trustees. Are we going to listen to what people tell us – an expert about money? We know that’s what Trustees*

manage the funds and annual contributions made by Comalco and the Queensland Government.

- 60% of the annual funding will be placed in long-term secure investments.

As well as the annual contributions:

- \$500 000 will be managed by Comalco to run employment and training programs endorsed by the Coordinating Committee
- \$150 000 will be allocated to the Cultural Awareness fund
- The Comalco owned Sudley Station, a 1325sqkm pastoral property, will be transferred to the Traditional Owners
- Parts of the Comalco lease that are no longer needed for mining will be relinquished to the State Government for its return to Aboriginal ownership.

The Coordinating Committee has broad representation from all signatories to the agreement and will oversee the day to day implementation of the Agreement. The Committee will also consult on:

- Cultural heritage and site management;
- Comalco operations and plans;
- Employment and training initiatives;
- Environmental and rehabilitation aspects; and
- Land access (mine and recreation).

The Western Cape Community Trusts have enunciated their vision statement and objectives:

#### VISION STATEMENT

“We recognise honour and respect our past, and in unity, we seek sustainable advancement and development for the future of our communities.”

#### OBJECTIVES

1. Engage the principles of sustainability for our social, economic, ecological and environmental development together with good governance in decision making.
2. Rebuild, preserve and maintain our culture
3. Facilitate and assist our elders and our people return to their country
4. Invest in a better future for our children through:
  - a. Education
  - b. Training
  - c. Employment
5. Seek out and create opportunities, local, regional, national and international to enable a greater choice and freedom.

Given that ‘sustainable advancement and development’ would clearly be enhanced by the



*jobs are but in this case we are still Traditional Owners sitting in as Trustees. You know, normally you have Trustees of the Board who have no ties to your family. Just say you own a big company and you have directors they don't particularly come from your immediate family or your extended family. They're neutral. They're just running your business and making more money for you and your family.*

*In our case it's different. We're directors managing money but it is our money too that we are managing. And that's harder because we've got to think about making sure that there's money coming out of those buckets in 20 years – the investment that we're investing now but we've got to realize too as leaders, being Trustees, that it's not about just having the money in the bank.*

*It goes back to our goals and objectives again because we are part of those goals and objectives not just as directors but as Traditional Owners. And goals and objectives that come under being directors is totally different, because it is about money, compared to the goals and objectives you have about your people and your future.*

*As Traditional Owners and Leaders we need to think about how we're going to do this. We have to set up systems in place now. If we are going to bring this big picture together we're going to get 20 years down the track with the 60% investment. Where does that fit in? Do we get to 20 years and let other people dictate where our money goes? Do we let Comalco or Government dictate where our money goes? No. Do we only sit there as Directors to let them dictate where our money goes? No. The scariest part is looking beyond - when we need to be looking here."*

*Cheryl Pitt & Jackie Madua – WCC Trustees*

diversification of the economy into more tourism related enterprises and that the development of tourism addresses **ALL** of the objectives of the Trusts, it is reasonable to expect that the WCCCA will give considerable priority to the design, development and implementation of the tourism process.

*Geoff Milgate - CEO WCCCA*

*"It's certainly a new era for the aboriginal people to be starting to look at their future, their investment in businesses, their jobs, their education, their training are all key factors in this agreement.*

*It's virtually locked in for 20 years. Most of the money gets locked into very safe and secure investments for 20 years so essentially they've got 20 years to really concentrate on vocational training, to look at their future and try and turn things around from what's happened in the past and we do have limited funds that keep coming in every year from Comalco and the government which they can spend now.*

*Part of that I suppose could be treated as a big 20 year project that everything we do from here on in is a trial for 20 years time. There will be substantial money there in 20 years and they'll certainly need 20 years of experience probably to cope with what they are going to do with that huge amount of money in 20 years time.*

*There are three sub regional trusts and there is one main trust. Total funds going into that system are about \$6 million a year at the moment, which we hope will grow as Comalco expands and that is about to start soon. Comalco pays roughly double what the State Government pays so to say Comalco pays around \$4 million and the Government around \$2 million would be the approximates.*

*60% of that is invested for 20 years and the balance of funds is split three ways into three sub-regional trusts those being Aurukun, Napranum area which is the Central region and the northern region which is split between Mapoon and New Mapoon which means that they are a bit short on money because the money is split two ways before they get it.*

*So in each of those sub-trusts they probably only get on an annual basis between \$500,000 and \$700,000 a year which then in turn can be split between Traditional Owners and Community benefit. So year by year not a lot of money. At the moment we have two years worth as the whole thing is new but certainly the way the communities are planning there is heavy demand.*

*There is far more demand on the money than there is actual money with the number of projects and ideas that are going out. We have been going through a process of identifying the concepts and projects. Certainly tourism is on the list for all sub-regions as is a huge range of other things. The list is very, very extensive.*

*It's been a stumbling block and a learning curve to get the directors to a stage of setting their goals, visions and objectives through the system which we've done. The two that have been approved so*



"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."  
– Mark Twain

The communities of Western Cape York have the cultural, natural and recreational tourism resources to build a very successful high quality tourism industry.

Remoteness is one of Australia's tourism assets and Western Cape York is regarded by many as the most accessible of Australia's remote regions because of its Weipa infrastructure and proximity to the Cairns domestic and international air transport hub.

The communities have access to substantial capital from various sources. This is the time to invest in a very high quality tourism industry. It's time to set the sail for the twenty year voyage.

far are totally different.

One is a history of Napranum which has come through the Napranum Council to the Central Trust. That is about \$30,000 and it's to print the book and arrange for distribution. The second one at this stage is Napranum Seed Harvesters. There's a group under the guidance of the Ranger Program at Napranum that collect seeds to sell on to Comalco from trees. The funding approved there will be in the vicinity of \$100,000 and that will include things like vehicles, a cherry picker and a co-ordinator to get it going properly."

Geoff Milgate

The table below is a typical scenario making a number of reasonable assumptions extrapolated from the above information. This table has not been generated, assessed or approved by the WCCCA. It has been calculated to demonstrate the likely capital sums available up to 2021 when the Trust matures.

Year	Capital (\$m)	Add Capital (\$m)	Total Capital (\$m)	Interest at 5%	Total at year end (\$m)
2003	3.60	0.00	3.60	0.18	3.78
2004	3.78	3.60	7.38	0.37	7.75
2005	7.75	3.60	11.35	0.57	11.92
2006	11.92	3.60	15.52	0.78	16.29
2007	16.29	3.60	19.89	0.99	20.89
2008	20.89	3.60	24.49	1.22	25.71
2009	25.71	3.60	29.31	1.47	30.78
2010	30.78	3.60	34.38	1.72	36.10
2011	36.10	3.60	39.70	1.98	41.68
2012	41.68	3.60	45.28	2.26	47.54
2013	47.54	3.60	51.14	2.56	53.70
2014	53.70	3.60	57.30	2.87	60.17
2015	60.17	3.60	63.77	3.19	66.96
2016	66.96	3.60	70.56	3.53	74.08
2017	74.08	3.60	77.68	3.89	81.57
2018	81.57	3.60	85.17	4.26	89.43
2019	89.43	3.60	93.03	4.65	97.68
2020	97.68	3.60	101.28	5.06	106.34
2021	106.34	3.60	109.94	5.50	115.44

Without taking indexation into account and assuming an average interest rate over the next 18 years of 5%, the value of the WCCCA Trusts in 2021 is in the order of \$115,000,000.

Recent figures suggest that in spite of considerable efforts to attract and train more local indigenous people to work for Comalco and their contractors, which is one of the key goals of the WCCCA, they are still well below target benchmarks even though there are significant numbers of indigenous



The WCCCA is encouraged to focus its investment strategies in tourism locally and not just for social and employment reasons. It is suggested that if the right investment decisions are made, better returns can be achieved in the Weipa region than elsewhere.



Vicki Law with Western Cape Hospitality finalists returning from receiving award in Townsville.

people either out of work or only meeting minimum work requirements under CDEP schemes. The April 2004 Newsletter of the Western Cape College highlights this matter of jobs being available at Comalco and not being taken up.

*Director's Desk – Newsletter Western Cape College 9 April 2004*

*"It is well recognised student attendance is a concern in the Western Cape. Considerable effort is put into addressing this issue, however, some issues remain out of our, or parental control. Students in Mapoon or Aurukun need to leave their community to access senior education. Just from these two communities approximately 110 students potentially could, or should, be accessing boarding or hostel accommodation.*

*Most do not however. Our efforts to address this issue however highlight some startling information. Our research demonstrates 98% of students leaving the communities to complete Year 12 have not. Naturally this extrapolates out as a minority of a minority as few attempt.*

*Given the research clearly highlights the advantage of completing Year 12 this is a major concern.*

***It was once stated students did not complete Year 12 because there were no jobs available so it was a conscious decision. Given the employment targets existing in this region this is no longer the case."***

*Don Anderson*

*Director Western Cape College*

There will always be people who don't want to work at all. However it may be that, in spite of the variety of work available at Comalco that some people would prefer to work in an industry other than the mining industry and there is only one other independently viable industry and that is tourism.

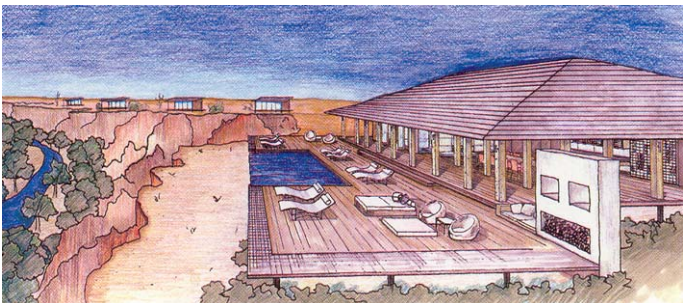
The purpose in making this observation is that if the WCC Trusts are to meet their Vision Statements and Fundamental Objectives, they need to ensure that they have a strong focus on the only other viable industry for the region. Given that this report is very optimistic about the future of tourism in the region, it is essential that such important local investment entities as the WCC Trusts lead the way and demonstrate confidence in the local tourism industry through their own investment. This will be essential to attracting other public and private sector investment and grants.

It is understood that the Trusts may be considering investment outside the Weipa region, in the tourism industry in Cairns for example, and it is suggested that these potential investment strategies be re-evaluated against the need to provide more quality tourism infrastructure locally as identified in this report. It is suggested that the need to create more diversified forward-thinking tourism orientated work within the Western Cape itself is more important than achieving some better short term returns on Trust investments elsewhere which deliver no local employment, training or business benefits.



## Business Models

<p><b>Outside Indigenous Communities</b></p>	<p>Outside indigenous communities, tourism operators will choose whatever business model best suits their operations and this document has nothing to contribute to that choice. If the business has freehold property or other acceptable security then usually business people can readily borrow against these assets to finance their business enterprises.</p>
<p><b>Inside Indigenous Communities</b></p> <p><b>Fundamental Tourism Accommodation Needs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Approval. The location and modus operandi of the enterprise needs to have the approval of the Traditional Owners, the Community Council and any other individuals or entities nominated by them.</li> <li>❖ Residential Liquor Licence. There are no known commercially feasible remote tourism accommodation facilities that do not sell alcohol to their guests or permit the consumption of alcohol.</li> <li>❖ Profitability. It must make an acceptable commercial profit in the medium to long term.</li> <li>❖ Research. Viable markets need to be identified.</li> <li>❖ Product design. Based on research and profitability targets, an accommodation product needs to be tailored to the needs.</li> <li>❖ Implementation. The identified product needs to be implemented according to the design. This includes building the infrastructure and operating it according to the agreed specifications.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Best Management Practice</b></p> <p>Tourism development that brings real economic benefit to aboriginal communities starts with building appropriate accommodation infrastructure within the DOGITs to suit identified markets. It is true that some business will flow into communities from day visitors from Weipa based accommodation but apart from minor purchases from community shops it is difficult to conceive of any other <i>viable</i> business enterprises without on-site accommodation.</p> <p>When considering viable tourism business models, the priority is therefore to examine business arrangements which will allow market-tailored accommodation to be built. Regardless of the style or standard of accommodation, it is still a relatively large investment requiring significant capital and sound tenure arrangements.</p> <p>Qualifications and experience do not yet exist in Napranum and Mapoon to operate accommodated tourism enterprises and therefore, if those businesses are to develop, specialist operators need to be attracted. So the situation, as it exists, is that locations that are suitable for tourism development are all on aboriginal owned or controlled land and the expertise to operate these ventures does not exist within the respective aboriginal communities to operate those ventures.</p> <p>Some people, both indigenous and non-indigenous, believed that the transfer of land ownership and control back to Traditional Owners and other aboriginal entities, as has taken place gradually over the past 20 years, carried with it a responsibility for indigenous people to exclusively manage and operate all enterprises on that land. This is an unreasonable expectation. Apart from the fact that educational, work and life experience hasn't equipped enough indigenous people in the communities to undertake those responsibilities, including the management of tourism accommodation, there simply isn't the population base from which any community could expect to draw the mix of skills necessary.</p> <p>Operating tourism accommodation profitably requires wide experience and a broad skill base. Often the people within DOGIT communities that are best equipped to begin to take on these roles already have important positions locally in community or government. Tourism is a 7 day a week 24 hour a day commitment and the remuneration, conditions and performance expectations usually compare unfavourably with government or community positions. Hourly pay rates may be similar, but annual leave, sick leave, compassionate leave, bereavement leave, superannuation, subsidised travel and training are all better in the public sector. Work performance benchmarks are also usually higher</p>

	<p>and this is because of the need to meet challenging day to day expectations of clients and investors.</p> <p>Given this scenario, why would local indigenous people want to work in tourism? It is because people are different. They like doing different things. They are better at different things. What it does emphasise however is that tourism operations have to be very efficient to work. Profit margins are lean in all sectors of the industry. This isn't to say that the industry isn't profitable. What it says is that every aspect of the operation has to be carefully thought through, monitored and implemented 365 days of the year.</p> <p>There are many different business models that exist in the provision and marketing of tourism accommodation, however just three will be addressed here as being most relevant to Napranum and Mapoon.</p>
<p><b>Business Model 1 – Separate Owner / Operator</b></p>  <p>The new P&amp;O Resort currently being built at Wrotham Park Station is yet to set final room rates but it is anticipated that it will be in the region of \$1,600 per couple per night all inclusive.</p> <p>ATC - Online6</p> <p>A "premium outback station resort" will be built in Wrotham Park, 300km west of Cairns. The \$4m tourism development will feature "The Homestead" and 10 "guest quarters", on a 600,000 hectare property on the banks of the Mitchell River.</p> <p>The station is scheduled to open in August 2004. The project is a joint venture between The Australian Agricultural Company, R.M Williams Holdings and P&amp;O Australian Resorts.</p> <p>"With an increasing amount of interest in the Australian</p>	<p>Throughout the international hospitality industry, including Australia, it is very common for one company or group to own the tourism infrastructure and a specialised management group to lease and operate it. Many, if not most, of the quality hotel and lodge operations in this country work in this way.</p> <p><b><i>This is the favoured model for Napranum and Mapoon.</i></b> It is a landlord and tenant relationship. As with any business model, there are variations within each agreement to suit both parties; however the basic structure is that the landlord (in this case, an Aboriginal Trust or similar) owns the land and builds the infrastructure according to an agreed specification and the tenant undertakes to pay rent and satisfy other requirements of the lease.</p> <p>The tenant (which would need to be an appropriate individual or business of standing) agrees to a lease with the property owner which preferably would typically be negotiated on the basis of a base rental plus a percentage of turnover among many other terms and conditions.</p> <p>This arrangement has to be good for both parties.</p> <p>There is a good contemporary example of this type of arrangement with the new Wrotham Park Station Resort 300 kms west of Cairns and due to open in late 2004. Wrotham Park Station is owned by the Australian Agricultural Company – a public company with an annual turnover of around \$100m. This company no doubt has the financial resources to build its own resort and doesn't need partners for that purpose. It has chosen however to undertake this project as a joint venture between themselves and two other large companies; being RM Williams Holdings and P&amp;O Australian Resorts Pty Ltd.</p> <p>This is because, even with adequate capital and a well established commercial management organization, the Australian Agricultural Company may recognise that it doesn't have specialist expertise in the tourism resort business and, as it is not their core business, it makes good business sense to partner with a company that does.</p>

<p>outback as a holiday destination, Wrotham Park Station will position itself as a holiday experience that captures the heritage and spirit of outback Australia," Mark Campbell, Managing Director P&amp;O Australian Resorts, said.</p> <p>Wrotham Park Station will cater to a maximum of 20 guests at one time and Mr Campbell said it would provide an outback experience that brings together wilderness, wildlife and a hint of luxury.</p> <p>Travelpress travel news 23 Dec 2003</p>	<p>The same principle applies to the communities of Napranum and Mapoon. The expertise is not there and it will take a long time to learn. Generally speaking, leases need to be long term to attract quality operators and the communities need to be thinking in the order of 20 plus years when it comes to negotiating leases. Memorandums of Understanding can be agreed at the time of the execution of leases concerning opportunities for employment and how their own independent businesses may become established to service the needs of the guests staying at the lodges.</p> <p>Under this model, if the lessee continues to meet their obligations in terms of payments and other responsibilities they are free to run the business however they wish without any involvement by the landlord in the day to day affairs of the business.</p>
<p><b>Business Model 2 – Joint Venture</b></p>	<p>With a joint venture arrangement, there is usually more integration between all of the parties to the process and higher degree of on-going negotiation and agreement between all parties is required. In theory, the arrangement sounds good but the need for consensus in regard to day to day commercial business operations can mean the decision making process is time-consuming and not finally in the best interests of any of the parties. Also, in any joint venture arrangement there usually needs to be a dominant partner or workable arbitration provisions to permit the business to move beyond a stalemate between the parties should it occur.</p>
<p><b>Business Model 3 – 100% owned by Aboriginal Trust or other local indigenous entity</b></p>	<p>This is the least favoured model. For reasons mentioned elsewhere, marketing and operating remote tourist resorts or lodges is a highly specialised field and even if expert managers are hired, unless the individuals responsible for , has the necessary experience to monitor the performance of the management team they are unlikely to perform to the necessary standard.</p>
<p><b>Recommendations</b></p>	<p>In view of the unique opportunities and constraints which exist in Northern Cape York, as a result of the nature of land tenure, a future Regional Sustainable Tourism Study should address the various equitable and workable options that may be implemented to allow tourism in the region to develop or not as the case may be. It is known that the natural tourism resources are there. It is known that Weipa is an excellent base from which to service a broader tourism industry. The biggest challenge to the evolution of tourism is negotiating practical business models.</p>



## Moral Case for Indigenous Capitalism Key Points

- ❖ Failure to sort out ownership is a frequent reason for enterprise failure
- ❖ There is frequently unresolved tension between private enterprise and communal assets and opportunities
- ❖ The usual and least controversial approach to enterprise development is for the community to own enterprises for the benefit of all members. But countless community owned enterprises have failed
- ❖ Insufficient thought is given to incentive and reward when Aboriginal community enterprises are conceived
- ❖ There are many failed enterprises owned and operated on behalf of a community, which are likely to have succeeded if they were privately owned
- ❖ .... Aboriginal enterprises differ little to mainstream enterprises – incentive is still a key ingredient to motivation and success
- ❖ In relation to business organisation, we must also ensure that our governance structures suit successful enterprise operation and management
- ❖ Indigenous social and cultural imperatives often result in the creation of decision making and ownership structures that make enterprise ownership and management inefficient, unwieldy, impossible
- ❖ the overwhelming majority of indigenous enterprise structures are unsuited to successful business – and are completely unrealistic about commercial realities
- ❖ Indigenous decision making structures are



Richard Ah Mat has traditional land around the Pennefather River region. His clan are referred to as the Yupangathi group whose lands are within the Napranum and Old Mapoon DOGITs.

The area is mostly inhabited by Comalco and Alcan leases. Richard has been actively involved in high level negotiations with both Comalco and Alcan and has worked for Comalco for 27 years.

He is a qualified plant operator and dogman, with tickets to operate cranes, scrapers, graders, front-end loaders, tipper trucks and dozers.

Richard is serving his 2nd term as Chairperson of the land council. Prior to this appointment Richard was a Field Officer at the land council for 2 years.

Richard's appointment to the Balkanu board enhances effective communication between partner organisations.<sup>7</sup>

### Richard Ah Mat – “The Moral Case for Indigenous Capitalism”

Development of appropriate business models within Aboriginal communities presents unique challenges. The Executive Director of the Cape York Land Council, Richard Ah Mat's address to the NTRB Native Title on the Ground Conference in Alice Springs on 5 June 2003 titled “The Moral Case for Indigenous Capitalism”<sup>8</sup> is a benchmark document in identifying and describing the issues regarding business models in Aboriginal communities and suggesting ways to move forward. As Yupangathi from the Pennefather River area (in the Napranum and Mapoon DOGITs) there is even more relevance in that he is from one of the specific regions addressed in this report.

The last half of the speech is particularly relevant to tourism development in Western Cape York and is reproduced here. The complete paper can be found at <http://www.capeyorkpartnerships.com>

### *Governance, ownership and decision-making structures*

*Failure to sort out ownership is a frequent reason for enterprise failure. In the wider community, people who have a business idea and the means to develop their idea can develop their own enterprise at their own initiative. It is not as straightforward in Aboriginal communities.*

*This is because Aboriginal people are invariably members of wider family groups and communities, and individuals are not completely free to undertake private enterprise. Many assets like land are not capable of being privately owned by individuals – they are communally held. Similarly, opportunities are frequently seen as communal assets - belonging to clan groups or to communities, not to individuals.*

*There is therefore a frequently unresolved tension between private enterprise and communal assets*

about social and political representation, whereas optimum business decision-making should be about expertise, experience, knowledge and talent

- ❖ .... we must separate ownership from management, so that even if a group or community is the ultimate owner of an enterprise – the management structure is established along business lines
- ❖ ... we must be prepared to recognise talent, experience, education, skills and passion - rather than political and cultural considerations - when we select those who are charged with the management of our enterprises
- ❖ This is about getting the best people as directors to run your business. It also means that external directors who are independent and disinterested should be attracted onto the boards of indigenous enterprises.
- ❖ We have to support and trust our young, educated people!
- ❖ The communist conception of Aboriginal society that dominated Aboriginal affairs policy in the past was simplistic and wrong. It flattened Aboriginal society into a uniform community of people - like inmates of an institution
- ❖ Private enterprise presents significant dilemmas to Aboriginal people.
- ❖ The concern that individual entrepreneurs with access to finance, with skills, connections and so on, can easily come to monopolise all of the available enterprise opportunities within a community - there being a limit to the enterprises which the community economy can sustain.
- ❖ The concern that key assets and resources (particularly land) are communally owned and should not be "privatised" or exploited by an

*and opportunities. This often results in privately owned enterprises being resented or opposed by community members or organisations. It results in many enterprise opportunities not being developed because of disputation or opposition on the grounds that the opportunity that is proposed to be taken up "belongs to the community, not to the private individual".*

*The usual and least controversial approach to enterprise development is for the community to own enterprises for the benefit of all members. But countless community-owned enterprises have failed.*

*There are enterprises which are successfully owned and operated by communities: such as supermarkets, canteens and service stations. However many community-owned enterprises have failed because, at the end of the day, no-one took responsibility for them and the necessary effort, diligence and extra necessary work was not put into them.*

*One of the reasons for the frequent failure of enterprises is the lack of incentive arising from the ownership of the enterprise. Insufficient thought is given to incentive and reward when Aboriginal community enterprises are conceived.*

*There are many failed enterprises owned and operated on behalf of a community, which are likely to have succeeded if they were privately owned. Community ownership will be appropriate with some enterprises, however, where there has been perennial failure in certain enterprises - it is likely that the lack of incentive explains the failure.*

*The point is to ensure that in planning enterprises in Aboriginal communities, the issues of incentive and reward need to be properly analysed. In this respect, Aboriginal enterprises differ little to mainstream enterprises - incentive is still a key ingredient to motivation and success.*

### **Cultural match**

*There is a lot of talk nowadays about the need for "cultural match" in indigenous governance, that is that the structures should match the cultural arrangements and realities of indigenous groups if they are to be successful. There is no doubt much truth in this.*

*However, I would temper the idea that our governance structures must be made to suit our social and cultural arrangements. In relation to business organisation, we must also ensure that our governance structures suit successful enterprise operation and management. Indigenous social and cultural imperatives often result in the creation of decision-making and ownership structures that make enterprise ownership and management inefficient, unwieldy, impossible. In fact I am prepared to argue that the overwhelming majority of indigenous enterprise structures are unsuited to successful business – and are completely unrealistic about commercial realities.*

*Indigenous decision-making structures are about social and political representation, whereas optimum business decision-making should be about expertise, experience, knowledge and talent.*

individual or a subgroup of the community, for their exclusive profit.

- ❖ The concern that Aboriginal economic development should result in community benefit and uplift, not just of those who own private enterprises.
- ❖ The resulting concern that classes will be created within communities, where some people have opportunities and gain benefits from enterprises, whilst others have no opportunities.
- ❖ One does not need to deny that these dilemmas are real in order to also make the observation that it results in our people being unable to operate enterprises – whilst other people are.
- ❖ It is a situation which condemns us to allowing others to profit from opportunities within or involving our communities, but not our own people. It is a situation which we must confront.
- ❖ The existence of capitalism is something we can do nothing about. The morality of this fact is a useless thing to consider.
- ❖ Therefore there is, to our way of thinking in Cape York, a moral case to be made for indigenous engagement in enterprise and wealth creation for our people.
- ❖ Whatever dilemmas and problems enterprise development present to our people, we must face the fact that unless we succeed with enterprise development, our people will be trapped in impoverishment and dependency
- ❖ .... throw off the shackles of the gulag concept of community that has developed in indigenous policy
- ❖ ... we must make wealth creation and wealth participation respectable amongst our people.

*Indigenous groups contemplating enterprise find it hard to face up to the business realities concerning decision-making and management – and therefore develop community governing structures instead of business-oriented structures.*

*There are two solutions to this issue. Firstly, we must separate ownership from management, so that even if a group or community is the ultimate owner of an enterprise – the management structure is established along business lines. In this way we let the best damper-makers operate in the kitchen and we stay out of their way. Too many cooks in the kitchen...leave the experts to make the damper; the rest of us can work out how to cut it up after the cooks have made the bloody thing. But the way we do it at the moment – we're fighting over the damper even before we got any flour.*

*Secondly, we must be prepared to recognise talent, experience, education, skills and passion - rather than political and cultural considerations - when we select those who are charged with the management of our enterprises. This is about getting the best people as directors to run your business. It also means that external directors who are independent and disinterested should be attracted onto the boards of indigenous enterprises. We have to support and trust our young, educated people!*

*The point is that we should separate functions so that we make wealth like white fellas, but we distribute wealth like blackfellas.*

*The communist conception of Aboriginal society that dominated Aboriginal affairs policy in the past was simplistic and wrong. It flattened Aboriginal society into a uniform community of people - like inmates of an institution. The community became the sole focus of formal policy and family motivations became increasingly illegitimate.*

*Furthermore, with the transition to self-management, resources were granted by government to, and came to be controlled by, community structures, principally the Community Councils. These community structures came to be the distributor of the great proportion of the resources and opportunities available to community members. Governments transferred resources through grant funding to these community structures. Great pressure was brought to bear on family members in positions of responsibility to prefer family members. Community leaders were said to be torn between community responsibility and family obligation which were at odds with each other. Disputation between families increased and the politicking around community structures has grown to torrid levels.*

### ***Our culture as a barrier***

*In relation to Aboriginal economic development there is frequent reference to the need for "culturally appropriate" enterprises and ways of conducting enterprises. It is never clear what is meant, however.*





The Mapoon General Store displays the aboriginal flag in recognition of the traditional owners of the region.



On the other side of the entrance the Torres Strait flag is displayed in recognition of the 'historical' islander residents of Mapoon.

*Firstly, how "culturally appropriate" can enterprise be made to be? Secondly, are there requirements of enterprise development which are culturally universal - in that Aboriginal enterprise cannot avoid these requirements if they are to be successful?*

*Now is not the time to resolve these questions. It is enough to recognise that "culture" is frequently cited as a reason why enterprises need to be approached differently in Aboriginal communities - and why Aboriginal enterprises do not succeed.*

*The fact is that we now live in a market economy where the people with whom we coexist and deal with daily, make their livelihoods and accumulate wealth through enterprises. The goods and services we utilise in our daily lives are provided by enterprises owned by other people.*

*This means that whilst, for cultural reasons, enterprise development may seem foreign to our people - we are clearly a part of it. But we are part of it as passive customers: we contribute our resources to the livelihoods and the accumulation of wealth by other people, and we seem unable to do it ourselves. Let me put it simply: we're busy making everybody else rich, and we remain poor.*

### ***Dilemmas of private ownership***

*Private enterprise presents significant dilemmas to Aboriginal people. These dilemmas include:*

- The concern that individual entrepreneurs with access to finance, with skills, connections and so on, can easily come to monopolise all of the available enterprise opportunities within a community - there being a limit to the enterprises which the community economy can sustain*
- The concern that key assets and resources (particularly land) are communally owned and should not be "privatised" or exploited by an individual or a subgroup of the community, for their exclusive profit*
- The concern that Aboriginal economic development should result in community benefit and uplift, not just of those who own private enterprises*
- The resulting concern that classes will be created within communities, where some people have opportunities and gain benefits from enterprises, whilst others have no opportunities*

*These are significant barriers to private enterprise development. These barriers are not just manifested in the policy and political difficulties involved in developing private enterprise within communities – the barriers are psychological and cultural, in the sense that there is an undercurrent of suspicion and misgivings in relation to private enterprise within our Aboriginal communities, and frequently a belief that it is foreign to our culture and society.*



Alcan and Comalco leases cover extensive areas of the Western Cape. The land is revegetated after mining and will revert to ownership by Traditional Owners over time.



If feral animals are targets instead of signs, hunting can be a lucrative source of income for communities as well as assisting in the control of pigs in particular.

*One does not need to deny that these dilemmas are real in order to also make the observation that it results in our people being unable to operate enterprises – whilst other people are. Indeed we seem to have no problems utilising private enterprises that are owned by strangers – but our own people cannot own and provide these same services through their own enterprises. It is a situation which condemns us to allowing others to profit from opportunities within or involving our communities, but not our own people. It is a situation which we must confront.*

### Conclusion

*What I have sought to outline today is the political case for enterprise development in indigenous Cape York. But it is not just a political case; we must make the moral case - if not for capitalism, then for involvement in the wealth creation process. The existence of capitalism is something we can do nothing about. The morality of this fact is a useless thing to consider. What we have to do is face up the reality that we live in a market society and economy, and we are located at the most miserable bottom end of it. What is a moral question is whether we are participating and gaining a fair share from the market society and economy in which we live. Therefore there is, to our way of thinking in Cape York, a moral case to be made for indigenous engagement in enterprise and wealth creation for our people.*

*Whatever dilemmas and problems enterprise development present to our people, we must face the fact that unless we succeed with enterprise development, our people will be trapped in impoverishment and dependency.*

*So let me summarise what we in Cape York think is needed in our future direction.*

*Firstly, we must make families respectable again and throw off the shackles of the gulag concept of community that has developed in indigenous policy.*

*Secondly, we must make wealth-creation and wealth-participation respectable amongst our people. Impoverished and dependent people will never be able to keep their culture, language and identity as a distinct people in the long term. Instead they will continue the decline into social dysfunction and cultural poverty.*



## Other Businesses (existing and proposed)



David Khalu – CEO Weipa Rent-A-Car



### Car Rental

There are two car rental operations in Weipa including Thrifty and Weipa Rent-A-Car. The interview was conducted with Dave Khalu of Weipa Rent-A-Car.

"Weipa car hire business is mainly corporate. Very little of my business is related to tourism. The only tourism business that I get is when people break down who are travelling up through the Cape.

People who are flying into town for fishing trips to go fishing with one of the guides for 3 or 4 days and then they might want to fish by themselves for a while and they hire a 4WD to tow their hired tinnie. But we don't get the American, German, Japanese tourist hiring a vehicle and going up to the Daintree etc. like they do in Cairns. We don't get any of that.

It is mainly commercial relating to the mining industry and State and Commonwealth Government. That includes Fisheries, to Police to Customs, Magistrates and Engineering Consultants. All those type of people are our main market. And when I say tourism, most of that business is paid for by RACQ because of breakdowns etc. They have a contractual arrangement with us and hire cars directly for their clients while their vehicles are being repaired.

But as far as tourism goes ..... no. We may get an enquiry from someone down south to hire a vehicle to take it up to the tip but I am reluctant to hire for that purpose now. We are seriously, seriously thinking of stopping that simply because it's costing us money and that's not what it's about. It's about us providing a fair service to you as a customer and getting a vehicle back that we have a good return out of.

Even if people look after the vehicles we still get shockies broken off, cracked chassis's, springs, cracks in the bodywork which nobody else experiences. It is because of where we are. Corrugations, washouts, potholes. Predominantly structural type of damage which is big. We've just had a chassis broken on a Nissan Patrol that's only done 30,000 kms. We can't charge enough to cover the damage. That will stop us from putting vehicles into that environment and that then reflects on tourism.

You try and get a car from Avis or Hertz in Cairns to come up the Cape. They won't do it because over the years they have been burnt so many times. Not only that, if you have an accident in a remote area and the vehicle needs to be transported back it can cost thousands of dollars to get it back. We recently paid \$2,500 to recover a vehicle up the Cape. The tow company is exposed to the same things that I am. TNT brought 7 cars up on one of those car carriers. Never again will they do it. It cost them about \$8,000 in damage to my vehicles and \$28,000 in damage to the truck.





All Cape York visitor surveys show that one of the main reasons 4WD self-drivers make the trip to the 'tip' is for the sense of accomplishment. Those travel-worn and dusty overlanders who arrive at the same time as a Unique Adventures jet ski safari may find the sight of jet skis an unexpected 'taming' of the tip. (photo Unique Adventures Website)

### Adventure Tours

The only adventure tour company operating out of Weipa itself is Unique Adventures who run trail bike, 4WD and jet ski tours of the northern Cape.

The following information is quoted verbatim from the Unique Adventures website:

#### "TIM BARKER (OWNER/OPERATOR)

Owners Tim & Claire Barker, bring a lifetime of experience to what are simply the best Cape York tours you can do. Tim's cv includes field service as a diesel fitter/motor mechanic in some of the most remote areas in Australia. Rest assured, he knows how to get things done. He's had extensive experience catering for large groups and is qualified in first aid, workplace health & safety, holds a coxswains ticket, 20 years riding experience, organiser of the famous Weipa Croc Run enduro and is also a passionate natural historian. Basically, if it's broken he can fix it, if it's tasty he can cook it, if it hops, walks or crawls he can tell you about it and if you want the real Cape York Experience, he'll give it to you."



Maryanne Coconut at Vyce's Crossing. There is a permanent fresh water creek here deep enough for cooling off even in the dry season. A location like this could be suitable for a 'traditional bush camp'. Elders like Maryanne and Thelma Coconut are central to the process of identifying suitable locations to present unique indigenous tourism opportunities.

### Pre-Contact Traditional Indigenous Camp

Mike Hintz of Oz Tours has indicated that there has been some interest expressed in the possibility of re-creating a pre-contact traditional indigenous camp where passengers on Cape York safaris could perhaps spend one night. He also believes that it would be popular with self drives.

Oz Tours Safaris have been operating both camping and accommodated Cape York expeditions for 20 years or so. Throughout that time they have always sought to include as much indigenous content as possible. They were the first operator to make extensive use of indigenous product such as Willie Gordon's walk at Hope Vale for example as part of their standard Cape York itinerary.

This concept was discussed with Maryanne and Thelma Coconut and a site at Vyses's Crossing was visited which is typical of sites that may be suitable for this concept. A more in-depth tourism study may reveal a more suitable site.

This would clearly be a very challenging project to implement but with some indicated market appeal it is recommended that the concept be addressed in any future sustainable tourism study.



Ian Bell – Senior Conservation Officer, Turtle Research Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Ranger Geraldine Mamoose remove the remains of a Flatback Turtle from an Indonesian trawl net on the beach in Mapoon around 6 kms north of the Pennefather River in September 2003. (photo/story: Peter McCulkin – DPI Weipa)



Flatback turtle nesting begins from late November to early February. Hatchlings emerge from late December to late March. If Feral Pig Exclusion Devices are to be deployed by paying volunteers, the volunteers need to be there during the nesting season. Participants will need to have a high level of fitness to cope with laborious activity at this time of year. (photo – AIMS)

### Western Cape Regional Turtle Conservation Project

<sup>9</sup>A survey of the Weipa coast was undertaken by Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Land and Sea Rangers from Aurukun and Mapoon Communities to identify marine turtle resources and population threats. Approximately 150 kilometres of coast was surveyed where vessel access and logistics permitted. It was concluded that feral pig predation of marine turtle eggs on western Cape York is extensive and the greatest threat facing this nesting population. Drifting fishing nets that have been lost or abandoned by fishing boats and washed up onto Western Cape beaches also account for the deaths of significant marine biota including turtles.

Studies are under way to determine whether a viable tourism product can be built around conservation efforts to protect sea turtles. A preliminary study has already been facilitated through DPI Weipa and Rotary International District 9640 on the Gold Coast. Key points are as follows:

- The concept is to build demountable tented beach camps for up to 14 guests each.
- Guests will pay in the region of \$300 per day to participate with local indigenous people in fishing net clean up operations. It is also proposed that participants assist with the deployment of Feral Pig Exclusion Devices around turtle nests. For this to occur it seems that it would be necessary for the program to operate during the summer months during the peak turtle nesting period.
- Initial budget estimates are that around \$500,000 is required for infrastructure with up to another \$100,000 required for marketing and start up cash flow.
- The financial analysis predicts 1,000 guests per annum are necessary to make the project viable. In Section 4.4 (Funding) of the study it states that “Clearly, the success of the project is dependent upon the acceptability of the product by the Client base.” and “Market research conducted to date suggests that there is a high interest in the product and a significant demand exists.”
- The report however qualifies the ‘market research conducted to date’ in the following terms: “It is emphasised that the document is indicative only at this time and the final financial projections can only be validated after significant and rigorous market testing and research.”

### Recommendations

A \$600,000 investment clearly does require “rigorous market testing and research” in respect to the financial projections and it is suggested that the following matters need to be considered in further developing the concept:

- As the desired outcome is to reduce turtle deaths to the extent that turtles continue to nest on the beaches of the Western Cape into the future, it seems imperative, in view of the extent of the financial investment required, that the planned conservation effort is based on scientific



Green Turtle nesting occurs between October and February.  
(photo – AIMS)

planning.

- Although it is known that there is a market that pays to participate in conservation activities around the world, any product that positions itself to access that market needs to meet all of the market criteria. It would need to be established that there is a market, at the occupancy rate required of 5,000 bednights per annum, and that guests will pay in the region of \$300 (nett) per bednight, plus considerable travelling costs, to perform laborious work under demanding climatic conditions of the type indicated.
- This project has been presented as being a profitable enterprise and usually this genre of 'conservation' travel activity is 'not-for-profit' and is more often than not conducted directly under the auspices of scientists within programs such as Earthwatch on a significantly smaller scale than is proposed here.
- The preliminary financial scenarios do not take depreciation into account which, given the nature of the infrastructure; tents, boats, vehicles etc. will have a significant impact on viability when applied to the financial modelling. It is suggested that this be addressed in future financial analyses as it has a negative impact on the Balance Sheet of over \$100,000 per annum based on the proposed capital expenditure. Standard accounting protocols need to be applied to allow for responsible audit and acquittal of investments.
- It is considered that, in toto, this project has no parallel elsewhere and, as such, does require extensive, objective evaluation.

Because the above market research and financial scenarios are not yet available, it is not possible to comment further on this particular project except to quote further from the original study which states:

*"It is recommended that before any investment is made in the project by any potential investor that appropriate due diligence be undertaken so that a view can be formed about the adequacy or otherwise of the project's ability to deliver returns and outcomes that are consistent with the potential investors' objectives and expectations."*<sup>10</sup>

### **General Observation**

Independent of the above proposal, it is recommended that each tourism enterprise that benefits from the marine resources of the Western Cape should, within responsible fiscal limits, contribute to and participate in conservation activities that are scientifically formulated, ratified and monitored.

It is suggested that the respective Government Departments responsible for maintaining and enhancing the environmental integrity of the Western Cape partner with industry to develop specific local plans to achieve these outcomes.





Sportfishing is catch and release and the waters of the Western Cape are regarded as one of the best salt water fly fishing locations on the planet.



Dave Donald Sportfishing – This operation is typical of the professional sportfishing operations out of Weipa. These guests from Victoria said, "We think Weipa and this part of the Cape is beautiful. You don't even notice that it's a mining town."

## Sportfishing

*"With sportfishing, nine years ago there was one guy operating here and if he didn't get seven people then he wouldn't go out whereas now with one or two they'll go out because there are 13 or more charter boats operating and they're booked. They're booked out all of the time.*

*As I grew up here in Weipa, then it was a case of use a hand reel. Haul everything in and keep everything. Nowadays it's catch and release and the shit fish like queenies and trevally that didn't interest us before we now go looking for. It's sportfishing with a fly rod and it is a different style of fishing altogether. The attitude around here is that a lot of guys think that these fellas are going out there and raping the resources. But the fact is that these guys protect their own resources because if there are no fish, their businesses don't exist. So they control the environment much better than a tourist would ever do. The fishing industry here promotes Weipa as far as tourism more than anything. Qantas is also helping. Sometimes you see a plane come in with up to 20 fishing rods.."*

*Dave Khalu*

In marketing, what was once called a 'Point of Difference' is now more often referred to as a 'Unique Selling Proposition' (USP).

The Western Cape's USP is clearly its Sportfishing. There are other places in Australia where there is good Sportfishing of one type or another but it is only on the Western Cape where the mix of species, weather conditions and access to professional fishing guides and facilities all comes together to produce the ideal package.

Many fishing journalists have written enthusiastically about the quality of the experience. This is David Green writing in Fishing World – August 2003.

*"The remote Queensland town of Weipa is readily forging a reputation as the place to go for sport-fishing action. The Western side of Cape York is one of the most impressive fishing destinations I've been to. Long sandy beaches, clear smooth water with the fleeting shadows of trevally, barra and maybe permit, with towering red bauxite cliffs as a backdrop, make this a fantastic place to cast lures and flies. The diversity of this area means the visiting angler can compile a pretty extensive species list in a few days, with pelagics, tropical estuary species and a host of others in abundance. The prevailing wind is generally south east for much of the year, meaning off shore conditions on the beaches.*

*The tide differential is small, generally less than two metres, which is much less than similar areas in the Northern Territory. This means the water stays pretty clear a lot of the time.*

*Anglers tend to evaluate the quality of their experience on how visual it is. We all crave for fish that*



Barramundi is just one of up to 50 species caught on fly.



Dave Donald – Dave Donald Sportfishing

*jump so we can see them move in air, and we all love poppers and fizzers because you get to see the bite. Champagne moments come when you get to see the fish cruising and then present a fly or lure in front of it and watch the take, the fight and the capture. It's easy to remember a great fish if you got to see it in action. When the bite comes in deep or muddy water it's a fantasy rather than reality until you get the fish to the boat. Fly-fishing in particular really comes into its own as the best form of fish hunting when you get to cast to a fish you can see. I'm not all that fussed on fly-fishing blind into murky depths. But if you want some vintage fishing moments to store in your brain's memory files, then get yourself to Weipa and take a fly rod or light spin stick."*

There are up to 20 sportfishing operations in Weipa, ranging from day trips at \$180 per person per day to motherships charging up to \$700 per person per day all inclusive. Some of the operators are full time professional sportfishing operations while others have full time employment with Comalco or their contractors and run sportfishing trips as a part time operation.

Generally speaking, the full time professional operations market outside the region and begin each season almost fully booked. They then top up their idle capacity with last minute out-of-town bookings or local bookings. At the lower priced end of the spectrum, most of the clients are on 4WD self drive Cape York trips and book when they arrive through the Camping Ground or the Hotel/Motels. As with anything, this is not a hard and fast rule. Some self drives pay top prices and no doubt there are some fly-in bookings that pay lower prices but the scenario generally holds true.

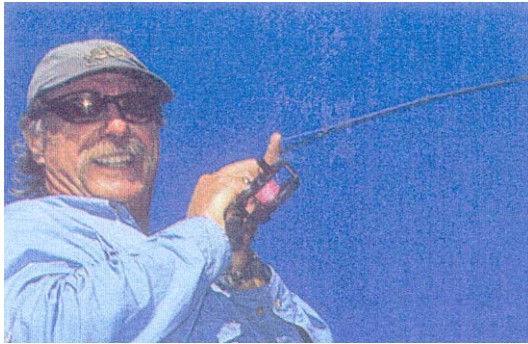
The professional operations that market outside the region tend to be very good at what they do and have their own contacts with fishing journalists, agents and corporate clients. This hard-won market loyalty and intelligence is understandably not shared, which makes it challenging for the operators to work together on joint marketing initiatives. It may be that the best way forward is to continue to do what they are doing at the moment and it could be time wasting and counter productive to try to jointly market through conventional destination marketing strategies.

*"We have sponsored many journalists over the past 18 odd years and a lot of them originally came along via Tourism Queensland or whatever but in the end I decided that I would choose the journalists that I wanted to come because a lot of the people who were coming through Tourism Queensland weren't worth a pinch of whatever and we were getting nothing out of them at all and basically I now choose the journalists that I want to come and I pay. I don't worry about going through all this. It's just not worth the hassle."*

Dave Donald – Dave Donald Sportfishing

While all operators are keen to operate to capacity, there is a desire to strike an equitable balance between improving the tourism economy generally while still maintaining the character and quality of the region. This is a challenge that is common with remote natural destinations which are becoming more engaged with tourism. This is why it is important that the difficult task of developing a vision for the destination is undertaken and continually monitored. High yield is specifically identified as a priority in the Federal Government's White Paper on tourism and, in conjunction with other strategies; it is through lower numbers and higher yields that natural





Alan Philliskirk – Fish's Fly and Sportfishing Cape York  
(photo/scan: David Green – Fishing World – August 2003)



A number of different fishing trips can be booked on arrival in Weipa at Weipa Camping Ground.

destinations can retain their quality of experience while still growing their economies. This is a challenging ethic to deliver in practice however as there will always be a strong local commerce lobby that only counts growth in terms of numbers.

*"One of the most marketable qualities of Weipa is that it is remote – the fact that it is hard to get to. Once we turn it into another Cairns, it's not Weipa anymore. I know that of the tourist operators here a lot of them have spent a considerable amount of their own money to get their own market. Once it starts to get taken out of your hands, it can get a little bit unnerving because all of a sudden you're talking about Sportfishing Weipa working on a huge market scale; the operators who are here at the moment are going to get more and more competition coming in. There's nothing wrong with competition but once we start to get to a saturation point which won't take very long. This place is not that big, it won't support a huge sport fishery here and it certainly won't support 50 operators. Once it gets to that stage, you're not selling the same thing. You haven't got that same marketable quality."*

Alan Philliskirk – Fish's Fly and Sportfishing Cape York

Houseboat hire is also available.

### Recommendations

There is considerable scope for improvement throughout the region in infrastructure both in terms of accommodation and waterfront facilities. The people who know what is required are the people running the current fishing operations in Weipa. It is recommended that they develop a comprehensive vision of how the industry should develop and specify in some detail what infrastructure is required.

One other challenge that needs to be addressed is indigenous employment in the sportfishing industry. Out of the employment options available to young indigenous people in the Western Cape it would seem that being out on the water fishing should be a very popular way to earn a living. It is understandable however that it has not occurred to this point in time for a number of reasons.

Sportfishing is much more than taking anglers out in a boat to the right spot and motoring back home again. The relationship between the professional fishing guide and the angler is critical to the success of the business. Sportfishing anglers often plan their annual fishing holiday over a year in advance. They spend hours perusing magazines and internet sites and they practise fly casting in the local park. They live their annual fishing expedition long before they get on the plane for Weipa. Their expectations when they arrive are very high and the success of the trip depends to a large extent on their relationship with the guide and the guide's expertise. For this to work there needs to be a shared affinity for sportfishing and they need to be able to relate on other levels as well. Most indigenous people living in the Western Cape, by the very nature of where they live, who they are and their recent life experiences are not life-style equipped to deliver on these expectations.





Torres Strait Islander Francis Wapau tries his hand with rod. There is a role for Government and the WCCCA to apply themselves directly and energetically to facilitate the uptake of practical skills such as Sportfishing that Western Cape Indigenous People can embrace.

*"If the fishing guides have to expand their businesses by say 50% then they need to buy an extra boat and staff it. Because of the shortage of accommodation that might mean that they have to spend up to \$300,000 for example putting a duplex in. It's no ones real fault. It's not Comalco's fault. It's not the guides fault. It's no ones fault. It's just how it is."*

*David Khalu*

This observation underscores the fact that it is a 'given' that there will not be any local aboriginal person who could fill the role of fishing guide. That may well be the case now but this report is about the future as well as the now. One of the primary goals of a successful tourism industry is to provide employment opportunities for indigenous people in the region. The most successful tourism product in the region is sportfishing. It is self evident that bringing the two together has to form an important part of any future tourism vision for the region.

It is suggested that a training and employment program be initiated to begin this process. It may include:

- Generous subsidies and incentives to employers to hire and train local indigenous people. This may include the capital purchase of boats and equipment so that apprentices can learn through working in tandem with the professional guides.
- Some legal protection for the employers from guides starting up their own businesses for a stipulated period of time. It is unlikely that professional fishing operations will wish to pass on all of their skill and knowledge so that someone can start up in opposition to them.

Local specialists in this field of expertise could no doubt contribute significantly more to this discussion and it is recommended that this debate be joined.



The Mine Tour is not operated by Comalco. It is operated by the owners of the Weipa Camping Ground. The tour includes a visit to the plant working the ore body and a general tour of Weipa including the Cultural Centre.



Tours of the bauxite mining operation in Weipa are conducted daily in a 40 seat coach during the dry season.

### Mine Tours

Comalco's Weipa Mine has been producing bauxite on Cape York Peninsula since 1961. Bauxite mining is the first step in the production of aluminium and the ore is found in a layer three to four metres deep in the form of small red pebbles called pisolites.

In 2002 the company employed 507 people directly and produced 11.2 million tonnes of ore. That production is will almost double from 2005 as the new upgrade comes on line.

Vegetation is removed from the site before it is mined. Front end loaders use a shallow, open cut technique to load the bauxite, which lies below the topsoil, into bottom-dump trucks that carry the ore to the dump station. The bauxite is then transported to the beneficiation plant by rail or conveyor. At the beneficiation plant the ore is screened and washed then placed into stockpiles prior to loading onto ships.

Following the mining operation, Comalco has a comprehensive regeneration program to restore vegetation in those areas no longer required for mining. About 70 per cent of Weipa's bauxite is shipped to the Queensland Alumina Limited refinery in Gladstone and the Eurallumina SpA refinery in Italy. Here the bauxite is processed into alumina (a white powder) and transported to smelters for smelting, the last stage of the aluminium production process.

Comalco also produces approximately 150, 000 tonnes of calcined bauxite each year. This involves roasting bauxite ore in a large kiln and then supplying it to customers for use as an industrial abrasive. Calcined bauxite is exported to customers in Europe and North America.

The geographic location of Weipa presents significant challenges for a modern mining operation. Located 900 kms north west of Cairns, Weipa is largely inaccessible by road for most of the wet season which runs from December to March. Weipa's annual rainfall of 1,700 mm falls in this period. This can also bring cyclones and monsoonal conditions. Western Cape York is unique from a cultural and environmental perspective and Comalco is committed to ensuring that this uniqueness is preserved.<sup>11</sup>



Daphne de Jersey and son Joman at Bowchat. There are no limits to what can be achieved if the artistic talents of the indigenous people of the Western Cape are allowed to flourish.



Art at Napranum

### Art Development and Sales

Although the region has a rich aboriginal history there is no obvious artistic evidence of it when first arriving by air or by road and there is little evidence of it elsewhere. It is suggested that there needs to be an appreciation of this heritage on an architectural scale where ever appropriate and that this broad expression of culture be also actively encouraged with personal art.

There is clearly significant artistic talent within the region and if the tourism industry evolves as anticipated there will be a growing market for art pieces across all price ranges. In terms of art, the story of the Western Cape has only just begun to be told.

If the experience of other regions, such as Lockhart River, can be extrapolated to the Western Cape, then region can look forward to a flourishing art future.

### Recommendation

Fine artists need an audience. Fine artists need buyers. It is suggested that the region invest in a regional curator/broker who has a history of success in similar situations elsewhere. This is a role for somebody who has a keen understanding of the indigenous art market and can open doors for local artists and show alternative ways for their art to develop.

There is a wealth of history and custom that is known by the current elders in all of the communities and it is known that there are many young artists who may wish to represent those stories in art in a variety of mediums.

The best artists however do not always make the best salespeople and that is why the world over there has always been art brokers who make a living from bringing the artist and the buyer together.

An advisor with specific expertise in this area needs to be consulted to determine the best way forward for this role.





For east coast Australians, watching the sun set over the ocean is a rare experience. At Weipa Camping Ground children play on the beach and wade in the shallows while adults enjoy a sundowner and a sunset across Albatross Bay – Gulf of Carpentaria.

“Crack a smile and stay a while” paints an ideal picture for the future of Western Cape Tourism.

The decisions made now will determine how many faces will be smiling in 20 years time.



SUNSET OVER ALBATROSS BAY – GULF OF CARPENTARIA

The three laws of Destination Marketing

Visitors need:

A reason to come  
A reason to stay  
A reason to return

## References

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<sup>10</sup> Geekie 30 March 2004 'A proposal for the establishment of a Regional Turtle Conservation Project on the Western Cape York Peninsula'.  
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**REPORT ENDS**