

**REGIONAL TOURISM PROGRAM 1998-99**

**INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT CATEGORY**

**Parks & Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory**

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**SECTION ONE: PROJECT TITLE AND DESCRIPTION**

**Project Title:            Training of Aboriginal Tour Guides - Alice Springs Desert Park**

This one year project is designed to provide four Aboriginal Tour Guides with the knowledge, confidence and skills to provide a high quality face-to-face interpretation of the natural environment and cultural history of central Australia. On completion of the project, trainees will have a Certificate II in Tour Guiding and be superbly equipped to obtain employment in the growing nature-based and cultural tourism industry of the Alice Springs region.

Training will be culturally appropriate and will cover all aspects of guiding including presentation techniques, visitor expectations and scientific knowledge of the central Australian environment. Formal training on interpreting the management of the desert environment by Aboriginal people will build on the cultural perspectives which the trainees will bring to the program.

## SECTION TWO: KEY CRITERIA

### **1. *Eligibility of organisation.***

The Parks and Wildlife Commission, of which the Alice Springs Desert Park is part, is an agency of the Northern Territory Government. The Commission is charged with the prime responsibility for the conservation of nature, including the management of parks and reserves, the protection of the Territory's biological diversity and cultural heritage and the promotion of an appreciation of nature, public enjoyment and nature-based tourism.

### **2. *How will the proposal further the objective of the RTP?***

The proposal will further the RTP objective by developing highly skilled guides to ensure the Alice Springs Desert Park is presented to visitors at the high level they have come to expect.

Surveys have shown that visitors from overseas and from the urban centres of Australia rate the "outback" and Aboriginal culture among central Australia's major attractions. The Alice Springs Desert Park is a world-class attraction which seeks to capitalise on this interest by providing visitors with an appreciation of the natural environment of arid Australia and the role of Aboriginal people in this environment through habitat-based displays and face-to face interpretation.

The training of Aboriginal Tour Guides will help to fulfil the Park's goal of providing a world class tourism product in the Alice Springs region. The program will enhance the quality of experience of visitors to the Park by providing additional face-to-face contact with skilled Aboriginal Tour Guides who interpret the natural environment of central Australia and the role of Aboriginal people in that environment.

Many Aboriginal people, as major stakeholders in the central Australian region, are keen to take advantage of the employment opportunities offered by cultural and environmental tourism but there are barriers to their involvement, including the lack of culturally appropriate training and work experience. This program provides Aboriginal people with high quality training and experience in a supportive environment which will enable them to become actively involved in the growing tourism industry.

For the duration of the program, the trainees will be employed by the Alice Springs Desert Park and, on completion of the program, potential future employers will include the Park and the growing number of cultural and environmental tourism ventures in central Australia and elsewhere in regional Australia.

### 3. *The Strategic importance of the Project to Tourism in the Region.*

#### *Regional Development and Tourism Plans*

Cultural and nature-based tourism is a key part of the central Australian economy and has been identified as such in various reports on regional development. Many of these reports identify the importance of Aboriginal people presenting their own cultural information as integral to the success of this tourism industry. The training of Aboriginal people for tour guiding in central Australia therefore directly supports the recommendations of these reports and strategies.

- **Towards Year 2000 (1989).** This plan identified tourism needs for the Northern Territory to the year 2000, including enhancement of environmental and cultural aspects and the need to ensure a quality tourist experience. Aboriginal perspectives for involvement were also identified in this plan.
- **CENTRAL AUSTRALIA – Tourism Planning, Development Marketing – A PATA Task Force Study (1991).** In acknowledging the wealth of natural resources in the Alice Springs region the study made recommendations for the re-establishment of Alice Springs as a major tourism destination. It also identified Australian interest in the region as a holiday destination with particular interest in the “real Australia” – the outback, wildlife and nature. The recommendations contained in this report provided the impetus for the development of the Alice Springs Desert Park with its integrated focus on the environment and the people of central Australia.
- **The Northern Territory Tourism Development Masterplan (1994).** The Masterplan recommended the development of international standard attractions such as that proposed at the Alice Springs Desert Park and identified the need for the provision of more nature guided tours in parks.

The world-class and unique Alice Springs Desert Park conforms to the Masterplan’s aims for the provision of varied visitor attractions, which complement the natural appeal of the Northern Territory, are of an international standard and appropriately target visitor needs. This Masterplan also recognises that man-made attractions such as the Desert Park provide an important adjunct to the visitor experience through the display of Territory flora and fauna and the interpretation of aspects of Aboriginal culture and heritage. It further emphasises that aspects of Aboriginal culture are becoming more and more relevant to the experience of visitors to the Territory and should be presented by Aboriginal people.

*“Worldwide interest in indigenous people means there is a focus on Aboriginal culture, especially from the growing number of overseas visitors who want their nature-based experience in the Territory to be enriched through contact with Aboriginal people and their culture.”*

The Masterplan aims

- To encourage Aboriginal people to become involved with tourism in the Northern Territory by sharing their vibrant culture with interested visitors and
- To provide high quality experiences for people interested in Aboriginal cultural tourism and capitalise on the growing global interest in indigenous cultures.

- **Regional Tourism Development Plan – Central Australia (1994).** This plan identified the need for the development of an international standard Desert Park for the exhibition of the flora and fauna of arid Australia for the enjoyment of visitors and to interpret Aboriginal relationships with the land and their traditional use of plants and animals.
- **National Ecotourism Strategy (1994).** This strategy has as one of its aims the involvement of indigenous Australians in ecotourism. A 1993 study conducted by the Australia Council revealed that a high proportion of international visitors to Australia wish to learn about Aboriginal culture first hand. The Alice Springs Desert Park provides an ideal setting in which Aboriginal guides can impart knowledge of their culture as it relates to the use of arid land resources.
- **Aboriginal Tourism in the Northern Territory (1994).** This discussion paper supports the necessity for appropriate training to allow Aboriginal people to take advantage of involvement in tourism opportunities to satisfy the needs of tourists for accurate information about Aboriginal people and their culture.
- **National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tourism Industry Strategy.** This strategy identifies some of the obstacles related to the employment of Aboriginal people and supports initiatives such as specialised tourism training programs which will enable Aboriginal people to become actively involved in the tourism industry.

### ***The Role of Aboriginal Guides at the Alice Springs Desert Park in Promoting Growth in Regional Tourism***

There is a widespread and growing international interest in indigenous cultures and through its Aboriginal Tour Guides the Alice Springs Desert Park is providing the type of experience sought by national and international visitors to central Australia. The Desert is part of the very desert environment in which the central Australian Aboriginal culture has developed over tens of thousands of years. Visitors learn of the inter-relationship of the desert environment and its people from local Aboriginal Tour Guides with direct cultural links to the land.

The Alice Springs Desert Park further contributes to the development of regional tourism by:

- Providing a major tourism icon for the town of Alice Springs, enabling the development of extended itineraries in the central Australian region,
- Providing a world-class product that showcases the natural environment and people of Australia's deserts
- Providing a focus for the development of special interest visits to central Australia (Aboriginal, wildlife, eco-tourism education)
- Providing significant media attention both nationally and internationally to raise the profile of the central Australian region.
- Attracting more visitors to the region thus benefiting many local businesses notably accommodation houses, restaurants, souvenir shops and tour operators

### ***Social Benefits for Aboriginal people resulting from the Traineeship Program***

Tourism has been recognised by the Federal Government, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody as an industry which can provide significant benefits to Aboriginal people. The training of Aboriginal guides at the Alice Springs Desert Park can contribute to these benefits by

- Raising the self esteem and confidence of the trainees
- Providing trainees with the knowledge that there is a real interest in their culture
- Providing trainees with satisfaction in the knowledge that they are promoting a greater understanding of indigenous culture
- Providing training for employment opportunities within the tourism industry
- Providing successful role models for other Aboriginal people
- Providing opportunities for consultation with traditional owners
- Providing proper interpretation of Aboriginal stories and messages

#### **4. Outline of the Parks and Wildlife Contribution to the Project.**

The Parks and Wildlife Commission, through the Alice Springs Desert Park, will undertake administrative management of the project. At the Desert Park, the trainee Tour Guides will be fully supported by an experienced and professional Guiding team, a majority of whom are local Aboriginal people. This Guiding team will provide much of the on-the-job training and support throughout the project.

The Park will arrange for the trainee Tour Guides to complete a Certificate II in Tour Guiding through Centralian College in Alice Springs. The modules which will be delivered by Centralian College are:

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| TLE061 | Customer Relations                          |
| TLE062 | Basic Commentary and Presentation Technique |
| TKE133 | Tour Commentary & Interpretative Skills     |
| TAE060 | Introduction to Flora                       |
| TAE061 | Introduction to Fauna                       |
| TIE020 | Introduction to Geology                     |
| TAD086 | Introduction to Ecology                     |

The Commission will provide in-house training for the following topics

|   |         |
|---|---------|
| Senior First Aid  | 3 days  |
| Cultural Awareness  | 1 day   |
| Arerrnte Language Course  | 1 week  |
| Interpretation Techniques Course                                  | 3 days  |
| Familiarization with Parks & Wildlife Commission                  | 1 week  |
| Familiarization with Regional Parks and Scientific Services Units | 9 weeks |
| Plant Identification  | 1 week  |
| Animal Identification   | 1 week  |
| Introduction to Traditional Custodians                            | 1 week  |
| Introduction to Aboriginal Organisations                          | 1 week  |
| Introduction to Local Aboriginal Tour Operators                   | 1 week  |
| Tour Guiding at the Territory Wildlife Park                       | 1 week  |
| Uluru-Kata Tjuta Tour Operators Course                            | 1 week  |
| 4 Wheel Drive course  | 1 week  |

The Tour Guide Trainees will also have the use of extensive library and research facilities, computer and internet access and training and other office amenities.

## 5. *Status of Planning for the Project*

The Alice Springs Desert Park was developed following considerable research into the tourism needs of the central Australian region. It was recognised in this planning that the presentation of Aboriginal cultural information would be most effective if it was done by local Aboriginal people. Consequently, the employment of Aboriginal Tour Guides is an integral part of the Business Plan of the Alice Springs Desert Park.

There is, however, a limited number of Aboriginal people in central Australia who are adequately trained and experienced for the role of professional Tour Guides. The Alice Springs Desert Park Business Plan therefore also identifies the need for the Park to train Aboriginal people as Tour Guides. This will enable the Park to:

- fully meet visitor demands for Aboriginal interpretation presented by Aboriginal people,
- train sufficient numbers of suitably skilled and experienced people to fill permanent vacancies as they arise,
- fill temporary vacancies which arise when Aboriginal staff take leave for community obligations and
- support the local cultural tourism industry.

In 1996, the Alice Springs Desert Park conducted a traineeship program for Aboriginal Tour Guides involving formal and on-the-job training. This program was very successful with all four trainees completing the program and two subsequently appointed to full-time permanent positions as Tour Guides at the Park. The training program proposed for this project is modelled on this prior experience. The project will therefore operate in an environment where the needs, actions and outcomes are already well defined, where support staff and trainers are experienced in delivering such a program and where the infrastructural requirements have already been demonstrated to be in place and effective.

The necessary modules and training requirements to complete a Certificate II in Tour Guiding have been determined in consultation with Centralian College. Additional formal and informal training requirements have also been determined and their delivery planned. Budgetary provision has been made for the Park's contribution to the cost of the project.

## 6. *Support for the Project*

The project is well supported by the local community. Attached are letters of support from

- Alice Springs Town Council
- Northern Territory Tourist Commission
- Central Australian Tourism Industry Association
- Arrernte Council

The proposal for an Aboriginal Traineeship Program at the Alice Springs Desert Park was endorsed by the **Parks & Wildlife Commission Management Committee** in March 1998. This proposal included provision for four trainees.

A Major Employment Strategy is being developed by the **Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment** to assist with the placement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people in the Northern Territory Public Service. The proposed Alice Springs Desert Park traineeships would provide the necessary skills for the trainees to be placed in suitable vacancies under this program.

**Centralian College** was very supportive in assisting with implementation of the pilot traineeship program of 1996. Staff have indicated willingness to tailor courses to suit the specific needs of the Alice Springs Desert Park trainees while maintaining the ability to properly accredit trainees on completion of their courses.

## SECTION THREE: PROJECT OVERVIEW

### 1. *Provide a Broad Overview of your project*

This project has been developed to achieve four major goals:

- (1) To provide training and experience which will assist Aboriginal people to enter the tourism industry as Tour Guides
- (2) To further the ability of the Alice Springs Desert Park to provide a tourism product which leads the world in environmental and cultural interpretation.
- (3) To enhance the appeal of the central Australian region as a tourist destination by meeting visitor demand for Aboriginal cultural information presented by Aboriginal people in an appropriate manner.
- (4) To support the local regional tourism economy by increasing the length of visitor stay in the central Australian region.

The success of the project will be measured against the following criteria:

- (1) Successful completion of the formal and informal training by the trainees.
- (2) Visitor feedback of the quality of interpretation experience provided by the trainee.
- (3) Successful employment of the trainee in the local tourism industry within 6 months of completion of the program.
- (4) Visitor statistics for the central Australian region.

The project will be managed by the Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory through the Guiding Unit of Alice Springs Desert Park. The Commission has a considerable track record for the successful employment of Aboriginal trainees and the Guiding Unit has previously run a successful program for trainee Aboriginal Tour Guides on which this project is modelled.

## SECTION FOUR: PROJECT FUNDING

### 1. Total Project Budget

#### FUNDING SOUGHT FROM REGIONAL TOURISM PROGRAM

|  |              |        |  |                 |
|--|--------------|--------|--|-----------------|
| Training Wage  | 4 @ \$18,000 | 72,000 |  |                 |
| Vehicle Mileage (59c/km) x 6000 km   |              | 3,540  |  |                 |
| Travel Allowance @ \$65.70 per day (4 trainees x 5 weeks – visits to NT Parks) |              | 6,570  |  | 86,110          |
| Uniforms   |              | 4,000  |  |                 |
| <b>TOTAL RTP</b>   |              |        |  | <b>\$86,110</b> |

#### CONTRIBUTION BY PARKS & WILDLIFE

|   |                    |              |        |                 |
|---|--------------------|--------------|--------|-----------------|
| <b>STAFF INVOLVEMENT</b>  |                    |              |        |                 |
| P3 Curator Zoology  | \$60,523 (0.1)     | 6,052        |        |                 |
| P2 Asst. Curator Zoology  | \$48,738 (0.1)     | 4,873        |        |                 |
| T2 Senior Guide   | \$32,730 (0.2)     | 3,273        |        |                 |
| T2 Park Rangers   | \$34,221 (0.3)     | 10,266       |        |                 |
| T1 Guides   | \$26,000 (4 x 0.2) | 20,800       |        |                 |
| Scientific Services Professional and Technical Staff  |                    | 5,000        |        |                 |
| Executive/Secretariat staff   |                    | <u>1,000</u> |        |                 |
| <i>(Includes day to day requirements for administration and supervision of trainees and in-house training courses: Tour Guiding at the Territory Wildlife Park, Introduction to Parks &amp; Wildlife Commission, Familiarization with Regional Parks &amp; Scientific Services)</i> |                    | 51,264       |        |                 |
| + Salary On-costs (25%)   |                    | 12,816       | 64,080 |                 |
| <b>OPERATIONAL</b>  |                    |              |        |                 |
| Vehicle Lease x 6 weeks   |                    | 1,000        |        |                 |
| Library and research facilities   |                    | 500          |        |                 |
| Computer and internet access  |                    | 1,000        |        |                 |
| Administration costs  |                    | 3,500        | 6,000  |                 |
| <b>Total In-Kind</b>  |                    |              |        | <b>\$70,080</b> |
| <b>Formal Training Costs to be met by Parks &amp; Wildlife</b>  |                    |              |        |                 |
| External Training:  |                    |              |        |                 |
| Certificate II in Tour Guiding (Centralian College):  | 4 @ \$170          | 680          |        |                 |
| - Customer Relations  |                    |              |        |                 |
| - Basic Commentary and Presentation Technique   |                    |              |        |                 |
| - Tour Commentary & Interpretative Skills   |                    |              |        |                 |
| - Introduction to Flora   |                    |              |        |                 |
| - Introduction to Fauna   |                    |              |        |                 |
| - Introduction to Geology   |                    |              |        |                 |
| Senior First Aid  | 4 @ \$100          | 400          |        |                 |
| Cultural Awareness  | 4 @ \$200          | 800          |        |                 |
| Arrernte Language Course  | 4 @ \$300          | 1,200        |        |                 |
| Interpretation Techniques Course  | 4 @ \$600          | 2,400        |        |                 |
| Uluru-Kata Tjuta Tour Operators Course  | 4 @ \$1500         | 6,000        |        |                 |
| 4 Wheel Drive course  | 4 @ \$300          | 1,200        | 12,680 |                 |
| Consultancy:  |                    |              |        |                 |
| Aboriginal facilitator/linguist   | 10 days @ \$300    | 3,000        |        |                 |
| - Introduction to Aboriginal Organisations  |                    |              |        |                 |
| - Introduction to Local Aboriginal Tour Operators   |                    |              |        |                 |
| - Introduction to Traditional Custodians (custodian fees)   |                    | 3,000        | 6,000  |                 |
| <b>Total of Formal Training Costs</b>   |                    |              |        | <b>\$18,680</b> |
| <b>TOTAL PARKS &amp; WILDLIFE CONTRIBUTION</b>  |                    |              |        | <b>\$88,760</b> |

**TOTAL COST OF PROJECT**

**\$174,870**

**Regional Tourism Program 1998-99  
Aboriginal Tour Guide Proposal – Alice Springs Desert Park**

**SUMMARY OF ATTACHMENTS**

**1. Alice Springs Desert Park Information**

- Location map
- Fact Sheet
- Brochure

**2. Extracts from Strategic Tourism Plans**

- Towards Year 2000
- Central Australia - Tourism Planning, Development and Marketing
- Northern Territory Tourism Development Masterplan
- Regional Tourism Development Plan – Central Australia
- National Ecotourism Strategy
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tourism Industry Strategy
- Aboriginal Tourism in the Northern Territory

**3. Letters of Support for the Project**

- Alice Springs Town Council
- Northern Territory Tourist Commission
- Central Australian Tourism Industry Association
- Arrernte Council