

## **9. Collaboration and Partners**

Collaboration is a form of participation where community members and outside agencies are partners and work together in activities. Many classification schemes for participation have been formulated, however, the basic model proposes that participation by community members should move from passive to more active forms of participation. This means that, over time, personnel from outside agencies should aim to desist with implementing passive approaches such as contractual and consultative participation, and formulate strategies to enable their withdrawal from project initiatives. Such strategies require outside personnel to increasingly take a back-seat role in activities as community members complement their own skills and knowledge through participant resourcing and outside advice at their own direction and control. These more active forms of participation, known as collaboration and collegial participation, are the approaches to which all stakeholders aspire so that the most effective ecosystem management is enacted.

When commencing research in partnership with community members it is important to be aware of the types of participatory approaches which are currently occurring. In this way all stakeholders can then aim for progressing along the ladder of participation which in itself becomes an outcome of the project initiated.

While it is important to build capacity in communities, it is also important that institutions become aware of their lack of expertise to work in cross-cultural settings. Building capacity within institutions to work and operate in collaborative research projects may also be required. These strategies will require time, thought and radical re-thinking of optimum approaches within institutions so that collaborative and collegial participation eventuates.

There is an urgent need by all institutions currently involved in weed management on Aboriginal lands to develop their own internal strategies that will build their capacity to recognise strengths and limitations of the current approaches used. The following institutions have indicated support for collaborative approaches to weed management on Aboriginal lands.

### **9.1 Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory (PWCNT)**

PWCNT have at officer level been very supportive of work carried out under this project and have stated that they seek and support further development of collaborative, consultative approaches to weed management. At the officer level information has flowed freely between staff of PCWNT and the NLC.

### **9.2 Australian Plant Quarantine Service (AQIS)/North Australian Quarantine Service (NAQS)**

To date NAQS have cooperated and supplied all data it has on the survey of weeds from coastal communities in the Northern Territory to the NLC. The process they follow in surveying for weeds is a consultative one using techniques of rapid rural appraisal. Feedback is given to the NLC and landholders about weeds found. NAQS has expressed interest in developing more close links with the NLC particularly in the area of extension and educational material on weed entry prevention (NAQS is also interested in the same with animals and plant pathogens). NLC needs follow this up with publicity department of AQIS.

### **9.3 Cooperative Research Centre for Weed Management Systems (Weeds CRC)**

Weeds CRC has indicated they are keen to explore collaborative links and approaches to weed management but this is dependent on a bid for continuation of funding that proposes a north Australian focus.

#### **9.4 NT Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries (NTDPIF)**

The NTDPIF has indicated that it wished to establish collaborative links with indigenous organizations. However has shown an unwillingness to accept the NLC's statutory role to act on behalf of landowners and land trusts and in particular the NLC's responsibility for determining who the relevant Aboriginal landowners are for particular areas of land.

In some instances the Department has been unwilling to provide material and information to the NLC and has at other times indicated they are prepared only to supply data to NLC with caveats (see Appendices 8 and 9). The problems in exchange of information relates mainly to confidentiality of information and the situation is currently with NTDPIF and NLC legal staff.

#### **9.5 Cooperative Research Centre for the Sustainable Development of Tropical Savannas (Tropical Savannas CRC)**

The Centre encourages capacity-building projects within Aboriginal communities that assists them in effectively managing their land and strongly supports development of capacity within these communities to work collaboratively with outside agencies with complementary skills. The Centre is working to foster collaboration and information exchange among all land management agencies in the tropical savannas. The Centre is already funding collaborative projects with Aboriginal organisations in north Australia.

#### **9.6 Recommendations**

*Recommendation 31:* NLC to liaise with PWCNT, AQIS, Weeds CRC, NTDPIF and Tropical Savannas CRC to build capacity of institutions to understand philosophy and methods of participation.

*Recommendation 32:* NLC to liaise with PWCNT, AQIS, Weeds CRC, NTDPIF and Tropical Savannas CRC to build capacity of institutions to engage in cross-cultural activities.

*Recommendation 33:* NLC to liaise with PWCNT, AQIS, Weeds CRC, NTDPIF and Tropical Savannas CRC to build capacity of institutions to recognize strengths and limitations of current approaches.