

SUMMARY SHEET



MINING AND INDIGENOUS TOURISM IN NORTHERN AUSTRALIA

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Objectives of the Study

A case study methodology was used to investigate the opportunities for using 'soft' and 'hard' mining project infrastructure to support the development of indigenous tourism operations in northern Australia. Key objectives were to:

- Assess the potential to develop existing natural and indigenous cultural tourism resources in areas proximate to mining operations;
- Identify how mining operations could support indigenous tourism ventures in these areas; and
- Assess the willingness of mining companies and indigenous communities to cooperate in such initiatives.

Methodology

The study involved three elements: a literature review; wide consultation with representatives of mining companies, Aboriginal communities and tourism agencies; and field visits to three case study sites.

The case studies comprised the regions around Comalco's Weipa bauxite mine on the western Cape York Peninsula of Queensland; the Century mine in the southern Gulf of Carpentaria, north-west Queensland; and the Argyle Diamond mine in Western Australia's East Kimberleys.



*Argyle Diamond Mine
(image courtesy of Kununurra Tourism)*

Key Findings

- Numerous mining operations in northern Australia are located in or near areas that have substantial tourism potential. Primary attractions are the natural environment, cultural heritage sites and landscapes, and the mines themselves.
- There is currently only very limited indigenous involvement in tourism ventures in northern Australia. The report identifies a range of benefits of increasing indigenous participation in the tourism sector.
- Leading mining companies have public commitments to contribute to sustainable development of the communities and regions in which they operate. Greater indigenous involvement in tourism is one way mining operations can give practical effect to this commitment.
- Surveys of tourists indicate many international visitors to northern Australia would like to experience greater exposure to indigenous culture and people. The attractions situated in the three regions could be readily marketed to both international and domestic tourists.
- Actions that mining operations might take to facilitate greater indigenous involvement in tourism include providing Aboriginal groups with the rights to run mine tours, and/or requiring other tour operators to employ Aboriginal people; and ensuring Traditional Owner perspectives are presented in any mine tours conducted.

Research and Future Action

There is a clear need for timely and accurate market research into the level of demand for and potential earnings from a range of indigenous tourism ventures. Further research could include further detailed study of tourist demand for indigenous cultural tourism products; timely and accurate market research into the real level of demand for, and possible earnings from, tourism ventures that could potentially be of interest to indigenous communities and individuals; and continued monitoring and assessment of the initiatives already in train at the case study sites.

Within the Kimberley, Arnhem Land, Gulf of Carpentaria and Cape York regions of northern Australia, there are numerous Aboriginal communities and outstations that maintain customary practices and traditions.