DESERT KNOWLEDGE CRC

The Working Paper Series

Examples of NRM contracting within Australia

Rob Law
Jocelyn Davies
John Childs

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7
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CHANGE YOUR WORLD. CHARLES DARWIN UNIVERSITY
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Introduction

Background

This working paper presents results of a small research project undertaken by Rob Law as a Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre (DKCRC) Vacation Scholarship through Charles Darwin University. The project is a contribution to the DKCRC Livelihoods inLand™ research project.

Livelihoods inLand™ research supports the development of sustainable livelihoods for desert people through natural and cultural resource management, in order to benefit Australia. There are many issues associated with this area. This background covers some of them.

Livelihoods are more than a job, encompassing health and wellbeing and capacity to withstand shocks and stresses. Nevertheless, jobs, work and sources of income are important to sustainable livelihoods – a necessary part of wellbeing. Most of the paid work that desert Aboriginal people do in natural and cultural resource management is grant funded (particularly via NHT) and resourced through CDEP. We are trying to understand how to expand income generating opportunities beyond these sources.

This leads to the question of what the demand is for desert people to work in natural and cultural resource management, employed by, or as contractors to, people who have responsibilities for natural and cultural resource management. Some 'demand' may come from governments because they have certain responsibility for aspects of natural and cultural resource management. Other 'demand' may come from landowners and different kinds of land users (tourism, transport, mines, etc) who all have some kind of responsibilities, or a duty of care, for maintaining the natural and cultural resources on their lands in good condition. Corporate social responsibility is another source of demand, where large corporations may support development of sustainable livelihoods for community members in natural and cultural resource management to help secure the corporation's own 'social licence to operate'.

Aim

The aim of this research task has been to locate and document examples where government agencies with natural resource management and related responsibilities are discharging their responsibilities by contracting businesses, landowners or community groups (rather than through the work of their own staff).

This research task has been undertaken to inform research that Dr John Childs of NT Department of Natural Resource, Environment and The Arts (NRETA) is undertaking in 2007, as a contribution to the DKCRC Livelihoods in Land™ project. Dr Childs is undertaking an audit of contractible tasks within the NRETA portfolio. The audit will examine the NRETA portfolio – statutory and related responsibilities – in some pilot regions of central Australia to identify tasks that are NRETA responsibilities and that could potentially be outsourced. The results of the audit will indicate potential for the NRETA portfolio to contribute, through outsourcing, to building a stronger private sector economy in central Australia. Outsourcing may offer opportunities for Aboriginal

and/or other enterprises to grow their businesses. The audit is also expected to identify issues that impact on the agency's decisions about how it organises itself to discharge its responsibilities and address its priorities, including risks and benefits of outsourcing compared with employing staff to undertake tasks. This audit is one contribution to understanding the demand for desert people to work in natural and cultural resource management.

Method

Information on NRM contracting examples was gathered by Rob Law in February 2007 by phone interview and email supplemented by internet, addressing a checklist of questions. Some starting points were established through the willing cooperation of the secretariat and members of the Working Group for Indigenous Reconciliation in Natural Resource Management (NRM) and Primary Industries (PI), which has representatives from agencies in all states/territories and the Australian government. Other starting points were from professional networks and anecdotal information of the report's authors.

Limitations

Certain limitations and uncertainties are evident in this report. Due to the short timeframe to complete this report, each example of contract arrangements is based on only one or two sources of information. The short time frame made it difficult to include a range of perspectives on the success of each contract and to explore any issues that exist in the implementation and management of the contracts (such as quality assurance or risk management issues). Furthermore, as many of the project examples in this report are in their infancy stages, it is too early to know what problems or issues may arise in the future. The short time frame and the nature of the research also meant that a number of other potential examples were not included in this report due to relevant people being unavailable.

Examples of contracted tasks

Example 1: Starling control program, Esperance WA

Nature of the contract task	The task involves the monitoring and control of the starling, an invasive bird species introduced to Australia in the 1850s. The starling is having a detrimental effect on both biodiversity and agriculture in the region. Six Aboriginal bio-security officers are currently under an employment contract to identify, manage and research the starling populations in the Esperance region.
Location of the contract task	The location of the task is not defined by any particular boundary – it is dependent on the location of the starlings. This may include Cape Le Grand, Cape Arid and Stokes National Parks, but also farms within the Esperance region.
Location of the contract staff	Esperance, Western Australia.
Agency/organisation responsible for contracting out the task	Department of Agriculture and Food WA in partnership with the South Coast Regional Initiative Planning Team (SCRIPT).
The NRM or related outcome that the agency is responsible for and that the task is necessary for	The control and eradication of starlings from the Esperance region to minimise impacts on the local environment, agriculture and communities.
Name of legislation that the task relates to	The task is related to the responsibilities under the Agriculture Act 1988 (WA), which requires the department of Agriculture and Food to eradicate and control pests in Western Australia.
Plans, policies or agreements that define the task	The starling program itself is not found in any piece of legislation, other than the broader responsibilities DAFWA is obligated to under the Agriculture Act 1988 (WA).
Is the task one-off, periodic, or recurring? If periodic or recurring, how often?	The starling program has been an internal program within DAFWA for many years. However this is the first time it has been contracted. The initial contract will run for five years.
Value of contract	No figure given – still in negotiation. However, bio-security officers are already employed and undertaking the task.
Source of funding	
How is the contractor selected?	Through community consultation. After several community meetings, six Aboriginal members of the community showed keen interest in becoming bio-security officers.
Special skills or qualifications required by the contractor	No special skills or qualifications were required. A two-week training course on starling observation was provided for the six officers in South Australia.
Who has held the contract – currently, recently?	Individuals. The contract is a new development. Previously the Department's bio-security officers have undertaken this program without any assistance.
Location of contractor in relation to the task	Location highly variable depending on the location of the starlings.
Agency's quality assurance requirements or risk management protocols for management of the contract	This task is an employment contract rather than a services contract. As such quality assurance is done internally through project supervision by the starling project manager and the executive director in charge of bio-security within the Department.
Quality assurance, timeliness, or other issues encountered by the agency in implementation and management of the contract	The contract is still new and these issues are ongoing as the contract is being implemented.
How long has this been a contract task?	Recently changed to a contract task. 1st year of implementation.
Source of information (contact person/s, date of conversation)	Mark Chmielewski; Department of Agriculture and Food WA; 12/02/07
Any published or publicly available information, web site links?	www.script.asn.au/

Example 2: Koala control program at Mt. Eccles, Victoria

Nature of the contract task	Population control of koalas within Mt. Eccles National Park, southwest Victoria. A high density of koalas in this region is placing significant pressures on the environment, due to extensive defoliation from over-browsing. Winda Mara Aboriginal Corporation is responsible for the task of monitoring and capturing koalas in the region. The captured koalas are then handed over to qualified veterinarians who sterilise the koalas through either surgery or a contraceptive implant technique.
Location of the contract task	Mt. Eccles National Park and surrounding areas, southwest Victoria
Location of the contract staff	Heywood, southwest Victoria
Agency/organisation responsible for contracting out the task	Department of Sustainability and Environment Vic.
The NRM or related outcome that the agency is responsible for and that the task is necessary for	The DSE has an overall responsibility for flora and fauna management in Victoria, and has the authority to permit intervention in wildlife populations
Name of legislation that the task relates to	Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cwth); Wildlife Act 1975 (Vic); Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 (Vic)
Plans, policies or agreements that define the task	The National Koala Conservation Strategy; Koalas in the Balance Program
Is the task one-off, periodic or recurring? If periodic or recurring, how often?	Annual program recurring
Value of contract	AUD 50,000–100,000 per annum
Source of funding	State government
How is the contractor selected?	Formal public tender process through statewide newspapers. Winda Mara chosen based on locality, suitable skills, previous track record and access to their own equipment.
What special skills or qualifications are required by the contractor?	Skills acquired from on-the-job training through previous working partnership with Parks Victoria. Joint funding is provided by Parks and Winda Mara for conservation and land management certificates.
Who has held the contract – currently, recently? Names if possible.	Winda Mara Aboriginal Corporation. Before Winda Mara, the service was carried out by Parks Victoria staff.
Location of contractor in relation to the task	Less than 100 kms
Agency's quality assurance requirements or risk management protocols for management of the contract	Quality assurance is monitored by overall Project Manager employed by Parks Victoria, including team leaders who oversee the day-to-day tasks.
Quality assurance, timeliness, or other issues encountered by the agency in implementation and management of the contract	There have been some minor issues with defining job roles more clearly. No major issues have occurred at this stage. Very happy with contractor.
How long has this been a contract task?	Changed to a contract task two years ago. However, Winda Mara A.C. has been involved in the program for the past five years.
Source of information (contact person/s, date of conversation)	Mark Riley; Senior Project Manager, Indigenous Land and Resource Management Policy, Department of Environment and Sustainability, Victoria;
15/02/07	
Patrick Fricker; Manager of Indigenous Partnerships, Parks Victoria; 17/02/07	
Any published or publicly available information, web site links?	http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au

Example 3: West Arnhem Land fire abatement project, Northern Territory

Nature of the contract task	The project engages Aboriginal people in a fee-for-service arrangement to undertake strategic fire management across West Arnhem Land to produce greenhouse gas offsets. Traditional owners implement early dry season burning to reduce the occurrence of late dry season wildfires, in turn reducing greenhouse gas emissions and protecting cultural and environmental values.
Location of the contract task	West Arnhem Land, adjacent to Kakadu National Park. Project area covers 28,282 km².
Location of the contract staff	Variable due to multiple contractors and large area the project encompasses.
Agency/organisation responsible for contracting out the task	Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts, Northern Territory (NRETA) with the Northern Land Council (NLC). The West Arnhem Fire Management Agreement (WAFMA) is held between NRETA and Darwin LNG Pty. Ltd.
The NRM or related outcome that the agency is responsible for and that the task is necessary for	The Territory Government is responsible for the Greenhouse Gas Strategy and reducing annual emissions. Darwin LNG Pty. Ltd, who lease from Conocophillips, is required under the conditions of its operating licence to commit to a project to offset its greenhouse gas emissions.
Name of legislation that the task relates to	The Territory Government: Section 31 of the EDP, Northern Territory Strategy for Greenhouse Action; Darwin LNG Pty. Ltd.: condition 36 of its operating licence.
Plans, policies or agreements that define the task	West Arnhem Fire Management Agreement
Is the task one-off, periodic, or recurring? If periodic or recurring, how often?	Recurring for 17 years
Value of contract	> AUD 1,000,000
Source of funding	Darwin LNG Pty. Ltd. and Northern Territory Government.
How is the contractor selected?	Contractors are traditional owners or Aboriginal organisations selected by the Northern Land Council.
What special skills or qualifications are required by the contractor?	Traditional knowledge of fire management. Support provided by scientific bodies such as the Tropical Savannas CRC/NT Bushfires Council.
Who has held the contract – currently, recently? Names if possible.	A number of traditional owners and Aboriginal corporations such as the Jawoyn Association and the Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation.
Location of contractor in relation to the task:	Variable
Agency's quality assurance requirements or risk management protocols for management of the contract	The Traditional Owners implement a fire management program guided by a steering committee who oversee annual and 5-year activity plans, and measure program success through key performance indicators. Greenhouse gas emissions are measured annually within each project area by the Tropical Savannas CRC, NRETA and the NT Bushfire Council.
Quality assurance, timeliness, or other issues encountered by the agency in implementation and management of the contract	The technical aspects of the contract are generally positive. Implementation of the contract has encountered its greatest difficulties from governance issues between partner organisations, and a complex delivery of funds due to the involvement of the Northern Land Council.
How long has this been a contract task?	Less than one year old, since mid-2006
Source of information (contact person/s, date of conversation)	Jeremy Russell-Smith; NT Bushfires Council; 16/02/2007
Any published or publicly available information, web site links?	http://savanna.cdu.edu.au/publications/savanna_links_issue33.html?tid=250363
http://www.savanna.cdu.edu.au/information/arnhem_fire_project.html	
http://www.atns.net.au/agreement.asp?EntityID=3638	

Example 4: Kuka Kanyini at Watarru project, South Australia

Nature of the contract task	The environmental management of a sanctuary area in the Watarru Indigenous Protected Area in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands in northwest of South Australia. Tasks involve mapping biodiversity, restoring and protecting rockholes, habitat management through feral animal control including the mustering and removal of camels, pest plant control and using fire, and the harvesting and monitoring of bush foods.
Location of the contract task	Watarru Community (APY) Lands in far northwest of South Australia.
Location of the contract staff	Watarru Community in the APY lands.
Agency/organisation responsible for contracting out the task	SA Department for Environment and Heritage
The NRM or related outcome that the agency is responsible for and that the task is necessary for	The management of biodiversity, which in this project involves an integrated approach between contemporary science and traditional knowledge.
Name of legislation that the task relates to	National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972 (SA)
Plans, policies or agreements that define the task	Watarru Sanctuary Plan
Is the task one-off, periodic, or recurring? If periodic or recurring, how often?	Ongoing and to be reviewed in 2009
Value of contract	AUD 400,000 per annum
Source of funding	SA Government
How is the contractor selected?	Through an agreement with the Watarru Community
What special skills or qualifications are required by the contractor?	4WD, Traditional knowledge
Who has held the contract – currently, recently? Names if possible.	Watarru Community. Up to 11 permanent part-time and 10 casual Anangu people have been employed on the project.
Location of contractor in relation to the task	Watarru Community
Agency's quality assurance requirements or risk management protocols for management of the contract	Project Manager monitors program implementation. Annual reports, Health and Wellbeing studies developed.
Quality assurance, timeliness, or other issues encountered by the agency in implementation and management of the contract	Funding agreement with Watarru Community and APY identifies roles and responsibilities of all partners.
How long has this been a contract task?	3 years
Source of information (contact person/s, date of conversation)	Malcolm Anderson; SA Department for Environment and Heritage; 16/02/2007
Any published or publicly available information, web site links?	http://www.awt.com.au/content/publications/ap_final.pdf

Example 5: Mamungari Conservation Park, South Australia

Nature of the contract task	The management of Mamungari Conservation Park. Includes feral animal and weed control, management of landscape change, fire management and visitor services.
Location of the contract task	Mamungari Conservation Park, formerly known as Unnamed Conservation Park. Located in northwest South Australia.
Location of the contract staff	Oak Valley and Tjuntjuntjarra Communities, Great Victoria Desert.
Agency/organisation responsible for contracting out the task	Department for Environment and Heritage, South Australia (SA DEH)
The NRM or related outcome that the agency is responsible for and that the task is necessary for	The Maralinga Lands Unnamed Conservation Park Board of Management is responsible for the management of the park as it is listed as a registered park on Aboriginal freehold land. As a conservation park the Board is required to preserve the remote and undisturbed character of the park, maintain habitat and species diversity, maintain ecological function and encourage the maintenance of Aboriginal tradition through joint management with traditional owners.
Name of legislation that the task relates to	National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972 (SA)
Plans, policies or agreements that define the task	Unnamed Conservation Park Co-management Agreement 24 Aug 2004; Mamungari Conservation Park Management Plan (Draft in preparation).
Is the task one-off, periodic or recurring? If periodic or recurring, how often?	Recurring
Value of contract?	AUD 200,000 per year.
Source of funding?	SA Department for Environment and Heritage.
How is the contractor selected?	The contractors are the Traditional owners over the park.
What special skills or qualifications are required by the contractor?	Traditional knowledge with governance support and training provided
Who has held the contract – currently, recently?	Maralinga Lands Unnamed Conservation Park Board of Management. The board has an Aboriginal majority and is a co-managed park with DEH SA.
Location of contractor in relation to the task	Local area, contractor travels <100km
Agency's quality assurance requirements or risk management protocols for management of the contract	Required to produce annual reports and audits.
Quality assurance, timeliness, or other issues encountered by the agency in implementation and management of the contract	Funding agreement with SA Minister of Environment and Heritage identifies schedule of works and Board management.
How long has this been a contract task?	Ongoing
Source of information (contact person/s, date of conversation)	Malcolm Anderson; SA Department for Environment and Heritage; 16/02/2007
Any published or publicly available information, web site links?	http://www.parks.sa.gov.au/mamungari/index.htm

Example 6: North Australian Quarantine Strategy

Nature of the contract task	To assist with management of quarantine risks resulting from illegal foreign fishing vessels that make landfall in remote areas of Northern Australia. The tasks involve disposal of quarantine risk material including illegal foreign fishing vessels and debris from illegal foreign fishing vessels, ongoing monitoring programs such as insect trapping and monitoring, wood boring pest surveillance, blood collection from feral animals, weed collection, and plant disease collection.
Location of the contract task	The Northern Australian Quarantine Zone – Coastal strip from Broome to Cairns.
Location of the contract staff	Variable – coastal communities.
Agency/organisation responsible for contracting out the task	Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS)
The NRM or related outcome that the agency is responsible for and that the task is necessary for	The protection of Australian land from exotic pests, weeds and diseases that may enter Australia through illegal fishing vessels that make landfall in remote areas.
Name of legislation that the task relates to	Australian Quarantine Act 1908 (Cwth)
Plans, policies or agreements that define the task	AQIS Indigenous Engagement and Illegal Foreign Fishing Vessel Strategy
Is the task one-off, periodic, or recurring? If periodic or recurring, how often?	12-month contracts, expected to be recurring but funding dependent on Australian Government priorities
Value of contract	AUD 5,000 – 100,000; Variable, dependent on capacity, location relative to quarantine risk
Source of funding	Commonwealth Government initiative announced four years of funding for the project beginning 1 July 2006
How is the contractor selected?	Community groups or organisations whose members have the relevant capacity and proximity to quarantine risks.
What special skills or qualifications are required by the contractor?	AQIS in situ training
Who has held the contract – currently, recently?	Contracts are currently being negotiated with participating organisations, all of which are Aboriginal community organisations
Location of contractor in relation to the task:	Variable, may travel anywhere between 1km to >1,000kms
Agency's quality assurance requirements or risk management protocols for management of the contract	Contract and associated activity plans are for defined period. Significant resources within AQIS have been directed to the project. This is a mutual obligation arrangement negotiated between AQIS and the Aboriginal organisation (contractor). AQIS provides training and support to enable groups to provide service. The fee for the service provision is negotiated with the contractor who then provides the service. Once the work has been completed the contractor provides a report of the work done and then invoices AQIS according to the pre-agreed fee.
Quality assurance, timeliness, or other issues encountered by the agency in implementation and management of the contract	Too early in the project to identify significant issues. Limited administrative resources, local priorities, cultural obligations and consultation processes in the Aboriginal community organisations make it difficult to achieve mutually agreeable outcomes within rigid Government time frames.
How long has this been a contract task?	New task.
Source of information (contact person/s, date of conversation)	Lyndall McLean, Remote Area Coordinator, North Australian Quarantine Strategy, Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service, 21/02/2007
Any published or publicly available information, web site links?	Nil

Example 7: Friends of the Arid Recovery Project

Nature of the contract task	To undertake research into small mammals and plant ecology, conduct feral animal control (including fox baiting research) and trial the reintroduction of locally extinct native species. Also provides environmental education and training to schools and community groups.
Location of the contract task	The Arid Recovery Reserve, occurring on pastoral leases belonging to BHP Billiton, northeast of Roxby Downs.
Location of the contract staff	Roxby Downs
Agency/organisation responsible for contracting out the task	South Australian Arid Lands Natural Resource Management Board (SAALNRMB)
The NRM or related outcome that the agency is responsible for and that the task is necessary for	Responsible for weed and pest management in the area. The research helps inform the SAALNRMB about current cat, fox and dingo control methods in the area. Current research into the ecological role of the dingo may potentially influence current baiting programs. Ecological studies also contribute to the biodiversity targets identified in the regional Integrated Natural Resource Management (INRM) Plan that the Board is responsible for delivering.
Name of legislation that the task relates to	Natural Resources Management Act 2004 (SA)
Plans, policies or agreements that define the task	Rangelands Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan and Investment Strategy; SA Arid Lands NRM Board Initial Natural Resource Management Plan 2006–2007
Is the task one-off, periodic or recurring? If periodic or recurring, how often?	Annual recurring
Value of contract	Approximately AUD 50,000 each year.
Source of funding	NHT funding. Arid Recovery is also funded by BHP Billiton and the SA Department for Environment and Heritage (SA DEH).
How is the contractor selected?	The contractor was already in operation.
What special skills or qualifications are required by the contractor?	A number of staff have ecological qualifications, further skills and advice is provided by the University of Adelaide and SA DEH.
Who has held the contract – currently, recently?	Friends of the Arid Recovery Project; not-for-profit community organisation
Location of contractor in relation to the task	Variable; Local area, contractor travels <100km
Agency's quality assurance requirements or risk management protocols for management of the contract	Must provide SAALNRMB with annual reports, quarterly reports and financial statements, and have a series of milestones that need to reported against.
Quality assurance, timeliness, or other issues encountered by the agency in implementation and management of the contract	No issues with the contract.
How long has this been a contract task?	New contract, since 2003/2004
Source of information (contact person/s, date of conversation)	Sandy Gunter, Program Manager, SA Arid Lands NRM Board, 28/02/2007
Any published or publicly available information, web site links?	www.saalnrm.sa.gov.au
www.aridrecovery.org.au	

Example 8: Brambuk Cultural Centre, Victoria

Nature of the contract task	The co-management of Brambuk National Park Information and Cultural Centre near the Gariwerd/ Grampians National Park. The Centre contains a gallery, shop and bush food café, provides visitor information, conducts cultural talks and tours, traditional dance and art demonstrations.
Location of the contract task	Halls Gap, southwest Victoria.
Location of the contract staff	Halls Gap or surrounding communities.
Agency/organisation responsible for contracting out the task	Parks Victoria
The NRM or related outcome that the agency is responsible for and that the task is necessary for	To provide visitor services and information for National Parks within Victoria, and to protect Aboriginal and European cultural heritage.
Name of legislation that the task relates to	National Parks Act 1975 (Vic)
Plans, policies or agreements that define the task	Grampians National Park Management Plan; Grampians National Park Memorandum of Understanding; A Fairer Victoria: Creating Opportunity and Addressing Disadvantage; Gariwerd/Grampians Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Strategy (being developed)
Is the task one-off, periodic or recurring? If periodic or recurring, how often?	Recurring.
Value of contract?	
Source of funding?	Service fee provided through Parks Victoria, but the Centre is run as a business.
How is the contractor selected?	Cultural Centre was previously a private business operated by Brambuk Enterprises.
What special skills or qualifications are required by the contractor?	Tourism training programs are provided to staff by Parks Victoria and Gariwerd Enterprises Pty Ltd. Gariwerd Enterprises have applied to become a registered training organisation.
Who has held the contract – currently, recently?	Brambuk/Gariwerd Enterprises. An enterprise owned by five Aboriginal communities with historic links to Gariwerd/Grampians National Park.
Location of contractor in relation to the task	Local area, contractor travels <100km
Agency's quality assurance requirements or risk management protocols for management of the contract	Quality assurance is maintained by full-time staff, both Gariwerd staff and Parks Victoria staff. Parks Victoria consulted with Gariwerd Enterprises to ensure centre be open at certain times such as public holidays and weekends. Previously the centre did not have any set opening hours.
Quality assurance, timeliness, or other issues encountered by the agency in implementation and management of the contract	A high turnover of Aboriginal staff results in training issues; someone has to start from the beginning once a trained person has left. The corporation needs to look at ongoing capacity.
How long has this been a contract task?	Changed to a contract task 5 or 6 years ago. Previously Brambuk was run as a private enterprise in competition with the Parks Victoria Visitor Centre.
Source of information (contact person/s, date of conversation)	Patrick Fricker; Manager of Indigenous Partnerships; Parks Victoria; 17/02/07
Any published or publicly available information, web site links?	Management Plan: http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au/resources07/07_0938.pdf Brambuk Aboriginal Cultural Centre: http://www.brambuk.com.au/

Example 9: Second round pastoral lease assessments, South Australia

Nature of the contract task	To undertake second round pastoral lease assessments across properties in Central South Australia to assist the South Australian Department of Water, Lands and Biodiversity (DWLB). The contract requires carrying out fieldwork for assessing land conditions and submitting the assessments to the DWLB.
Location of the contract task	Gawler Ranges and Kingoonya area, central South Australia.
Location of the contract staff	Main staff are based in Port Augusta.
Agency/organisation responsible for contracting out the task	South Australian Department of Water, Lands and Biodiversity
The NRM or related outcome that the agency is responsible for and that the task is necessary for	To monitor the rangelands of South Australia to ensure their use is ecologically sustainable. This monitoring assesses land condition of pastoral lease holders in order to determine whether a new 42-year lease is offered or whether remedial measures are required.
Name of legislation that the task relates to	Pastoral Land Management and Conservation Act 1989 (SA)
Plans, policies or agreements that define the task	Service level agreement between Rural Solutions S.A. and the SADWLB
Is the task one-off, periodic or recurring? If periodic or recurring, how often?	The assessments are conducted every 14 years when the pastoral leases have 28 years to go. However, each round of assessments may take up to 14 years due to the large number of pastoral leases (c.300) that need to be assessed.
Value of contract	Approximately AUD 450,000 for the first two years.
Source of funding	SA pastoral management is principally funded through pastoral lease rentals
How is the contractor selected?	DWLBC is part owner of Rural Solutions SA. The selection of Rural Solutions was done through an internal process not requiring a formal external tender process.
What special skills or qualifications are required by the contractor?	Rural Solutions provides formal training and qualifications for staff involved, and is assisted by the DWLB.
Who has held the contract – currently, recently?	Rural Solutions SA, a commercial business with 260 employees, owned by the government: 50% by the DWLB and 50% by the Department of Primary Industries.
Location of contractor in relation to the task	Variable; for staff based in Port Augusta usually 100–600 kms. For staff coming from Adelaide, this exceeds 1,000km.
Agency's quality assurance requirements or risk management protocols for management of the contract	Rural Solutions SA must produce assessment reports to the DWLB within a given period, and also provide ongoing progress reports. Assessments are conducted based on a template devised by the DWLBC. DWLBC has a formal audit process to provide quality assurance. This audit process is carried out by senior scientific staff of the pastoral program of DWLBC.
Quality assurance, timeliness, or other issues encountered by the agency in implementation and management of the contract	There have been small issues with data capture and the lack of strict day-to-day quality assurance that had occurred when the task was carried out by DWLB staff. A review is taking place to determine whether the contract will continue, be brought back in-house or go out to formal public tender.
How long has this been a contract task?	New Task: a contract since March 2005.
Source of information (contact person/s, date of conversation)	David Leek; Pastoral Program Manager; SA Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation. 27/02/2007
Any published or publicly available information, web site links?	Information pertaining to the lease assessment process is available on the DWLBC website under the Pastoral Program information: http://www.dwlbc.sa.gov.au/land/rangelands/index.html

Example 10: Booderee National Park/Wreck Bay Enterprises Ltd, Jervis Bay Territory

Nature of the contract task	Park services such as visitor entry fee collection, road and track maintenance, and cleaning public and staff amenities. These tasks occur as service level agreements under a general services contract between Director of National Parks (DNP) and Wreck Bay Enterprises Ltd (WBE). The focus of services provided by the WBE under the services contract is dependent on the decisions and direction provided by the Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community Council (WBACC).
Location of the contract task	Booderee National Park (Bherwerre Peninsula), Jervis Bay Territory, eastern Australia. The national park protects most of the southern peninsula of Jervis Bay and Bowen Island.
Location of the contract staff	Jervis Bay village and Wreck Bay village, Jervis Bay Territory
Agency/organisation responsible for contracting out the task	Parks Australia
The NRM or related outcome that the agency is responsible for and that the task is necessary for	The lease agreement between the DNP and WBACC, and the Booderee National Park Management Plan encourage Parks Australia to create employment for the Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community. Parks Australia is also responsible for visitor services and park services including research and fire management.
Name of legislation that the task relates to	Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cwth)
Plans, policies or agreements that define the task	Booderee National Park Management Plan; Park Lease; Services Contract; SLAs
Is the task one-off, periodic or recurring? If periodic or recurring, how often?	Service Level Agreements are aligned with the term of the services contract and usually last for 3–5 years
Value of contract	AUD 1.9 million in 2006
Source of funding	Parks Australia budgets
How is the contractor selected?	Wreck Bay Enterprises Ltd is chosen as the contractor because of the joint management arrangements under the park lease and management plan facilitating the involvement of the Wreck Bay Community.
What special skills or qualifications are required by the contractor?	Knowledge, skills and capacity are acquired through the joint training strategy which delivers nationally accredited training courses in a shared way to Parks staff, Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community and Wreck Bay Enterprises Ltd.
Who has held the contract – currently, recently?	Wreck Bay Enterprises Ltd.
Location of contractor in relation to the task	Less than 100 km
Agency's quality assurance requirements or risk management protocols for management of the contract	Performance monitoring by parks staff and WBE occurs regularly. SLAs are also benchmarked to ensure value for money is obtained.
Quality assurance, timeliness, or other issues encountered by the agency in implementation and management of the contract	One of the issues has been contract/management/technical skills among WBE staff.
How long has this been a contract task?	Became a SLA in 2003, but Parks Australia used WBE for works before this time.
Source of information (contact person/s, date of conversation)	Graeme Beech, Contract & Visitor Facilities Officer, Booderee National Park. 02/03/07
Any published or publicly available information, web site links?	State of the Parks report: http://www.environment.gov.au/parks/publications/annual/04-05/booderee.html
Booderee National Park home page: http://www.environment.gov.au/parks/booderee/index.html	

Discussion

During the conversations that took place throughout the research, it became obvious that government departments and organisations generally focus NRM engagement on assisting landowners to meet their obligations for NRM on their lands and use mechanisms such as NHT grant funding, linkages to CDEP schemes (for Aboriginal groups), and other partnerships or support programs. However, this research has been undertaken as part of efforts to expand work opportunities for desert people beyond these common options. Hence, it was looking specifically for examples where agencies are outsourcing to meet their own 'core' responsibilities for NRM and related areas. Examples of arrangements based on grant funding to landowners for NRM activities were not specifically pursued in data collection for this report, nor were private sector contracting arrangements.

The range of examples revealed by this research task cover a variety of contracting arrangements – either fee-for-service or employment contracts. In some situations such as the Arnhem Land Fire Abatement Project (Example 3) and North Australian Quarantine Strategy (Example 6) there are multiple contractors across a region. In South Australian pastoral lease assessments (Example 9) and management of Booderee National Park (Example 10), contracts are developed as service level agreements. Not all examples describe standard contracts; some agencies are using more innovative ways to contract with Aboriginal groups and other organisations and landowners.

Several of the examples revealed by this research are contracts or partnering arrangements between agencies and Aboriginal groups. Although the research was not only seeking examples of contracts to Aboriginal groups, the pathways followed to find examples – which started with consultations with members of the Working Group for Indigenous Reconciliation in Natural Resource Management (NRM) and Primary Industries (PI) – undoubtedly biased results towards such arrangements. Examples of contracts with Aboriginal groups typically build on previous working relationships or are part of broader partnership or co-management agreements. This evolution to contracting seems to occur as the experience and capacity of the Aboriginal groups increases. In the case of Booderee National Park (Example 10), Winda Mara Aboriginal Corporation (Example 2) and the Arnhem Land Fire Abatement project (Example 3) a mutual desire is apparent to gradually devolve more responsibilities through time to the contractors until the involvement of the government department is minimal.

Few of the examples revealed by this research award contracts through a standard competitive tendering process. Keith et al. (2006) make the point that although tendering can be an immutable fact of life for government agencies with accountabilities for use of public money, it can impede opportunities to develop more fruitful partnerships with community and business. For example, competitive tendering has limited capacity to account for social, economic and cultural benefits and disbenefits beyond the targeted outcomes from a project or activity. For this reason, the study by Keith et al. of partnership towards natural resource management outcomes has developed a six-way classification of pathways for agreement (see Table 1). Their study highlights the benefits for governments and society in agencies looking beyond competitive tendering to determine the appropriate pathways to, and scope of, agreements. These are important considerations if outsourcing by agencies is to be effective in supporting sustainable livelihoods for landowners in remote desert regions.

Table 1: Six pathways for agreement

1. Competitive tender	A job needs doing without consideration of need for community development or concern for social or cultural sustainability.
2. Triple bottom line tender	A tender that includes an environmental action plus requirements for organisational development, personal development, social enhancement, cultural sustainability; or requires reporting on social, cultural and economic impacts of the planned environmental change.
3. Institutional alliance	Formal MOU or partnership agreement document between an agency and another institution such as a university, CRC, industry peak body, or another level of government.
4. Collaborative project contract	Agreement for a specific project, between agency and group/groups within a sector.
5. Sector-based collaborative partnership	For delivery of a range of outcomes by sector groups over a period: Expressions of interest, then collaborative planning resulting in implementation agreements based on skills and interests of cooperating groups. Include provision for: sharing of skills; importing support to provide or develop skills needed; social sustainability opportunities or obligations; consideration of cultural sustainability opportunities and obligations; monitoring social, economic and environmental impacts.
6. Cross-sector–based partnership (Collaborative community partnership)	For delivery of a range of outcomes by multisector groups over a period: Expressions of interest and collaborative planning for complex projects requiring broad skills and resource input base. Develop an ideal/practical strategy collectively, then invite groups to identify what they will commit to and formalise with implementation agreements. Include provision for capacity building, social capital development etc. as for 5 above.

Source: modified from Keith et al. 2006

Conclusion

This research has rapidly documented ten examples where agencies with NRM and related responsibilities are outsourcing their responsibilities by working with Aboriginal groups, landowners or other agencies. It has indicated that instances where government agencies are contracting with landowners/groups to undertake their 'core' NRM responsibilities are relatively rare. However, it has also highlighted that there are a variety of other collaborative and partnership arrangements that agencies are using to engage with landowners in NRM and related fields, often in ways that build landowner capacity.

This research provides groundwork for Core Project 1, Livelihoods inLand™, to investigate ways that agencies in desert Australia may support the development of stronger livelihoods for desert people and meet their own needs for NRM and related outcomes. An audit of contractible tasks within the NRETA portfolio, underway in 2007, is building on this groundwork.

References

Keith K, Ross H and Gorringe S 2006, *Regional partnership agreements on prioritised investment strategies for the Burnett Mary Region*, Report for Burnett Mary Regional Group for Natural Resource Management Inc as part of a collaborative University of Queensland and Burnett Mary Regional Group project, School of Natural and Rural Systems Management and Centre for Rural and Regional Innovation – Queensland, The University of Queensland, Gatton.