



## A JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

By Toni Bauman

Cultures usually transform slowly and organically. One of the ways to open up opportunities for the development of a changed strong and thriving joint management culture is through building a 'community of practice'.

There is a body of literature underlying the idea of a community of practice. The idea is based upon the fact that knowledge is situated and reproduced in evolving social relations and activities called 'communities of practice' (Wenger 2006). Such a community involves a group of people with a common interest and/or passion coming together to share information, resources, contacts, knowledge and experience to influence change and arrive at creative approaches to issues and problems. Often a community of practice is founded in ideals of social justice, wellbeing, equity, human rights and participation. Reed describes this as a process for '... developing leadership and capacity among individuals, groups, communities and institutions' (2005: 86).

As the participants at the AIATSIS workshop for government staff involved in joint management noted, a joint management community of practice should involve the facilitation of free and open discussion on how to be mutually supportive, reduce duplication and maximise efficiencies. A joint management community of practice should be a source of information and advice for the benefit of parks services, policy makers and planners, and

traditional owners (Bauman, Stacey and Lauder 2012). An effective community of practice would be informed by existing research and initiatives, such as the Indigenous Protected Areas (IPA) network led by SEWPAC, activities relating to the management of sea country, and AIATSIS sponsored workshops. With this in mind, the AIATSIS workshop in 2012 sought to implement a recommendation of the Indigenous forum at APAC08 that DEHWA (now SEWPAC) meet with state and territory governments responsible for protected areas to 'explore ways of enabling national networking among co-managed parks, similar to the IPA managers' network, and linkages with the IPA Managers' network (Grant et al 2008: 8).

As joint management arrangements are determined at the state/territory level, this gives rise to uncertainties and inequities within and between jurisdictions. However, such inequities should not pose a barrier to more uniform bipartisan policy approaches. There are principles, processes, and practical measures which can provide guidance for those entering into joint management arrangements regardless of the respective jurisdiction and institutional arrangements. This is not to suggest the strict prescription of practice, but rather that a national community of practice can support learning and exchange platforms through tiered systems of communication and co-operation.

Strategically directed and facilitated

dialogues at regional, state and national levels between and among traditional owners and government staff in their full range of capacities, from rangers to bureaucratic decision-makers, would assist in promoting productive debate around key issues. Such issues may include:

- changed practices in which 'Top Down' and 'Bottom Up' meet in a more unified approach;
- the meaning of joint management, identifying and promoting its economic and other benefits to the wider community;
- joint management as a pathway, the many ways of 'doing' joint management flexibly;
- the relative benefits of different institutional arrangements, including legislation, ILUAs and MOUs and other informal arrangements;
- the location and nature of power in joint management arrangements;
- alternative discourses and approaches to the governance of joint management;
- the implications of viewing joint management arrangements as 'inter-cultural' including issues of cultural heritage, intellectual property rights and partners not being seen as apposite;
- rights-based approaches to protected area management and their limitations, including innovative ways of describing native title rights and interests;

- ways of understanding how joint management, biodiversity, political ecology, traditional ecological knowledge and intellectual property issues relate to Closing the Gap indicators;
- 'whole-of-country' multi-tenure approaches that transcend protected area boundaries and mainstream management planning;
- ways of integrating joint management with socioeconomic values and commercial benefits, such as employment and rental payments, commercial ventures, licensing, contracting with traditional owners, sitting fees and other forms of paid recognition of traditional owner involvement to reflect adequate compensation for loss of rights;
- frameworks for monitoring and evaluating joint management from the perspectives of a wide spectrum of joint management partners and stakeholders; and
- international case studies and comparisons.

There are also many practical measures to be taken and tools to be developed, not all of which are set out here (but see Bauman and Smyth, 2007: xiv-xv and Bauman, Stacey and Lauder 2012). Initially there is a need to identify, locate and share existing knowledge resources and to then building on these existing initiatives.

Tools might include:

- guidelines for negotiating joint management partnerships;
- a code of conduct for joint management addressing the responsibilities of all parties;
- national and international bibliographies that locate existing research;
- templates for joint management ILUAs;
- templates for community education and park visitor engagement programs;
- a common approach to the establishment of digital archives for protected area cultural materials and facilitating return of materials to traditional owners;
- collaborative development of toolkits

providing key practical and operational advice addressing issues such as: staff and traditional owner burnout; mentoring processes; managing relationships between traditional owners, parks staff, and broader park management;

- developing conflict management protocols and processes; and
- cultural protocols, e.g. no person speaks for another person's country.

Communication strategies and networking in a community of practice can capitalise on existing networks and initiatives to leverage support and champion joint management. Communication strategies might involve email networks, online forums and webpages, exchange visits between traditional owner groups nationally and internationally, as well as networks of specialised accredited Indigenous and non-Indigenous facilitators.

Above all, there is a need for specialised joint management career pathways and a national curriculum for park staff, the staff of Indigenous representative bodies, boards of management and advisory committees, and traditional owners involved in joint management. This might include:

- the development of key eligibility and selection criteria for jobs in joint management;
- an alternative national curriculum for Indigenous Rangers;
- Junior Ranger programs with an 'on country emphasis';

- dedicated positions for developing joint management intercultural awareness, training and education;
- secondment arrangements to enable government conservation and natural resource management staff to develop working relationships with traditional owners, promoting skills transfer and cross-cultural understanding;
- flexible vocational pathways for Indigenous staff, including though contracted services reflecting Indigenous cultural priorities; and
- a national cultural awareness and engagement curriculum for protected areas, into which local components may be incorporated.

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Wenger E 2006, 'Communities of practice: A brief introduction', accessed 22 April 2013, <[http://www.ewenger.com/theory/communities\\_of\\_practice\\_intro.htm](http://www.ewenger.com/theory/communities_of_practice_intro.htm)>.



Above: Bitter Springs, Mataranka, NT. Previous page: North Beach, West Island, Sir Edward Pellew Islands, NT. Credit: Bhiemie Williamson