

Achieving broader benefits from Indigenous land use agreements: community development in Central Australia

Danielle Campbell and Janet Eileen Hunt*

Abstract Research on a range of agreements between Indigenous people and extractive industries suggests that equitable benefits from such activity on Indigenous land are rare. In Central Australia, the Central Land Council has piloted a new approach to generating benefits from land use agreements by establishing a community development unit and encouraging Indigenous traditional owners to apply some of the income from land use agreements with mining companies and similar parties to community development activities. This paper discusses the variety of community development projects this unit is undertaking with traditional owners and Aboriginal community members, and the challenges it is facing as it tries to utilize community development principles in its projects. It indicates some of the issues that may need to be considered in government policy which seeks to assist Indigenous landholders gain optimum benefit from land-related payments. In particular, the paper demonstrates that the priorities of Indigenous people to support and promote social and cultural activities, including maintaining micro-communities (outstations) on homelands, may conflict with government views as to how to 'optimize benefits' from land use agreements.

*Address for correspondence: Janet Eileen Hunt, CAEPR, Australian National University, Copland Building 24, ANU, Canberra ACT 0200, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, Australia; email: janet.hunt@anu.edu.au

Background

The extent of Indigenous benefit from mining on Indigenous land has been much debated. [Langton \(2010\)](#) recently highlighted the marginalization of Indigenous people from the mining wealth now being generated in the Pilbara region of Western Australia. Typically, the wealth generated from Indigenous land stands in stark contrast to the poverty and exclusion many of those people experience in their daily lives. Certainly, equitable benefit between Indigenous landowners and others is rare ([Altman, 2009](#), p. 3).

Land use agreements may underpin increased local involvement in decision-making ([Langton et al., 2004](#)). However, more sustained analyses emphasize the variability of benefits generated ([O’Faircheallaigh, 2004, 2006](#); [Altman and Martin, 2009](#)). [O’Faircheallaigh \(2004\)](#) proposes that ‘outcomes’ from agreements might be judged, through either the processes (of agreement making) or the actual provisions, including their implementation and eventual impact. Financial payments are the simplest provision to benchmark, but the more critical issue is how payments are used ([O’Faircheallaigh, 2004](#)).

Agreements arising from land rights or native title rights often include a form of compensatory payment to those whose lands are being utilized or those who have foregone native title rights in favour of particular developments. That is, the payments arise from property rights and are made to the particular holders of those rights. Essentially, the Australian Government wants land use agreements to contribute more to achieving the objectives of the ‘Closing the Gap’ policy, which aims to close the statistical gaps between Indigenous people and other Australians in health, education and employment. But it has no legal basis to apply conditions to such payments ([Macklin, 2008](#)).

This paper explores the complexities inherent in achieving the ‘best’ outcomes for Indigenous people from payments from land use agreements. Noting some of the history and characteristics of community development in Australian Indigenous communities, we outline the recent experience of the Central Land Council (CLC) (see details below) in establishing a community development approach to land use agreement incomes. We outline the challenges faced by both landowners and the CLC in using rents and royalties for community benefits in a variety of settings and issues for consideration by those wishing to assist Indigenous people gain more sustainable benefits from land use agreements.

The CLC and land use agreement payments

The CLC is a Commonwealth statutory authority operating under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act (Northern Territory) 1976 and the Native Title Act

1993. It represents some 24,000 Indigenous people speaking fifteen different languages and living in very small communities across 771,747 km² of the southern part of the Northern Territory (NT). Its Council comprises ninety elected Indigenous members. To date, the CLC has assisted land-owners to reclaim traditional lands under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act (Northern Territory) 1976, and more recently, native title rights. The CLC is now broadening its role, by working to help them use their opportunity to achieve the kind of lives that they want to lead, or in Sen's terms 'to choose the lives they have reason to value' (Sen, 1999).

Among its many statutory responsibilities, the CLC assists Indigenous land title holders to negotiate agreements with mining companies or other bodies, including the distribution of rent or royalty payments to, or for, the benefit of the title holders. In Central Australia, land use agreement payments have generally been to relevant royalty associations which invest half of the payments on behalf of royalty association members and distribute the rest to members. In 2005, the CLC responded to requests from members of one of the largest associations it manages who wanted to see more lasting benefits from royalties and adjusted its approach to include specific community development projects. Since then other land-owning groups have done the same.

Community development in Indigenous Australia

Community development has long been identified as a potentially useful development approach in Indigenous Australian settings, including by Indigenous leaders who see it as consistent with Indigenous aspirations for greater control over their affairs. But such approaches in Aboriginal Australia have generally been inadequately resourced, and published examples of the implementation and outcomes of such approaches are rare (Campbell, Wunungmurra and Nyomba, 2005).

For decades, Australian governments have focused on service delivery rather than community development and few non-Indigenous, non-government community development organizations have operated in this setting. Aboriginal community organizations have struggled to develop their communities. Government departments located in urban centres generally employ a 'top-down' approach to service delivery, and non-Aboriginal bureaucrats articulate the rhetoric of 'community development', while trying to solve Aboriginal people's 'problems' for them. The different meanings practitioners attach to the term 'community development' can mean the roles they adopt 'do not result in community development at all' (Toomey, 2011, p. 182).

Even government initiatives explicitly badged as community development, such as the long-running national Community Development

Employment Program, may not really support community-directed development. Arguably, the original community development emphasis has gradually been replaced by a focus on enterprise development and employment in the mainstream labour market (Martin, 2001, p. 33).

Despite the difficulties in assessing the success of community development approaches in the Indigenous Australian setting, there is currently a renewed focus on its potential value including by the Australian Government (CGRIS, 2011). This is perhaps partly due to the limitations of its most recent policy on Indigenous Affairs in the NT – the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) – which took top-down decision-making to a whole new level (Altman and Hinkson, 2007). International development agencies are also increasingly looking to apply their community development knowledge from other development settings to projects in Indigenous Australia (Hunt, 2010). Many Indigenous organizations have long ascribed to community development principles and processes, but they have rarely been adequately resourced or supported to implement and evaluate comprehensive community development work on an ongoing basis. In the context of ongoing Indigenous disadvantage, and media and government attention on what are overwhelmingly depicted as dysfunctional Aboriginal desert communities (Ingamells, Holcombe and Buultjens, 2011), it is timely to report on the CLC's Community Development Program (CD Program), which is generating valuable insights and development outcomes.

Recognizing that it is a term that is described and understood in many different ways (Eriksson, 2011), the CLC understands community development as being irrevocably connected with empowerment (Toomey, 2011). As described by Kenny (2006, p. 10) community development incorporates the '... processes, tasks, practices and visions for empowering communities to take collective responsibility for their own development...'. Empowerment refers to 'the ways that power relationships are changed in the interests of disadvantaged, oppressed or exploited groups' (Kenny, 2006, p. 163). It draws attention to how power is exercised and the identities and rights of subordinate groups when such power is exerted. Increasing empowerment means increasing such groups' access to, and control over, information and resources or assets. Kenny (2006, p. 163) describes several preconditions for empowerment, including a level of confidence in a group's capacity to manage and, importantly, a belief that they can collectively control their lives.

These definitions point to some challenges for community development in Australian Indigenous communities with their history of dispossession and their on-going experience of being dominated by the settler society. Such pervasive marginalization is likely to diminish motivation, confidence

and a sense of control – in short, to weaken the conditions that promote empowerment. As already noted, there is a limited literature on community development in Australian Indigenous communities, and the severe impact of post-colonial development on Indigenous peoples in Western countries tends to lie outside the development literature (Fletcher, 1995). What literature there is relates largely to the health sector (see, e.g. Campbell *et al.*, 2007; Entwistle, 2009). Nonetheless, several themes and insights are pertinent to our discussion.

Mismatches between notions of autonomy and control

Indigenous people look for high levels of individual autonomy and local control when they participate in community development activities. Such degrees of control may challenge non-government organizations or government officials working with them but operating within highly regulated, bureaucratic frameworks (Campbell *et al.*, 2007).

Heterogeneity and social complexity in small communities

Although often small in absolute terms, Indigenous communities are extremely heterogeneous places, with complex social and power dynamics and internal relationships, including conflicting identities. There are often levels of initial cynicism or mistrust both within communities, and directed at outsiders, especially governments (Eversole, 2003). Articulating common goals is problematic in these circumstances, but involving the right local people from the outset and utilizing skilled external facilitators help overcome these difficulties (Lawson and Close 1994; Tsey *et al.*, 2004).

Achieving participation and ownership

Although research identifies difficulties in achieving real participation and community ownership (Eversole, 2003), there are counter examples where the development process has been Indigenous-led (Campbell and Stojanovski 2001; Siggers, 2005). Research has indicated that starting small, building trust and generating a sense of shared identity and shared values can be a useful way to begin (Milliken *et al.*, 2007). Tsey *et al.* (2005) also emphasize taking small steps; they describe working at the micro level and building out – working with people rather than structures. Others have found that developing trusting relationships requires respect for local values and processes (Voyle and Simmons, 1999; Campbell, Wunungmurra and Nyomba, 2005) and recognizing cultural differences in perceptions of the locus of control, ideas about individual autonomy *vis-a-vis* responsibilities to kin, preferred forms of communication, time frames, language and world views (Hunt, 2005).

Role of outsiders

The gradual development of trusting partnerships between community members and skilled community development practitioners from 'outside' is a constant theme. But [Campbell, Wunungmurra and Nyomba \(2005\)](#) show how difficult it often is for governments to support Indigenous priorities and agendas. A contributing factor is an overly narrow definition of the problems coupled with pressures to achieve specific pre-determined targets ([Hunt, 2010](#)).

Fundamentally unequal partnerships

In Indigenous Australia, to a far greater degree than in developing countries, the role of governments and intergovernmental arrangements in facilitating or frustrating community development efforts is very much to the fore ([Hunt and Smith, 2007](#)). This is because of the Australian colonial and post-colonial experience which continues to see Indigenous people marginalized into a 'fourth world' context. Partnerships between outsiders (especially governments but also mining companies) and Indigenous communities are fundamentally unequal. Commentators suggest that significant investments in capacity development are essential to redress power inequalities, including to develop robust local governance structures ([Hunt and Smith 2007](#); [Hunt et al., 2008](#); [Jarvie, 2008](#)).

Co-opting the language of community development

Critics note that governments also co-opt the language of community development to cover pursuit of their own agendas such as saving money, avoiding responsibilities and prioritizing economic development ([Mowbray, 1994](#); [Hollinsworth, 1996](#); [Martin, 2001](#)). Despite using, and promoting the language of community development, governments have retained centralized control over decision-making – communities are not empowered and outcomes are not sustained ([Mowbray, 1994](#); [Petersen, 1994](#)). [Ife \(2002\)](#) goes further, arguing that the language of community development has been used to perpetuate oppression.

As it began its work, the CLC was well aware of these issues, and recognized that it was venturing into difficult territory, yet this approach had potential to improve Indigenous peoples' lives.

The CLC and community development

Thus in 2005, building on thirty years of operating successfully in Central Australia, the CLC established a dedicated Unit (CDU) to set up a CD Program to support land owners to apply some of their money through community development processes. This included developing an organizational community development framework ([Central Land Council, 2009a](#)),

implementing and evaluating community development processes with interested land-owning groups and promoting the benefits of the approach to other land-owning groups and external stakeholders, including government and mining companies.

The CDU staff work with landowners to create lasting community benefits with varying portions of the monies landowners acquire from land use agreements, including mining payments and land use rents. Internationally established community development principles including empowerment, community participation, capacity building and good governance underpin the CLC approach. Staff facilitate participatory planning with local people to identify their priority issues and develop appropriate solutions, and then these projects, once given final approval by the relevant group, are implemented largely with landowners' own money (Central Land Council, 2009b). As such, the CLC's CD Program is inherently strengths-based; it starts with Aboriginal people's own financial resources; draws on their knowledge and involvement to design appropriate solutions to issues they face; and utilizes and enhances local governance structures for decision-making; and to oversee project implementation. It also draws as far as possible on local resources, infrastructure, facilities and networks of support.

Goal and intended outcomes

The long-term goal of the CLC's CD Program is that Aboriginal people will be strong and resilient and able to live well in both the Aboriginal world and mainstream Australian society.

The CLC's three key CD Program objectives are:

- (1) to maximize opportunities for Aboriginal engagement, ownership and control, particularly in relation to the management of resources that belong to them;
- (2) that rents/royalties are managed to generate community benefits including economic, social, cultural, political and infrastructure development; and
- (3) to build an evidence base for the CLC's community development approach and share lessons learned with government and non-government agencies.

Current CLC community development projects

The CD Program includes five major regional projects:

Project One: Warlpiri Education and Training Trust (WETT). The establishment of an education and training trust is specified in the 2003 mining agreement between Warlpiri landowners (Indigenous people who speak the Warlpiri language) and Newmont Asia Pacific. Landowner payments

are split three ways: individual land rights holders (40 percent); investment (40 percent) and WETT (20 percent). Warlpiri women from a WETT sub-committee, most of whom are trained Warlpiri teachers, together with an elected group of landowners, are the primary decision-makers.

WETT aims to provide training and education projects consistent with Warlpiri aspirations, which supplement core government education programmes. WETT has established a number of subprojects, which support lifelong learning in both Warlpiri and English. These were developed through a collaborative community consultation process facilitated by CDU, with input from an education expert.

Project Two: Uluru-Kata Tjuta Rent Money Project (URM). The Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park is part of extensive lands owned by Anangu (the word for Indigenous people in Western Desert languages). Since 2005, almost half of the rent payments they receive have gone to community development projects; the remainder to individual families.

Anangu traditional owners allocate the 'community development' funds to a range of local and regional initiatives. Annually, they select three communities or family-based 'outstations', and CDU staff support those communities to develop proposals. Once their proposals and budgets are approved by the Anangu traditional owners, the CLC releases rent money to the implementing project partner. Many projects have involved infrastructure, including water supplies, upgrading power supplies, renovating and equipping workshops for art, small stores and sporting facilities. Regional projects include support for at-risk youth, assistance to Anangu dialysis patients, children's mental wellbeing and a cultural history archive.

Project Three: The GMAAAC Project. The Granites Mine Affected Area Aboriginal Corporation (GMAAAC) was established in 1991, but in 2008 the CDU began working with this corporation to strengthen its governance and increase community benefit from its compensation payments. Local organizations submit proposals for funding to GMAAAC. Funds are used for vehicles, provision of community and outstation infrastructure, training and employment and operational or programme costs (e.g. for health, arts, media, aged care or sporting associations).

Project Four: Tanami Dialysis Service. To address widespread kidney disease, significant funds have been allocated to provide a renal dialysis unit in the community of Yuendumu. The unit, opened in August 2010, enables renal patients in the region to visit their homes and families more often and to stay longer. An Indigenous health organization with relevant expertise is managing the service. Additional government funding has also been secured to support and extend this service in the region.

Project Five: Northern Territory Parks Rent Money Project. This new project was initiated by the CLC Council in late 2010. It involves the CD Unit

working with sixteen traditional owner groups to apply the rent paid by the NT Government for the lease of sixteen national parks to CD projects.

Programme monitoring and evaluation

The CLC has developed a programme-monitoring and evaluation strategy for the CD Program. Facilitated by an external consultant, programme monitoring began in late 2009. In what follows, we summarize the findings from 2009 and 2010. Despite some limitations on data collection, the monitoring reports paint a largely encouraging picture of the CDU's work around the three overall programme objectives ([Central Land Council Community Development Unit, 2010](#); [Kelly, 2011](#)).

Aboriginal engagement, ownership and control

The 2010 Monitoring Report found that 'in most projects there was strong and increasing engagement of Aboriginal people and an increasing sense of their control and ownership of the projects.' It also found that 'Aboriginal people's capacities and capabilities were being increased through the community development approach' ([Kelly, 2011](#), p. 3). In the two longest running projects, WETT and URM, there is evidence of improving decision-making, including a capacity to obtain and consider all relevant information prior to making a decision. WETT committee members have undertaken advocacy, including lobbying government to fund an Early Childhood and Learning Centre. Community leaders also feel growing ownership of these projects. There is less evidence of such learning in the GMAAAC committees, yet there are signs that it is increasing as their involvement in community development approaches extends over time. A few quotations from community members in the 2010 evaluation report illustrate the sense of ownership Aboriginal people (Yapa) feel:

WETT money is community doing things for itself. ([Kelly, 2011](#), p. 36)

Money comes through Kurra [the royalty association] really, GMAAAC and WETT. Yapa doing it for yapa, using yapa money. It's alright, good. ([Kelly, 2011](#), p. 15)

Years ago traditional owners from Uluru-Kata Tjuta came up with the idea to start a community development project, and it's a good one. Because it's good to help other communities, small outstations and so on. ([Kelly, 2011](#), p. 27)

Community benefit

According to the 2010 Monitoring Report, 'Aboriginal people were able to identify the benefits of projects and increasingly were focussed on enlarging benefits for the whole community, not just for individual gain' ([Kelly, 2011](#),

p. 3). Interestingly, GMAAAC had significant evidence of material outcomes through its many small, tangible projects, but also the clearest examples of less-positive outcomes typically for projects involving vehicles. The URM project demonstrated more intangible benefits such as effective group leadership and uptake of flow-on development opportunities to increase benefits. The Tanami Dialysis Project has supported Warlpiri patients through reconnecting them with family, country and community. The 2010 evaluation found that ‘people are able to identify benefits in each of the WETT sub-projects and the value that these benefits bring for their lives’ (Kelly, 2011, p. 15). As one community member commented:

WETT services are really benefiting the community, kids and elders and with jobs. It does really help everyone. They are using WETT money in a really good way, like Mt Theo is doing a really good job of what’s been asked of them. (Kelly, 2011, p. 36)

In addition, the evaluator reported that:

Significantly, Warlpiri have compared the services provided with WETT funding to services provided through other organisations. People identified that other services did not operate in the same way and were of less value to them. (Kelly, 2011, p. 24)

A community member talked about the value of dialysis patients being able to come home to visit family:

He had a good visit here. He went everyday shaking hands for family members. They said ‘Wiyarrpa—which is like, poor thing, long time no see, dear thing that you came back—good to see you again’. It makes him feel better. He was really happy. (Kelly, 2011, p. 25)

Ownership is a factor in perceptions of benefit. Where people feel some level of ownership and control of the benefit, they are more likely to sustain engagement and build further development opportunities onto it. This underscores the importance of people understanding the decision-making processes that translate rent or royalty monies into activities with community benefit. Later we take up the question of inputs – the work and resources required to, first, generate these benefits and, second, to sustain them.

Building an evidence base and sharing lessons learned

Information is being collected about projects, which is contributing to building an evidence base, but dissemination and communication of the information has proved more challenging. The CDU is working with communities to produce videos and short reports about projects, and a

communication strategy has been developed to explain the approach to external stakeholders who generally apply a top-down approach.

Contextual factors and lessons learned

Contextual factors significantly influence, for better or worse, community development potentials. We discuss those that have most significantly impacted the CLC's work and outline the lessons learned about what works.

Existing Indigenous capacity and assets

The programme builds on Indigenous strengths and uses Indigenous assets, particularly local knowledge and people's own financial resources. These people understand their local context and what is likely to work. Respecting local knowledge requires accepting that Aboriginal people will value some things in their cultural and social life which are different to Western values. This acceptance is essential in effective cross-cultural collaboration. People feel a greater sense of control because they are using their own funds to develop the projects. This strengths-based approach is extremely important in the Indigenous Australian context where a deficit model informs most policy and programme design.

At the same time, given the funds are their own, community members often just want to 'get on with it', so striking an acceptable balance between participatory planning and getting initiatives happening is a constant challenge. Doing small, tangible projects in the first instance builds landowner understanding of the CDU approach and helps establish the trust that is critical to success. Tangible, timely results encourage further engagement (Tsey *et al.*, 2005).

Facilitating locally appropriate governance structures

The role of CDU in facilitating local governance, which is both culturally appropriate and robust in terms of corporate governance requirements, has been an important factor in the outcomes to date. CDU staff work with strong, capable, local Aboriginal leaders who are committed to improving their communities. Helping to develop the capacity of these local governance structures is a key role of the CDU. This requires time and involves helping people develop the necessary skills to run their organizations and committees. For example, the GMAAAC project involves working with nine community committees in an annual process of setting priorities, developing projects and allocating funding for implementation and reporting on their outcomes.

CLC has a very good relationship. They—Government—don't have workshops and ask our ideas. With CLC they are very strong and make

people feel strong. They respect Aboriginal culture. We really feel comfortable working with them (Community member). (Kelly, 2011, p. 35)

The majority of the CLC constituency speak English as a second language; most have had minimal formal education, and literacy/numeracy levels are low. Therefore, the CDU uses a range of visual and other communication strategies to promote the understanding of the community development work.

Government policy: shifting sands

Although Indigenous landowners in the CLC region are using their own funds to carry out these various activities, governments at all levels remain inextricably involved. Many projects require government collaboration in planning or achieving other legislative and policy requirements. There can be blurred boundaries between augmenting and replacing government services. Furthermore, given the inherent unpredictability of mining-related funds, project sustainability is an important consideration.

Ever-shifting government policies are creating significant challenges for the CD Program. For example, since 2008, the Federal and NT governments have prioritized investing in twenty towns in the NT, only three of which are in the CLC region (Northern Territory Government, 2009). This drastic policy shift has made it increasingly difficult to leverage complementary government funding for projects in small communities and outstations. Moreover, the policy is at odds with the strong trend for landowner royalty associations to direct significant portions of their land use agreement funds to very small communities and family-based outstations. In part, landowners are endorsing culturally important links to country. But, cognizant of the decreasing *government* funding available to such groups, they choose to invest their own money instead. In another example, the NT Government withdrew support for bilingual education in primary schools in 2008 and instead prioritized English language teaching (Simpson, Caffery and McConvell, 2009). WETT has funded a range of Warlpiri language-based initiatives and resources which are no longer consistent with departmental policy. It is now increasingly difficult to get schools to factor them into the curriculum in the way Warlpiri people wish.

By far, the most dramatic, far-reaching policy shifts have however been associated with the Australian Government's 2007 NTER (Howard and Brough, 2007). The policy, backed with legislation, saw the Australian Government abruptly take control over many aspects of Indigenous people's lives and communities. The myriad changes created an environment of confusion and mistrust, further disempowering and marginalizing Indigenous people (Central Land Council, 2008; Commonwealth of Australia, 2008). This has created significant challenges for community development

approaches that run counter to the prevailing environment of increasing external control.

Different conceptions of 'benefit'

Indigenous priorities and government policies are sometimes in conflict. The experience of the CDU is that landowners often prioritize expenditure on cultural and social initiatives. Government policies emphasize economic priorities including enterprise development and employment, English language, numeracy and literacy. The impasse frustrates attempts to generate any sort of development – whether it reflects Indigenous or other priorities.

It is not that priorities (as opposed to policies) are necessarily so different – Indigenous people seek education for their children, and opportunities for adult education and employment; they seek better health; they are generating income from arts and crafts and building economic activities – but, on their own terms. Government policies very often appear to frustrate rather than support development.

Partnerships

Activities such as upgrading outstations, building stores and learning centres, running youth programmes and so on are outside the CLC's statutory functions. Thus, when project proposals are finalized, the CLC seeks partnerships with appropriate agencies to manage project implementation. Partnering agencies need to: be well governed; operate within a community development approach; and have good organizational capacity. Partnerships with such agencies have achieved sustained project benefits. Examples include a partnership with the Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation to manage funds from WETT and GMAAAC for activities in the Tanami region for young people, including diversionary, education, training and employment opportunities. This success is largely due to the strong emphasis on Warlpiri involvement and decision-making in all aspects of the work. Conversely, where there is no agency that meets these criteria to take on project management, the 'choice' for landowners is either suboptimal project management and outcomes, or no project at all.

Community complexity

In Central Australia, key community leaders and influential decision-makers are few in number with a multitude of competing demands. Consultation by a raft of government and non-government agencies operating in the region is seemingly constant. In many places, and particularly in larger communities, there is also a limited sense of 'community' beyond one's close kin and thus little-priority-accorded 'community' projects with their planning meetings and related activities. In more extreme

instances, there is entrenched conflict and community-wide division. The challenge is to work in such conflict-ridden situations in ways which 'do no harm' (Anderson, 1999) and prevent projects exacerbating conflicts. A scarcity of appropriately skilled local conflict mediators can delay progress, but in at least one case, we have witnessed an easing of conflict within a community following the success of a community development project.

Adequate resourcing and realistic time frames

Given the context of pervasive Aboriginal marginalization, successful community development in these communities requires adequate resources and realistic time frames to build community trust and confidence and begin to foster empowerment (Campbell, Wunungmurra and Nyomba, 2005; Burchill *et al.*, 2006). Currently, seven CDU staff facilitate community development planning processes each year with up to fifteen communities involved in more than eighty funded projects, and supporting community use of up to \$5 million generated by land use agreements on Indigenous land. Community development in Central Australia will remain a facilitated and intensively supported process for the foreseeable future.

Conclusions

The CLC's CD Program is demonstrating the potential benefits in applying financial payments from land use agreements to community development purposes. Benefits seem to be increasing over time, and demand for community development from CLC's constituents is growing. The CLC's community development approach creates opportunities for Indigenous people in Central Australia to be meaningfully involved in decision-making and control of their own resources. Whether their decisions are directly addressed to 'Closing the Gap', as governments would prefer, is not the central issue. Some certainly will. Others, as we have shown, reflect different priorities and systems of value.

To achieve outcomes from land use agreements, successful community development programmes will be built on Indigenous strengths and assets and will require considerable support resources. This is doubly so in Australian Indigenous settings with their long histories of neglect and dependency.

It is also important that governments recognize the negative effects of constantly changing policies and institutional arrangements which frustrate Indigenous development efforts. For Indigenous people to gain maximum benefit from community development arising from land use agreements, the surrounding context needs to be considerably more supportive. Indi-

genous communities need, in Kenny's words, to 'identify and address their own issues, needs and problems within their own terms of reference' (Kenny, 2006, p. 10). They must also, as she says, 'develop a belief that they actually can collectively control their lives' (Kenny, 2006, p. 163). Under present conditions, neither of these criteria is easily met in Central Australia. The power shift needed is hard to accomplish in the current policy and administrative environment. If agreements are to generate optimal community development outcomes, governments will find they have to make major changes to the way they engage with Indigenous communities.

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Danielle Campbell is with the Central Land Council, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, Australia. She is the Manager of the Central Land Council Community Development Unit in Alice Springs where she manages the Community Development Program, which supports Aboriginal people to plan, implement and evaluate sustainable development projects using their own money from land use agreements. She has been involved in developing this Program which started in 2005 with two regional projects and now involves six major regional projects across the Central Land Council region and significant Aboriginal resources. She has previously lived in remote Aboriginal communities in Western Australia and Arnhem Land, as well as Sri Lanka, where she worked on development projects. She has a PhD in Aboriginal community development that explores the factors critical to the success of a three year community health project she facilitated in the remote Arnhem Land community of Gapuwiyak, which was funded by the Co-operative Research Centre for Aboriginal and Tropical Health.

Janet Eileen Hunt is with CAEPR, Australian National University, Canberra, Australia. She is a Fellow at the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) at the Australian National University where she is conducting research on the socio-economic benefits of Aboriginal involvement in natural resource management in NSW, and the work of international non-government organisations with Indigenous communities in Australia. She previously managed the Indigenous Community Governance Project, an ARC Linkage Project with Reconciliation Australia, which explored what works, what doesn't and why in Indigenous community governance in Australia. Her background is in education and international development and she has lectured in International and Community Development at RMIT and Deakin Universities. She was Executive Director of the Australian Council for Overseas Aid, the peak body of international development NGOs, from 1995-2000, and prior to that was Executive Director of the International Women's Development Agency. She has served on a number of Ministerial Advisory Committees.

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