



**Australian Government**  
**Indigenous Land Corporation**

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**SUBMISSION TO:**

***House of Representatives Economics Committee***  
***Inquiry into Indigenous economic development in Queensland and***  
***review of the Wild Rivers (Environmental Management) Bill 2010***

## About the ILC

The ILC is an independent statutory authority of the Australian Government, established in 1995 to assist Indigenous Australians *acquire and manage land* to achieve economic, environmental, social and cultural benefits. The ILC is governed by an Indigenous-controlled Board appointed by the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

The ILC has two programs that align with its functions – Land Acquisition and Land Management.

### Land Acquisition

The ILC acquires and grants land to Indigenous corporations to build a secure and sustainable land base for Indigenous people. At 30 June 2010, the ILC had acquired 231 properties, of which 149 have been granted to Indigenous corporations.

Properties are acquired for a range of reasons, including to create or expand Indigenous businesses, generate employment, deliver social services and protect significant environmental and cultural heritage values.

### Land Management

The ILC's land management program assists Indigenous landholders to manage and develop their land to achieve sustainable benefits.

Indigenous landholders are assisted projects that range from property planning to infrastructure development works and environmental management activities. The ILC also collaborates with Australian and state/territory government agencies, Indigenous land councils and industry on regional projects that provide advice, planning, capacity-building, mentoring, infrastructure development and capital to Indigenous landowners throughout regional Australia.

## ILC Priorities

The ILC's priorities for Indigenous people include socio-economic development and access to and protection of cultural and environmental values.

### Socio-economic development

The ILC Board places priority on the creation of Indigenous employment outcomes and the development of sustainable Indigenous businesses. It believes that this is best achieved through

participation in mainstream industries. To this end, the ILC provides the following forms of land acquisition and land management assistance:

1. Acquiring land to develop businesses and create employment;
2. Operating businesses in the tourism and pastoral industries in regional and remote Australia;
3. Negotiating commercial leases with Indigenous landowners to develop infrastructure and capacity;
4. Collaborating with government agencies, Indigenous land councils and industry to develop property/business plans and capacity, as well as provide business advice, mentoring, and developing infrastructure;
5. Exploring emerging opportunities in Indigenous custodianship and offsetting greenhouse gas emissions; and
6. Maximising Indigenous services and employment in the operation of businesses and when undertaking infrastructure and construction works.

#### Cultural and environmental values

The ILC recognises the importance of land to Indigenous people's cultural identity, and is committed to assisting Indigenous people acquire and manage land of cultural and environmental significance, and to protecting and maintaining the cultural and environmental values of Indigenous-held land.

The ILC is bound by the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act 2005* (Cth), which requires it to pursue sound land and environmental management practices in performing its functions. The *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth) provides further legislative obligations around management of environmental and other heritage matters, including the development of a Heritage Strategy. Through its Heritage Strategy, the ILC works to identify and appropriately manage heritage values of all properties it owns.

The ILC strives to meet all its legislative requirements, including those of the *Wild Rivers Act 2005* (Queensland), in its undertakings on declared wild river areas.

## ILC activities located in Wild River Areas

Wild river declarations affect a number of ILC land interests on Cape York Peninsula. All or part of the following ILC-acquired properties fall within current Wild Rivers Areas:

- Geikie Station
- Merepah Station
- Silver Plains
- Bulimba

Geikie, Silver Plains and Bulimba have been divested to Indigenous groups, but the ILC continues to operate a pastoral business on Bulimba. The ILC holds title to Merepah and operates a pastoral business on the property.

On 6 May 2009, the ILC applied to the Queensland Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM) for approval to clear vegetation and construct fence lines traversing a number of watercourses in the Archer Basin wild river area. This application was assessed against Part P of the *Wild Rivers Code* and was approved in full on 16 July 2009.

Further to land acquisitions and grants, the ILC is involved with key land management projects in the region, including the Cape York Indigenous Pastoral Project, and is currently assessing the proposed development of Billy's Lagoon as an ILC-operated pastoral business.

Key ILC projects in Cape York wild river areas are highlighted in **Attachment 1**.

## **Attachment 1 – ILC projects in Cape York wild river areas**

### **MEREPAH STATION**

Merepah is a 186,000ha property that was transferred to the ILC upon the dissolution of ATSIC in 2005. Since the ILC took over the title, the station has seen development of a new residential-based Indigenous pastoral training centre, cultural heritage work undertaken by Traditional Owners; and a major infrastructure construction and herd upgrade program. Part of the property falls within the Archer Basin wild river area.

In 2009 the ILC was granted approval by DERM for fencing work to be undertaken within high priority areas of the wild river area. The ILC has spent \$4 million on new fencing and waters and currently runs a cattle herd of 8,000, which will grow to 14,000.

### **BULIMBA STATION**

Bulimba is a 294,740ha pastoral station situated west of Cairns. The ILC acquired the property in 1996 and divested it to Uwoykand Tribal Aboriginal Corporation (UTAC) in September 1999. UTAC and the ILC established a 20-year partnership in 2007 to establish a major enterprise. To date, the ILC has spent \$4 million upgrading infrastructure, and establishing a residential-based Indigenous pastoral training centre, mostly hosting trainees from the ILC's Crocodile/Welcome Station training program. Part of the property falls within the Staaten wild river area.

### **CAPE YORK INDIGENOUS LAND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECT (CYILEDP)**

The CYILEDP is a strategic land management project that aims to explore opportunities, and increase the capacity of Indigenous land holders and managers, across Cape York. Initially focused on the pastoral industry, it has expanded in scope and now aims to support Aboriginal Land Trusts to identify and develop a broader range of economic development opportunities including ecotourism, carbon abatement, land and ecosystem management, biofuel production and art and craft.

The ILC is collaborating with Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation and the Cape York Welfare Reform partnership to deliver the project outcomes. This project involves assessing, identifying and planning in relation to the viability of economic opportunities on land that has been transferred to Indigenous Land Trust ownership through the Queensland State Land Dealings and National Park transfer process. In some cases, these land parcels may overlap with declared Wild River areas.

## **BILLY'S LAGOON**

Billy's Lagoon, owned by the Napranum Aboriginal Shire Council, is a pastoral property that falls within the Wenlock Basin wild river area. It is currently being assessed as a future ILC-operated business, in conjunction with the Council and Traditional Owners that will bring Indigenous-held land back into production and provide long term income and employment. ILC-funded development is projected to include construction of cattle yards and upgrading of training and administration facilities to incorporate structured training and employment programs providing 20 short term jobs, 12 long term jobs, and traineeships for 32 local Indigenous people.

## **Attachment 2– other ILC projects in Cape York Peninsula**

The ILC is involved in a range of other land acquisition and land management projects in the Cape York region. As shown in Figure 1, there are a range of properties that have been acquired and granted to Indigenous corporations. There have also been a number of land management projects funded for Indigenous landholders to assist them with development of businesses and capacity to manage land.

Three highly significant ILC projects that are currently being undertaken in the area are:

### **CROCODILE AND WELCOME STATIONS**

The ILC's acquisition of the Station and development of the cattle enterprise, along with the successful operation of a residential, employment-based pastoral training program for Indigenous trainees, has seen Crocodile/Welcome evolve into a regional training hub for the northern Australia cattle industry. The program on Crocodile/Welcome has received national exposure for the successes it has achieved.

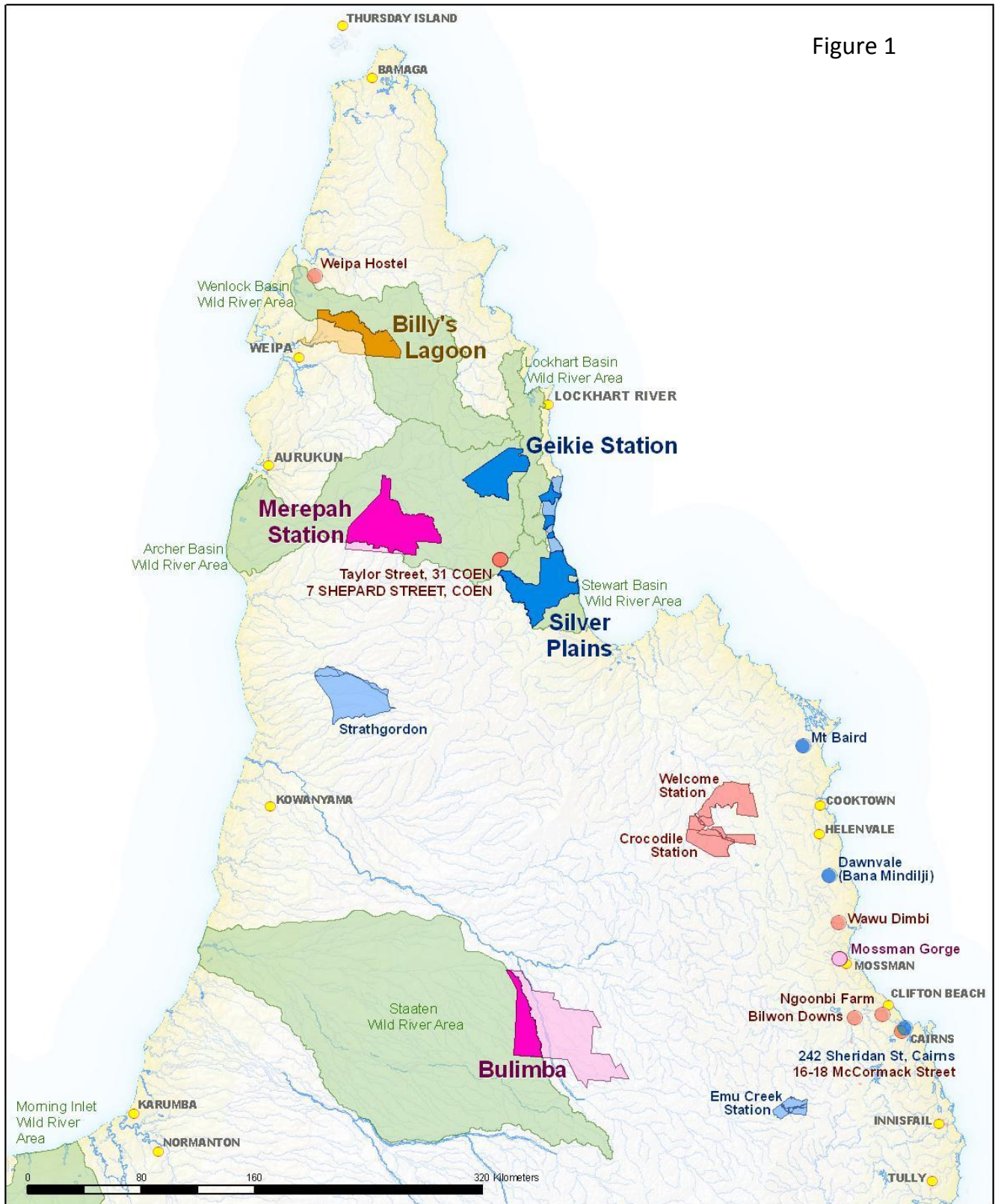
### **MOSSMAN GORGE TOURISM VISITOR AND TRAINING CENTRE**

Mossman Gorge Gateway Centre will be a world-class tourism experience for the 500,000 people who visit the World Heritage-listed Mossman Gorge each year. Construction of the \$20 million Gateway Centre will generate 40 new Indigenous jobs when it opens and up to 70 new jobs in the peak tourism season. In addition to the visitor centre, the ILC is building a residential tourism and hospitality training facility to cater for 50 Indigenous trainees each year.

### **WEIPA STUDENT HOSTEL**

The ILC is funding the construction of a 120 bed Indigenous secondary student boarding hostel at Weipa. The new facility will be a boarding facility for Cape York Indigenous secondary school students, both male and female, to enable them to attend the Western Cape College. This project is part of the Australian Government's Indigenous Boarding Hostels Partnership.

Figure 1



**ILC Land Interests, Wild Rivers**

Cape York Wild River Areas, Cape York Peninsula, QLD

- Proposed ILC Operated Business (ILC 2011)
- ILC Operated Business (ILC 2011)
- ILC Acquired Land - Non Commercial Business (ILC 2011)
- ILC Granted Land - Non Commercial Business (ILC 2011)
- Wild River Preservation Area (DERM 2010)

**Note:** There are currently no active Land Management Projects based on non-ILC properties in the Wild River protected areas.



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