APPENDIX 2 – DESERT TOURISM RESEARCH SCOPING WORKSHOP

Held at the Desert Lantern Restaurant, Charles Darwin University, Alice Springs Campus, Thursday 2nd December, 2004. This appendix includes the content of morning presentations at the workshop. Alicia Boyle recorded the content of the presentations and Pascal Tremblay summarised them.

App 2.1 Workshop presentations

Prof Murray McGregor - Theme 4 Leader Introduction

- Focus on Desert Knowledge CRC outcomes
- The 4 building blocks of the Desert Knowledge CRC
- Strategic and tactical research – and regional networking
- Research focus – Today is about research NOT philosophy
- Expected Outcomes from workshop:
    - identify research areas
    - establish priorities
    - identify synergies and complementarities with other research networks
    - suggest ways forward.

Joc Schmiechen - Lake Eyre Basin Project

- Involved for the last three years (originally one year)
- 1 million km^2, drainage systems into Lake Eyre – QLD, NSW, NT to SA – 16% of land mass
- Driven out of land management issues – people and landscapes
- Talking to people on the ground in the region and to the tourists in their source destinations
- Unique and special, very few, if any comparable international examples
- Unique natural landscapes, heritage, waterways, arid mountain ranges – Flinders, MacDonnells, Aboriginal heritage – rock art, art work, historic heritage (European – explorers, pastoralists, miners), Diamantina Shire was once a key 'highway', now the tourists are travelling these same routes, artificial reconstructions of heritage (many inappropriate – content and location), steam train redevelopments, new creations, e.g. Stockman's Hall of Fame
- Four sectors in the Lake Eyre Basin – mid-west QLD/Matilda Hwy, Alice Springs/Central Australia, Flinders Ranges, the heart of the basin/the middle – has some of the most quintessential outback experiences, no organised tourism system here – those living in this region don't need tourists – mining and pastoral strong
- Travellers – domestic, own vehicle, 80% independent travellers, camper trailer (rather than caravan) and 4WD. Drive clubs, camping shows, travel shows, word of mouth on the road – much more so than NTTC. Self-charter of light planes to regions, some fly in/fly out. Some international visitors – travelling south – north, now some more from Cairns south. Want to sit by water, fish, camp, want open space.
- What about tourism? It is not the panacea. Location, location, location. If you have to move visitors far from their route it is very expensive.
- Most important findings, in own vehicles, it is all about flow lines, following highways around edges, major tracks and tourism hot spot areas. Simpson Desert is a

key hot spot – is very accessible, easier than Cape, Kimberley or Canning. What is happening at other spots along the flow line affects places like Alice Springs.

- Land use – Aboriginal use and management, explorers – pastoral, pastoral system has led to development of a whole lot of rules, mining – gold, opal, petroleum and gas (Moomba and Mereenie) – more rules, conservation, protected area management – state and national – more rules, tour operators (plus FITs), there is no clear set of rules for this group. Assets now commodities with $ values attached to them. Individuals want to reach them and third parties want to get money. Conflicts between users – non-tackled within legislation. Most tied up in Pastoral Acts – have become defacto tourism land access managers.
- Has greatest impact on use in the central basin. Land tenure in the basin 70% crown leasehold land to pastoral leases. Public should have a say in the use of these. Some in national parks and protected areas. Only about 4% private land, mostly in Qld.
- The FIT 4WDs want to access this country, many of the areas fragile, but they believe they have rights. e.g. Dig Tree, Standbroke Pastoral Co has been subsidising the costs of visitor access, Maryvale Station and Chambers Pillar, etc.
- Reaction by pastoralists – no camping, no access – this is their mechanism for dealing with it. Third party tourism operators – land access and continuity, Diamantina Tours – a whim of Kidman etc –2 years of advertising for international clients. e.g. camels not liked therefore camel operators not liked by lessee.
- National Parks – totally under-resourced, everyone is funnelling into these areas. e.g. Innaminka. Impacts, waste management, firewood, erosion, infrastructure – ablutions (1800 residents but 40,000 visitors), water resource planning. Capturing the sense of place. Ethos and technologies: correct ones are important. How do we preserve this? How do we put the best infrastructure in? There are good ‘sense of place’ examples.
- Imagery and advertising is important. Camping in the bush, ‘shitting in the bush’ etc, some fundamental behaviours not told yet. Signage and interpretation style. Telling the Aboriginal story, not necessarily direct involvement, but they need to be able to present their stories, e.g. the Lindsay Bookie tour, interpretive signage, books, on-site experiences.
- Quality, service and value for money – travellers want.
- People are the greatest resource – spirits, their back yard
- Future directions – tourism as a major land use, tour operators as extensions of the land management system, access, infrastructure, quality
- Priority projects – Oodnadatta/Finke Track, Innaminka/Cooper Creek, Simpson Desert, Aboriginal Story
- Sustainability into heritage tourism – mutual support, protected areas, government agencies
- Information management important.

Research Questions

- What do visitors want? information, access, facilities, experiences
- Managing national parks for people
- Comparing tourism with other land uses
- Clearer more regionally specific visitation data
- Sense of place and best practice for sustainable use – including technology – ultimate desert cities
- Social values of tourism and cost benefit effects (including Indigenous – what are the social implications)
- Indigenous tourism – niche, mainstream, business or social engineering

Diana James – Desert Tracks

Pitjantjatjara tours, Central Australia. Nganyinytja – Aboriginal owned land – come and see my country, joint venture, cannot take land as surety, under direction

- 1988 – first destination, Alice to Angatja. 80% domestic in the early years, now growing
- 1994 – Cape Hill came on board – rock art site, then Mimilie, Fregon, Ernabella.
- Desert Tracks became the de facto contact group for tourism in the Pit lands.
- Teaching tourism, retaining culture, brings in money, grandchildren to stay and grow on land.
- Cave Hill – major rock art site – sacred and access to men only. Odyssey and Discovery Eco Tours can now access site – short access three hour experience. Prior to this was overnight with the traditional owners. Different desires.
- Mission statement – desert tracks aims to provide visitors a unique experiences of Aboriginal culture and country.
- The Anangu elders are guiding the people into this area that builds sustainable business and culture.
- Teaching survival in a dry land. Cave Hill tourism land management. Rock art conservation study – 1994 and 2002
- Tourism impact changes assessed.
- Main objectives
- Maintenance of cultural heritage and maintenance of authentic information.
- Meet international standards for ecotourism.
- Anangu business operating in Anangu land. Public stories/interpretation of the Tjkurpa rather that the full aboriginal story. The painting of the vehicle then made it come under traditional as well as western law.

Strategies considered:

- Employment of Anangu
- Training youth as interpretive guides
- Recognition of prior knowledge of elders
- Training in marketing promotion.
- Anangu directors control all information in brochures, pre-trip booklets, itinerary, Tjkurpa /Dreaming stories by Anangu
- Community provide in business control of the itinerary and movements of tourism in their country
- Economy sustaining culture – award rates pf pay, income returned to participating communities
- Customary economy
- Cultural heritage
- Ecological diversity
- Traditional governance
- Education and training
- Food and shelter
- Health
- Social connectivity – kinship
- Inma – sustaining country by exchange of ceremony

Consultation and Planning: 1994–2004

- A corporation – Pukulpa Tjungurinjgkunytja included other AP shareholders as company directors so that more Indigenous operators could be involved.
- Governance is a huge issue. Tourism and Conservation initiative with Discovery Ecotours.
- Indigenous Ngintaka Heritage Trail – Indulkana to Mimite, Fregon, Ernabella, Cave Hill, Amata, Apara Springs, Angatja, Uluṟu, Impanpa, Erldunda loop road opportunity. Indigenous people want it under their control. The songlines through this region means that people are related in this region. Two laws required to give life to land.

Aṉangu Business Eco-Cultural Sustainability

- Ecological, Economic, Social, Spiritual, ontology/law
- Country, family, songlines, spirit, traditional law
- Tourism potential of heritage trail on AP Lands. Already is a tri-state council in the Pitjantjatjara Council. Link art centres, proximity to Uluṟu, alternative loop road N/S or E/W via Uluṟu
- Feasibility study required
- Desire and capacity for tourism on public route
- Tourist sites to be protected environmentally and culturally
- New tourism enterprises and infrastructure needed
- Restricted permit model like Uluṟu/KT National Park
- Employment and training of Aṉangu as rangers and guides,

Regional consultative group: Tourism Design Components

- Permits, film and journalist contracts are in place
- Camp site infrastructure
- Environmental management plans
- Designated camp sites, water/wood, restricted access
- Appropriate toilets, solar power, water, rubbish
- Interpretive material
- Explain permit conditions, restricted areas
- Appropriate interpretive materials of cultural sites
- Ethical protocols
- Advertising
- Regional Business Plan
- Existing expertise

What are the research questions around this experience? Study already in place:

- Serious engagement of Aṉangu in the development of tourism on their lands – positive and negative impacts
- Land management issues – especially water, wood
- How can tourism be a way of bringing money into country to sustainability manage country, e.g. money from feral hunting and then use this to sustain mammals and traditional foods and totems
- Bicultural training of guides

Mike Crowe – Desert Knowledge Australia Initiatives – Linked Business Network Project and Australian Tourism Development Project

Inland Alliance of Local Governments

- Telstra
- Created a Regional Video Network, meeting once a month
- Gives feedback and reports on DKA, Desert Knowledge CRC and how business networks can be developed, creating networks using technology
- Creating international attention
- RVN led to the Linked Business Network Project now funded by AusIndustry.
- 18 months pilot to December 2005
- Enhancing local networking, clustering between firms, using technology
- Objective: build critical mass for remote firms to develop across Australian desert regions
- Pilot regions – Alice Springs, Mount Isa, Broken Hill, Upper Spencer Gulf, Kalgoorlie –Boulder, Geraldton and Pilbara want to join
- But not enough resources in project
- Five pilot sectors – tourism, bush produce, house design, mining services, renewable energy. Another industry pilot is art
- Building on the clustering concept
- Regional clustering specialisation – competitive advantage by working together
- Scone NSW, only Kentucky has more thoroughbreds
- Daylesford – Vic, Spa centre, weekend tourism, conferences
- Building on a name – Bulls, New Zealand – cure-a-bull, soci-a-bull, cash-a-bull, forgive-a- bull etc.

High performance cluster – physical infrastructure, local buzz – dense networking, rivalry yet collaboration, competition, teamwork between firms, and with government, TAFE, rapid movement information.

Benefits of clusters - Tourism possibilities

- Information centre collaboration. Accurate, rich information for people crossing state boundaries
- Issue of high staff turnover, especially young people, if they are moving, use a desert knowledge work passport, what about WOOFs, call it Working in Desert Environments?, Have tangible benefits for such (connect with desert guides?)
- Links between bush produce and tourism, renewable energy and tourism
- Link nationally and then international opportunities

Australian Tourism Development Program

- DKA Project
- Developing a strategy for cross-border development of Outback Tourism
- Funded by AusIndustry
- Existing outback tourism strategies
- Visitor centres, touring routes
- Looking for an overall project for desert Australia – changed to Outback, now includes Savannah Way (they aim to be the best ‘outback’ experience in Australia).

Issues addressed:

- Touring routes
- Aboriginal product
- Indigenous tourism
- New product development
- Operating standards
- Growth of demand
- Marketing strategies
- Marketing operations
- VICs
- Technologies

Comments:

- Critical mass, Communities that do or don't want to take tourism on board.
- Initiation ceremonies now until April.
- Sorry business and funerals now take up much time
- Potential research question - How do you run a successful business when you need to take into consideration the cultural needs of your staff? What models exist, what is working?

Norm White – Scoping Tourism Business Issues in the Desert

Issues:

- Cross-border in the desert regions
- Two halves of tourism – product and customers
- There is an enormous focus on product, one cannot survive, nor be successful without the other. Apparent widespread belief that tourism is all about product. But we need to understand the customer and their motivations and what this means for viable businesses.
- Tourism is not only about the tourism businesses at the destination. There are wider community implications. e.g. Byron Bay and the influence of the greens, this is what was bringing people here. The demand was large and the resources weren't there originally to protect them from these impacts. Now changes in place to ensure the resource is not destroyed.
- Local governments and tourism
- Tourism is about small business
- Visitor spend – small business – community benefit
- Lack of understanding of this in the regional areas.

Research issues:

- Lack of market focus
- People in local communities tend to think local – based on their knowledge of what tourism is all about.
- There is a need to know about what is happening in the major and source markets on the coast. There are major changes in domestic travel/market. Airfares – Virgin, Jetstar and Qantas cheap fares, Australian Airlines. These fares are taking people outside our regions and regions are struggling.
- The 100% New Zealand campaign has been successful and taking many Australians.

- P&O now operate out of Brisbane and Sydney
- Tasmania very successful over the last few years. The ferries are now struggling against low fares
- Baby boomers are here – highly mobile, better health and wealth but are frugal in their decision making
- Travel agent commissions gone/going and now service fees are in place
- Internet – most people in regional Australia are not as heavy users as their capital city counterparts – booking and information source. Regional websites are of poor quality – can deter potential customers.

All reasons why markets are changing and too few people in regional Australia understand these.

- Build it and they will come can be a fallacy – location is critical, Forestry Centre, Peppin Heritage Centre, Coal Creek Heritage Centre, Timber Centre at Wauchope, Heritage Centres along the Matilda are not viable.
- After initial $, who continues to pay to operate?
- Need more money for market studies.

Drive market

- Desert's biggest potential for the foreseeable future.
- What do desert destinations know about customers and what they want? Do Councils know? What infrastructure and community facilities do they need? caravan parks, etc
- Do they know how to sustain a demand level?
- Do they know about the speed of market demand?
- We don't know enough about these markets, their impacts, or how to target them or how regional communities can benefit from this.

Need to research local government.

- LG is crucial to success of tourism in local areas
- But many of them do not understand tourism
- They don't know much about the global attributes of the industry
- Changing people in positions need constant education
- Can talk about mining, pastoral etc.
- But know little about tourism
- Knowledge levels, attitudes and visions for tourism across regions from LGs
- Problems, expectations
- Will respond to hard data based on research. If we want LGs to get more involved, supportive, we need this research.

If tourism in the desert is to capitalise on its potential:

- Need a better market focus and an understanding of the competitive nature of tourism
- Demand and future and impact of the drive market
- Better understanding for partnerships with LG in tourism

Comments

- Five motels are converting to residential in Alice Springs – this is telling us something
- Bicentennial funding to seal the roads to Uluru and Kakadu then Alice is a transit route
- Proposed sealing of Plenty Highway – what might this mean for Alice
- What about changing fuel prices and the way this might impact on the drive market?
- Outback Highway – Kalgoorlie? to Cairns? What does this mean?
- Sealing of Kidman/Matilda has sucked customers off the Newell. Likely to have taken people from Alice
- Airlines offering direct flights to Uluru overseeing Alice
- NTTC highlighting the icons, but little Alice Springs (as a Melbourne consumer)
- There are expectations of how much travellers will pay in the various destinations. They are expecting lower prices
- Cost of accessing Alice can influence decisions.

Reproduced from Norm White's prepared paper:

There are some key strategic issues inhibiting development of tourism in Outback Australia.

The two major issues which would benefit considerably from research are:

- a better understanding of the drive market, Outback Australia's biggest source of visitors and a growing market segment
- closer links and greater support from local government.

Other issues which would benefit from research projects are:

- improved business performance of tourism-related enterprises in Outback areas
- an understanding of market attitudes towards the Outback
- impact on regional communities of the growing number of 'touring by caravan' visitors.

Each of these issues is proposed for consideration at the workshop. Further details of each issue are as follows:

Drive market

- While air travellers and coach groups are important to the Outback tourism industry, the drive market is hugely important now and will be more so in the future as roads improve and the market grows. Yet there is little known about this market segment.
- The drive market includes:
    - caravan/campervan travellers
    - 4WD enthusiasts
    - independent travellers by car.

    But the industry does not:

    - have a market profile of the customers
    - know of traveller preferences
    - have an understanding of travel patterns
    - know what motivates travellers or their preferences for destinations and attractions

- know the level of ‘top of mind’ awareness of touring routes and themed trails
- know how travellers obtain travel information and make bookings when planning their itineraries, or after departure.

Armed with this information, Outback communities can:

- more effectively structure their tourism marketing
- provide better product delivery.

Local government

- It is very difficult for Outback communities to succeed with tourism industry development without good support from local government but in many instances such support is limited because Councils either don’t understand this new industry or have wrong perceptions about tourism.
- Local government attitudes by their very nature lead Councils to ‘think local’. This is fine for delivery of community services and other local functions. However tourism is an industry that extends from the destination to distant markets, some on the other side of the world.
- Many Councils follow the ‘build it and they will come’ philosophy which has been proven usually is not effective.

The tourism industry does not understand Council operations and attitudes. Research is needed to:

- ascertain attitudes of elected and appointed Council officials towards tourism industry operations
- assess whether Councils understand the economic and social benefits that tourism brings to their community and factors that are limiting Council support for tourism.

From this review it will be possible to develop strategies to win greater local government support.

Business performance of tourism enterprises:

- no bar to entry for any entrepreneur who wishes to buy or establish a tourism business
- usually, no educational qualification or license is needed which means many tourism businesses often operate with an optimistic outlook for the success of their business whether justified or not
- limited business skills
- no previous marketing skills
- no previous experience in the tourism or hospitality industry
- fail to budget funds necessary to attract customers. Another example of the ‘build it and they will come’ philosophy
- the business being under-capitalised.

These businesses often:

- fail to understand how the tourism industry operates and how to extract maximum benefit
- fail to recognise benefits to be gained from cooperative marketing
- lack an understanding of the importance to their business of technology developments.

Research is needed which:

- determines the level of business expertise in Outback tourism related businesses
- ascertains attitudes and resources of such businesses towards marketing
- identifies options to help these enterprises boost their business performance
- examines how technology can be introduced.

From the research findings, action plans can then be prepared to assist Outback tourism businesses.

Market attitudes towards the Outback:

- The Year of the Outback was a turning point in national awareness, understanding and appeal of the Outback
- However the term 'Outback' is now being widely used. For customers of the tourism industry, there seems to be a variety of interpretations as to what the 'Outback' includes
- The tourism industry is not certain as to what the term means either and it is used for a variety of applications.

Research is needed in key markets to ascertain:

- market interpretations of the 'Outback'
- what potential travellers expect of the Outback as a travel experience
- what facilities and service features they need and expect when travelling in the Outback
- which destinations have greater appeal and why
- how customers will obtain details of the Outback when planning their travel
- preferred method of travel
- likelihood of visiting in next five years.

From the research findings, individual businesses and tourism organisations will be able to better target their marketing activities and product delivery.

Caravan market

- Outback Australia is facing issues associated with the explosion in the number of Australians touring our country with a caravan or campervan.
- 'Baby boomers' and Australians living longer with greater affluence together with more sophisticated caravans/campervans and more powerful vehicles are fuelling this growth.
- This is occurring at a time when caravan park sites at popular locations are being sold for development.
- A problem facing some regional communities is the growth of caravanners who want to park free beside the road and not stay in commercial caravan parks. For short term gain, some Councils support free camping in public areas but in time they will come to regret this policy stance. In the meantime, private sector caravan parks are suffering revenue downturns.
- Typical of the caravan sector are problems associated with seasonality. As an example in some parts of Outback Australia demand for caravan parks is heavy in the winter but almost non-existent in the summer. Attracting customers during the shoulder season would be a great help to businesses. Achieving a spread of the 'grey

nomad' season for annual round Australia trips would also be worthwhile, not just for caravan parks but for sightseeing attractions which rely on business from caravan park patrons.

- At present there is no research to forecast future growth of this segment. Caravan builders are all reporting strong growth with building new caravans.
- A study to assess future growth and market needs will directly benefit Council policies, planning for caravan park growth (particularly the private sector) and tourism marketing.

Harry Scott – Community advisor/Executive Office in the Community of Titjikala (www.titjikala.com.au)

Opportunities for the future of Indigenous people's kids:

- They do appear to have a long term vision, but not short term
- They are very patient people. They know their environments, they know about adaptation
- They are not assimilating, simply adapting
- They will plot their own path in their own way. e.g. art centres – Aboriginal people are not working 9–5 but they are still successful – adapting
- People don't necessarily see value in the same things that we do.

Gunya Tourism Venture

- Joint venture with company in Sydney
- Bringing in the best of both worlds
- Indigenous leaders will tell you what is important – that is that they want to walk both worlds
- There will be an emerging difference to mainstream culture
- Affluent adventure tourists – lots of money, not too many of them – no bus tours – how effective could this be on a Community – e.g. visitor expectations
- 50:50 partnership not to be run or delivered by white fellas – rather a utilisation of the best skills from both cultures. Gunya – marketing and promotion, T-service delivery
- Length of time for set up – much consultation, mostly positive – except for Harry!
- The intelligent illiterate – the hunter-gatherer presented with an opportunity, who decided to take it. Whilst Harry played the devil's advocate – readiness, demanding. Needed to be within a realistic distance of opportunity
- Led to enormous increase in pride and self-esteem. Visitors, people drawn here for Aboriginal culture, people fascinated by ancient history and origins. Here in Australia we have the greatest examples of history/culture – has a great power of attraction and opportunity. People just want to talk to Aboriginal people.
- Existence of distrust of white people – long history – 2/3 years to understand them and took them longer for them to understand Harry. Hardest thing was for them to understand that the white fella wasn't ripping off the Community
- Has its own University, has its own land management, have strong knowledge about survival, their people, their land – stories of stars, bush medicines etc. Visitors want to make contact, talk to them and find out their views.
- Some views that suggest that we should close Communities – that we are paying them too much.

Suggestions:

- We have our greatest asset/capital/$ in a culture, but we don't understand it
- They don't understand the western renaissance
- How do we work with this culture, whilst at the same time trying to keep the problems out of the way?
- The social issues are by far the biggest challenges
- Thinking is not that different, just tempered by different understanding.

Community issues:

- Education of their children
- Drugs and alcohol
- Work
- Lack of understanding of the business of tourism
- They have a clear picture on how they can adapt it
- Community has no interest in visitor spend – they are concerned with community benefit.

How do we tap into the knowledge of Aboriginal people for sustainable benefit for deserts people and the regions?

- Created about 30 part time jobs. Have organised themselves into teams, multiple family groups and three times the number of people expected. Need to blend sorry business with tourism business. Therefore multiple families work on same team.
- Community members are happy for 20–30 year return, when white investors need 2–3 years. Only now realising that white people do want to come and listen to them.
- Titjikala has developed a new road so that visitors don't need to come into the Community. Over the next few years we will see more astute Aboriginal business partners in tourism. They have a strong depth of Indigenous Knowledge.