

A PRECURSOR TO ENTREPRENEURIALISM ON ABORIGINAL LANDS OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA

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ABSTRACT

For centuries Australian Aboriginal custodians have managed their country and its natural, cultural and spiritual resources and values within. Upon European colonisation many of Aboriginal practices were interrupted and in the subsequent years substantial changes to the landscape have taken place. In the 1990s, in response to land management threats, Australian and Northern Territory governments funded programs supporting employment of Aboriginal peoples as rangers. The Indigenous Land and Sea Management program integrated Indigenous and non-Indigenous land and sea management practice and was supported through government machinery and bureaucratic processes and procedures. A rise in the public debt levels and paucity of funds has led to downsizing of such programs. An unintended consequence of downsizing has been the creation of inimical conditions for providing the necessary funds for Indigenous Natural and Cultural Resources Management (INCRM) activities. A blended form of Indigenous land management practices emerged through formation of public-private partnerships. With inevitability of further downsizing even these partnerships are facing near annihilations as alternative market drivers for such service provisions fail to exist on these remote lands. Genuine concerns for continuity of INCRM operations have emerged because of wide fluctuations in the funds available for such programs. In reality, search is focussed on alternative funding sources from the private and the not-for-profit sector to continue INCRM activities. However sustainability from different funding sources is largely dependent on the availability of Indigenous entrepreneurs who are engaged in INCRM. The paucity of funding and availability of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial acumen has prompted an investigation of entrepreneurs in INCRM activities on Indigenous lands in uncertain environments. As a result the main focus of this paper is an examination of challenges in establishing Indigenous cultural and resource markets as an alternative to the existing process. The paper calls for creating market forces on indigenous lands to sustain INCRM activities to enable the development of entrepreneurialism.

INTRODUCTION

Indigenous Natural and Cultural Resource Management (INCRM) is a term which is used in this paper to encompass all of the activities that Indigenous people provide on their country. It encompasses the biophysical aspects of land management, which are at the forefront of conventional Natural Resource Management (NRM) practice, but also includes the special interdependent relations that Aboriginal people have with their ancestral lands and seas and the myriad of cultural and social activities centred on the promotion of ecological, spiritual and human health.

INCRM activity on Indigenous lands can be analysed, understood, and examined using several approaches including Indigenous frames of reference emphasising the cultural and spiritual connotations of people belonging to land; or governments operating under the universal obligations to provide equitable services through policies and initiatives to promote sustainable development activities. In the realm of environmental management, specifically NRM, there has been a growing and widespread application of market based instruments to deliver ecological conservation benefits, both within Australia and elsewhere (Lockie, 2013; Whitten et al., 2012; Pascual et al., 2012). However, there is visible absence of discussion of the significance of market based approaches to INCRM. An unintended consequence of lack of theoretical discourse as well as absence of consideration at a policy level has been limited prevalence of entrepreneurial spirit. This paper attempts to redress this fallout by suggesting a framework for INCRM in the Northern Territory (NT) of Australia to increase avenues for encouraging entrepreneurial activities.

In the Australian NRM context, it has previously been recommended that a more market based approach be applied to ecosystem management activities on Aboriginal land in the NT (Gorman and Vemuri 2011, Coggan et al. 2009). The market based approach in the context of the paper generally refers to government activities that create markets in order to provide additional services by land owners and natural resource managers. Governments constitute an integral part of the management stewardship (Coffey and Pearson 2007) and where no organically evolving marketization occurs governments of all echelons respond in unison to these structural market failures by providing the necessary organisational skins to emulate market based governance.

Nowhere are market failures, due to non-existent markets, more noticeable than in the NT of Australia, where a number of INCRM activities are delivered through Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger groups as fee for service (FFS) activities (Gorman and Vemuri 2010). As markets fail to exist, government departments determine which NRM activities are offered to Indigenous Rangers as FFS activities. The NT and Federal governments are the main buyers of these services which currently include disease monitoring, carbon abatement, monitoring of illegal fishing, coastlines surveillance, and many others. However, as State monopolies, they also define the conditions of the contracts related to the payments and outcomes. As such it could be construed that this process is 'colonial' and perhaps not a truly market driven phenomenon. A similar concern was shared by Muller (2008) when Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) was introduced as a relatively new concept into Indigenous Rangers practice.

There are many reasons for governments as institutions to emulate market behaviour. The Federal government has an overarching stewardship obligation to ensure landscape function is maintained due to legislative requirements such as the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* as well as Australia being signatory to intergovernmental agreements such as the Millennium Development Goals (Millennium Development Summit 2000). In meeting underlying stewardship responsibilities when markets seldom exist, governments become more visible through their presence. This is increasingly noticeable over the last decade in the case of the NT of Australia where particular environmental services have been contracted to Indigenous Ranger groups to ensure these essential stewardship activities were delivered within a certain budget (Gorman and Vemuri 2010; Muller 2008). However, with governments continuously facing financial prudence with lower tax revenues, they are always contemplating the practice of prudent measures in their activities. As governments are financially unable to continue past expenditures and provide the necessary support for creating markets to

the same extent as they had in the past the unintended consequences of such reductions in direct government involvement in market creation is increasingly becoming visible prompting a need for a very different approach to service delivery, namely for encouraging private sector involvement.

The change from market based approaches promoted by government interventions towards a more conventional private sector engagement in markets requires a fundamental shift away from past land management practices and adoption of new skills, different process and procedures. A new conceptualised model of land management based on private sector features is a formidable challenge and one which will require a substantial shift in the 'mental modelling' by those accustomed to many decades of government intervention. A number of important questions arise that need consideration in moving from government created markets to private sector engagement in markets. For instance, if the private sector wishes to engage with Indigenous people, one of the fundamental questions is how entrepreneurial are the people currently engaged in INCRM to able to take up these activities? This largely depends in turn on understanding the inherent nature of being an entrepreneur in the context of INCRM activities. Another question relates to conditions for enabling new entrepreneurs to emerge who will have the potential ability to carry out entrepreneurial activities on their land. This paper is an attempt to address these issues in order to provide further insight into why there is slow uptake of INCRM services as FFS by Indigenous entrepreneurs.

The entrepreneurial nature of people engaging in INCRM can be explained through use of at least two different methodologies. They are: the Trait Theory and Contingency Thinking. The Trait Theory focuses on why certain individuals start firms and are successful entrepreneurs. The Contingency Thinking approach to entrepreneurialism focusses on the 'firms' wherein they are widely defined as providing an environmental context, and the individual entrepreneurial characteristics that are bound within. These terms are parallel in meaning to the terms commonly used in the NRM literature, species ecology and landscape ecology; one which focuses on factors specific to the individual species and the other that focuses on systems and processes within the larger ecosystem.

In the case of the Trait Theory, examining the entrepreneurial features underpinning market-based approaches to INCRM activities highlights the role of Indigenous people conducting entrepreneurial activities. An example of a small Aboriginal owned business which would be best explained through the Trait Theory is one in the Kimberley of Western Australia called Twin Lakes Gunmarrd and Goolyaroodk Cultural and Conservation Park. This business started in 2009 by a traditional custodian of the Winawari country (just north of Broome, WA) called Bruno Dann and partner Marion Louise Manson. It initially focussed on wild harvest and commercial sale of Gubinge (*Terminalia ferdinandiana*) but is now expanding to include other bush foods and a cultural tour. Bruno and Marion can be described using Trait Theory methodology as they possess entrepreneurial qualities that allowed them to make a successful business out of their land ownerships and knowledge along with allowing themselves to achieve their goal of supporting their livelihoods and landcare aspirations (Twin Lakes Cultural Park 2015).

Contingency Thinking on the other hand examines the appropriateness of the environment for shifting to market-based approach of INCRM activities. An example of an Aboriginal enterprise which could be described using this would be Fi Weaving Tours at Nauiyu Community in Daly River, Northern Territory. This enterprise is an art and culture program where the local Aboriginal women share their culture and knowledge through dillybag weaving

workshops (Merrepen Arts Culture and Language Aboriginal Corporation 2015). The objective of these workshops are not just to generate income but also to illustrate their use of natural resources, their connection with their land, and to involve different generations in cultural activities and pass on their knowledge. This enterprise is holistic in nature and the objectives of the tours are multi-dimensional and the roles within the group are contingent on who is available and what else is going on.

Both these methodologies provide insight into the existing and future market aspects of entrepreneurs in INCRM activities.

The second section of the paper examines the people currently engaged in INCRM activities and their entrepreneurial ability to effectively undertake these activities. The third section analyses the common features that exist for carrying out environmental activity as a market-based approach to INCRM. This facilitates an understanding of the existence of preconceptions to carry out successful market based approaches. The fourth section of the paper identifies the factors that contribute to understand the market in general and specific supply features that are necessary for entrepreneurial INCRM activities. These include: (1) possessing ability to address adverse conditions through appropriate strategies to manage risk by adopting Indigenous cultural management techniques, (2) familiarity with knowing how to satisfy demands for NRM products in a sustainable manner, and (3) having knowledge, information and skills to produce quality and quantity of NRM products for Indigenous and non-Indigenous markets. The paper finally concludes that Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger groups in particular have the necessary entrepreneurial features that are best suited to conduct INCRM activities in a market-based environment. There are however certain caveats to this happening in a timely manner that will also be discussed.

INCRM AND ENTREPRENEURIAL ABILITY

Despite owning large tracts of land and having intimate knowledge and connection with their 'country', Aboriginal people in the NT of Australia generate little financial benefit from consumptive and non-consumptive commercial utilisation of wildlife (plants and animals). Income, wealth and subsistence all contribute to livelihoods (Altman 2001) and sustainability with varying degrees of effects in providing for development of business acumen.

The income that sustains Aboriginal people stems largely from government welfare programs as well as royalty payments received from a range of sources including mining and leasing of land. Another important source of employment for Aboriginal communities is through land management. The Indigenous Land and Sea Management Program (ILSMP) generates employment for Aboriginal people with wages currently being funded through the Australian government and operational costs funded largely through the Aboriginal Benefits Account (ABA), FFS contracts and a variety of other funds. The ABA is an account established under law to receive and distribute royalty equivalent monies generated from mining on Aboriginal land in the NT (Australian Government 2011). Given the success of the ILSMP and the uncertainty of continued government funding, what aspirations, options, strategies and barriers are there for Indigenous stakeholders to progress this activity into more of a business structure?

To plan for economic development into the future requires an understanding of the past and current policy and legislation, models, funding, and governance that have contributed and shaped processes and procedures in Aboriginal communities. It also requires innovative thinking on the best approaches in creating economic gain from management of natural and cultural resources.

The ILSMP was initiated in the monsoonal tropics or 'Top End' of the NT in the 1990s at a time when there were some major ecological threats that needed to be addressed at a finer scale by local people using a combination of Indigenous and non-Indigenous land management practice. Specifically these environmental challengers included: feral buffalo populations which had increased at a huge rate to the extent that they were declared an environmental nuisance in 1978; the rapid spread and intrusive nature of *Mimosa pigra* and its negative impact on production, wetland habitats and other intact native environments; and increasing evidence that changed burning regimes, especially wildfires, were having detrimental effects across the landscape. The low human population density and remoteness of NT landscapes made it very difficult to manage these threats at an appropriate scale and the broad scale management that was being applied was inadequate.

At around this time there was an increase of people moving back out to their traditional country because of policy and legislative change. The *Aboriginal Land Rights Act* (Northern Territory) (1976) was the first attempt by the Australian government to legally recognise the Aboriginal system of land ownership through making law inalienable free hold title. This legislation allowed for a movement of people back out to their traditional lands and is also known as the 'Outstation Movement'. It also initiated the establishment of four Land Councils in the NT (Northern, Central, TIWI, and Anindilyakwa Land Councils) which supported Aboriginal people on their land and had the statutory responsibility of facilitating land management on Aboriginal lands.

In 1996, the Northern Land Council (NLC), whose role it is to support Aboriginal people across most of the Top End of the NT and to help its Aboriginal constituents build sustainable lives on their own lands, established a new division called the *Caring for Country Unit* (CFCU). This CFCU was created specifically to support community based land and sea management programs and was in response to a series of consultations with 17 Aboriginal communities who wanted input on the development of targeted training and job opportunities (NLC 2006). The CFCU assisted traditional land owners to increase their capacity to manage environmental problems such as feral animals, inappropriate fire regimes, and invasive weed species as well as provide other natural and cultural resource management tasks. A major land management issue and activity of the ILSMP around this time was weed control with 223 species of unwanted exotic plants being recorded on Aboriginal land, 52 species being classified as high-priority weed species (Smith 2001). Two of the first Indigenous Ranger groups, the Djelk (Maningrida) and Dhimurru (Nhulunbuy) Rangers, were set up in 1995/6 to control *Mimosa pigra*. Later in 1999/2000 a major 4 year agreement was signed called Top End Aboriginal Land Management and Employment Strategy (TEALMES) between the NLC and a number of State and Federal government departments. The main focus being weeds and it supported 6 existing Indigenous Ranger Program and instituted 5 more (Ashley et al. 2002). The NLC helped strategically plan weed eradication on Aboriginal land which was and remains today a major environmental concern with massive economic implications from a lack of productivity, to a loss of biodiversity through fuelling of wild fire and inappropriate fire regimes.

The ILSMP was a fortuitous match between the dire environmental threats on Aboriginal land that required local, fine-scale Indigenous management with employment and livelihood opportunities that remote Aboriginal communities required to supplement their income in an increasingly materialistic world. To increase employability in Aboriginal communities, a Community Development Education Program (CDEP) started in late 1970s (see Altman 2001) and for the next ~35 years this program employed the bulk of Aboriginal people in Aboriginal

communities including those involved in the ILSMP. The CDEP program started off as a training and education program but ended up as more of an employment or 'work for the dole' type program as there were very few 'real' jobs in remote Aboriginal communities for participants to transition into (Vemuri and Gorman, 2012).

By 2004 the ILSMP consisted of over 30 community-based, Indigenous Ranger groups across the Top End employing over 350 Indigenous people. Indigenous Ranger groups generally consisted of people from different clan estates in a region and therefore had a connection with the most appropriate cultural land managers which in turn allowed for cultural advice to feed into these ranger groups which gave authority for land management. Of course there were other forms of cultural activities happening on country which have been described as 'looking after country' rather than the INCRM activities through the Indigenous Ranger Program which is better known as 'caring for country' (Zander et al. 2013).

In 2007 there were some policy changes which impacted upon the CDEP program and the ILSMP was separated from other CDEP activities to be funded through other Federal money. The Commonwealth government committed \$90 million over 5 years to employ and train up to 300 Indigenous rangers for INCRM including Indigenous Protected Areas. The Commonwealth government invited existing community programs to apply for Ranger funding for wages. Some groups applied independently and now manage themselves independently (usually through an Aboriginal Recourse Centre) while the NLC applied on behalf of about 19 ranger groups. About 13 of these were through the *Working on Country* Program (Australian Government 2015) while 6 were through the Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC). In the Central Land Council region there are about 7 Ranger groups employing about 70 Rangers which were funded through the Federal government.

In June 2008 the TEALMES became known as the Land Management Economic Development (LMED). Under ILC funding associated with the NT 150 Real Jobs program, former CDEP workers were recruited into 25 full-time ranger positions in the NT (ILC 2014). The Federal government provided funds via the ILC for full-time Ranger salaries and associated training. The Aboriginal Benefits Account (ABA) matched the amount contributed by ILC, for capital and operational costs. This funding agreement saw the ILC providing funds for the employment of a program manager and eight coordinator positions associated with each ranger group, their focus, to facilitate the desired outcomes stipulated in the contract, namely, the control of *Mimosa pigra* and other invasive species, fire management and feral animal control as core land management activities. The contract encouraged ranger groups to seek enterprise development opportunities as core targets were met.

In recent years government agencies have encouraged Indigenous Ranger groups and their communities to work towards generating their own income, especially those Ranger groups funded by the ILC. This sentiment is endorsed by Ranger groups and their communities who also desire to shift away from reliance on short term government contracts and have greater empowerment and continued cultural input into land management activities from within. This has led to support for initiation of wildlife based enterprise but, with the exception of the Arts and Craft industry, most of these types of enterprises have struggled to be economically viable and in most cases this has led to their demise. There have been a number of studies that have looked at the factors that influence the initiation and success of these wildlife based enterprise (Nikolarkis 2010, Gorman et al. 2006, 2008, etc) and clearly the remoteness of these communities, lack of business acumen, poor infrastructure and support, as well as a variety of cultural factors have been the main contributors to these failed enterprise initiatives. Many of

these initiatives involved harvesting, storage and processing techniques which are difficult to provide in some of these small remote settlements, wild products are seasonal and often not in huge abundance and consistency and volume of supply are difficult to match with market demands. So, the feasibility and success rates of many of these enterprises have understandably been very poor.

However, the ILSMP is considered a success in providing a 'two toolbox' approach to land management, a term used because it combines traditional Aboriginal land management practice with more conventional land management practice (Aslin and Bennet 2005). Local people providing these services in remote areas are much more cost effective than outside agencies and there are quite a variety of environmental services that are delivered by Indigenous Rangers for Federal and State agencies as FFS. However, the funding for these Ranger groups remains short term which makes it difficult for strategic planning and operational funding difficult and inconsistent to get. This is frustrating for Aboriginal people living in these remote areas because it restricts opportunity for these Ranger groups to expand and diversify and provide employment and income generation in these areas where employment is limited. It has been proposed that there exists a much bigger market for Aboriginal land management service delivery than what has been currently been realised (Gorman and Vemuri, 2011) and the potential to access these markets needs to be followed through in a strategic and coordinated fashion. There is a need to investigate what the gaps are in providing these services to find out why this market opportunity is not being seized by Indigenous entrepreneurs who clearly need opportunities to break away from the poverty trap that seems to have been created.

MARKET-BASED APPROACH TO INCRM

In the NT of Australia Aboriginal people are progressively seeking greater empowerment and self-determination of their lands, institutions and affairs. However, where once cultural land managers decided the action and outcome of a land management activity there are now government agencies and other institutions that influence this decision. FFS activities like carbon abatement through early burning have an objective which is to reduce fire intensity and the amount of carbon going into the atmosphere. It is important that the conventional views of traditional land managers are not overshadowed by directives of government agencies. In terms of fire abatement the objective may or may not match cultural objectives of burning and it is important that this component is not taken away from land management as ultimately this may result in a disengagement of local people and disconnect between the Ranger activities and their community.

Over the last decade in the NT there has been a shift towards land management activities as FFS. These included activities such as coastal surveillance for foreign fishing vessels, blood sampling for disease monitoring, ghost net surveillance, landscaping and revegetation, fire management, etc (see Gorman and Vemuri, 2010). This shift has come about partly because there was a push towards accountability of money spent in natural resource management since the end of National Heritage Trust Funding in 2007 (ANAO 2008). Most of the FFS activities currently in place are facilitated through government agencies that take on the role of creating and administering these contracts for cost effective management. However, the downstream effect of this and a perverse outcome of this approach is that the Ranger groups seldom gain the capacity to define the contract themselves and provide costs other than those defined in administering the activity. This lack of business acumen restricts their ability to create FFS contracts for other land management activities. A cul-de-sac of ideas prevail exacerbating the

problem that poor business acumen is a major limiting factor in the capacity of Indigenous groups to pursue FFS contracts independently.

It should be acknowledged that *business planning* is not always the same as *planning for business*. There are a myriad of factors that can influence the development and governance of business in cultural settings where the business product involves a plant, animal, or landscape. According to Aboriginal belief, everything in the Aboriginal world has been assigned a moiety during the dream time by the ancestral beings (termed Dhuwa or Yirritja moiety by Yolngu of south east Arnhem Land) and those of one moiety have a special connection with other things of that moiety. When Aboriginal people are born they are assigned a totem which they have a certain affinity with and obligation to look after. Particular Traditional Owners have responsibility to make decisions about their clan estate; some are specifically related to land management. Responsibilities are passed to younger generations through ceremony when elders think the time is right. There are kinship structures which define obligations and in cases restrict people talking to each other or working together. There are obligations and rules related to nature, social connections and family grouping and these have consequences in every aspect of life in Aboriginal clan groups and communities. These obligations and responsibilities are made even more complex in Aboriginal townships which may be derived from government outstations and missions where clan groups were brought together due to intervention. This history makes each township unique and different to the next. These cultural rules along with bureaucratic nature of INCRM funding and the subsequent responses impact upon entrepreneurial free spirit. Despite, or indeed because of, these forces there are examples of some Indigenous groups and individuals exhibiting entrepreneurial spirit.

There are some Indigenous groups that are less constrained to those contracts derived by government agencies and it is worth considering a few different models that Aboriginal people are operating within to provide market based services. We have termed these: *subsidised*, *supported* and the *mentored* approaches because of how they are structured. Below we will briefly describe them and later we will try and identify the factors which contribute to their success.

The Subsidised Approach

Much of the formal land and sea management of Aboriginal lands are channelled through the ILSMP. This model allows for a 'safety net' where many of their core expenses, such as wages, are covered through Federal funding. Within these Indigenous Ranger groups there has been some discussion about generating income since the early 2000s and there has been some support to generate wild life based enterprise and other income especially with the ILC funded groups. As mentioned earlier in the paper this has resulted in a number of groups providing a variety of land management activities as FFS, mainly for government departments (see Gorman and Vemuri 2010). There are some groups which have taken this a step further and broadened their service delivery outside of that offered by government to other buyers and in doing so have shown business acumen in connecting with buyers, quoting, reporting and invoicing for jobs. One such group is the Kenbi Rangers.

The Kenbi Rangers are a small group of Rangers and a coordinator based at Belyuen Community which is across the harbour from Darwin near to Wagait Beach Township. This Ranger group has only been running for the last 6 years and is funded through ILC and hosted by NLC. These Rangers have progressively done more FFS work with a variety of Federal and State government agencies as well and with private industry. The Ranger coordinator, of this group

has a lot of business acumen and experience from other jobs and is very capable in brokering these agreements and conditions.

It should be noted that Kenbi is hosted by the NLC which is a not for profit organisation so the quotes are very competitive because they are based on a cost recovery structure and an administration fee and do not include a big profit margin. Another factor that also contributes to their competitiveness is that they are generally based close to where work needs to be done so have reduced transport costs. A third factor contributing to their success is they have a very organised process and procedure in quoting and reporting FFS contracts which can be easily interpreted and meets the procurement standards required by different organisations.

The Supported Approach

There are a number of other groups that do not have the 'safety net' that Indigenous Ranger groups have and must rely on money generated from work to survive. One such group is the Bradshaw and Timber Creek Contracting and Resources which is a 100% Indigenous owned and operated civil and contract company which is based in Timber Creek in the western part of the NT. This company was founded by a local Aboriginal man with the support of the Northern Land Council in 2008 (NLC, 2010). They provide services in construction and maintenance, fire-break, fencing construction and maintenance programs, landscaping, erosion control, road side drainage and vegetation management for government, defence and pastoral clients (Digedi 2015).

This company started off providing services as a local contractor under a negotiated Indigenous Land Use Agreement at the Bradshaw Station where the Australian Defense Force conducts regular training exercises. The Bradshaw Field Training Area (BFTA) has been established on what was the Bradshaw Pastoral Lease, 8,700 square kilometres near Timber Creek in the NT. Following a number of Native Title Determination Applications, the Commonwealth of Australia negotiated the Bradshaw Partnering Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) with Traditional Owners (TOs) of Bradshaw Station and the NLC in 2003. The Management of the ILUA is overseen by the Bradshaw Liaison Committee (BLC) whose membership consists of Department of Defence, NLC and TO representatives.

After learning how to operate as a business and with mentoring from NLC this Indigenous owned entity are expanding their services to take on other contracts outside of BFTA. The NLC facilitator who works with this group is a fantastic mentor for the group who has knowledge of the government tender systems and who works closely with them to get grants, apply for tenders.

A major difference between this group and Indigenous Ranger groups is that they cannot afford to allow cultural activities (ceremony, sorry business etc.) to impact on their business model and so have to regulate the extent staff participates in cultural activity. An advantage not being subsidised is this there is no dependence on support funding and as they develop business acumen they are able to expand their portfolio and bid for a broader suite of FFS activities than Indigenous Ranger groups that are subject to outsider audits of their expenditures.

The Mentored Approach

Last we will consider Triple P Contracting which is an Indigenous owned and operated company which like the Bradshaw and Timber Creek Contracting and Resources, does not receive government funding for wages. Each of these three business arrangements is slightly

different in how they were formed and are currently governed but there are some common attributes that undoubtedly have contributed to their success that need to be drawn out.

Triple P is an Indigenous owned and operated labour hire company. They are the local contracting and construction company in a small town called Elliott in the NT, with expertise in building, fencing, concreting and welding. As a business they are totally dependent on money they generate.

They are supported by the director of North Australian Rural Management Consultants Pty. Ltd. which is a business and community development consultancy company that focuses on Indigenous enterprise and community development, pastoral property development and employment and training of Indigenous people. It is based in Katherine and operates throughout NT and into Kimberley and Pilbara areas. Since 2003 has delivered management and consultancy services that have supported Indigenous individuals, organisations and companies to establish and develop their own enterprises or gain meaningful employment outcomes (Triple P Contracting 2015).

All of these three approaches defined above have been successful in pursuing contracts and generating income. In the next section we will consider what factors have contributed to these groups being successful in winning contracts and providing services.

FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE SUPPLY FEATURES FOR INCRM

The supply features that are required for conducting entrepreneurial INCRM activities such as FFS include appropriate cultural decision making as to what services can be supplied, a structured procurement and reporting process, and the capacity to deliver these things in a timely and professional manner.

Zander et al. (2013) raised the issue that some Aboriginal people consider land management activity as either 'looking after country' when done through cultural obligation or 'caring for country' which considered 'Ranger work' and went on to review a subset of Aboriginal opinions as to whether they should be paid for providing these services. Therefore, moving towards a market based approach in INCRM requires Contingency Thinking as it requires an examination of the appropriateness of provision of these activities as a market based approach. These decisions need to be made at a community level by the 'right people' in an Aboriginal community and how this is done is likely to be different for different communities (Gorman and Vemuri, 2010). However, the community and cultural based decision making component of INCRM as FFS is the very strength of this model because in effect should give autonomy back to the right people in the community rather than being defined through government departments.

From the three case examples provided there are some common attributes that may have contributed to their success. There include:

1. *Entrepreneurial skills*: each group had a person with entrepreneurial skills driving the process or mentoring the group. This person(s) was able to match the skills that their group had and the services they could provide with a buyer and deliver the service in a way which met the buyer's satisfaction. The reasons why the individual in these groups initiated these businesses and were successful is what needs consideration through the Trait Theory and will be considered later in the paper.
2. *Process and procedure*: each of these groups was able to connect with the buyers and deliver the service they required in a competitive and professional manner and in a structure that the buyers were happy with. This requires experience and capacity which all three groups had.

3. *Local decision making*: each group decided what they needed to do to make the business viable. This requires a very structured approach to costing out service delivery but also acknowledgement that certain practice (cultural) had to be curtailed to ensure services would be delivered on time. This type of decision requires local input and cultural authority to ensure it did not result in cultural/social disharmony.

What Is Hindering Uptake Of These Supply Features To Be Able To Conduct These Entrepreneurial Activities?

These groups represent the Indigenous entrepreneurial spirit emerging from many decades of government intervention. Each has within or has connection to someone who has the skills to connect with a market and present supply features in a way which the buyers understand and can connect with. They have the process and procedure that outlines clearly what is being supplied and how it is costed and recorded. They also have cultural authority to deliver these services.

A major obstacle hindering this type of entrepreneurial activity is uptake and unawareness of markets that these supply features exist on Aboriginal land. There is a need for market development through corporate engagement at a variety of levels to engage relevant corporate bodies with social responsibility, philanthropic groups who want to have conservation objectives, companies operating on Aboriginal land that require services and many other potential buyers. There is a need for these buyers to connect with providers of these supply features in a way in which they are comfortable and for contracts to be arranged which meet their requirements. This could be considered a 'clearing house'. Lastly there need to be appropriate structures in the community which can supply these services using appropriate process and procedures. Appropriateness in the context of this paper refers to sustainability in terms of economic, environmental, cultural, administrative as well as political aspects. Entrepreneurialism should be promoted through consideration of all these aspects.

In short, a framework is required to progress these features (Gorman & Vemuri, 2010). This requires acknowledgement by government and Land Councils (who represent Aboriginal people) that this activity is worth investing in.

What Are The Important Features?

To understand what the supply features of entrepreneurialism are in remote Indigenous communities requires an understanding of the dynamics of interactions between the major players over time in these communities. Factors influencing supply features include:

Policy and Legislation

In recent times land management services barely continued to persist due to conditions of uncertainty resulting in increased calls for a continuation of funding for land management through government intervention on familiar lines. The combination of market failure along with government assisted funding is increasingly addressing environmental threats (illegal fishing, biosecurity). However the recent downturn in actual and estimated government revenues has resulted in a scaled down approach by government to intervene in INCRM. Governments apply the same principle of selecting the most necessary INCRM services and acquire the necessary services through FFS. Applying monopoly power in an ever increasing demand scenario for INCRM services, the governments (State and Federal) are controlling the supply and the price of these services by managing their contracts efficiently.

Indigenous Support

There are other forces of influence of supply of INCRM services. The Indigenous support agencies (NLC, Aboriginal Resource Centres) have also influenced supply through their supported Indigenous Ranger groups by only allowing them to provide limited quantity of supply of services and often on a cost recovery basis because of their institutional status as being 'not for profit'.

Customary Obligation

Indigenous Traditional Owners have also played an influencing role in the above labour market model as provisions of services are partly considered as a customary obligation. Provision of INCRM services with reduced payments is justified on the grounds that it is a customary obligation to provide these services. The ensuing effect of these factors and agents in the market for provision of INCRM services especially in the remote areas makes the supply limited. Furthermore, it reduces the total cost of land management which may not be fully accounted for in Federal budgets.

In effect, customary obligation and the welfare state that Aboriginal people have existed in have subsidised the provision of INCRM services to date. However, as government spending is being curtailed and welfare provision reduced, the real expense for provision of INCRM services is becoming more explicitly clear. Governments of all echelons are reacting to these explicit realisations by changing their model of support for INCRM for new services through FFS. As they maintain the need for fiscal harmony with other areas of government expenditures, governments are regulating their expenditures through continuing to control payment for and demand for services. Government needs to change its investment focus in promoting INCRM service provisions by moving away from intervening in the market. Thinking has to shift and recognise that its involvement is one of the reasons for market failure when it comes to the INCRM market. Promoting for provision of FFS will assist in encouraging new markets to be created on Indigenous lands. Through FFS markets can be free to operate and efficiencies can be achieved reducing the need for expensive government interventions.

DISCUSSION

There are a number of historical, legislative and cultural reasons that have contributed to a generally held belief that '*individuals see lack of entrepreneurial activity for provision of INCRM services by Indigenous entrepreneurs despite the incentive of fee for service provision*'.

The Australian Federal government has two main overarching policies relating to Aboriginal people and the land upon which they live. One relates to maintaining landscape function and protecting biodiversity and ecosystem services and the other relates to 'closing the gap' which fundamentally involves providing Aboriginal people with adequate educational, health and employment opportunities (Australian Government 2013). History shows us that NT landscapes need active management which requires people on country, without this it is hard to manage fire, feral animals and weeds as well as Indigenous kinship, cultural and custom. However, providing social services to remote Indigenous townships and outstations is very costly and something that Federal government is trying to disengage from and to pass on to State and Territory governments. In a further bid to reduce expenditure the Federal government has reconfigured welfare payments from CDEP to New Start Allowance and is in the process of

tightening conditions to encourage recipients away from welfare and into 'real' jobs. To aid this process they are providing financial incentives to private industry to employ Aboriginal people as well as providing relocation expenses for transition from remote settings to 'growth centres' and by investing in growth centres to encourage economic development.

The NT Emergency Response Intervention in 2007 and 'The Little Children are Sacred Report' (NTG 2007) highlighted the social plight of people in Aboriginal communities and there has been a priority shift in government expenditure towards improving the socio-economic conditions of inhabitants in the NT. One strategy to do this cost effectively is by concentrating Aboriginal people to provide services at a level that will improve low levels of mortality, high levels of degenerative disease as well as low education and employment levels. The perverse impact of this is that they are moved away from their Clan Estates and are no longer able to perform their customary land management practices.

However, the government still has an obligation to ensure landscape values are maintained and are managing to do this by being much more targeted and specific as to which services are essential and by purchasing these as FFS. In cost cutting through phasing out CDEP and changing welfare conditions the Federal government has had to continue funding to ILSMP by paying for Ranger employment costs. Through these groups they are managing to meet their legislative requirement to look after Australia's natural values in defining certain service delivery contracts.

The government (s) have never encouraged a market to develop or engage with and purchase INCRM services from Aboriginal people and this failure to establish conditions for markets to naturally evolve has resulted in the government (s) having to play the part of the market and fund the provision of these services. In a very 'colonial' fashion they have controlled the price, outcomes and delivery of the INCRM services through the ILSMP in conjunction with Land Councils and through highly regulated contractual agreements. The result is that many Aboriginal people and their associated Indigenous Ranger groups still do not have the business acumen to offer these INCRM services independently as they have limited exposure, experience and knowledge. The resultant effect of nonexistence of market features on these lands has been absence of opportunism and a predisposition of a mindset for uncertainty avoidance especially in financial aspects. A further complicating factor has been the Aboriginal customary obligation to maintain their cultural and spiritual connection with country to such an extent they are willing to provide INCRM services independently and therefore free of charge (Zander et al. 2014). This adds another layer of complexity as the services Aboriginal custodians are willing to supply substantially bring down the cost of land management. The Indigenous Ranger Groups sit somewhere in between these cultural obligations and the obligations on them through being part of the ILSMP and it appears these activities are considered quite differently to those provided by custodians (Zander et al. 2014) where once they were less so (Aslin and Bennett 2005).

The mounting pressure for governments of all echelons to reduce their expenditures is however increasing awareness to Aboriginal people that their land, its management and natural resources within, need alternative frameworks to exploit a variety of livelihood opportunities and potentially provide the financial and employment opportunities for them to remain on or connected to their country. The alternative framework for a real market to develop requires a shift from bureaucratic, government controlled set of processes and procedures to one which has the flexibility to allow for different ways of doing business. A precursor to entrepreneurialism is needed to enable exercising of individual and collective freedom to choose and participate, or not, through market driven forces.

In working towards this goal it will be important for all of the stakeholders to redefine their role. These include government, the private sector, Indigenous people, Indigenous communities; as well as not-for-profit and for-profit Indigenous and non-Indigenous organisations.

CONCLUSION

The State and Federal governments would be wise to reconsider their approach and address conditions for Indigenous entrepreneurs to exist and perform landscape functions. It requires moving away from intervening and playing the part of the market. They need to determine strategies which can encourage real market forces to develop on Aboriginal lands. This may involve playing less of a role in defining the process of land management activities and more of a facilitative role in the setting up the framework which will allow buyers and suppliers to connect with each other with minimal governmental intervention. By empowering local people to take control of the market driven process and to incorporate those values they see as being important (cultural, social, ecological and financial) it is possible there will be different incentives for Indigenous people to grow these opportunities and create culturally acceptable business hubs. In this paper we have given examples where this entrepreneurial spirit of Aboriginal people in land management has begun to emerge in different ways but we concur that there needs to be a much more structured approach to identifying and encouraging entrepreneurial activity for potential markets to flourish in INCRM, through capacity enhancement of Aboriginal suppliers and assisting in fostering these connections and contractual agreements. One may take heed from Venkataraman (1997, p.120) that entrepreneurship is after all a field which “*seeks to understand how opportunities to bring into existence “future” goods and services are discovered, created, and exploited, by whom, and with what consequences.*” Let the tail not wag the dog by preventing the change to happen!

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