

# DESERT KNOWLEDGE CRC

Demand-responsive services and  
culturally sustainable enterprise in  
remote Aboriginal settings:  
A case study of the Myuma Group

P Memmott

Report  
**63**

2010



THE UNIVERSITY  
OF QUEENSLAND  
AUSTRALIA





# Demand-responsive services and culturally sustainable enterprise in remote Aboriginal settings: A case study of the Myuma Group

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2010



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## Desert Knowledge CRC Report Number 63

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ISBN: 978 1 74158 176 1

ISSN: 1832 6684

## Citation

Memmott P. 2010. *Demand-responsive services and culturally sustainable enterprise in remote Aboriginal settings: A case study of the Myuma Group*. DKCRC Report 63. Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre, Alice Springs.

The Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre is an unincorporated joint venture with 28 partners whose mission is to develop and disseminate an understanding of sustainable living in remote desert environments, deliver enduring regional economies and livelihoods based on Desert Knowledge, and create the networks to market this knowledge in other desert lands.

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The work reported in this publication was supported by funding from the Australian Government Cooperative Research Centres Program through the Desert Knowledge CRC. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of Desert Knowledge CRC or its Participants.

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## Shortened forms

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4WD	four-wheeled drive
ADWG	Australian Drinking Water Guidelines
AQF	Australian Quality Framework
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
BCITF	Building Construction Industry Training Fund
c.	Circa
CBD	Central Business District
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CP5	Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre's Core Project 5: Desert Services that Work, Demand Responsive Approaches to Desert Settlements
CTQ	Construction Training Queensland
Cwlth	Commonwealth Government of Australia
CDEP	Community Development Employment Projects
DAC	Dugalunji Aboriginal Corporation
DET	Queensland Government Department of Employment and Training
DEWR	Australian Government Department of Environment and Workplace Relations
DKCRC	Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre
DTMR	Queensland Government Department of Transport and Main Roads
Dugalunji	Dugalunji Aboriginal Corporation
EPM	Enterprise Project Management
GPS	Global Positioning Satellite
HACCP	Hazard Analysis at Critical Contact Points
IBA	Indigenous Business Australia
ICHOs	Indigenous Community Housing Organisations
kL/h	kilolitres per hour
kms	kilometres
kWh	kilowatts per hour
MISC	Mining Industry Skills Centre
MITT	Mount Isa Institute of TAFE
Myuma	Myuma Pty Ltd
NGOs	Non-Government Organisations
NWQ	north-west Queensland
NT	Northern Territory
PROEs	Permanent Resident Outside Employees
Rainbow	Rainbow Gateway Limited
QAS	Queensland Apprenticeship Services
SIHIP	Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program
STDs	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
TAFE	Technical and Further Education

# Acknowledgements

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This monograph was written with support from the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre (DKCRC) during 2007 to 2009, as a contribution to its Core Project 5 (CP5) on 'Desert Services that Work, Demand Responsive Approaches to Desert Settlements'. Acknowledgements to those many people who assisted with comments on earlier drafts, including the two successive Team Leaders of CP5, Mark Moran and Steve Fisher, for their insightful critiques, and the staff and the Directors of the Myuma Group for their supportive participation in the project. In particular, thanks go to Colin Saltmere and Sally Sheldon for sharing their vision and providing numerous data and insights into the workings of the Myuma Group. The author also wishes to thank Lee Sheppard, Linda Thomson and Katie Allen from the Aboriginal Environments Research Centre, at The University of Queensland, who provided administrative support.



# Summary

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This monograph was prepared during 2007 to 2009 as a contribution to the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre (DKCRC), and specifically to its Core Project 5 (CP5) titled ‘Desert Services that Work, Demand Responsive Approaches to Desert Settlements’. The overall aim of this project was to provide guidance on how to enhance Aboriginal livelihoods in desert settlements through improved access to and effectiveness of services. This project sat within the broader aim of the DKCRC, namely to create economic opportunities for desert people and make a demonstrable difference for remote Aboriginal communities through the application of research and training. The current descriptive case study sits within the nexus of these two aims statements.

This monograph explores and presents a case study of Aboriginal cultural and socioeconomic empowerment situated within both the fields of service delivery and of mainstream economy, that of the Myuma Group. It contains valuable case study material for Aboriginal organisations, industry partners and government agencies seeking to promote more effective Aboriginal engagement and outcomes in enterprise and service delivery. The Myuma Group comprises three inter-linked Aboriginal corporations centred on the upper Georgina River in far western Queensland, which were established by the local traditional owners, the Indjalandji-Dhidhanu people. The Myuma Group first established a Work Camp on the outskirts of Camooweal (a township near the Queensland–NT border), then a second Work Camp at a remote quarry, and an office in Mt Isa. From these three bases they administer a combination of enterprises, training, service delivery and cultural heritage activities. The various innovatory achievements and successful features emanating from this group have stimulated this report as a good-practice case study. It consists of a culture-contact history, a contemporary profile and an analysis of the activities of the Myuma Group in relation to a set of key DKCRC research questions.

The five key research questions of Core Project 5 are:

1. What are the characteristics of the interplay between demand and supply of service, according to the perceptions of consumers and service providers engaged at the local interface?
2. What are the conditions that permit successful practice to develop between consumers and service providers?
3. At what scales of governance should different service delivery functions be assigned to optimise both demand- and supply-based criteria?
4. What are the service type and delivery style priorities of consumers within a specified budget framework, and what is their capacity to participate and willingness to contribute to services?
5. What are the critical issues and strategies to improve the service system, including the strengths and weaknesses of different technology and governance options?
6. Each of these questions is addressed in the monograph, after the case study has been contextualised and profiled (all based on extensive interviewing).

The commencement of Myuma’s enterprise initiatives occurred in 2000, when the Indjalandji-Dhidhanu people, as local native title applicants, negotiated an agreement with the Queensland Department of Main Roads for the planned major upgrade of the Barkly Highway between Mount Isa and Camooweal. These road works, financed by the Australian and Queensland Governments, were planned for a seven-year period between 2001 and 2008, with a total value in excess of \$120 million. The agreement that was struck was one which protected native title and Aboriginal cultural heritage interests within the planned road corridor, and delivered appropriate training, employment and business development opportunities to local Aboriginal people. Initial framework contracts established Myuma’s potential capacity and were followed by an alliance partnership role for the Myuma Group in the three successive stages of the road upgrade works. Myuma has since continued to win road maintenance contracts from

Main Roads within the region, as well as generating a range of other clients and business partners. The gross revenue gained by Myuma from these major civil construction contracts during the period 2001–2009 has been \$19.8 million, or an average of \$2.5 million per year. Much of these capital gains have been used to subsidise workforce development and training. However, this is only part of the Myuma income; training is another component.

From its early stages, Myuma's leaders developed a keen interest in fostering the region's capacity to deliver sustainable training and employment outcomes for Aboriginal people based in Camooweal and surrounding population centres. It was recognised that ample employment opportunities for trainees existed within Myuma's own operations, as well as there being an urgent need for a supply of suitable prequalified entrants into the many civil construction and mining companies operating in the region. During 2006, the Myuma Group and its partners designed and began trialling a prevocational, accredited, individualised training program that delivered competencies specifically chosen to equip Aboriginal participants for pre-identified, full-time entry-level positions in civil construction and mining operations in the north-west Queensland region. During 2007 and 2008, the program was consolidated and stabilised as a best-practice national training scheme with secure income of \$2.5 million per year from the Australian and Queensland Governments and the mining sector. A bi-annual intake of 30 trainees occurs (i.e. total of 60 per year) organised in a three stage process: (1) recruitment and home-based preparation stage to ensure an intake with a high potential for course completion; (2) residential period of 13 weeks of intensive training based at the Dugalunji and Quarry Camps; (3) employment placement and mentoring stage to manage the transition into a full-time working lifestyle, addressing and resolving any associated workplace or lifestyle problems that arise.

Myuma Pty Ltd provides a range of key services and facilities to its Aboriginal workers and trainees in response to their expressed needs. An important brokerage role of Myuma for its Aboriginal staff and trainees is the demystification of government and marketplace methods and procedures, including language and key concepts. This is essential to become an effective consumer in Western society, and in order to understand mainstream service settings. Services such as health checks, nutrition advice, banking services, procuring driving licenses and resolving legal problems are either addressed at the Work Camp or in Mt Isa with support from Myuma staff and mentors. Myuma seeks to negotiate service delivery in Aboriginal terms in the familiar environment of its Work Camp. Above all, the Camp provides workers and trainees with a calm residential setting, relatively free of problems or chaos, where people can feel at home in the world for a while, where relatedness is constructed for many with their fellows in the camp. Camp harmony results from intra-group harmony, which in turn results from the requirement of a strong personal moral code conveyed through the camp rules and the authoritative guidance of the Myuma Managing Director. Many of these services and facilities have been built up with the economic gains from Myuma's enterprise work.

Myuma has positioned itself in the market within a complex network or field of supply and demand, which might best be termed a 'transactional model of supply and demand' (or multiple diversified market interfacing). In adjusting 'the playing field' of service delivery to be 'level' with a degree of demand-driven consumer choice, there was a need for Myuma to earn some power within market relationships and transactions, and for Myuma to take some control over information (informed consumerism) and decision-making capacity based on that information, thereby facilitating active engagement and negotiation on the terms of its Aboriginal consumers (trainees and workers).

A number of further critical methods of operation are employed by Myuma in having achieved this position of being able to influence service demand and delivery style. One is the use of the 'Aboriginal service setting', which can be defined as one that is controlled by Aboriginal people and is designed to be comfortable for Aboriginal consumers. The combination of architectural features and behavioural patterns, including setting controls, are designed to be relatively comfortable, predictable, secure and

conducive for Aboriginal people to use. There is also a sense of identity with and even ownership of such a setting by Aboriginal people when the service is being delivered in an effective way.

There is a complex mix of enterprise functions, service functions, cultural functions and representational (governance) functions with the Myuma portfolio and its daily round of work, and all of these things are underpinned by Aboriginal cultural law precepts and an Aboriginal ethic of social harmony in the Dugalunji Camp. There is a unique symbiotic relationship between the practice of Aboriginal law and the practice of commerce in the Dugalunji Camp, whereby the two are mutually supportive of one another, generating a strong Aboriginality in the way that day-to-day 'business' is run by Myuma. This is directly projected on to the regular trainee intakes who gain increased confidence in their own cultural identities and return to their home communities with an increased sense of their Aboriginality.

The current study has identified the following five attributes from this analysis as critical good practice factors underlying the Myuma success story:

1. The special Aboriginal leadership skills of Myuma's Managing Director in being not only able to successfully influence and negotiate in the mainstream government and business world, but also simultaneously to earn the respect of Aboriginal people by being a customary Law authority and leader in the Aboriginal world.
2. A strong lobbying process by Myuma among various industry and government sectors (mining and construction industries, state and local governments), combined with the respect of these sectors towards Myuma for its in business enterprises.
3. That this has resulted in Myuma becoming part of the local and regional economic market, which partly explains its capacity to secure selected and culturally modified demand service needs from the government and business sectors.
4. Pre-vocational training in an Aboriginal-run and -controlled work camp, which doubles as an Aboriginal service setting, and in which most cross-cultural blockages and intimidations experienced by trainees can be worked through with a trusting training team.
5. Closing the gap: 'not just job readiness, but having jobs ready' for the Aboriginal trainees; again a function of Myuma's good standing in the economic market.

Further success factors revealed in the analysis include effective business strategy and gearing up, including through maintaining three business units for different purposes; availability of key skills and competencies, including through partnerships; a capacity to deal with all forms of Aboriginal politics; enterprise capacity and ability to keep attracting contracts; tendering as much as lobbying; good management and governance; reliable incoming goods and services despite its remote location; strong identity and associated 'brand'; and a network of 'trusted outsiders' to provide support, advice and to 'open doors' for the Myuma Group.

The Myuma Group and its Dugalunji Camp have generated significant outcomes, already well recognised as national best practice through a variety of measures outlined herein; for example, one index of Myuma's good practice is its consistent and stable annual growth reflected in its annual gross turnovers, which have increased in each successive financial year. Another example is the gross turnover of \$8 million for 2007–2008, which increased to \$10 million for 2008–2009. Other outcomes of its good practice are a host of industry awards of various sorts, including for training, reconciliation and cultural heritage achievement, and the recent winning of an Australian Government national infrastructure grant of \$3.8 million to upgrade its training facilities.

The Myuma Group's practice involves a combined approach to enterprise development, employment, training, cultural heritage and service delivery for Aboriginal people. The Myuma experiment denies socioeconomic disadvantage as being Aboriginal destiny (see Pearson 2009a) and aims to lift young Aboriginal adults out of such disadvantage and 'provide for them a prospect that they would otherwise not have, that their parents never had' (ibid). Through the Aboriginal service setting of its camp, Myuma is able to provide its trainees and workers with a sense of 'at-homeness', of residential harmony

and social relatedness of order and security, experiences which are often in contrast in particular ways with their home community life. Myuma, in light of the evidence at hand, is a nationally significant example of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people overcoming ‘extraordinary hurdles to foster emergent social norms and new institutions to negotiate the difficult space between the Market and the Dreaming’ (Altman 2009).

## 1. Preface

*The malaise in Australian Aboriginal communities is widely acknowledged but the economic conditions which exacerbate it – even when ostensibly designed to help – are little understood. I wish to explore what kind of ‘economy’ has supported, and might continue to support, forms of distinctive cultural practice and its reproduction over time.*

(Gaynor MacDonald, University of Sydney, email communication to Australian Anthropological Society 9/10/07)

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## 2. Political context of the Core Project Five (CP5) of the DKCRC

Core Project 5 began soon after the demise of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) and the ascendancy of the neo-liberalist policies of the Howard Government. It can be said that Aboriginal Australia had entered the post-self-determination era, one in which the Australian Government was attempting to take back ultimate responsibility for service delivery from Aboriginal people and re-distribute it through mainstream programs. The start of CP5 was catalysed by continuing poor outcomes in Aboriginal housing, health, employment, education and life expectancy, despite the cyclic pendulum swings of government policies from the end of the assimilation era in c.1972 through 35 years of sustained government service delivery – including the COAG trials in recent years.

The ‘Aboriginal problem’ and its transformations and repetitive constructions had recurred throughout this time continuum (e.g. see Memmott’s 1988, 2004, 2008 definitions of the ‘Aboriginal housing problem’). One fundamental lesson is that it seems there has and always will be construed an Aboriginal problem of some sort, preoccupying political policy in Australia, just as there is an agricultural production problem or a union labour problem. There are recurring tensions in these cyclic policy constructions: tensions between traditionalism versus modernity, protection versus market liberalism, targeted service delivery versus mainstreaming, assimilation versus cultural pluralism.

Thus Chris Sarra, Executive Director of the Queensland-based Indigenous Education Leadership Institute has written:

*There are two present narratives worth examining ... In one, the core problem is seemingly articulated as the refusal of Aboriginal Australia to abandon traditional culture and embrace modernisation. This is the ‘clash of civilizations’ narrative in which Western influence is seen as progressive and good, and the enemy is culture and tradition ... The*

*other leading yet connected narrative is that of the spread, and disempowering effects, of so-called passive welfare. The way forward in terms of this narrative is to let the market rule in Aboriginal affairs. Here the solutions lie in the provision of 'real jobs' and the only real job is a job provided by the free market.*

(Sarra 2009)

However, when policies are modelled in this bi-polar way, as two extremes of a pendulum arc, each presents too simplistic a dichotomy to make an effective impact on quality of lifestyle. This point has most recently emerged in the debate on Sutton's hypothesis (2009a), that the role of tradition in explaining Aboriginal community dysfunction has been under-emphasised; this point appeals to the neoliberalist push for assimilation. This view has been countered by Altman (2009), who has argued:

*Structural factors like historical and current needs-based neglect cannot wholly explain dysfunction where it occurs – and that is not everywhere – and nor can cultural factors, whether pre-colonial vestiges or post-colonial modifications, be upheld as the sole explanation. Such a dichotomous framing is erroneous in any case because today inter-culturality, an ongoing and highly diverse adaptive blend of customary and western social norms, is everywhere.'*

The persistence of Aboriginal identities and cultures, albeit in transformed states, despite these pulses and shifts of policies, is a dominant continuity. Furthermore, it is difficult to reverse the impacts of land claims and native title that have reinforced sociogeographic aspects of the ancient place-centred Aboriginal cultures. This is despite the calls of members of the Bennelong Society, The Menzies Research Centre and the Centre for Independent Studies, who have argued that services to remote Aboriginal communities should be terminated if there is an absence of a viable scale of employment by which residents can sustain a mortgage to buy their houses. 'Anything less than a "no job, no house" mindset will harm Aborigines' (Johns 2009, p. 36).

For those many Aboriginal groups who do not wish to leave their traditional homelands and communities, one consistent challenge for their leaders and trusted advisors is to generate remote Aboriginal economies that are embraced by Aboriginal people. A second challenge is to ground these economies in Aboriginal culture and social capital, so as to assist in the veracity and persistence of the latter. A third challenge is to seek a 'fit' between viable enterprise and voluntary economic behaviour in the local market conditions. These challenges for Aboriginal leaders require support from empathetic policy makers, consultants and business partners.

A further challenge is achieving quality of service delivery to ensure viable health, quality of lifestyle, social cohesion and wellbeing. This returns us to the substance of Core Project 5, service delivery. Service delivery encompasses the provision of such things as food, cars, music, religion, governance, housing, water, health treatment, recreational infrastructure and many other commodities. Service delivery needs to be designed and cross-linked to satisfy both needs and consumption styles or choices. In itself, consumption also needs to be considered and analysed as a form of self-definition and of cultural identification.

This monograph explores a case study of Aboriginal cultural and socioeconomic empowerment situated within both the fields of service delivery and of mainstream economy, that of the Myuma Group. The Myuma Group comprises three inter-linked Aboriginal corporations centred on the upper Georgina River in far western Queensland, which were established by the local traditional owners, the Indjalandji-Dhidhanu people. The Myuma Group first established a principal Work Camp on the outskirts of Camooweal (a township near the Queensland/NT border), then a second Work Camp at a remote quarry, and an office in Mt Isa. From these three bases they administer a combination of enterprises, training, service delivery and cultural heritage activity. The various innovatory and success features of this structure have stimulated this report as a good-practice case study. It consists of a culture-contact history, a contemporary profile and an analysis of the activities of the Myuma Group in relation to the five key research questions of Core Project 5. These research questions are:

1. What are the characteristics of the interplay between demand and supply of service, according to the perceptions of consumers and service providers engaged at the local interface?
2. What are the conditions that permit successful practice to develop between consumers and service providers?
3. At what scales of governance should different service delivery functions be assigned to optimise both demand- and supply-based criteria?
4. What are the service type and delivery style priorities of consumers within a specified budget framework, and what is their capacity to participate and willingness to contribute to services?
5. What are the critical issues and strategies to improve the service system, including the strengths and weaknesses of different technology and governance options?

### Operational region of the Myuma Group



Each of these questions will be addressed later in this monograph, once the case study is contextualised and profiled. Finally, a summary will be made of the critical attributes that constitute success factors in Myuma's good practice.

Figure 1: Operational location of the Myuma Group

## 3. The Georgina River Frontier History

In the mid-nineteenth century the Indjalandji-Dhidhanu people occupied the upper Georgina River basin and surrounding Barkly Tableland in far north-west Queensland, extending from the O'Shannassy and Seymour Rivers in the north to the Templeton River in the south, and from the James River in the west (Northern Territory) across the upper Georgina River to encompass its eastern tributaries (including the Buckley River). These English names were not in use at this time; rather, there was an Aboriginal cultural geography and system of place naming in existence.

The traditional society and lifestyle of the Indjalandji-Dhidhanu people was not impacted by the British invasion of Australia until after the continental crossing by Burke and Wills in 1861–1862. A young Dhidhanu man named *Idaya* was alive at this time, a forebear of the contemporary Indjalandji-Dhidhanu group who can thus trace its genealogical link to their broader territory prior to the first wave of European occupation. As a result of the search effort for the lost Burke and Wills expedition, the

colonial explorer William Landsborough, in 1862, encountered and re-named three sacred Indjalandji lakes as Lakes Mary, Francis and Canellan. These lakes on the upper Georgina River were of central significance in Indjalandji law and custom, being both sacred sites and the sites for inter-tribal trade markets and ceremony, situated on the north–south continental trade route.<sup>1</sup> Landsborough also reported on the surrounding grasslands, and these discoveries (water and grass) triggered several waves of pastoral occupation by colonists.



Figure 2: The upper Georgina River contains three large lakes that are the sacred sites of the Indjalandji-Dhidhanu people



Figure 3: The Camooweal caves are all sacred sites of the Indjalandji-Dhidhanu people

The first wave of pastoral settlement occurred from 1864 to 1869, establishing the pastoral runs of Rocklands, Avon Downs, Soudan, Alroy Downs and Lake Nash stations, but all withdrew after severe drought. The second wave occurred from 1876–1885 and brought permanent settlement. During this

<sup>1</sup> This trade route extended from the Flinders Ranges in the south (including the *Parachilna* ochre mines) up to Lake Eyre, and northerly to the Mulligan River where *pituri* (*Duboisia hopwoodii*) was brought in from the eastern Simpson Desert and up the Georgina River, where *Kalkadungu* stone products were incorporated to the route, and then north to the Gulf of Carpentaria where marine products were interchanged (McCarthy 1939).

early period, the socioeconomic and religious significance of the Georgina waterholes would have been paramount to the Indjalandji and other Georgina Aboriginal groups. Conflict arose during the droughts when the local pastoralists were trapped with large numbers of stock needing water and fodder. Tense relations would have been exacerbated by the establishment of a stock route beside the river, the destruction of edible riparian flora by the stock, the pollution by the cattle and sheep of the waterholes which were sacred sites, and such stock becoming bogged in drought-stricken waterholes and remaining there as rotting dead carcasses.

Pastoral settlement of the Georgina's upper tributaries in Queensland – the Buckley, Inca, Wooroona, Mingera and Upper Templeton river and creeks – spread in the 1880s and early 1890s and was consolidated between 1895 and 1919 with the establishment of Barkly Downs, Morstone, Yelvertoft, Undilla, Flora Downs, May Downs, Wooroona and Thornton stations. The members of the *Idaya* descent group maintained a connection with all of these pastoral areas through visitation, pastoral employment, and residence. The township of Camooweal was established beside Lake Francis in 1884 and was to flourish as a border customs post, a pastoral industry service town and a droving stop for the cattle barons who quickly became established across the Barkly Tableland and west to the Kimberley. Cattle from this vast northern area had to be brought back via the Queensland border dipping centre to the eastern coastal markets.

Decimation of the Aboriginal groups of the Georgina and its tributaries occurred during the late nineteenth century and was largely attributable to frontier violence, especially conflict at the hands of the Native Police, as well as multiple infectious and contagious diseases (influenza, measles, dysentery, venereal diseases). Only a few Indjalandji-Dhidhanu families survived in the region. Partly in response to the widespread demographic collapse that occurred in this and other parts of the state by the end of the nineteenth century, the Queensland Government introduced the *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897*. 'The act' regulated the labour of Aboriginal people in the pastoral industry. Its administrators were able to punish those who did not or could not please their employers and the local police, by sending them to institutionalised penal settlements in the east of the state such as Cherbourg, Woorabinda and Palm Island.

Soon after 'the act' was established, *Idaya's* son *Dijeru* came to the attention and disapproval of the Chief Protector of Aborigines (Roth 1903). *Dijeru's* granddaughter, Ruby Saltmere, who is the contemporary Elder of the Indjalandji-Dhidhanu group, hypothesises that *Dijeru* absconded from his labour service in 1902 in order to attend ceremonies in the season of religious festivals. In later decades various relatives of *Dijeru* in the next descending generation were sent to Palm Island. Due to the forced separation under the State's Aboriginal 'removal' policy, the offspring of these Palm Islanders were still re-establishing links with *Dijeru's* descendants who remained on the Georgina at the time of writing (2009).

The construction of the state border on the Georgina basin and the emergence of differential frontier conditions for Aboriginal people in Queensland and the Northern Territory underlay the eastward migrations of various NT Aboriginal groups such as the Wakaya, Eastern Arernte and Alyawarr into Camooweal and the Georgina River border stations, especially during the 1920s and 1930s, enabling the maintenance of a cultural law bloc of affiliated tribes with associated inter-marriage and ceremony between groups.

A set of regional Aboriginal town camps and pastoral camps were established on the Georgina basin in Queensland and used for up to 100 years in which the remnant Aboriginal population maintained a distinctive lifestyle. Collectively they marked out a cultural region encompassing such groups as the Indjalandji-Dhidhanu, Wakaya, western Kalkadungu, Waanyi, Waluwarra, Bularnu and eastern Alyawarr. The descendants of *Idaya* and *Dijeru* lived in these camps as they worked under 'the act' and inter-married with spouses from these other language or tribal groups (see Figure 4). The contemporary Elder of the Myuma Group, Ruby Saltmere (nee Monkhouse) was born in 1933 at a traditional birthing



camp. Of particular cultural importance was Ruby's uncle *Dijeru* Jack (the son of *Dijeru*) who maintained the rain-making rituals of the Indjalandji-Dhidhanu group, and its link to the Rain-making site of *Dugalunji*.

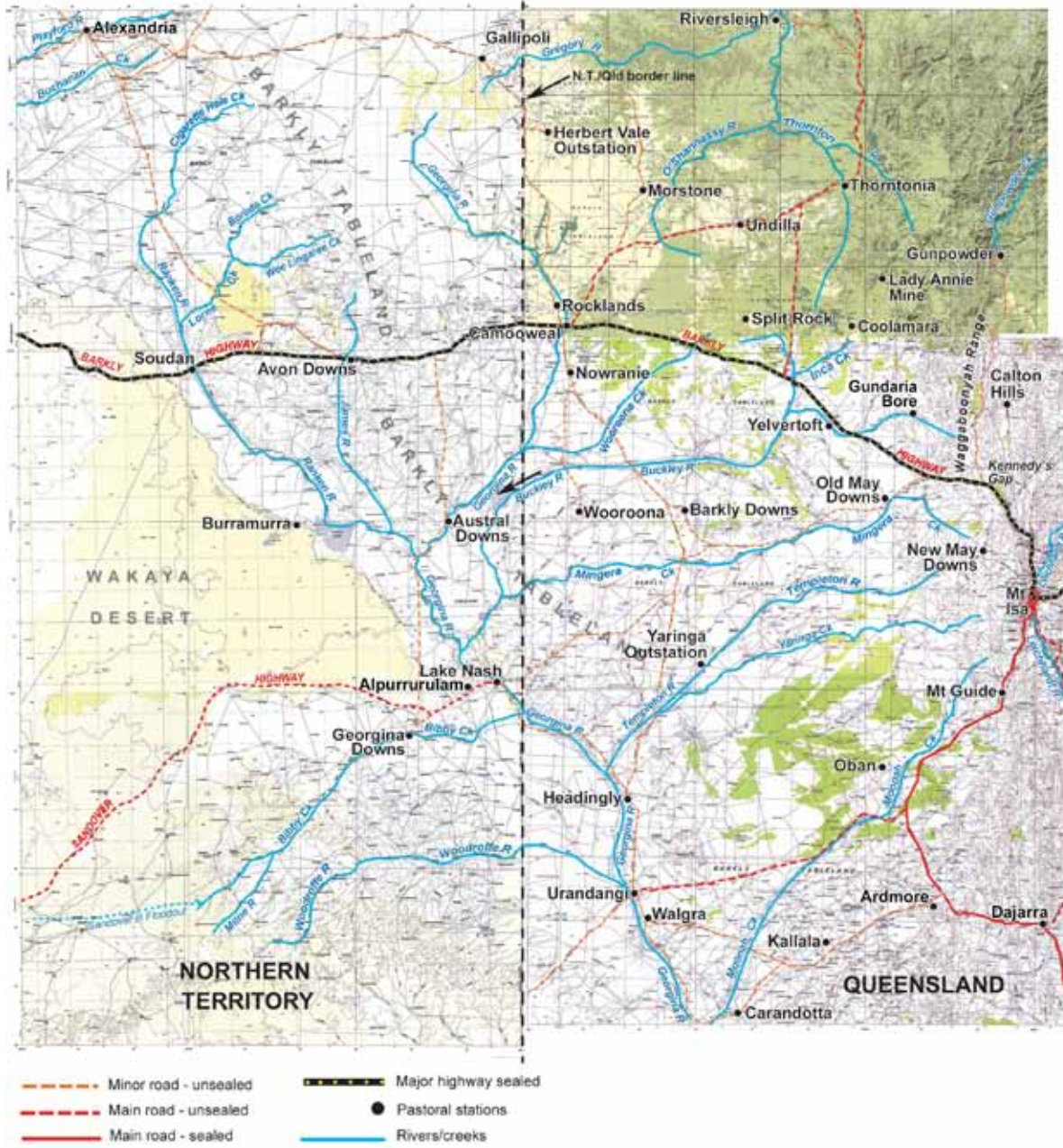


Figure 4: Towns and pastoral stations in the vicinity of Camooweal and the Indjalandji-Dhidhanu territory  
 Source: Map by author

Despite the above forces of demographic and cultural change at a regional level, opportunities for social interaction and the transmission of traditional laws and customs occurred for the Georgina people (including the Indjalandji) in pastoral camps (e.g. on Barkly Downs, May Downs, Yelvertoft, Rocklands), and at Urandangi and Camooweal throughout the twentieth century. Working in decentralised Aboriginal stock teams and living on pastoral outstations facilitated a connection to country and sacred sites for Indjalandji people, as well as enabling customary resource collection and the transmission of customary knowledge from older stockmen and domestic labourers to the younger

generations of the *Idaya* descent group. A sense of a Georgina River culture and community has survived. Ruby Saltmere sums this up by saying, ‘And as for the country part of it, well we know the country because we been here all our life and worked on it’.

The Indjalandji-Dhidhanu group maintained their tribal identity and connection to territory, but nevertheless, due to their diminished population, they have depended upon the wider cultural bloc of the upper Georgina Basin for the maintenance of initiation ceremonies and related Law matters. Another consequence is the expanded responsibility of the group to take primary responsibility for all Indjalandji-Dhidhanu country in the absence of other surviving active clan groups.

European contact and settlement inevitably forced Indjalandji society to undergo adaptation and change. However, the senior members of the group have responsibly maintained law and culture by (a) passing down the knowledge of the traditional system of Indjalandji-Dhidhanu law and custom through the successive generations of their group; and (b) activating linkages with neighbouring groups, especially the Alyawarr and East Arrerntic groups at Alpururulam, so as to participate in the regional Law bloc.

## 4. After the lifting of ‘the act’: Snapshot of the Saltmere family in the latter 1900s

Let us briefly examine the lives of the contemporary senior Myuma Directors<sup>2</sup> in the late twentieth century prior to the advent of the Myuma company, so as to understand the socioeconomic context underlying the emergence of Myuma Pty Ltd.

In the early 1970s the suppressive Queensland Act began to be relaxed, paralleled federally by the advent of equal wages and welfare payments for Aboriginal people. But it was only in 1984 that the last restrictions and controls on the behaviour of Queensland Aboriginal people were finally lifted by the State Government with the repeal of the old Act. During the 1970s and 1980s, all members of the Saltmere family were engaged in the pastoral industry working on the same stations where their forebears had laboured in earlier decades under Queensland’s *The Aboriginal Act 1970* and its predecessor Acts.

In the early 1970s, Ruby and Clargie Saltmere were working on Rocklands and remained there until Clargie retired around 1990. Clargie was employed as a stock-camp manager and Ruby as a stock-camp cook. Their younger children, including Colin, walked from Rocklands to the Camooweal School every day, playing along the Georgina River on the way. In the mid-1970s, Colin and his younger brothers, Allen and Lawrence, were sent to eastern boarding schools for a year or two. After retirement from pastoral station work, Ruby and Clargie moved back to Camooweal, residing as caretakers at the Racecourse, and were there for ten years until 2004.

During the late 1970s and 1980s, Ruby’s eldest child, Shirley Macnamara and her husband Nat Macnamara purchased a small pastoral property near Mt Isa, Hazelvale. Shirley and Nat were founding members of the ‘Georgina (later renamed Camooweal) Campdraft Association’ in 1982, and attended Camooweal regularly in subsequent years for Association events. They established stables for their horses near the Camooweal Race Course, and maintained a campsite there for when they were staying at Camooweal. In 1992 Shirley and her husband purchased Mt Guide Station, a little south of Mt Isa, and Shirley has resided there ever since but maintains contact with her country, regularly visiting the Georgina River area and collecting local ochres and fibres for her artworks, which are in national gallery collections.

Colin Saltmere, who was to later become the Managing Director of Myuma, left high school in Charters Towers in 1976 and then worked as a pastoral ringer on seven stations from 1977 to 1985,

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<sup>2</sup> This and later sections are based on numerous semi-structured and open-ended interviews with these Directors.

gravitating back to Rocklands in 1986 and staying there until 1994 as a boreman, handyman, musterer, contract fencer and yard builder. During this period Colin's leadership attributes came to the fore and he rose to be Head Stockman on both Benmara and Morestone stations, in charge of teams of 10–12 stockmen, including non-Aboriginal as well as Aboriginal ringers of various tribal origins. In dealing with different human resource problems in the Myuma Group, during his later life, Colin Saltmere has continued to draw on the many lessons he learned as a boss in the Georgina stock camps. Meanwhile, Colin's sister Hazel and her husband Roy went to Barkly Downs fencing in 1970 and were then employed at Rocklands in 1971, where they were to spend most of the next 30 years. In 2000 they moved back into Camooweal.

While Colin Saltmere was working on Rocklands Station during the early 1990s, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) was established as the principal instrument of the Commonwealth's governance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Australia. In ATSIC's second triennium (1994–1996), Colin ran as a member for the Camooweal Ward, and was not only successfully elected, but with the support of his fellow ATSIC members and other north-west Queensland Aboriginal leaders became Chairperson of the Mt Isa Gulf Region on a full-time salary for three years. As such, he had to vigorously lobby within the ATSIC bureaucracy of Aboriginal Commissioners and high-ranking public servants to acquire funds for prioritised projects in his region, such as housing and other infrastructure for Indigenous Community Housing Organisations (ICHOs) in rural towns (e.g. Birdsville, Boulia, Dajarra), remote settlements (Doomadgee and Gununa to the north) and outstations (e.g. Bidunggu at Gregory Crossing, Doomadgee and Wellesley Islands outstations). Colin was later elected to the ATSIC Council for a second triennium (1997–1999), but did not continue as Regional Chair. During these six years in ATSIC he became acutely aware of the difficulties and deficiencies of the ATSIC bureaucracy, which was dominated by the politics of the Aboriginal Commissioners some of whom, at times, were not only favourably biased and nepotistic towards their own constituencies but also at times outwardly corrupt, a flaw which ultimately brought about the political downfall of ATSIC during the Howard era. During this period, Colin recalls repeatedly reflecting on whether there was a more effective and ethically sounder way to achieve positive community development, a challenge which was to remain and grow within him.

These ATSIC positions provided Colin with experiences of bureaucratic dealings, transactions and sub-cultures, which were later to prove useful when he took up advocacy on behalf of his clan group and of other Aboriginal people in north Queensland and the eastern Northern Territory. It also provided him with important personal experience in dealing with Aboriginal leaders across Queensland, so that he has had ongoing constructive relations with one set of leaders, and political tensions with another (smaller) set of leaders. During the 1990s, Colin also became active as an initiate within Aboriginal men's Law, drawing on the regional support of the wider Georgina cultural bloc, and particularly the Law men at Alpururulam and Ampilatwatja in the east of the Northern Territory. (He has remained active in regional Aboriginal Law business ever since.) Following the advent of Native Title legislation in 1993, Colin Saltmere and his wider family established the Dugalunji Aboriginal Corporation in 1997 as a vehicle for the future cultural heritage activities of their group, including a prospective Native Title Claim.

## 5. Levering up Myuma from Native Title

The descendants of *Idaya* submitted a Native Title application in 1998 (Q6108 of 1998) over a part of the Georgina River around Camooweal, including Lakes Francis and Canellen, the original points of colonial focus as chosen by William Landsborough in 1862. The application was filed by 'Ruby Saltmere as an applicant on her own behalf and for and on behalf of the Indjalandji Native Title Claimant Group'. However, another Native Title Claim was also filed over a part of Camooweal by the Kalkadungu (or Kalkadoon) tribe of the Mt Isa uplands to the east.

In 1999, the development progress of a proposed new Georgina River Bridge by Queensland Main Roads Department was stymied by these two competing claims. The Department commissioned an independent anthropological report to determine with whom they should deal as the bona fide group (Memmott & Stacy 1999). This report showed that the Kalkadoon Native Title claim over Camooweal did not have its basis in pre-sovereignty customary law. A review of the historical and contemporary ethnographic evidence indicated that the Indjalandji claimants were the traditional owners for the bridge site under the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cwlth). The stalemate was thus broken, which allowed the Indjalandji to commence negotiation with Main Roads over progressing the bridge. However, a second issue was a strong objection by the Elder Ruby Saltmere to allow deep pier footings for the bridge within the riverbed as she believed this would harm the Rainbow Serpent's back, which the group believed had metamorphosed into the bedrock of the river (and damage to which would unleash an environmental catastrophe). This problem was overcome by the Main Roads engineers designing a system of pad footings so that the piers could sit on top of the river bedrock without penetrating it. A third issue was the implementation of a range of additional environmental management principles required by the Indjalandji claimants to ensure protection of cultural heritage sites and other natural features.

A large-scale archaeological study of the innumerable stone artefacts and chippings in the vicinity of the bridge site was then carried out by a firm named ARCHAEO Cultural Heritage Services in conjunction with the Dugalunji Aboriginal Corporation (ARCHAEO Cultural Heritage Services & Dugalunji Aboriginal Corporation 2002). The construction of the bridge was then able to proceed. The Indjalandji, using their Native Title claimant status, managed to negotiate many outcomes and benefits from Queensland Main Roads, including employment and training for themselves and other Aboriginal members of the wider community. In addition, a construction camp was established by Main Roads within the Camooweal Town Common for use by the Dugalunji Corporation. It was agreed to leave the construction camp, with all of its infrastructure, in the hands of the Indjalandji group after the completion of the bridge, so the group could also participate in subsequent highway upgrades. It was named the Dugalunji Camp and the group occupied it in 2001. The bridge was officially named *Ilaga Thuwani*, meaning the Place (or Camping Ground) of the Rainbow Serpent, as requested by the Indjalandji group.

The Queensland Government viewed the Bridge Project as a most successful partnership project, describing it as follows:-

*The Georgina River Bridge project at Camooweal in north-west Queensland grew out of the need for local Aboriginal communities and the wider community to have continuous access to the Barkly Highway ... Community members and travellers were frequently cut off from the Barkly Highway and key services when the former Georgina River Bridge was flooded. Continuous access to the highway through a new bridge was needed to ensure personal safety and maintain access to health and other services.*

*Rebuilding the bridge was a successful partnership based on shared responsibility and reciprocity between local Aboriginal groups (represented by the Dugalunji Aboriginal Corporation), the Department of Main Roads, Barclay Mowlem Construction Ltd and RoadTek, resulting in the Georgina River Alliance. In replacing the bridge, the alliance recognised the need to provide training and employment opportunities for local Aboriginal community members and to catalogue and preserve important artefacts from the construction site dating back thousands of years.*

*More than 17 000 artefacts of local, national and international archaeological significance were excavated during the construction phase. The focus on cultural respect and understanding resulted in the project winning a special award for Queensland in the cultural heritage category of the 2003 Case Earth Awards. During the construction phase, local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples comprised more than half of the crew employed on the project ...*

*The Georgina River Alliance won the Department of Employment and Training Indigenous Peoples' Training Initiative Award in the 2003 Queensland Training Awards. The initiative also won an award in the joint Venture (Medium Business) category of the 2003 Queensland Government Reconciliation Awards.'*  
(DATSIP 2005, p. 24.)

The archaeological report on the Camooweal bridge project concluded:

*In appreciating cultural values, the Indjalandji were practicing their Traditional law and values in regard to their sites and places. Traditional law involves in part management of country – looking after country in a responsible way to preserve and maintain it. This involves a deeply significant spiritual link with the land. As Colin Saltmere (Indjalandji Spokesperson, pers. comm., 2002) said, the land has “all of its energy” because he has looked after its values. This is an on-going commitment and responsibility that the Indjalandji take very seriously. The intrusion of the new bridge into this landscape could have been considered a disastrous impact on country. But because of the way in which the life and energy of the land was maintained through the construction phase by protection of cultural heritage and the land around it, the Indjalandji know that their Dreaming is still alive and the land lives too.*  
(ARCHAEO Cultural Heritage Services & Dugalunji Aboriginal Corporation 2002, section 14.1.)

Following the completion of the *Ilaga Thuwani* bridge over the Georgina River, the scene was set for the birth of Myuma Pty Ltd. In less than 20 years, Colin Saltmere had thus progressed from being a pastoral ringer, to ATSIC Regional Chair, to the incoming Managing Director of Myuma.



Figure 5: Managing Director of the Myuma Group, Colin Saltmere, addresses Main Roads personnel on the achievements of the Georgina Bridge construction



*Figure 6: The old Georgina River bridge in front of the new bridge*



*Figure 7: Georgina Bridge Opening with Mrs Ruby Saltmere in centre*



Figure 8: Barkly Highway upgrade, installation of bridge footings and piers

## 6. Profile of the Myuma Group

During the early 2000s, the Indjalandji-Dhidhanu Group of Traditional Owners at Camooweal had thus drawn on their cultural capital via their native title claim, albeit one that was not determined by the Federal Court at the time, to secure an infrastructure facility in the form of a Main Roads Work Camp and had simultaneously established a contractual basis for both ongoing enterprise generation and Aboriginal service provision. However, the Dugalunji Aboriginal Corporation, established under the *Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act 1976* (Cwlth), was not a suitable corporate vehicle for establishing an enterprise business on behalf of the extended family. This section of the monograph provides a profile of the Myuma group of corporations during the period 2002–2009.<sup>3</sup>

The Indjalandji-Dhidhanu people established the Myuma Group of corporations to further the wellbeing, cultural maintenance and quality of lifestyle of the Aboriginal people of their region as well as their own people. The Myuma Group came to consist of three corporate entities, each with a different function:

- Myuma Pty Ltd
- Dugalunji Aboriginal Corporation
- Rainbow Gateway Ltd.

Each corporation will be described in turn.

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<sup>3</sup> This and some of the following sections have been edited from PMA (2007), 'The Myuma Story', and updated.

**Myuma Pty Ltd** ('Myuma') was established in early 2002 and is a non-profit proprietary company, incorporated for the purposes of managing the business arm of the group's activities. Myuma Pty Ltd runs an enterprise operation (including labour and plant hire) and also employs and delivers accredited training programs to local Aboriginal people in civil construction work, mining and related support services, including horticulture, hospitality and catering. At the time of writing, the number of workers employed by Myuma Pty Ltd ranged between 40 and 80, depending on shifting project demands and numbers of trainees; at peak staff, over 90% were Aboriginal.

The Myuma Group purposefully engages people from their neighbouring Traditional Owner Aboriginal groups as employees and trainees in all projects, as well as other Aboriginal people who have historical connections throughout the region. The neighbouring groups comprise the Alyawarr, Eastern Arrernte, Bularnu and Warluwarra people in the south and south-west, the Wakaya to the west, the Waanyi to the north and the Kalkadoon (or Kalkadungu) to the east (see map in Figure 12).

The constitutional objects for which Myuma is established are to promote and benefit the welfare of the Aboriginal Communities of the upper Georgina River region, and are detailed as follows:

- Providing employment and on-the-job training for members of the Communities
- Providing education and vocational training to develop and promote the business and life skills of members of the Communities to enhance their employment opportunities
- Providing employment assistance and opportunities for members of the Communities, including traineeships or apprenticeships
- Promoting self-management and self-sufficiency within the Communities
- Providing low-cost housing to members of the Communities in need.

While maintaining a strong focus on the upper Georgina region, practical implementation of the first three goals has, in recent years, expanded geographically to embrace the greater part of north-east Australia.

Myuma's primary goal is to manage the commercial business operations of the Indjalandji-Dhidhanu people, on behalf of the traditional owner group. Specifically, its business objectives include:

- Provision of training and employment to Aboriginal and other long-term unemployed people from the north-west Queensland region
- Operation of a commercial labour hire service for clients seeking skilled labour (both qualified and trainee) in the civil construction and mining industries
- Ongoing development and operation of a commercial plant hire service for the civil construction and mining industries
- Management and successful delivery of a range of commercial civil construction contracts (including regional road construction and upgrade works, road base manufacture and supply, fencing, materials carting, and miscellaneous minor works contracts) secured with clients in the north-west Queensland region
- Provision of regular pre-vocational training courses for young Aboriginal adults from north-east Australia interested in entering the mining and civil construction industries
- Future expansion of the group's commercial operations into additional fields: in particular, delivery of accredited vocational mining training, hospitality and tourist operations.

The General Manager of Myuma Pty Ltd is the Indjalandji-Dhidhanu leader, Colin Saltmere. The staff structure is set out in Figure 9.

While Myuma Pty Ltd is not a registered charitable body, it has in its dealings to date been managed as a 'not-for-profit' business. Although enterprises are pursued to make a commercial profit, the profits are invested back into the company's infrastructure, either to purchase additional plant or to expand and upgrade the two Work Camps. Profits are also used to subsidise free services for the Camooweal township community, as well for a range of gifts to sporting organisations in Mt Isa that engage with



Aboriginal youth and young adults. Profits are also used at times for Myuma staff to engage in what are considered essential environmental and cultural management responses, e.g. responses to environmental damage.

The **Dugalunji Aboriginal Corporation** is a not-for-profit organisation that was incorporated in 1997. It is owned and managed by the Indjalandji-Dhidhanu traditional owners of the Camooweal region. The Dugalunji Aboriginal Corporation’s core business is management of the group’s native title and cultural heritage interests. This includes land and riverine management activities, and the provision and management of cultural heritage services to clients. Myuma Pty Ltd assists Dugalunji to deliver employment and training outcomes to local Aboriginal people from north-west Queensland in their cultural heritage practices (including relevant subsidisation and grant schemes). The management structure is shown in Figure 10.

**Rainbow Gateway Ltd** acts as a tax-deductible charity that receives and distributes any net incomes from Myuma Pty Ltd and Dugalunji Aboriginal Corporation for use in addressing the charitable goals of the Indjalandji-Dhidhanu and other local Aboriginal communities. Rainbow Gateway is operated by a Board of Directors, most of whom are the female leaders of the Indjalandji/Dhidhanu group.

The functions of these three corporations of the Myuma group are summarised in the table below.

Table 1: The three corporate vehicles of the Myuma Group and their respective spheres of operation

Corporate vehicle	Sphere of operation
Myuma Pty Ltd	Economic enterprises, training
Dugalunji Aboriginal Corporation	Cultural heritage, native title, land and riverine management
Rainbow Gateway Ltd	Social, welfare and charitable projects

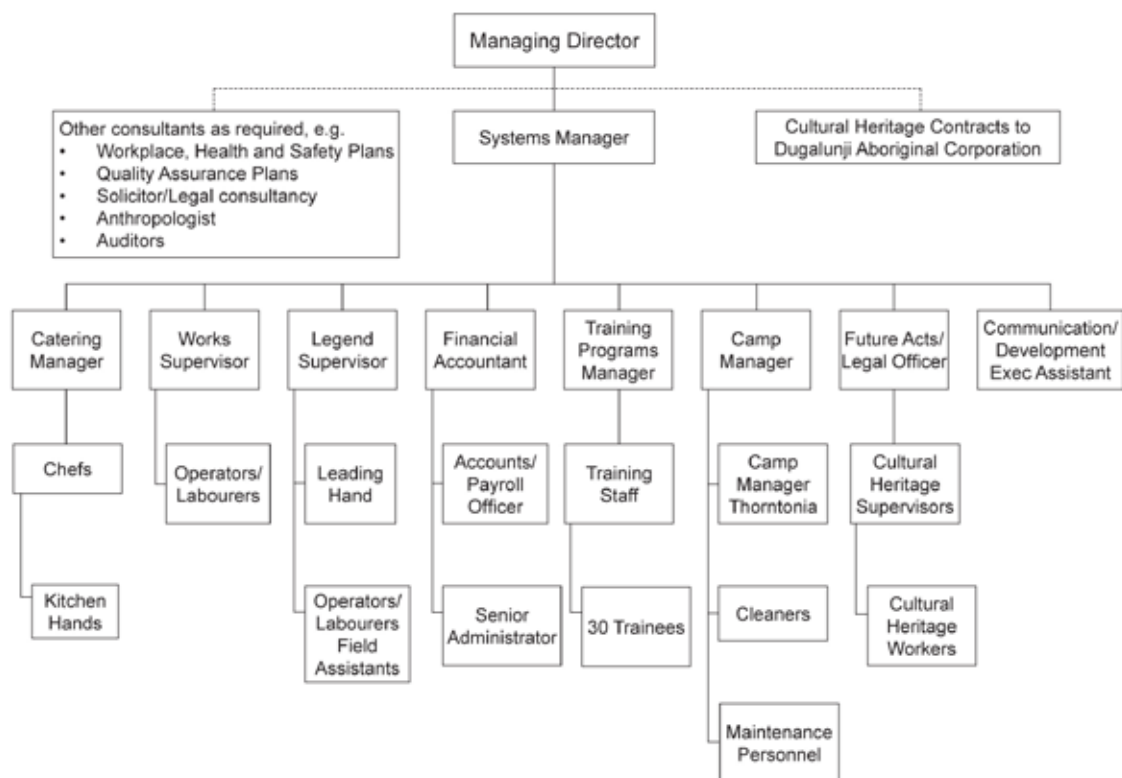


Figure 9: The Myuma staff structure

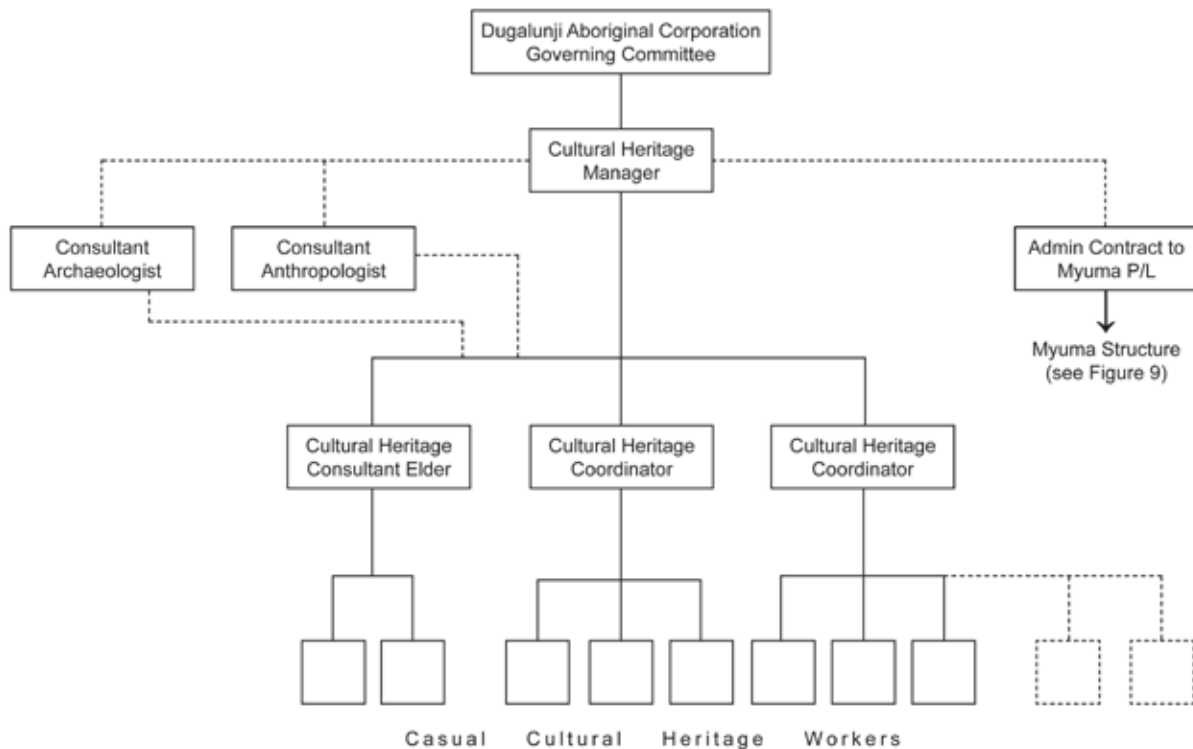


Figure 10: The Dugalunji Aboriginal Corporation Staff Structure

## 6.1 The centres of operation of the Myuma Group

The activities of the Myuma Group are mainly conducted from three locations. Firstly, from the corporations' registered public office (the Head Office), which is located in rental premises at Miles Street, Mount Isa, north-west Queensland. Mount Isa is the regional business centre for north-west Queensland. The second and principal location is the Dugalunji Camp, which is the Group's Work Camp and Cultural Heritage Keeping Place, and is located near Camooweal, centrally in Indjalandji and Dhidhanu country. The third location is the Thornton Quarry site, 90 kms north-east of Camooweal, at which Myuma has established a satellite Training Centre in addition to its quarrying operation. Myuma holds a joint venture interest in the Thornton limestone quarry operation with Lawlor Contracting Pty Ltd, employing local Aboriginal workers. Each of these will be described in turn.

The **Head Office** of the Myuma Group is located in Mount Isa, the regional centre of Queensland's north-west highlands and mineral province. The office is located conveniently in the Mount Isa CBD for visiting business and government personnel. (Mount Isa is serviced by daily jet flights from Brisbane and Townsville.) At times of peak operation, the office is staffed by an Office Manager, an Accounts Manager, and two Administration Officers, and contains five workstations, a waiting area and kitchenette. The office is handsomely furnished with Aboriginal art, company awards and project photographs (assets include computers, printers, furniture and fittings).

The **Dugalunji Camp** is the operations base of the Myuma Group and is situated on approximately 1.5 hectares, located 6.5 kms east of the township of Camooweal along the Barkly Highway, and some 18 kms from the Queensland/Northern Territory border. Camooweal is situated on the Georgina River Basin and within the surrounding grassland plains, desert and mountain landscapes, which provide the environmental setting for pastoralism, mining and cultural tourism. However, the contemporary regional industry centre for these activities is at Mt Isa, 188 kms to the east-south-east. The level of economic activity in Camooweal fell in the late twentieth century, as with the advent of road 'beef trains' the town became a highway stop for cattle trucks and tourists, rather than the busy driving centre it had been. During this period, its population had dropped from almost 400 people to 198 people (in the 2006

census), of whom 124 were recorded as Aboriginal, 45 were non-Aboriginal and nine recorded as 'not stated'. A long-term vision of Myuma is to assist in rejuvenating Camooweal's somewhat gentrified state as a rural township.

The Myuma Group has managed the Dugalunji Camp since early 2001; the camp was originally established by the Queensland Department of Main Roads for use in the road upgrade works along the Barkly Highway between Mount Isa and Camooweal. Main Roads gifted the Camp over to the Myuma Group in appreciation of its contributions to the roadworks project, and Myuma has made annual improvements since 2002.

In early 2009, the Dugalunji Camp was made up of an air-conditioned dining hall and well-equipped kitchen, three office buildings (ten work stations), two training rooms (six workstations with computers), nine five-person bunk houses for single men and women, one three-person bunk house for training staff, seven duplex accommodation units for married couples and single women, manager's residence, gardener's caravan, semi-enclosed recreation area, two laundries, three ablution units, first aid centre, covered workshop, open workshop, six covered carparks, several storage buildings, outdoor barbecue and ground-oven facility, artefact keeping place and manufacturing area, fowlhouse, duck pond, water tanks and vegetable garden. Overall, the Dugalunji Camp had furnished accommodation for 64 people.

The air-conditioned dining hall catered for a peak maximum of 65 diners per sitting, comprised of Myuma staff, trainees, contractors, visiting consultants and guests. A two-week cyclic menu ensured a regular healthy choice and diversity of meal types. The kitchen was staffed by two shifts of cooks and kitchen hands and was well-equipped with the necessary culinary tools of the trade, despite the remote location. (The kitchen included gas stove, oven, walk-in freezer coolrooms, dry store, chest freezers, dishwasher, extractor fans, urns and small equipment). The Head Chef took pride in conforming to food licensing requirements and hygiene standards as established by HACCP (Hazard Analysis at Critical Contact Points). Dieticians visited the Camp for an evening once a month, to carry out personal health checks and health education for all trainees and staff. The Dugalunji Camp has operated as an alcohol- and drug-free venue.

The Myuma vehicles, plant and tools are distributed between the Dugalunji Camp and the Quarry Camp. The Myuma construction assets in early 2009 included four 4WD vehicles (wagons and single- and double-cab utilities), a 25-seater bus, office car, excavator, mini-excavator, front-end loader, skid-steer loader with multiple attachments, earth roller, two semi water-tanker trailers, three prime movers, body truck (tilt-tray), grader, plant servicing equipment (including mobile fuel tanks), welders, compression generators, trailers and construction tools. Other vehicles (excavators, grader, bulldozer, road rollers) were hired on long-term arrangements.

The Dugalunji Camp was serviced with town electricity (Camooweal has a diesel-operated generator plant), and had four telephone lines, a fax line, satellite broadband internet service, free-to-air television and satellite-delivered subscription channels. Myuma employed a gardener who actively maintained the landscaping of the Dugalunji Camp to establish a natural aesthetic and shaded residential environment for all-year use in the harsh climate. Being situated on the edge of the Barkly Tableland, the Camp experiences cool-to-warm, dry, sunny winters and hot, humid summers with intermittent periods of heavy rainfall and sometimes prolonged drought.

The seven Dugalunji Camp workplace policies comprise Occupational Health and Safety, Rehabilitation (from injury and sickness), Quality Assurance, Environment Protection, Alcohol and Drugs, Discrimination and Harassment, and Aboriginal Peoples. These policies synthesise mainstream Australian workplace standards and a set of Aboriginal workplace values based in customary Aboriginal Law. (These policies are clearly displayed in the dining hall at the Camp.)



Since Myuma became joint partners in the Thornton Quarry, it has gradually upgraded the pre-existing Quarry Camp (which started operating in the 1980s) so as to provide accommodation for a semi-permanent work crew operating the quarry and the crushing equipment, as well as for other projects. The Quarry Camp has operated as a base for Myuma's civil construction team engaged on the Camooweal to Gregory Downs/Burketown road upgrade project, which continues until 2011 (for up to nine months of the year). Since September 2008, the Quarry Camp has also operated as a work camp for exploration teams engaged by Legend International Holdings Inc carrying out phosphate exploration mining.



In 2008 the infrastructure of the Quarry Camp was substantially expanded. It included a permanent canteen kitchen with electric cooking facilities, walk-in freezer, cool room, dry store, chest freezers, extractor fans, urns and small equipment, and an adjacent crib room (for lunch making). The office at the Quarry Camp was equipped with two computer workstations, satellite telecommunications system, one telephone landline, one fax landline and satellite broadband internet service. Accommodation for 34 people was available in four five-person bunk houses, two four-person bunk houses and three two-room ensuited dongas. There was also a first-aid room, covered entertainment area, a laundry and an ablution block. The Quarry Camp is powered by diesel generators.



*Figure 11: The Dugalunji Camp near Camooweal showing (top) verandah to dining hall, (middle) the outdoor artefact manufacturing area, (bottom) the barbeque and ground-oven cooking facility with men's quarters behind*

From 2007, the Quarry Camp took on another important role as a satellite facility for practical training activities for the Aboriginal trainees who participated in the bi-annual Dugalunji 'Civil Construction and Mining Skills' prevocational program. Trainees were rotated through the Quarry Camp work force that Myuma supplied to both the Legend Exploration project and the road construction program, where

they could gain unique experience in operating heavy plant. The Quarry Camp was also used as a day training site for other trainees who commuted from the Dugalunji Camp. In early 2009 the Thornton Quarry Camp contained about 38 people and was due to expand to cater for 50 during that year. Limited alcohol consumption was permitted at the Quarry Camp.

## 6.2 A brief business history of the Myuma Group

### 6.2.1 The early period, 1997–2000

The Dugalunji Aboriginal Corporation was the first corporation of the Myuma Group to be established, in 1997. During its first three years, Dugalunji's business activities were largely restricted to the management of native title and cultural heritage interests within the group's native title claim area. The corporation provided cultural heritage services to a range of clients, including Telstra, the North Queensland Electricity Board (NORQEB), and mining and exploration companies. Some grant funding was sourced and acquitted for natural resources projects within the group's tribal area.

In 2000, the Indjalandji-Dhidhanu people negotiated an agreement with the Queensland Department of Main Roads for the planned major upgrade of the Barkly Highway between Mount Isa and Camooweal. These works, financed by the Commonwealth and the State, were planned for a seven-year period between 2001 and 2008, with a total value in excess of \$120 million. The agreement that was struck protected native title and Aboriginal cultural heritage interests within the planned road corridor, and delivered appropriate training, employment and business development opportunities to local Aboriginal people. In particular, the negotiations yielded two framework contracts which structured future dealings between the Indjalandji-Dhidhanu people and the Main Roads Department. Against the backdrop of these contracts, the State also involved the Myuma Group in a partnership role within the road construction contracts associated with three stages of the road upgrade works. Since the completion of the Barkly Highway upgrade, Myuma has continued to win road maintenance contracts from Main Roads within the region.

### 6.2.2 Overview of business activities, 2001–2009

Since 2001, the Myuma Group has developed a highly successful set of business activities, based at the Dugalunji Camp. The Myuma Group's full range of successful business enterprises specialise in:

- civil construction contracting operations (labour hire of a predominantly local Aboriginal workforce trained in many aspects of civil construction, including plant operation)
- joint venture for manufacture and supply of quarried limestone materials (with Lawlor Contracting Pty Ltd)
- training delivery for the Aboriginal workforce with accredited outcomes
- pre-vocational training program for young Aboriginal adults
- cultural heritage services for new construction or development projects
- plant hire
- work camp accommodation, catering and cleaning operations.

Myuma has packaged these individual enterprises together in bids for major projects, resulting in its strong economic growth over its first eight years (2001–2008).

The joint venture with Lawlor Contracting Pty Ltd began in 2004 and involved the production and supply of limestone materials at the Thornton Quarry facility. Under the terms of the ongoing agreement with Lawlor Contracting, Myuma carries out contract bidding, contract negotiation and

administration; provides labour (both general labour and plant operators), plant and infrastructure to Lawlor Contracting for use in quarrying and earthmoving operations; and integrates training into the work programs of those employees.<sup>4</sup>

During 2007 and 2008 there was a diversification of income streams due to the absence of a single large-scale contract. A major project then emerged in 2008, being the Legend International Holdings phosphate exploration project, which is ongoing. The full range of major civil construction contracts held by the Myuma Group during the period 2001–2009 is indicated in Table 2. The gross revenue gained by Myuma from these contracts in a little over eight years has been \$19.8 million, or an average of \$2.5 million per year. Much of these capital gains has been used to subsidise workforce development and training.

### 6.2.3 The Barkly Highway Projects: 2001–2006

The Barkly Highway between Mount Isa and Camooweal was built during the Second World War for strategic military use. In 2000 this part of the highway was more than 50 years old and one of the worst pieces of national highway in Australia. From 2001 to 2006, the North Western District of the Department of Main Roads oversaw a Federally funded upgrade of the Barkly Highway between Mount Isa and the Queensland/Northern Territory border. The first task was to replace the old bridge over the Georgina River, which when subjected to wet season flooding, blocked all interstate traffic across northern Australia for many weeks. After constructing the new (higher) bridge, the remaining roadworks then involved rebuilding 89 kilometres of road with only single-lane seal to a 9.0 m sealed standard, eliminating blind crests and dips and upgrading eight major creek crossings with a total of 20 bridges over smaller creeks and rivers.

Both Federal and State governments required that the ‘20/10’ Aboriginal employment and training policy be implemented on the projects (20% overall Aboriginal workforce hours and 10% trainee hours). The Barkly Highway works thus presented training, employment and commercial contracting opportunities for the local Aboriginal people, as well as cultural heritage work. Through working together in a spirit of cooperation, the Aboriginal traditional owners and the Department of Main Roads were able to protect and promote both the historical cultural heritage values associated with the Barkly Highway and the Aboriginal cultural heritage values of the area. Employment and training opportunities provided through these projects were harnessed to enhance the Myuma Group’s capacity for further development, and to improve the skills base and economic strength of Aboriginal communities within the region.

The Myuma Group is committed to the employment of Aboriginal people from the upper Georgina River and wider cultural region. During the Georgina River Bridge project (March 2001 to December 2002), the Myuma Group employed a workforce of 40 full-time employees, hiring them to the Project Alliance team as civil construction general labourers and trainee plant operators. Again in 2004 the Myuma Group employed 38 workers for the Nowranie Creek Alliance, of whom 30 were local Aboriginal people. Many received accredited training outcomes that were recognised through the grant of a number of Commonwealth and State training and business awards.

During the third and final phase of the Barkly Highway upgrade project, the Split Rock Inca Alliance (involving Seymour Whyte Constructions Pty Ltd and the Myuma Group) employed 52 persons, of whom 39 were local Aboriginal people, with 30 registered on official traineeships. Myuma again delivered accredited training to employees – this time in the fields of civil construction, business administration and hospitality – during the course of the final project works. Colin Saltmere has identified this contractual alliance with Seymour Whyte as a critical growth point (‘ramping up’) when

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<sup>4</sup> For the Nowranie Creek road construction project, Myuma and Lawlor Contracting manufactured and supplied 60 000 tonnes of unbound pavement material to the job. On the Split Rock Inca road construction project, 226 000 tonnes of unbound pavement material was provided. Miscellaneous small contracts for crushed limestone materials are also continually managed by Myuma and Lawlor Contracting in response to local demands.

Table 2: Major Myuma commercial contracts during 2001–2009

Contract	Time period	Myuma Group contract share	Peak Myuma employment	Project works description	Project partners/clients
Georgina River Bridge Alliance	Mar 2001 – Dec 2002	\$1 400 000	40	Major bridge construction, highway reconstruction (labour hire, minor plant hire); Training management services; Catering/cleaning services for 40-person camp; Cultural heritage services	Qld Dept of Main Roads (client); RoadTek, Barclay-Mowlem (Total project value \$20 million)
Nowranie Creek Alliance (Barkly Highway)	Jun 2004 – Dec 2004	\$5 900 000	38	Highway and bridge reconstruction (labour hire, minor plant hire); Training management services; Catering/cleaning services for 60-person camp; Quarry manufacture and supply of 90 000T pavement material to site; Fencing construction (30.5 km); Cultural heritage services	Qld Dept of Main Roads (client); Leighton Contractors Pty Ltd (Total project value \$19.7 million)
Gravel supply (Split Rock Inca Barkly Highway Upgrade)	Dec 2005 – Oct 2006	\$500 000	5	Quarry manufacture and supply of 235 000T pavement material	Qld Dept of Main Roads (client); Lawlor Contracting Pty Ltd (Total project value \$5.8 million)
Fencing (Split Rock/Carleton Creek Barkly Highway upgrade)	Jun – Dec 2005	\$300 000	12	Fencing construction (60 km)	Qld Dept of Main Roads (client)
Fencing (Inca Creek/Yelvertoft Road (Barkly Highway upgrade)	Jul 2006 – Dec 2006	\$200 000	8	Fencing construction (35 km)	Qld Dept of Main Roads (client)
Split Rock Inca Alliance (Barkly Highway)	Apr 2006 – Nov 2006	\$5 100 000	52	Highway and bridge reconstruction (labour hire, heavy plant hire); Training management services; Catering/cleaning services for 60-person camp; Cultural heritage services	Qld Dept of Main Roads (client); Seymour Whyte Constructions Pty Ltd (Total project value \$33.8 million)
Gilbert River Construction Camp	Aug – Dec 2007	\$675 000	12	Construction of remote accommodation camp for 30 people	RoadTek (client)
Gregory Downs–Camooweal Road Upgrade	Jul 2007 – Jun 2008	\$1 070 000	10	Reconstruction of the Camooweal–Gregory Downs road	RoadTek (client)
Misc. Roadworks	Jul 2007 – Jun 2008	\$295 000	8	Upgrading of sections of Barkly Highway, Camooweal–Urandangi Road, Camooweal township roads	RoadTek, Mount Isa City Council (client)
Miscellaneous Labour Hire	Jul 2007 – Jun 2008	\$530 000	8	Labour hire for mining, exploration, civil and building construction clients	Xstrata, Rio Tinto Alcan, Incitec, Pivot, CDE Capital, Barkly All Trades
Gregory Downs–Camooweal Road Upgrade	Jul 2008 – Jun 2009	\$2 190 000	12	Reconstruction of the Camooweal–Gregory Downs road	RoadTek/Dept of Main Roads (client)
D-Tree Phosphate Exploration Project	Aug 2008 – Jun 2009	\$1 400 000	20	Provision of site camp, catering/accommodation services, labour and plant hire, access road construction	Legend International Holdings Inc. (client)
Miscellaneous Labour Hire	Jul 2008 – Jun 2009	\$200 000	8	Labour hire for mining and civil construction clients	Rio Tinto Alcan, Incitec Pivot, Boral Asphalt
<b>Total</b>	<b>Mar 2001 – Jun 2009</b>	<b>\$19.8M</b>			

Myuma realised its greater potential as a mature commercial company operating confidently in the region. Although the expansion of Myuma’s staff and plant has been a gradual process as it has grown over the years, it was at this particular time that Myuma negotiated a \$750 000 floating loan with its bank, that could be drawn down during any enterprise agreement as it wished, thus equipping it with a self-confidence to tender for appropriate large-scale contracts in its region so as to maintain the momentum of its growth.

Table 3 provides a profile of the 44 Myuma staff and trainees employed on the Split Rock Inca Alliance civil construction project in May 2006. The table is organised by Aboriginal language groups and places of normal residence. The table indicates that 36 out of the 44 employees were from language groups in the Georgina River Basin or wider cultural region<sup>5</sup> (see map of these groups in Figure 12). This was in keeping with the Myuma Group's constitutionally based policy of advancing economic development, employment and training within the region's Aboriginal communities. The table also indicated a ratio of male to female employees in the order of 3:1, and a ratio of Aboriginal to non-Aboriginal workers of 5.5:1. Figure 13 shows the charter of the partners involved in the Split Rock Inca Alliance with the shared objectives, values and principles of the contract.

Interestingly, it was Colin Saltmere's positive report of the Myuma success in alliance contracting (the Barkly Highway contracts) to public servants in the NT Government that influenced the latter group to investigate the adaption of alliance tendering principles to the Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP) in the NT.<sup>6</sup> Contracting models are clearly a significant variable in designing both effective service delivery and enterprise engagement.

Table 3: Profile of Myuma employees, May 2006

Language group/ Place of normal residence	Aboriginal			Non-Aboriginal		
	Male	Female	Sub-total	Male	Female	Sub-total
<b>Groups in the Georgina River Basin Catchment</b>						
Alyawarr/Lake Nash & NT	7	3	10			
Indjalandji-Dhidhanu/Georgina River	3	2	5			
Waanyi/Nicholsen River, Lawn Hill	4		4			
Wakaya/NT	3	1	4			
Kalkadoon/Mt Isa	3		3			
Bularnu/Georgina River	1		1			
Warluwarra/Georgina River	1		1			
Pitta Pitta/Georgina River	1		1			
<b>Groups in the wider cultural region</b>						
Wangkanguru/Simpson Desert	1		1			
Eastern Arrernte/NT	2		2			
Warumungu/NT	3		3			
Kaytetye/NT	1		1			
<b>People from distant places</b>						
North Queensland	1		1		1	1
South-east Queensland					3	3
Rural New South Wales				1	1	2
Papua New Guinea					1	1
<b>SUB-TOTALS:</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>

Note: The classification by language group is simplified for the sake of illustration; in reality most individuals have a genealogical connection to several language groups if one traces back past their grandparents.

<sup>5</sup> Sometimes referred to by the author as the Georgina River basin cultural bloc or Barkly Region cultural bloc and extending west to such places as Tennant Creek, Ali Curung and Ampilatwatja.

<sup>6</sup> pers. comm. Leon Morris, Director of Indigenous Policy, Department of the Chief Minister, Northern Territory Government, Alice Springs, 26/5/09.



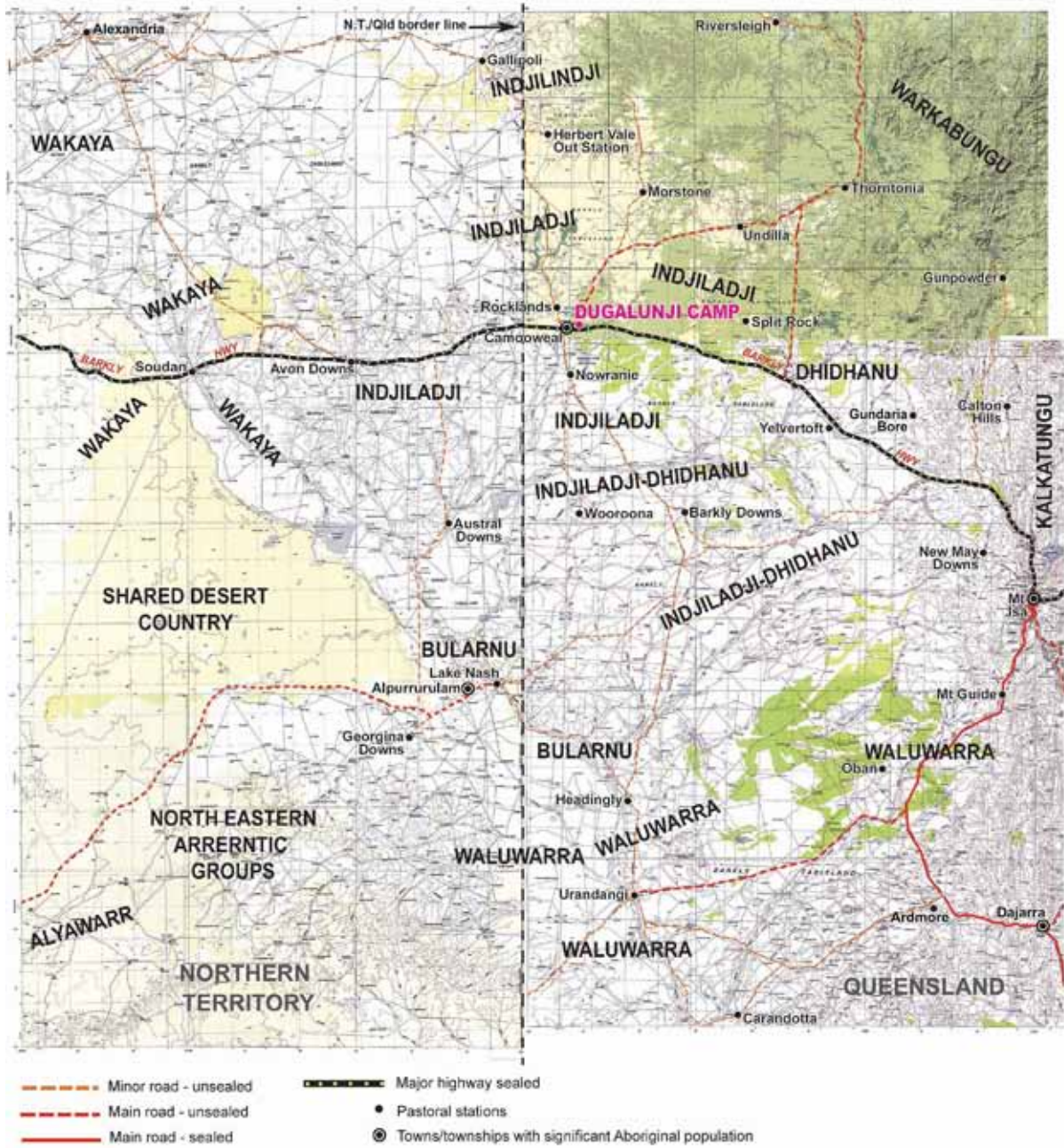







Figure 12: The operational region of the Myuma Group showing the various local language groups

Source: Map by author



 Foundation Workshop  
 Split Rock Inca Alliance







## SPLIT ROCK INCA ALLIANCE CHARTER

**Mission Statement**

*"The Split Rock Inca Alliance will work together with local communities to deliver the final 35.4km of the Barkly Highway Upgrade. The Alliance will exceed the expectations of all stakeholders and will leave a lasting benefit for the people of Northern Australia."*

**Objectives**


**(a) Performance Objectives**


- ✓ The Split Rock Inca Alliance will be seen as a model alliance.
- ✓ Time, cost, quality and safety targets will be beaten.
- ✓ Cultural Heritage and environmental expectations will be exceeded.
- ✓ The ITO Training Model will be left as an outstanding legacy.
- ✓ Innovation and creative ideas will be promoted and supported.

**(b) Relationship Objectives**

- ✓ The cultures of those involved in the Alliance will be respected.
- ✓ Decisions are made on a "best for project" basis.
- ✓ Communications are always open, frank and honest.
- ✓ The Alliance Team will be fully integrated and will achieve very high performances.
- ✓ Personal achievement will be fostered and promoted.

<p><b>The Values Practised by Team Members</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Respect for individual ideas, beliefs and situations.</li> <li>✓ Open, honest communication.</li> <li>✓ Innovative thinking.</li> <li>✓ Frankness and honesty.</li> <li>✓ A supportive culture.</li> <li>✓ Shared accountability.</li> </ul>	<p><b>The Principles Shaping the Alliance Agreement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Through our efforts, we all win or we all lose.</li> <li>✓ We will share responsibility for our decisions and actions.</li> <li>✓ All opinions are valid but we all support the final decision.</li> <li>✓ All decisions are the best for alliance outcomes.</li> <li>✓ We will provide/find the right people, advice and resources to get the job done.</li> <li>✓ Transactions will be open book.</li> <li>✓ We will encourage innovative thinking.</li> <li>✓ We will extend ourselves by setting and planning to achieve breakthrough targets.</li> <li>✓ We will promote open, honest communication.</li> <li>✓ We will support alliance participants to help desired outcomes.</li> </ul>
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*Peter Lotshaw*

02/04 February 2006

*David Whyte*

*Marn Ernst*



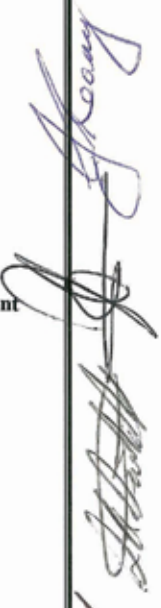
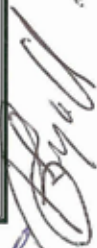
  
  
  


Figure 13: Charter of the Split Rock Inca Alliance for Main Roads reconstruction of part of Barkly Highway

#### 6.2.4 Major projects and expansion during 2007–2009

The completion of the upgraded Barkly Highway catalysed the need for a more effective management structure within Myuma if large-scale projects were to continue. In September 2007, a Systems Manager was appointed to Myuma to re-invigorate its structure over a period of time through a rationalisation of human resources as well as administrative and financial procedures, and a reigning in of ineffective expenditures. This represented an important growth stage in Myuma's corporate evolution.

During the period 2007–2009, Myuma won recurrent annual contracts for regional road upgrades from both Queensland Main Roads and Mt Isa City Council (e.g. Camooweal to Gregory Crossing Road). The first 13-week pre-vocational training programs began as well. These were to give young Aboriginal adults employment access to the mining and civil construction sectors, and were run bi-annually, with two intakes of 30 trainees per year. More detail is provided in section 6.4 below.

In August 2008, Myuma was contracted by Legend International Holdings Inc to provide a suite of services to assist with the establishment of a phosphate mining operation on both the north and south sides of the Barkly Highway. These services included the establishment and operation of a mining exploration camp at the Thornton Quarry, cultural heritage clearance for exploration roads on mining exploration leases, plant and labour hire for exploration works, and construction and maintenance of roads into tenements (a \$1 million contract in three months). At the time of writing, contract negotiation was in train to provide long-term contract services as an alliance partner for the operation of the Legend International phosphate mine (on the basis of Myuma having right of receiving first offer of Legend contracts for execution at commercially competitive contract prices).

The Main Roads and Legend projects also catalysed the development of a one-day Cultural Induction course to educate non-Aboriginal personnel (both field and office-based workers) from regional workforces about the Dugalunji cultural heritage values and management.

During 2009, Myuma reached another critical growth threshold point, that of employing its own internal company accountant in its Mt Isa office, and thereby establishing an improved state of economic transparency (both to itself and to outsiders), and of strengthened corporate governance capacity for its Directors.

### 6.3 Training delivery by the Myuma Group and partners

Myuma has a keen interest in fostering the region's capacity to deliver sustainable training and employment outcomes for Aboriginal people based in Camooweal and surrounding population centres. From its early stages, Myuma's leaders recognised that ample employment opportunities for trainees existed within Myuma's own operations as well as within the many civil construction and mining companies operating in the region.

In the early 2000s, the Myuma Group gained its initial experience in the design, funding and implementation of training programs for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal trainees in the north-west Queensland region. In the context of previous major civil construction projects, the Myuma Group, with its training partners, organised and supervised the delivery of accredited training outcomes to over 40 Aboriginal trainees, many of whom progressed as part of Myuma's core civil construction workforce from unskilled to Certificate III status and beyond, and some of whom remained in the Myuma workforce.

Through the experiences gained on its early projects, the Myuma Group forged close working relationships with key stakeholders interested in training and employment outcomes for the civil construction and mining industries, including:

- Regional job network agencies and CDEP organisations (CHR, Centacare and IsaSkills/JobFutures)
- Australian Government agencies (Department of Employment and Workplace Relations; Department of Education, Science and Training; Centrelink; Indigenous Coordination Centres)

- Queensland State Government agencies (Department of Employment and Industrial Relations; Department of Education, Training and the Arts; Department of State Development and Innovation; Queensland Apprenticeship Services)
- Registered training organisations (in particular the Mount Isa Institute of TAFE and Construction Skills Training Centre) which are Australian Quality Framework (AQF) compliant
- Peak industry groups (Construction Training Queensland, the Building and Construction Industry Training Fund and the Mining Industry Skills Centre).

From this network, the Myuma Group initially established a standing Training and Employment Consultative Committee, which met regularly throughout the course of training projects to supervise delivery of the particular project and to advise the Myuma Group and relevant contract partners on matters pertaining to the Training and Employment Plan for that project. With the assistance of the Committee, a Training Management Model was gradually developed through Myuma's projects with its early contract and Alliance partners.

This Training Management Model emphasised five key learnings. First, the Committee had to be proactive in scoping the potential availability of forthcoming on-site training opportunities and associated project proponents who would be willing to engage in such an Aboriginal training program. The second learning was the need for the Committee members to then take a collective approach to identifying, pooling and coordinating available government resources for the respective costs incurred by trainees, training organisations, and on-site employers. Third was the need for early engagement between the training agency and the identified project proponent and their project contractor(s) on the issues of design, delivery and integration of training into the contract work on site. The fourth learning was the need to manage training delivery in a timely, regular and continuous program and to monitor such through regular progress reviews; at times it was necessary for the Committee to take on this role in the absence of any other review body. The final learning was the importance of identifying the particular needs of trainees between exiting their training program and entering their available employment option; in some cases this involves the provision of further short specialised training packages.

This early standing Consultative Committee has since transformed into the Mt Isa Regional Industry and Infrastructure Key Managers Forum, which takes a regional coordination role in identifying, implementing and managing the progress of Aboriginal training and employment programs throughout local and regional industries. The five key learnings continue to be applied by this Forum and by Myuma. The Forum is made up from the following diverse range of stakeholders:

- the Myuma Group
- current contract partners (e.g. road construction contractors, mining companies, government departments)
- Department of Employment and Industrial Relations (Qld)
- Department of Education, Training and the Arts (Qld)
- Department of State Development and Innovation (Qld)
- Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (Cwlth)
- Job Network providers
- Mount Isa Institute of TAFE (MIIT)
- Queensland Apprenticeship Services (QAS)
- Construction Training Queensland (CTQ) and Mining Industry Skills Centre (MISC)<sup>7</sup>
- Centrelink.

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<sup>7</sup> Peak industry advisory bodies for civil/building construction and mining respectively in Queensland.

The Mt Isa Regional Industry and Infrastructure Key Managers Forum helps Myuma create new links with relevant potential employers to participate in the ongoing design and delivery of training and employment strategies for the civil construction and mining sectors in north-west Queensland. Once a potential employer is identified, the Committee works with the employer to design recruitment and articulation strategies to move existing trainees/employees and under-skilled and/or unemployed Aboriginal persons into the expanding regional mining and civil construction industries. A proportion of graduating trainees are also employed by Myuma itself.

The Myuma general workforce also currently comprises trainees completing Certificates II and III in Civil Construction (both in Road Construction and Maintenance and in Plant Operations), experienced plant operators and construction workers who are looking to upskill into Leading Hand/Trainer and Assessor roles, hospitality trainees completing Certificates II and III qualifications in catering and housekeeping operations (employed at the Dugalunji construction work camp), and occasional business administration trainees completing Certificate II and III qualifications.



*Figure 14: Myuma trainees discussing welding techniques at Dugalunji Camp*

#### 6.4 Myuma's prevocational training programs in civil construction and mining skills

In the period 2004–2005, consultations with community stakeholders (including Registered Training Organisations, job agencies, secondary schools, Construction Training Queensland, the Mining Industry Skills Centre and private sector employers) revealed an urgent and long-term need for the supply of suitably prequalified entrants into the civil construction and mining industries throughout Queensland, and in the north-west region in particular. During 2006, the Myuma Group and its partners designed and began trialling a prevocational, accredited, individualised training program that delivered competencies specifically chosen to equip Aboriginal participants for pre-identified, full-time entry-level positions in civil construction and mining operations in the north-west Queensland region.

During 2007 and 2008, the program was consolidated and stabilised as a best-practice national training scheme with secure income of \$2.5 million per year from the Australian and Queensland Governments and the mining sector. A bi-annual intake of 30 trainees occurs (i.e. total of 60 per year) organised in a three-stage process: (1) recruitment and home-based preparation stage to ensure an intake with a high potential for course completion; (2) residential period of 13 weeks' intensive training based at the Dugalunji and Quarry Camps; and (3) employment placement and mentoring stage to manage the transition into a full-time working lifestyle, addressing and resolving any associated workplace or lifestyle problems that arise. In 2009, Myuma was assisting with the planning of an Aboriginal workers' managed residential facility in Mt Isa to house Myuma graduate trainees and to provide them with support services during this critical transition phase into full-time employment.

Following the 2005 pilot program that conscripted north-west Queensland trainees, the demographic profile of trainees broadened to take in both remote and urban communities throughout the Gulf of Carpentaria, Cape York, North Queensland and the far east of the Northern Territory. This broadened set of community sources facilitated a more careful selection process, maximising opportunity for those with high motivation and unfulfilled capacity, including from remote communities characterised as being troubled with dysfunctional traits. This geographic spread of trainees ensured a stimulating multi-cultural Aboriginal interactive experience between trainees from diverse and different Aboriginal cultures, and from across the full spectrum of remote traditionally oriented communities to urban town communities. Informal agreements were put in place with a number of Aboriginal Community Councils or NGOs from whom to regularly recruit trainees, including at Aurukun, Yarrabah, Palm Island, Mossman and Innisfail.

Participants were largely Aboriginal school-leavers or persons who were either long-term unemployed or at risk of long-term unemployment. Each training intake of 30 persons is largely made up of young adults in the 18–26 year age range and with a mixture of men to women in the ratio of about five to one (see Table 4). Participants are usually recruited in groups of three, four or five from each targeted community, such that upon arrival each participant can interact with some familiar faces. The social relatedness grows as individuals find themselves in different work teams and activity groups. The program delivered a set of generic competencies involving job readiness, life skills and basic civil construction and mining skills.

Table 4: Myuma's pre-vocational training outcomes, 2007–2009

Training semester (13-week course)	Trainees entering			Trainees graduating			Trainees employed	
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Obtained employment	Remained in continuous employment for 6 months
2007, semester 1	10	2	12	8	2	10	7	2
2007, semester 2	14	6	20	10	6	16	10	6
2008, semester 1	26	4	30	23	3	26	20	8
2008, semester 2	24	6	30	19	6	25	16	8*
2009, semester 1	26	4	30	24	4	28	16	0*
Totals	100	22	122	84	21	105	69	24*

Note: The asterisk indicates that employment outcomes were ongoing, i.e. some placements had not yet reached the six-month mark.

Another feature of the trainee profile was the diversity of their cultural backgrounds, personalities and skill levels. There was a mix of individuals from different Aboriginal cultural blocs, including west Cape York, east Cape, southern Gulf, north-east rainforest, north-west Queensland highlands, lower Sandover River and from urban cities such as Cairns, Townsville and Mt Isa. Some of them (e.g. the Wik from Aurukun) were steeped in Aboriginal law, while other urban trainees had largely missed out on being enculturated into traditionally oriented Aboriginal cultures.

Whatever the case, Colin Saltmere visited the household of every prospective trainee to sit at the kitchen table of their family, explain the nature of the training program, ensure families had a clear understanding of the rules and the expectations that would be incurred and to seek the family's support for the trainee, both during and after the program and whenever problems may have arisen. And there have been problems, as the trainee intake has often included individuals with substance addiction, insecurity about their Aboriginality, immaturity about adulthood, and sometimes individuals engaged in violent behaviour and living outside of the Australian law in various ways.

The prevocational training curriculum has been divided into three accredited streams: (1) civil construction, (2) mining, and (3) lifeskills. Trainees carry out welding, concreting, carpentry, joinery, construction-plan reading, use of power tools, small plant and equipment use and occupational health and safety training. The third stream, lifeskills, has included financial literacy, IT skills and personal confidence. With respect to personal confidence, a set of aims has been to foster an emergence of diverse Aboriginal identities within the trainee group based on Aboriginal values, to strengthen individual confidence, to express their particular identity, and to be able to contrast their identity with those of others. Aboriginal cultural identity and religion workshops have enhanced Aboriginal values of relatedness to others as well to country and sacred sites, while family violence workshops have addressed issues of having one's employment undermined by home family problems.

As well as cultural identity empowerment, a range of other non-accredited training and development components were included in the course, including driver training, upgrading of driving licenses, Aboriginal health risk awareness, personal health plans, family violence awareness and literacy and numeracy enhancement. All of these components aimed to provide a strong foundation for young Aboriginal adults in the workplace embracing physical, psychological and skills performance. On-the-job practical experience also occurred during the training through a series of short work-team placements. The trainees have assisted Myuma in the delivery of existing contracts and works, including the execution of a range of well-supported public infrastructure projects chosen to yield long-term benefits to the residents of the Camooweal region and the travelling public. Project participants were exposed to high-profile construction work, of which they were able to feel justly proud in terms of their role in improving community services.

The training in the prevocational course is at times both bicultural and intercultural, dealing on the one hand with separate Anglo Australian and Aboriginal positions on issues, and on the other, with how these different values and perceptions must be respected and in various ways reconciled and integrated without rejecting either, in order for each trainee to tackle their individual career and life paths after leaving the Dugalunji Camp.

Despite the 2008–2009 global recession and its adverse economic impacts, Myuma was able to maintain high outcome performance for its trainees by balancing placements across the civil construction with those in the mining sector and absorbing five or so graduates from each intake into its own workforce. At least half of the graduates have thus had guaranteed employment in outside industry, with Myuma employing another quarter. In 2009, placements were occurring with Rio Tinto, Alcan, Xstrata, Cairns Earthmoving Company, Incitec Pivot, CDE Capital, Legend International Inc, Mt Isa City Council and the Myuma Labour Hire Pod. Future employment prospects were guaranteed by the start of the Legend International phosphate mining project close to Camooweal.

The prevocational training program has been used as the vehicle to pilot a new Aboriginal e-learning strategy being delivered by Mount Isa Institute of TAFE in conjunction with the Myuma Group, and funded by the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training as part of an Aboriginal Engagement strategy. A package of e-learning training materials was built around the competencies identified as part of the Myuma prevocational training program and was used to facilitate the delivery of these programs. Myuma intends to continue refining and using this program for future prevocational training.

After completion of the prevocational program, Myuma and its partners have supported the articulation of trainees into full-time employment and further accredited training opportunities with regional employers engaged in present and developing civil construction and mining operations (e.g. Certificate II and/or III programs in Civil Construction or other allied industries). The trainees progress in a staged manner (under the Australian National Training Framework System) through exposure to civil construction and mining operations and typical working environments associated with each type of operation. In this manner, the Myuma Group helps address the current skills shortage in the civil construction and mining industries throughout Queensland and, in particular, in the north-west Queensland region. Other elective competencies that are likely to be incorporated into the prevocational program as required include Clerical/Administrative, Landscaping, Agricultural and Environment subjects.

The mode of running the Dugalunji Camp was a critical input into the success of the training program. The Myuma Managing Director (Colin Saltmere) operated the camp like a boarding school for young Aboriginal adults, providing a set of lifeskills and industrial discipline for the trainees (see section 7.1 below for more on this).

Indicators of service performance with respect to the Myuma training course include a high retention of trainees during the course and a high rate of graduation (86%). Of the 105 trainees who graduated in the period 2007–2009, some 69 (66%) obtained employment upon graduation, of whom about a third then remained in continuous employment for at least six months (see Table 4). Other measures, which were not available to the author, were the overall longevity and stability of the employment period.<sup>8</sup>

## 6.5 Cultural heritage management

Dugalunji Aboriginal Corporation is regularly involved in the delivery of cultural heritage services such as fieldwork, database management, cultural heritage inductions, cultural heritage field inspections and cultural heritage monitoring work, and the publication of associated reports, for a range of stakeholders undertaking development impact works on Indjalandji-Dhidhanu country. These stakeholders have included a number of mineral exploration companies, public utilities such as Telstra and Ergon Energy, and private individuals and groups within the local non-Aboriginal community. Work is undertaken pursuant to the terms of negotiated cultural heritage and Native Title agreements with the relevant stakeholder.

The primary role of the Dugalunji Aboriginal Corporation is to manage the cultural heritage and native title interests of the Indjalandji-Dhidhanu people. As such, its responsibilities include:

- securing adequate protection of and otherwise appropriately managing Indjalandji-Dhidhanu cultural heritage interests
- securing formal recognition of the Indjalandji-Dhidhanu people's traditional ownership of their country and an effective tenure base for exercising that ownership, both through the native title process and through Aboriginal-specific programs and mainstream avenues for land acquisition
- negotiating and managing Native Title and cultural heritage agreements with mining and exploration companies, government departments, public utilities and others who wish to undertake development work on Indjalandji-Dhidhanu country
- providing cultural heritage field inspection, reporting and monitoring services for the conduct of necessary cultural heritage management
- providing cultural heritage induction and cross-cultural training sessions on country to a range of clients, including staff and contractors engaged in development projects, and university students enrolled in archaeology, anthropology and related degree courses
- cataloguing, storing and databasing artefacts retrieved during field work
- researching and recording Indjalandji-Dhidhanu traditions, language, cultural heritage and contemporary history.

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<sup>8</sup> These measures were the subject of a proposed separate research project by the Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining at the University of Queensland, which will aim to track graduates through their post-training period to evaluate the success of the scheme.



- maintaining and transmitting to younger Indjalandji-Dhidhanu people a working knowledge of Indjalandji-Dhidhanu traditions and heritage
- sharing information and insights about Native Title, cultural heritage and broader cultural issues with other Aboriginal groups and, where appropriate, the general public
- carrying out local and riverine management on country.

Dugalunji Aboriginal Corporation has extensive experience in the conduct of cultural heritage projects and management of the Indjalandji-Dhidhanu cultural heritage collection. Since 1997, Dugalunji has been involved in managing Indjalandji-Dhidhanu participation in a large number of cultural heritage projects which have culminated in some 16 major technical reports. Dugalunji has acquired what it considers to be a high level of cultural heritage management expertise through its work on multiple projects. The corporation has won several awards for its cultural heritage preservation work.<sup>9</sup> Dugalunji has also gained more proficient technical support in the form of quad bikes, each equipped with a GPS, to use in remote rugged terrains for Aboriginal site identification and recording.

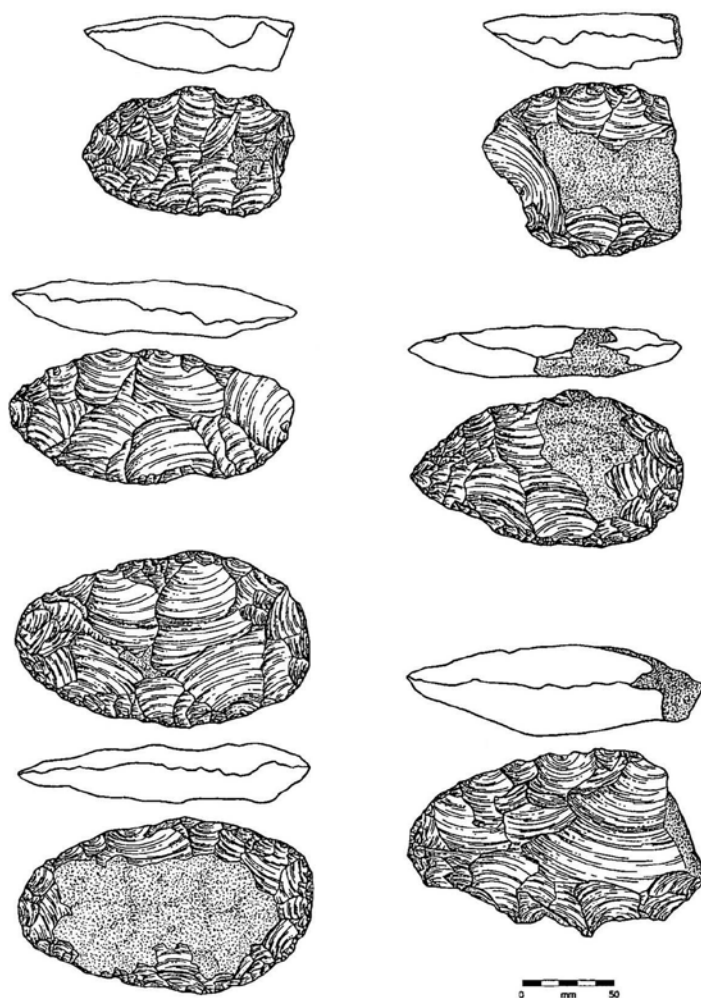


Figure 15: Biface stone implements from upper Georgina River and Nowranie Creek

Manufacturing skills for these tools are maintained by Colin Saltmere  
Source: Dr Mark Moore (2004)

The Corporation has also developed a one-day Cultural Induction course to educate non-Aboriginal personnel (both field and office-based workers) from regional workforces about the Dugalunji values and management of cultural heritage within a knowledge base of traditional Aboriginal culture and contact history in the region. Cross-cultural induction and training offered by Dugalunji for proponents of major development projects in the region has included innovative methods such as inductees participating in the manufacture (knapping) of stone artefacts and in spinifex resin hafting by traditional techniques (see Figure 15), and learning about regional Aboriginal history (from 1861); these are topics that are not available in formal text books.

Dugalunji Corporation hosted a three-day Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management Conference and Workshop in June 2009, titled ‘Salt to Dust’, with participation by Aboriginal traditional owner groups from the Gulf rivers catchments, the Lake Eyre Basin (Desert Channels), and east coast groups from throughout Queensland.

<sup>9</sup> Including the John Herbert Award for Cultural Heritage Excellence and the Civil Contractors Federation Queensland Earth Award for Special Achievement in Archaeology and Heritage Excellence.

During 2006 to 2009, Colin Saltmere has taken on an increasing Aboriginal leadership role in cultural heritage advocacy in Queensland, becoming a member of the Southern Gulf Catchments and Desert Channels National Heritage Trust bodies and of the Review Committee of the Queensland Cultural Heritage Acts. Colin Saltmere continues to provide informal advice to many Aboriginal land management groups throughout Queensland and the eastern Northern Territory.

Two major incidents of environmental damage occurred in the Indjalandji-Dhidhanu tribal area during the course of the research project reported here (2007–2009), each providing new cultural heritage response experiences for the Dugalunji Aboriginal Corporation. The first was that of damage to a sacred Blue-tongue Lizard Dreaming site on the northern outskirts of Camooweal by an electricity supply company, and the second was that of a major acid spill into Inca Creek after flooding at the Lady Annie copper mine. In both cases the Dugalunji Aboriginal Corporation, under the leadership of Colin Saltmere, took remedial actions. In the case of the sacred site, the offending electrical pole had to be removed and re-sited elsewhere and the offending company was taken to court under the *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003* (Qld), culminating after initial court evidence in a successful out-of-court resolution of the matter through a favorable agreement with Dugalunji. In the case of the acid spill, Dugalunji provided environmental monitors and drafted a cultural heritage management plan for the remediation process that was to remove the contaminants. Myuma has also provided plant hire to conduct these works.

## 7. Summary of Myuma's services

### 7.1 Services to Aboriginal workers and trainees

Myuma Pty Ltd provides a range of key services and facilities to its Aboriginal workers and trainees in response to their expressed needs. Many of these services and facilities have been built up with the economic gains from Myuma's enterprise work.

Myuma organises banking and financial information presentations for its workers (e.g. from Westpac) with follow-up personal assistance on matters such as overdue tax returns, re-payment schemes for creditors using pay deductions and hire purchase. Myuma also assists in resolving matters such as unpaid fines, necessary payment deductions, unanswered court warrants, tax returns and conformance to probation requirements; it also raises awareness of legal rights, and the filling in of legal forms. These services do not constitute Income Management as implemented by the Australian Government's 'Intervention' in the Northern Territory during 2007 and 2008, but rather advisory services that the workers respond to and engage in voluntarily.

Using local Elders, Myuma provides cultural instructions to its workers, including (a) butchering and hearth cooking techniques for kangaroos, emus and goannas with appropriate rituals; (b) cultural heritage work skills, e.g. instruction on identifying discarded flakes from stone tool manufacturing for cultural heritage recording; (c) cultural identity strengthening and networking; and (d) involvement in or exposure to traditional artefact manufacture (e.g. spears, wet weather shelters).

The Dugalunji camp environment is a substance-free Aboriginal living area with nutritious meals and some recreation facilities. The camp costs up to \$90 000 per month to run, with a peak residential population of up to 90 people. Myuma provides a private room for each of its employees, which for a good number of them is the first fully private space they have ever lived in and personalised. Myuma trains its staff to drive both light and heavy plant vehicles (such as forklift, backhoe, bulldozer, trucks) and arranges for workers to be tested for their plant licences. The Myuma prevocational program encourages the development of a career narrative and a purpose in life. It opens a window to alternate lifeways and pathways that may not have been apparent or available in the home communities of the trainees.

Myuma provides health checks (and follow up medication) for workers and trainees, including drug screening, blood pressure, diabetes, hearing, STDs and scabies, as well as some drug rehabilitation and mental health counselling and assistance. Access is also provided to a small gymnasium at the Dugalunji Camp. Dietary awareness education and options for healthy foods are also included in the services at the Dugalunji Camp.

Myuma clearly provides a major service to its trainees through providing the pre-vocational training course and assisting its graduates to obtain employment (as well as employing some itself). The overall approximate cost to plan and run the 13-week training course, with post-participation support and mentoring, is \$45 000 per head, including staff salaries, staff and trainee meals, accommodation and transport costs (total of \$1.35 million for 30 trainees).

An important brokerage role of Myuma for its Aboriginal staff and trainees is the demystification of government and marketplace methods and procedures, including language and key concepts. This is essential to become an effective consumer in Western society, and in order to understand mainstream service settings. To this effect a number of Aboriginal mentors from the region have been employed in the Camp (e.g. Ganggalida leader Clarrie Waldren, Kalkadoon sportsman Vern Daisy) who can empathise with the typical trainee from a remote community with minimal (if any) experience of Western towns and commerce. The mentors can also play an important role in suggesting alternate forms of behaviour for trainees who become dysfunctional or insecure in relation to their career path in some way.

This is by no means an exhaustive list of the Myuma services to its trainees and staff. Myuma personnel are likely to perform any service to correct or modify a problem being experienced by a particular staff member or trainee that may be blocking or limiting their work capacity. To this extent Myuma staff are likely to act as informal social workers, counsellors or ‘errand runners’ to maintain the harmony and wellbeing in the Dugalunji Camp. Above all, the Dugalunji Camp provides workers and trainees with a calm residential setting, relatively free of problems or chaos, where people can feel at home in the world for a while, where relatedness is constructed for many with their fellows in the camp (after Austin-Broos 2009). Camp harmony results from intra-group harmony, which in turn results from the requirement of a strong personal moral code conveyed through the camp rules and the authoritative guidance of Colin Saltmere.

## 7.2 Services to non-Aboriginal clients and partner-clients

There is a spectrum of relationships with non-Aboriginal corporations or entities, which range from clients with whom Myuma contracts to provide services, through to various types of client-partner or full-partner relationships. Some clients are long-standing and have had a special contractual arrangement with Myuma supporting the mutual relationship.

Contract clients are typically those with whom Myuma has supply and/or construct contracts; for example, the Gilbert River Bridge Construction Camp (25 people), staged recurrent contract for Gregory Road with the Queensland Department of Main Roads and RoadTek, and the provision of trainees and gravel supply to Xstrata (\$1.5–\$2.5 million annually) and the Mt Isa City Council. New emerging clients at the time of writing were Comalco (Weipa) and Chalco, for whom training services were to be provided.

TAFE is in a special category, being both a service provider to Myuma, and a client of Myuma’s (Myuma supplies training services for them). The relationship is quite ‘partner-like’ in spirit, even though it is strictly commercial and contractual in its financial operation.

The only true ‘partner’ Myuma has is Lawlor Contracting, with whom it operates an informal joint venture arrangement that involves operation of the Thornton Quarry for mutual and complementary gains and purposes. Lawlor runs the limestone crushing while Myuma secures and manages the

contracts for crushed material, and uses the crushing facility as a training venue free of charge. Myuma also runs the Quarry Camp, which can, for a fee, accommodate outside contractors working in the vicinity.

Client/partners are established via Alliance contracts, but this arrangement had mainly been restricted to Myuma's Alliance work on the Barkly Highway upgrades with the Queensland Department of Main Roads and with the civil contractors involved, namely Leighton Construction and Seymour Whyte Construction. At the time of writing, a new long-term alliance contract was being brokered by Myuma with Legend International Inc and another engineering contractor for the mining development of Legend's phosphate mineral leases to the east and north-east of Camooweal.

Alliance contracting models are used in preference to traditional contract models when there are complex risk factors. Traditional contracting has its place when risks are well-known and easily defined, as traditional contracts are based on allocating risks to one party or the other. It is then in the interests of a party to minimise its allocated risks, even if doing so adversely affects the other party. By contrast, project 'Alliances' are preferable when complex problems have to be solved and opportunities exist to work cooperatively to devise innovative and superior solutions. Alliances gain the benefit of group problem solving when managers work closely as a single team to mitigate the project risks. Under the terms of an Alliance agreement, all parties generally commit to sharing project risks and potential benefits equally. If the project proceeds effectively with benefits such as cost savings, then these are shared equitably by the partners on a win/win basis. However, the converse also occurs, with any project losses being shared. In this way, the Alliance agreement is structured so that it is in the interests of all Alliance participants to cooperate for the best project outcomes. (Adapted from Durkin 2005.)

### 7.3 Services to the local community

The local community of Camooweal (a mix of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people) also receives benefits from Myuma's projects, in a variety of ways. Firstly, Myuma provides stable, full-time employment and training for a number of community residents who would otherwise have been in, or at risk of long-term unemployment. This is accompanied by the retention of employees' families within, and the attraction of new families into, the Camooweal township, supporting the continued viability and operation of key services such as the primary school and health clinic. Economic benefits to Camooweal flow from wages paid to the Myuma staff and trainees which are partly spent at local businesses, as well as from direct services procured by Myuma in Camooweal (e.g. fuel, tyre repair). Social benefits also flow from the enhanced profile and status of trainees within the community. Myuma also provides free labour for community projects in Camooweal such as the building of the school vegetable garden, the installation of rain water tanks for the Drovers Camp Association, and the construction of a wheelchair access ramp for the local Health Clinic.

A number of unfulfilled services for Aboriginal people in the region which the Myuma group would like to fulfil, are as follows:

- native title and cultural heritage management services and admin training for other Aboriginal groups (including EPM fee collection)
- systematic land management services on the upper Georgina Basin, including development and planning of a regional rangers' program with training and contracts
- provision of private housing in Camooweal for Myuma workers (which would help revitalise the Camooweal economy)
- advancement of the new Alyawarr Council Alliance in the Sandover Region of the NT, including assisting with training, roadworks contracts, camps, housing, IBA clean-up contracts, and the Alpurrurulam community kitchen. Myuma would also like to help import goods from the east coast for the Alyawarr region to effect savings on normal Alice Springs mark-ups for services (e.g. could save \$6 million in a \$25 million contract).

## 8. Myuma as consumer

Myuma Pty Ltd is a conventional consumer in that it buys in products and services. Ballpark figures for the costs of running Myuma include electricity at \$56 000 per year, food at \$300 000 per year, and fuel at approximately \$147 000<sup>10</sup> per year. These are the main consumption expenditures at Myuma’s three centres of operation, totalling a little over \$500 000 per year.

A summary of the electricity usage and costs per person at the Dugalunji Camp is presented in Table 5, with a comparison between peak and off-peak occupancy times (Rounsefell 2009).<sup>11</sup> The table indicates that the average daily electricity demand is approximately the same over both electricity bills, which reflect maximum and minimum peak loads during the Myuma work year.

A critical issue that these consumption costs raise is whether there is a more sustainable consumption style possible for Myuma. This issue will be discussed further in section 10.5.

Table 5: Summary of electricity demands and costs for DAC camp

Date of electricity account	Days	Total electricity cost (\$)	Electricity demand For period (kWh)	Average daily electricity demand (kWh)	Average price (\$/d)	Average daily demand per person* (kWh/p/d)	Average daily cost per person (\$/p/d)
25/09/08	7	1 052.98	7 197	1028	184.94	25.7	4.62
29/12/08	90	14 947.60	98 815	1098	165.26	27.5	4.13

\* It is assumed in this table that the average number of people on site for the period is approximately 40, based on Myuma’s records

Note: Full range of results reported in Rounsefell (2009, Table 7, Appendix 1).

## 9. Myuma as a complex Aboriginal service provider

At the beginning of the research project, the basic model of the remote Aboriginal community given within the research network was as a passive recipient of welfare having negligible bargaining power within the open market, despite being a consumer.

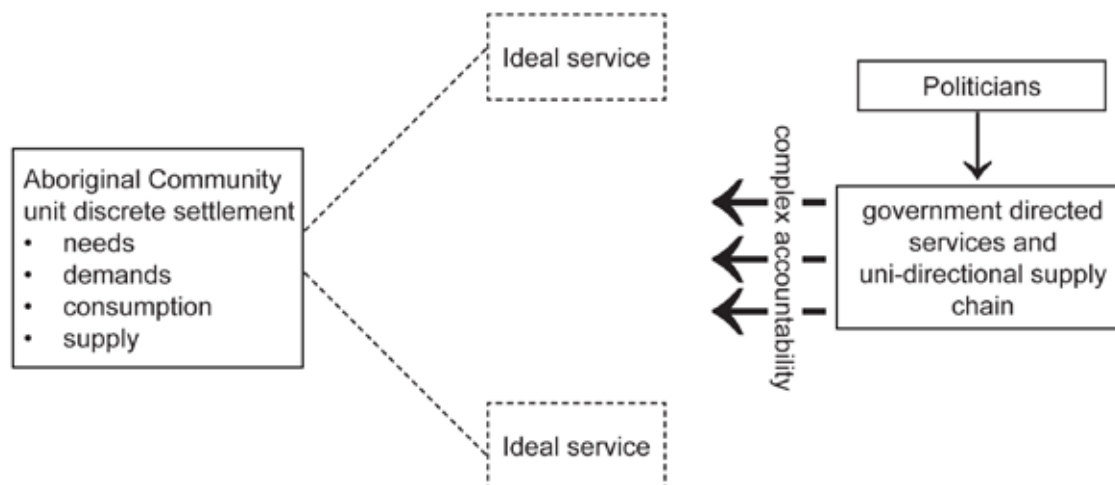


Figure 16: Model of remote Aboriginal community and uni-directional service delivery

It was observed that certain needs often remained unfulfilled from the uni-directional supply of government-sponsored services. This market phenomenon can be termed ‘directed consumption’.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Calculated at nine months x 10 000 litres X \$1.40 (\$126 000), plus three months x 5000 litres X \$1.40 (\$21 000).

<sup>11</sup> The limited amount of data available for the analysis (electricity records for a total period of 97 days) meant that this data can only be taken as an approximate indication of usage.

<sup>12</sup> This term follows Spicer (1961) who employed the term ‘directed cultural change’, i.e. imposed change to effect a specific aim.

The project was concerned with how *demand-driven* service delivery could be attained by such Aboriginal communities, such that a more bi-directional (or transactional) relationship could be achieved between particular communities and service providers, resulting in a better response of service supply to demand.

One model that does have good response of supply to demand is a Market Participation Model, which has complex demand and supply chains and networks (see Figure 17). Suppose I am Private Sector Industry, supplying service X in the market: In order to do this I have to demand Y goods and Z services. However, the entities that supply Y and Z also want my supply of X, or alternatively want me to maintain the supply of X which stimulates the trade of their goods and services in other parts of the market. Thus demand is partly driven by the capacity to supply (not just to consume), as well as by the reciprocal appreciation of the mutual demands and needs for one another's services. Accountability becomes more lateralised (as market place performance) with many players in the economic chain interdependent on one another, as opposed to vertical accountability in a top-down service to bottom-up demand context, typical of many remote Aboriginal communities.

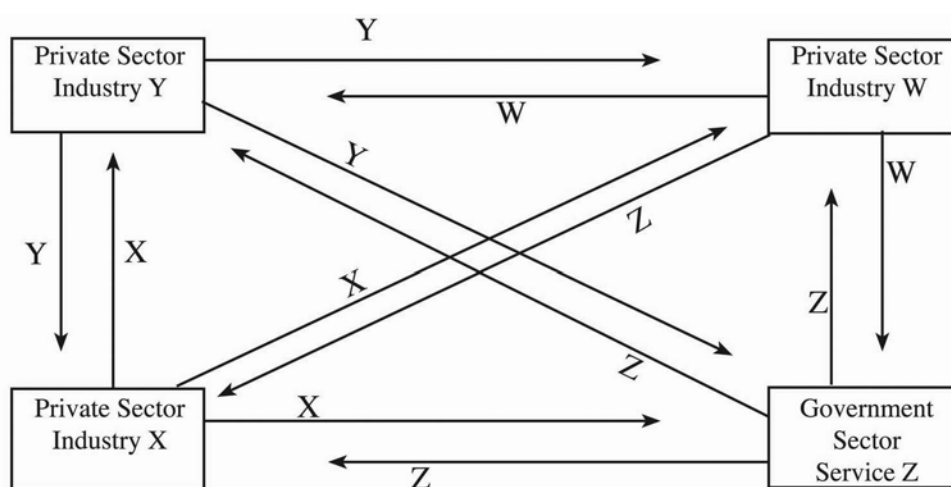


Figure 17: The Market Participation Model – complex demand and supply chains and networks

In the theoretical literature on human consumption, this more complex set of market relationships is termed ‘productive consumption’. Thus the ‘act of production is therefore in all its moments also an act of consumption ... Production as directly identical with consumption, and consumption as directly coincident with production’ (Marx 2001, p. 32).

A key challenge for Aboriginal groups is how to ‘lever’ themselves out of welfare dependency and to insert themselves into the market in this way, without substantial readily available, ‘starting-up’ resources. Now let us consider Myuma, which has achieved this status.

### 9.1 Myuma as the complex Aboriginal adaptive system

Myuma started as an ‘own source income’ corporation, leveraging up from its native title application as described earlier. In the 2004–05 financial year, the Myuma Group contributed a total of \$3.6 million to the local economy through its payment of wages for employment and training of local labour and the purchase of local services, supplies and products. In the four subsequent financial years (to end of June 2009), the contributions to the local economy did not fall below this amount and ranged upwards to \$6.1 million (see Table 6). The total contribution over five financial years has been almost \$21.7 million, an average of \$4.34 million. These contributions have come via both Myuma’s enterprise contracts and its training contracts.

Table 6: Myuma's contribution to its regional economy during the five years, 2004–2009

Financial year	Contribution to Local Economy
2004–05	\$3.6 million
2005–06	\$4.2 million
2006–07	\$6.1 million
2007–08	\$3.6 million
2008–09	\$4.2 million
Total (five years)	\$21.7 million

Myuma has become positioned in the market, with complex demand and supply functions (or multiple diversified market interfacing). The contemporary descendants of the Indjalandji-Dhidhanu stepped outside of being a discrete community unit, resident in Camooweal, by first establishing a native title corporation which was sub-divided into three corporations, and by then developing ongoing relations with a range of Aboriginal communities as both clients and labour sources. As described earlier, Myuma simultaneously developed a range of relationships with non-Aboriginal agencies and corporations, including Partner/Client (Alliance contracts), Partner/Sponsor, and Aboriginal Venture Partner (Lawlor Contracting) arrangements.

This positioning of Myuma in a complex network or field of supply and demand might best be termed a 'transactional model of supply and demand'. In adjusting 'the playing field' of service delivery to be 'level' with a degree of demand-driven consumer choice, there was a need for Myuma to earn some power within market relationships and transactions, and for Myuma to take some control over information (informed consumerism) and decision-making capacity based on that information, thereby facilitating active engagement and negotiation on the terms of its Aboriginal consumers (trainees and workers).

A number of further critical methods of operation are employed by Myuma in having achieved this position of being able to influence service demand and delivery style. One is the use of the 'Aboriginal service setting' and another is the use of its human resources. Each of these will be described in turn.

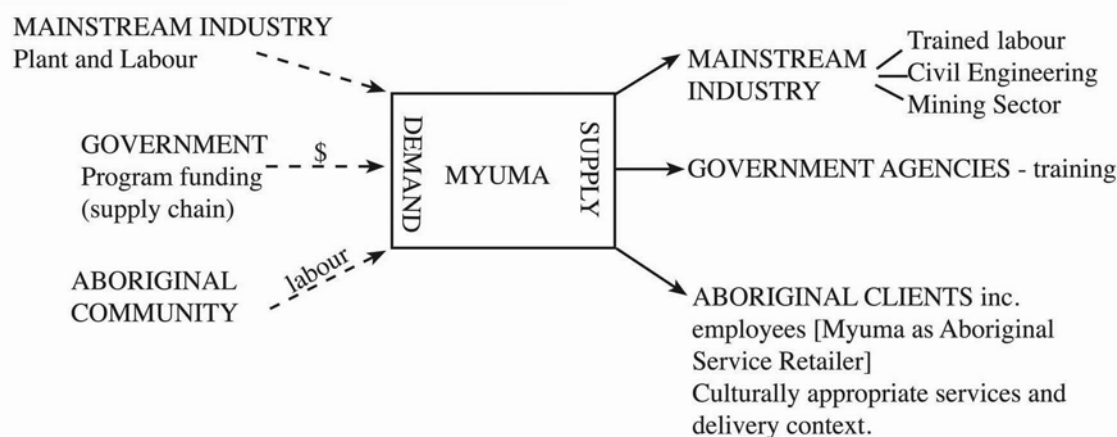


Figure 18: Myuma as the complex Aboriginal adaptive system

## 9.2 Concept and deployment of the 'Aboriginal service setting'

The Dugalunji Camp can be called an 'Aboriginal service setting'<sup>13</sup> (as opposed to a government service setting or a commercial service setting). An Aboriginal service setting can be defined as one that is controlled by Aboriginal people and is designed to be comfortable for Aboriginal consumers. This can be achieved through a combination of behavioural patterns and environmental and artefactual features.

13 This concept of 'the setting' follows that of the 'behavioural setting' (Barker & Wright 1955, Barker 1968) developed in environmental psychology, which refers to a recurring behaviour pattern in a physical setting, such that there is a synomorphic relation or 'fit' between the human behaviour episodes that occur in it and the physical and temporal environment of the setting.

The environmental features are fixed, semi-fixed or loose fixtures, being a combination of manufactured objects and structures (architecture, artefacts) and natural elements (landscaping). The combination of features and behavioural patterns, including setting controls, are designed to be relatively comfortable, predictable, secure and conducive for Aboriginal people to use. There is also a sense of identity with and even ownership of such a setting by Aboriginal people when the service is being delivered in an effective way.

The Aboriginal service setting is designed as the end point in the service supply chain to interface with the consumer, and is usually under the control of an Aboriginal facilitator, although other non-Aboriginal personnel may be assisting with the service delivery. These non-Aboriginal personnel mainly consist of ‘trusted insiders’ and ‘trusted outsiders’ (see 9.3 for more detail about these terms). It is argued here that the Dugalunji Camp is such a setting, and to a certain extent so are the Quarry Camp and the Myuma Office.

In establishing a desired Aboriginal behaviour pattern with minimal deviancy or dysfunction, Colin Saltmere asserts that the conformity to the training regime and the successful completion rate are partly due to there being sufficient trainees for a critical mass to effect peer group pressure, albeit within an Aboriginal value system. The presence of a young infant, young adult trainees, middle-aged and older employees of both genders as well as a resident Elder and various visiting Elders (particularly from Alpururulam), also provide a sense of the setting as being an inter-generational one.

In terms of designing the environmental, artefactual and temporal character of the Myuma settings, Colin has stated (pers. comm. July 2009) that he based the idea of the Dugalunji Camp on a traditional camp, firstly by setting it up on his country and drawing in as many of his family who were available and willing to participate. This established a clear role for the senior members of his family as Traditional Owners within the precepts of traditional Aboriginal law. Secondly, the Camp is controlled and run like a traditional multi-tribal camp, according to Colin. He sees these approaches as critical to the Myuma successes in carrying out enterprises and delivering services.

There are elements of the Camp that are reminiscent of the stock camp of Colin’s earlier adulthood. The Myuma day starts early, with the breakfast bell at 6.30 a.m. A cooked breakfast is consumed and then workers who are travelling away from the Camp make their own sandwiches for lunch. Management staff attend a ‘pre-start’ meeting, while other workers carry out the morning clean-up of the Camp and hose down the paths and gardens, partly to facilitate later evaporative cooling.

There is thus a strong sense of order in the Dugalunji Camp, reminiscent of a mission institution in the sense of having a defined set of rules and a strict timetable; but these are not forcibly imposed (because individuals are free to leave) –there is voluntary engagement. Nevertheless, individuals are instructed that they must accept the consequences of their actions if they break the Camp rules. In terms of environmental design, the emphasis in the Camp is on shaded semi-enclosed outdoor areas with well-maintained landscaping, rather than sophisticated building design. Ongoing upgrade plans centre on creating a sustainable environment with minimal energy costs and with water recycling.

The managerial attention to the daily workings of the Dugalunji Camp necessitates monitoring and maintenance of the individual responsibilities of every participant. Individual morality and harmonious relationships sit within, but also contribute to the notion of a camp morality. (The necessary balance between individual morality and societal morality is one that has received recent attention from Pearson [2009a, pp. 228, 230] and is also commented upon by Sutton [2009b].)

A key role of the Aboriginal service setting is to ‘level the playing field’ so to speak. This means altering the imbalance of power that often characterises many transactions with Aboriginal people in government and commercial delivery settings, both in the past and still at present, whereby delivery is one-way with either no opportunity for Aboriginal negotiation as a consumer, or where any prospect



of such negotiation is prevented by discriminatory practices. (Local historical examples that could be considered here are the Camooweal hotel and picture theatre as they were in the 1970s and 1980s, in which separatist settings were imposed upon the Aboriginal townspeople).

Another key role of the Aboriginal service setting is to provide stability and continuity in the supply chain and service delivery as best as possible, whereby any disjuncture or blockage in the chain of delivery can be repaired or replaced, including those caused by human resource problems, shifts in project budgets, and importantly by shifts in government policies and programs that may inadvertently subvert long-term service delivery. An example of an externally imposed problem for Myuma was that of the global economic crisis and recession (2008–09) which caused a major downturn in the mining industry. Myuma was able to broker an increase in civil construction jobs for its trainees in response to a loss in mining industry employment opportunities. Another method of dealing with service delivery ‘disjunctures’ that has been implemented by Myuma is the employment of several Aboriginal mentors in the Dugalunji Camp. At the time of writing one of these was the well-known retired Kalkadoon footballer, Vernon Daisy, and a second was the politically outspoken Ganggalida leader, Clarrie Waldren from Doomadgee.

An important capacity of Myuma in the operation of its service setting is the outreach capacity of its personnel to contact, communicate with, and travel to other Aboriginal communities in its sphere of inter-governance relationships, in order to maintain duties or correct human relationship problems, and to move trainees and employees in and out of the Dugalunji Camp.

Although I have here employed the term ‘Aboriginal service setting’ to describe the Dugalunji Camp, it is more accurately an intercultural setting, dominated by Aboriginal behavioural patterns and with ultimate Aboriginal control and management. It reflects an Aboriginal demand-driven form of cultural appropriateness.

### 9.3 Critical human resources within the Myuma Group

Any profiling of Myuma and its achievements would be incomplete without some discussion of the role and calibre of the human resources that drive Myuma both from within and outside of its corporate framework.

Foundational support is provided within the directorships of the Myuma Group by Mrs Ruby Saltmere and her adult children, and although some family members are more active than others in the day-to-day company affairs and particular projects, they consistently gather for board meetings to make critical decisions. These decisions are not just restricted to new contract engagements or what to do with profits, but encompass the wider concerns of the group such as maintaining Indjalandji Aboriginal law and custom, matters of local Aboriginal community politics and social development, and implementing new training initiatives. In this regard Mrs Ruby Saltmere plays a dominant role as the group’s Elder and keeper of extensive cultural knowledge. The day-to-day roles of being the ‘focal driver’ for Myuma and the lead negotiator with other communities, governments and industry, are taken by Colin Saltmere as Managing Director<sup>14</sup>, assisted by his senior staff.

A second set of critical human resources are thus the senior staff at Myuma, particularly the most long-serving ones who carry the wisdom of the corporate memory of Myuma. Although a number of personnel could be mentioned, it will suffice here to profile three non-Aboriginal senior staff to indicate the diversity and depth of the technical skills base at the upper management level of Myuma. Such technically expert personnel have been recently referred to by Moran (2006, p. 256), in his analysis of Aboriginal governance, as ‘permanent resident outside employees’ (PROEs), which he argues are more effective in stabilising relationships with government and industry in the inter-ethnic field than short-term consultants (2006, p. 399).

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<sup>14</sup> The significance of both a ‘focal driver’ and effective negotiation as criteria for successful governance are outlined in Moran (2006, p. 398.)

First and foremost there is Sally Sheldon, who holds a PhD from the University of Essex and was formerly a lecturer in law at the Queensland University of Technology, and who has a professional understanding of native title and cultural heritage legislation and policy. She took up a full-time position as the Myuma Group's Projects Coordinator in January 2005, having worked from 2000 to 2004 as a consultant to the Indjalandji people. Her Myuma responsibilities include cultural heritage project management, and assisting the Indjalandji-Dhidhanu people with the management of their native title claims. She helps manage the group's financial, corporate and commercial contracting operations, and oversees contracts administration, accounting, taxation and corporate reporting requirements. Sally also assists in planning and managing the Group's activities with university-based researchers, vocational training organisations and relevant funding and support agencies.

Second is Wayne Smart, the senior chef, who joined Myuma in early 2006, taking over management of the company's catering operations at the Dugalunji Camp site at the commencement of the Split Rock Inca Alliance Project. A former shearer, born and raised in country New South Wales, Wayne has decades of experience in catering operations and management, having previously worked at a range of sites throughout Australia with the Royal Australian Airforce and Eurest Australia. Wayne plays a key role in the delivery of training to Myuma's hospitality trainees, supervising and supporting catering staff in their work-based activities at the Dugalunji Camp. He is responsible for the daily provision of nutritious and attractive meals for the entire complement of Myuma personnel at the Dugalunji and Quarry Camps, which can number up to 70 on a single day.

A third senior staff member of Myuma is the Systems Manager, Ms Linda Rutledge, who joined Myuma in September 2007 and set about the review and refinement of its corporate structure and administrative procedures. Linda's professional background is in contract and safety management, including in the electrical, mining and heavy transport industries, with specialised experience in the transport of dangerous goods to mining companies. She oversees the management of all of Myuma's operational departments, including catering, works, finances, training and camp management. This encompasses systems design and monitoring of administration, purchasing, ordering, human resource policies, workplace health and safety and information technology.

Importantly, these three individuals are adept at operating across the 'inter-ethnic field' (Moran 2006, p. 257) and provide support to Colin Saltmere in bridging these domains, albeit being most adept in the non-Aboriginal domain. Colin, however, has additional support from Myuma's Aboriginal staff for transactions in the Aboriginal domain. In addition to senior staff there are a dozen or so rank-and-file Aboriginal staff who run the Myuma offices, maintain the camp and the plant, and organise labour gangs, tools and materials for specific jobs. This dedicated participation is essential to the smooth running of the Myuma operations.

A second critical method used by Myuma to maintain its status in the economic market and the network of supply and demand, is its use of 'trusted outsiders' (as distinguishable from 'local Aboriginal drivers') (Moran 2006). Trusted outsiders<sup>15</sup> do not arrive readily on the doorstep of the Dugalunji Camp but are appraised, tested and 'filtered' by the Myuma Manager, Colin Saltmere with the eye of an astute bushman. They then assume particular roles in relation to Myuma, which may fall into one or another of the following categories:

- some become longstanding consultants
- others become preferred colleagues/friends
- others are fellow Aboriginal leaders and counsellors
- some individuals become reliable government partners
- some eventually become staff and their role may eventually change to one of 'insider' within Myuma Pty Ltd.

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<sup>15</sup> The current author is one such person who falls into this category.

There are many professional government and industry personnel who would fall into these categories and who are worthy of discussion, but space does not permit, save for a mention of the support from politicians. At the contractual completion of the Nowranie Creek Alliance contract (early 2005), and with the winning by Myuma/Dugalunji of various industry awards for its role in these roadworks (including training and cultural industry awards), Colin Saltmere met and developed a collegial relation with the Queensland Minister for Main Roads. In subsequent years he has also had ongoing regular dialogue with the Queensland Premier, Deputy Premier, Treasurer and local Member of Parliament in the course of his work. These personal contacts provide a further extension to the network of support.

Thus Myuma's success is not just attributable to strong leadership, but also to a solid foundation of corporate teamwork, involving both staff and family, as well as the supportive network of outside advisors and advocates for the Myuma Group, who come from diverse professions and career paths.

#### 9.4 The relationship between Myuma's activities and Aboriginal law

The Myuma Group and its Dugalunji Camp have generated significant outcomes, already recognised as national best practice through a variety of awards and other measures as outlined above. The Myuma Group's practice involves a combined approach to enterprise development, employment, training, cultural heritage and service delivery for Aboriginal people. This combined set of outcomes was originally levered up from several native title claims. These in turn were based on a strong commitment to Aboriginal law and culture.

There are those who disagree that enterprise can co-exist with traditional culture. The late Professor Stanner asserted that the Dreaming and the market were incompatible.<sup>16</sup> He stated, 'Ours is a market-civilisation, theirs not. Indeed, there is a sense in which The Dreaming and The Market are mutually exclusive' (Stanner 1979, p. 58). Noel Pearson has recently extended this argument further. He writes of the need for the traditional (tribal) individual entering the modern era to split into two, with part of their personality 'animated by their own self-interest' in the 'pursuit of their individual interests ... as the best (and only) means of social and economic uplift', while the other half of their personality maintains their Aboriginal identity with their people, lands, languages, traditions and heritage. 'This is not a sphere of life that provides any chance for socioeconomic development. It serves those more intangible human needs for culture, spirituality and identity' (Pearson 2009c).

Despite Stanner's and Pearson's views, the strong commitment to law and culture continues to permeate through the Dugalunji Camp on a daily basis via a number of mechanisms and behaviours that include (i) the visitation and residence of regional Elders at the Dugalunji Camp who engage in a variety of customary activities; (ii) the regular contracting of cultural heritage services to industry by Dugalunji; (iii) the running of cultural induction programs for local industry workers; (iv) the workshops on cultural identity strengthening for prevocational trainees from throughout north-east Australian cultural groups (numerous tribal identities); (v) the involvement of the Indjalandji in regional Aboriginal ceremonies; and (vi) an ongoing program of Indjalandji sacred-site recording in the region.

The constant daily respect of Aboriginal law and sacred sites by the Indjalandji Elders and leaders is one that also gradually pervades into an awareness that comes upon staff, trainers and visitors, that they are in a cultural landscape of ancestrally created places and histories. An example is the Myuma company's brand, a graphic logo that appears on stationery, business cards and the standard workshirts issued to staff and trainees. This design (Figure 19) was created by Shirley Macnamara (a nationally recognised artist) using ground ochres sourced from the sacred site complex at *Wuruna* located some 50 kilometres east of Dugalunji Camp and which are believed to be the faeces of Picaninnies, left from the Dreaming.

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<sup>16</sup> I am indebted to Catherine Laudine for drawing my attention to Stanner's position on this topic. Stanner's passage is also cited and discussed by Sutton (2009, p. 67).

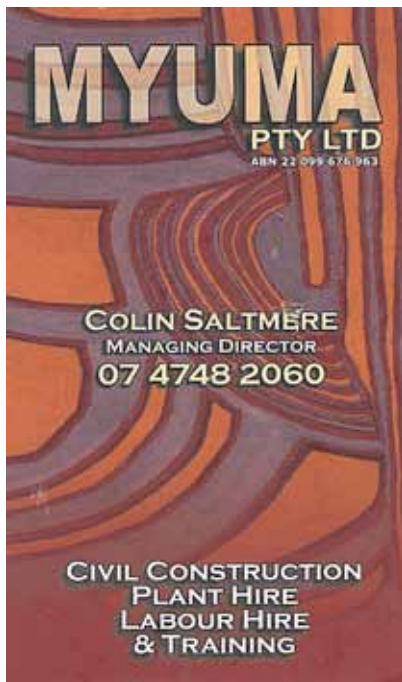


Figure 19: A Myuma business card with corporate logo designed by artist and co-Director Ms Shirley Macnamara

There is thus a unique symbiotic relationship between the practice of Aboriginal law and the practice of commerce in the Dugalunji Camp whereby the two are mutually supportive of one another, generating a strong Aboriginality in the way that day-to-day ‘business’ is run by Myuma. This is directly projected on to the regular trainee intakes who gain increased confidence in their own cultural identities and return to the home communities with an increased sense of their Aboriginality. This in turn impacts indirectly throughout the Aboriginal communities of North Queensland where there is a growing reputation of the Myuma program as indeed ‘deadly’ (i.e. fostering pride in Aboriginality). This in turn motivates other individuals to come forward seeking enrolment in subsequent training course intakes.

Although there is a complex mix of enterprise functions, service functions, cultural functions and representational (governance) functions within the Myuma portfolio and its daily round of work, all of these things are underpinned by Aboriginal cultural law precepts and an Aboriginal ethic of social harmony in the Dugalunji Camp.

## 10. Analysis of the demand-responsive services provided by Myuma

Further understandings of the relationships between the supply and demand of services within the Myuma operation can be elaborated by addressing the five research questions listed earlier at the start of this report.

### 10.1 The characteristics of the interplay between demand and supply of services

Question 1 asked ‘What are characteristics of the interplay between demand and supply of services, according to the perceptions of consumers and service providers engaged at the local interface?’ Acting as an Aboriginal host organisation, Myuma has accomplished a viable integration of Aboriginal service provision and Aboriginal economic enterprise activity (PMA 2007). The interplay characteristics of the Myuma modus operandi involve the following components: (i) Attract a large-scale contract with government or private enterprise that can be fulfilled with largely Aboriginal labour; (ii) host the Aboriginal labour on-site with accommodation, meals and a social and service environment that is culturally appropriate, so that the employees are reasonably comfortable; (iii) provide accessible training courses to the labour pool relevant to the work experience, so there is added value for the employees and so that the labour force acquire ongoing diverse skill sets; (iv) identify the consumer needs of the workforce and invite suppliers to visit the Work Camp at various times to fulfil some of those needs, either by educating the employee-consumer about the availability of the service, or by delivering the service in-situ at the Camp; and (v) attract more enterprise and training contracts to achieve a stable continuity of employment, training and hence accompanying ongoing service provision. In implementing this process the Myuma Group has also been able to generate identifiable good practice achievements in its training services.

## 10.2 Conditions permitting successful practice between consumers and service-providers

Question 2 asked ‘What are the conditions that permit successful practice to develop between consumers and service-providers?’ In the case of Myuma, several key conditions can be identified. The first is the use of a native title claim from which to obtain an initial set of economic assets (infrastructure, contracts). The second condition is an inclusive (rather than exclusive) approach to spreading the enterprise benefits created by a small extended family group to a regional bloc of multiple language groups and to other benefactors in the wider community. This enables the Myuma Group to project itself as a benefactor for the regional Aboriginal population (not simply as a nepotistic family-based firm), an image that is essential to attract strong government support and local legitimacy among the regional population. Thirdly, the Myuma modus operandi involves the selective attraction of government and private sector service agencies on spatial and temporal terms that are culturally appropriate for the Aboriginal recipients, as exemplified through the concept of the Aboriginal ‘service setting’ outlined earlier.

The utilisation of successful partnerships with industry and government, articulated in a unique structure, thus achieves tangible outcomes for quality of Aboriginal lifestyle. The ongoing challenge for the Myuma Group is how it can, as a grass-roots user group acquire demand-responsive services in terms that it continues to instigate and to control in a culturally appropriate manner, and simultaneously present the process as good practice policy implementation in order to help maintain the sustainability of these services, but also avoid any over-zealous capture and containment by policy makers.<sup>17</sup>

The Myuma case study has demonstrated how service delivery can be linked to and integrated with economic enterprises to provide a more holistic approach to sustainable communities, one that combines economic, social, cultural and environmental sustainabilities. Part of the Myuma vision is to progressively interlink with the Camooweal township so that the benefits can be spread more into the town and ultimately raise its sustainability as well.

## 10.3 The scales of governance at which Myuma’s service delivery modes function

Question 3 asked ‘At what scales of governance should different service delivery functions be assigned to optimise both demand- and supply-based criteria?’ In its formative years, the practices of the Myuma Group largely retained an identifiable and contained regional scale, defined by (a) the location of enterprise activities and natural resource-based partners; and (b) by the dominant community sources of labour. The core of the region is that of the Myuma group’s traditional territory, the Indjalandji-Dhidhanu tribal area, although there is some contestation of this territory on certain boundary areas, where a rival Aboriginal group has been competing for resource control. Around this core area are the tribal areas of the Wakaya, Bularnu, Waanyi, Kalkadoon, Warluwarra, Pitta Pitta, Alyawarr and other Arrerntic groups from which the labour pool is largely drawn.

In terms of Aboriginal politics, there are potentially increasing operational difficulties and factionalism manifest in disputes as the group moves away from their core. Yet industry and government have increasingly pressured the group to do this as they recognised its operation to be good practice, and have encouraged it to focus its activities into more distant and problematic communities. The scale of governance thus expanded during 2007–2008, although remained largely within Queensland.

The geographic scales of governance that have now emerged in the history of the Myuma group are as follows:

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<sup>17</sup> This phenomenon was identified by Moran (2006, pp. 228, 276), who, in his analysis of Aboriginal governance at Kowanyama, describes some examples of the capture and containment of good practice initiatives such as the Kowanyama Justice Group, which, although once identified as ‘best practice’, was increasingly conscripted by government policy makers into extra-curricular administrative and marketing duties to the point where the execution of its grass-roots activities become undermined.

- that of the Indjalanji-Dhidhanu tribal territory where the Dugalunji clan maintain traditional rights and practices of Aboriginal governance (the original core area)
- that of the north-west Queensland or 'Greater Mt Isa area' region where Colin Saltmere was formerly ATSIIC Chairperson and where he still has informal and formal collaborations with leaders from other Aboriginal groups (e.g. Waluwarra, Mitakoodi, Lardil, Kaiadilt, Ganggalida, Waanyi, Pitta Pitta, Wangkamanha, Kukatj, Kuthant)
- that of the upper Georgina Basin and the wider Barkly Cultural Bloc (encompassing the central-east parts of the Northern Territory) where Colin Saltmere is active as an Aboriginal law leader through his paternal descent group kin
- that of the catchment area of trainees for the Myuma training program, encompassing various communities in the southern Gulf, Cape York, and north Queensland, where Colin Saltmere has forged agreements with Aboriginal councils and community-based groups to conscript regular intakes of trainees; these community links in turn extend into individual family units (Figure 20)
- that of Myuma's government and non-government organisation clients, mainly embracing the north-west and Cape York mineral provinces and the local government areas of north-west Queensland.

The entities of governance can be seen to be a complex mix of corporate and non-corporate, formal and informal, and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. Attached to these overlapping but different scales of governance are variable decision-making processes and accountability processes, many of which are government-driven, but many of which are also distinctly Aboriginal. Particularly with respect to the first two scales of governance listed above, there is a strong use of and dependence on traditional Aboriginal Law. A specific feature of the Dugalunji Camp is the intermittent presence of Alyawarr and other Arrerntic-speaking Elders from the lower Sandover region, who subscribe to traditional Law and who are consulted regularly by Colin Saltmere on such matters.

Another interesting aspect of scale is that the Myuma group's core area (traditional territory) straddles the Queensland/Northern Territory border. So far, Myuma's economic operations have all occurred in Queensland, drawing on Mt Isa-centred industry and Queensland Government contracts/grants. It remains to be seen whether Myuma chooses to seek NT Government contracts/grants or NT-based industry partners, and expand into cross-jurisdictional contracts. The Myuma Group certainly has strong cultural links to the Alyawarr and other Arrerntic groups to the south-west, to Alpururulam and other Sandover communities in the NT (e.g. Ampilatwatja). A part of the Myuma labour pool is drawn from Alpururulam, and Colin Saltmere recruits people for cultural activities from these places, including for ceremonial functions and ritual duties.

These informal Aboriginal instruments of governance, based on family, clan, kin network, cultural bloc, and initiates network, are forms of social and human capital that are crucial to the success of the Myuma story but are so often undervalued, unrecognised and unrecompensed by government. A specific use of Myuma profits is the purchase of modest gifts (food, petrol, clothes, cigarettes) to maintain these Aboriginal relationships in a 'blackfeller way'. A technological characteristic of this communication network has been the increased reliance on mobile phones by bush people with low literacy skills over the last ten years, including the latest models for remote usage. Video conferencing has not yet been introduced to the Dugalunji Camp, but it is anticipated in the near future. These features generally enhance the Aboriginal preference for a direct face-to-face form (and principle) of service delivery.

The multiple and dynamic spheres of Myuma governance and their various Aboriginal characteristics thus make for a complex political economy.

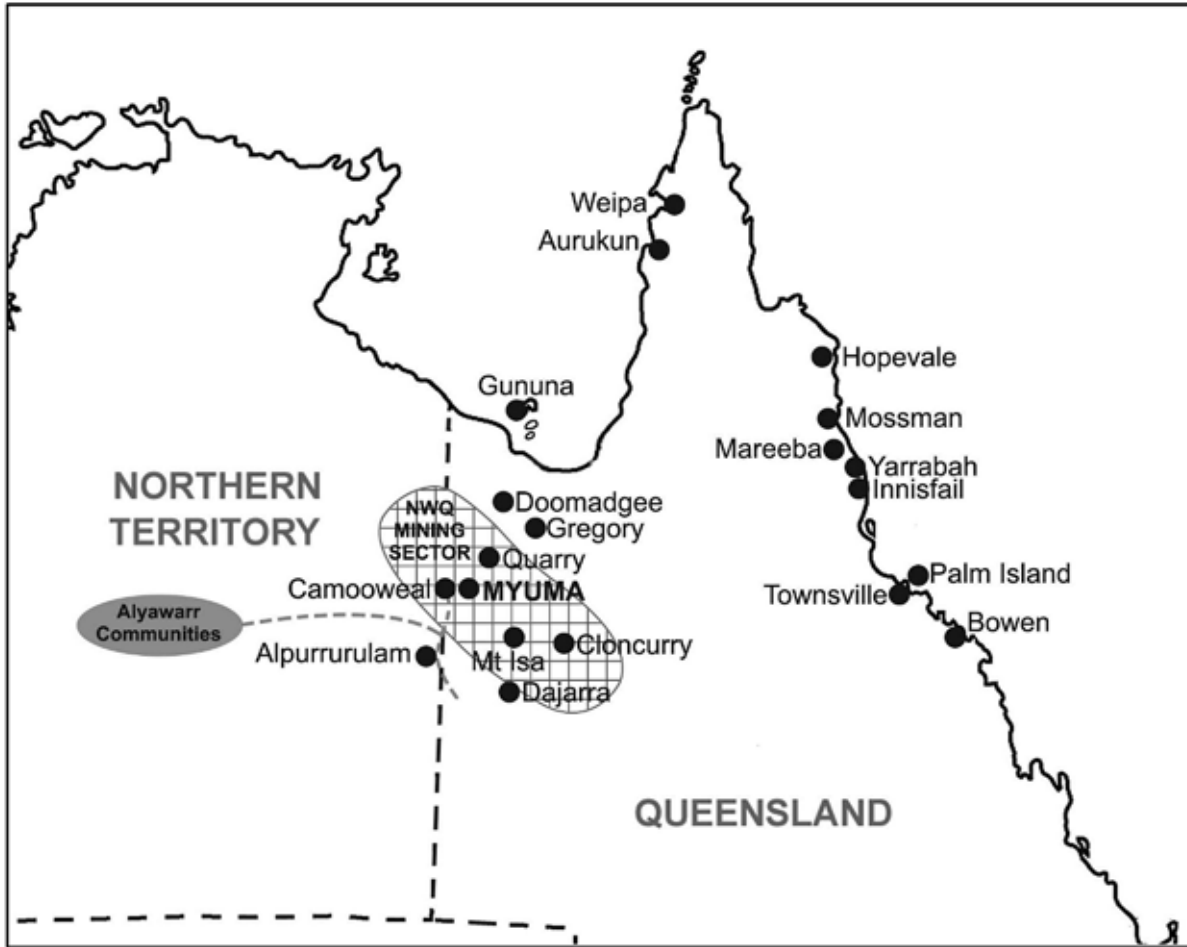


Figure 20: Myuma's Aboriginal clientele

Myuma's sociospatial field of Aboriginal clientele includes (i) the local region, NWQ; (ii) the Alyawarr region, NT, and (iii) further communities in north Qld from which trainees are conscripted

#### 10.4 The service type and delivery style priorities of Myuma's consumers

Question 4 asked 'What are the service type and delivery style priorities of consumers within a specified budget framework, and what is their capacity to participate and willingness to contribute to services?'

In the case of Myuma, there is no fixed budget framework, but a constantly dynamic budget framework, transforming in relation to current enterprise contracts and training courses that are being held. The core services provided by Myuma to its staff, trainees and 'countrymen' are accommodation, meals, employment, recreation, training (civil construction, catering), accreditation, cultural support and leadership, controlled facilitation of other selected service providers (e.g. health service providers, banking providers), sports sponsorship, and civic landscaping in Camooweal. The core services provided by Myuma to industry are road construction, gravel and road metal supply, civil mining works and cultural heritage clearances. Other services that have been mooted for future provision by Myuma are (i) Aboriginal housing; (ii) Indjalandji land and riverine management (upper Georgina Basin); and (iii) a licensed University research station on its Dugalunji Camp lease.

At the Dugalunji Camp, Aboriginal leaders have chosen when to engage in particular issues of service delivery and act as brokers or facilitators in the delivery of the services at the Myuma service setting (e.g. with respect to appropriate health services and counselling services). This form of participation and engagement is viewed as being essential to obtain sustainable outputs from service delivery. The level and depth of engagement varies with the particular service. The brokerage also involves making choices

in the markets of Mt Isa, Townsville (or Brisbane at times) of the best service or supplier in the interests of the Myuma workforce. This assumes that the individual customer (the Myuma worker or trainee), particularly one with little experience of Western service settings, does not always know what services might be the best for their own needs. Nevertheless the combination of Aboriginal leaders and mentors shaping the nature and design of service delivery and the use of the Dugalunji service delivery setting results in a significant level of consumer satisfaction such that there is a strong retention of staff and successful completion rates by trainees.

### 10.5 Critical issues and strategies to improve the service system

Question 5 asked ‘What are the critical issues and strategies to improve the service system, including the strengths and weaknesses of different technology and governance options?’ Substantial resource flow into Aboriginal communities is relatively unusual other than down vertical routes from central government through the ‘command control’ chain, yet the Myuma Group has captured both lateral (industry) and vertical (government) resource flows within its unique structure.

A major challenge of effective service delivery in Aboriginal Australia has been the integration of numerous State and Australian Government programs, whether it be in the fields of health, infrastructure, housing, health, training, education, recreation, etc, and as witnessed by the efforts over recent years of the COAG trials and partnerships. An aspect of the Myuma training project is the skilful integration of Australian and State Government programs to tap key funding sources, as well as the cooperative participation of senior public servants from various departments in the monitoring and guidance of the project. This is achieved through Myuma’s reputation for professional levels of performance and the subsequent widespread respect for such by both industry and government personnel.

The value of the Myuma Case Study has thus been to recognise Aboriginal groups who are creatively procuring resources from non-government and non-vertical programs and using those resources to control service delivery in certain ways at the local level for the good of a regional Aboriginal collective. Such case studies are important in understanding techniques of creating local political control and stability of service delivery in the face of, or despite the policy shifts, vagaries and uncertainties of the vertical delivery systems of the Australian and State Governments and the associated welfare dependency.

Although there are interesting case studies of this type characterised by mining subsidies in the various Australian mineral provinces, the Myuma Group in Camooweal is a particularly interesting example as it has used a combination of State and Australian Government resources and private industry goodwill and capital to create a relatively stable socioeconomic position, which is in turn partially insulated against any possible future fluctuations of either government or private resourcing.

Despite Myuma’s impressive progress in terms of its social, cultural and economic sustainability, there are clearly issues to be addressed with its environmental sustainability. In particular, fuel – which is necessary not only for the Myuma fleet of vehicles but for powering the Camooweal generator – is an increasingly expensive and environmentally critical resource. Alternate fuels and power sources need to be explored for the future of Myuma. Recently, some \$3.2 million of funding has been allocated by the Australian Government to the Dugalunji Camp to upgrade the training facilities on the site. This presents an excellent opportunity to incorporate more sustainable management practices into the camp, aimed at reducing the current electricity requirements and to possibly reconfigure the water/waste/food cycles in the camp to manage usage and ultimately reduce consumption and cost. This aspect is discussed further in Appendix 1.



## 10.6 Further evidence of Myuma good practice in service delivery

It has been beyond the scope of this study to conduct in-depth consumer satisfaction interviews with clients, trainees and staff to assess their satisfaction with Myuma's services. However, there are other indicators that can be cited which readily indicate Myuma's good practice as a service provider. For example, in terms of its provision of services for pre-vocational training, it should be noted that after the first two intakes of trainees, a number of clients involved in this scheme agreed to sign contracts to provide recurrent funding for three years to ensure this service continued. These clients consisted of the mining companies Rio Tinto and Xstrata, the Building Construction Industry Training Fund (BCITF) and the Queensland Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation. Other client agencies involved in this training program, while not committing to three years of recurrent funding, nevertheless have continued to provide annual funding based on the strength of the program outcomes for the previous years, e.g. the Australian Government's Department of Environment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) and the Queensland Department of Employment and Training (DET).

Another outcome of the good practice achieved by Myuma during the series of Alliance road contracts on the Barkly Highway upgrade (2001–2006), has been the significant recognition of such by the Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads. This Department (DTMR 2009) has recently produced a marketing video highlighting the good practice achieved in Myuma for use in promoting reconciliation and upskilling via partnerships between Aboriginal communities and government, both within the Department and in other government departments as well. The video includes trainees being interviewed about a range of their perceived achievements in skills acquisition, machine operations, literacy and numeracy, and cultural heritage work. Colin Saltmere speaks on the film about 'building people', emphasising the holistic development of the individual, in addition to the other achievements of workplace alliances and skills development.

A further index of Myuma's good practice is its consistent and stable annual growth, reflected in its annual gross turnovers which have increased in each successive financial year. For example, the gross turnover of \$8 million for 2007–2008 increased to \$10 million for 2008–2009. Other outcomes of its good practice are a host of industry awards of various sorts, including for training, reconciliation and cultural heritage achievement<sup>18</sup>; also the recent winning of an Australian Government national infrastructure grant of \$3.8 million for the upgrading of its training facilities.

## 11. Conclusion: critical components of the Myuma success story

Through the current study and discussion with a number of key personnel on Myuma, as well as outside observers<sup>19</sup>, the following five attributes have been isolated from this analysis as critical good practice factors underlying the Myuma success story.

1. Colin Saltmere's special leadership skills in being able to successfully influence and negotiate in the mainstream government and business world, as well as simultaneously to earn the respect of Aboriginal people by being a customary Law authority and leader in the Aboriginal world.<sup>20</sup>

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18 For example the John Herbert Award for Cultural Heritage Excellence and the Civil Contractors Federation Queensland Earth Award for Special Achievement in Archaeology and Heritage Excellence, the Department of Employment and Training Indigenous Peoples' Training Initiative Award in the 2003 Queensland Training Awards, and the Joint Venture (Medium Business) category of the 2003 Queensland Government Reconciliation Awards, and five Australian Training Awards in 2007 including 'Australian Training Initiative', 'Innovation in Training', 'Premier's Award', 'Earth Award', 'Engineering Excellence Award'.

19 I am particularly indebted to Sally Sheldon (Myuma) and Pauline Peel (Old State Government) for their insightful evaluations

20 Colin Saltmere is the type of leader who leads by example with a hands-on approach. As the complexity of the Myuma operation increases, so do the responsibility and stress on Colin. Peak times of leadership are in the early morning after breakfast (7–8 a.m.), when groups of staff and trainees have to organise themselves for their day's work activities. There is often a senior management staff meeting at this time to coordinate duties and define work goals. Despite this, Colin is always inundated with questions, requests and phone calls at all times of the day.

2. A strong lobbying process by Myuma among various industry and government sectors (mining and construction industries, state and local governments), combined with the respect of these sectors towards Myuma for it having made a success in business enterprises.
3. Myuma's presence in the local and regional economic market, which is a result of Colin's leadership skill and of strong lobbying, and which partly explains its capacity to secure selected and culturally modified demand-responsive services from the government and business sectors.
4. Pre-vocational training in an Aboriginal-run and controlled work camp, which doubles as an Aboriginal service setting, and in which most cross-cultural blockages and intimidations experienced by trainees can be worked through with a trusted training team.
5. Closing the gap: 'not just job readiness, but having jobs ready'<sup>21</sup> for the Aboriginal trainees; again a function of Myuma's good standing in the economic market.

Further success factors revealed in the preceding analysis include effective business strategy and gearing up, including through maintaining three business units for different purposes; availability of key skills and competencies, including through partnerships; a capacity to deal with all forms of Aboriginal politics; enterprise capacity and ability to keep attracting contracts; tendering as much as lobbying; good management and governance; reliable incoming goods and services despite its remote location; strong identity and associated 'brand'; and a network of 'trusted outsiders' to provide support, advice and to 'open doors' for the Myuma Group.

Some observers of Myuma attribute its success solely to Colin Saltmere's leadership, but it can be seen from above that there are numerous other contributing factors.

Is it possible for these critical ingredients of the Myuma success story to be replicated by other Aboriginal groups in other parts of Australia? This question has often been asked by senior public servants upon hearing of the success of the Myuma Group. Some guidelines for such replication are clearly embedded in the above five critical components. However, what would happen to Myuma if somehow Colin Saltmere was removed from the scene for whatever reason? Is there a succession plan? Could some sort of committee or board be formed to run Myuma? This remains an unanswered question. Suffice to say that strong Aboriginal leadership would be necessary in any organisation attempting to replicate or adapt the Myuma model.

In conclusion, it can be said that the Myuma experiment denies socioeconomic disadvantage as being Aboriginal destiny (after Pearson 2009a) and aims to lift young Aboriginal adults out of such disadvantage and 'provide for them a prospect that they would otherwise not have, that their parents never had' (ibid). Through the device of the Aboriginal service setting, Myuma is able to provide its trainees and workers with a sense of 'at-homeness', of residential harmony and social relatedness of order and security, experiences which are often in contrast in particular ways with their home community life. Myuma, in light of the evidence at hand, is a nationally significant example of Aboriginal people overcoming 'extraordinary hurdles to foster emergent social norms and new institutions to negotiate the difficult space between the Market and the Dreaming' (Altman 2009). This is surely a dialectic resolution that surmounts opposition between idealism and pragmatism, overcomes mainstream left wing and right wing political myopias, and lands somewhere in 'the radical centre' to follow Pearson's recent prescribed position (Sutton 2009b; Pearson 2009b, p. 248).

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<sup>21</sup> pers. comm. Pauline Peel, Queensland State Government.

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# Appendix 1: The ongoing eco-efficiency needs of the Dugalunji Camp

*Edited from a report by Beth Rounsefell (2009) for Aboriginal Environments Research Centre, University of Queensland.*

To commence addressing the eco-environmental issues of the Dugalunji Camp, an environmental engineer was engaged to prepare a preliminary study of the energy, water and waste demands and management at the camp in late 2008 and early 2009. Dr Beth Rounsefell (2009) prepared an initial assessment of the energy demands at the camp, and offered a number of recommendations that could be incorporated into the new camp design and/or management practices. Secondary to this, an overview of the current water and waste management practices was provided to offer insight into possibilities for improvement in the future. The ultimate goal was to incorporate more sustainable practices into the daily running of the camp which would lead to monetary savings for Myuma. Another goal was to understand the scales and costs of running such an Aboriginal camp, ‘in the event of similar training/enterprise/service delivery camps being established elsewhere in remote arid Australia.’ (Rounsefell 2009.)

Rounsefell found that the average consumption of electricity at the Dugalunji Camp, of approximately 26kWh/person/day, is an order of magnitude higher than the reported energy consumption in Queensland of 5.5kWh/person/day (Australian Greenhouse Gas Office 1999). This was despite the electricity consumption at the Dugalunji Camp being charged under two different tariffs: a peak tariff (day) and off-peak tariff (night/weekend), with the peak tariff costing 22¢/kWh compared to the 7.8¢/kWh for off-peak electricity. Within this consumption is a base load of energy used to maintain essential processes on site and a peak energy load due to daily activity. It is important to separately determine these two loads in order to identify areas and times that can be targeted to ensure the greatest savings. It was found that targeting the reduction of the electricity demand during the peak tariff period (i.e. during week days) would have the greatest effect on the energy costs for the Dugalunji camp (Rounsefell 2009)

Data from preliminary measurement of the power consumption of a number of appliances at certain times of the day at the camp ‘supports the reports that heating and cooling of human environments requires significant power demands compared to other appliances in a domestic/office setting’ (EPA 2009). Due to the location of the DAC camp, it was recognised that a degree of cooling was required in the camp buildings to varying degrees during the year. Therefore the use of air-conditioning is required in all buildings. However, the power consumed through the use of air conditioners can be significantly reduced by reducing the internal temperature of buildings, since energy flows in the environment are driven by temperature gradients and solar radiation is significant in regions with a high solar index (solar irradiance).

## **Water hardness**

The potable water supply at Dugalunji Camp is sourced from a sub-artesian bore located on the camp site and drawing approximately 3kL/h of water into above ground water tanks for camp use. This water is potable as it meets the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines (ADWG) (NHMRC 2004) health limits; however, it is slightly outside the specifications for some aesthetic limits (see Rounsefell 2009, Table 3).

Rounsefell discusses the results for the Dugalunji Camp bore-water analysis (2009, Table 3):

*[the dissolved salts] will not provide any noticeable effects to consumers (apart from perhaps a slight difference in taste) but rather have the potential to cause scale and fouling problems on fittings and fixtures that are exposed to this water on a regular basis ... Water hardness can be classified as either temporary or permanent depending on the form that the*

*salts are in. Generally, temporary hardness can be removed from water through heating/boiling or lime addition, while permanent hardness is removed through ion exchange processes.*

*It is evident from an inspection of the inside of an electric hot water system ... that had been using bore water from the site for the camp kitchen, that there is a high degree of temporary hardness to the water. This fouling is particularly troublesome in appliances that heat the bore water as it produces a precipitant that will not only reduce the efficiency of these appliances but also require regular maintenance. This will increase costs through higher energy consumption and more regular replacement of fouled systems.'*

From the information presented in this report, a number of opportunities exist to decrease the costs associated with providing electrical energy to Dugalunji camp. The ways to address this include reducing overall energy demand through structural changes of the site and/or management practices and indentifying alternative sources of energy to replace electricity demand.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the information collected and assessed, Rounsefell (2009) recommended that:

1. construction and installation of permanent roof structures to shade buildings, in order to:
  - a. reduce direct solar radiation on buildings, reducing requirements for artificial cooling (air-conditioning)
  - b. reduce direct solar radiation on air-conditioning units to improve unit efficiency and reduce power demands
  - c. provide a structure on which to support solar panels (north facing and with a 10° incline) for energy generation to reduce electricity costs
  - d. provide a surface from which rain-water can be harvested, which is softer than the site bore water and will reduce scaling problems that lead to appliance energy inefficiency.
2. installation of appropriate vegetation on northern, southern and western aspects of site buildings to increase passive cooling through shade and evapo-transpiration which will lead to a decreased demand on artificial cooling requirements
3. incorporation of energy efficient and water efficient devices to:
  - a. directly reduce energy demand with low wattage fittings
  - b. indirectly reduce energy demand through reduced water consumption (reduced hot water use/wastage and power requirements for running bore).
4. investigation of alternative options for water heating requirements to potentially reduce on-site electricity demands up to 30% [e.g. solar energy].
5. investigation of options for water softening – extending capacity of reverse osmosis unit or separate water softening units involving lime addition.
6. improved management of solid organic waste on site to produce compost for gardens or feed for laying hens to produce eggs.

These can be summarised as (1) improved architectural design, (2) landscaping, (3) better choices of technologies (higher efficiency), (4) solar water heating, (5) water softening, and (6) waste management.

Rounsefell (2009) concluded: 'Further investigation and data collection at the site is required to determine the exact requirements for the above mentioned recommendations; however, with the inclusion of these concepts, the power demands of the site will be reduced and subsequently lead to significant monetary savings on electricity bills in the future' at the Dugalunji Camp.

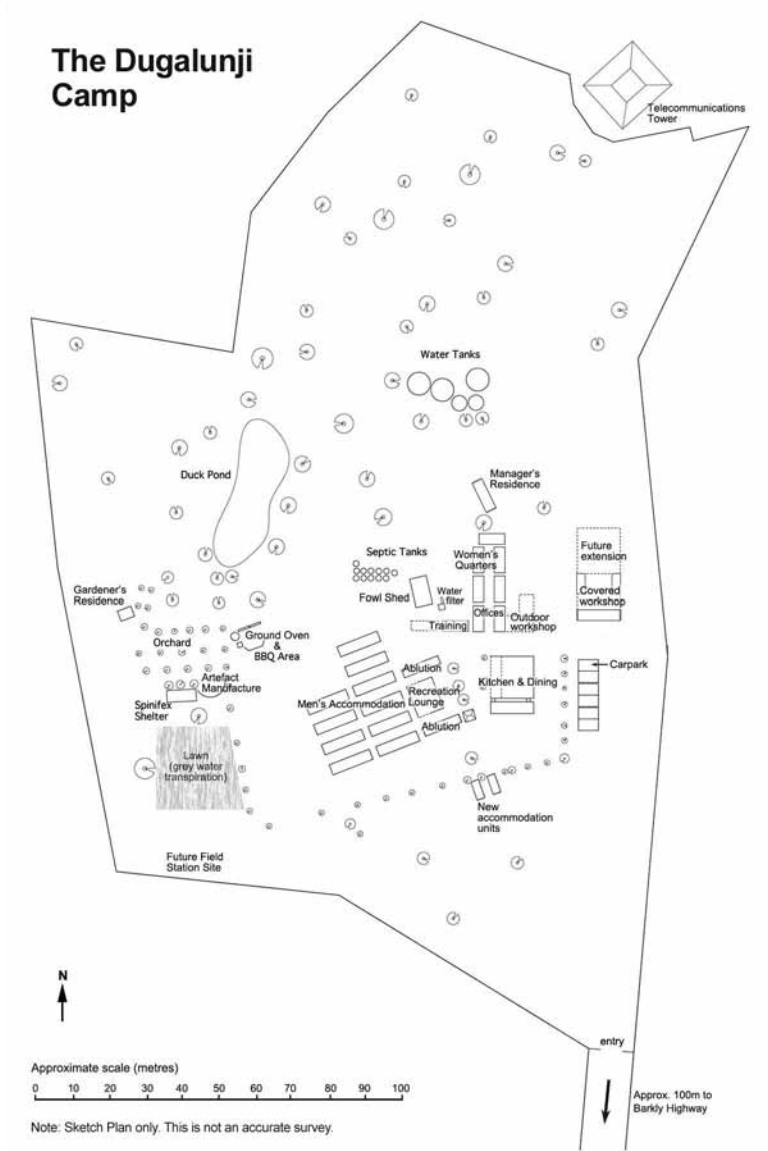


Figure 21: The Dugalunji Camp

# DKCRC Partners



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