

INTRODUCTION

The Aboriginal Project Committee (Appendix A), and the Project Team under its direction, have had a period of just over eight months, since late October 1996, in which to prepare this statement of Aboriginal concerns and aspirations arising from the experience of development in the Kakadu region (defined as Stages 1 and 11 of Kakadu National Park) over the last seventeen years. The Committee was nominated at an Aboriginal meeting at Jabiru lakeside organised by the Northern Land Council in September. Nominations were called representing different interest groups and subject areas of concern in an attempt to establish a broadly-based membership. The Committee has met on average once a fortnight.

The Terms of Reference for the Study emphasised Aboriginal involvement, so apart from this regular interaction with the Committee, a great deal of external consultation was done, both in small meetings and on an individual basis. Much of this was done by consultants appointed by the Committee to focus on particular areas of concern. Project Team members participated in much of this consultancy work, as well as maintaining an independent program of discussions and feedback, including from the consultancy projects themselves. This Report tries to give generous expression to this Aboriginal input, often through direct quotes that preserve a range of opinions and positions on the issues at hand. There is no attempt to represent consensus where none exists. There is, however, an intention to clearly mark out and present in some sensible order the major areas of concern and debate.

At the time the Study was established, other local action groups composed of representatives of various Kakadu and external agencies were already focussed on problems of alcohol abuse, employment and training, and housing and infrastructure. A co-ordinator had started research on the problems of aged and disabled care, and a working group to plan a women's, or family, resource centre, was soon operating. The Study maintained communication with all of these, and contributed where able. Their projects, as taken on board by the Committee or reflective of Aboriginal concerns expressed to the Project Team, are represented here as well.