



TOMG meeting attendees at Wulgurukaba property, Stick Lease, on Magnetic Island.

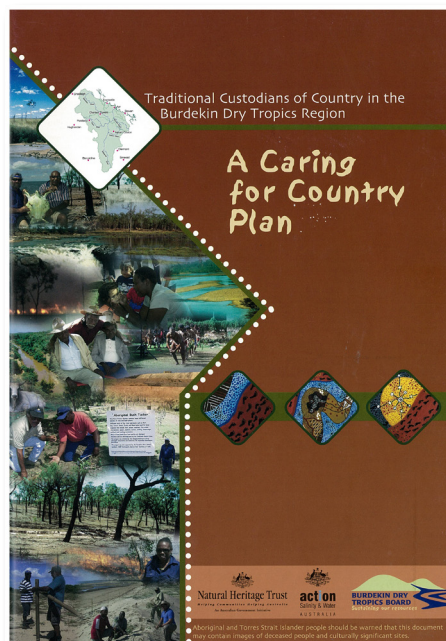
TRADITIONAL OWNERS PROVIDING STRATEGIC DIRECTION FOR MANAGING LAND AND SEA COUNTRY

NQ Dry Tropics proudly works in partnership with regional Traditional Owner groups to build their capacity to care for their country. Traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) and land management techniques can play a key role in protecting our natural resources, and effective Traditional Owner engagement is needed to incorporate it into current and future strategies.

In 2004, following extensive consultation, NQ Dry Tropics established the Traditional Owner Management Group (TOMG) to ensure effective engagement with the 17 Traditional Owner groups across the Burdekin Dry Tropics region, which covers approximately eight per cent of Queensland, including the broad catchment of the Burdekin River and a coastal area running from Bowen to north of Townsville. These Traditional Owner groups are the Nywaigi, Wulgurukaba, Bindal, Juru, Gia, Jangga, Birriah, Wiri, Gudjal, Gugu Badhun, Warrungnu, Manbarra, Iningai, Wangan, Jagalingou, Bidjara and Yirendali.

This consultation occurred within the development of the “Traditional Custodians of Country in the Burdekin Dry Tropics Region - A Caring for Country Plan”. The Caring for Country Plan, developed to be integrated with the NQ Dry Tropics Natural Resource

Management (NRM) Plan, highlighted the need for a Traditional Owner representative structure which resulted in the TOMG.



The TOMG provides advice and direction to NQ Dry Tropics and other regional NRM organisations and groups, about Traditional Owners’ aspirations for land and sea country management. It provides a structure that allows Traditional Owners to engage more broadly

and collaborate effectively with all relevant organisations, both government and non-government, regarding cultural and natural resource management.

TOMG meetings are held twice a year, because many members work and have to travel quite a distance, however further discussions happen via phone and email. Often the agenda is extensive so meetings may run over two days.

In late 2014 the TOMG provided advice to NQ Dry Tropics about a strategic change of direction in how Traditional Owners in the region are consulted and involved in NRM. This resulted in Gudjuda Reference Group Aboriginal Corporation taking on the responsibility of co-delivery, with NQ Dry Tropics, the Engaging Traditional Owners project, funded under the National Landcare Programme.

The TOMG workshopping the main areas for capacity building and on-country activities for their groups.



The TOMG approved Gudjuda's suggested new engagement approach through community network areas (CNAs). CNAs are groupings, or hubs, of Traditional Owner groups which are geographically and culturally linked. The engagement approach aims to support Traditional Owners to build relationships and connections with various NRM stakeholders within their hub.

The Engaging Traditional Owners project aims to integrate traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) and effective participation of Traditional Owners in NRM planning and activities. In 2015 the TOMG helped to develop two important documents that guide some project areas – a TEK Strategy and a framework for the delivery of the Traditional Owner Grants.

The TEK Strategy identifies ways to ensure that TEK is collected and recorded in a culturally appropriate manner, and highlights the importance

of all Traditional Owner groups in the Burdekin NRM region having the opportunity to record TEK.

NQ Dry Tropics' \$30,000 Traditional Owner grants programme supports groups to deliver projects that build their capacity, and carry out on-ground management of natural and cultural assets. In the grants framework, the TOMG identified that grant activities must contribute to the outcomes of the Engaging Traditional Owners project, align with outcomes from the National Landcare Programme, and involve collaboration between two or more Traditional Owner groups where possible.

NQ Dry Tropics appreciates the advice it receives from the TOMG, which continues to provide strategic direction on a range of topics.

"It's about us working together, supporting each other and building capacity. We are all here for the same thing, natural resource management."

- Eddie Smallwood,
Bindal TOMG representative

