

‘How to work with knowledge providers’ workshops Brisbane 5-6 November

Record of Indigenous knowledge providers workshop

Introduction

Workshops in Brisbane on 5-6 November brought together representatives of regional NRM bodies, science and research providers, Indigenous knowledge providers and local knowledge providers. The aim of the workshops was to develop content for a new "How to work with knowledge providers" section of the RKRK in relation to:

- How regional NRM bodies can find research to close knowledge gaps.
- Identifying who are the knowledge providers to regions.
- How can regional NRM bodies best engage with these knowledge providers, including identifying any barriers to engagement.
- Identifying how to increase collaboration across regional bodies so they might jointly identify knowledge requirements and jointly fund knowledge providers to close these gaps.

Agenda for Indigenous knowledge providers workshop

1. Introduction
2. What is an Indigenous knowledge provider?
3. Anecdote circles
4. Sensemaking with Post-Its
5. Intervention Design
6. ‘Nuggets’ from the session and closing

What is an indigenous knowledge provider?

- Indigenous people – local (protocols)
- Elders
- Anthropologists
- Custodians of cultural and landscape values
- Advisory groups (indigenous)
- Scientists
- Landholders – caretakers (official and unofficial) with local knowledge
- Tourism/operators
- Artefacts/locations
- Any non-human point of reference
- Anyone who has been educated in indigenous issues

Anecdotes

Note: Personal and location references have been removed from these anecdotes, in accordance with the anonymity guidelines for anecdote circles.

Auntie – old lady at [location] – about big waterhole and will only tell certain people, not put on tape for everyone to learn (for example).

“Living in the landscape” story.

At creek crossing – carpet snakes mating and different responses from 15 year olds and indigenous guide – that it was a good sign for the day and journey, as carpet snake is totem for that area. (Lead to) new understanding for teenagers about landscape.

Advisory Group – [region]...

Rep didn't have any dramas getting group together, and they meet regularly and are getting projects done.

It is very secretive – only see end product of project. Have to trust them!

Own NRM Plan – incorporated together as part of [region] Plan.

Initial interest in indigenous knowledge where worked in [location] for thesis studies.

[Person 1] and [Person 2] in vehicle trips

[Person 1]: Pounding ground at acacia tree for witchety grubs

[Person 2]: Mix grubs with ash and sand and toast them – delicious

Stories about landscape told especially water places. Trust grew from interest in food led to being taught like “one of the children” about the landscape.

Graziers in [State] will not tell other people about what's on their land. Wetlands have artefacts. Wish to fence them from indigenous people to protect traditional sites as well as biodiversity. Some graziers will destroy sites.

[Location] – artefacts on clay pan. Graziers will not let people on their site to see traditional sites/artefacts.

Having to work through the quote process, and having to repeat it because the person with the knowledge of structuring a quote had left.

Fitting in protection of cultural heritage sites within environmental concerns for indigenous people.

Guy around [location], has a lot of Indigenous sites/artefacts on his land, but was asked for access and said... “no blackfellas on my land”
Govt dept seem to not be able to do anything about it.

Indigenous people can have apprehensions about sharing information with people from other tribes when moving from area to area eg [State] – northern [State].

Her experiences with Indigenous in urban setting.

A meeting of tourism operators – found paintings on land and wanted to open up land for tourism. [Person] in meeting and she mentioned not 1 Indigenous representative present or consulted for meeting. She left the meeting as no Indigenous person present – so did several others.

Time: 2 different timeframes for non-Indigenous and Indigenous.

Forming [region] Land and Sea Management Association

- finding people to sit at table for this Association
- long slow process to find representatives
- who represents whom? Who is “right person”
- time parameters differ between participants

Native Title does not exist in [region] discussions

In [region]

- elders represented – male and female
- mix of Board members including indigenous

From people not speaking together to now inclusiveness and discussion

Younger guys brought in as well as elders as a learning process for younger members

Recently

Disallowed representative from a group meant another representative had to be found. Group moved forward with this and accepted changes.

Running think tank for youth. Range of nationalities etc. Elder from area around campfire for 2 hours talking and telling stories from local area. Experience was so engaging – glued to experience.

Too many questions – so enthusiastic!

Experiential, moving, and felt connected to the place.

Many people’s first time interaction with traditional owner.

Fear of bureaucracy

Grazier reluctance to share knowledge. They have local knowledge of special areas on their land – they fence them, they don’t let anyone know of these sites. Fear of regulatory processes if sites disclosed.

Indigenous people lose access to these sites and the opportunity for passing on knowledge within their community.

Project to take 26 15 year olds on canoe trip.

- Indigenous person travelling with them
- Permission to take group to women's cave
- Kids not registering value of site – had to pull them up
- Sat at fireplace and dingo howled – turned tables. He was at home and they realised there was a lot more about being involved in landscape.

“[Indigenous location]” visit planned.

[Person] wanted name of landholder to visit property – grazier refused. Stories of bureaucracy told by grazier – shift to words “give me a ring when you are next up here and we’ll talk about a visit again”.

Story of fear of Indigenous community wanting to use “big stick” approach to visiting Indigenous sites.

[Person] did not push access request.

Intervention design I

Issue

Education

Intent

Traditional education and non-traditional education (broader community)

Ideas

Place-based learning

Experiential learning

Application based

Educate the educators (make it easy and sustainable)

Change of status quo across the board

Changing the negative stereotypes – this has to come from both sides

Need for education of graziers

Lack of understanding means less value linked to cultural areas/information

Immersion in learning environment

Resources

Champions – on both sides

Elders

Time and money (applied appropriately)

Next steps

A process for upskilling people

ID people to become and support champions

Involve student teachers and champions in NRM

ID what they know (build on from there)

Intervention design 2

Issue

Trust (two way)

Intent

Creating trust between indigenous knowledge holders and other stakeholders
Need to work with people rather than fight to achieve best result
Trust is essential for groups to work together

Ideas

Trusting without too much red tape for appropriate and good outcomes
Encouraging discussions regarding pre-conceived ideas
Sharing stories
Not just ticking boxes
True representation on who can speak for “country” or agencies
Sharing information is often based on trust of receiver
Trust is needed to share knowledge
Inclusion
Education
Establish protocols/rules
Allowing processes and objectives to unfold

Resources

Organisers of protocol and meetings. Well connected to people. Awareness of stakeholders resources, ie transport, health, location.
Facilitators
Respect needs to be two-way
There are trust issues with inter-tribal relationships

Next steps

Contact details, regional/language group protocols
National data base
Where people can register their interest in particular areas, regions, issues...
“Asking” not “telling” is better for building relationships.

Intervention design 3

Issue

Knowledge and information sharing

Intent

To find better ways to retain and pass on knowledge

Ideas

Develop shared understanding of cultural history/significance with the community on ways to capture and store information where they control who can access it
Culture and land are closely linked for Aboriginal people
Restricted sharing means information can be easily lost
Highlights the question “What is land ownership?” (in post-2000)
Often assumptions are made that we (or they) are all the same
Going through the learning process once often isn’t enough
Some people are knowledge sharers. Some take the knowledge with them when they leave
Loss of access to traditional sites and knowledge for indigenous people
All equal custodians of “country”

Resources

Traditional knowledge recording project (TKRP)
Advisory groups – indigenous/non-indigenous
AIATSIS

Next steps

Find ways to involve the younger generation, eg attend/observe meetings

Intervention design 4

Issue

Experience leading to connections
Need to foster more experiences which connect people
Experiences shared can lead to relationships being built
When passion is shared others can experience and understand connections
Experiencing and trusting different lifestyles
Shared experiences can lead to commonalities

Intent

Develop ways to share experiences

Ideas

Exchanges to see, hear experiences on ground of people between NRM and within
“Women’s business meeting” between indigenous and non-indigenous and/or youth meetings
Invite others on research trips, field days – replantings, especially where projects are working; or where there is an issue to resolve
Introduce “anecdote circles” to start of meetings
Capture some good and bad experiences (video, interviews)

Resources

Anecdote circle method on RKRK
People’s experiences
Grant schemes for “indigenous programs”
?Reconciliation program
ORID process

Next steps

Introduce “anecdote circle” to your next meeting
Exchange between landholders who have opened access with those closing off access
Investigate funding options; eg Earthwatch