



Australian Government
Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation



The ILSC GROUP

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Information Memorandum

Banka Banka West Station (NT)

The Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation (ILSC) is seeking expressions of interest from individuals or businesses interested in utilising Banka Banka West to operate a pastoral business and caravan park on the property.

The ILSC is the pastoral leaseholder of Banka Banka West Station until such time as the property is transferred to Indigenous people in the future, consistent with the ILSC's legislative mandate (*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act 2005*). In the interim, the ILSC is seeking an operator who is committed to engaging with Traditional Owners and providing employment and training opportunities for Indigenous people in agriculture and tourism.

The ILSC will consider a range of tenure options from prospective operators at Banka Banka West Station, such as a sublease, agistment or a grazing license to run livestock and/or operate the caravan park. It is the ILSC's preference to establish a single contract for both the pastoral and caravan park operations, however other configurations will be considered.

Property

Banka Banka West Station is a 154,300 hectare stand-alone Pastoral Lease NTP 7048 known as PL 1203 (expiry 8 June 2035) and CT 796 /173. The property is located approximately 100km north of Tennant Creek in the Barkly Tablelands region. The ILSC holds a Non-Pastoral Use permit (expiry 8 June 2035), allowing the conduct of non-pastoral activity for tourism purposes. The property is accessed directly from the Stuart Highway, which bisects the property from southeast to northwest.

Banka Banka West is in the northern end of the Davenport Murchison Ranges bioregion, a hilly transition zone between the Tanami to the west and the Barkly Tablelands to the east. The property includes gently sloping low rocky ranges with heavily weathered sandy and red clay soils and plains incorporating transition areas between red sand and black clay soils.

Four main creeks with catchments in the hilly country on the western sides of the property drain across to the east. Creek lines are generally sandy with occasional gravel sections and a range of ephemeral to semi-permanent waterholes. Springs are located in several areas of the property, including at the eastern flank of the hills to the west of the Stuart Highway and various other parts of the property.

Creeks and waterholes generally include a fringe of Red Gums with an understorey dominated by introduced Buffel Grass and other perennial grasses. Vegetation on the hilly and red-soil country is predominantly eucalypt low, open woodland and acacia-sparse shrubland over hummock (Spinifex) grassland. Transition country (mixed red and black soil plains) includes low eucalypt woodland and dense woody shrub patches with turpentine (*Acacia* sp.).

Banka Banka West lies in an area of predominantly summer rainfall, with maximum rainfall in February. The mean February rainfall 123.7 mm, and mean annual rainfall is 470.5 mm. The mean maximum temperature is 31.9 C, with a mean minimum temperature of 19.8 C.

Infrastructure

The homestead area includes the main residence, stockman's quarters, store, camp kitchen, laundry, ablution block, workshop and various sheds and a third house used by a tour company.

Services provided on the subject include water, reticulated from a natural spring fed bore supply reticulated to a header tank. Power is generated onsite with a 55 KVA Hino diesel motor. All buildings have septic sewer systems. Tennant Creek is the nearest service centre providing all major financial, school and local amenity style facilities. Telephone connections are available at the main homestead with a Telstra phone facility available.

Fencing on the property is typically 3 barb star picket with steel corner and gate assemblies in average condition. Land fenced for cattle production covers 620 km² or approximately 40% of the property and is divided into eight paddocks watered by bores, waterholes and dams. The main processing yards are situated on the highway opposite the homestead complex, have a permanent load ramp and are well watered.

The property currently has eight operational water points, including the dam and waterhole. Numerous bores exist on the property, many of which are currently not in use, but proposed to be equipped over coming months.

Business Operations

BBW supports three businesses, a pastoral operation (currently inactive), a tourism enterprise and an operational mine.

Pastoral Operation

Until December 2018, the pastoral operation was managed and operated by the ILSC subsidiary, Australian Indigenous Agribusiness Company. The ILSC is now transitioning away from being a principal operator to focus instead on investing in and building the capacity of Indigenous agribusiness enterprises.

In 2015, a desktop carrying capacity assessment of Banka Banka West was carried out by the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries. The report estimates that with current infrastructure and land condition the long term carrying capacity of Banka Banka West is 836 animal equivalents (AE), assuming a run of average rainfall years and a 3km watered area radius. The report also states that if all of the area within the existing fences was fully watered, and in its present land condition, with a run of average rainfall years the area would carry 2,825 AE.

Semi-permanent water is available through the drainage and river systems in the Attack Creek river systems but the level of rainfall most natural waters dry up and allow trap muster techniques to be utilised later in the season.

Caravan Park

The caravan/camping ground is located at the homestead area and includes camping areas, unpowered sites, a museum and a general store. Facilities include hot showers, toilets with disabled access, a laundry and a bush kitchen with water and gas cooking facilities. The caravan park is open all year and can accommodate up to 100 guests per night. Maximum capacity is regularly reached during peak season, between April and September, with approximately 12,000 visitors per year.

Activities offered to visitors include a 2km scenic walk to a waterhole located north of the homestead and a museum displaying old pastoral equipment and documents and photographs relating to the history of the property.

A Northern Territory based tour company has a standing arrangement with the caravan park and uses a dedicated site at the caravan park 2-4 times per week, contributing approximately 30% of total visitors.

In addition to camping fees, other income is derived from the sale of beverages and merchandise.

Mining Lease

The Bootu Creek manganese mine operated by OM (Manganese) Ltd is located northeast of the homestead. The mine is subject to the Bootu Creek Mining Native Title Agreement administered by the NLC. The agreement with the Traditional Owners includes establishing a management structure to provide TO involvement and oversight of the mining process and provides for a training and employment program.

The ILSC has no environmental or heritage obligations or responsibilities in regards to the mine area, however when the mine is decommissioned Traditional Owners will have an interest in ensuring that the site is appropriately remediated.

Environmental and Heritage Values

Banka Banka West has a rich history and is known to have significant environmental and heritage values.

Environmental Values

Areas of ecological significance within Banka Banka West offer important habitat for native fauna, with the south western area identified as suitable habitat for the Greater Bilby. Migrating wetland birds and resident populations of aquatic species, birds and animals utilise the unique vegetation assemblages across Banka Banka West.

Waterholes and springs are critical refuge areas for wildlife, particularly in times of drought, however they also offering refuge to domestic livestock and feral animals resulting in land degradation and reduced water quality.

Two endangered species, the Golden Bandicoot and Common Brushtail Possum (Central Australian population) were identified on the EPBC Act Protected Matters search tool as likely inhabitants of Banka Banka West or surrounds. Seven vulnerable species within Northern Territory have been recorded in the area immediately surrounding Banka Banka West. Of these, the Greater Bilby and Brush tailed Mulgara are the most recent and in the greatest numbers.

Cultural Heritage

In relation to the Banka Banka West pastoral lease, there are six Aboriginal estate or landholding groups which 'speak for country'; the Marntikara, Kunapa and Pirttangu estates affiliated with the Warumungu language, and the Ngarrka, Kangawarla and Kanturrpa estates affiliated with the Warlmanpa language.¹ A native title application filed in 2001 is expected to be resolved with a native title determination over Banka Banka West Station in the coming months.

Significant cultural values of Banka Banka West include:

- 61 sites of cultural importance registered or recorded by AAPA, including burial and ceremonial sites, stone engravings, art, rock holes and ochre quarry sites
- Ancestral references to Attack Creek
- Continuity of sites for ceremonies, usually undertaken by hunting groups
- Current hunting and foraging trips managed through customary rights.

Under section 19A-22 of the *Northern Territory Sacred Sites Act 1989*, AAPA have placed conditions around these sites and have provided a property map, which identifies Restricted Work Areas. All activities on the property must be undertaken in a manner that protects these values.

The ILSC and Banka Banka Traditional Owners have proposed the establishment of a Banka Banka TO Steering Committee comprised of representatives of all six Aboriginal land-owning groups to provide input into the management of the property with respect to cultural and environmental values.

Built Heritage

The original mudbrick homestead is a registered National Trust building and protected under the Heritage Conservation Act. The building originally served as the homestead on the property, and in later years as accommodation for Indigenous station employees. It currently operates as a general store and museum.

Business Opportunities

Pastoral improvements

The ILSC are currently undertaking a program of good order works to maintain and upgrade existing infrastructure, which is expected to be completed this financial year. Subject to the outcome of this expression of interest process, the ILSC is also proposing further investment in infrastructure improvements over the coming financial year to improve productivity and the economic viability of the pastoral and tourism enterprises.

¹ Report to the ILC: Planning and Undertaking Aboriginal Engagement, Banka Banka West Station, NT (Draft) S. D. Donaldson, March 2019.

Cultural Tourism

Opportunities exist to engage Traditional Owners in the development and delivery of cultural tourism offerings from Banka Banka Station, such as cultural experiences for visitors, sale of local art work, establishment of walking trails for self-guided walks, development of a cultural centre and guided foot and vehicle based tours. Traditional Owners have indicated a strong interest in engaging with visitors to Banka Banka and the steering committee will provide a means for the operator to consult with TOs in order to develop these opportunities.