



**Green Economy and Sustainable Development:  
Bringing Back the Social Dimension  
CONFERENCE**

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## **The Potential and Constraints on the Payment for Ecosystem Services Markets on Aboriginal Land in Cape York Peninsula**

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# Cape York is situated at the northern end of Queensland, Australia.



# Cape York is a vast region covering 137 000 km<sup>2</sup>. 40% is Indigenous owned





Most of the 15 000 population is Indigenous –  
representing 50 language groups



# The landscape and biodiversity is unique and largely intact





# Dunefields, rainforests, tropical savannah, wetlands and many pristine river systems



# Welfare reform is being implemented to confront alcohol epidemic & social problems





We demand the right to take responsibility for our health, education, economy and land





# Payment for Ecosystem Services

# The Cape York Institute

- The Institute is heavily engaged in examining ways to protect and strengthen Indigenous ownership of land. To do this, the bond between land ownership and the property rights associated with that ownership must be protected and strengthened.
- The existing land administration system is unable to facilitate opportunities for individuals and families to alleviate their poverty.



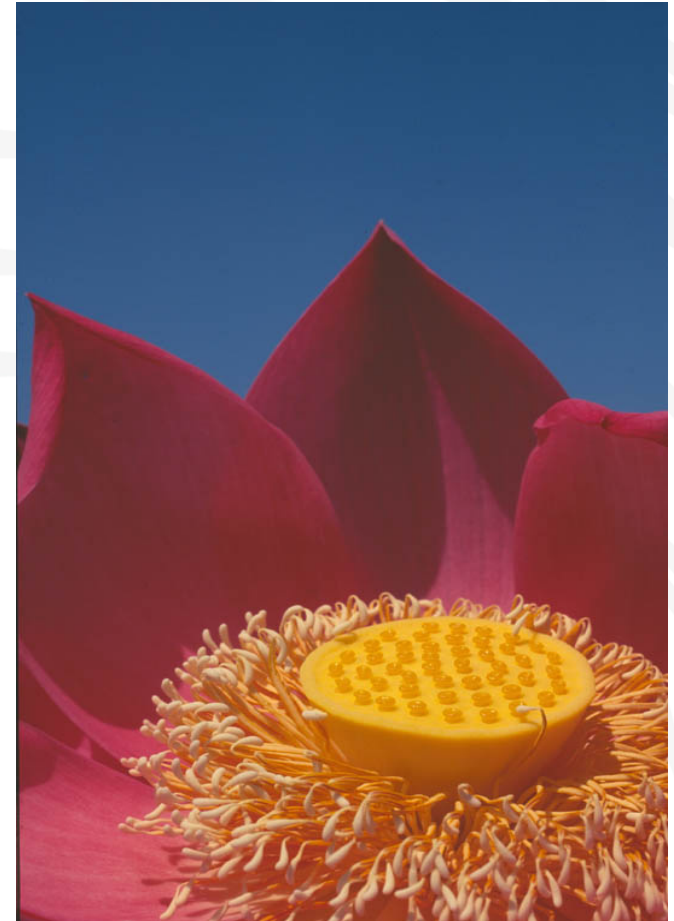


# Current Areas of Work



## Land use and resource management

- Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) including carbon
- Cost of regulatory burden on indigenous land
- Property Rights
- Opportunity cost of Wild Rivers & other environmental regulation
- Maximising job and enterprise opportunities in NRM
- Effective conservation



# Indigenous Participation in PES Markets

- Cape York needs solutions to improve both environmental and social equity outcomes
- Current tension between conservation and Indigenous economic development
- New approach to environmental management in Cape York needed incorporating PES market participation by Indigenous landowners
- Payment for Ecosystem Services: Provision of environmental services that provide a public benefit should be recognized financially
- PES projects: additional option to achieve conservation and development goals and achieve greater autonomy and self-determination for local communities



# PES Design for Social Development Goals

- Potential for PES schemes to improve social and welfare conditions in remote Australian Indigenous communities
- But good design essential to ensure social development objectives for disadvantaged participants:
  - Secure property rights
  - adequate regulatory frameworks
  - sufficient finance
  - infrastructure
  - good governance and Aboriginal control



# Current Approach to Environmental Management

Current approach on Cape York is not delivering environment outcomes and constrains economic development aspirations of traditional owners

Insufficient government funding results in:

- increased environmental risk
  - 2 million + feral pigs
  - 200 + major weeds
  - Uncontrolled poaching continues
  - High level bio-security risks
- Unsustainable and underfunded ranger programs
- Disempowerment of TO's – removal of responsibility
- Ecosystem service opportunities diminished
- Lack of long-term approach to NRM
- Lack of Indigenous long-term career and skills development
- Ad-hoc, unreliable short-term NRM programs
- Lack of infrastructure



# Barriers to PES Market Participation

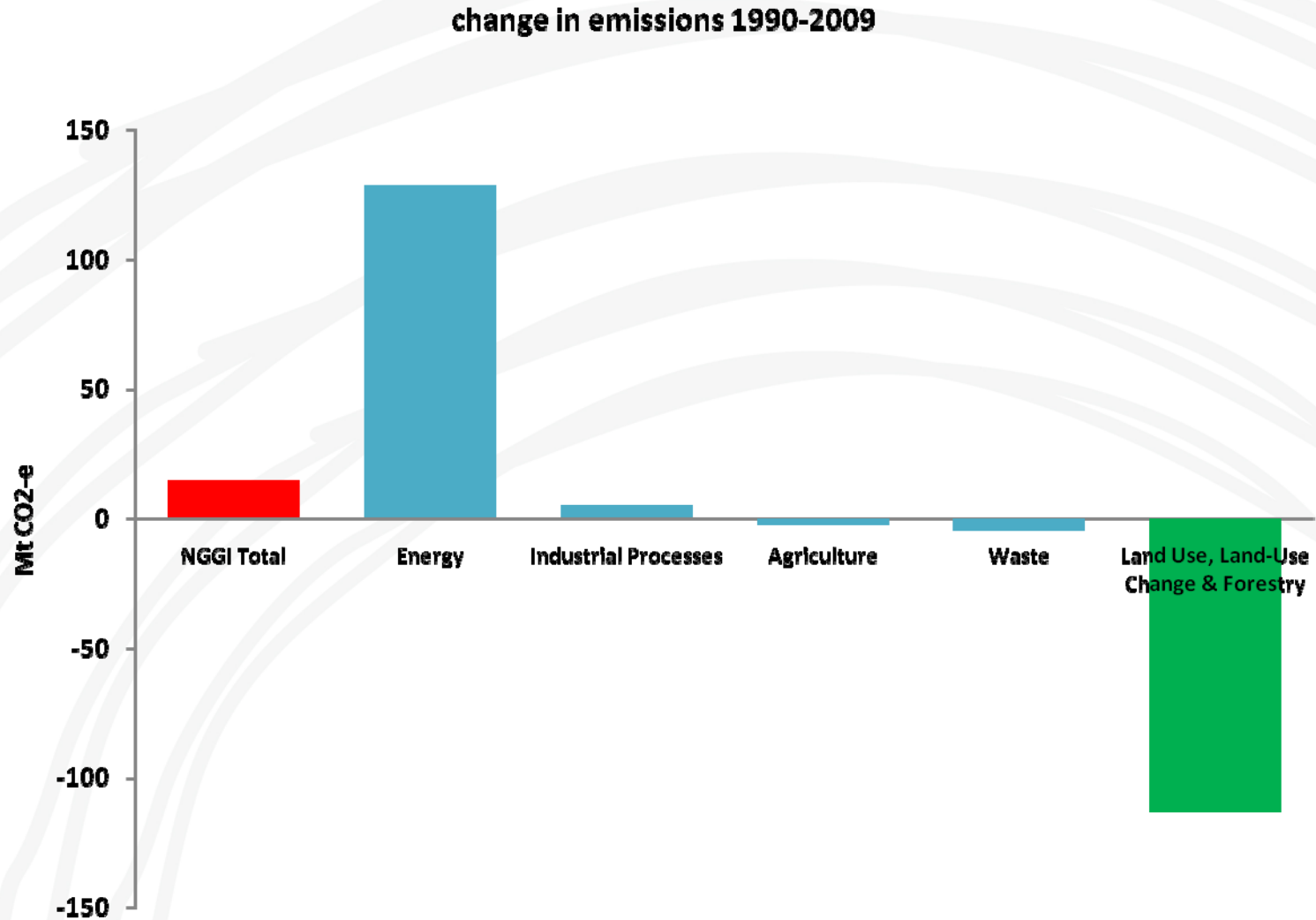
# There are many challenges in achieving land justice and effective conservation

- Over the last decade Aboriginal property rights have been severely diminished by conservation laws which have stripped additional requirements of PES markets
- These laws have a proportionally larger impact on Aboriginal lands
- Green and political pressure to protect “what’s left” in Australia is focusing on the top end including the largest remaining Aboriginal Homelands
- The environmental development costs of the south are being offset cheaply through acquisition of environmental value or offsets in Cape York while leaving the management liability with those who can least afford it
- We must ensure Traditional Owner consent and governance
- The Government will never sufficiently fund conservation

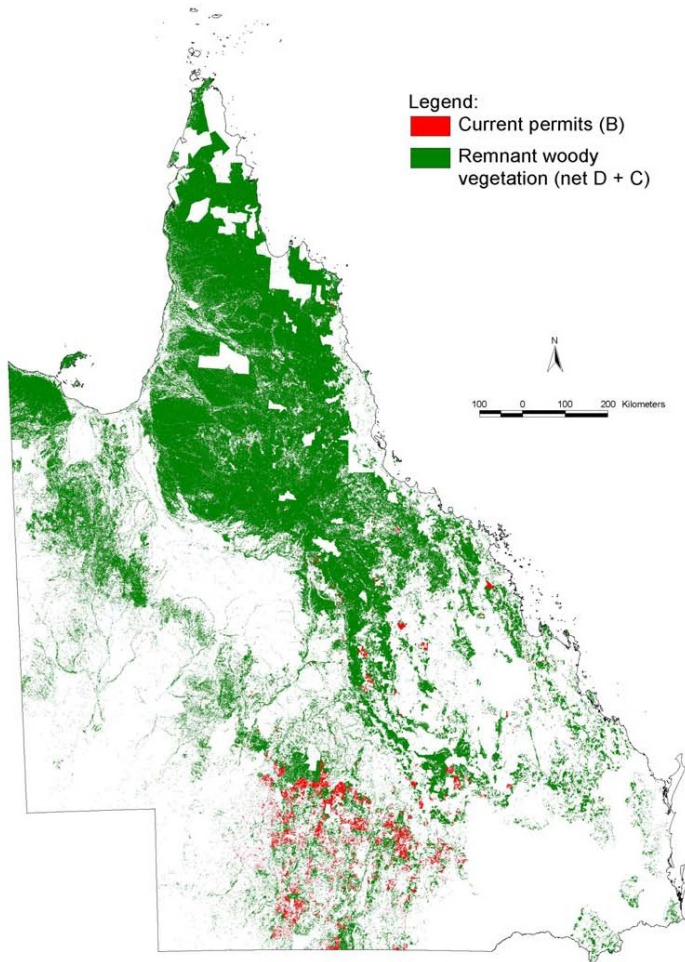




# Australia will meet its Kyoto targets through land clearance laws



# The Australian Government has already booked up Cape York carbon sink values



- Australia will meet its Kyoto target largely due to land clearing controls, which have sheltered other Australians from reducing their emissions
- Cape York Peninsula has made a significant, but unrecognized, contribution to Australia meeting its Kyoto target
- Opportunities for participation by Cape York indigenous communities in a future carbon market are limited
- Cape York indigenous communities have a liability for land management, but few of the potential carbon market benefits

# We are trying to achieve a conservation strategy that :

- Places Traditional Owners in the driver's seat
- Provides sustainability and scale to ranger programs
- Shifts the land management model from a green welfare model to one that incorporates enterprise, private investment and ecosystem services
- Engages land management industry with welfare reform – Land management is aspirational and has high capabilities
- Respects Aboriginal land ownership and property rights
- Provides the scale and quality of management that the region deserves, in perpetuity



# Conclusion

- The challenge we need to put to society is to give equitable control of those assets so the land owners can manage their own country properly.
- Insufficiently funded, ad-hoc government initiatives carried out by a small number of rangers will not protect Cape York's valuable heritage.
- A diverse and large ecosystem service economy working alongside a broader mainstream economy will ensure protection of the region's natural and cultural heritage as well as economic equity for its Indigenous inhabitants.

Thank you