

**2009 – PGA ANNUAL CONVENTION**

**GROWING INDIGENOUS PARTICIPATION  
IN THE WA PASTORAL INDUSTRY**

*Presentation by*  
**MS. SHIRLEY MCPHERSON**

**Chairperson, Indigenous Land Corporation**

**27 February 2009**

**Perth**

(INTRODUCTION , CHAIR PGA PASTORAL COMMITTEE)

***Thank you for your kind introduction.***

**It is a great pleasure to be here and I would like to thank the PGA for its invitation to address delegates at this session.**

**I am a Yamatji woman, from Western Australia and I take this opportunity to recognise the Noongar traditional owners of the country on whose land we are meeting today.**

**As the Chairperson of the Indigenous Land Corporation, I am proud that the ILC is both a member of the PGA and a sponsor of this conference in Perth.**

**In my presentation today I would like to focus on the practical work the ILC is doing to assist increased Indigenous participation in the WA Pastoral industry.**

**The ILC is very much about rolling up its sleeves and working collaboratively with Aboriginal people, key industry sectors, Governments at all levels and the wider community to get real runs on the board.**

**A recent example of this is the ILC decision to become a signatory to the Australian Employment Covenant which has been championed by Andrew Forrest from Fortescue Metals Group.**

**The Australian Employment Covenant is all about working with the business community to create training opportunities and jobs for Indigenous people for the benefit of the whole community.**

**The ILC has launched a major Indigenous Employment and Training Strategy on its business properties with targets of creating 410 jobs and 500 training opportunities over the next three years.**

**This is exactly what the ILC is on about – providing training that leads to real employment opportunities for Indigenous people.**

**The ILC Board strongly believes that a sound education, skills development and training that leads to employment are the key building blocks towards Indigenous economic development.**

**As an extension to this strategic approach, the ILC Board has directed that the pastoral and tourism industries will be priorities in terms of economic activity over the next five years and this has set the direction for the ILC in terms of creating economic opportunities.**

**Today, I would like to give you an overview of the positive developments underway on a number of Indigenous-owned pastoral properties in WA along with some major**

**developments on ILC-owned properties in the North of Western Australia.**

**Broome Export Cattle Yards**

**The ILC is currently developing a live cattle export yard next to the ILC-owned Roebuck Plains Station near Broome.**

**I will talk further about our Roebuck Plains Station operation later in this presentation but for the moment would like to focus on the Roebuck Export Depot.**

**The ILC is investing close to \$2 million to establish the yards as a fully commercial, accredited export cattle business with a capacity of up to 8,000 head of cattle at any one time.**

**The yards will boost economic development in the general community and also create Indigenous jobs and training opportunities.**

**In 2004 the ILC acquired a special lease adjacent to Roebuck Plains Station.**

**The lease had export yards that would hold up to 1,000 head of cattle, but they were not completely finished by the then owner.**

**Construction of the new, expanded yards is well underway, steel has arrived on site, a yard manager has been employed,**

**a new bore has been sunk – there is a lot of activity on site with completion scheduled for April this year.**

**Daily rates will be finalised by the end of this month and cattle from Roebuck Plains Station will be run through the facility to ‘test’ it, prior to commercial use.**

**The Manager of the new Roebuck Export Depot is Paul Heil, formerly with Harvey Feed Lot, who began work on site earlier this month.**

**The ILC will be briefing key stakeholders and conducting an information campaign about the yards from early next month and the official opening is scheduled for the 1<sup>st</sup> of May this year.**

**The ILC’s new export cattle yard business will provide a unique opportunity for six full-time Indigenous trainees per year gain invaluable skills in the cattle industry, as well as the opportunity to travel overseas with the export cattle on the boats.**

**As a part of the joint WA Government and ILC Kimberley Indigenous Management Support Service pastoral program, the yards will also assist existing Aboriginal pastoral properties with timely marketing, together with the possibility of consolidating cattle loads from different properties, which will increase prices paid for cattle.**

**When the ILC announced its cattle yard project, it received strong support from organisations such as LiveCorp and the WA Pastoralists and Graziers Association.**

**I think it is worthwhile to repeat a comment made by LiveCorp CEO Cameron Hall regarding the ILC's decision to build and operate registered export yards at Broome.**

***“This investment will assist the continuing growth of this vital trade for cattle producers and livestock exporters from Northern WA. In 2007 more than 90,000 cattle were exported from Broome to South East Asian markets, and demand is expected to continue to grow over the next three years” he said.***

***“The live cattle trade contributes \$198 million to the Western Australian economy each year with \$87 million generated in the northern region of the state and \$111 million generated in the southern region.***

***“The livestock export industry employs 1,045 northern Western Australians including farming families, Indigenous landowners, exporters, stockmen, road transport providers, dockside workers and others that provide services to the trade such as veterinarians and fodder suppliers.”***

**I think that quote underlines the importance of the collaborative effort between the ILC, the WA Government, Indigenous land owners and the wider pastoral industry and what we can achieve when we all work together.**

**The Broome Export Cattle yards project is one example of how the ILC is significantly increasing its efforts to boost pastoral activity on Indigenous-held land in Western Australia.**

**This includes support to both ILC-purchased and other Indigenous-held properties.**

**The ILC continues to pursue collaborative initiatives to generate improvements in the productive use of Indigenous-held land and improved training and employment outcomes.**

### **KIMMS**

**A good example of this approach in the North is the Kimberly Indigenous Management Support Service - or KIMMS as we call it.**

**The ILC and WA Department of Agriculture and Food jointly fund KIMSS to train and mentor Indigenous people involved in operating a business on Indigenous-held pastoral leases.**

**The key to the success of KIMSS is in the strong partnership between the ILC, DAFWA and the Indigenous pastoral leases that work within the project.**

**The KIMSS project has shown that cattle turn off, animal health, and social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits are greater on properties where the ILC has invested in infrastructure and herd genetics.**

**18 of the 25 Indigenous-held pastoral leases in the Kimberley are involved in the KIMSS project which means more than 18,500 square kilometres of Indigenous land are now under increasingly effective management.**

**This has seen the Indigenous herd size increase by about 8% in recent years and turnoff has also increased dramatically.**

**This resulted in the creation of 18 additional full-time jobs and 56 part-time jobs during 2007-08 and this is expected to grow further this year.**

**Under the program, intensive management support and capacity development is currently being provided to Noonkanbah, Millijiddee, Lake Gregory, Billiluna, Lamboo, Mowla Bluff, Mowanjum, Frazier Downs and Mt Barnett Stations.**



**Other Indigenous-held pastoral leases including Gibb River, Tablelands, Bow River, Burks Park, Elvire, Glen Hill, Koonjie Park, Milliwindie and Mt Pierre have also received assistance.**

**The ILC Board recently approved approximately \$800,000 to develop infrastructure and improve herd genetics at Mt Barnett, Mowanjum and Millijiddee Stations.**

**This money will help purchase bulls, erect nearly 100 km of fencing, establish seven water points, and repair or build new yards, cattle crushes, loading ramps and panels on each property.**

**KIMMS has been such a successful model in the North that a similar program is now operating in the Pilbara.**

### **PIMMS**

**The Pilbara Indigenous Management Support Service, or PIMMS, is collaboration between the ILC, DAFWA and Rio Tinto Iron Ore.**

**The partnership, which runs to 2010, represents a significant strategic move in the Pilbara to improve the performance of Indigenous-held pastoral enterprises with the ILC contributing \$600,000 and DAFWA \$800,000.**

**Rio Tinto has contributed \$508,000 to help train, employ and mentor 9 Indigenous trainees starting in March and April this year.**

**Four of the trainees will be involved with pastoral industry work, one with business administration and four with natural resource management.**

**In the past 12 months the PIMSS team has provided advice and assistance to four of the eight Pilbara Indigenous-held pastoral leases and there have already been positive outcomes derived from this support.**

**At Mt Welcome Station, after 15 years of inactivity on the pastoral lease, the station agisted 300 head of cattle in 2008 from neighbouring Mardi Station.**

**The ILC contributed \$70,000 to fix fences and yards, and install new water points on a section of the station to enable the agistment of the Mardi cattle. To date Mt Welcome has gained 60 head of heifers from the agistment agreement.**

**In July and August 2008, Peedamulla Station cattle topped the Geraldton cattle yard sales. It was the first time Peedamulla had attended the sale and they were very happy with the result! This is a real coup for the property and is due to an increase in cattle numbers and quality.**

**An additional 300 head of cattle were mustered in 2008 – an increase of about 10% of the total herd in.**

**This has come about from the uptake of advice from PIMSS on improved herd management and disease control. The managers of Peedamulla have been greatly encouraged by such a rapid improvement and will continue to liaise with PIMSS staff.**

**At Ullawarra Station – after years of internal conflict, the PIMSS team facilitated the formation of a new Aboriginal corporation to hold the pastoral lease. In 2009, the PIMSS team will work closely with the new corporation to improve basic infrastructure and increase cattle turn off.**

**In the last half of 2008, the PIMSS team assisted Yandeyarra Station to complete a muster which provided a much-needed return to the community.**

**Another important development in WA has seen the establishment of the Indigenous Pastoral Enterprise Development Service (IPED) which is working with Aboriginal landholders, industry and government agencies to generate land-based economic activity and employment.**

**IPED works on a case by case basis to:**

- Address any legal impediments to business development on Aboriginal held land;**

- **Develop appropriate structures for Aboriginal businesses,**
- **Strengthen the management and governance of Aboriginal enterprises: and**
- **Broker training to allow Aboriginal people to develop the skills to access employment opportunities either within their own enterprises or elsewhere.**

**IPED's approach allows Aboriginal people to generate economic activity and employment on their own land.**

**In addition, it provides local people with the skills necessary to find employment either on site or elsewhere.**

**IPED works extensively with the joint DAFWA and ILC Indigenous Management Support Services to address station-specific issues in the Kimberley, Pilbara and Gascoyne regions.**

**For instance, in the case of Ullawarra Station in the Ashburton and Mt Welcome Station in the Pilbara, IPED addressed high level governance and tenure issues, after which DAFWA and the ILC through its Pilbara Indigenous Management Support Service supported management and practical training.**

**I am pleased to be able to say that these examples of a collaborative approach, so evident in the North of WA, are being replicated across other Indigenous-held pastoral leases in the NT and Queensland.**

### *Future Direction*

**The ILC will continue to foster the growth of a sustainable Indigenous pastoral industry by developing further pastoral businesses and creating centres for pastoral training.**

**It is envisaged that, in the next five years, the ILC will develop 1.1 million hectares of land for cattle production and run approximately 100,000 head of cattle on Indigenous-held land across Australia to create significant economic, employment and training opportunities for Indigenous people.**

### *ILC Operated Businesses*

**Another important initiative by the ILC involves the direct management of businesses on ILC-purchased land.**

**These are predominantly pastoral industry businesses across Northern Australia covering approximately two million hectares and operating 66,000 head of cattle and 20,000 sheep but also including a pastoral-based tourism venture in the Kimberly, called Home Valley Station.**

**The ILC has 14 businesses which are run on a commercial basis and seek to generate profits which are reinvested in improved infrastructure and skills development and training for Indigenous employees.**

**Across the 12 businesses that have cattle, the ILC herd grew over the 2007-08 financial year from 54,000 to over 66,000 head.**

**Indigenous employees are engaged wherever possible on ILC businesses and the ILC looks to all opportunities to provide training and development support for them. In 2007-08, the ILC employed 271 Indigenous employees in full-time, casual and seasonal jobs on its business properties.**

**This point is best illustrated with some Western Australian case studies of what the ILC is doing to make this happen in its own businesses.**

#### **Roebuck Plains Station**

**I mentioned Roebuck Plains Station at the start of my presentation regarding the development of the export cattle yards.**

**But, Roebuck Plains Station is also a successful cattle operation in its own right and is playing a pivotal role as a residential, on-the-job training hub for young Indigenous trainee pastoral workers from across the Kimberley and Pilbara regions.**

**The 283,000 hectare station just outside Broome runs more than 21,000 head of cattle aimed mainly at the Asian export market.**

**The ILC has built state-of-the-art training and worker accommodation facilities on the station including male and female living units, a staff kitchen and dining area, classrooms and recreation facilities including a swimming pool and basketball court.**

**The first intake of Indigenous trainees started in October 2007.**

**Four trainees graduated in November 2008 and all have been offered employment on the station.**

**The second intake started in May 2008 and of that intake two trainees are continuing and will complete their Certificate II in Beef cattle production in May this year.**

**A third intake of eight trainees started at Roebuck earlier this month (February 2009) and trainees are currently undertaking Certificate 1 in work readiness at Broome TAFE.**

**From April this year the trainees will all live on the property and continue their Certificate 2 up to Nov 2009.**

**The trainees are employed full time through Kimberley Group Training (KGT), paid industry wages and are hosted by the ILC.**

**A resident Indigenous trainer from Broome/Derby TAFE and an Indigenous trainee supervisor /mentor coordinate the young workers on a daily basis and ensure they are fully integrated into daily operations on the cattle property.**

**At Roebuck Plains, training qualifications have been aligned to the property's operational plan to ensure the delivery of practical and technical training is synchronised with daily property operations.**

**This provides the trainees with the best possible “real time” industry experience and practical learning.**

**During the wet season, when access to the outer reaches of Roebuck Plains is limited, additional technical training will be undertaken including motor vehicle/bike licences and heavy plant operator's certificates.**

**Roebuck Plains Station is the model for training hubs at other ILC-owned pastoral business across the North of Australia.**



### Myroodah Station

**At the ILC's Myroodah Station, 120 kilometres south east of Derby, a combination of major infrastructure development and gearing up for Indigenous trainees is underway.**

**As I speak, the finishing touches are being applied to new accommodation facilities for 10 trainees and workers at the station.**

**The plan is to take trainees, who have graduated with their Certificate 1 & 2 in Beef Cattle Production at Roebuck Plains Station and want to do Certificate 3, out to Myroodah which supports a herd of over 20,000 cattle.**

**There is plenty of work to be done as infrastructure on the 405,800 hectare property, particularly water, was badly in need of repair when the ILC purchased it in 1999.**

**This year alone will see the construction of over 600 kms of fencing and laneways, 24 new water points, nine trap yards and two new sets of cattle yards.**

### Cardabia Station

**At Cardabia Station near Coral Bay, the ILC is working closely with traditional owners, who are members of Baiyungu Aboriginal Corporation, to develop training courses in heavy machinery skills.**

**The 199,000 hectare property started life as a sheep station but is gradually transitioning to cattle production.**

**There are currently 3,500 cattle on the property and 8,500 sheep.**

**A feasibility study is underway into organic beef production on the property.**

### **Home Valley Station**

**The ILC's Home Valley Station is located about 150 kilometres West of Kununurra on the Gibb River Road.**

**Home Valley is showing that pastoral-based tourism can offer significant training and employment opportunities for Indigenous communities.**

**The tourism activities at Home Valley are fully integrated into the pastoral activities at the station with tourists participating in horse riding and property inspections accompanied by Indigenous guides.**

**Home Valley currently runs 2,000 head of shorthorn cattle, 237 Brahman cattle and work is currently underway to upgrade and grow the herd.**

**While the tourists may come and go, the training and employment opportunities the station now provides is a legacy which will be handed on to future generations.**

**Home Valley has accommodation and training facilities and can support 10 trainees and an apprentice chef and mechanic.**

**There are currently nine trainees at Home Valley with the current group having started in August 2008 and due to finish in July 2009.**

**During the wet season, trainees study at TAFE IN Kununurra.**

*Closing remarks:*

**My address to you today was designed to showcase the significant effort underway in Western Australia to boost output from Indigenous-held pastoral properties.**

**There is some great work being done and it is already delivering significant immediate benefits in terms of animal health, productivity, sustainable land management and infrastructure development.**

**But, it is the long-term benefits in terms of Indigenous training, employment and economic development and associated gains in areas such as improved health, education and self –esteem, that is the real story behind the various projects underway in Western Australia.**

**This work is helping boost economic development in rural, regional and remote areas in WA and that is good for everyone – especially in these times of a world financial downturn.**

**We should all be proud of the progress of significant projects and collaborations on Indigenous-held pastoral properties in Western Australia.**

**Certainly, the ILC is proud of its involvement in this vital work.**

**The ILC remains committed to actively seeking out land-based economic opportunities which will provide long term and sustainable benefits to Indigenous people.**

**The ILC is about delivering real benefits, training and employment through a strategic and practical investment in partnership with traditional owners, government and private enterprise.**

**Ultimately, the ILC believes that economic development along with other key challenges such as education, health, housing and infrastructure, will provide the tools, capacity, pride and dignity that are needed so that there is true equality in life and opportunity for the Indigenous peoples of Australia.**

**Thank you.**

### **Position relevant to presentation**

- **Me – Northern Australia Land & Water Taskforce**
- **David Galvin – Member of LiveCorp**