

TO DO! 2007
Contest Socially Responsible Tourism

Award Winner

**Western Australian Indigenous
Tourism Operators Committee
WAITOC**

represented by:

Mr. Neville Poelina, Chairperson
Mrs. Ann Preest, Board member
WAITOC

Perth
Australia

Rationale for the Award

by

Dr. Christian Adler

1. INTRODUCTION

WAITOC (Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Committee) is a registered association based in Perth, the capital of the Australian state of Western Australia (WA). As a not-for-profit association, WAITOC represents the interests of about 100 independent indigenous entrepreneurs working in the tourism sector in various ways. The companies are from all the regions of Western Australia. They are owned by indigenous individuals, families or communities.

On behalf of the Institute for Tourism and Development (Studienkreis für Tourismus und Entwicklung e.V.) the author of this report travelled to Western Australia in November 2007, to assess the contest application of WAITOC for the TO DO! 2007. In accordance with the insights and knowledge gained, and in recognition of WAITOC's objectives, working principles and activities, the expert recommends awarding the association WAITOC with the TO DO! 2007 at the ITB 2008.

2. BACKGROUND

The state of Western Australia (WA) covers about one third of the Australian continent and a land area of the size of Western Europe. There are a few ranches in the region which are as large as Belgium. The population density is very low. Only about 1.9 million out of a total of 20 million Australians live in WA. Most of them live in the capital Perth and its surroundings (about 1.5 million).

Originally an agricultural state (animal husbandry, cereals), WA has for about ten years been experiencing a tremendous economic boom and has become the most productive state of Australia in economic terms. The boom is mainly attributed to the mining sector (iron ore, gold) and the exploitation of offshore gas fields.

Tourism also plays an increasing economic role. In the statistical year 2005/2006, the contribution of tourism to Western Australia's Gross State Product (GSP) was 5.7 billion Australian dollars (AUD, 100 AUD are about 59 Euro) or 4.7 percent of Western Australia's total GSP. Over the period from 2001/02 to 2005/06, tourism's contribution to the Gross State Product increased by 27 percent. The travel and tourism industry is an important employer in Western Australia, directly or indirectly providing jobs for around 63,000 people.¹

Western Australia presents itself to the visitor as a very modern and affluent state. It is not only the impressive skyline of Perth that bears witness to this, but also the rest of the cityscape and the buildings along the coast south of Perth with top modern architecture, expensive villas and impressive marinas with a yacht fleet comparable to the Côte d'Azur. Prices in Western Australia are relatively high and more or less correspond to the price level of Switzerland.

A favourable climate (a lot of sunshine, warm winter), hundreds of kilometres of pristine sandy beaches and various national parks with fantastic natural heritage attract more and more tourists. Western Australia has an extremely well-developed tourism infrastructure that benefits individual travellers in particular.

The tourism authority "Tourism Western Australia" (Tourism WA) is striving to increase the tourism growth mentioned above even more, e.g. by promoting business tourism, event tourism and other segments. There is a programme to promote indigenous tourism: "Experience Indigenous Tourism in Western Australia". The incoming agents are usually white Australians, while the poorly paid workers are Aborigines. Only five percent of Australia's tourism enterprises are managed by indigenous entrepreneurs.²

¹ Economic Contribution of Tourism to Western Australia Fact Sheet 2005/06

² According to WAITOC

3. ABORIGINES IN AUSTRALIA

For 45 percent of the visitors to Australia surveyed, encounters with Aborigines (from the Latin for "from the origin or beginning") constitute the main motive for their stay. 150,000 visitors per year book cultural programmes with indigenous communities.³

As the indigenous population of the Australian continent, Aborigines today constitute a minority of two percent of the Australian population. According to government statistics, there are currently about 400,000 Aborigines living in Australia, 70,000 of them are citizens of Western Australia (members of the Noongar, Yamatji, Wankai and Ngaanyajarra).

These tribes share a similar traditional world view, marked by a close relationship between human beings and the land which they inhabit. Aborigines call the beginning of existence "dream" or "dreamtime". During this "dreamtime", the ancestors rose from the earth. They took the forms of all the perceivable creatures and objects of nature: animals, plants, rocks, rivers, oceans, etc. and continue to remain forever spiritually alive in all their forms. Unlike in our religions, Aborigines do not regard human beings as beings of a higher order, but as an ordinary part of nature.

The highly respected land is to be protected. Therefore, there are "dream paths", numerous rules and bans with a "custodian" or "dreaming-holder" supervising that these rules are being observed. For Aborigines, there are many invisible boundaries in Australia which not everybody is allowed to cross. According to Aboriginal belief, there are many sacred natural sites (e.g. geographic peculiarities such as ledges, narrow valleys, water holes). Before going on a bush walk, you need to collect detailed information in order to know which are the places to be avoided. This helps to understand how painful it is for Aborigines to be deprived of their land or to helplessly watch how the Whites are using the land.

Contemporary Aboriginal history can be called dramatic. The European settlements in Western Australia turned out to be the biggest disaster they ever had to endure. The consequences are still to be felt. After the "Act of 1909" and its amendment 1911 with the "Aborigines Act Amendment Act" had been passed, white Australians were allowed to take children of Aborigine background from their parents, to take them to unknown places and have them grow up in missions and children's homes in order to subject them to forced assimilation. Parents and children were suffering for decades.

This practice was brought to an end only in the early 1970s. All over Australia, about 100,000 children had been displaced in this manner. They are called the "lost generation". This generation is still searching for their families and traditional roots. For a long time, the use of indigenous languages had also been prohibited. That's why out of the 265 languages that once existed, only about 70 have survived.

It was not until 1967 that the indigenous population of Western Australia was granted Australian citizenship – which established equality of white Australians and Aborigines before the law. Today, the Aborigines still belong to the poorest section of Australian society. They have less access to medical care and their imprisonment rate is the highest. Serious problems of alcohol and drug abuse also remain, and a very high rate of unemployment (38 percent)⁴. Other markers of poverty could be added to the list. The Aborigines partly even live under conditions similar to the "Third World", as it was formulated in a report by the State Government's special adviser on indigenous affairs, John Sanderson⁵. But all over the state, well-meaning people are now working on reconciliation between the two groups – also in order to heal the wounds of the past. They try to build a bridge between two totally different, seemingly irreconcilable worlds.

³ WAITOC The Indigenous Better Business Blitz Training Program, Introduction

⁴ wikipedia, 6th January, 2008. The rate of unemployment in Australia is around 5 to 6 percent on average (2006)

⁵ "Report: WA Aboriginal living conditions Third World" ABC news, 21 November 2007

4. WAITOC – CHANCE FOR A BETTER LIFE

Against this background, a few Aborigines who had been able to free themselves from poverty decided in 2000 to initiate a change in Western Australia. They set up the “Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Committee” (WAITOC). The founding members regarded tourism as one of the most appropriate sectors to help Aborigines achieve economic independence while safeguarding their cultural identity. In 2002, WAITOC was registered and recognised as a not-for-profit organisation (Incorporated Association). The Committee with its board as the top decision-making body consists of experienced indigenous entrepreneurs. They represent 12 language groups and the full range of tourist and cultural services offered. The WAITOC board members have formed a network among themselves, linking all the regions of Western Australia. They work on a volunteer basis and meet several times a year.

WAITOC works independently, but in close cooperation with the state tourism authority Tourism WA. The objectives of WAITOC are the following:

- to integrate members into the mainstream tourism industry
- to safeguard cultural values, traditions and the resulting rules and regulations that have been handed down through the ages
- to develop marketable socially and ecologically sustainable indigenous products and services
- to encourage Aborigines to participate in the development of tourism and to become active in this sector
- to provide network support for business start-ups
- to offer capacity-building for members
- to maintain quality standards
- to promote joint ventures between indigenous and non-indigenous businesses
- to encourage employment of indigenous people by the wider tourism industry
- to access funding and financial support

The intention behind all these: to improve the profile of small indigenous enterprises and to help Aborigines to get more employment in the tourism sector. The aim is also to invalidate the prejudice that Aborigines are not to be taken seriously as professional business partners. WAITOC tries to help its members to get more recognition in the mainstream tourism industry. The association sees itself as a catalyst and facilitator in the interest of indigenous enterprises; WAITOC provides consultancy services for governmental institutions and organisations on all aspects related to indigenous tourism.

In order to increase the share of indigenous entrepreneurs in the tourism sector, the state tourism authority Tourism WA also runs its own programme to promote indigenous tourism and supports the projects of WAITOC.

5. THE PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES OFFERED BY WAITOC MEMBERS

There is a wide range of products and services offered. Depending on the size of the enterprise, one or more programmes are offered simultaneously. Apart from a few enterprises that operate on a seasonal or part-time basis, there are currently 65 companies offering products and services that can be marketed throughout the year.

1. The first ones to be mentioned are the galleries which offer internationally recognised Aboriginal art (especially paintings), as well as ornaments and devices such as boomerangs and didgeridoos. In many cases, there are small museums attached to the galleries, portraying – with photographic presentations – the history and the material or spiritual culture of the respective region. The galleries are located in presentable buildings, they are attractively furnished and their managers co-operate with artists. Some of the enterprises are under sole

proprietorship, others belong to communities, or they are managed by cooperatives (e.g. "Wardan Aboriginal Centre", "Aboriginal Art and Craft Gallery Kings Park", "Warlayirti Artists", "Ganada Art Gallery", etc.)

2. Many visitors to Australia are interested in learning about the "Outback", about life in the desert which hardly provides for food and water, but where Aborigines have survived for millennia. The numerous "bush walks" offered, with fanciful names such as "Kwillana Dreaming", "Didgeridoo Dreaming", "Daytime Dreaming", etc., cater to this demand. By following an Aborigine on a walk, guests learn to see nature from an indigenous perspective: getting to know medicinal and food plants (bush tucker), interpreting different traces, learning how to find water sources, etc. Keeping a respectful distance, guests are guided to sacred sites or learn about their existence. They sit at a romantic bonfire and listen to the didgeridoo and the legends told by local people. WAITOC members "Jack's Tours & Storytelling", "Wula Guda Nyinda - Aboriginal Cultural Tours", "Wundargoodie Aboriginal Safaris", "JBAC Bush Adventures" and many others specialise in this kind of tour programmes.
3. Dance events, dance theatres or dance festivals with one or more Aborigines performing traditional dances recall times gone by. Explanations are given on what the dances are meant for. However, not all the dances may be shown. Many things are still taboo to the eyes of strangers, as there is still very lively spirituality.
4. Some Aborigines offer accommodation, such as the "Fitz Roy Lodge" or the "Karijini Eco Retreat" in the Karijini National Park. They also offer camping sites such as "Nature's Hideaway at Middle Lagoon".
5. There are WAITOC members who have got boats and organise boat trips. One of these companies is "Captain Cook Cruises – Aboriginal Heritage Tours" based in Perth. The Kimberly gorges can be discovered with "Darnngu Heritage Cruises" or "Manbana Aboriginal Aqua Cultural Tours".
6. Those who want to experience even more adventures and want to get deeper into the Outback can have Aborigines take them on guided tours using off-road vehicles, e.g. as offered by "Kimberly Wilderness Adventures – APT". The nine days' wilderness adventure "Lurujarri Trail" with the Goolarboooloo (starting from Broome) has been documented several times by the media. There is also a great demand for the trips organised by "Uptuyu Aboriginal Adventures", which take several days.
7. The best things come in small packages, such as the invitation to an opulent dinner with bush specialities and a cultural performance: "Didge after Dark". It is a programme organised by an Aborigine in cooperation with her white neighbour, near Perth.
8. Finally, one of the WAITOC members runs a publishing house: Through their publications, "Magabala Books" try to spread knowledge and adequate information about Aboriginal culture.

To visit all of these enterprises, you would need to travel thousands of kilometres. Despite the huge distances, the expert on his research trip was able to get to know six indigenous enterprises and got an impression of what they offer.

6. ASSESSMENT

The comparison of WAITOC's activities with the **six TO DO! contest criteria and three additional questions** leads to the following assessment:

Evaluation against the TO DO! contest criteria

1. Taking into account the different interests and needs of the local people through participation

WAITOC is an initiative by indigenous people and for indigenous people; an organisation in which the idea of participation had triggered its foundation.

From WAITOC's perspective, their mission is to involve as many Aborigines as possible in the travel and tourism industry and to develop profitable, sustainable indigenous tourism.

Through its involvement in the tourism sector, the association wants to enable Aborigines to determine their economic and social development in line with individual and/or community needs. WAITOC presents itself as a credible representative of indigenous interests. The association has formed a network covering Western Australia, in which Aborigines working in tourism provide each other with support and advice, while taking into account regional differences and individual experience. Due to the common desire to protect their own culture, the members share a strong feeling of solidarity. The WAITOC members therefore regard their network connections mainly as a strengthening factor. WAITOC membership is voluntary.

2. Enhancing the awareness of the local people with regard to the chances and risks of tourism development in their everyday economic, social and cultural life

Despite the fact that all Aborigines are Australian citizens, many of them still feel like a minority at the margins of Australian society. They do not feel they have reached the level demanded by Australian society for professional advancement. This self-assessment is reinforced by geographical isolation and poverty, as described above, by unemployment and a low literacy rate. Many indigenous people therefore do not have the courage to change their living conditions. They lack the self-confidence needed to embark on the venture of an entirely new and unfamiliar occupation. For outsiders it is difficult to understand that to an Aborigine setting up his own business means a huge step, as it forces him to expose himself.

With its initiatives, WAITOC helps indigenous people to overcome shame, and step by step encourages and strengthens their self-confidence. Those who find access to WAITOC and take up what the organisation offers, will undergo a continuous process of personal development. They come to realise that they are not just disadvantaged citizens but "absolutely normal" Australians with basically the same opportunities in the tourism sector that are also open to white Australians. Furthermore, these Aborigines later develop a changed awareness of their own culture which they can then also see in the mirror of the Whites.

In "The Indigenous Better Business Blitz Training Program" (see details below), WAITOC provides the necessary guidance, tailored according to the participants' individual needs. Every Aborigine wishing to free himself from poverty will be educated with regard to his opportunities in tourism and will be encouraged to take action or to think about whether tourism might offer a possibility to tap a new and sustainable source of income. At the same time, participants will also learn that setting up one's own business is not without risk. That's why step by step they will be guided to conduct their activities in a professional manner.

There are no discernible risks for the social and especially cultural life due to the activities by WAITOC, as all the activities of the association and its members are aimed at strengthening Aboriginal culture.

3. Participation of broad local population strata in the positive economic, social and cultural effects of tourism

Those who want to make a new start also need the relevant know-how. WAITOC therefore regards capacity building for as many interested Aborigines as possible as one of its main tasks. WAITOC addresses all indigenous people, irrespective of their age and qualifications.

In the first place, however, WAITOC tries to reach young Aborigines. To that end, WAITOC has set up a "Youth Forum" for young people already working in tourism. Their mentors are board members of WAITOC. In this forum, interested newcomers learn about the success stories of Aborigines who have already gained experience in tourism that is motivating. They learn to overcome their initial shyness and to develop confidence in their own abilities. Among other things, simple presentation and communication techniques are taught. The young participants learn how to operate overhead projectors; they stand behind a lectern for the first time and have to maintain their position in a small speech in front of their peer audience.

Potential entrepreneurs or existing small enterprises are the target group of "The Indigenous Better Business Blitz Training Program" mentioned above, which consists of several modules. The training units are adapted to the needs of the respective regions and their cultural and seasonal conditions as well as the development stages of the companies. The training is conducted in several workshops distributed over a period of one year. Whenever possible, indigenous trainers are being employed. After the workshops they continue to be available as contact persons. In order to monitor the success of these training programmes, there will be an evaluation after another one year, the purpose of which is to find out who among the newcomers may be a prospective member of WAITOC.

In brief, there are twelve different modules available for this training programme, which, as just mentioned, will be adapted to the individual needs. The following subjects are part of the curriculum:

1. How does tourism work – who does what?
2. The way from an idea to a successful service
3. Financial aspects: What is needed to set up a business?
4. Cultural norms, possibilities and prohibitions
5. Sole proprietorship, family or community enterprises:
What suits me/us best?
6. How do I develop a creative, sustainable programme?
7. Basic training "marketing concepts"
8. Advanced training "marketing concepts"
9. Basic training "business planning"
10. Advanced training "business planning"
11. Official accreditation, questions of cultural authenticity
12. Cooperation with potential partners (both public and private)

Each of these workshops has about 20 registered participants. Some of them initially come to get some general information – with the option of possibly setting up a business later on. Others, however, immediately make use of the opportunity offered and become entrepreneurs. Half of the participants are already indigenous businessmen and use these programmes for further capacity-building. The relatively small number of participants is due to the Aborigines themselves. The "shame factor" already mentioned prevents some of them who might be interested from accepting

these offers. Most of the newcomers are relatives or acquaintances of former participants. Those who once participated in a WAITOC programme obviously become multipliers in their neighbourhood.

WAITOC also facilitates internships in well-established member companies to help newcomers get to know tourism in practice. If during these training programmes someone should turn out not to be suited at all to run his own business, these indigenous people are advised to co-operate with others and to contribute to their projects (e.g. with their own cultural knowledge).

WAITOC does not consider training tour guides as one of its tasks. There are public institutions that offer vocational training programmes for tour guides and other careers in tourism. Without the initiatives of WAITOC, however, there would hardly be any incentives for Aborigines to make use of such opportunities. WAITOC is involved in the vocational training programmes in public schools by making guest presentations, and WAITOC supports indigenous applicants to access government grants to pursue their professional careers.

4. Guarantee the attractiveness of jobs in tourism for the local people by improving working conditions relative to payment, social security, working hours as well as education and training

The existing indigenous enterprises are very successful and some of them earn amazing incomes. "Wula Guda Nyinda", for example, caters to about 4,000 guests and generates an income of around 100,000 AUD (= 59,635 €). Bill Webb, the owner of "Wardan Aboriginal Centre" near Margaret River, employs nine indigenous workers full time or part time. His gallery also supports five artists.

According to WAITOC, employees are paid in accordance with the standard rates applicable in WA. There are currently 400 to 500 people employed in around 100 indigenous enterprises in Western Australia. There are no statistics on annual turnover.

WAITOC regards it as an important task to ensure that the programmes and services offered meet national quality standards, which will make and keep them marketable. In co-operation with the Tourist Council WA and the Australian Tourism Accreditation Association Ltd., WAITOC offers its members the official accreditation programme for tourism enterprises, to which the WAITOC criteria for indigenous enterprises have been added. Those who complete this programme may use the label "accredited tourism enterprise" for two years and may use the accreditation logo as an external mark.

This label brings a major advantage when marketing one's own products and services, since only those who have successfully gone through the accreditation process and have thus proven their professionalism will be listed in the promotional materials published by the association. After two years, companies wishing to keep the logo will be checked again. The list of criteria to be met is long. It is not easy to pass successfully. The process includes, among other things, a detailed evaluation of the labour conditions and remuneration of employees, and even evidence of taxes paid and emergency evacuation procedures for the staff. Furthermore, the social and cultural sustainability of the products and services offered will be evaluated. On the whole, this helps to ensure quality in indigenous tourism and contributes to its sustainability.

In this context, the "Gnunkai Award" should be mentioned ("Gnunkai", in Noongar language, means "excellence"). It is a prize awarded for excellent performance in the field of indigenous tourism. WAITOC assesses the applications and organises the award ceremony during the annual "Australian Indigenous Tourism Conference". (How it is conducted and why it is relevant will be explained in more detail in the section on the next contest criterion.) The award is given for an excellent personal or professional performance over a period of several years, exceeding the employees' expectations that are based on standard wages. Of course, this serves as an incentive

for companies to distinguish themselves from others with regard to working conditions and remuneration.

Apart from that, WAITOC does not exert any direct influence on its members, respecting their independence as free entrepreneurs.

5. Strengthening the local culture and the cultural identity of the people living in tourism destination areas

At the end of October 2007, WAITOC organised the third “Australian Indigenous Tourism Conference” (AITC) with 250 participants in Broome. Building on the success of the previous conferences, this event served as an excellent forum for indigenous participants to exchange experiences. They had come from all over the place and had to travel long distances to participate. What they all had in common was their awareness of the strength of their culture and their joint efforts to protect it.

Another focus of the conference was on protecting the environment. It targeted young people who are increasingly to be recruited and motivated to become active in indigenous tourism. The young participants were shown opportunities and possibilities available to them, so that as Aborigines living traditional lifestyles they could become successful entrepreneurs. The target audience was to find out for themselves by learning of various examples of “best practice” indigenous tourism enterprises from different regions. During the conference, new partnerships evolved, even beyond the borders of the Australian states.

The conference mainly served as an occasion to also draw attention to the WAITOC initiatives at the national level and to thus gain recognition. During the conference, some 70 journalists and a few European tour operators were present. Next year, the conference is to take place at the other side of the continent, in Brisbane.

In contact with the guests, local indigenous people keep getting opportunities to present their culture in an authentic manner. Tourism offers them an excellent instrument to do so.

6. Avoiding and minimising any social and cultural damage caused by tourism in tourism destination areas

Apart from preserving cultural traditions, one main focus of WAITOC’s work is to protect the indigenous population. All the programmes organised by WAITOC’s members are designed in such a way as to demand respect from the guests – for the country, her people and their culture.

WAITOC’s training programme for indigenous entrepreneurs-to-be includes a specific module on this topic. It covers aspects that show cultural restrictions as well as the possibilities and opportunities associated with these restrictions.

WAITOC has added criteria to the official accreditation programme for tourism enterprises which indigenous enterprises applying for this licence have to fulfil. In a nutshell, these criteria are described by the following guiding principle: *The product being delivered has to be culturally sensitive and appropriate. It must be pertinent to the operator’s own cultural heritage or the operator should have the permission to operate and use the region’s cultural information from the relevant traditional owners.*

Evaluation against the TO DO! additional questions

A) “Could you give some examples which document that your project/measure is in line with environmental compatibility?”

For people so concerned about preserving a cultural heritage in which land plays an important spiritual role of its own, acting in an environmentally sustainable manner goes without saying. Guests can feel the Aborigines’ special connectedness with their environment. During “bush walks“, indigenous leaders always request guests to behave in an ecologically sustainable manner, not to tear off any plants, not to leave any garbage behind, not to smoke.

One example from the expert’s observation: In one case the indigenous guide went as far as to recommend to guests to step on the desert soil only very gently, out of “respect“. Before setting off at all, he stayed in one place for several minutes, asking the land in his language for permission to step on it together with the guests – also in order to fulfil his spiritual duties.

Irrespective of this, WAITOC also sets environmental standards for its members. As an orientation for sustainable environmental management, several possibilities are being suggested to them with regard to:

- reducing energy consumption
- minimising water consumption
- minimising resource use and reducing waste
- disposing of waste
- influencing customer behaviour
- raising awareness among employees
- monitoring the measures taken

WAITOC members are encouraged to explain in detail in what ways they take these criteria into account in their business operations. Implementation will be checked in the accreditation process (mentioned above).

B) “Are there any examples in the framework of your project/measure which make clear that a just participation of women and men has been taken into account during the planning/implementation phase of your project/measure? Considering gender relations, can be found any improvement of the status/situation of women within your project/measure?”

In classical foraging cultures such as those of the Aborigines, there is a high degree of gender equality. Even though there are role models and a division of labour between men and women, the issue of gender equality as we have been discussing it is totally new to most of the Aborigines.

Accordingly, indigenous tourism also offers equal opportunities to both men and women. About half of the WAITOC enterprises are owned by women. There are also many women on the WAITOC board, which until recently was chaired by Maria Morgan.

C) “Through which measures/mechanisms is the economic and institutional sustainability of the project guaranteed? In the context of safeguarding the future of the project, where do you see problems and risks?”

WAITOC has very good promotional materials and helps indigenous tourism enterprises to present themselves as entrepreneurs who act in a responsible manner. Special mention needs to be

made of the professionally programmed internet platform of the association (www.waitoc.com) with its excellent graphic design, presenting all the member enterprises of the network as well as their programmes. Here, we can find information on various topics and fields of interest, such as the Aborigines' history, their languages and the organisation itself. There is also information for potential candidates on the conditions for WAITOC membership as well as information for the tourism industry and on possibilities for co-operation. Further links lead to the WAITOC members' websites.

The website currently records around 1,000 visitors per month. In addition, bullet points on the different companies and their programmes are also listed in a several pages' coloured promotional brochure in A4 format. The members themselves distribute small flyers to draw attention to their programmes. It is regrettable that often the promotional materials referring to indigenous enterprises cannot be found in Tourist Information Centres in Western Australia.

WAITOC sends out a quarterly newsletter, distributes a multimedia CD-ROM (WAITOC Road Show) and advertises in travel brochures published by tour operators (such as DER, FTI or BEST OF TRAVEL GROUP). The organisation is represented at both national and international trade fairs, such as ATE (Australian Tourism Exchange) and ITB. In its public relations work, WAITOC receives support from Tourism WA. The annual "Australian Indigenous Tourism Conference" (AITC) enjoys increasing national and international recognition.

WAITOC is optimistic about the future opportunities of its members (economic sustainability), against the backdrop of increasing demand for indigenous programmes and the market growth related to it.

As far as the institutional sustainability of WAITOC is concerned, it is to be noted that the association has so far been financed exclusively by funds from the state tourism authority Tourism WA, which supports WAITOC with an amount of 100,000 AUD (about 59,635 €) annually. In view of the huge distances in Western Australia and the high price level, this amount is certainly not enough to actually effectively implement the tasks WAITOC has defined for itself. The financial situation of the organisation is therefore very tight. The board members, who live in different parts of one third of the continent, can meet only three to four times a year in Perth. The organisation estimates its budget needs at about 289,000 AUD per year⁶ and is currently trying to get project specific sponsorship from within the tourism industry.

It would be most welcome if Tourism WA decided to grant more support. After all, the association eases the workload of the state tourism authority by offering services to develop and better establish indigenous tourism, which would otherwise be the responsibility of the state. As part of the training programme 2007, only four workshops took place in different locations. That is certainly not enough to achieve the defined target within the near future. It must be taken into account that WAITOC does not just work in Perth, but especially in the remote regions of Western Australia.

As an organisation that helps Aborigines on the road from poverty to economic independence, WAITOC also eases the workload of other governmental institutions (e.g. regarding unemployment benefits and income support). WAITOC helps to provide jobs in communities where there are no other employment opportunities and thus ensures the livelihoods of a large number of families who would have no chance on the labour market and would have to live on income support from the state.

The tourism budget of the state of Western Australia amounts to a total of 50 million AUD per year. In view of such an amount it seems to be desirable to offset the financial weaknesses of the organisation in order to make it more efficient in its current work and future projects.

⁶ Business Plan 2004-2008

5. CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

WAITOC's vision is to add a strong indigenous component to the tourism business in Western Australia. In the tourism industry all over the continent, WAITOC strives to set standards for authentic and socially responsible encounters with indigenous people.

What is more: WAITOC wants to become the number one in a sector which has developed simply because of an interest in Aboriginal culture. According to WAITOC's vision, tourism should benefit mainly the Aborigines themselves. Above all, they should manage it on their own and control it in cultural respects. A national network could emerge from the original WAITOC idea: the "Australian Indigenous Tourism Committee" (AITOC).

Speaking to the board members of WAITOC and learning of the passion and powers of persuasion behind their efforts to realise their vision leaves no doubt that this committee will continue to be very successful in the future.

In the meantime, the efforts of WAITOC are supported not only by Tourism Western Australia. The national tourism authority Tourism Australia is also active in this field. At the "Australian Indigenous Tourism Conference" (AITC) organised by WAITOC in 2005, it was announced that a department "Indigenous Tourism Australia" (ITA) had been established, which officially started its work in August 2005 as part of the activities of Tourism Australia.

According to ITA, it builds on the work of WAITOC and other indigenous interest groups and has, among many other measures, published in late 2007 a strategy paper for indigenous tourism. One of the strategy's objectives formulated in this paper is to: "*Provide opportunity for Indigenous people to create wealth*".⁷

All in all, these are positive developments which help to introduce indigenous entrepreneurs and workers to the Australian mainstream tourism industry, so that they can participate to a larger extent and in an independent manner.

WAITOC's ideas and concepts are convincing. In co-operation with Tourism Western Australia, WAITOC points the way to the future and changes the existing tourism industry in Australia. It is therefore recommended to award WAITOC with the TO DO! 2007.

English translation: Christina Kamp

⁷ National Strategy for Indigenous Tourism 2007-2012: "Building a Sustainable Future through Tourism"

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