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**DISCUSSION PAPER**

**WHO'S PLANNING, WHOSE PLANS?  
THE DEET-ATSIC ABORIGINAL  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
PLANNING PILOT SCHEME**

**Jackie Wolfe**

*when will she say something remotely  
analytical?*

No. 15

May 1993

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# **NORTH AUSTRALIA RESEARCH UNIT**

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In 1973 the Australian National University created the North Australia Research Unit for two purposes: to carry out a research program of its own and to provide a base and logistic support for research workers, from ANU and from other Australian or overseas research institutions. The Unit is part of the Research School of Pacific Studies.

The Unit's activities range well beyond its base in Darwin in the Northern Territory to research localities in central Australia and the north and west of Queensland and north Western Australia.

The Unit's academic work is interdisciplinary and principally in the social sciences. An overall aim is to initiate research on problems of development in the north, little studied by other institutions. At present, emphasis is being given to four main research areas:

- Environmental management and planning
- Governance and policymaking structures
- Economic development and social equity
- Quality of community life

The future prospects and present needs of the Aboriginal and Islander communities remain a major theme in our work as are ecological and economic sustainability.

NARU Discussion Papers are intended to invite comment and to stimulate debate. Interested parties and others are encouraged to respond to any paper in whatever way is appropriate. This could be by offering comments, entering into debate or correspondence with the author, or by responding in public fora or even by offering a manuscript for another discussion paper.

Each paper will be short (see guidelines below). They will often deal with controversial topics. While the Unit takes pride in, and legal responsibility for, its publications, these papers reflect views of authors and not those of the Australian National University or the North Australia Research Unit.

The Unit is willing to publish discussion papers written by authors who are not members of ANU or NARU. However, NARU retains the right to use referees or to reject manuscripts. Non-NARU contributors may be expected to make some financial contribution towards publication.

We hope that this series will open up discussion about some issues of northern development and the inevitable conflicts that arise from change, culture contacts and diversity of values.

Information about the Unit's activities and publications can be obtained from:

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#### **Guidelines for contributors:**

Papers should not exceed eleven thousand words. The Harvard system of referencing is used. Authors are asked to follow the styling used in this paper. Originals of illustrative material should be supplied. Authors are requested to submit their papers on floppy disk and as hard copy. Papers will be accepted in MS Word in IBM or Mac format and in WordPerfect. Papers may be refereed before publication. An abstract of about three hundred words and a short resumé about the author(s) should also be supplied with the manuscript.

## Acknowledgments

There are so many people to thank that it is hard to know where to begin, so I will first offer my apologies to all those who are not mentioned by name, but who have assisted in the development of these papers by giving so generously of their materials, their time, and most importantly, of their ideas and thoughts. Across northern Australia people in many Aboriginal communities and organisations have offered their ideas, their comments and their guidance over the years that I have been interested in community and area planning and development issues. The staff of the ATSIC regional offices generously assisted with their files, their recollections and observations, as did those from DEET regional offices. In particular the staff of the Cairns ATSIC Regional Office, and members of the Peninsula, and Cairns and Region, Regional Councils have given unstintingly of their experience and their ideas. Bill Sheldon, community and regional planner, and Geoff Richardson, regional manager at Cairns, have provided assistance, new insights, critiques and support. Staff of the ATSIC central office Regional Support Branch, which sponsored the initial report, have been very helpful with travel and other arrangements. Special thanks to branch head Shane Hoffman, and to members of the Community and Regional Planning Section, most particularly Herb Grant and Russ Taylor, for guidance while I was writing up the reports and for critique of the report and papers. DEET officer Bill Daniels also provided valuable criticism. Others with whom I have had lengthy discussions which have helped shape my ideas and to whom I owe so much include Cath Elderton and others associated with the Kimberley Land Council and Warringari Resource Centre, Barbara Flick and staff of Mamabulanjin Community Development Unit in Broome, members of the West Kimberley CDUs in Derby, Geoff Barker who also works with communities in the Kimberley, Brian Burkett and David Riley of the Northern Territory Open College Community Development Planning Program in Alice Springs, staff of the South Australia TAFE system Community Management Training Unit, and Alan Dale of Griffith University in Brisbane. I hope I have done justice to your experience, your contributions, your ideas, and your ideals. Here at NARU all the

staff give so generously of their time to visiting researchers like myself. To Mardy Aye, Nicki Hanssen, Jann King, Colleen Pyne, Sally Roberts, Janet Sincock, Ann Webb and Meriel Weir — my gratitude for your help and your friendship. Special thanks to Dr Nugget Coombs whose life, mind and ideas are an inspiration. To NARU Director David Lea, my appreciation for his support and hours of discussion and critical reading. I know there are more, but I am running out of space. It shows that these papers belong to a lot of people, though I take full responsibility for what is in this version.

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### *Disclaimer*

The views expressed by the author are not necessarily the views of the Commission.

### **Notes on contributor**

Jackie Wolfe is a geographer and Associate Professor in the University School of Rural Planning and Development at the University of Guelph in Ontario, Canada (1967–present). She has worked in community planning and development with Indian and Inuit groups in Canada. Since 1986 she has spent several months each year as a Visiting Fellow at NARU, researching and writing on Aboriginal community government, conditions in town-camps, and, for the last three years, on Aboriginal community and regional development planning.

## **ABSTRACT**

DEET (Department of Employment, Education and Training) and ATSIC (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission) launched a joint Community Development Planning Pilot Scheme at the beginning of 1991. Six sets of agencies and nine Aboriginal communities were initially part of the Scheme. Participants were expected to follow, within a six-month time frame, a four phase model for community development planning developed by consultants. The Pilot Scheme represents a public commitment by the agencies to address the demand for effective community level planning within Aboriginal communities expressed with increasing frequency in a number of national reports on Aboriginal conditions. 'Trialling' of the model would be followed by its implementation, perhaps with minor modifications, in a country-wide Aboriginal Community Development Planning Program.

Although DEET and ATSIC monitored the pilots, no formal evaluation of the strengths or shortcomings of the model, the time frame or the conduct and outcomes of the Scheme was carried out. This paper examines the background to establishment of the Community Planning Pilot Scheme, and develops a simple framework for assessing aspects of the Pilot Scheme. It then describes and comments on the strengths and limitations of the four northern Australia pilots and provides an overview of the NSW and South Australia pilots.

The conduct and outcomes of the Pilot Scheme highlight issues which need to be addressed if a program of Aboriginal community planning is to achieve any success. Issues include appropriate time frames and processes for planning facilitation; appropriate roles and training for staff and consultants assisting communities with planning; the need for long-term planning assistance that incorporates training of community leaders and members; and the need to recognise the differences between planning services to geographical and residential settlements and planning by Aboriginal groups to achieve their goals for the future. ATSIC



Community and Regional Planning Section is working to address many of these issues at both the central office and regional levels.

The paper argues that competing agendas are embodied in the Pilot Scheme, in which a conventional agency-driven planning model co-exists with rhetoric of community empowerment, ownership and control. The agendas reflect different conceptions of the future for Aborigines and how to achieve them, and present challenges to Aboriginal communities trying to plan for themselves, and to government agencies mandated both to deliver programs to Aboriginal communities and organisations and to support Aboriginal empowerment.

# **WHO'S PLANNING, WHOSE PLANS? THE DEET-ATSIC ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLANNING PILOT SCHEME**

**Jackie Wolfe**

## **Expectations for the Community Development Planning Pilot Scheme**

DEET (Department of Employment, Education and Training) and ATSIC (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission) launched a joint Community Development Planning Pilot Scheme at the beginning of 1991. The Pilot Scheme represents a public commitment by the agencies to address the demand for effective community level planning within Aboriginal communities expressed with increasing frequency in a number of national reports on Aboriginal conditions.

Six sets of agencies and as many as nine Aboriginal communities were initially part of the scheme. Participants were expected to follow a four phase model for community development planning, developed by consultants. DEET and ATSIC, Canberra, set six months as the time frame to implement the four phase model and produce community plans. Regional staff likely to be involved with the pilot communities were introduced to the concept of community development planning at a National Workshop in Canberra in April 1991. A 'recall' workshop was held in June 1991. DEET and ATSIC central office staff visited the regions and participating communities between September and November 1991 and reported on progress, or lack of it.

DEET and ATSIC documents and interviews with key players in Canberra indicate that 'trailing' of the model would be followed by its

implementation, perhaps with minor modifications, in a country-wide program. ATSIC elected Commissioners, at their August 1991 meeting, approved the creation of a new Community and Regional Planning Program, and approved the allocation of \$7 million in 1991/92 to the Community and Regional Planning component. ATSIC launched its Community Development Planning Program (also known as Community Development and Planning or Community Planning) at the beginning of 1992, and most regional councils were developing plans by mid-year 1992.

Usually a pilot scheme adapts and fine tunes an accepted approach or model to changing circumstances, or carefully tests new processes or models in order to identify what works and what must be re-thought. Despite the importance placed by ATSIC and DEET on the pilot scheme, no formal evaluation of the strengths or shortcomings of the model, the time frame, or conduct and outcomes of the pilots, were planned and, by mid 1992, none had been conducted. Discussion papers were prepared and circulated by a staff member of ATSIC in Cairns (Sheldon 1991) and by the North Australia Development Unit (NADU) of the Department of Social Security, Darwin (Elderton 1991) at the time the pilots were launched, but the concerns raised about aspects of the pilot scheme were not addressed by DEET or ATSIC. Consequently an opportunity afforded ATSIC central office, state or regional staff, paid planning consultants, or Aboriginal communities and organisations engaged in or interested in being involved in planning, to learn from the experience of the pilot projects was missed.

In mid 1992 ATSIC Canberra Regional Support Branch, by then responsible for both the Community and Regional Planning programs, began a review of those programs. Staff from the Community and Regional Planning Section of the Regional Support Branch reviewed the Lightning Ridge and Point Pearce pilots. I was engaged to review the approaches being taken to community planning and regional planning in selected regions and regional offices across northern Australia. Review of the four pilots in northern Australia, Yarrabah, Mornington Island,

Ngukurr and Kununurra area and assessment of their current status were included as one component of the community planning review (Wolfe 1992). Brief in-house reports on the NSW and South Australia pilots were compiled by the Community and Regional Planning Unit of the Regional Support Branch of ATSIC, Canberra.

Because of widespread agreement among the regional agencies involved in the northern Australia planning pilots that the pilots had not gone well, it was deemed inappropriate, at a time when a number of planning initiatives were getting underway, to further confuse community members by requiring their participation in yet another externally driven evaluation. My review drew most heavily on documents and interviews with agency staff and community leaders. Lack of broad community input is, therefore, an inbuilt limitation of both the consultancy review and this paper.

The paper uses the reviews of the pilots to draw out some lessons. It examines the background to the establishment of the community planning pilot scheme, early critiques, and the initial involvement of agency staff, and develops from this a simple framework for assessing the pilot scheme. It then looks at what the pilots, and the monitoring carried out by the central offices of DEET and ATSIC, contribute to our understanding of 'community' in community development planning, the skills and supports required, and the usefulness of the model.

Attention is drawn to some of the issues highlighted by the pilot trials, which need to be addressed if a program of Aboriginal community planning is to achieve its potential for contributing to a better future for Aboriginal people. Issues include appropriate time frames and processes for planning facilitation; appropriate roles and training for staff and consultants assisting communities with planning; the need for long-term planning assistance that incorporates training of community leaders and members; and the need to recognise the differences between planning services to geographical and residential settlements and planning by Aboriginal groups to achieve their goals for the future.

The paper argues that competing agendas are embodied in the Planning Pilot Scheme, in which a prescribed, agency driven planning model co-exists with a rhetoric of community empowerment, ownership and control. The agendas reflect different conceptions of the future for Aborigines and how to achieve them, and present a challenge to Aboriginal communities trying to plan for themselves, and a challenge to government agencies mandated both to deliver programs for Aboriginal people, organisations and communities and to support Aboriginal empowerment. All too frequently these mandates work against each other (for an elaboration of the idea of two paradigms, the 'old' and the 'new' in Aboriginal-government relations, see Fleras & Elliott 1992).

## **Community planning needs and purposes: Commonwealth recognition**

The concern for more effective planning at the local community level has been expressed in several recent and influential government reports. They illustrate the evolution and the ambiguities in official thinking about the purpose and process of planning for, in, and by Aboriginal communities.

### ***Miller Report***

The 1985 Miller Report on Aboriginal employment and training programs criticised

the total lack of planning occurring not just between the relevant agencies and departments but with the communities themselves regarding short and longer term development (Miller 1985, 360).

and advocated a shift to local level planning (Miller 1985, 8). The Report was equally critical of existing consultation with Aboriginal communities, saying that it was frequently interpreted as seeking 'I want' statements, and resulted in 'wish lists'. No effort was made to explain policy or program purposes. Discussion was inhibited by informing people of rigidly interpreted guidelines (Miller 1985, 8).

The Report proposed ways to deal with the problem, emphasising that:

co-ordination has to occur at several levels. However, its major aspect is to ensure that at the local level, programs are operating in direct response to Aboriginal needs, and in harmony with Aboriginal plans to meet those needs ... it essentially involves Aboriginal communities and organisations in a planning process to which functional agencies can respond (Miller 1985, 416).

The Miller Report advocated a planning process in which agencies would be required to jointly negotiate with community councils on the basis of policy aims to improve councils' capacity to manage the community; enhance their capacity to provide the services usually provided by government agencies; and increase community economic independence.

The negotiations should, according to Miller, result in 'plans being made to achieve the aims, and goals being set against which performance can be measured'. Recommendation 155 took the planning process a step further by advocating that 'planning for development beyond the current welfare service delivery and municipal type functions' be included as a priority (Miller 1985, 417).

The concepts of strategic planning by communities, and co-ordination and responsiveness on the part of government agencies, were incorporated into the Aboriginal Employment Development Policy (AEDP) which implemented many recommendations of the Miller Report. Specifically, AEDP policy documents encouraged Aboriginal communities to set their own goals and to plan their own strategies to achieve their goals, and exhorted government agencies to assist Aboriginal people to implement their strategies, within known resource limitations (Department of Aboriginal Affairs, 1987, 1-2). Inevitably, AEDP was most concerned with economic development, employment and related education and training.

## **'A Chance for the Future' and 'Our Future Our Selves'**

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs Reports, *A Chance for the Future* (Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs 1989), and *Our Future Our Selves* (Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs 1990), reiterated the need for improved and effective strategic planning of delivery of Aboriginal services and programs, and added further dimensions to the concept of Aboriginal community planning. The 1989 report put forward an expanded interpretation of the planning needs of Aboriginal communities, one which included cultural goals, by arguing that:

Community planning involves individual communities articulating their particular expectations and objectives and incorporating them as a strategy for future development. As such community planning involves much more than mapping existing and proposed physical infrastructure within communities. It involves assessing the human resources within the community and planning their development within the context of the community's economic, social, and cultural goals (Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs 1989, 4).

In discussing both community planning and community development, this report noted that the way in which the concept of development has been used in Aboriginal affairs has implied that Aboriginal people should change their values and their culture in order to progress. The Standing Committee rejected this interpretation of development, stating, rather, that the concept of community development must be linked to self-determination. According to the Committee:

Community development is about enabling Aboriginal people to have more control over their community's affairs and their daily lives. It is part of a process by which communities can make their own decisions about their long term physical, social and cultural objectives (Standing Committee 1989, 4-5).

*Our Future Our Selves* expanded on the nature and purpose of community plans, explaining that they must be much more than just a town or infrastructure plan. It argued that they should embrace the future development strategies of people in a broad sense. The report listed eighteen areas which community plans could address, including land tenure, sacred site protection, means of facilitating ceremonies, recreation, health and education needs, policing, community management

training, structure of community organisations, as well as the more conventional physical infrastructure, employment and enterprise development. The report acknowledged that the list 'is not exhaustive and priorities will vary according to local needs' (Standing Committee 1990, 83). It is noteworthy that the list includes matters which are culture specific, and matters which are highly politicised, both between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, and within Aboriginal society (for an expanded discussion on *Our Future Our Selves* focussing on self-management and self-determination, consultation and negotiation, and agency co-ordination, see Rowse 1992, 91-98).

### ***1990 National Aboriginal Employment Development Policy Workshop***

The *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Act 1989*, Part 3, Division 3, 94 (1) (a) requires that ATSIC elected regional councils prepare regional plans. The Chairman of the AEDP Task Force commented that it is reasonable to presume that regional council plans would best be based on community plans, wherever possible (in Chapman 1990, 43). The Chairman expressed concern that there is presently little support for, or training provided for, the development of such plans in any comprehensive or structured way. The National Workshop on Aboriginal Employment Development Policy, held in Alice Springs in October 1990, identified, as one of four major summary points, the targeting for training of those involved in regional and community planning.

At the National Workshop, an AOT (Aboriginal Organisations Training) Group workshopped community development planning, dealing with such issues as what is community development planning, what are its advantages and disadvantages, what is the community planning unit, how can the process be facilitated, and what personnel and money resources are necessary? Aspects of the Laynhapuy Homelands Association (in Arnhem Land) initiative in community planning were presented. The



Association emphasised that planning is long-term work, and depends on the community and its commitment (Chapman 1990, 50-51).

The AOT Group presented detailed findings on community development planning to a plenary session (Chapman 1990, 434-49). A twelve point definition of community planning stressed that the process be initiated by the community, take place in a community, be controlled by a community, and involve all sections of the community. Again, concerns about service delivery co-ordination between government agencies and levels of government were raised. The Group also argued the need for resources for planning, for planning training, and for the implementation of community plans.

The community planning group report to the plenary opened up debate on the need to clarify what is meant by 'community'. The Group report suggested that there may be a problem in using a geographic definition for 'community', and proposed that definition of community is itself part of the planning activity, stating that 'there is no unit too small or too big to be a community for planning purposes (Chapman 1990, 44).

## **Initiation of the Community Planning Pilot Scheme**

The response to demands for more coordinated and strategic community planning, first by the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET), then through a partnership between DEET and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Commission (ATSIC), and subsequently by ATSIC alone, was to develop and implement the Community Development Planning Pilot Scheme and, soon after, for ATSIC to establish the Community Development and Planning Program.

### ***Pilot projects: a joint DEET and ATSIC initiative***

The Community Development Planning Pilot Project was initiated by the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training

(DEET), and vigorously promoted in late 1990 and early 1991. The Secretary of DEET saw community development planning as a way to focus TAP (Training for Aborigines) funds and apply them more effectively, and proposed that a census of existing community development plans and development of a community development planning policy be undertaken. DEET committed funds and personnel to the project and sought cooperation from ATSIC.

DEET proposed a joint pilot project, in which a small number of Aboriginal communities would be invited to participate. DEET hoped that the project would:

- develop a better understanding of what different types of community plans can be produced relatively quickly in a cost effective manner;
- develop the community planning process within the communities themselves;
- produce documents which will form an accountable arrangement between the community and government agencies regarding service delivery arrangements;
- develop exemplary plans and procedures for the information/guidance of other communities and staff; and
- identify training requirements for officers.

At their next meeting, in February 1991, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commissioners received a joint statement from DEET and ATSIC recommending that six Aboriginal communities be invited to submit pilot proposals for developing community plans. The Commissioners agreed to support the proposal, noting that both DEET and ATSIC would then be better placed to present to the Commissioners a comprehensive proposal, and that DEET might consider how it can best support those communities who choose to embark on a planning process.

Objectives for community plans were to provide communities with the means of mapping out their development strategy; feed community plans into the regional council planning process; allow regional councils to respond to the priorities developed by communities; and provide a process through which relevant agencies can be made accountable to the communities for the services they provide (ATSIC 1991).

DEET's and ATSIC's roles were also spelled out. DEET's would be providing initial training assistance to the communities so that they gain basic planning skills; advising communities on DEET's programs; and negotiating agreement with communities on what DEET assistance will be in co-ordination with other service providers.

ATSIC's role would include encouraging and assisting communities to adopt a strategic planning approach; providing funding to communities and relevant organisations to enable them to secure expert advice and assistance in the preparation of community plans; arranging provision of skills training for community managers and members in community planning and strategic planning; encouraging other agencies to adopt community plans as the basis for service delivery, facility provision, and funding to the communities; establishing and maintaining mechanisms which co-ordinate the provision of services, facilities and funds in ways which are consistent with community plans; preparing a regional strategic plan for the implementation of the program; and monitoring and evaluating its effectiveness in improving the delivery of services and programs, and its impact on the development of communities.

### ***Selection of pilot communities***

The joint statement said that community planning 'must be based on the premise that community or group actually wants to be involved'. It then specified criteria which communities participating in the pilot project should meet, namely strong community cohesion; effective community organisations; experience in participation in government programs;

potential for further economic development; and an understanding of the need for strategic planning. Who would apply these criteria, and how it would be done, was not spelled out — the implication being that this was a task for the two agencies.

Communities in six locations were nominated to be invited to participate. They were:

Yarrabah	Cairns region, Qld
Mornington Island	Mount Isa region, Qld
Ngukurr	Katherine region, NT
Mulan	Kununurra region, WA
Lambooo-Gunian	Kununurra region, WA
Murriwung-Gajerrong	Kununurra region, WA
Lightning Ridge	Walgett/Bourke, NSW
Point Pearce	Adelaide, SA

In South Australia, the joint agencies had supported community planning assistance through the Community Management Training Unit (CMTU) of the School of Aboriginal Education of South Australia TAFE system since early 1990. Point Pearce was identified as a community which could benefit from professional planning facilitation. In Kununurra, DEET was promoting co-operation between agencies, termed locally the 'innovative programs' exercise, as a way for field staff to assist communities to plan. Mornington Island was nominated because of widespread concern in ATSIC and DEET at all levels, about difficulties in the community over the functions of the elected Aboriginal local government council and role of the non-Aboriginal Shire Clerk. The precise reasons for the selection of the other communities is obscure (see also comments by Elderton 1991, 6-7). Typically, they were nominated by senior regional or state agency staff. Yarrabah and Ngukurr were nominated by senior staff in anticipation that community planning might contribute to resolution of internal strife in the communities.

Several of the communities appeared to contradict the selection criteria, most notably Mornington Island, Ngukurr (Elderton 1991, 6), and Yarrabah, which are all complex, multi-clan communities. After nomination communities were strongly encouraged to participate in the pilot scheme. None rejected the nomination. Only one (Murriwung-Gajerrong) withdrew early in the project. No written or verbal evidence was found to indicate that other communities were considered.

Other important considerations in the joint proposal included the relationship between ATSIC and DEET staff at the regional level; existing activity in community planning; and current workloads of regional staff and their capacity to assist in working with the pilot communities.

The nature of a preferred relationship between DEET and ATSIC was not specified: an established and co-operative working relationship comes to mind. Whether existing activity in community planning was an advantage or deterrent was not spelled out. How workloads of staff and their planning and or community development skills would be assessed and adjusted was not mentioned.

### *The Four Phase Planning Model*

DEET hired a consulting firm with experience in training to develop a planning model (Moreland Group 1991a, 1991b). The model was to be 'trialled' in the participating communities, with DEET and ATSIC agencies in six regions providing guidance and support.

A Four Phase Model (also referred to in this text as a four step model) was developed by the consultants. In phase one, the 'demographic information and database phase', government agencies were to prepare background papers 'to assist communities identify where they are now'. The papers would cover the following aspects in summary form: training required to enable community members to participate in community

development activities; existing resources available to the community (economic, educational, health, housing, community infrastructure, social facilities, etc); potential employment activities for community members; government programs and opportunities to meet community development objectives; and the community's own resources (eg CDEP workforce, community enterprises, etc).

Phase two was titled the 'planning phase'. Communities would determine their objectives by identifying and writing down their social and cultural goals; economic advancement and employment goals; infrastructure and development needs; educational outcomes; community development objectives; strategies for maximising Aboriginal benefits from funds directed at Aboriginal advancement; and training requirements. According to the Moreland Model, 'this is a community document. If further training assistance is required in its preparation, this would be provided'.

Phase three was to be the 'negotiation phase', involving what will be accomplished in the community in the next twelve months. In this phase communities would negotiate an activity plan with government agencies, establishing the objectives over the next twelve months and the extent of government support to be provided. 'This jointly prepared document should be a very specific and clear statement understood and accepted by all'.

Phase four, 'monitoring and review', was the final phase. According to the model, there are two distinct elements to this phase. In the first, government agencies determine what objectives are to be addressed by their programs in the immediate period, and determine the outcomes by which the performance of field staff will be assessed. The second element involves a review of achievements against objectives, including the suitability of program response, the level of community support and involvement in the implementation of the plan, and the need for readjustment to the plan.

The model was the focus for a number of Senior Managers' conferences on community planning, and was distributed by ATSIC to the regions immediately prior to the February Commission meeting. Comment was invited.

## **Feedback and critiques**

### ***Written comment from ATSIC Cairns***

At least one regional office replied at some length, raising a number of concerns about the model and its implementation. An ATSIC Cairns staff member prepared a discussion paper which drew attention to potential confusion over the term 'community development', and its use in DEET/ATSIC documents, interchangeably, with 'community development planning' (Sheldon 1991). Drawing on theoretical and practical literature, the paper defined community development as:

the process whereby people of a community work to attain their goals through their own efforts (Sheldon 1991, 1).

Based on this, the paper suggested that 'community development planning' should be interpreted either as the creation of a plan for community development or the sketching out of goals that come from a process of community development.

The paper warned that the word development is a poorly understood concept, especially by many public servants, and cautioned that:

Community Planning may be simply the planning of the input of Government Services to obtain outcomes Government, and the Government created structures of administration, consider desirable (Sheldon 1991, 3).

Commenting on the Four Phase Model, the paper argued that the phases are inappropriate for genuine community development. Sheldon's criticism was directed particularly at the first phase of data gathering by agencies.

He was concerned that:

this process ... would reinforce the conditioned patterns of passivity and dependency ... any meaningful community planning process must be preceded by fairly extensive dialogue on development that would be held within the communities. These dialogues would not only generate goals and strategies, but would also involve the cultivation of critical thinking about what is appropriate and feasible and what should be the priorities (Sheldon 1991, 14).

Sheldon drew attention to use of the word 'sides' in the proposed third phase of the model. The description stated that 'this jointly prepared document should be a very specific and clear statement understood and accepted by all sides'. Sheldon was concerned that the word 'sides'

connote(s) competitive/combatative roles, which would indicate a compromise between government goals and those of the administrative structures, rather than administrative and government roles being reflective of those goals generated and rationalised at the grass roots level (Sheldon 1991, 3).

Supporting his arguments with reference to a critique of some 150 development organisations throughout the world (Esman and Uphoff 1984), Sheldon suggested that:

any meaningful planning process must be preceded by fairly extensive dialogue on development that would be held within communities. These dialogues would not only generate goals and strategies, but would also involve the cultivation of critical thinking about what is appropriate and feasible and what should be the priorities ... it is envisaged that this dialogue in communities would be facilitated by trained community members, backed by consultants (Sheldon 1991, 14).

He concluded that ideally, using this approach, it would take two to three years to develop a community plan and that great care would have to be exercised to prevent the dialogues being yet another imposition on communities. A simple, short-term approach would use external rather than community-based facilitators: an intermediate approach would involve some limited training of community members. He stressed, though, that an important part of the planning process would involve discussion within the communities about the limitations of 'quick fix' planning and the advantages of longer term community development planning.



### *Written comment from NADU Darwin*

Other Commonwealth agencies, most notably NADU (North Australia Development Unit of the Department of Social Security, Darwin), responded to the planning pilot Draft documents. Staff researcher Elderton's discussion paper repeated some of Sheldon's concerns, and raised additional issues. Elderton first drew attention to the tangle of terminology about planning by listing the seven different planning terms in the pilot scheme draft: community planning program, community planning process, community plan, strategic planning approach, community development plan, activity plan and project plan noting that the words mean different things, but are often used as if they are synonymous. Not only will Aboriginal people be confused; the terms create confusion for anyone trying to work in the area, including staff (Elderton 1991, 4).

Elderton criticised the inconsistency between the planning pilot scheme's insistence that the planning process and the plans must be 'owned' by the Aboriginal community involved and the nomination of participating communities by politicians or bureaucrats. Equally inconsistent, according to Elderton, was the concern for community ownership on the one hand, and the insistence on the four step model on the other. Like Sheldon, she took particular exception to step one, in which government agencies prepare background papers on where a community is. She asked what procedures were going to ensure that Aboriginal people themselves identify where they are and interpret their own history (Elderton 1991, 10).

Indeed she was critical of the entire notion of a 'model plan' and model planning process, arguing that it is inappropriate to believe that there is a model community plan or planning process which will be applicable for Aboriginal people 'from Lightning Ridge to Kintore' (Elderton 1991, 10). On the contrary, she states that it is vital that differences be recognised so that appropriate methods of community action can be developed.

## *Concerns expressed at agency workshops*

Workshops on community development planning, in many cases using the training materials prepared for DEET, were held for DEET and ATSIC regional staff around the country, either as a component of AEDP preparation, or an introduction to the planning pilots, or in anticipation of establishment of a community planning program. DEET expected that the planning training packages would prepare staff for the planning tasks ahead.

Typically the workshops attempted to define community development, and to introduce participants to concepts of planning and planning steps. At a joint agencies workshop, in Broome in 1991, definitions of community development ranged from Aboriginal empowerment and control over the nature, direction and process of change, to improvement of living conditions of Aboriginal people living in communities and outstations, to effective, efficient and co-ordinated delivery of physical and social services to Aboriginal communities. Although the workshops had the effect of opening up debate on these problematic issues, they were not designed to probe their implications for Aboriginal community planning and how it might best be supported.

### *North Australia Development Unit Workshop*

A number of workshops drew on experiences in community development and community planning in Aboriginal communities. For example, a workshop on community planning in Darwin in April 1991 organised by NADU brought together NADU and DEET staff and a number of representatives from groups involved in planning facilitation and education at the community level. Again, participants developed definitions for community, community development, and community planning.

The workshop discussed various interpretations of 'community', drawing attention to the geographic, or locality and residence definition used in

the Miller Report (1985), and widespread government usage of 'community' to mean a place of human settlement where the residents are represented by a local government body or a legally incorporated organisation. Participants generally subscribed to definitions of community which centred on social association and social organisation (for discussions of concepts of community, and particularly the dangers of regarding Aboriginal communities of locality as socially organised communities with cohesive, democratic structures in place, see Smith 1989 and Ross and Elderton 1991).

### *Lessons from the community planning program in Canada*

I had been involved in a number of capacities with a program of Integrated (initially called Comprehensive and later Holistic) Community-Based (initially called Community) Planning, sponsored by the Canadian federal Department of Indian Affairs and operating from 1978 to 1986. My involvement included participation in a small team which developed and ran planning awareness and training workshops for agency staff and for community leaders, staff and members; support to community-based planning facilitation teams; and critiquing of the program and planning processes (Wolfe 1985, 1988, 1989).

In a series of workshops for agency staff and community leaders presented across north Australia, I drew attention to two different interpretations of community development planning. One interpretation aims to produce a document to be used by the community and by agencies to improve living conditions through more efficient and effective implementation of needed projects and delivery of services: the other, 'developmental' and community based planning, aims to increase the ability of Aboriginal people to determine and control their future and the way in which they wish to live (Wolfe 1991).

## *Concerns from the Cairns ATSIC/DEET Workshop*

A June 1991 joint ATSIC/DEET Workshop on Community Development Planning organised by ATSIC Cairns for community leaders and members and agency staff drew on Canadian and Australian experiences with community development and community planning. My presentation emphasised that those involved in the Canadian program had learned the hard way that community development planning is a long-term and time consuming process; that haste and agency or consultant or community elite domination of the process produced 'wish-lists'; and that government agencies, consulting firms and Aboriginal organisations lacked staff with understanding, experience, or facilitation skills in community-based and holistic planning, especially planning in a cross-cultural context.

One of the most obvious lessons to be drawn from the Canadian experience was the need for a lengthy planning and community development 'awareness' and pre-planning phase, not only for communities and local leaders but also for agencies and their staff.

A related and, in the Canadian experience, even more intractable problem was shifting government agencies from top-down policy and program development and implementation to being partners in implementing community development plans generated by communities (Wolfe 1989). There was a persistent gap between the rhetoric of community-based planning and the reality of government driven agendas: between the rhetoric of agency co-operation and co-ordination and the reality of sectoral programs and central office accounting systems.

Assessment of the Canadian program stressed the need to develop new processes and models of community development planning appropriate to specific Indian communities' cultural, social, organisational and economic realities; the need to train community leaders, community members, external facilitators and agency staff, through mutual or 'two-way' learning; and, most importantly, to link training with development of processes and models as part of the planning process within and by

communities (Wolfe 1985). Structural and system supports must exist both within Indian organisations and external government agencies for effective planning process and effective implementation of plans (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada 1984; Wolfe 1988).

Since the national pilot 'recall workshop' was taking place next door to the Cairns regional workshop, the CEOs of both DEET and ATSIC attended the final session of the Cairns regional workshop. Regional participants drew the attention of the CEOs to several points, including:

the need for facilitators skilled in working with Aboriginal people and knowledgeable about the process of community development and planning;

the importance of paying considerable attention to preliminary work with the community, its members and organisations, not only council, about planning awareness;

the difference between planning which simply lists a sequence of desirable projects and planning developmental of a community's capacity to shape its own future;

and the need for performance indicators for government agencies to measure their co-operation and co-ordination with other agencies and their responsiveness to and implementation of community plans.

## **Applying a critical framework**

The discussion so far has highlighted the lack of agreement about virtually every aspect of Aboriginal community development planning, except the presumption that it must be done, and be done better. As Elderton perceptively pointed out in the 1991 discussion paper, there are 'competing agendas', which the searching and the shifting positions on Aboriginal planning found in Miller, the House Standing Committee Reports, and Deaths in Custody Report (Johnston 1991) hint at. The 'competing agendas' are evident in the confusion emerging at the workshops. And they underlie the early critiques.

However, rather than impose a critical framework *on* the community development planning pilot scheme, the questions used to review the pilot

scheme will build on those posed by DEET and ATSIC staff at the 'recall' workshop held three months into the scheme, about community, the model, and skills and capacity.

First, since the scheme uses the word 'community', and communities were selected to be the target for the planning pilots, what insights can the pilots offer about the geographic or social, or organisational units for Aboriginal planning? Second, what lessons can be derived from the pilots with regard to the skills and training required for effective Aboriginal community development planning? Third, since the pilot scheme was designed to 'trial' a four step model, an obvious question is: how successful was the model? How responsive were the agencies when adjustments were suggested? What adjustments were made, and by whom? Did alternative models emerge, and if so, what were their characteristics?

Although, at first glance this may seem limited in scope, it is likely to lead into examination of some fundamental and critical questions which were not anticipated when the pilot scheme was initiated. Such questions underlie the confusion and ambiguities apparent in the reports quoted earlier in this paper; are implicit in the definitions of community development and community planning generated at the workshops; and are at the heart of the Sheldon, Elderton and Wolfe critiques, namely what notions of Aboriginal community are they based on, and how appropriate to contemporary Aboriginal society are these notions; what skills, capacities, and organisational or structural supports are required for successful Aboriginal development planning; what concepts or agendas underlie the models of community development planning which are being promoted?

## **Start-up of the Community Development Planning Pilots**

### ***Introduction of staff to Community Development Planning: Joint Workshop April 1991***

Regional managers of both DEET and ATSIC and agency field staff initially assigned to the project participated, in late April 1991, in an introductory workshop in Canberra, facilitated by the planning training consultants. The purpose of the workshops was to provide staff with knowledge and understanding of the planning process; ensure comprehension of the purpose and nature of pilots; provide a framework for joint ATSIC/DEET field staff implementation of pilots; and clarify the roles of agencies in collaborating with communities on achieving their planned objectives (Moreland Group 1991a).

In his opening remarks to the April workshop ATSIC Minister Tickner commented on about sixty community planning projects surveyed recently by ATSIC regional offices. He noted:

I find some of the professionally produced plans disappointing. They seem more concerned with an expert's analysis of community needs and contain no real flavour of community input or community control ... Another disappointing aspect of some of these plans is their concentration on needs and objectives (for example so many new houses or upgrading of an airstrip) with insufficient attention being given to strategies to meet needs or achieve objectives (Tickner 1991).

He opined that:

Some of the most useful plans in my view are those prepared by communities themselves with limited outside assistance. While these plans are often simple and focus on only a few key objectives, they are a positive start and can be expanded to form more comprehensive plans as the communities gain planning experience and skills (Tickner 1991).

The Minister stated, in conclusion, that community development plans will serve two purposes: to assist communities to adopt a structured and integrated approach to their future development; and to provide a basis for the inputs to communities from all levels of government.

The Four Phase Model was presented to participants, and workshop leaders emphasised community planning principles which, they said, require that:

communities control the planning process so that it proceeds at the pace and follows the directions dictated by communities; the plans reflect community perceptions of need, and their objectives and priorities; communities achieve a genuine sense of ownership of the plans; and communities take responsibility for the implementation of their plans (Moreland Group 1991a).

Participants workshopped the planning steps, coming up with a terminology which, with some minor variations, has been widely adopted. Planning will consist of an *assessment* of where the community is at present (in planning literature this is sometimes called situational analysis, sometimes SWOT — strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats — analysis); a *vision* of where the community wants to be at a future point; *objectives* which identify the end results of change (in later documents this step is more frequently referred to as *goals*, with objectives being subcomponents of goals); *strategies* to be followed to achieve change; documentation of resources to be provided by external agencies (notably, no reference here to internal community resources, such as local knowledge, experience and skills); and an inbuilt *review* mechanism (ie monitoring and evaluation).

Participating staff from each of the six pilot regions then analysed the community or communities which had been nominated. Each group attempted to identify the current social and economic status of the community; the nature and direction of change already occurring; the goals and aspirations of community members; the degree to which planning has played a part in the present situation; and the forces for and against further development. Participants noted, for example, that Lightning Ridge already had some sort of community plan, that Point Pearce had begun to be involved in a community development planning process with South Australia TAFE staff, and that Ngukurr had an NT government Serviced Land Use Plan and physical infrastructure development plan. Several regions drew attention to negative forces for



further development such as lack of community commitment, factionalism, or friction between dominant families (Moreland Group 1991a).

### ***Joint 'Recall' Workshop June 1991***

A 'recall' workshop, facilitated by the same consultants, was held in Cairns in mid-June 1991 for agency staff involved in the pilot projects. The expressed purpose of the workshop was to allow monitoring of the pilot project processes and progress to date. The workshop also provided an opportunity, early in the pilot projects, for the agencies to identify 'on the ground' problems which could then be the subject of further examination and resolution' (Moreland Group 1991b).

One group, in Kununurra, had already begun to engage in local level planning through the local DEET-driven 'innovative programs' exercise. Several had begun very slowly. A few were cautious and questioning. The Cairns staff continued to have serious reservations about the four phases of the model and were conscious of their lack of planning skills. The Katherine staff felt they lacked the skills and also the time to conduct community-level planning workshops. Other officers were more confident about the process, their activities during the first three months, and their strategies for the subsequent phases. During the workshop, each of the six sets of agencies worked out a strategic plan for the next phase of the pilot.

The workshop highlighted three problem areas: i) staff in some regions had not completed or even begun to carry out stage one of the model — 'data preparation'; ii) some communities had responded with a lack of awareness as to the purpose of the community development planning pilot; iii) all regions raised concern about the lack of staff skills. According to the workshop report, staff knowledge of planning is still basic and concepts of 'development' and how it occurs appear rudimentary (Moreland Group 1991b, 2).

The report observed that stage one is essential for communities and agencies to gain a better factual basis on which to construct the plans. According to the report, stage one, 'collection of data', is being confused with stage two, 'the planning stage' (Moreland Group 1991b, 1). The report concluded first, that the process must be carried out in a systematic way using the model; second, that it would be useful to establish how community level difficulties such as local politics impact the pilots by enhancing or delaying planning; and third, that the staff training issue needed urgent attention by senior management (Moreland Group 1991b, 5).

## **Putting the model into practice**

### ***Perspectives from the periphery: community and staff experience***

Communities, which in practice meant an elected council or other group of leaders, had been invited to be part of the planning scheme. No one from any of the communities had participated in any of the introductory workshops. Few community members had much of an idea of what might be involved. Agency staff, on the other hand, knew they were taking on an important, pioneering task. Some thought it would be quite straightforward — a matter of carrying out the prescribed steps. Some were apprehensive — sensing not only their own limitations but also the magnitude of the task. There was, however, little or no recognition of the profound issues which lay at the heart of the community planning pilot scheme.

Each of the six pilot schemes offers insights into the community development planning process and the dilemmas which it poses. The pilot projects will be used here to illuminate aspects of the questions posed earlier, about the characteristics of community and their relationship to planning, the skills and training required, and the four step model.

## *Ngukurr: a centralised multi-clan community*

Ngukurr, Mornington Island and Yarrabah have grown from a mission or government nucleus into large centralised multi-clan residential settlements. The Ngukurr pilot provides a glimpse into the difficulties of community development planning for, and by, such communities (Wolfe 1992).

Ngukurr was established in 1901 on the ancestral lands of the Ngalakan people as the first Christian mission in the area. There are now seven major families in Ngukurr, some with over four hundred members, others with far fewer. Many people are seeking to return for some part of the year to their own lands. Each clan has established a number of outstations, and most want to improve the facilities of existing outstations and to set up more. The obvious question for community development planning, then, is whether the planning unit is the geographical residential unit of the Ngukurr settlement, the settlement and satellite outstations, or the member clans.

The joint agencies project team arranged meetings with the Community Government Council (a fourteen member council with two representatives from each clan — the council area covers both the central settlement and outstations). Although Council members had little understanding of what formal planning meant or what it could do for the community, there was considerable interest. A decision was taken to establish a planning advisory committee. A visit to the Laynhapuy Homeland Resource Centre in Nhulunbuy, which had been doing its own community development planning for some years, demonstrated to Ngukurr Council members what effective planning could accomplish (it is noteworthy that the Resource Centre did its own planning without government assistance). A follow-up workshop with Council and project staff identified community resources, ongoing projects and community income. It also identified some community priorities such as greater community and clan control, improved skills and education. A planning

strategy was decided on that required more involvement of the DEET and ATSI field staff in meetings with clans, and much more talking with people.

After further meetings, Council decided that the best way for Ngukurr to do community planning was to develop plans with each clan group, and then amalgamate them. A community-wide meeting was held. Agency officers began the clan consultations. Several groups completed written vision statements and needs. All this took seven months.

Coincidentally, the NT government was preparing a Serviced Land Use Availability (SLAP) Plan for the central settlement, with some consultation with Council and Community Government staff. Also, difficulties had arisen about who should be on the planning committee when the Council appointed the members. Some parts of the community demanded representation of traditional landowners and elders. The community was also dealing with a move on the part of some groups to form a break-away Land Council separate from the Northern Land Council. And at the same time, the community was experiencing difficulties with the way CDEP was being handled in the community.

For a variety of reasons, of which only a few have been identified here, the pilot project was terminated (for a more comprehensive description of the Ngukurr pilot see Wolfe 1992). The questions of how to undertake community development planning, with what unit or group of people, and for what purpose, were posed by the Ngukurr pilot, and remain unresolved.

### *Murriwung-Gajerrong: planning by a community of kin*

The Murriwung-Gajerrong Group of Families is the organisation representing about 100 kinfolk living in and around Kununurra and out on their homelands in the Cambridge Gulf area. They are a community of kin and connected through their land affiliation. They are not a centralised, residential community. They are not a local government unit.

They do not have an elected council. When first approached, they agreed to be part of the Kununurra pilot project. They chose to use their own co-ordinator rather than agency staff or any outside facilitator. The co-ordinator worked with each family group to pull together goals, which in most cases were already well known but had not been written down. In a short time the Group of Families pulled out of the pilot, arguing that they were already doing their own planning. The steps they were being asked to take were too elaborate and the wrong way round. Most importantly, they did not want to share all their priorities with outsiders. Elements of their plan are displayed on their office wall for all who visit to see. The plan is simple, understood by the members, and they use it to guide their activities.

### *Lightning Ridge: leadership from an Aboriginal organisation*

The Lightning Ridge pilot provides yet another perspective on community and particularly on the organisational unit through which planning can be done effectively. Aboriginal people live today in and around the town of Lightning Ridge. Some have been there for many years. Others have arrived more recently, often to seek work. The planning pilot was undertaken directly by the Barriekneal Aboriginal Housing and Community Corporation, with encouragement from DEET. The corporation, on behalf of Aboriginal people in Lightning Ridge, saw the project as an opportunity to review its operations and develop a plan for their future directions.

The project got off to a slow start. Eventually the corporation's Directors, staff, including CDEP participants, and members worked through, in a general way, the four steps of the model. This was done by the organisation, with no direct involvement from agency staff. A respected Aboriginal member of the local community acted as facilitator. The plan covers the present and proposed activities of the Barriekneal Corporation, and deals with housing, the local CDEP activities, a number of enterprises, and women's activities. In 1991/92 they received financial

support from ATSIC to prepare a written plan. The Corporation is now heavily involved with ATSIC and other service providers in negotiating implementation of its 5 year community development plan.

The DEET and ATSIC monitoring team report of November 1991 initially criticised the Lightning Ridge pilot because it had not submitted reports and had not prepared a written plan, even though 'they had a plan already', presumably in peoples' heads. However, the report concluded that:

we should be targeting more communities like these who have the basic skills and the desire to be successful (DEET and ATSIC 1991e, 3).

The 1992 ATSIC Community and Regional Planning section review was also impressed by the achievements of the Aboriginal community of Lightning Ridge. It noted that 'even progressive communities ... rely heavily on one strong personality ... to drive the process'. It cautioned, though, that Lightning Ridge 'should not be used as a model to promote community development planning procedures in the ... region' (ATSIC 1992). The report concluded that

the nature of the process is not as vital to the success of any community development planning process as the acceptance of the process by the community (ATSIC 1992).

A number of factors contributed to the success of the Lightning Ridge planning activity. A strong Aboriginal organisation with respected and skilled leadership was in place. The organisation leadership recognised that they were ready for a rather more systematic and formal approach to the *ad hoc* planning they were already doing, and they took care to bring community members along with them each step of the way. It would be inappropriate, though, to conclude as the pilot monitors did, that only progressive and 'ready' communities should be targeted for planning support. Rather, different processes and supports for planning are needed depending on the particular circumstances of each community.

### *Point Pearce: support from a planning and training institution*

The Point Pearce pilot provides further insights into the question of community readiness, and into the skills and institutional supports which effective planning requires. The project was being implemented through the Community Management Unit (CMTU) of the School of Aboriginal Education, South Australia TAFE system, which had been contracted to provide a planning service to Aboriginal communities in South Australia in 1990. CMTU provided a detailed interim report in August 1991. Background material on the Point Pearce community had been compiled by CMTU staff, in accordance with step one of the model. However, the CMTU team was concerned about the lack of early involvement and commitment by the community and what appeared to be a degree of community alienation from the planning process. With agreement from the regional offices, it decided to provide an educational awareness program to Council and the community, to assist Council to promote the community development planning concept and to develop an ongoing support to promote a better working relationship between the team, Council and community.

This was to be a common finding of the pilots: that, with the exception of Lightning Ridge and the Barriekneal Corporation, a lot of work needed to be done with community leaders, council members, community organisations, and the community in general as a lead-in to more formalised planning. The four step model needed to be changed, and preceded by a careful awareness and developmental phase. As had been found elsewhere (Wolfe 1988), this can also put in place internal participatory and decision making mechanisms which respect local custom, and promote a broadening of local leadership and planning and other skills.

The DEET and ATSIC monitoring team report for late 1991 found the Point Pearce project to be in advance of all the others, although even it, too, had been unable to meet the prescribed timetable. The project had the

advantage of the professional planning, community development, and facilitation skills of the CMTU unit, which exceeded those of agency staff. The Point Pearce pilot offers an alternative way to provide a community development planning service: through an existing institution that has a range of skills, can sustain a lengthy and time consuming relationship with a community, and is committed not only to the preparation of plans but also to building local capacity for planning and community development.

### *Kununurra: agency and consultant planning efforts*

The Kununurra experience demonstrates the consequences for pilot communities when, despite efforts on the part of the joint agencies, skills and support were insufficient (Wolfe 1992). Prior to the planning pilot, both Lamboo-Gunian and Mulan, small Aboriginal communities in the East Kimberley, had been involved in training workshops on pastoral management and community management facilitated by consultants. They asked that the consultants they were familiar with be used for community planning workshops.

The senior consultant was not available for the Lamboo-Gunian workshop, which was facilitated by an alternate. At the community meeting on planning community members were encouraged by the facilitator to speak out about 'what you want'. They were asked directly 'how many houses do you want ... Agency staff are here, tell them what you want'. This approach was not conducive of careful consideration by the community of their own priorities, what choices and alternatives, if any, they had, or what the implications of going after one thing rather than another might be.

After the close of the first day's workshop, community members continued discussions. The following day people were ready with their own priorities. Their top priority was additional land. Then they talked about training for real jobs, a homemaker service for the elderly of the community, and sports and recreation for young people. As the workshop



report noted 'the community had set about a planning activity without the facilitator or agencies'. Lamboo-Gunian eventually withdrew from the project.

At the Mulan workshop community members first said 'you have written lots of reports, who has read them and come to discuss them with us?', and one person said 'we don't want to go through this bullshit again'. Men and women met separately. Men concentrated on matters of community organisation and administration, such as the management of the store and operation of the local CDEP program. Women came up with community priorities such as an all-weather airstrip, a vehicle for use by the health clinic, and a community clean-up. At a follow-up meeting at Mulan some months later DEET and ATSIC officers agreed to a strategy which included appointment of an officer to work with the community over a three month period. The person would be located at Mulan, subject to the availability of accommodation. No one was appointed. Mulan community fears seem to have been justified, despite assurances that 'this time it will be different'.

### *Mornington Island: contrasts in community development planning approaches*

The facilitator's encouragement of Lamboo-Gunian people to come up with a wish-list headed by housing, and the community's own priority list offer a glimpse of different assumptions about the meaning and purpose of development planning. Events in the Mornington Island pilot project provide a graphic illustration of different assumptions.

DEET and ATSIC had some difficulties in co-ordinating their approach to the pilot. ATSIC engaged a consultant to provide facilitation for community planning. In all, the consultant visited the island for periods of three days at approximately six week intervals. A planning steering committee was established. A written request was made by the community for substantial funds to extend the consultant's contract, and to hire two community members to provide supports to the steering

committee and collect information from the community. The request for \$123,000 to continue the planning process was rejected by the agencies (DEET/ATSIC 1991a, 3).

Meanwhile, DEET was seeking to recruit an experienced Aboriginal officer from another agency for the Mornington Island project. Towards the end of 1991 this officer was assigned by DEET full-time to the project. He was directed to complete the community plan in six to eight weeks. He spent some time on the island consulting with local people, and produced the report or plan within the time frame. When the plan was presented to the Mornington Island Council, it is reported to have rejected the document.

### *Yarrabah: waiting for community involvement and control*

The Yarrabah pilot is a striking contrast. Very little happened at Yarrabah, beyond a few meetings between the two DEET and ATSIC officers and the community council. The officers were conscious of their lack of understanding of community planning. They were particularly puzzled by what they saw as a contradiction between the first step of the planning model, in which they were to compile information about the community, and their sense, as Aboriginal people with close contacts with Yarrabah, that the community had within itself the information most pertinent to community development planning. It seemed to them that community leaders and community members should be involved in all aspects of the planning activity, right from the outset. However, they felt they did not have the facilitation, community development or planning skills to do the job.

Although the Yarrabah project was criticised for inactivity, participation in the pilot scheme stimulated the Cairns ATSIC regional office to serious consideration of the purposes, appropriate institutional supports and most useful processes of community development planning — evidenced, among other things, by the two regional workshops they hosted in June 1991 and March 1992. The regional office has continued to struggle

directly with how the agency may best support a community planning process which goes beyond lining up priority projects and results in increased community choices and greater community control.

### *Perspectives from the centre: DEET/ATSIC monitoring*

DEET and ATSIC central offices tracked the pilots using monitoring reports submitted by regional agency staff and by visiting the regional offices and projects.

#### *Staff reporting*

Agency staff were required to submit monthly reports to the central offices. They were asked to report, on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest ranking, about co-operation between DEET and ATSIC staff, adequacy of time spent by staff on implementing the pilot, adequacy of staff skill in terms of what the pilot required, level of training given to community members and community staff, and improvement within the community as a result of involvement in the pilot.

Central office summary of the reports submitted in the first three months noted that agencies gave the highest ranking to co-operation between DEET and ATSIC: this despite complaints about the availability of staff, particularly ATSIC staff, noted in the pilot monitor's written reports of visits to each pilot project. Staff reported spending only half the time they felt they should on the pilot. The monitor commented that one can assume that those staff who did not report are in a worse situation. Staff rated the adequacy of their own skills for the task as being between 10% and 70% of what was required. Almost no training had been given to community people, and no improvements in the communities were reported.

## *Central agency monitoring*

Monitoring teams from DEET and ATSIC central offices visited the agencies and pilot communities between September and November 1991. The monitoring team reports tended to focus on perceived problems, with only occasional mention of successes.

## *Staffing issues*

Staffing issues were a matter of concern in all of the pilots, with the exception of the Adelaide/Point Pearce pilot which contracted an outside agency, the CMTU unit, right from the start. Even where planning at the community level seemed to be going ahead, as at Lightning Ridge, communities complained that they had not received the regular visits or assistance with planning that had been promised, and which they expected as participants in the pilot scheme. Staff turnover, absences due to sickness and vacation leave, and the reality that the pilot was largely an add-on to an officer's regular duties, were common problems.

The planning pilot scheme rested on a presumption that regional managers could find staff with the time, apart from existing duties, to provide the new service. In a few cases DEET had seconded officers specifically to community development planning, though only for a short period. ATSIC officers took on planning as an additional duty. The monitoring reports gradually recognised that community planning demands substantial commitment of human energy, time and resources. Noting that most progress had been made by the Point Pearce pilot, the monitoring report acknowledged 'we are never going to be able to commit officers full-time to projects, which is an essential requirement' (DEET/ATSIC 1991b, 2).

Moreover, the community development planning pilots were launched during a period of great change and turbulence for both agencies. ATSIC,

in particular, had only recently been established. Structural change was still underway. Programs of both agencies were under critical review. Staff were being moved within and between agencies.

### *Staff knowledge and skills*

After the visits in September and October to Katherine, Mount Isa and Cairns, the monitoring reports expressed frustration that participating staff lacked understanding of what the steps of the pilot model were, let alone how to go about doing them. They 'do not have a clear understanding of the whole basis of these pilot projects' (DEET/ATSIC 1991c, 2). Even in Kununurra, where community level planning workshops had taken place, monitors expected more progress after six months. Planning had not progressed beyond initial discussions. The monitoring reports concluded that the real reason centred on skills and training of regional staff, or lack of them (DEET/ATSIC 1991d, 3).

In line with the customary allocation of agency responsibilities, evidence suggests that staff were more comfortable with the duties they were used to and had been trained in, and which their colleagues and regional managers also understood, than they were trying out new skills after rudimentary training. Many ATSIC staff had considerable experience with deciding on solutions and planning projects for communities, with delivering pre-determined programs, and tracking and accounting for expenditures. Generally, DEET staff had closer contacts at the community level, and considerably more experience with local level training than ATSIC personnel.

The presumption that joint agency staff had the knowledge, skills and motivation to co-operatively plan their approach to the pilot, and the understanding of community development and community planning and accompanying skills to carry out the approach, was a key and untested component of the pilot scheme. The presumption was, apparently, that community planning was a service like any other, and putting staff through a training package would give staff the competency to do the job.

## *Training of staff*

Reports of the monitoring visits showed a gradual recognition that the planning training packages were insufficient and, in part, inappropriate for agency staff, let alone for community people. There were calls, first for more training, then for different training. In November, the monitoring report quoted the Adelaide Regional Manager that field officers do not have the ability or skills to undertake the complicated planning exercises (DEET/ATSIC 1991b, 2). It concluded that 'the skill level of ATSIC/DEET staff is always going to be lacking in the area of community planning' (DEET/ATSIC 1991b, 2).

But alternatives were anything but clear. For example, when the ATSIC Mount Isa office brought forward the community proposal to hire a planning consultant and community members at a total cost of \$123,000, the monitoring report noted 'another infrastructure of resources to carry out a task we are supposed to develop as providers of government services' (DEET/ATSIC 1991a, 3).

The visit to Point Pearce, where trained community planning and community development facilitators from CMTU of South Australia TAFE were implementing the pilot, reinforced the recognition that 'there needs to be a different approach to the development of a model of community planning' (DEET/ATSIC 1991b, 1). The implication is, though, that the search was still on for a model, that is, one universally applicable model.

## *Following the model*

The monitoring reports hint at other problems associated with the pilot scheme model beyond those of staff lack of time, inexperience, and inadequate skills — problems which were inherent in the pilot model. The initial assessment of the Lightning Ridge pilot provides a graphic illustration of the tension between the requirement that the model steps be undertaken in sequence, with written documentation, and the realities of

community based planning. According to the monitoring report, the purpose of the visit was to 'outline our Department's concern about the slow progress in Lightning Ridge, particularly the lack of written documentation' (DEET/ATSIC 1991e, 2). At the conclusion of the visit, the monitors were impressed by the high level of community achievement (DEET/ATSIC 1991e,3). The report still insisted on the preparation of appropriate documentation, 'particularly data emanating from Phase 1' (DEET/ATSIC 1991e, 2).

### *Planning for whose needs?*

This vignette raises more substantive issues inherent in the central agency-driven model. Whose needs take precedence in a planning activity: the needs of government agencies for what they consider to be appropriate documentation, or the needs of communities for processes with which they feel comfortable. Inside this issue are two fundamental questions. Who controls the planning process? Who is community development planning for?

The pilot model sent mixed messages which confused both regional staff and the monitoring team, and caused difficulties at the community level. After the Cairns visit, the monitoring report commented on the lack of understanding of the importance (especially time frame) of the pilot project (DEET/ATSIC 1991f, 2). To many regional staff the requirement that the pilot be executed to a pre-set, precise and short time frame, using a prescribed set of steps, was inconsistent with the training workshop and pilot document rhetoric of community ownership and community control.

### *Community control and agency time frame*

Finding an appropriate balance between the need for community participation and control and the pressures of the agency steps and time frame was contentious.

Opinions differed between monitors and some participating staff on this matter. One of the monitoring reports states 'while I totally agree that the community needs to be in control of the project, I do not accept that they should be expected to do everything' (DEET/ATSIC 1991a, 3). Indeed, the community cannot be expected to do everything. In the case of community development planning, which activities are most appropriately carried out by community members; which can be undertaken jointly; and which tasks are most usefully carried out by a community development planning professional? This is a key dilemma for any service agency, and is particularly problematic for community development planning: can assistance be provided without the agency exercising control, and if so, how; and, how can communities exercise control over the key planning decisions?

### *Agency use of monitoring*

The central office monitoring reports noted the lack of care given to progress reports by participating staff, which they attributed in part to regional office heavy workloads and priorities other than the planning pilots. The reports also noted that the central office section responsible for administering and tracking the pilot scheme 'is not structured or resourced to enable the kind of activities that would ensure the close attention warranted'. After several months of monitoring activity the monitors spelled out a core issue. In an attachment to a memo summarising early findings they said

We must not let the desire for rapid results (in the valid pursuit of community direction to drive government programs and assist in their co-ordination) result in a discrediting of the planning process, or a submissive concurrence by communities which has as its only outcome a more efficient and coordinated delivery of services of dubious appropriateness, perpetuation of community dependency and dependency and a resultant waste of resources; or even worse, the labelling and rejection of planning as a government driven exercise to enable it to meet its statutory obligations, rather than being a valuable component of integrated community development and a way forward to the achievement of the objectives of ATSIC (DEET/ATSIC 1991g).



Unfortunately the matter did not become a focus for debate and action within the agencies in time to have an impact on the pilot projects or before the community and regional planning programs were launched.

## **Who's planning, whose plans: conclusions**

Elderton commented that it would seem rational to evaluate what has been done before, in order to learn from it so as not to repeat mistakes, and in order to capitalise on successes (Elderton 1991, 11). She was, however, sceptical because:

this issue confronts the never look back philosophy. You never look back because you might have to acknowledge you've done something wrong and then have to deal with it (Elderton 1991, 11).

The pilot scheme seems to have been undertaken with the confidence that it was an exercise in finetuning of a model. No evidence was uncovered that the central offices driving the pilot scheme had put in place mechanisms to systematically deal with problems arising and to implement course corrections, or to examine the underlying causes and possible solutions and feed them into the upcoming community and regional planning programs.

As Ross and Elderton (1991, 12) reminded us, the term 'community' in itself is not the problem; rather it is our concept of community in relation to Aboriginal people which we need to examine. The planning model appears to have been premised on a stereotype of Aboriginal communities as geographically bounded and socially cohesive, with democratically elected leadership which legitimately represents the community, and which could, therefore, be used as the focal point for planning, a concept of community challenged by Smith (1989). Not one of the pilots conformed to this picture. At Lightning Ridge, the Barriekneal Corporation successfully undertook a form of strategic organisational planning which was designed to benefit the whole Aboriginal community. Although this was done under the rubric of the pilot scheme, the agencies seem to have had virtually no input into Barriekneal planning. Both the

Mornington Island and Ngukurr pilots eventually expanded initial participation in planning from the elected council to a more broadly based community steering committee. When Ngukurr did what Ross and Elderton's paper advocated, and articulated a self-definition (planning by the seven clans should precede any attempt to plan for the whole community), the pilot time frame could not sustain such complexity.

The pilots demonstrate something of the variety and complexity of Aboriginal communities, and the need for community development planning to recognise the differences between planning services to geographical and residential settlements and planning by Aboriginal groups to achieve their goals for the future.

The pilot projects demanded new skills from agency staff. However, it soon became apparent that they did not have the array of planning, community development and facilitation skills required: indeed few planning professionals combine these skills with sensitivity to and knowledge about Aboriginal cultures and society.

The pilot projects also placed staff in new roles and new relationships with communities. But there was, and still is, little incentive for officers to explore and adopt new ideas or skills. Personnel performance indicators were not adjusted. Staff continued to be judged by pre-existing measures and expectations. Many staff felt uncertain about engaging in the new planning scheme, since it did not fit smoothly with the prevailing agency ethos. Some regional managers, such as the Cairns ATSIC manager, encouraged examination of the ideas surrounding community planning and community development. Others reserved judgement or remained sceptical.

The tensions and inconsistencies in the planning pilot model reflect 'competing agendas' for community development planning (Elderton 1991; Wolfe 1991). One agenda is directed to more efficient, co-ordinated and responsive delivery of physical and social services to Aboriginal communities by agencies. It is consistent with the widely held,

rationalist, mainstream model of planning. Community development planning of this type is largely an agency tool for improved service delivery to places and to people in those places. There may be more Aboriginal input into how the services are delivered, but little say in what those services should be, and less again in how they achieve Aboriginal goals.

The focus on service provision results in insufficient attention being given to service uptake or use, and insufficient attention to whether service delivery is producing results which Aboriginal people consider beneficial. Performance indicators measure inputs, such as number of houses provided or number of clinics set up, rather than outcomes — is family stability and individual and community health improving. Although this approach can contribute to measurable improvements in material living conditions, it may not improve overall well-being, and does not contribute to substantive change in the relationship of Aboriginal people to the rest of Australian society.

The other agenda regards community development planning as one of the means by which Aboriginal people determine their own goals (which may well include better service delivery, but on terms different from those described above) and, with assistance if they wish it, decide what they need to do to carry out their own solutions to community problems, and to achieve their goals. Community development planning is, according to this agenda, a transformational Aboriginal tool for greater self-determination, empowerment and improved quality of life. It may, in addition to better housing, more jobs, and relevant training, encompass land and resource control, and justice and civil rights: goals which the pilot planning scheme did not anticipate. Planning is not, and cannot be, politically or culturally neutral.

The pilot scheme unintentionally, but perhaps inevitably given the policy shifts within DEET and more particularly within ATSIC, embodies the struggle between the mainstream society agenda of Aboriginal self-management and the Aboriginal agenda of self-determination. This in

turn reflects what Fleras and Elliott (1992) call the transition between two paradigms: the old conventional paradigm which emphasised legalism and control, and the new paradigm which redefines Aboriginal-government relations (and, I would add, Aboriginal-non-Aboriginal relations generally) around justice, fair and equitable treatment, adaptation, and workable intergroup dynamics. They comment, aptly, that policy and administrative officials have been reluctant to follow through on the paradigm shift. The result, according to Fleras, is a 'paradigm muddle' (Fleras 1992, 36).

There are, therefore, several questions arising from this review of the pilot scheme that are pertinent to the ATSC community planning and regional planning program, and pertinent also to a number of non-governmental Aboriginal community planning initiatives which have recently emerged that have only been touched on in this paper. Are the two planning agendas inevitably in opposition? Can the better service delivery and better living conditions model and the community empowerment, control and development model be constructively linked? Are there ways in which government agencies can support community development planning, including financing it, without dictating the process and outcomes? What institutional arrangements for Aboriginal organisation and community development planning enable greater Aboriginal control? Further papers explore the post-pilot approaches to community planning and regional planning in the context of the ongoing 'paradigm muddle' (Lea & Wolfe 1993; Wolfe 1993a; Wolfe 1993b; Wolfe 1993c).

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