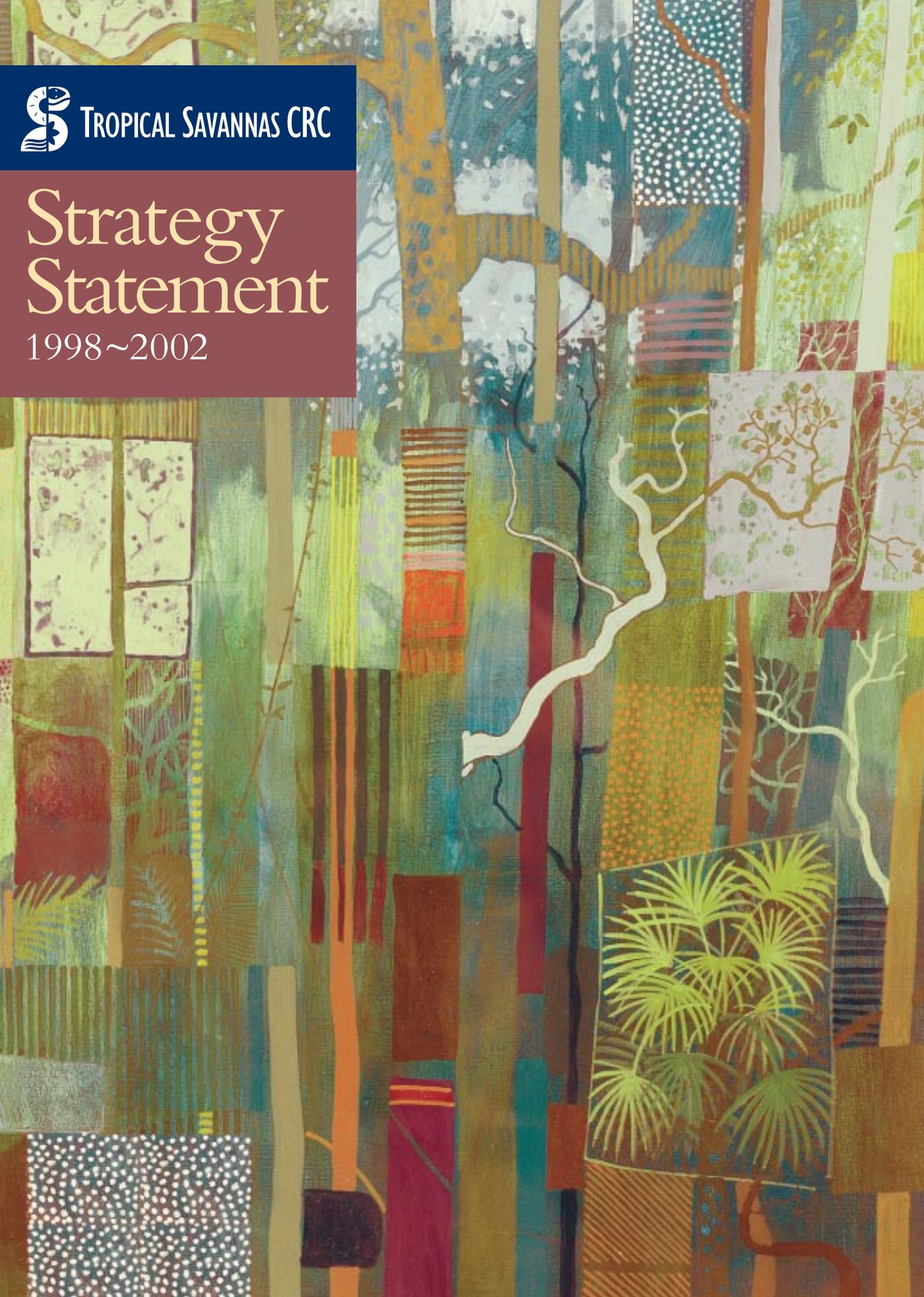




Strategy Statement

1998~2002





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Foreword

This Strategy Statement provides the direction and priorities for the period 1998 to 2002 for the Cooperative Research Centre for Sustainable Development of Tropical Savannas (Tropical Savannas CRC).

Our responsibility is to make a significant contribution to the sustainable development, management, conservation and use of Australia's tropical savannas. This Strategy Statement provides the framework for projects and activities which will achieve this. The development of this Strategy Statement is the culmination of a comprehensive and inclusive process involving the Centre's Project Leaders, Management Committee, Consultative Committee of stakeholder representatives and Board of Management. There is a commonality of view on the elements of this Strategy Statement and a shared determination to achieve its purpose. The Board approved this Statement at its meeting of 13 March 1998.

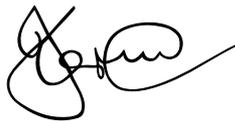
Our Centre is a unique meeting place for the diverse range of stakeholders who manage and use the tropical savannas. They can consider issues of multiple, contrasting and potentially conflicting environmental management and land use in a constructive and cooperative approach based on a common interest in sustainability. This Strategy Statement reinforces that role and builds on the opportunities it provides.

Our focus is on achievement. Excellent research, communication and education will provide the basis for development of knowledge, skills and practices essential to ecologically sound use and conservation of the environment. We will contribute to the processes by which savanna managers and users learn about and adopt sustainable use and conservation practices.

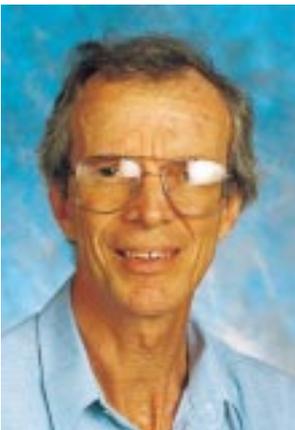
This Strategy Statement reaffirms the commitment of Tropical Savannas CRC to meeting its responsibilities in environmental management and provides a clear focus on the major issues influencing sustainable use and conservation of the tropical savanna environment.



John Childs
Director



John Kerin
Chair, Board of Management



Tropical Savannas CRC

The Tropical Savannas CRC was founded in 1995 as one of the Commonwealth Government's Cooperative Research Centres. There are now 67 CRCs around Australia.

The CRCs are based on the premise that for Australia to benefit, scientific research must become more cooperative and must be made applicable to the public and private sectors. Furthermore CRCs aim to improve Australia's undergraduate and graduate programs by giving students access to researchers' skills and experience.

The Tropical Savannas CRC is focused on the sustainable use and conservation of around a quarter of the Australian continent.

We bring together over 100 researchers from disciplines including ecology, biology, economics, information technology and the social sciences. Our researchers are located across Australia from Darwin to Canberra, and from Kununurra to Townsville. There are 14 partner agencies involved in the Centre's projects.

Our research is made available to a wide range of public and private sector stakeholders.

Our partner agencies

- Agriculture WA
- Australian National University
- Conservation & Land Management WA
- CSIRO Land & Water
- CSIRO Tropical Agriculture
- CSIRO Wildlife & Ecology
- Environment Australia
- James Cook University
- NT Department of Lands Planning & Environment
- NT Department of Mines & Energy
- NT Department of Primary Industry & Fisheries
- NT Power & Water Authority
- Northern Territory University
- Parks & Wildlife Commission of the NT
- Queensland Department of Natural Resources
- Queensland Department of Primary Industries

Our stakeholders

Industries and sectors

- Aboriginal
- Conservation
- Defence
- Pastoral
- Mining
- Tourism

General

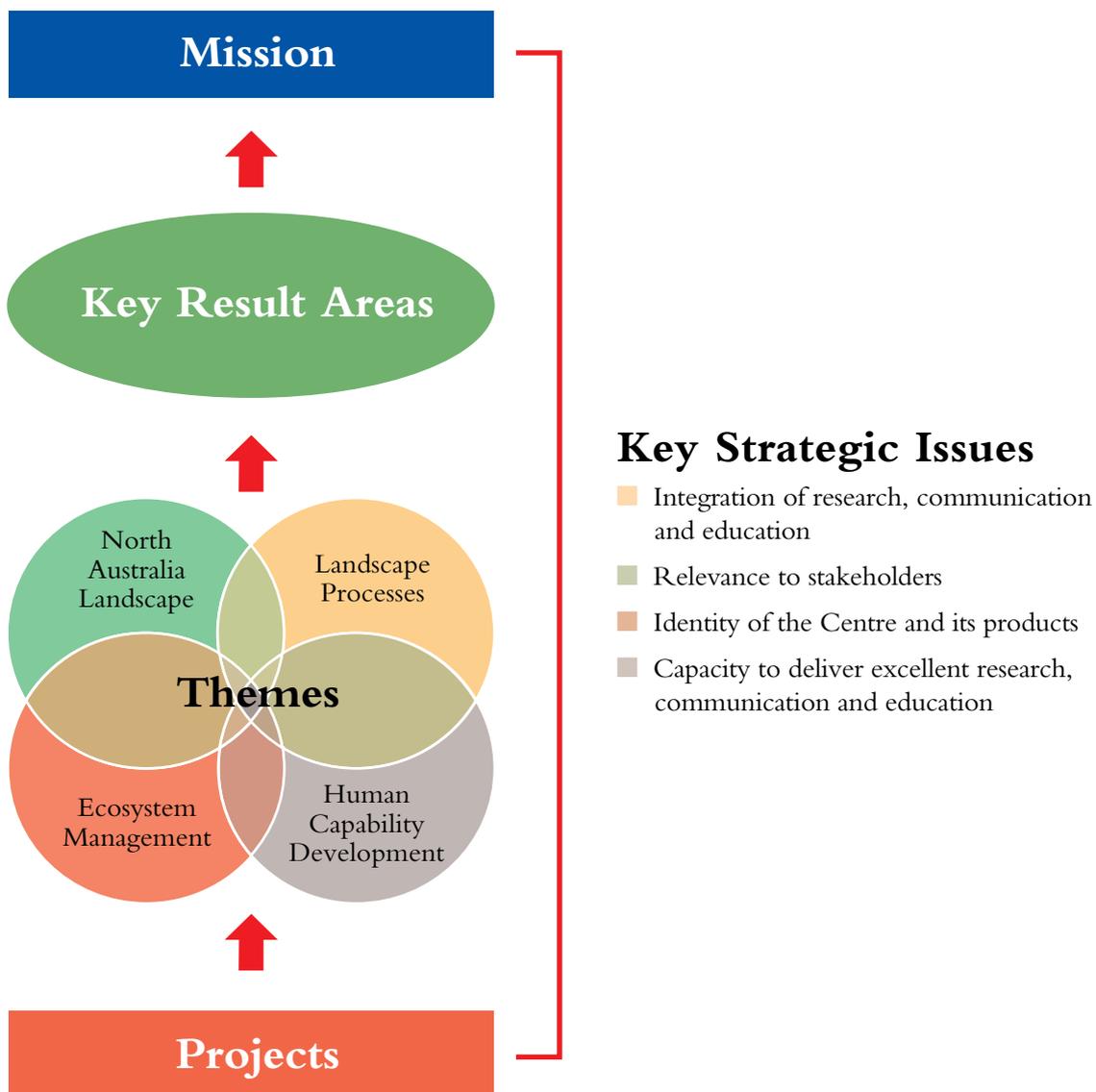
- Landholders and users
- Regional planners and developers
- Government agencies
- Conservation organisations
- Students
- Community groups

Strategic Planning Process

Over the past nine months the Centre has undertaken a comprehensive and inclusive strategic planning process. Consultation with the Board, management, stakeholders and project leaders has ensured that our vision for the future is shared by all involved.

Our planning process has culminated into a mission and key result areas which clearly outline a framework for future projects. Most importantly the process has helped us to focus future projects into four integrated research themes.

Tropical Savannas CRC Strategy



Our Future

Mission

To achieve sustainable use and conservation of Australia's tropical savannas through excellence in collaborative research, communication and education.

Vision

Tropical Savannas CRC will:

- Make a significant, tangible and visible contribution to the sustainable use and conservation of tropical savannas
- Add value through its partnerships and networks
- Interact effectively with stakeholders
- Conduct excellent research, education and communication
- Create strong linkages among its partner agency staff
- Provide a focal point for education and information on tropical savannas
- Provide the basis for cooperative research and education beyond the year 2002

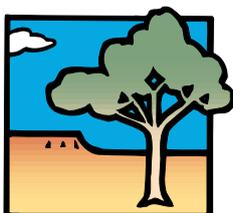
Values

Tropical Savannas CRC values include:

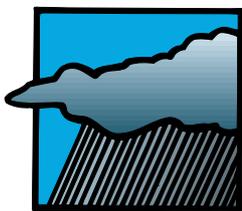
- Scientific integrity and excellence
- Cooperation and collaboration
- Stakeholder focus and sensitivity
- Relevance to stakeholder and ecosystem needs
- Openness to ideas and having a 'big picture' focus
- Courage, honesty and ethical behaviour
- Maintenance of diverse and healthy ecosystems
- Diverse perspectives and knowledge – traditional, experiential and scientific
- The well-being of people, communities and social groups
- A desire to learn among staff, students and stakeholders

Research Themes

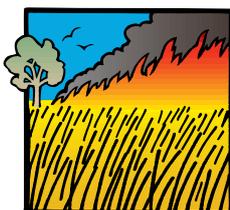
These themes constitute the major elements of sustainable use and conservation of the tropical savannas. They are the focus for our activities, the basis for generating our outputs and products and ensure relevance to our mission. The themes are:



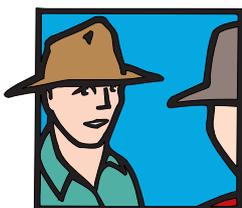
North Australia Landscape – descriptions and definitions of resources, data and health status of the tropical savannas. This theme will focus on: vegetation mapping; fire histories; reports on the biophysical, social, economic and cultural status of the savannas and its residents and users; impacts of policies and management decisions on savanna condition and trends.



Landscape Processes – the natural interaction of resources in the landscape. This theme will focus on: understanding water and nutrient transfer processes; the relationship between landscape features such as run-on and run-off areas; the functional role of soils-plants-animals-climate interactions in the survival and health of the landscape and its diverse components.



Ecosystem Management – interventions in landscape and population processes and resources which create ecological, economic and social impacts. This theme will focus on: the ecological, economic and social consequences of fire, grazing and weed invasion on landscape processes; developing products and tools for the management of resources and processes to maintain or improve diverse and healthy ecosystems; methodologies for monitoring the impacts of interventions.



Human Capability Development – enhancing the knowledge and skills of people who are current and potential stakeholders in the tropical savannas. This theme will focus on: undergraduate and postgraduate courses relevant to sustainable use and conservation of tropical savannas; learning and information products relevant to savanna landholders, users and managers, which will enable them to create sustainable use and conservation outcomes.

Key Result Areas

The Centre's themes are the framework for generating information and knowledge for stakeholders to use in ensuring sustainable use and conservation of the savannas.

This information and knowledge will be focused on key result areas which include:

- Definitions of healthy landscapes at space and time scales useful to landholders, managers and users.
- Methods for assessing landscape health which incorporate landscape processes and resource status at a range of space and time scales.
- Management options for ensuring sustainable use and conservation of tropical savannas at scales relevant to decision makers.
- Information and learning products and access processes for tropical savanna stakeholders.



To add value to existing land management research, the Centre aims to make it more useful by creating a clearing house of information.

Tropical Savannas CRC is collecting sources of land management information: research papers, reports, etc. and storing them on a website with easy-to-understand summary information so that people know what images, data, papers and reports might be of use to them. The website will in turn be linked to more portable forms of communication like newsletters and CDs so that people in remote communities can access useful land management information.



Key Strategic Issues

These issues are the criteria for determining whether projects and activities should be part of the Tropical Savannas CRC program. They define the particular role and functions of this Cooperative Research Centre if it is to be successful.

1. Integration of research, communication and education

The Centre's partner agencies are highly professional and competent in conducting research, communication and/or education.

Understanding and managing complex ecological and socio-economic systems requires a holistic approach involving many disciplines and functions.

The Centre must be the stimulus and catalyst for that holistic approach.

2. Relevance to stakeholders

Tropical savanna stakeholders need to be viable in social and economic terms and sustainably use and conserve natural resources.

The Centre must provide outputs that enable stakeholders to consider outcomes which relate to both viability and sustainability of the resource.

3. Identity of the Centre and its products

The Centre must contribute in a unique way to addressing sustainable use and conservation of tropical savannas.

The Centre has considerable advantages in being non-partisan, multi-sectoral and not constrained by constituency boundaries.

It is recognised as able to facilitate dealing with potentially divisive issues among stakeholders and agencies.

4. Capacity to deliver excellent research, communication and education

The Centre is a cooperative which facilitates activities that individual agencies and sectors can not easily do on their own.

It has limited resources of its own and is dependent on the commitment of its partner agencies.



The Centre is involved in a number of National Heritage Trust or National Reserve System funded fire management studies across the tropical savannas.

Here fire ecologist Dr Jeremy Russell-Smith explains how fire management can be used for weed control and pasture management to pastoralists at the Mt Sanford Open Day. Greater adoption of effective fire management across north Australia would also benefit biodiversity conservation.

Initiatives within Key Strategies

1. Integration of research, communication and education

- Systems modelling will be used as a means of integrating data from a number of projects.
- Ensure project teams understand how their data and outputs will be incorporated in systems modelling.
- All projects will have a communication plan.
- Have participants from more than one partner agency or stakeholder group in a project team.
- All projects will have a plan to contribute to education and learning modules.
- Management studies to have a number of projects collecting data so it can be related.

2. Relevance to stakeholders

- Involve stakeholders in the planning, conduct and analysis of management studies and in the communication activities of these studies.
- Assess Centre products and outputs for their social and economic consequences.
- Have the Consultative Committee provide an assessment of relevance of the Centre's program and outputs.
- Conduct benchmarking studies periodically to determine stakeholder attitudes and practices in relation to savanna use and conservation and to the Centre's information and learning products.



A discussion group at the Centre's fire management workshop in Darwin, March 1998. This group of stakeholders talked about the fire management issues that are important to their region.

3. Identity of the Centre and its products

- Focus on addressing issues requiring a multi-organisational and multi-discipline approach such as landscape process modelling and regional scale landscape monitoring.
- Develop products such as maps and education courses which encompass the whole of the tropical savannas.
- Provide information access which is available to all stakeholders of tropical savannas and is comprehensive and relevant.
- Develop confidence in stakeholders and agencies that the Centre can be a neutral meeting place on issues of multiple resource use, cooperative resource management and integrated landscape policies.
- Provide the Centre's students with unique opportunities for personal and professional development.

4. Capacity to deliver excellent research, communication and education

- Develop a business plan incorporating financial management for planning and resourcing the operations of the Centre.
- Ensure that adequate resourcing is provided for internal consultation, communication and networking.



The Centre has developed links with Indonesia. After its disastrous fires, Indonesia's priorities include tackling air pollution and bush fire reduction strategies. It is keen to work with Australian groups from government and private enterprise that can offer expertise and technology in these areas.

This offers opportunities for northern Australia which has fire management expertise in landscapes similar to those in eastern Indonesia (shown at left). Australia also has expertise in education and training in sustainable management practices through bodies like the Tropical Savannas CRC and its partner agencies. The Centre's director John Childs has been appointed coordinator of an Indonesian/Australian working party to examine this issue.

Measuring Performance

These are the indicators as described in the Centre Agreement.

Cooperative arrangements

- The level of participation of the partner agencies and stakeholders in major decisions concerning the activities of the Centre.
- The extent and frequency of interaction of personnel from partner agencies in the conduct of the activities of the Centre.
- The extent and form of interaction with other researchers, research groups and institutions in Australia and overseas.
- The extent and form of commissioned, collaborative and contract research undertaken with users and owners of tropical savanna land.
- The extent to which activities of the Centre are integrated across State, Territory and sectoral boundaries.

Research and researchers

- The extent to which program objectives and milestones have been achieved.
- The level of publication of Centre outcomes in refereed scientific journals, as papers delivered at conferences or as book chapters.
- The level of success in obtaining research grants and other research funds from external funding bodies.
- The extent to which researchers in Australia and overseas are attracted to visit the Centre.
- The extent of national and international recognition of Centre participants through awards, academic invitations and media interest.



The Centre's Education Project aims to deliver research findings to a broad audience. It features collaboration between ecologists and education researchers. L-R Alan Arnott, Sam Setterfield, Rebecca Benson and Gordon Duff.

Education and training

- The extent and nature of graduate training programs developed by the Centre.
- The number of postgraduate students in the Centre and their ability to find employment after graduation.
- The extent to which non-university staff are involved in the supervision of postgraduate students and the distribution of students among partner agencies.
- The extent to which the extension and vocational education services of the Centre are successful in modifying management practices within tropical savannas.
- The extent and nature of the involvement of stakeholders in the development and conduct of training programs.

Application of research

- The extent to which Australia and overseas industry and stakeholders adopt knowledge and information developed by the Centre.
- The extent nationally and internationally of Centre involvement and influence in natural resources management and policy development.
- The extent of communication and participation with stakeholders and industry.
- The level of economic and other benefits to savanna stakeholders stemming from Centre research.

Management and budget

- The establishment of procedures to monitor and report on research progress and other achievements of the Centre.
- The extent to which the activities of the Centre are modified in line with new knowledge or changed expectations of stakeholders.
- The accuracy of recording and reporting financial transactions, the balance of expenditure against budget and the efficiency of the audit process.



Students and staff of the Tropical Savannas CRC's Master of Tropical Environmental Management get their feet wet. This course is aimed at planners, the environment impact assessment industry, environmental officers in industry, etc. A Graduate Diploma is also available for people like park rangers who want to add to their knowledge of tropical land management.

Pathway of Implementation

Achieving the goals and intent of this re-focused Strategy Statement has required adjustments to our organisational arrangements and structure. A paper *Management Arrangements for Tropical Savannas CRC* describes the reorganised structure, management and roles.

A clear process of project selection, approval and management is the basis for the Centre's activities.

The framework for the Centre's program incorporates two major aspects:

- A focus on the key elements or themes influencing sustainable tropical savanna use and conservation as the means of providing coordinated output and products.
- An adaptive research and education approach to the development of relevant, pragmatic practices and policies through management studies and participative activities with stakeholders.

A business plan underpins the planning and resourcing of the Centre's program.

A communication plan ensures awareness, understanding and accessibility of information and knowledge related to the tropical savannas and the Centre's program.

These implementation actions will ensure the effective achievement of the strategic vision and mission for Tropical Savannas CRC to the year 2002.



Students from the Master of Tropical Environmental Management and ERISS staff on a field trip. It is the students and people who have passed through our short courses and education programs that are one of the keys to a sustainable future for the tropical savannas.



The National CRC Program is administered by the Federal Department of Industry, Science and Tourism (DIST). Its website, where you can download reports and publications, catch up with media releases, is at: www.dist.gov.au/

The CRC Program's website includes information on all 67 of Australia's CRCs, the national program and frequently asked questions. It is located at: www.dist.gov.au/crc/index.html



The Tropical Savannas CRC has its own website at: www.savanna.ntu.edu
There is an internal site for staff and researchers; please contact the TSCRC for information on how to access this site. The TSCRC also produces an internal newsletter for our researchers, available on our website or by email.

To find out more about the information services and products the Tropical Savannas CRC can provide contact:

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*Established
and supported
under the
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