

# DESERT LIVES

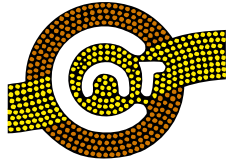
Livelihoods Inland research project



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**Centre for  
Appropriate  
Technology**

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The Centre for Appropriate Technology (CAT) is the national Indigenous science and technology organisation. CAT's vision is Happy and Safe communities of Indigenous peoples and its purpose is to secure sustainable livelihoods through appropriate technology. CAT is currently funded from a variety of sources including the Commonwealth and State and Territory governments and private sources.

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**Adrian**

We bring you another edition of Desert Lives, Desert Lives about the knowledge of deserts in Australia. Desert Lives, Desert Lives reports on the research projects undertaken by the Desert Knowledge CRC, these research projects are about linking the traditional knowledge which indigenous people hold on deserts for the scientific knowledge of researchers. In this edition of Desert Lives, Desert Lives we bring you part 2 of the Livelihoods Inland research project.

In the Desert Knowledge CRC research projects there are researchers in universities and scientists from the CSIRO who are working with aboriginal people on how traditional knowledge of deserts can create livelihoods in remote communities. The Livelihoods Inland research project is being undertaken by Dr Jocelyn Davies of the CSIRO and is probably one of the bigger research projects, it's looking at how jobs or livelihoods can be created for aboriginal people working in the area of land management. One of the main reasons why jobs or livelihoods can be created in the area of land management is because of the traditional knowledge that aboriginal people hold when they're looking after the environments in the deserts. When we talk about the environments in the deserts, we're talking about the bio diversity which makes up the deserts, all the plants and animals. Giving you an update about the Livelihoods Inland research project, in the last segment, part 1, we looked at how land management can be a strong motivator for aboriginal people working on their land, and how governments recognise that the traditional things that aboriginal people do on the land actually supports the governments own view about creating stronger bio diversities. We also highlighted how the Livelihoods Inland management produce other positive outcomes, like people having good health and wellbeing, feeling good about themselves, but to bring you right up-to-date we need to reflect a bit from part one.

We brought to you attention how in between aboriginal people who live on the land and the mainstream Australian market there is such a thing called a 'value chain' for the Livelihoods Inland management to be productive so they achieve the outcomes for both government and aboriginal people. The value chain Inland management needs to be developed properly; this will then allow aboriginal organisations and other people who are in these broker roles being able to communicate with aboriginal people about their expectations at the same time being able to understand the mainstream markets and governments with their funding programs.

**Jocelyn Davies:** "We think of it in terms of a value chain whether land holders producing something and the general Australian taxpayer wants something but you've actually got to make the connections between those two otherwise the general Australian public doesn't know what aboriginal people are doing on the ground and the land holders don't really know what it is the Australian public want. You need to build a value chain to connect between those two and that value chain includes people like aboriginal organisations that work with land holders to actually make more visible what it is the land holders are doing, make more awareness of those things, and also there's private sector groups and conservation non-government groups in those roles and we call them broker roles, they're intermediary roles and they're the people who understand the land holders and can talk their language and also understand the language of government when it's putting in funding programs, or of what the mining industry might want in terms of it's connections with aboriginal people for conservation environment work, they talk the language both ways. I've said just there that those people in the broker roles are organisations like aboriginal organisations, outstation resource agencies, land councils, enterprise arms of aboriginal organisations and also non-government conservation groups but they're actually lots of really important individuals in that middle ground space, people who have got strong connections with aboriginal groups and then they've got the way of speaking to government as well or to specialist outsiders, they have a really important role in this value chain. If you're talking about art, the value of aboriginal people's art into the art market isn't just because we have great painters out in, you know, desert and in the top end of Australia doing fantastic, it's actually because there are art centres, there are galleries, there are people who buy and sell art who make the connection between the remote artists and into that market who wants the art. In the land management area this value chain is very poorly developed at the moment and it's complicated one to develop. The value chain for land management is complicated to develop because what aboriginal people are actually producing when they're doing work on country, they're not just producing land that's in good condition; they're producing health and wellbeing outcomes for their own people".

**Adrian**

The value chain and management is a lot more complicated to develop because of the different outcomes that aboriginal people can produce from working on their land, it's important for people who are working in these broker roles to play their part in the outcomes that aboriginal people can produce as well as inform organisations of these outcomes so they're prepared to invest in land management.

**Jocelyn:** "When aboriginal people are working on country they are producing not just country that's in good condition they're producing health and wellbeing for themselves, so in this idea of a market chain, a value chain for aboriginal land management, how you connect from the ground to the public of Australia and to the people who will ultimately pay for that land management to be done, we say that aboriginal people are not just producing the product of good environment they're producing this product of good health, so they're actually producing those two things so that idea of having a value chain, what we have to recognise is people are producing many different things and there's different parts of government are prepared to invest and pay for those things. So the role of the broker organisations in the middle is really critical because they are the ones who have to really see this integrated set of outcomes that aboriginal people can produce and present them into these different people, different organisations and agencies who are prepared to invest in that".

**Adrian**

Creating these livelihoods, Inland management, getting the positive outcomes of good health and wellbeing feeling good about working on their own land and making stronger bio diversities as the government wants can only be a positive when attracting government investments.

**Jocelyn:** "The government is outcome focused these days, there's not a lot of patience in government for you know, this ought to be that ought to be funded, we really have to saying what is going to change as a result of this investment from government so we're talking about outcomes and the types of social outcomes that land management can contribute to include individual people's health and wellbeing, cooperative behaviour, people working together as a group and giving opportunities for young people and building young people's skills and ways of doing things you now, getting them interested in work patterns, those are all social outcomes that land management can support".

**Adrian**

Getting these outcomes in good health and wellbeing and by attracting government investments because of these outcomes they also need to identify their key principles for land management, that is, what are the main rules and beliefs about how to conduct land management programs?

**Jocelyn:** "What we're working on in this Desert Knowledge research project Livelihoods Inland is, what are the key important principles for how you do land management in order to get these kinds of social outcomes as well, that's what we're trying to understand and develop through the project a set of key principles which won't be detailed but they're really just the basis of a system where people can say, we are doing land management in the proper way in order to get these social outcomes as well as the land management outcomes. Some of these things will be really familiar to aboriginal people now and are really familiar to aboriginal people now, that you don't go onto other people's country to do work, you know if you're doing work in land management you have the proper cultural authority for what you're doing as well as the legal land holder's authority. Then there are things like how much exercise is actually built in to the land management programs, if it's just about people driving around in Toyotas then maybe it's not going to be so good at getting the health outcomes as if people are also walking and doing some physical activity".

**Adrian**

Growing and harvesting bush plants on the land such as bush tomatoes, so that people establish livelihoods in this area of land management, Indigenous people still have to overcome various problems of promoting and getting their bush products to market. Not only is the value chain poorly developed in land management where there is no real broker role or the middle man to help promote their bush products into the mainstream markets, the market itself isn't very well developed, people have to also deal with the reality of the harsh environments of the deserts, for example, there's been a lack of bush tomatoes in the past few years in Central Australia because of the low rainfall.

**Jocelyn:** "People who are getting bush produce off country like bush tomatoes, bush potatoes, being a long way from market is one problem for them but there are lots of other problems like the market isn't actually very well developed for using those things. The bush tomato market has just grown quite a lot in the last few years in terms of people

wanting to buy, you know, the people who are making sauces and chutneys and things wanting to buy bush tomatoes. However, the problem for aboriginal people out bush at the moment is there actually aren't many bush tomatoes around in the bush at the moment 'cause it hasn't rained, you know how dry it's been in Alice Springs in the last couple of years and it was really going back to 2002 when there were lots of bush tomatoes around when you'd had good rain and then you'd had fires afterwards which had stimulate the bush tomatoes to grow and in the last few years we haven't had a lot of rain and we haven't had the follow-up fires. Well people who are buying bush tomatoes are actually saying at the moment, the wholesalers who are buying bush tomatoes any bush tomatoes they can get they'll buy but they're just not being produced out in the wild because there hasn't been the rain".

**Adrian**

For these livelihoods, inland management to be successful, that is people harvesting bush plants from the land and being healthy and happy so they're able to have a productive commercial enterprise, they would need to grow and harvest several bush plants to make it a productive livelihood which also secures other outcomes of the government such as bio diversity.

**Jocelyn:** "With the fires you also get a whole suite of other plants coming through, some of those could be plants that could be sold as bush food ingredients, but even just focusing on the bush tomatoes, if the only thing people are collecting from the wild is bush tomatoes, if they're managing country for bush tomatoes it's got all these other outcomes for plants and animals which are important to keeping the country healthy and the bio diversity strong and we know that that outcome is important nationally for Australia as bio diversity like, underpins everything we do. The reason people can live in Australia is because the diversity of plants and animals supports the production of soil, the cleaning of water, you know all of that depends on bio diversity. So bio diversity that comes from burning, burning for bush tomatoes, the bio diversity that comes from that is important to the public good of Australia. If you're just trying to rely on wild bush tomatoes to make a living it's pretty difficult to get a commercial enterprise around that as a bush aboriginal person".

**Adrian**

Although we want remote communities to secure commercial enterprise on their bush foods being sold into mainstream markets, Jocelyn Davies believes that to get the best social outcomes for communities, which is what the government also wants from livelihoods and land management is for remote communities to use the social enterprise model so that it attracts more government investments.

**Jocelyn:** "One of the ways forward in terms of livelihoods inland is to think about enterprises rather than commercially viable enterprises but as a social enterprise where there is some money being earned from market production like for bush tomatoes but also where in recognition of the health and wellbeing outcomes that come from people engaged in wild harvest of bush tomatoes and the bio diversity outcomes that there's a stream of other investments support from social and environment programs of government that will allow people to work as an enterprise even though the bush tomatoes in themselves won't pay for those".

**Adrian**

That's another edition of Desert Lives, Desert Lives, about the knowledge of deserts in Australia. You've been listening to part 2 of the Livelihoods Inland research project.