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Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your discussion paper on Indigenous Sustainability.

Obviously this topic will mean different things to different Aboriginal communities, Family groups, and Individuals. Out there in the bush there are Aboriginal people at many different stages along what some believe are pathways to Independence, while others believe they are getting nowhere.

For those Aboriginal people that are strongly connected to thousands of generations of their spirituality, sustainability means caring for country, and caring for country means caring for everything associated with that country in a sustainable way. In every instance where this is the case, you will find that these people have maintained their cultural beliefs as a direct result of having access to their traditional homelands. You will also find that very few have escaped the influence of the white man. This of course has resulted in a breakdown in the intergenerational transfer of knowledge, and where this is the case only a select few have been charged with the responsibility of keeping the ancient laws alive. These people have been echoing this through the generations since the white man came to stay.

I say lets put some common sense back into this issue by releasing the hand brake and let the Aboriginal cultural revival begin in earnest with the blessing and support of Governments etc. I have long subscribed to the adage that no one looks after me better than me.

For these people this is Spiritual Inevitability as all their hope is based on the belief that through their spirituality there will be a return to total control of their own destiny.

There are also those people that have this feeling of absolute hopelessness, and no matter what programs they try to change their situation their frame of mind tells them it will never be good enough. These people have had so much mud thrown at them, they actually believe that some of it has stuck. Most of these people have been removed from their traditional homelands, and Therefore, they have suffered the full impact of cultural deprivation. Many of the older members of this group were raised in Christian Missions to be domestics, servants, and labourers, and for the greater part of their working lives they were told what to do, how to do it, and, when to do it. These people now find themselves in a situation where they are expected to have all the answers, and contribute the bulk of input into solving the socio economic problems for themselves and their communities.

There are also a large number of Aboriginal communities, family groups, and Individuals at varying stages of cultural poverty scattered somewhere in between the two groups of people that I have mentioned above.

My contribution to this discussion is to share with you what we have been doing at the Department of Conservation and Land Management. In 1995 CALM set up a Unit to deal with anything to do with Aboriginal Cultural matters, Therefore, I would like to share this with you as it shows a clear and genuine commitment toward creating workable and sustainable models in the area of Aboriginal Cultural Tourism, and Aboriginal Cultural Education programs.

In 1995 the Indigenous Heritage Unit at CALM set up in partnership with the Hills Forest Activity Centre CALM Mundaring, a number of Aboriginal Cultural Activity Programs, Initially these programs were used as a training ground for IHU staff, and as staff skills developed and improved so came the need for a greater challenge.

So IHU staff looked toward Cultural Tourism, and in partnership with the Maritime Museum, the Fremantle Aboriginal Heritage Walking Tour was set up, This one hour tour tells the story of the Fremantle area and the impact of white settlement on the Aboriginal people.

Also IHU staff developed the Aboriginal Heritage Tour in partnership with Captain Cook Cruises, the cultural component of this tour consists of a walk in the local bush land close to where visitors that choose to do the tour are dropped off by CCC at Pt Walter jetty, the importance of this place to Aboriginal people is also shared.

Our focus has centred around keeping the culture alive, and at the same time giving our projects the best possible chance of success by going into partnerships with reputable organizations as well as sharing and promoting Aboriginal culture with as many people as possible, we have deliberately kept the programs small to allow Aboriginal people to grow them. There is little doubt in my mind that Aboriginal people are fast becoming major players in a fast growing tourism and education industry.

In an effort that I simply term as runs on the board, the IHU at CALM has now trained an Aboriginal family that have taken over the Aboriginal Cultural Activities Programs at the Hills Forest as their own Business, this product was handed over as a going concern in 1999 at no cost to them, the new owners have grown this from a two day a week business into a four day one, and it is still growing.

IHU at CALM has now trained another Aboriginal family group and they have taken over at no cost to them, both the Fremantle Aboriginal Heritage Walking tour in partnership with the Maritime Museum. And the Aboriginal Heritage tour in partnership with Captain Cook Cruises, both of these programs have tremendous potential for growth once again a deliberate ploy to allow the new owners to develop an important sense of ownership of their Business.

What we have been doing at CALM has not gone unnoticed by the West Australian Government, and while I am not going to claim full credit for what is being proposed here by yourselves. I know that the work that we have been doing at CALM has played a significant role toward the development of a sustainable model.

I agree with the idea of Regional Indigenous Sustainability Strategies, as it will give Aboriginal people the time to build a future for their children, at their own pace, and in incremental stages, this will intern allow for them to develop a strong sense of ownership of their land and their lives.

As a land management agency we at IHU, CALM are already assisting with the training, implementing and monitoring of in particular the caring for country aspect of the Regional Indigenous Sustainability Strategies, at the moment I believe that Indigenous Affairs lacks good clear leadership and focus, personally, I would like to see the Department of Indigenous Affairs given total responsibility for all Indigenous Affairs, and ATSIC providing a purely political focus.

Once again thank you for this opportunity to have some input.

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