

**EVALUATION OF
DAINTREE CONSERVATION INITIATIVE (DCI)
AND
CASSOWARY CONSERVATION PROJECT (CCP)**

**COMPILED FOR
THE AUSTRALIAN RAINFOREST FOUNDATION**

May 2007

The Porchester Consulting Group

In association with

Fred Marchant and Associates

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Background

The Australian Government allocated \$6 million in funding to the Australian Rainforest Foundation (ARF) from the Maintaining Australia's Biodiversity Hotspots Program. The two programs for which the funding has been allocated are;

1. The Daintree Conservation Initiative (\$5 million) and
2. The Cassowary Conservation Project (\$1 million)

These funds were received in February and April 2005 and have an end date of June 2007.

In April 2007, an independent consultant was appointed by the Department of the Environment and Water Resources- Heritage Division (DEWR) and tasked with conducting an assessment of the two programs to date, within a specified Scope of Evaluation as defined by the DEWR (see below).

The ARF Board commissioned this report, with the same terms of reference, as a timely review of projects to date as part of the ARF's on-going quality assurance policy.

1.2. Scope of Evaluation

The DEWR has provided the following scope of evaluation, which this report will address. The full Consultant's Brief is attached at [Annexure 1](#).

Appropriateness – *whether the project objectives and delivery is consistent with program objectives and guidance of the Maintaining Australia's Biodiversity Hotspots Program and also for the Cassowary project, the Recovery Plan for the Southern Cassowary.*

Effectiveness – *did the project achieve its stated objectives as reflected in public (Ministerial) statements about desired outcomes; project description; milestones and performance criteria in the contracts; for the Daintree Conservation Initiative, consider also the impact of the Daintree planning environment on project delivery and whether the marketing program and income generated met expectations and assisted to build capital for further land acquisition.*

Efficiency – *are there other ways to achieve the same outputs/objectives having regard to other community based conservation projects in the region and timescale (i.e. the project was initiated ahead of regional NRM plan and investment strategy and the Biodiversity Hotspots guidelines); Were the projects able to build partnerships with key agencies and stake holders (eg WTMA, EPA, Cassowary recovery team, Daintree Community to coordinate delivery of biodiversity conservation outcomes.*

Transferability – *can the approach be used to implement the project/s be applied to other regions*

1.3. Comments on the Terms of Reference

Appropriateness – *whether the project objectives and delivery is consistent with program objectives and guidance of the Maintaining Australia's Biodiversity Hotspots Program and also for the Cassowary project, the Recovery Plan for the Southern Cassowary.*

The ARF presented the proposal for funding directly to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Hon David Kemp, in 2004. The funding announcement was made by Minister Campbell and the Department drew up the Contracts in 2005.

The projects' objectives and the mechanisms for delivery were determined by the Department of Environment and Heritage (DEH) now Department of Environment and Water Resources (DEWR) and articulated in the contracts for both the Daintree Conservation Initiative (DCI) and the Cassowary Conservation Project (CCP).

- Did the Department give sufficient attention in drafting the Contracts to ensure they complied with Maintaining Australia's Biodiversity Hotspots guidelines, public comments or other guiding principles and the Recovery Plan for the Southern Cassowary? This is a matter for the Department.
- Did the ARF, given all circumstances and influences, deliver the outcomes contained in the contracts?

This report concludes that the ARF's performance in delivering DCI and CCP milestones to-date have achieved the provisions of the contract; have delivered the majority of the specified outcomes and in addition, have exceeded their mandate through additional positive activities.

Particular accomplishments achieved by the ARF during the contract period include;

- Raised \$223,000 in direct land sponsorship and adoption through an innovative program when land re-sale proved difficult;
- Undertook a national advertising campaign using high profile Australian, General Peter Cosgrove, which resulted in an additional \$91,000 in donations;
- Obtained \$565,000 in free to air advertising nationally in prime time/space;
- Purchased 143 hectares of Daintree land over 14 titles at a median per hectare price of \$27,189;
- Built up a substantial degree of trust among Daintree residents, in a fractured and suspicious community;
- Completed an update of the Cassowary Corridor report in consultation with other agencies;
- Worked in partnership with QPWS to manage and upgrade a cassowary hospital at Garners Beach;
- Identified six salients in the cassowary corridor;
- Worked in partnership with CSIRO to jointly fund important cassowary research;
- Responded swiftly to implement a feral pig program in critical cassowary habitat following habitat destruction in the wake of Cyclone Larry;
- Raised \$42,000 from the private sector to support cassowary recovery;

- Acquired 60 ha of essential cassowary habitat at El Arish; and
- Appointed two community conservation officers to work with local communities in the Daintree and Mission Beach areas.

The ARF point out that these programs have only been active since the contract start in April 2005.

A great deal has been achieved in this short time, given the external problems with the Daintree and overall community cynicism of projects and programs that had failed or had met with resistance in the past.

Observations in comparing ARF with other conservation organisations¹ are that there are key elements that make ARF successful, namely;

- ARF's ability to effectively communicate with landowners and the community;
- The success with bringing the conservation message to the wider community and the corporate sector (e.g. through Give a Tree for Life program, Adopt a Square, Rainforest Guardians and Protectors);
- ARF's success in procuring significant investment in conservation from private individuals ;
- ARF's success in drawing sponsorship and financial support from corporations; and
- ARF's ability to manage a diverse range of programs, not just the DCI and CCP, with low overhead expenses.

¹ See *Competitor Analysis ARF and Australia wide conservation organisations* – Click Communications 2007

2 CASSOWARY CONSERVATION PROJECT (CCP)

2.1 Synopsis of the Project

The basis of the CCP is to develop a model approach to the recovery of the Cassowary, by involving Australian, State and Local governments, local landowners, community groups, conservation NGO (ARF) and the private sector.

This was articulated in 2000 through the Cassowary Corridor Report, prepared by the Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA)². The update of this report with 2004/05 vegetation and regional ecosystem mapping and other science was the guide for the delivery of the CCP contract³. The contract allocated funding and outcomes to seven sub programs, viz:

1. The updating of the Cassowary Corridor Report to identify private land that would provide habitat linkages to protected land for the cassowary, in a north-south coastal corridor between Cardwell and Cairns. This has been referred to as the “Cassowary Corridor.” ARF received some previous Commonwealth funding in 2000/01 to commence a revolving land fund in this corridor;
2. Conducting DNA research on cassowary dung to better understand their range and distribution;
3. Land acquisition and landowner stewardship payments to secure and improve habitat linkages between protected areas and in linkages identified in the updated Cassowary Corridor Report;
4. Identifying and securing ‘salients’ – areas of high conservation value for cassowaries which exceed the minimum cassowary requirements for food sources and are protected from predation through purchasing, leasing or stewardship incentives;
5. Undertaking revegetation to improve habitat and habitat linkages;
6. Community education programs to improve the understanding of the cassowary’s plight; and
7. Marketing and fundraising to engage the private sector in supporting conservation of the cassowary.

² *The Cassowary Corridor Report 2000*, described a process for establishing secure cassowary habitat through a mix of land acquisition and landowner payments (stewardship)

³ Biotropica Pty. Ltd. (Tucker, N. et al) was engaged to update the report and produced *A Framework to establish lowland habitat linkages for the Southern Cassowary between Cairns and Cardwell* – This is known as the 2005 Cassowary Corridor report

2.2 Contract Delivery

Project Coordination

ARF provided a strategic business plan to DEH and WTMA within 12 weeks of signing the agreement. The plan is detailed and professionally prepared. It describes processes and policies for implementing the contract outcomes.

During 2005, management of the contract was handled by the ARF CEO with support from one full time staff member and a number of outside contractors. At this time WTMA provided significant office and administrative assistance to ARF.

Comment

An assessment has been conducted of the ARF's capacity to deliver conservation outcomes by reviewing of a number of other programs prior to their delivery of the CCP.

The ARF established Operation Big Bird in 1999 and purchased, covenanted and resold two rainforest blocks at Garners Beach.

They then launched two successful programs – 'Give A Tree For Life' and 'Adopt a Cassowary' in 2001-02.

In 2002 ARF received \$1 million from the Wet Tropics Ministerial Council to undertake a revolving fund in the Daintree (DV1). The QLD EPA Audit of the Daintree V1 contract concluded satisfactory of the ARF's performance. In addition, a review of the files pertaining to the revolving of two Garners Beach blocks in the Cassowary Corridor (2002) leads to the conclusion that the ARF's private sector approach to the delivery of outcomes is extremely cost effective.⁴

Desktop update of the Cassowary Corridor 2000 report

The choice of Tucker, N. at Biotropica Pty Ltd to update the report appears to be both well received by end users and perceived as professional by peers. The report was completed by the ARF in October 2005 however the final WTMA peer review and subsequent public version release was delayed due to the unfortunate illness of WTMA's Chief Scientist.

Comment

The report provided a successful and practical blueprint for the delivery of the contract, with the full support of WTMA and QPWS and developed in parallel with the Recovery Plan for the Southern Cassowary (Cwth).

⁴ I reviewed the satisfactory QLD EPA Audit of the Daintree V1 contract, the files pertaining to the revolving of two Garners Beach blocks in the Cassowary Corridor (2002) and the administrative costs of the ARF and the FNQ NRM Board from their Annual Reports.

DNA Testing

A proposal from CSIRO and QPWS to undertake DNA testing on cassowary dung was discussed with ARF at a Cassowary Recovery Team meeting in 2005. ARF agreed to provide funding of \$15,000 from this contract to CSIRO to be completed by December 2005 on the basis of contributions from QPWS and CSIRO.

CSIRO and QPWS were unable to secure funding for the original concept and a revised testing program was devised in 2006. ARF signed a new contract with CSIRO in April 2007 and also agreed to allocate an additional \$15,000 to enable the revised project to proceed.

Establish strategically located salients

The concept of salients - parcels of land that are strategically located and of particular geographic or environmental importance - fits well with the cassowary recovery strategies of identifying areas of high conservation value - cassowary habitat. They are particularly important where they provide for expansion through private property to form connectivity with other protected areas.

The ARF's focus for improving cassowary habitat is the proven provision of geographic connectivity to ensure a safe and continuous habitat for the bird. This is a key strategy of the updated Cassowary Corridor Report 2005 and the ARF business plan.

The contract calls for the establishment of a minimum of five salients. It does not determine what happens once the salients have been identified. The ARF business plan however does identify using salients as nodes from which to expand cassowary recovery programs and in particular by habitat acquisition and landowner incentives on adjoining properties.

At the time of this report it is confirmed that ARF has identified six salients. The major salient is the subject of a stewardship program directly aimed at cassowary recovery and community education via stewardship expenditure (Garners Beach Cassowary Facility) and another has been secured by acquisition of Lot 5 Leo Road, El Arish.

Interviews have been conducted with the ARF's Community Conservation Officer at Garners Beach and key QPWS staff in the area.

Comment

Feedback from the above parties reveals that a good working relationship has been established with the key players involved in cassowary recovery and landowner incentives. ARF has committed both CCP and its own private sector funds to support a coordinated approach. The ARF is also working with FNQ NRM to coordinate stewardship programs run by both organisations.

Land acquisition and landowner incentives

ARF files have been reviewed and it is established that the ARF has in place a landowner incentive scheme, details of which were circulated to the public through advertisements and posters. The scheme fits with other stewardship programs undertaken by most Australian State and Territory revolving fund managers and covenanting schemes.⁵

ARF also has an agreement with the Queensland EPA to promote and support Nature Refuge and Nature Assist programs when promoting landowner incentives.

This is an integrated approach which at ground level involves the joint consideration and often joint funding of stewardship payments between ARF, Qld EPA, QPWS and FNQ NRM. Decisions are determined following discussions between the relevant parties. There is a good working relationship which allows for exchange of information and sharing of expertise. ARF sits on a number of joint committees such as the Cassowary Advisory Group, Cassowary Recovery Team and the Mission Beach Habitat Network Action Plan Committee.

More than 30 applications for stewardship support and in some cases land acquisition, were received by ARF in 2006.

Unfortunately, dealing with these was interrupted by the devastation of Cyclone Larry, which destroyed much of the forested and arable land in the region and brought to a halt any focus on conservation programs in the effected communities.

The focus of the majority of landowners post Cyclone Larry has been simply on survival and rebuilding and it is only now, some 12 months after the event, that they feel able to concentrate on conservation on private land issues.

ARF has resolved to allocate funds to land and stewardship programs:

1. Allocating \$200,000 to improve delivery of cassowary recovery and treatment at the Garners Beach Cassowary facility;
2. Acquire 60 hectares of critical cassowary habitat at El Arish. This is listed as a salient and will form the basis of a node to extend north east to the Maria Creek and east to National Park. I have viewed a report on this land prepared by Biotropica which endorses the acquisition as being complementary with the Cassowary Corridor 2005 Report. The report also provides scientific advice on management and possible resale options⁶;
3. Approve up to \$40,000 to support a wildlife fencing project adjacent to the World Heritage Area and Nature Refuge on private land in the Palmerston corridor (identified in the Cassowary Corridor Report and endorsed by QPWS);

The conference papers for the 2007 Conservation Covenanting and Revolving Land Fund Managers Meeting in Canberra in April 2007 have been reviewed and confirm that ARF's stewardship program is in line with the methodologies used in NSW, QLD and Victoria.

⁶ Tucker, N. Biotropica 2007; Report on the conservation values of Lot 5 Leo Road, El Arish for ARF

4. Deliver a \$100,000 precinct wide feral pig response immediately post Cyclone Larry, when other agencies were unable to act. This program has been particularly successful and well received by the response contractor, landowners and local community as a whole.
5. An extension of the above feral pig program with Cairns City Council as partner is currently being negotiated.

Revegetation Programs

ARF has approved the expenditure of \$10,000 on revegetation at Palmerston and El Arish on two of the salient properties and will undertake this work in cooperation with the Johnstone Shire Council, QPWS, Conservation Volunteers Australia, FNQ NRM and local landowners.

ARF CEO advises that the involvement of Conservation Volunteers Australia to deliver the outcome is a policy aimed at fostering local community involvement in conservation programs.

Community Education

The ARF interpretative centre and shop situated in Cairns provides a wide range of cassowary and world heritage information to the public including the publication by ARF of a wildlife book.

ARF has also developed a web based Cassowary Education Kit which is freely available to all schools from its web site.

Corporate and Community Fundraising

The ARF has raised approximately \$80,000 from its promotional activities with the expenditure of \$58,000 from the contract's budget allocation. The Adopt a Cassowary program has raised \$42,000 from the private sector and the balance is from interpretative centre sales. In addition, \$30,000 has been received as a donation from a local business.

2.3 Assessment of Outcomes – Cassowary Project

Appropriateness – *whether the project objectives and delivery is consistent with program objectives and guidance of the Maintaining Australia's Biodiversity Hotspots Program and also for the Cassowary project, the Recovery Plan for the Southern Cassowary.*

The basis on which ARF made decisions to acquire land, provide stewardship support or undertake other conservation works; or to target specific areas within the Cassowary Corridor, was made with reference to Biotropica's Cassowary Corridor Report 2005 and in discussions with other stakeholders.

The Cassowary Corridor Report 2005 used the existing Cassowary Recovery Plan, WTMA mapping, QPWS/EPA mapping and consultation. It was peer reviewed by WTMA before release to the public.

In specific instances before land acquisition or proposed stewardship payments, Biotropica was engaged to do additional site specific reports for key areas at Bingil Bay which were applicants for stewardship support. The Billy Singh stewardship investigation has been viewed. This was undertaken by Biotropica, into 250 hectares at Cedar and Stony Creeks at Bingil Bay. The Biotropica report on the proposal to acquire Lot 5 Leo Road El Arish has also been viewed.

Both site specific reports approve ARF's proposed expenditure based on conservation values linked to the Cassowary Corridor Report 2005 plus the social and financial outcomes add value to the overall objective.

Comment

The emphasis placed on community development through stewardship programs and the appointment of a Community Conservation Officer based at Mission Beach, has provided a capacity building resource to the community. This has been reinforced many times in positive feedback from local landowners.

In particular, the rapid introduction of a feral pig management program post Cyclone Larry was well received by landowners, when both FNQ NRM and QPWS were unable to act.

The project objectives and delivery are consistent with the Cassowary Recovery Plan.

Effectiveness – *did the project achieve its stated objectives as reflected in public (Ministerial) statements about desired outcomes; project description; milestones and performance criteria in the contracts; for the Daintree Conservation Initiative, consider also the impact of the Daintree planning environment on project delivery and whether the marketing program and income generated met expectations and assisted to build capital for further land acquisition.*

The CCP contract referred to in the above statement, did not identify specific milestones or objectives. There were specific tasks to be undertaken and a time line for these tasks (specified in Annexure A to the CCP contract).

To quantify the ARF's performance with the timeline tasks required in the contract, interviews were conducted with various stakeholders with a view to gauging the overall response to the model proposed by the ARF to the plight of the cassowary (as indicated in Annexure A to the contract).

This report is drafted in April 2007, representing 80% of the contract to end date. A review of quarterly reports prepared by ARF for DEWR has been made and it is noted that seven of the eight milestones have been achieved, and the ninth has been committed through a contract with CSIRO. Certainly, all activities in which there was not an external impact or third party requirement to perform, the ARF has delivered on time.

This has been established by reference to internal documents and reports and by an audit review of ARF financial documents.

ARF has made commitments to deliver the remaining outcomes – largely stewardship payments beyond the contract end date and contracts and memoranda of understanding have been sighted for commitments beyond the contract end date. These have been assessed as being well constructed legally. ARF CEO advises that legal templates are provided at no cost by ARF directors.

It is also noted that ARF has committed some its own privately raised funds to supplement a number of the programs for which Commonwealth CCP funding is allocated.

ARF maintains (at page 64 of the contract):

“The Coastal Cassowary Corridor provides an excellent opportunity to demonstrate how a major conservation task can be achieved quickly and very cost effectively. By using the skills and knowledge acquired by government agencies in similar projects (Mahogany Glider program) and linking these with the resources and energy of the wider community, this project has the potential to become a world class exemplar of community partnerships in conservation management.”

The question is, has the partnership model proposed by ARF worked in this contract? If key success markers were achieved, then the CCP could be held up as a model for delivering threatened species recovery. The ARF was keen to explore this issue in assessing their performance.

Analysis is based on discussions with nominated participants, particularly QPWS and ARF as partners; and landowners seeking to participate through stewardship incentives. While it is probably too early to make a scientific judgement on the model, it is clear that the success factors are present, i.e. a partnership that is working at the on-the-ground level between QPWS and ARF (as well as C4, FNQ NRM and others) and a willingness of landowners to engage with ARF and seek to do ‘public good’ conservation works on private land in support of cassowary conservation. Furthermore, land has been acquired or secured on which essential cassowary habitat is protected or on which cassowary populations are known to be present.

Is limited land acquisition and stewardship by private landowners providing secure habitat and connectivity within the cassowary corridor?

The answer from analysis of this program is clearly in the positive.

Consideration has also been given to the effect on the program should the ARF withdraw. Would there be a residual capacity within the local governments and landowners to continue with the cassowary recovery program?

Again the strategy of the ARF has been to initially deliver best practice outcomes/services and leave expertise within the community. The ARF’s partnership with the Cairns City Council is particularly impressive, with the ARF agreeing to provide equipment and training in feral dog and pig management to Council and landowners so that an expert capacity remains within the community, rather than being delivered by ‘government’ and ceasing when funding expires.

The ability of the ARF to raise private sector funds in support of the cassowary program is also impressive. Over \$40,000 has been raised through the ‘Adopt a Cassowary’ program and \$30,000 in sponsorship from local traders in the Tully area.

The CCP has eight sub programs (see page 63 of the contract) and these form an integrated approach to the recovery of the cassowary in line with the current recovery plan (Cwth).

Comment

There is a distinct benefit to the Commonwealth in having ARF deliver the contract outcomes. ARF is able to add value through efficient and low cost administration and the provision of additional funding from the private sector.

Efficiency – *are there other ways to achieve the same outputs/objectives having regard to other community based conservation projects in the region and timescale (i.e. the project was initiated ahead of regional NRM plan and investment strategy and the Biodiversity Hotspots guidelines); Were the projects able to build partnerships with key agencies and stake holders (eg WTMA, EPA, Cassowary recovery team, Daintree Community to coordinate delivery of biodiversity conservation outcomes.*

Are there other ways to achieve the same outputs/objectives? The key to this question is the word “same.”

The ARF is well placed, well resourced (financially and operationally from outside of government) and has the respect of many key players in the government/community delivery model.

This has resulted in considerable added benefit to the Commonwealth in the delivery of their expected outcomes.

Comment

There are clearly other ways of buying similar outcomes. However none of those investigated come with the economies and efficiencies of the ARF model.

Were the projects able to build partnerships with key agencies and stake holders (eg WTMA, EPA, Cassowary Recovery Team)?

ARF has worked successfully to establish a strong working relationship with EPA/QPWS, particularly in the Mission Beach/Garners Beach area. There is recognition by QPWS senior staff that the private sector flexibility and non-government funds raised in support of the Garners Beach Cassowary Facility salient will deliver excellent outcomes for cassowary recovery in the area.

ARF is a member of the Cassowary Recovery Team and the FNQ NRM sponsored Mission Beach Habitat Network Action Plan Committee. It also has a strong relationship with the Cairns City Council pest management team and is currently working with the Council on cassowary threat reduction strategies. ARF attends Cassowary Advisory Group meetings and is working with C4 to provide funding to a range of their proposed cassowary projects.

ARF has also developed a good working relationship with Conservation Volunteers Australia.

Comment

The findings of this report suggest that the CCP project was not the catalyst to good partnering as this existed already within the network dealing with cassowary recovery.

What the funding did however, was to enable greater on-ground outcomes and provide leverage, for example, when local government or QPWS funds were jointly applied to various project elements.

Transferability – *can the approach used to implement the project/s be applied to other regions*

The key success drivers for the CCP were:

- the combination of a number of partners and stakeholders;
- a combination of funding sources;
- the raising of community awareness of the cassowary; and
- the raising of private sector funds.

The model which underpins the CCP is a partnership approach to conservation on private land. In fact, the ARF model is similar in some ways to the Queensland EPA's Nature Assist model, in that it seeks to involve and encourage conservation on private land through stewardship.

The key difference however is the flexibility in delivery through a NGO and the allocation of funding to marketing and education.

The ARF argues strongly that education and marketing raise the issue of the cassowary in the media and that resources directed to corporate and individual support of conservation provides significant added value to the project. This is apparent here but more so in the Daintree project.

Comment

If these drivers and methodologies are used in other regions and delivered by an organisation with the expertise of the ARF, then the model proposed and delivered through the CCP could be successfully applied in other areas.

3 DAINTREE CONSERVATION INITIATIVE

3.1 Synopsis of Project

The Daintree Conservation Initiative (DCI) was the Commonwealth's response to the Queensland Government's allocation of \$5 million to buy back privately owned land in the Daintree, prior to the 2004 Federal election and subsequent State election.

The period from April 2005 (contract start date) to late in 2006 when the Douglas Shire Council's Alternative Planning Scheme was introduced, was a period in which diametrically opposed and entrenched positions (particularly Queensland v's Commonwealth) on the best way to achieve conservation of the Daintree lowlands were evident and vigorously pursued.

The ARF contract was framed following a presentation to the Federal Environment Minister in which ARF argued for a more innovative and flexible approach to the conservation of the Daintree lowlands, than simply buying back freehold land. This followed the ARF's experience with the issues in delivering a \$1 million Wet Tropics Ministerial Council, Daintree land buy back in 2001-04.

While the contract provides for a variety of conservation tools, it is nonetheless fairly prescriptive.

There are four sub programs making up the funding, viz

1. Project coordination
2. Land acquisition
3. Stewardship support
4. Marketing and education

There are also some underlying principals contained in the conservation tools available to ARF. These are;

1. The acquisition of specifically targeted freehold land for consolidation or development reduction and the resale under conservation covenants in a revolving land fund; and the financial support of neighbour buy neighbour land; and land swaps;
2. The support of landowners living in the Daintree who wished to remain on their land and be good conservation stewards (i.e. a 'stewardship' component);
3. Safeguarding of conservation works by use of covenants and perpetual on-title protection;

4. Marketing and education activity to raise funds from the private sector to support Daintree conservation;

3.2 Contract Delivery

Issues and events impacting on delivery of the contract outcomes

It is difficult for those not directly involved in the Daintree issue to appreciate the depth of feeling created by the Douglas Shire Council's decision to introduce a planning scheme which banned development on more than 200 freehold residential blocks of land.

The controversial Alternative Planning Scheme (APS) which was introduced in 2006 with the backing of the Queensland Government, EPA and WTMA fractured the Daintree community.

The delay in knowing what zoning the land would be under the delayed APS meant that land acquisition for resale would be risky.

Due to resource constraints, WTMA was unable to provide the contractually required scientific information or advisory support to ARF which also impacted on the timely delivery of the Contract.

Unfortunately, the Department of Environment & Heritage (DEH) was unable to comment on and approve the ARF Business Plan until late in 2006 (along with 5 changes to the Contract manager within DEH) which also impacted negatively on the delivery of outcomes in the early stages of the Contract.

As a result of many of these impacts, there was a delay in response from the Daintree community to the conservation initiatives proposed by ARF.

Project Coordination

The ARF CEO is responsible for the management of the project coordination and has utilised a number of consultants and contracted staff to assist with the project. Considerable expertise was also provided by members of the ARF Board in the areas of environmental law and real estate practice.

Priority mapping has, to date, not been provided to ARF and acquisition priorities were made on mapping provided for DV1⁷.

An investigation of correspondence and interviews with ARF CEO and acting executive director WTMA indicates that funding cuts to WTMA made meaningful contributions to the project impossible.

WTMA was involved with the Daintree Planning Group, (which was abandoned by the Commonwealth as not practical or appropriate) yet none of the science provided to this group was made available to ARF.

The project was also significantly impacted by DEH contract managers who were unable to comment on or approve the ARF Business Plan until after five changes of contract management personnel and not until late in 2006. This is despite the pressure by DEH to acquit the funding to a linear timescale.

Despite these negative factors the project has been administered by the ARF in accordance with the Contract, with most milestones reached by April 2007.

Comment

The audited financial reports of the ARF and the reports to DEH/DEWR have been viewed and this report concludes that there are good procedures in place to administer the project, including a detailed and professional business plan, land management plans, adequate decision making procedures using expert advice, first line probity checking by the ARF's external accountants and an annual audit by external company auditors.

The contracting of specialist staff rather than full time employees has also resulted in cost savings, while maintaining delivery capability.

Land Acquisition

ARF claims it was pressured to buy land by DEH before a resolution of the APS and this resulted in the acquisition of 11 blocks of land which eventually were zoned "conservation with no

⁷ Conservation values were assigned to land in the Daintree by WTMA in 2001-02 which formed the basis of priority acquisition maps for ARF in the delivery of the Wet Tropics Ministerial Council Daintree Land Conservation Program (DV1)

development.” This has proven problematic in revolving the land, as potential buyers are unable to construct a dwelling on the land.

There is a requirement in the contract for the revolving land fund to hold 75% of the funds provided for land acquisition (i.e. in the value of land held and cash remaining). There does not appear to be a specific rationale for this figure, other than recognition that land resold in a revolving fund may attract less interest and a lower price because of conservation covenant restrictions.

ARF has consistently held the fund at > 100%, largely due to ARF’s good standing in the community and ability to negotiate good purchase deals with landowners.

Following the approval of the APS, DEH directed ARF to buy land outside of the conservation zone or land within the zone but which had a dwelling or a development approval. ARF purchased three properties in the ‘Rainforest Tourism’ zone following this advice.

Comment

ARF’s land acquisition has been professionally undertaken with qualified real estate agents and lawyers on staff and within the ARF Board.

This has resulted in flexibility in deal making and land being acquired often below valuation.

The contract paperwork is REIQ & Queensland Law Institute approved. ARF has also met contract milestones and revolved one block for approximately the same price of purchase.

Stewardship

The ARF advertised for expressions of interest in stewardship payments to private land owners in the Daintree and mailed all landowners in the area. The basis of the stewardship program is similar to the Queensland EPA’s Nature Assist tender and other programs run by revolving funds.⁸

Public meetings and a number of landowner meetings were also held in the Daintree to explain the stewardship program. Three key issues were raised by Daintree landowners at these meetings:

1. The lack of local expertise to build conservation capacity in the community;

⁸ See footnote 4

2. The impact of feral pigs on private and public land and the lack of capacity of landowners to deal effectively with the problem;
3. The problem of dealing with weeds on private land.

ARF's response was to set up a Daintree Conservation Advisory Committee (DCAC) to develop and help deliver a range of stewardship programs. This was designed to develop capacity within the community through education and training, give Daintree community ownership to the delivery of conservation outcomes (rather than outside providers who were highly criticised) and provide local employment.

The nature of the problems of weeds and feral pigs, i.e. the precinct wide impact rather than an individual landowner impact, meant that a precinct wide response was needed. ARF has committed the following to stewardship programs in the Daintree.

- ARF appointed a Community Conservation Officer to work with the Daintree community in developing and supporting precinct wide and individual stewardship programs and committed to support QPWS and the DSC with a jointly delivered feral pig management program.
- ARF agreed to fund and support the DCAC with a weed education and weed action program targeting weeds on private lands in the Daintree. The Draft Weed Strategy prepared by ARF field staff has been reviewed and found to be professionally prepared, comprehensive and innovative.

Marketing and Education

The contract provides for expenditure on marketing and education with performance indicators being the holding at least two public functions each financial year and a number of prominent news stories in national and regional media.

There is also a requirement that the ARF raise funds from the private sector based on a factor of 2.5 times the money spent from the marketing and education budget. The ARF has raised \$305,000 from the private sector which represents a factor of 1.14.

Comment

There is no evidence available to explain how the 2.5 to 1 ratio was calculated and research appears to indicate that this figure may be higher (against the ARF) than the norm; e.g. Landcare Australia groups in WA were tasked to match Government funding from the private sector on a ratio of 1 to 1

(Source: Funding to Community Landcare Groups in Western Australia: a powerful "New Generation" of soil conservation incentives by T. Nabben)

There is no requirement in the contract to measure the value of other media exposure obtained by ARF other than the number of news stories. The ARF has been very successful in gaining media exposure through the free to air advertisements featuring General Peter Cosgrove. The leverage on this activity has been eleven times the investment.

3.3 Assessment of Outcomes

Appropriateness – *whether the project objectives and delivery is consistent with program objectives and guidance of the Maintaining Australia's Biodiversity Hotspots Program and also for the Cassowary project, the Recovery Plan for the Southern Cassowary.*

The projects' objectives and the mechanisms for delivery were determined by the Department of Environment and Heritage (DEH) now Department of Environment and Water Resources (DEWR) and expressed in the Contracts. Whether they meet Biodiversity Hotspots guidelines or comply with the Cassowary Recovery Plan is an issue for DEWR's further consideration.

Effectiveness – *did the project achieve its stated objectives as reflected in public (Ministerial) statements about desired outcomes; project description; milestones and performance criteria in the contracts; for the Daintree Conservation Initiative, consider also the impact of the Daintree planning environment on project delivery and whether the marketing program and income generated met expectations and assisted to build capital for further land acquisition.*

In assessing the effectiveness of the ARF's delivery of outcomes, the performance criteria in the contract (P61 of the Contract) has been assessed. ARF states that the presentation to the Minister stated the ARF's credentials, resources, combined expertise and their ability to achieve excellent marketing exposure, value for money in low administrative overheads and experience in buying and selling land.

This report finds that the ARF has managed to achieve significant results given the controversial nature of the Daintree, the contrary views and methods of operation for Daintree conservation expressed by the Queensland Government, WTMA and EPA; and the delays experienced in receiving a clear picture of land tenure, landowner rights and compensation issues tied into the delayed APS.

Comment

The first performance measure is the maintenance of the revolving land funds. The contract calls for 75% of the land acquisition funds being held in cash or land value in the Fund - Through its acquisition strategies the ARF has achieved 100.4 % of this figure

The second performance measure does not set a numerical target, but simply says “the number of hectares (of land) protected each year”. It appears contradictory that the ARF is expected to achieve private sector income at 2.5 times the marketing spend – a concise measure; and nine news stories – again a concise measure, but there is no expectation of actual hectares of land acquired.

Land acquisition tables of both ARF and Queensland EPA have been reviewed and it is noted that ARF has purchased considerably better than the EPA. ARF has also previously achieved two blocks donated by owners. ARF is a Deductible Gift Recipient, making such donations a tax deduction to the donor.

Comment

The ARF has acquired 143 hectares of land over 14 titles, valued at \$4,130,000 for the cost of \$3,772,000. This is a leverage of 1.11 at a median per hectare rate of \$26,916.

This rate is well below valuation. In particular, the ARF acquired Lot 6 Cape Tribulation Road, for \$2,000,000. The market price was \$2,600,000 and the registered valuation \$2,300,000.

ARF has consistently acquired land at below valuation using in-house real estate expertise and Board director legal advice to complete land dealings, providing a benefit to the program.

The third performance measure is that “100% of transactions be linked to key conservation outcomes.” Again this is an unusual indicator as ‘key conservation outcomes’ is not defined in the contract. However, as the contract calls for priority acquisition mapping to be provided to ARF by WTMA; and DEH/DEWR has ultimate approval of ARF purchases. It is assumed that the approved purchases would meet this performance indicator.

The fourth performance measure relates to the length of time land is held in the revolving fund. “At least two parcels to be acquired and / or disposed of in each financial year of the project,” is a measure of the ability to revolve the land. ARF has disposed of one block and acquired 14 blocks in the three financial years of the project

Comment

The inability to market 11 of the 14 blocks to a residential market because of the planning scheme restrictions has been an external factor beyond the ARF’s influence.

The fact that ARF has found a buyer for one of the conservation zone blocks is extremely positive.

However the creative development of ‘sponsoring’ or ‘adopting’ rainforest land acquired by ARF and promoted in national media campaign in 2006 has resulted in \$223,000 in private sector income, without the need to sell the land.

The fifth performance indicator relates to communicating World Heritage Values and measures the holding of ‘significant public functions’ and generating ‘three State or National and six regional stories in each financial year.’

The Contract does not specify measures of other media exposure.

Comment

The ARF advised the Department that the controversial nature of the Daintree, particularly the issue of the Douglas Shire Council’s negative publicity and the controversy surrounding the APS, did not provide a media forum for ‘good news stories’ of the Daintree.

The ARF’s ability to then seek considerable national exposure in electronic and print media, with significant leverage, provided a creative way of meeting and exceeding the performance measure.

In excess of \$500,000 of free media exposure was achieved in 2006/07. This would not be possible for a government entity, as ARF’s NGO status assisted in this media placement.

There have been at least two significant public functions in each year as indicated in the Contract. These were held in Cairns, Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide and resulted in donations of \$60,000.

Although, as mentioned earlier, it has not been established whether a multiplier of 2.5 is reasonable or based on any industry standard, ARF advises that it is accepting of this target and that, based on the 2006 result of raising over \$300,000, it is on target to meet this measure by contract end date.

There is some credence to the view that the \$500,000 in free media exposure should be added to the cash earned from the private sector against this performance measure. That would take the ARF's leverage to 2.7 times.

Certainly, this free media would have had to be paid for if the ARF was a government or non charity body.

Secondly, media contacts advise that the uniqueness of having General Cosgrove as the spokesperson for the ARF/Daintree, placed the ARF's message above other community service placements in media.

General Cosgrove would not have made the commercials for another organisation and indeed, he has not endorsed any other product.

In addition, the ARF's acquisition of General Cosgrove as a spokesperson was particularly affective as he was charged at the time with the logistics and mobilisation of the post Cyclone Larry recovery team within the very heart of one of the ARF's primary geographic target markets.

Efficiency – are there other ways to achieve the same outputs/objectives having regard to other community based conservation projects in the region and timescale (i.e. the project was initiated ahead of regional NRM plan and investment strategy and the Biodiversity Hotspots guidelines); Were the projects able to build partnerships with key agencies and stake holders (eg WTMA, EPA, Cassowary recovery team, Daintree Community to coordinate delivery of biodiversity conservation outcomes.

There are of course other ways of delivering a Daintree Conservation Program, however as with the Cassowary Program, the key here is the term "same."

The ARF has delivered considerable added value or leverage to the dollars spent in the various budgets. The good will among the Daintree residents should not be overlooked. A number of

Daintree residents and key community people were interviewed and were adamant that the ARF was the only organisation that they would trust.

The response to the appointment of a dedicated, Daintree based Community Conservation Officer and the allocation of pest and weed funding has been very well received.

ARF has the reputation of listening to the community and more importantly, acting to get on-ground outcomes.

Land could not have been acquired at the same median per hectare rate by government (neither could government accept tax deductible gifts of land or donations).

Comment

It is quite clear that the NGO structure of the ARF, its current staff and Board and the connections into the private sector make it unlikely that the contract objectives and outcomes could be delivered as well by others.

Considerable leverage has been achieved over the contracted outcomes – and this despite a difficult political climate in the Daintree.

The issue of whether the project was able to build partnerships with key stakeholders is an interesting one in the case of the Daintree project. As observed earlier, the Daintree was, and still is, controversial.

The ARF Board and the Commonwealth would be well aware of the political issues which led to them walking away from the Daintree Planning Group and of the reported dysfunctional nature of the Douglas Shire Council during the whole term of the contract.

However a professional working relationship was established between Gaye Scott (managing the EPA's buy back) and the ARF CEO and project officer. This enabled both organisations to share information and not have potential sellers bid up the price.

Comment

The members of the Daintree community interviewed were strong in their praise of the ARF and of the Commonwealth's model for Daintree conservation.

To further illuminate the ARF's perceived status and success rate in this capacity, a number of telephone interviews were conducted during May 2007, with several key identities in the field, namely;

- **Dr Mark Read**, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service
- **Mr. Nigel Tucker**, Director of Biotropica P/L, Author of 'The Cassowary Corridor Report'
- **Mr. Max Chappell**, Acting Director, Wet Tropics Management Authority
- **Gaye Scott, 20/20 Group**. Employed by EPA to manage the Queensland Government's Daintree Buy-Back Program

The interviews were conducted within an open ended framework and transcripts have been provided to the ARF Board.

Transferability – *can the approach be used to implement the project/s be applied to other regions*

The findings of this report indicate that the approach is transferable, providing the core success elements generated and exhibited by ARF are present.

The model for the Daintree, that is the combination of a suite of conservation tools underpinned by the two key elements of a revolving land fund and landowner stewardship, is recognised and practised by most State and Territory conservation NGO's.

The key success factor in this model is the ability of ARF to engage successfully the private sector in supporting conservation on private land.

PERSONS INTERVIEWED

Australian Rainforest Foundation

Roger Phillips, CEO

Steven Garrad, Community Conservation Officer, Tully – Innisfail

Jolyon Ritchie, Community Conservation Officer, Daintree

QPWS

Dr. Mark Read

WTMA

Max Chappell, Acting ED

EPA / DSC

Gaye Scott, 20/20 Group - managing the Council and EPA's land buy back

FNQ NRM

Alan Dale, ED

Science

Nigel Tucker, MD - Biotropica Pty. Ltd.

Community

Paul Smith, Boar Busters and El Arish farmer

Dixie Phillpot, Daintree

Prue Hewett, Daintree

Interviewer's Summary

The interview answers can be extracted to show that:

1. ARF collaborated well with other players;
2. ARF brought to programs NGO/private enterprise approach, able to transact business rapidly with good outcomes;
3. Enhance other organisations programs/work with additional resources and expertise;
4. ARF operated in a difficult political environment and has built good relationships across "whole of government;"
5. ARF has the ability/opportunity to present a neutral face (although this may not have been so from some people's perception), win confidence of stakeholders/communities and foster collaboration across different government departments and organisations.

DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

Cassowary Conservation Project

- Cassowary Conservation Project contract between ARF and DEH
- Cassowary Corridor Report 2000
- ARF Business Plan for the CCP
- A Framework to establish lowland habitat linkages for the southern cassowary (*casuaris casuaris johnsonii*) between Cairns and Cardwell (Referred to as the Updated Cassowary Corridor report 2005)
- An assessment of the Natural Values of Singh / Lomana Corridor (Biotropica)
- An assessment of the Natural Values of lot 5 Leo Road (Biotropica)
- Recovery Plan for the Southern Cassowary
- Purchase and resale contract files – ARF Garners Beach revolved properties
- Legal contracts ARF – all Cassowary files pertaining to land purchase
- Aerial photographs and vegetation mapping of Cassowary Corridor

ARF Administration

- Give A Tree For Life files (ARF)
- Adopt a Square files (ARF)
- ARF Annual Reports and Audited Financial Statements 2004, 2005, 2006
- Competitor Analysis for ARF by Click Communications
- Queensland EPA Audit of ARF Daintree V1 program
- Annual Report FNQ NRM Limited 2005
- Conference Papers, 2007 Conservation Covenanting and Revolving Land Fund Managers Meeting (Canberra)
- ARF quarterly reports to DEH / DEWR
- MoU's and Contracts for stewardship payments (Boar Busters, Cairns City Council, Palmerstone Rocks Nature Refuge, CSIRO, QPWS)
- ARF staff contracts

Daintree Conservation Initiative

- Daintree Conservation Initiative Contract ARF and DEH
- ARF Business Plan for Daintree Conservation Initiative
- Land acquisition tables for EPA and ARF
- Scientific Analysis of ARF blocks (Dr. Reddell)
- Land sponsorship Deeds of Agreement

- Draft Weed Strategy
- Advertising and PR files, ad copy and visuals
- AC Neilson value of media achieved
- ARF quarterly reports to DEH / DEWR
- Legal contracts ARF – all Daintree files pertaining to land purchase and sale
- MoU's and Contracts for stewardship payments (QPWS, DCAC)
- Aerial photographs and priority acquisition maps DV1 from WTMA
- Press releases

ANNEX 1



Australian Government

Department of The Environment and Water Resources

Heritage Division

**Evaluation of the Daintree Conservation Initiative
and Cassowary Conservation Project**

1. Background

In August 2004 Minister Campbell announced an Australian Government allocation of \$6 million for the Daintree Conservation Initiative and Cassowary Conservation to be delivered by the Australian Rainforest Foundation (ARF), with funds provided from the Maintaining Australia's Biodiversity Hotspots Programme.

The Funding Agreement to deliver the Australian Government's contribution to the Daintree Conservation Initiative commenced in April 2005 and identifies three key activities: land acquisition; stewardship support and marketing and education.

The Funding Agreement for the Cassowary Conservation Project commenced in February 2005 and involves the following activities: assessment of a north/south corridor - Cairns to Cardwell, establishment of strategic areas for focus on cassowary research and population, DNA testing research; land acquisition and incentives; revegetation, community education and corporate and community fundraising.

The project period of both projects is due to expire on 30 June 2007 with final reports due on 30 September 2007. The option of further term/s to extend the project period is provided under the Daintree Conservation Initiative contract, with ARF to be notified of the Departments decision by 30 May 2007.

2. Objective

To obtain an independent evaluation of the above projects. The evaluation of these projects will also contribute to the proposed evaluation of the Maintaining Australia's Biodiversity Hotspots Programme and other projects funded under that programme.

3. Scope of Evaluation

The project evaluation will focus on the following questions:

- **Appropriateness** – *whether project objectives and delivery is consistent with programme objective and guidelines of the Maintaining Australia's Biodiversity Hotspot Programme, and also for the Cassowary project, the Recovery Plan for the Southern Cassowary;*
- **Effectiveness** – *did the project achieve its stated objectives as reflected in public (Ministerial) statements about desired outcomes; project description; milestones and performance criteria in the contract/s; For the DCI, consider also the impact of the Daintree planning environment on project delivery; and whether the marketing program and income generated met expectations and assisted to build capital for further land acquisition.*
- **Transferability** – *can the approach used to implement the project/s be applied to other regions.*

Consultant Tasks

In conducting the evaluation, the consultant will be expected to undertake the following tasks:

- site visit to Mission Beach and Daintree;
- desk top review of key documents – contracts, progress and annual reports, related correspondence and communication material;
- interviews with Board and management of ARF;
- interviews with government and community stakeholders associated with the projects including DEH project managers; Wet Tropics Management Authority; QLD Environment Protection Agency; Cassowary Recovery Team; Daintree residents groups etc.
- develop a draft report of evaluation findings to the Department; and
- develop a final report.

4. Available Documentation

- Programme Guidelines
- Financial Agreements
- Progress and Annual Reports for projects
- Project Business Plans
- Media releases
- ANAO report (only if public)
- Project Contact List for interviews

5. Project Budget

TBC

6. Project Contact

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Attachment - Contact List for Interviews

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Daintree and Mission Beach Residents ?