

Indigenous Enterprise Partnerships Case Study

Balkanu Mossman Gorge Project



Background

The Mossman Gorge community is located in a pristine rainforest setting on Cape York, with the nearby the Mossman Gorge National Park a magnet to tourists visiting Cairns and Port Douglas. In excess of 400,000 tourists visit the gorge annually and pass through the Aboriginal community. To date, the community has received little or no economic benefit from this, just disruption and damage to the natural environment and cultural places.

Project Objectives

The project seeks to change all of that, protecting the Gorge and at the same time creating a sustainable and independent aboriginal community. The project aims to:

- create a sustainable tourist enterprise that employs people from the Mossman Gorge Aboriginal Community in a place & a way that is meaningfully connected with their cultural roots.
- protect the natural environment and address chaotic traffic conditions.

The project has negotiated with the relevant authorities to close the road to the public and is in the process of purchasing adjoining land to set up a parking and transit area from which all visitors will have a choice to take their electric buses, or walk into the Gorge. Aside from the direct revenue that this will generate, there are also plans for shops, art sales, cafes interpretive walks etc. The project has the potential to generate up to 40 jobs. Given that the population of fewer than 200 is predominantly reliant on welfare, the impact of this project can be enormous.



IEP involvement

Over the past two years the project has benefited from a wide variety of skills brought by secondees, sourced by IEP. These include project management, financial analysis (including income/expense forecasts and funding submissions), customer market research, employment requirements analysis and senior management leadership. These have largely been drawn from secondees from Westpac Banking Corporation and Boston Consulting Group.

This brings a breadth and depth of skills that are otherwise inaccessible for indigenous organisations driving such change. They enable significant change to be delivered in a much shorter span of time.

Achievements to date

Supported by these secondees the project has now achieved the following milestones:

- Shire Council approval to rezone land to enable visitor centre and car park development
- Shire Council approval of road closure
- Indigenous Land Council approval of funding to acquire and develop the land.

IEP partner resources have played a valuable role in development of the Feasibility Study, Development Application, Business Plan, Communications Plans and Employee Ready Programs.

It is widely acknowledged that the skills and experience brought by secondees sourced by IEP have made significant contributions to the project's progress.

The next stage is to acquire the land and commence development. IEP will continue to source resources to assist as the project moves through these stages.

Recognition of value

Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation is highly appreciative of the contributions of IEP resources from corporate partners. Balkanu consistently seek out additional secondees to engage on the project. Comments on secondees from the Balkanu project manager include appreciation of the valuable contributions made by secondees including their professionalism, and financial, management and delivery skills.

