ourplace

NUMBER 31

HEALTHIER DOGS, HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES

Kintore community dog health program

The Bushlight approach to designing and implementing Renewable Energy

Holding tradition and caring for country:
A DIGITAL MEDIA TRAINING PROGRAM

The Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands

BUSHTECHS: SMART DESERT GARDENING • WINDMILLS FOR WATER PUMPING • BUSH AIRSTRIPS POSTER

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Front cover

A healthy child plays with her dogs on a community. A pilot program by AMRRIC is helping to increase health of dogs on communities.

Our Place

"Healthier dogs, healthier communities" is the topic of our cover story in this issue of Our Place magazine.

We take a look at a pilot program facilitated by Animal Management in Rural and Remote Indigenous Communities (AMRRIC), which aims to create opportunities in Indigenous communities for improving the health of dogs, which in turn has a lasting impact on the health of the community.

In our International feature Alyson Wright takes an in-depth look at the The Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) — a response to civil unrest and ethnic violence in that country.

Paul A Coull explains the approach of Bushlight in implementing Renewable Energy Systems, and shares some feedback from Indigenous community members about the project.

A digital media training project for Indigenous Elders is providing modern technology to record and preserve traditional knowledge. James Newman reports on this important project on page 7.

Also in this issue we have a transcript from an Our Place radio program interview with stockman Alan Creek, and a review of the book "Lola Young — medicine woman and teacher."

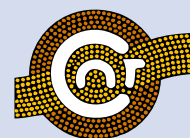I hope you find this issue enjoyable and informative.

COLLEEN DANZIC
Publications Officer
The Centre for Appropriate Technology
Alice Springs

Alan Creek
at Kulpa Homelands
Edited transcript of Our Place Radio Segment 1 2007

ADRIAN: In 2006, I travelled throughout Cape York in far North Queensland collecting stories in remote communities. I had the pleasure of meeting stockman Alan Creek who has built his own cattle station on the Kulpa Homelands. After getting to know Alan you come to understand that he is a very determined person who wants his cattle station to succeed no matter what the challenges are. Alan Creek grew up as a stockman with his family and over the years has worked with many other cattlemen in Cape York.

ALAN: I've been with the best of the best cattlemen and the best ringers that ever rode this country. That's where I got my skills from, especially working beside my old dad, my grandfather and my uncles. They were top ringers, and of course I worked with a lot of white pastoralists and they were fairly strict blokes, hard working men. Indigenous ringers, even if they were a head stockman, did the hard yards. They did the mustering, the hardest part, bringing the cattle in. They told me the top ringers always ride in front of a big mob of wild cattle — up in the lead — I had to be up there too because I wanted to be a top ringer.

ADRIAN: Back in December of 2002, Alan moved his family back onto his wife's traditional land at Kulpa to build the cattle station with some help from the ILC (Indigenous Land Corporation).

When they arrived at Kulpa they had no real infrastructure in place, just a tent and their determination to build and manage their own cattle station.

ALAN: Four years ago this area was just an open area. We come down here about Christmas time and we pitched the tent over near the spring there. We stayed in that tent through the wet, and we fenced here, and then we gradually built from there. Over four years we've done a bit of house building, a bit of yard building and making paddocks and we just kept on, kept on growing. You can see today what's been built in four years. You know, it takes time, a lot of work, a lot of sweat, but if you're willing and you're keen enough to do it you know it could be done.

All my life I wanted to be a top ringer, head stockman or even one day sort of managing my own place. That day has come now. Here I am in Kulpa on our own traditional land. The place that I really built here, the yards, the paddocks around here, the little old shed that we started in. When we got the paddocks we bought our own horses and we did a bit of a mustering around here and now we got about 250 head of cattle behind barbed wires. My aim is to really improve the livestock, the breeding stock and get better blood in them. And we've already started that. We have got about six pure bred Brahman bulls and 50 head of heifers with a bit of support from the ILC.

ADRIAN: In 2002 the cattlemen of Cape York formed the Northern Cattleman's Alliance. The Cattleman's Alliance was established not only to improve the quality of their cattle but also to ease some of the tense relationships between the Aboriginal and non Aboriginal cattlemen of the Cape. Alan is the President of the Northern Cattleman's Alliance. Five years ago he spoke to a friend, John Fraser, about how they could get Indigenous stockmen more involved in other aspects of the industry.

ALAN: Being an Indigenous fellow and wanting to start a property from this land here, I wanted to know some more about the managers side of it. I knew about mustering and all that but not the managing. You know those days we used to just bring cattle in and soon as the cattle hit the drafting yard the black fellows were all just hanging off gates and all that. And the white man would do the drafting and do the ordering. John could see that and so we got talking and we said well, let's start a Alliance like the Cattle Alliance with black and white cattlemen joined together. A lot more Indigenous people joined the Cattle Alliance and I think that's made it a bit easier for me. I can go around now and talk to a lot of non-Indigenous cattlemen and we sit down and talk as cattlemen. Where before, you're a blackfella and you sit over there and that's it and you don't really get

Alan Creek built his own cattle station on the Kulpa Homelands.

talking about these cattle or breeding and managing. But the Northern Cattleman's Alliance changed that thing and the aim of it is to get black and white cattlemen together.

ADRIAN: Operating his cattle station at Kulpa, Alan also has a unique agreement with the Criminal Justice System of Queensland. Men who have been in trouble with the law are sent to Kulpa to become stockmen. Alan knows that people get bored easily just doing the one job so when he's working with his stockmen at Kulpa he makes sure that the younger stockmen have plenty of different jobs throughout the day.

ALAN: Well, I find now that I'm in charge of everything, I make the plans and I have learnt over the years how to get the young men working well. You can't let them get bored doing the one thing. But I'm pretty lucky here with the horses and the cattle and this place here so we do a bit of everything. They can do the buildings and then they can change about and do a bit more yard work.

ADRIAN: During the monsoon season when it rains non-stop for about a month Alan can't do much work for obvious reasons, but when the storms settle down he's out and about enjoying the rain with his cattle and horses. Years ago, people in the Cape understood the paths and the patterns of the storms. But the patterns of the storm seem to be changing.

ALAN: We have funny years now you know, not like the old days. Then you could follow the storms with your monsoons coming in about January,

February, March, with rains for a month then it breaks off and then comes back in again. We had cyclone Monica here which left some damage in the place — knocked a few trees down over the paddocks. But the rain was definitely needed here because in the three years before that rain was just on and off and we never, never got the average rainfall. When Monica come through it did fill up all the springs and left us with a fair bit of water. A lot of the springs are dried up now although a lot of the permanent ones have still got plenty water in them. Hopefully they'll see us till the storm starts again.

You get bored just sitting down in the wet season. I do anyhow and I keep moving whether it's raining or not. Not in the big wet, but when it's raining on and off rain, we go out and do a lot of horseback mustering. It feels good to ride about in the rain and the horses are cooled off by the rain, the man is too, and the cattle are a bit easier to work when they're cooled down. We do a muster and branding when the storms come and then after the wet, depending on the main road access, we get them ready to put on the truck to sell to Mareeba.

ADRIAN: Working on his cattle station everyday, Alan has to deal with various problems that come up from time to time. He's constantly doing some sort of work to maintain his property. He also believes that when dealing with problems you just have to resolve them as soon as you can so you can get on with your work.

ALAN: It's like anything you always got teething problems, that's what I say. You always have a toothache but you can

get rid of that and keep going again. If you let that bit of worry or stress beat you well you might as well pack up. We kept nudging along steady, steady and as you can see we are shifting from the old shed and shifting into a new house here where we sitting now. We have to battle on, nothings finished yet, nothings ever finished because it's building your dreams. There's about a million and one things to do if you want to really improve your homeland and you've got to get in and do these things.

ADRIAN: Alan understands that if Kulpa is going to be a profitable cattle station in the future they need to invest their money in the right areas so that one day he can live his dream.

ALAN: We invest our money into trying to get more cattle, better breeders and all that. That's going to be the future of this place. The better stock you got the better money you'll get later on. My dream is like when I'm about 90, if I live that long, I want to be sitting over there on the top rail of those yards just watching Brahman cattle run through the drafting yard and shifting' out young Brahman cattle to the sale yards. That's really what my dream is. I can see it's a fair way off yet doing that but it's coming.

I'm glad that you come down here and had a look at Kulpa to see what has been done here. There's lot of stories going around that blackfella's only go back on their homelands just to sit down and live in the little humpy and don't want to do anything. And that's why I'm so determined to prove that they're wrong. Show people that we blackfella's can do a lot good for our country. ■

Funding computers for Indigenous communities

Late in 2007, the Centre for Appropriate Technology was appointed as a Regional Agent for the Australian Government Backing Indigenous Ability computers and training program. This program is designed to assist Indigenous people to access the range of educational, lifestyle and business opportunities provided by computers and the Internet.
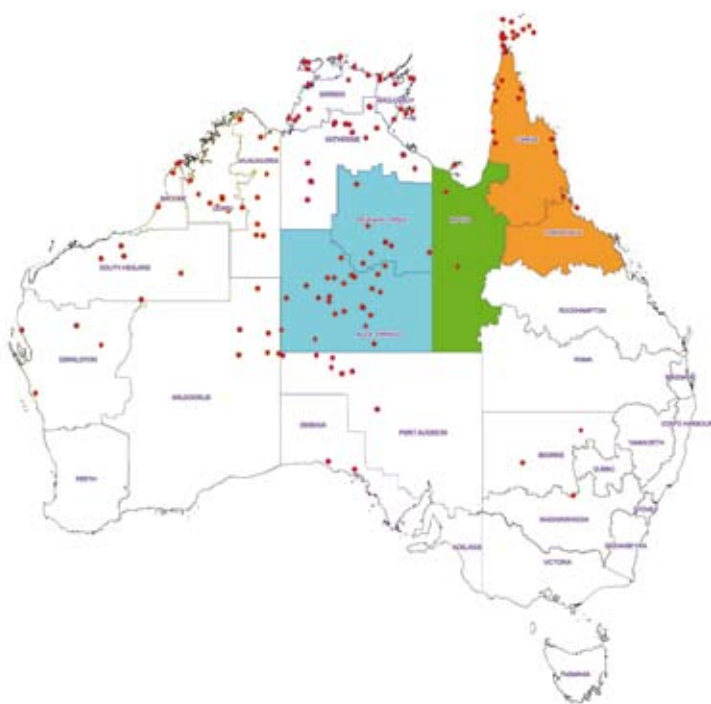
CAT's role in the program for the next couple of years is to facilitate the provision of services to all larger Indigenous Communities in four main program areas:

• public access computer packages including Personal Computers, Office software, printers and webcams, particularly for use by adult residents of the community. Annual funding will be provided through to 2010 for a broadband internet connection, and to supplement the salary of a person in each community who will manage the facilities and assist people to use them;

• provision of training in a variety of computing topics ranging from basic to advanced (communities nominate the training they need, and trainers will come to the community to deliver the training);

• provision of video-conferencing equipment;

• funding for communities to develop new online web content, or enhance existing web sites. These projects will typically be of up to a year's duration and could involve contracting external expertise to deliver the technical component, or training and supporting community members with the appropriate experience to develop the content 'in house'.

While this program is being rolled out Australia–wide, CAT will be working specifically in the Queensland and Central Australian regions.

For more information and to apply, please contact:
Andrew Crouch: Alice Springs (08) 8951 4325 or
Cheryl Prestipino: Cairns (07) 4031 0505.

Developing community researchers

In late October 2007, CAT in Alice Springs hosted a workshop for researchers working with the CAT/Desert Knowledge CRC project called 'Desert Services that Work'. Researchers working with the communities of Dajarra (Qld), Wunara (NT), Ali Curung (NT) and Parnpajinya (WA) attended with community residents who have been participating in the research. They included:

Mick Marshall and Henry Dempsey (Dajarra), Keith Marshall and Margaret Punch (Wunara),

Lucy Jackson, Janet Simpson, Rosie Holmes, Savannah Long and Martha Poulson (Ali Curung), and Neville Taylor and Leonie Attwood from Parnpajinya.

Through the sharing of experiences across the communities — the Dajarra/Wunara mob had also visited Ali Curung on the way to Alice Springs — a lot was learned about the practicalities of doing research, and how it might be a source of ongoing employment for the community researchers. Another workshop is planned for 2008 to continue strengthening the connections that have been made.

Researcher Alyson Wright (left) from The Centre for Appropriate Technology, with community resident Lucy Jackson from Ali Curung, at the 'Desert Services that Work' workshop.

Clontarf Football Academy

Clontarf Football Academy in action.

Any parent of a teenage boy knows how hard it can be to keep them focused on school and to get them to complete at least Year 10. For an Aboriginal parent this is twice as hard as a lot of our young men drop out of school for a number of different reasons. These can be a lack of self esteem, cultural reasons, or any number of social issues. Indigenous boys start to drift away from school at about year four and most leave school for good before year 10.

Former coach of Fremantle Dockers, Gerard Neesham has seen first hand the lack of interest in school within the Aboriginal community while doing some relief teaching at the Clontarf Aboriginal College in WA. On a good day there would be at least 30 kids at school and on a bad day there would be more teachers than students.

On one occasion at a school football match where only 13 boys turned up for the game, one of the players mentioned that his brother was there and asked if he could play with them as they were looking like they would be thrashed. Gerard asked how old he was and what school he goes to. The young man replied that his brother was 16 years old and hadn't been to school for three years. Gerard allowed him to play on the condition that he came to school the very next day and he promised he would. This same young man graduated high school and was drafted into the AFL a couple of years later.

From this experience Gerard Neesham spoke to the College and they agreed that he could set up an Academy that was attached to the school, and so the Clontarf Football Academy was born. Today there are six locations in WA where the Academy is operating with requests to start new Academies coming in from other WA locations as well as interstate.

There are four Academies in Alice Springs at the moment. There are the Anzac High School Academy, Alice Springs High School Academy & Yirara College Academy which all started in 2007. A Centralian Senior Secondary College Academy is the latest edition. The first year (2007) of operating saw about 120 students sign up. This year (2008) there are approximately 200 students to date.

The Academy is not about grooming future AFL stars, although if this happens I'm sure it would be a bonus to all the hard work put in over the years by the dedicated staff. Clontarf

is more about getting the young men to attend school and engage in activities with a goal to graduate with confidence at the end of year 12 and with the possibility of further education, traineeships, apprenticeships or full time employment.

The focus for staff is to not only coach football but to build self esteem and confidence by interacting with the students as a mentor and influence them in life skills, anger management and healthy lifestyles. All participating students must attend school regularly, apply themselves to their studies and abide by the Academy rule of good behaviour and self discipline. All Academies are involved in arranging forums with guest speakers, visits to local businesses around town and contacting surrounding area businesses such as mining companies. Ongoing support from local businesses has been vital to the program and very much appreciated by staff and students. Trips to other regions to play a game of football are also an incentive for the students to attend school and excel as the teams that travel are chosen on these merits.

Academy staff are in the process of building up a relationship with the surrounding communities where they are looking at aligning each of the town based school Academies with a community school. They are working towards having the community schools visit their partner school where they will have group activities as a part of social skills and leadership building as well as a game of footy thrown in for good measure.

According to Brad Puls, director of the Alice Springs Football Academy, there was a 100% retention rate of students (50 boys) that went from Year 9 in 2007 to Year 10 in 2008 in the first year of the Academy in Alice Springs. If this continues I'm sure we can only expect to see bigger and better things coming out of this program for our young men of the future.

Peter Garrett presents school children with a plaque for being Energy Champions.

Alice Solar City launch

On March 10 Alice Springs became the fifth official Australian Solar City. Australian Government Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Peter Garrett, and the Northern Territory Chief Minister Paul Henderson, officially launched the project outside the Smart Living Centre in Todd Street.

CAT's Grant Behrendorff is Chairman for the Solar Cities Project and was Master of Ceremonies at the launch.

A large number of Alice Springs locals gathered to witness the launch of the six year project which aims to empower the community to become energy champions and to make Alice Springs a model for the rest of Australia and the world to follow.

Brendan Wyman (Bidjara traditional owner), Phil Eulo (Budjiti traditional owner) and Floyd Robinson (Bidjara traditional owner) participating in the Traditional Knowledge Project. PHOTO BY DALLAS LOCK

Holding tradition & caring for country:
a digital media training program

The well-being of people and country is based on centuries-old knowledge about caring for country. With other cultures encroaching on traditional lives it is difficult to maintain cultural practices, and to educate future generations of Aboriginal people about their cultures.

With this in mind, Longreach-based Desert Channels Queensland (DCQ) has run a project designed to document traditional knowledge on behalf of three other participating regional natural resource management (NRM) bodies. The use of modern technology has helped many Aboriginal custodians throughout Queensland in their quest to maintain culture, and as a means of passing their knowledge onto future generations.

The aim of the project was to instruct senior Aboriginal people and their Elders in the use of digital video and audio equipment, editing software, and electronic storage equipment. To achieve cultural sensitivity, all data was recorded by Elders or a respected senior person, all of whom maintained strong involvement throughout the project. It assisted Elders in rebuilding inter-generational knowledge transfer processes. Data that is not culturally sensitive, and which may assist landholders with land management may become available at the discretion of senior traditional owners.

Budjiti Elder Phillip Eulo recording information from Peter Seckold near the town of Eulo for a case study based on mud springs.
Photo by James Newman

Photo: James Newman

Photo: Penny Timms

Photo: James Newman

The seven case studies produced aimed to recognise and strengthen Australia's understanding of Indigenous knowledge and land management practices. This was achieved by highlighting the relevance of traditional knowledge in contemporary resource management settings, particularly the sustainable management of sensitive ecosystems.

This project was inspired by two Elders from Cape York who decided to use modern methods to assist in caring for country. This idea expanded through-out Queensland with the assistance of a Natural Heritage Trust grant of $1.3m. After initial plans were stalled, Desert Channels Queensland, offered to administer the project. As DCQ's Executive Officer, Leanne Kohler said, "I didn't want to see such a great opportunity pass for traditional owners to record traditional culture and language, and have it safely stored for future generations". As part of the project, DCQ also provided technical support for one traditional owner group in western Queensland.

To help promote learning and to open cultural networks, three workshops were conducted to provide participants with knowledge about digital video cameras, audio, editing and interviewing skills. The first workshop, at Yungaburra, was a good introduction to the types of equipment available. It gave participants an opportunity to handle different cameras and investigate the capabilities of Apple's iMovie editing software. The second workshop, at Laura, provided a more hands-on learning approach. This work-

> "The project has been instrumental in combining traditional knowledge and contemporary multi-media to enhance Indigenous knowledge systems and contemporary land management practices."

shop coincided with the Laura Cultural and Dance Festival, and allowed participants to put their interviewing skills to the test. They conducted interviews and other exercises that were great for increasing confidence.

Desert Channels Queensland hosted the third workshop in Longreach to consolidate the information already obtained. This workshop focussed on editing and computer training. But in order to edit, participants had to first use all the skills they had already learnt to prepare and film stories beforehand. They were trained

Photo: James Newman

on storyboarding, composition, lighting, audio and interviewing techniques as well as editing and storage of the final product. Aboriginal people were involved in every aspect of all these workshops.

Apart from Desert Channels Queensland and South West NRM, other organisations who were involved with local administrative and technical support within their respective regions were Mackay-Whitsunday NRM, Girrungun Aboriginal Corporation and Balkanu Aboriginal Corporation. Eleven

traditional owner groups were provided with support, which attracted attention from other Aboriginal people and organisations. Custodians who were involved indicated that further funding should be sought to provide similar projects to other traditional owners throughout Queensland. As a consequence, Southern Gulf Catchments (SGC) decided to assist one of their traditional owner groups in a similar project. Wanyi Elder, Ken Isaacson, and SGC Cultural Heritage Officer, Tanya Willis, who both attended the Longreach training workshop, have since helped the Mitakoodi traditional owners begin a similar project in their region.

Three groups were involved in western Queensland — Waluwarra, Budjiti and Bidjara — where Desert Channels Queensland and South West NRM shared the responsibility for technical and administrative support. Waluwarra country lies within the Desert Channels Queensland regional boundary, and Waluwarra and Eastern Arrernte custodian, Susan Dean, was grateful to be given the opportunity to record some stories. The project allowed Susan to record stories on bush tucker, and to teach some young Waluwarra women about locating and collecting certain animals, bush foods and medicines.

In the process, Susan became more adept at using video cameras, computer editing software and electronic storage devices. Susan Dean had a traditional upbringing and says, "The traditional way is still best in terms of making children listen when we are out bush, but using

digital video technology can help maintain traditional knowledge as a lot of kids like to watch television. So the two ways should be able to work well together".

South West NRM region encompasses a large proportion of Budjiti and Bidjara countries. Budjiti Elder, Phillip Eulo, indicated the project was a great learning experience and provided an opportunity for him to take his Elders on country to instil his knowledge. Both Phil and Bidjara custodian, Floyd Robinson, appreciated the support they were given by South West NRM and Desert Channels Queensland. Floyd said he had learnt a great deal about video cameras and editing.

There were many highlights from western Queensland including: opportunities to care for country through cooperative efforts with landholders; efforts to improve water quality management; investigating ways to improve regional biodiversity; building capacity by providing custodians with knowledge on digital technology, and managing the inter-generational knowledge transfer process to aid in cultural survival.

The project has been instrumental in combining traditional knowledge and contemporary multi-media to enhance Indigenous knowledge systems and contemporary land management practices. The use of digital equipment can only help to maintain Indigenous stories related to language, culture and ceremonies and where appropriate use that knowledge to care for country in culturally aware and sustainable ways.

"This project has been a significant undertaking and builds on DCQ's successful Indigenous programs" says Executive Officer, Leanne Kohler. ■

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Healthier dogs, healthier communities

Kintore Community Dog Health Program

Dog health programs can have tangible, immediate and ongoing benefits for the well being of animals and people in remote communities. Animal companionship is important and for many Indigenous people there are also strong traditional associations with dogs as hunters and guardians. The ability to access veterinary and other preventative health services is affected by remoteness and cost and can lead to difficulties in managing and maintaining the health of dogs on communities. The Animal Management in Rural and Remote Indigenous communities (AMRRIC) is an independent group of veterinarians, academics, health workers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that works to facilitate sustainable dog health programs in remote communities. AMRRIC engages with elders and individuals in communities and coordinates the services of veterinarians and other staff to ensure that western veterinary medicine is delivered in accordance with local expectations. Community involvement in dog health programs is critical to their sustainability. AMRICC is currently undertaking a dog health program at Kintore in the Northern Territory, which is approximately 500km west of Alice Springs.

A pilot program, facilitated by Animal Management in Rural and Remote Indigenous Communities (AMRRIC), commenced in Kintore in November/ December 2007. The program is in collaboration with the Kintore community, AMRRIC, the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) and the ARK Animal Hospital. The three phase program will create an opportunity to improve not only the health of the dogs but have a lasting impact on the health of the community.

Following community requests for an animal management program, FaHCSIA contracted AMRRIC to develop and implement a dog health program. AMRRIC took on a coordination role and liaised with the community regarding appropriate services and then facilitated the engagement of veterinarians and nurses from the ARK Animal Hospital.

A participatory planning process was undertaken by the Executive Officer of AMRRIC, Julia Hardaker, and discussions were held with a wide range of community organisations and groups, including the council, health and women's centres, the schools and various places of local employment, to enable community members to voice concerns or animal management issues and to participate in planning the work of the program. Long consultations occurred with each household to discuss the program, the treatment choices and to give reassurance that, despite rumours, the program would not be indiscriminately killing people's dogs. At the same time, data was collected to establish statistics on the dog numbers per house. Julia was assisted in these discussions and surveys, and in the planning process by local Pintupi Homelands Health Service (PHHS) workers Tommy Conway, and community employee Tim, who also helped with the veterinary aspects of the program.

Veterinarians, Drs Jan Allen and Stephen Cutter and veterinary assistant Melissa Reid from the ARK Animal Hospital arrived on the community one week later and were then able to proceed with the logistical work of the program.

With the assistance of Tommy and Tim, all the community dogs and puppies which could be found were fed bread impregnated with a dose of Ivomec® to control parasites. This medication is very effective in the control of internal and external parasites such as intestinal worms and scabies and mange.

In total, 143 of the estimated 180

adult dogs were treated with Ivomec® giving approximate 80% coverage. Parasitic control is an aspect of an animal management program which does not require veterinary involvement, but can be managed by Environmental Health staff with training in the administration and storage of the medicines.

Pintupi Homelands Health Service assisted the program by enabling an outdoor annex to be set up on their premises as a temporary surgery. With the use of a council vehicle and the valuable help of Tim and Tommy, steady streams of dogs were brought to the vets for assessments and surgery.

Both male and female dogs that the owners did not want to breed from were desexed. A number of the females that underwent surgery were either pregnant, in season or had uterine abnormalities.

In total, 50 dogs (40 female and 10 male) were surgically desexed. Two female dogs were given a long acting (six month duration) contraceptive injection (Covinan®). This brings the proportion of dogs which have been desexed to 53% of the female and 12% of the male adult dogs.

It is estimated that as a result of the 40 females being desexed and two given Covinan that approximately 250-300 pups will now be prevented from being born in Kintore in the next six months. After the second visit in February and another in May, approximately 80% of the dogs will be desexed. If the program maintains the rate of adult females being desexed, it will effectively place a downward pressure on the number of females available for breeding. There will then be a natural decline in breeding numbers. The community will benefit significantly from having fewer but healthier animals, less bites, less disease and illness of dogs and humans.

In addition to the desexing program, a further eight unwanted dogs were humanely euthanased on the request of the owners. Four of the dogs that were euthanased had Transmissible Venereal Tumour (a canine sexually transmitted cancer).

The majority of the people of Kintore value their dogs highly as companions and protectors. They are generally aware of the benefits of a dog health program, and most were keen for their dogs to receive treatment. The children of the community were particularly enthusiastic about our work. School groups were brought over to the "vet suite" to engage in the program and have the opportunity to assist where appropriate, ask questions and have some discussions/education about animal care. This program provided an opportunity for our future decision makers to have modeled to them a respectful and caring approach and attitude to their pets and each other.

Outcomes of the program

This program will reduce both the incidence of dog health issues such as worms, scabies, ringworm, fleas and ticks. Further, as these are pathogens that are shared with people (zoonoses-problems that can pass from dogs to people) it will decrease the pool of infection from humans becoming infected with these diseases, leading to a decrease in human associated health issues such as skin sores and diahorrea.

As a result of regular dog program visits for parasite and population control, there will be:

- a healthier dog population with less parasites and zoonoses (infections that can pass from animals to humans);
- a more controlled dog population and a reduction in unwanted puppies;
- less wandering and nuisance behaviour. The community will be safer because there are less dog bites; dogs remain at home more and guard the house rather than wandering; less dogs chasing cars and less noise pollution (barking);
- a reduction in dog fights, sexual behaviour, and aggression;
- a reduction in canine reproductive tract problems: infections, prostate disease and tumours (mammary and sexually transmitted). There will be less problems associated with pregnancy/birth and risk of female dogs dying. Female dogs often die because they can not get enough food to support themselves and their puppies during lactation.

The team returned to Kintore in February for the second phase of the program. The vets have already been contacted for follow up support. Anecdotal feedback from the community is positive about the immediate outcomes from Phase 1. "The community has been very quiet dog wise since the AMRRIC Vet team left. There are hardly any dogs running around and those that are left are very well behaved" said one of the Pintupi Health team. ∎

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PHOTOS FROM TOP:
Dr Jan Allan giving community dogs Ivermectin; The Vet team: (from left) Dr Jan Allan, Nurse Mel, AMRRIC Executive Officer Julia Hardaker and Dr Stephen Cutter; Local Indigenous staff Tommy Conway and Timmy preparing the Ivermectin sandwiches. Photos courtesy AMRRIC

PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE:
Community consultation the vital step before starting work. Photo courtesy AMRRIC

Community members, Jason, Jill and Dudley with their Bushlight Solar panels.

The Bushlight approach to designing and implementing Renewable Energy

Introduction

The provision of reliable energy services, to small remote Indigenous communities presents major challenges for governments in Australia. These challenges can be summarised as follows:

- poor reliability of Renewable Energy (RE) in remote locations;
- lack of trained personnel to maintain and service RE systems;
- lack of back-up for RE systems in remote areas (especially Indigenous communities).

The Bushlight Project at the Centre for Appropriate Technology commenced in 2002. Bushlight's vision is to improve livelihood choices for Indigenous people, through access to sustainable renewable energy services.

Key outcomes for the project are:

- to educate and enable communities to manage and maintain their energy systems;
- to improve the quality and reliability of RE systems;
- to establish skilled technical service provider networks.

Bushlight helps build the social and technical capacities of people in remote communities to better utilise their energy services and to engage with service networks to better maintain them.

Demand Side Management

The range of Demand Side Management (DSM) measures used and developed by Bushlight are integral in ensuring that the energy services provided are sustainable (reliable and affordable) and adequate for supporting communities to achieve their livelihoods goals.

DSM refers to an approach to energy services which emphasises the need for energy users to be aware and manage their energy demand and use patterns, allow residents to operate within the amount of energy available from a system, and optimise how it is used. The DSM tools adopted by Bushlight assist residents to monitor and measure the amount of energy consumed and how quickly it is being used, to help them decide how to manage the amount of energy available, and to provide methods for reducing unnecessary energy waste.

Community energy planning

Using a range of pictorial resources via workshops and community mapping exercises, Bushlight invites communities

to consider how they use energy, how much it costs and to look at what options are available for improving their access to reliable energy services.

The outcome of this process is the Community Energy Plan (CEP). It details the community's current energy needs as well as their future aspirations. The CEP is accompanied by a Community Service Agreement (CSA), an agreement between Bushlight, the community and their service provider, laying out household energy budgets and the roles and responsibilities of the community, their service provider, the system installer and Bushlight in regards to the RE system.

Bushlight involves the community in all key activities and decisions, allowing the specific needs of remote communities to be identified and adequately addressed and ensuring that the delivered product:

• is socially appropriate;
• meets current and future needs;
• is integrated into a technical service network; and
• is accompanied by appropriate training and resources.

The Community Energy Planning Model

The model consists of five phases:

PREPARE STAGE

This involves visits to remote communities to establish their eligibility and discussions with funding agencies, Regional Councils and Resource Agencies about funding for energy systems. The available funding is taken into account by community residents when assessing their energy supply options.

SELECT STAGE

Communities identify their aspirations and development priorities and determine which energy services will help them achieve these aspirations. During these discussions, information is provided about the costs, benefits and limitations of different energy supply options to enable residents to make informed decisions.

For communities who wish to use RE, Bushlight helps residents identify their energy requirements and technical staff subsequently design an RE system appropriate to their needs. Each community's energy planning outcomes and service and maintenance agreements are recorded in their CEP. A storybook copy of this CEP is held in the community for future reference.

INSTALL STAGE

The RE system is installed and training in system operations and basic maintenance is provided to community members.

MAINTAIN STAGE

For the first year after the RE system is installed, Bushlight staff support community residents and service provider or Council staff to service Bushlight systems. They visit communities regularly and provide training sessions on troubleshooting and energy management, and provide technical assistance as required.

During each community visit, observations and issues discussed are documented and logged on a central database. Data is also downloaded out of the RE system during each visit to identify any faults or evidence of overloading. This allows Bushlight to monitor the situation in a community on an ongoing basis and assess any problems that arise.

After the first year a review of the Community's Energy Plan is undertaken. Amongst other information, Bushlight asks residents how things have changed for them after the RE system was installed.

SUSTAIN STAGE

Bushlight continues to provide technical and training support as needed to community residents, service provider or Council staff and service contractors and record important observations and discussions along with system data. This allows Bushlight to continue assisting communities to work towards their livelihoods aspirations and monitor the level of satisfaction residents have with their energy services.

By this stage, Bushlight's goal is for residents to be largely self-reliant in managing their energy systems.

Technical measures

In order to improve the quality, reliability and longevity of RE systems, Bushlight has developed a range of technical solutions to the challenges faced in the rigorous operating environment they work under.

Reliability of supply

Bushlight's intent is that essential energy services will be maintained almost indefinitely; to achieve this aim Bushlight have developed the concept of Essential and Discretionary power. In consultation with the community, all community loads are divided into essential (refrigeration, some lighting, and in some instances, vital medical equipment), discretionary (most lighting, fans and appliances), and generator-only (heavy use appliances, air-conditioning and heating).

If the system's capacity is exceeded, discretionary loads are disconnected to allow continuation of supply to essential circuits.

Demand side management (DSM)

Bushlight has developed a number of DSM measures to assist the user in managing their budget, in conjunction with user training. For example, circuit timers and individual load timers help the householder manage their energy use.
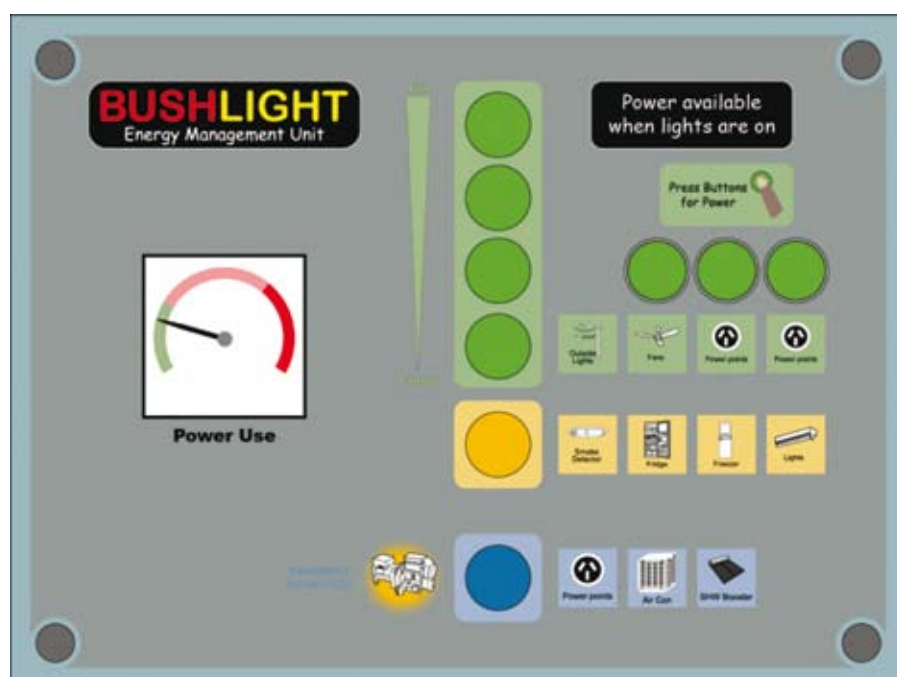
Appropriate design

Regular battery replacement can form a significant ongoing expense in inappropriately designed RE systems so protection of the batteries is paramount in Bushlight systems. Bushlight designs for an average battery Depth of Discharge (DOD) of no greater than 20%. Under this cycle regime, it is projected that battery lifetime will be considerable.

Bushlight's RE systems are designed to supply the energy required. Scheduled generator runtime is not used to supplement the RE load. Experience shows that systems that do rely on scheduled generator operation are only as reliable as the generator. In the remote communities that Bushlight works, generators are rarely reliable, either through a lack of fuel, a lack of maintenance, a flat battery, or generator breakdown.

Appropriate components

Over the course of the project, Bushlight has developed a range of standardised, robust electrical enclosures that are specially designed and tested to optimise heat removal to prolong the life of the critical components housed within. All enclosures are rigorously tested prior to leaving the factory.
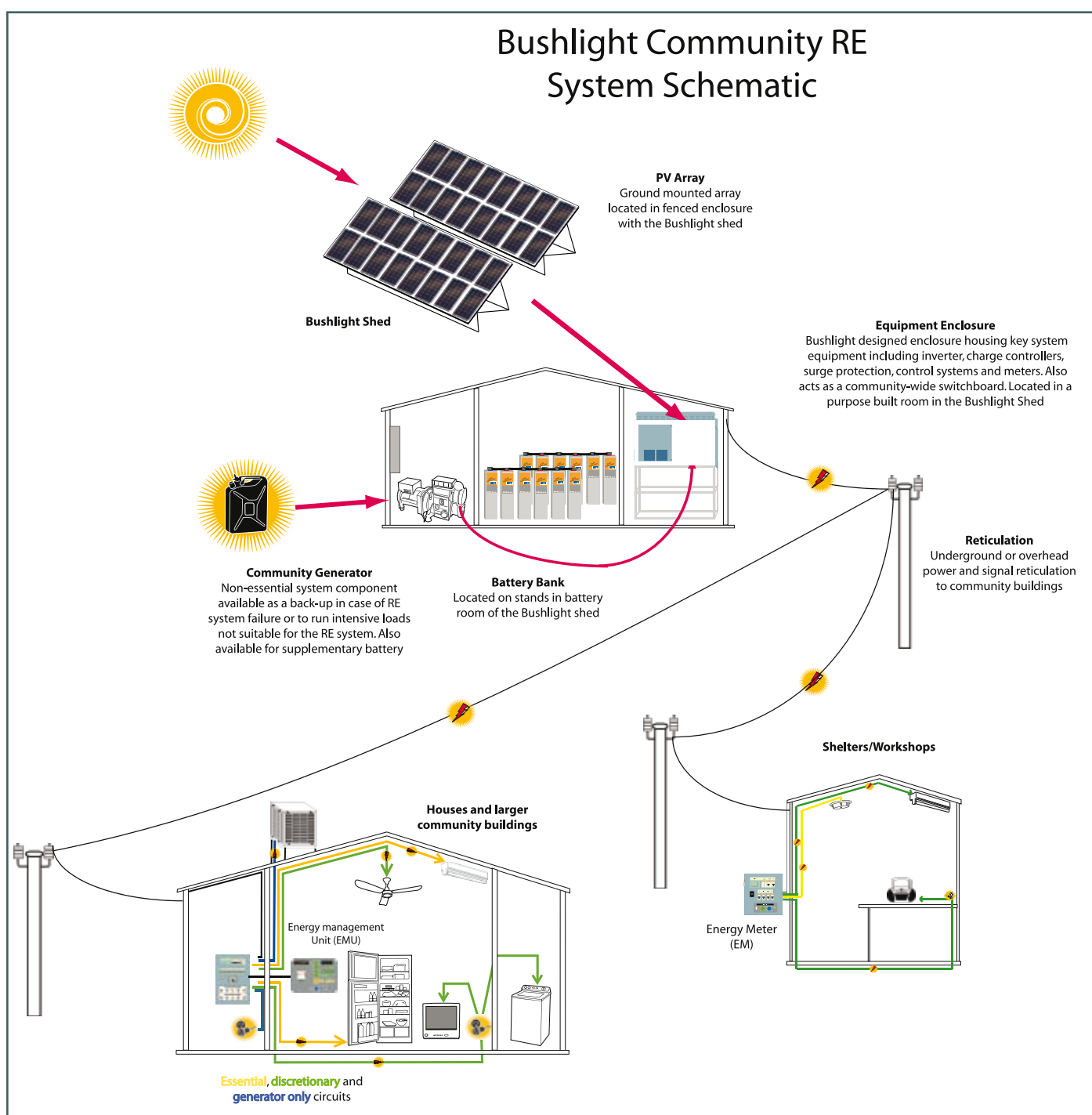
Specially developed user interfaces are a feature of the Bushlight enclosures. Of note is the "car dashboard" analogy, with a battery voltmeter or LED display forming the "fuel gauge", and an ammeter the "speedometer" which inform the user of their rate of energy consumption, and the remaining available energy in their batteries or budget.

Energy Management Unit (EMU)

The EMU maximizes battery life and, in conjunction with the CEP process, provides residents with the technical knowledge to manage their energy use in relation to available supply.

During Bushlight's community energy planning process, each household identifies their daily and seasonal energy

Bushlight Community RE System Schematic

PV Array
Ground mounted array located in fenced enclosure with the Bushlight shed

Bushlight Shed

Equipment Enclosure
Bushlight designed enclosure housing key system equipment including inverter, charge controllers, surge protection, control systems and meters. Also acts as a community-wide switchboard. Located in a purpose built room in the Bushlight Shed

Community Generator
Non-essential system component available as a back-up in case of RE system failure or to run intensive loads not suitable for the RE system. Also available for supplementary battery

Battery Bank
Located on stands in battery room of the Bushlight shed

Reticulation
Underground or overhead power and signal reticulation to community buildings

Houses and larger community buildings

Shelters/Workshops

Energy management Unit (EMU)

Energy Meter (EM)

Essential, discretionary and generator only circuits

requirements. As part of the design process, each EMU is allocated a daily energy budget which varies over the year to match seasonal variations in energy use and the capacity of the system. In addition, an essential buffer is allocated to each EMU to ensure essential power is not lost.

Programmed with its allocated daily energy budget, the EMU monitors and controls energy use in relation to the household's energy budget. Every midday, the EMU resets the energy budget.

Protection against energy demand exceeding energy budgets is enabled by the wiring of essential appliances, such as refrigerators and essential lighting, onto essential power circuits; the remaining discretionary loads are allocated discretionary power circuits. As energy is consumed the energy budget counts down, as indicated by the visual display, with a warning lamp flashing when the supply is nearly exhausted. If available energy is exceeded, power to the discretionary circuits is discontinued, however power supply to the essential circuit continues. Supply to all circuits is reconnected at the following midday budget reset.

With wider use in non Bushlight RE systems, the EMU will save the significant maintenance costs currently arising from replacement of prematurely failed batteries.

Partial Reset

A novel function of the Bushlight community system is the Partial Reset functionality of the EMU. In conditions where the batteries fail to attain full charge (for example, very overcast weather), the daily energy budget is reset to only 75% of the normal budget to ensure protection of the batteries.

Quality installation

All systems are installed to the Bushlight Technical Specification to ensure a high quality of installation is achieved at all sites. Several additional resources have been produced to assist installers in maintaining quality.

Bushlight supplies all electrical enclosures containing the system's key components to installers. Contractors are free to use batteries and PV modules of their choice from those listed on Bushlight's pre-approved component list. All components on this list are rigorously screened for quality to ensure their suitability for Bushlight installations.

Some Bushlight success stories:

Situated on a ridge of sand on the McArthur River floodplain, near Borroloola is the community of Sandridge. Traditional Owner, Nancy McDinny and her husband Stewart Hoosan are both successful artists who wanted a place to live and work with their families that was quieter than Borroloola. With the Bushlight system the community saves about $9000 a year on diesel and as Stewart says: "When the river is over the powerlines, Wandangula (the closest community to Borroloola on grid power), has no power; but Sandridge has power."

Chuula community is occupied by the Kaanju people and sits on their traditional homelands on the Wenlock and Pascoe Rivers of Cape York Peninsula, Queensland. The residents of Chuula stay on their homeland all year and are well established with a proven track record of efficiently using, maintaining and servicing their infrastructure and resources. Even so, the introduction of the Bushlight RE System has provided them with more time and finances to further develop their aspirations. "Even during the wet season when there were overcast days we managed our power use and never ran out of power."

Finally, Bushlight's Project Managers commission every installation to ensure compliance with specifications.

Maintenance, support and training

To maximise reliability and sustainability of the RE systems, Bushlight ensures that an appropriate repair and maintenance regime is in place. This occurs via a three tier support structure for each of the systems, involving community residents, resource agencies and electrical contractors.

LEVEL ONE — COMMUNITY:
Bushlight provides training to as many community residents as possible in the operation and maintenance of their RE system, basic troubleshooting and DSM practices.

LEVEL TWO — RESOURCE AGENCY:
Bushlight assists resource agencies develop their technical support capacities through on-the-ground training courses in RE maintenance.

LEVEL THREE — TECHNICAL SERVICE PROVIDERS:
This level includes the provision of comprehensive scheduled annual maintenance as well as unscheduled maintenance by appropriately qualified contractors. Bushlight provides specialist training and support to these contractors.

Each system is covered for defects for the first year. After this first year of operation, Bushlight has a maintenance program where electrical contractors are engaged under contracts to deliver Level Three maintenance.

Financial implications and outcomes

Life Cycle Costing (LCC) is carried out for every Bushlight installation during the design phase in comparison with 24 hour diesel (a similar service) and intermittent diesel (the typical case in the communities that Bushlight work in).

Typically a Bushlight system compares favourably with the intermittent diesel scenario, and provides a far more reliable and user friendly supply. Added benefits include the ability to keep food fresh in 24 hour refrigeration and reduced need for trips to town for the purchase of generator fuel.

Significantly for the end user the operating cost comparison shows Bushlight as clearly a more sustainable solution for the community. Evidence shows that many communities have been able to make good economic use of the money saved on generator fuel for community development projects and enterprise activities.

Conclusion

Independent evaluation has found that Bushlight is meeting or exceeding expectations and that recipient communities are universally satisfied with both their system performance and their relationship with Bushlight.

Through Bushlight, many communities now have access to reliable and sustainable RE services. ■

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Australian and New Zealand Iroquois helicopters land on a stoney beach at the new police base at Kolina, on the troubled Weathercoast of the Solomon Islands as part of the Australian-led intervention in the Solomon Islands.
PHOTO COURTESY AAP IMAGE/JIM BAYNES

The Regional Assistance Mission to the
Solomon Islands

Solomon Islands is portrayed as a place of deep rooted tension — ethnic violence, government misconduct and crime have undermined the country's economic and social stability and civil society. The warring provinces of Guadalcanal and Malaita are held responsible for much of the fighting and riots that has troubled the country since 1998. The effect of this tension has rippled across many of the country's small islands. Overall the crisis is estimated to have displaced 35,000 Solomon Islanders and caused the death of about 200. It has also devastated the economy (Hameiri 2006). In June 2003, the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) arrived to restore peace and disarm ethnic militias.

Background

From 1997 through to 2001 social tensions in the Solomon Islands were increasing (see timeline page 18). The tensions were driven by a culmination of factors, including: poor planning by past administrations; mismanagement of the country's resources; corruption and land ownership problems. The Solomon Islands has been represented in media and research reports as a "failed state". The notion of a "failed state" is interesting but difficult to contextualise. In the case of Solomon Islands the term was used to explain the clash between strong pre-modern Melanesian decision making systems and modern state systems. This is said to have weakened governance processes leading to violence and unrest (Wainwright 2003).

The Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) was initiated in 2003 at the request of the then Solomon Islands Government. The intervention was planned to respond to the civil unrest and the claims of "failed state". RAMSI is a "partnership between the people and Government of Solomon Islands and fifteen pacific countries", including: Australia, New Zealand, Kirribati, Fiji (RAMSI 2007). RAMSI has the goal of helping the Solomon Islands to instil the foundations for long-term stability, security and prosperity. To do this RAMSI's mandate is to:

- ensure the safety and security of Solomon Islands;
- repair and reform the machinery of government, improve government accountability and improve the delivery of services in urban and provincial areas;
- improve economic governance and strengthen the government's financial systems;
- help rebuild the economy and encourage sustainable broad-based growth;
- build strong and peaceful communities (RAMSI 2007).

This article explores some issues arising from the implementation of RAMSI's mandate.

Solomon Islands

The Solomon Islands is a Melanesian nation, east of Papua New Guinea and northeast of Australia, consisting of many small islands. Together the islands cover a land mass of 28,400 square kilometres. The capital is Honiara and is located on the island of Guadalcanal. The Solomon Islands are believed to have been inhabited by Melanesian people for thousands of years. The United Kingdom established a protectorate over the Solomon Islands in the 1890s. Self-

government was achieved in 1976 and independence two years later. The country remains a part of the Commonwealth realm.

Ensuring the safety and security of the Solomon Islands

The short term goal of RAMSI was to quell the violence and establish law and order in the Solomon Islands. The longer term phase was to bring stability to the budget and rebuild the machinery of government. In terms of safety and security, RAMSI organised the surrender of firearms and within weeks 2500 weapons and 30,000 rounds of ammunition had been handed in (Moore 2007). RAMSI also pursued corruption. It bought in magistrates and lawyers, and improved court facilities. By November 2003, over 160 Royal Solomon Island Police had been charged, several members of the Supreme Court were sent to prison and more than 6,000 militia men were arrested (Sodhi 2008: 8). Nonetheless, many Solomon Islanders are disappointed that so few senior corrupt politicians, police and public servants were detained (Kabutualaka 2004).

Despite the initial success in stabilising law and order, serious tensions between RAMSI, the Solomon Islands Government and societal groups began emerging in 2006. It has been argued that RAMSI has done little to reduce entrenched factional and ethnic rivalry. The perceived ambiguity of the intent of RAMSI's initial plans remains central to the on-going turmoil experienced by the people of the Solomon Islands and their government. The dismissal of the Australian High Commissioner and the riots in April 2006 (see timeline page 18)

that rocked Honiara are signs of continuing tensions. Hameiri (2007) argues that military deployment is no real solution to the deep-seated problems that underlie the riots. He believes that the riots signify a growing disaffection of many Solomon Islanders with their marginalisation from political and economic processes. RAMSI priorities have tended to undermine traditional structures and have not been effective in reducing tensions caused by patterns of high but uneven economic development. Increasingly, the arguments against RAMSI suggest that the intervention is exacerbating local conflict.

Repairing and reforming the machinery of government, improving government accountability and improving the delivery of services in urban and provincial areas

RAMSI's approach to governance reform approach included the policy of placing of Australian personnel into key positions in the Solomon Islands public administration — the Cabinet Office and Finance, Public Service, Health, Justice, Lands and Police Department. Whilst great achievements were made by RAMSI in the first twelve months in re-establishing law and order, the rapid deployment of the intervention meant there was little long term planning, personnel management nor attention given to building transparent and accountable reform processes. There has also been a key failure in prioritising and coordinating public diplomacy across all areas of the intervention and with both government and opposition parties (O'Callaghan, 2006). There have been a series of parliamentary elections and leadership resignations since 2000, each

tainted with allegations of corruption, partisanship and since 2006 at least, increased rumblings of dissatisfaction with RAMSI. There is an emerging perception that RAMSI is able to exercise considerable power within the Solomon Islands and across government departments with little accountability (Sodhi 2008). The previous Prime Minister, Manasseh Sogavare, accused Australia of using the current partnership as a license to infiltrate almost all sectors of the public sector. In the same statement, he alleged foreign nationals can be appointed to key government positions with no restrictions from the Solomon Islands' administration, security and leadership.

Critics of RAMSI have argued that RAMSI's top down approach won't work. Kabutaulaka (2005) makes the observation that in the Solomon Islands there has always been a significant power base outside of the state. He suggests that the key to governance in Solomon Islands is a form of power sharing between societal institutions and the state. Because RAMSI has not engaged with these alternative and possibly useful sources of legitimate power, it is perceived as more beholden to foreign interests than the interests of the Solomon Islands people and government (Hameiri 20007). Overall, RAMSI's long-term relationship with the Solomon Island Government remains unclear and there appears to be no exit strategy for the intervention.

Improving economic governance and strengthening the government's financial systems

The Solomon Islands has experienced the fastest gross domestic product growth among many of the other pacific nations since the RAMSI intervention. The growth has been underpinned by an expansion in fishing, agriculture (especially cocoa and copra) and forestry. However, this is in the context of a loss of 25% of gross domestic product during 1997-2003 (Sodhi 2008). It could also be artificially inflated by the influx of RAMSI based cash into the local economy as well as the escalation of foreign aid since 2003. The sustainability and continued improvement of these economic wins is difficult to determine.

Helping rebuild the economy and encouraging sustainable broad-based growth

Whilst the economy has experienced undeniable growth, RAMSI's facilitation of private sector activity has further enriched already better off elites,

LEFT: Former militants at Avu Avu, on the troubled Weathercoast of the Solomon Islands hand in fireams to the Australian led intervention force to destroy in a bonfire on August 10, 2003. Photo courtesy AAP Image/Jim Baynes

1997-2007:
A timeline of events in the Solomon Islands

1997: Annual General Elections, election of Bartholomew Ulufa'alu, a Malaitan.

1998: Ulufa'alu's Government survives a motion of no confidence. Fighting breaks out between the two rival militias — the Isatubu Freedom Movement (Guadalcanal Island) and the Malaitan Eagle Force (Maliata Island). At least 20,000 Malaitans are forced off Guadalcanal.

June 2000: The Malaitan Eagle Force stages an attempted coup. It takes Bartholomew Ulufa'alu hostage. He is subsequently forced to resigned.

June 2000: Parliamentary election of Manasseh Sogavare.

Oct 2000: A broad peace treaty brokered between the Malaitan Eagle Force and Isatubu Freedom Movement. Unarmed peace-keepers from Australia and New Zealand are deployed to supervise the handover of arms.

Feb 2001: Marau Peace Agreement attempts to bring together the two warring factions.

Sept 2001: Murder of prominent rebel leader Selwyn Sake of the Isatabul Freedom Movement threatens peace agreement.

Dec 2001: Annual General Elections, election of Allan Kemekeza.

July 2003: RAMSI was initiated in the Solomon Islands at the request of Kemekeza.

Aug 2003: Harold Keke, prominent rebel leader of Istabu Freedom Movement surrenders to Australia forces. He is charged with murder.

Dec 2004: Australian Federal Police Officer killed whilst serving the RAMSI police force in Honiara.

Mar 2005: Harold Keke and two of his associates are jailed for life for the 2002 murder of MP Father Augustine Geve.

Apr 2006: 6th Annual General Elections, election of Synder Rini.

April 2006: Black Tuesday Riots: Many people angry at the election of Synder Rini stormed the streets of the capital and completely destroyed the city's Chinatown district.

Apr 2006: Synder Rini forced to resign.

May 2006: Parliamentary election of Manasseh Sogavare.

Sept 2006: Australian High Comissioner, Patrick Cole, was expelled from the Solomon Islands.

Oct 2006: Sogavare threatens to expel Australia from RAMSI.

Dec 2007: Solomon Islands Parliament cast a no confidence vote over Manasseh Sogavare.

Dec 2007: Parliamentary election of Dr Derrick Sikua.

and amplified the lack of progress in the provinces. Carrol and Hameiri (2007) argue that the emphasis on good governance as a key to poverty reduction and security is fundamentally limited. They say that in focussing on good governance RAMSI neglects fundamental poverty reduction issues such as education, employment, access to finance and capital and rural infrastructure and development, while promoting policies that are difficult to implement and highly problematic. RAMSI's economic focus has been on reducing regulatory barriers to business in Honiara and encouraging foreign investment (Sodhi 2008). However, 85% of Solomon Islanders live in rural areas, do not participate in the cash economy and therefore remain largely unaffected by these initiatives.

Building strong and peaceful communities

It has been four years since RAMSI started and the process of rebuilding a nation and its communities post-conflict remains a challenge. Carrol and Hameiri (2007) suggest that while RAMSI promotes good governance in a variety of areas, this has ironically been associated with increasing violence. By supporting institutions that local politicians with little popular legitimacy (example Sini Rynder) are able to manipulate to their advantage, civil unrest has been inadvertently cultivated. The co-operative effort needed to achieve the reforms instigated by RAMSI is undermined by a lack of capacity and cohesion in the Solomon Islands. It is also questionable whether the Solomon Islands at this point in time has the capacity to engage on an equal basis with the intervention mission in a true partnership arrangement. Sodhi (2008) argues that RAMSI needs to better service the rural areas. People in these areas still lack services such as education, health, roads, inter-island transport and other important rural developments. He further suggests that RAMSI is at "risk of becoming the latest agency promising to deliver development with little improvement to show for their pledges" (Sodhi, 2008: 2).

Lessons learnt

RAMSI was developed at the request of the Solomon Islands Government. It was conceived as a regional assistance package, however RAMSI is often portrayed as influenced and controlled by the Australian Government. What can RAMSI tells us about the process of rapidly deployed law and order reform focussed missions? There are important lessons from this work that could be applied liberally to other development contexts. I highlight some of these here:

- assistance needs to be directed in the first phase to achieving small but important wins for increased community support;
- at the same time there is a need to plan for the long term, because short term wins are unlikely to be sustainable without on-going support;
- communities are not likely to be able to engage on an equal basis;
- assistance teams need to be aware and act to mitigate against the influential power imbalance of their work;
- there may be negative spin-offs and those involved should be prepared for this, including managing the risks;
- rebuilding communities requires a holistic approach not a band-aid solution to law and order problems;
- top down approaches that are not driven by community identified priorities are frequently unsustainable;
- those working in regional assistance programs need to work with local communities to achieve their support and their trust;
- work on improving governance should be linked to supporting local and legitimate decision making protocols;
- clear agreements with the community need to be made, including on-going planning and exit timeframes;
- building the capacity of the community to remain resilient, secure and safe post the assistance mission is paramount in planning and implementation process;
- on-going evaluations of the mission that incorporates assessments by

Australian Defence Force personnel walk along the main street of Honiara as the Australian-led intervention force begins to establish itself in the Solomon Islands capital. Photo courtesy AAP Image/Dean Lewins

LOLA YOUNG — medicine woman and teacher
BY LOLA YOUNG AND ANNA VITENBERGS
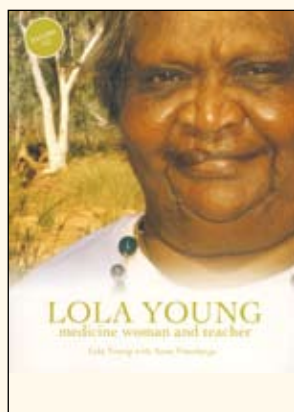
Lola Young begins this beautifully presented book by explaining the importance of accurate identification of useful and medicinal plants, and how she gains her knowledge of bush medicine from her grandparents.

She goes on to share the story of her life, from the happy early days, to the hard times that begin after her father passes away.

Lola longs to return with her family to their traditional land near Tom Price, and eventually she does.

Out on her country, Lola has her first experience of hearing the spirits of her Ancestors singing to her and revealing to her things about the land, and that she should teach.

Lola's family join her, and her dream of establishing Wakuthuni ("laughing kangaroo") community is realised.

Despite some setbacks and illness, Lola begins a business making toiletries, utilising her knowledge of the healing properties of indigenous plants. Lola also begins plans for her latest project, to start up a "homework centre" to serve as a place to provide care for the children, the elderly and to service the local community.

In the Second section of the book, Lola provides information on 60 plant species and their uses, giving their Aboriginal, common and scientific names, with multiple colour photos for easy identification.

Throughout the book are a number of asides with information on various fauna and flora, cooking methods and interesting anecdotes.

Since returning to her country, Lola has received six songs from the spirits of her Ancestors over a period of time, and Lola has included these songs on the CD rom accompanying this book. At the back of the book the song meanings are described.

Humorous, sad, insightful and informative, this book is a pleasure to read.

LOLA YOUNG — medicine woman and teacher (Lola Young and Anna Vitenbergs) Published by Freemantle Arts Centre Press 2007 160 pages plus CD rom. Available from Red Kangaroo Books, Todd Mall, Alice Springs, NT.

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all stakeholders are necessary to understand the outcomes;

- clear and concise communication between all parties, from the Heads of Government to the people in rural villages, needs to be undertaken;
- wage and accommodation disparities between deployed staff and those already working in the communities needs to be handled sensitively;
- strategies, technologies and processes need to fit the local context;
- assistance programs need to remain transparent and accountable to all stakeholders.

Conclusions

RAMSI has had some success in terms of restoring law and order, stabilising the economic and social conditions and beginning institutional strengthening but the hard part is yet to come. It is difficult to argue that the achievements in the Solomon Islands can be solely attributed to RAMSI.

This article highlights the real tensions that exist between intervention teams and local organisations and people. Clearly, the on-going relationship between the Solomon Islands Government and RAMSI needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency. The recent re-emergence of rioting and unrest, at times directly targeting security forces deployed as a part of RAMSI or ethnic groups (Chinese) perceived to be benefiting excessively because of RAMSI, highlights that a review of RAMSI aims and processes is pressing. Given that desperate circumstances rather than mutually beneficial collaboration dictated the necessity of RAMSI, the issues in managing mounting tensions generated by the presence and actions of an intervention force, even one that was so enthusiastically invited in, will be ongoing. The degree of honest self-examination, imagination and skill with which such issues are resolved by both the Regional Mission and its hosts, be it the Sikua Government or the ones that succeed it, will be pivotal to the success of RAMSI and will also determine the future of the Solomon Islands and its people. ◼

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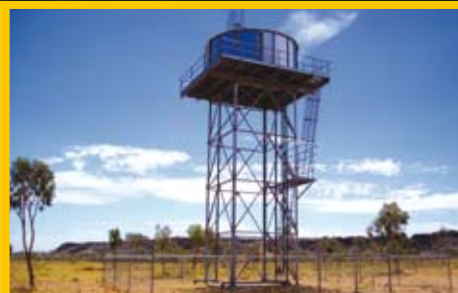
OUR place radio

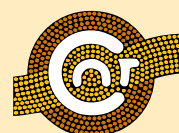## Tune into Our Place Radio
WITH ADRIAN SHAW

Our Place Radio is broadcast on community radio stations across mainland Australia and in the Torres Strait Islands.

- CAAMA 8KIN FM (100.5 FM), Alice Springs
- Radio Larrakia (93.7 FM), Darwin
- Walpiri Media, Yuendumu
- 6AR, Perth
- Nggaayatjarra Media, Wingellina
- Mulba Radio, Port Hedland
- 6GME (99.7 FM), Broome
- 6FX (936 AM), Fitzroy Crossing
- 6PRK (98.1 FM), Halls Creek
- 6WR (693 AM), Kununurra
- 3CR (855 AM), Melbourne
- 3KND, Melbourne
- Gadigal Information Service (93.7 FM), Sydney
- 4AAA (98.9 FM), Brisbane
- 4CLM (98.7 FM), Cairns
- 4K1G (107.1 FM), Townsville

- 4MOB (100.9 FM), Mt Isa
- 5UV Radio Adelaide (101.5), Adelaide
- 5UMA (89.1 FM), Port Augusta
- 5NPY Media Umuwa (101.3 FM), Pitjatjantjara Lands
- BRACS stations in the Top End via TEABBA (Top End Aboriginal Bush Broadcasting Association); in the Pilbara and Kimberley via PAKAM (Pilbara and Kimberley Aboriginal Media Association); in the Torres Strait Islands on Moa Island, Yam Island and via TSIMA (TSI Media Association).
- Other stations pick up the show via the National Indigenous Radio Service and TAPE, the Aboriginal Program Exchange.

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