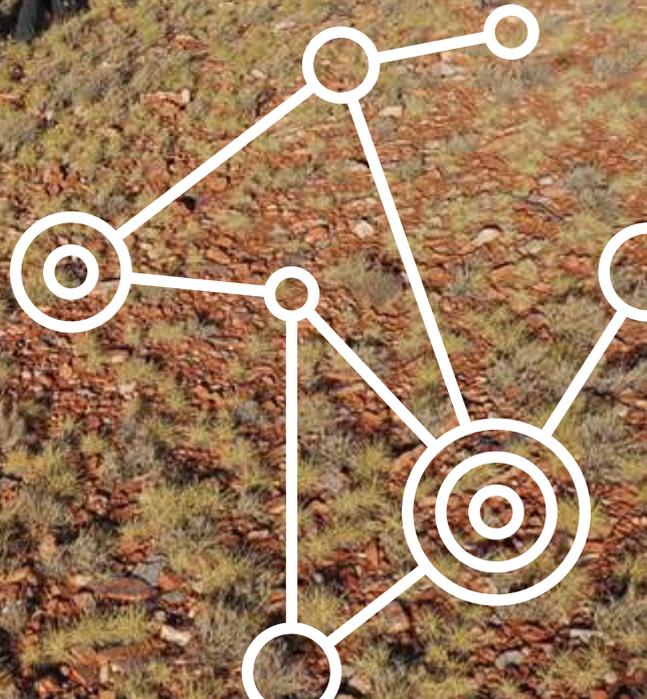
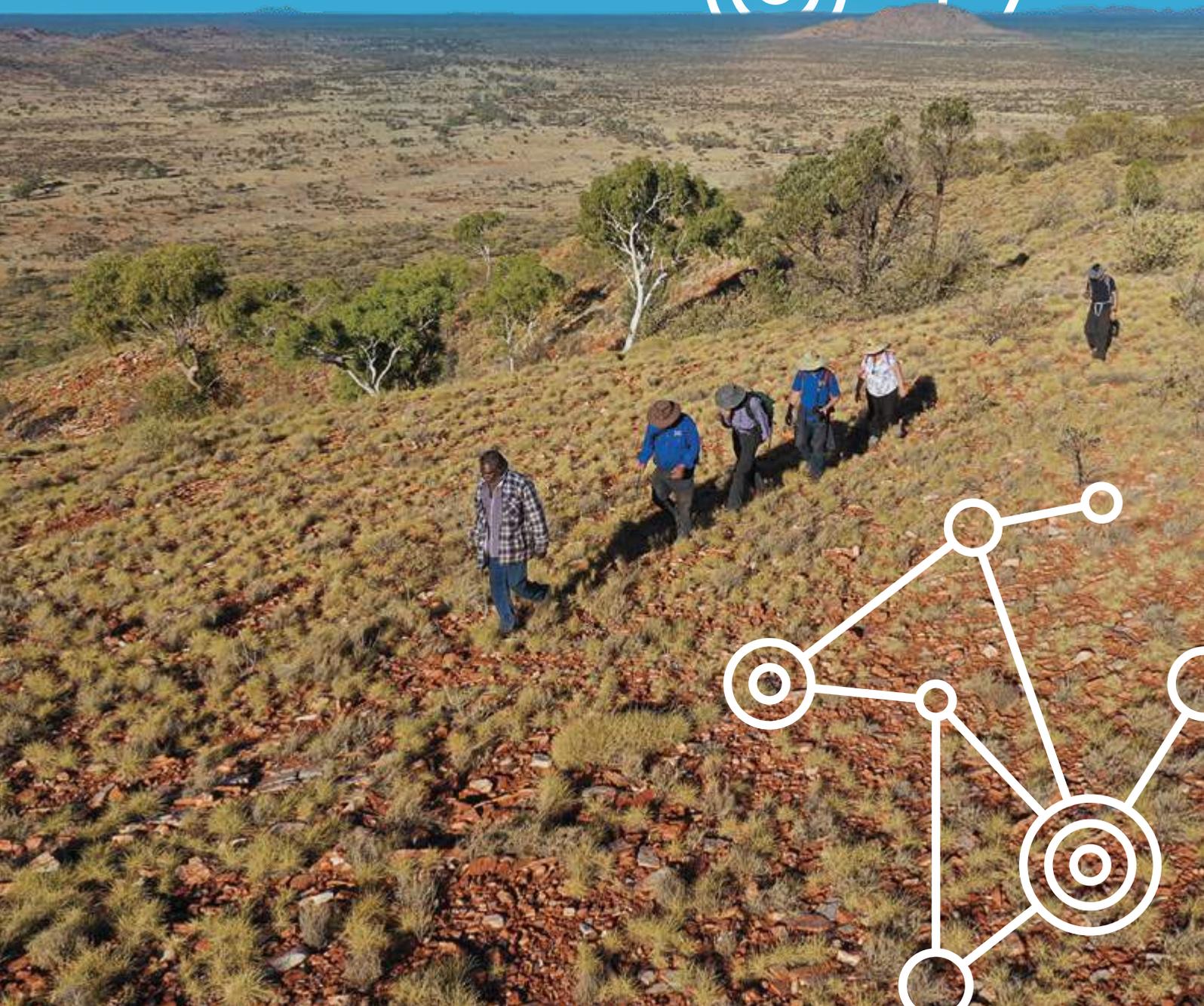
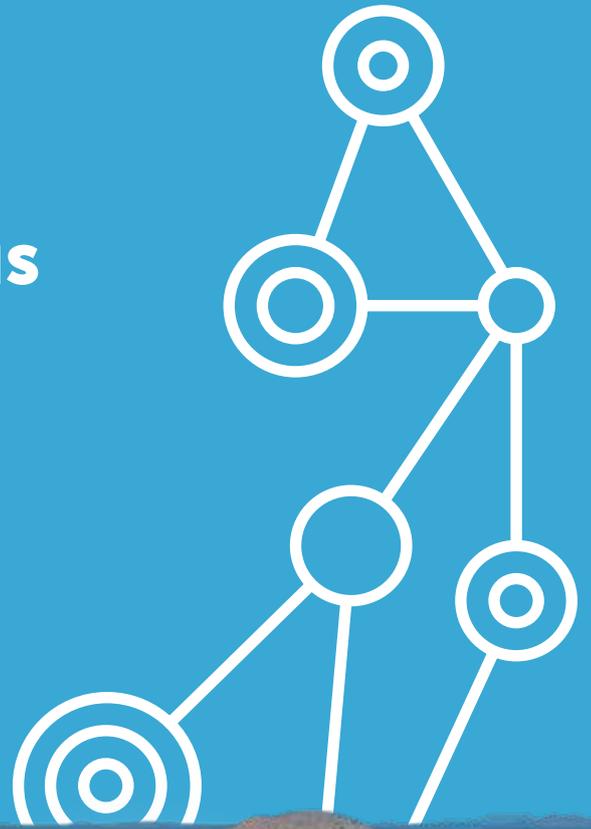


# 10 Deserts Indigenous Tourism Strategy Executive Summary



## ii. Executive Summary

### Background & Context

This strategy identifies the resources, methodology and a regional collaborative framework to empower Indigenous groups to drive the successful management and development of tourism across the deserts of Australia. This strategy is an initiative of the 10 Deserts Project (10DP) and contributes to 10DP's goal of supporting Indigenous groups to create new markets for sustainable jobs and income in the deserts.

The Australian deserts are vast, pristine and globally iconic. The deserts are almost exclusively held by Indigenous groups that have maintained strong and unbroken cultural traditions, land management practices and languages over millennia. The deserts are evocatively rich in cultural history and of immeasurable value for Indigenous groups. Australian and international tourists want to experience and engage in the desert regions and with desert Indigenous groups. But tourism in the deserts is underdeveloped, and there is a significant opportunity for Indigenous groups to diversify economic opportunity and achieve a range of economic, social and cultural outcomes through tourism.

There are a range of constraints to the development of tourism in the desert, the most significant of which include the seasonality of the market and a lack of critical mass in both the tourism market and Indigenous tourism products. Remoteness, isolation from regional centres and lack of key resources, combined with poor education and capacity building outcomes, further enhance the challenges. Currently, inappropriate visitation in some places is negatively impacting on Aboriginal cultural values and the natural values of significant places.

However, while many of the factors outlined are significant, they also shape the unique opportunity for the development of tourism in the deserts. For example, Indigenous groups in the desert are highly inter-connected and have a proven track-record of collaborating across large regions and developing regional projects. This provides a potential solution to issues of isolation, access to resources and the barriers associated with development, through enabling economies of scale and a collaborative approach.

Furthermore, vibrant Indigenous land management and cultural development programs exist and are expanding. They empower Indigenous knowledge, leadership and socio-economic development. With the relevant consent of traditional owners and representative organisations these land management programs enable groups to leverage their traditional country and cultural capital (cultural knowledge, customs, law and language) for social, cultural and economic development goals. These land management groups provide a platform to build and leverage desert people's capacity to develop viable tourism products and enable better management of existing tourism.

Lastly, remoteness and distance are themselves an asset, and an opportunity exists to capitalise on the mobility of visitors and their desire for remoteness, adventure and new experiences.

These strengths of the desert system provide an opportunity for the development of a sustainable and unique tourism industry, a mechanism to address some of the challenges outlined above and the context of desert tourism that this strategy responds to.

## Vision, Benefits & Drivers of Tourism

**Vision:** Traditional owners are using tourism to build resilient desert economies, enable capacity building and to enhance and protect their country and culture.

This vision will be enabled through a strength-based approach that supports Indigenous groups to develop their individual priorities for managing and developing tourism and that maximises the use of their cultural, social and land assets.

Indigenous groups in the desert have clearly articulated that the value of tourism, from their perspective, lies in the mutual achievement of an interconnected set of values for country, people and culture. It is the strength of these values combined, that enables the economic opportunity around tourism.

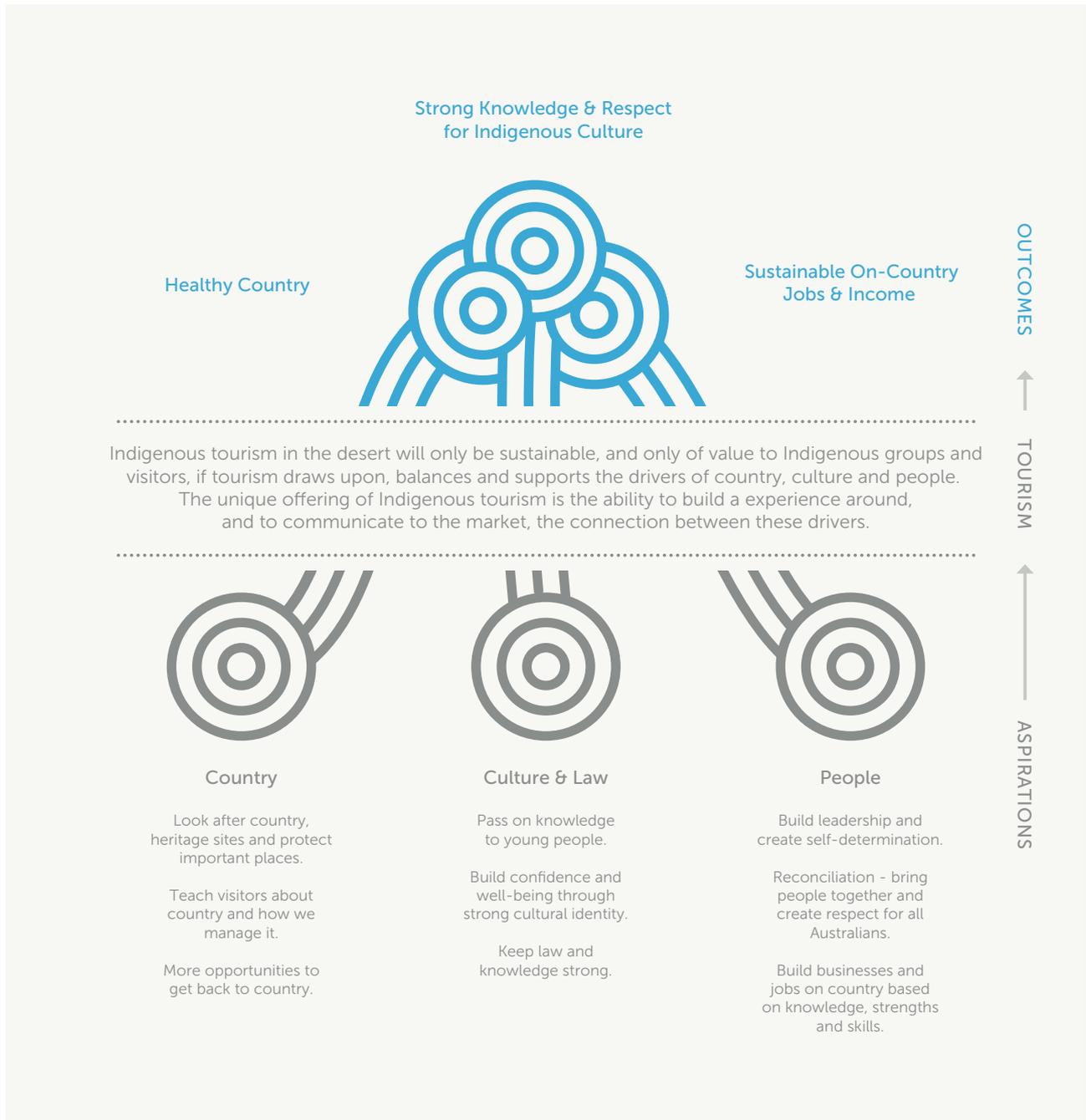


Figure 01 — Interconnections of tourism.

## Principles & Approaches

The following principles of development are a result of more than 50 individual organisational consults with Indigenous groups, Indigenous land management organisations, Natural Resource Management (NRM) bodies, tourism businesses, tourism support agencies, stakeholders and government bodies. More than 150 people across WA, SA, NT and QLD have been directly engaged in this process. The key principles of development drive the approach and actions described by this strategy.



**Local Autonomy**  
Support groups to develop priority projects.



**Regional Collaboration**  
Support groups to work together, share knowledge and develop regional projects.

Figure 02 — Local autonomy, regional collaboration.

DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES	HOW IS THIS ACHIEVED?
Right people to speak for country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aboriginal cultural frameworks drive the process of management and development</li> <li>Support groups to develop tourism in ways that reflect their cultural, social and economic aspirations and drivers, and that are based on proven Aboriginal ways of planning and development</li> </ul>
Provide direct and practical support to Indigenous groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Directly support groups to progress their priority tourism management and development projects</li> <li>Support ground-up development approaches, pilots, demonstrations and 'learning through doing' driven by local leadership</li> <li>Provide Indigenous groups with access to a 'toolbox' of practical tourism management and development tools</li> </ul>
Build on Aboriginal cultural networks to enable regional collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leverage the proven ability of groups in the desert to collaborate at scale to develop regional tourism initiatives, share knowledge and replicate successful approaches across borders</li> <li>Share successful approaches and methodologies with other groups across the desert through dedicated resourcing of exchanges, conferences and networking</li> </ul>
Tourism is a two-way process – work with the whole of industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and broker relationships between Indigenous groups and non-Indigenous tourism businesses, the broader industry and supporting organisations and government</li> </ul>
Tourism development is a long-term commitment based on strong relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Invest in people, skills, leadership and capacity</li> <li>Collaborate, network and empower people to lead the development process</li> </ul>
Leverage the backbone capacity of ranger groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support ranger groups to manage the impacts of tourism, build basic infrastructure, increase signage and enforce permit systems as appropriate</li> <li>Support Indigenous land management groups to develop permit systems</li> <li>Support Indigenous land management groups develop tourism opportunities that enhance the management of their lands, diversify income streams and support cultural and social development</li> </ul>
Be realistic and understand challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are many significant interconnected development challenges in the desert. Use a long-term capacity building approach that builds on strengths, enables local leadership and strengthens relationships and shared commitment across the desert and with the tourism industry</li> </ul>
Adapt, learn and pivot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This strategy is a starting point and identifies the key actions required to achieve the vision. An approach that enables evaluation, learning and the ability to adjust tactics and actions as the strategy develops is crucial to success</li> </ul>

## Key Market Opportunities & Challenges

The opportunities and challenges, and the aspirations for the development of tourism are varied across the deserts of Australia. This strategy responds to this reality by supporting local autonomy and enabling groups to pursue their aspirations and priorities through both local and regional collaborative approaches. With this context in mind, potential market opportunities that could be pursued by groups individually or in collaboration include:

- Domestic 4WD and 2WD self-drive market, particularly expanding the product offering to include nature/wildlife, heritage and remote experiences in combination with Indigenous cultural experiences
- Developing joint products and partnerships with existing tour operators including broadening operators' offerings with traditional owner guides or accredited access to special areas
- Conservation tourism including developing products for supporters of conservation organisations that combine natural values with Indigenous cultural experiences
- Corporate tourism, particularly targeting large corporates that value Indigenous culture and are implementing Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs) or community development-based staff leadership programs
- Schools and other education institutions that are seeking Indigenous cultural experiences as a part of their extra-curriculum activities

### KEY MARKET CHALLENGES

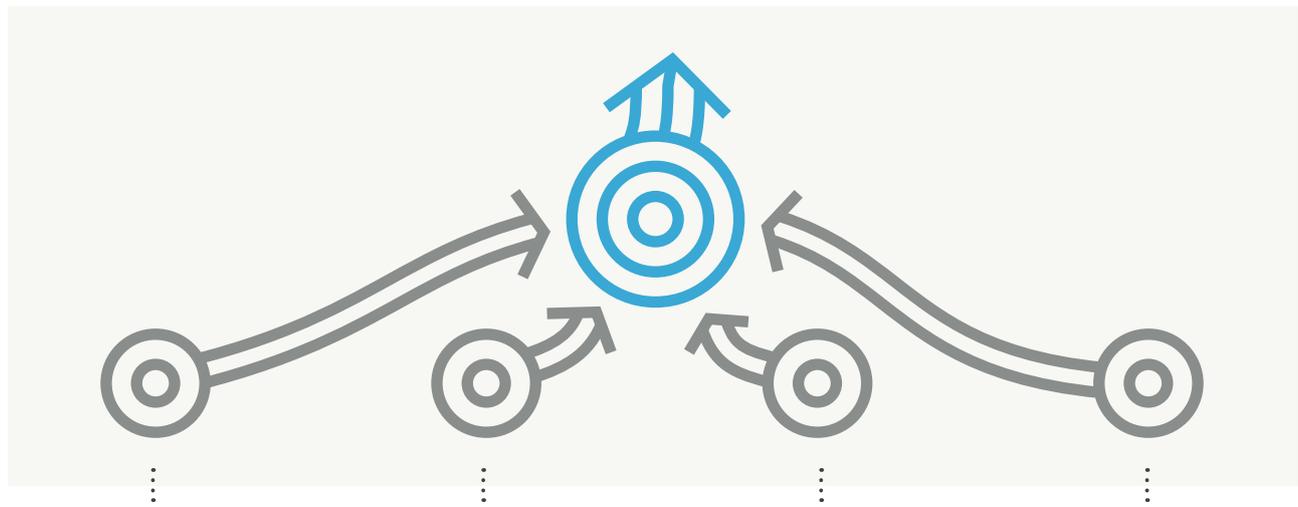
Common market challenges across the deserts include:

- Remoteness, isolation and distances from regional centres, combined with poor infrastructure and roads creates visitor access difficulty
- Seasonality and lack of critical mass of the market increases costs of services, development and profitability
- Marketing and destination image poorly defined
- Lack of appropriate products that respond to market drivers
- Perception of lack of reliability across sector

Actions to overcome these challenges are defined in the Desert Tourism Action Plan over the page. Market challenges are further discussed in the State of the Industry section, particularly in sections 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3.



Photo — Nyangumarta Country. Credit: Nyangumarta Warrarn Aboriginal Corporation.



**SUPPORT**

**Better Management of Tourism**

Support Indigenous groups to manage existing tourism and impacts, generate additional income.

**Access and permits**

- Develop permit systems, website forms and supporting permit information
- Develop regional permit/access systems to improve efficiency

**Management training and guidelines**

- On-country tourism management training
- Establish desert guidelines for the management of 4WD access, rubbish, campsites, firewood, biosecurity and toilets
- Distribute tourism toolbox to groups

**Visitor amenity and sustainability**

- Develop interpretive information and signage
- Implement basic infrastructure (water, toilets, basic campsites) at priority sites
- Educate visitors on Indigenous cultural values for country and promote responsible visitation

**LEARN**

**Capacity Building, Skills & Networks**

Build skills, networks and empower the Aboriginal knowledge economy.

**Guide training**

- Work with training organisations to deliver on-country tourism guide training
- Connect with national tourism industry accreditation and development organisations

**On-country planning**

- Support traditional owners to come together to enable effective planning for tourism

**Regional networks**

- Facilitate regional meetings, workshops and tourism conferences
- Facilitate exchanges between groups and Aboriginal tourism businesses
- Support groups to work together to connect local projects at a regional level
- Hold a forum to provide groups with case study examples of successful tourism products developed in other areas

**Build relationships with the industry**

- Broker relationships between Indigenous groups, the tourism industry and government agencies
- Support exchanges and participation in industry events
- Connect Indigenous groups with tourism operators
- Develop accreditation process for tourism operators on Aboriginal land

**GROW & CONNECT**

**Product Development**

Build the supply of Indigenous tourism products.

**Support staff**

- Fund program manager to implement the strategy and regionally-based tourism development officers to work with groups to build tourism initiatives

**Tourism experiences and products**

- Seek seed funding to enable groups to develop tourism experiences
- Support groups to develop their priority tourism project(s)
- Broker relationships and link groups to the corporate, conservation and education sector to build targeted experiences
- Support groups or regions to develop iconic drive loops and trails. Establish a network of drive trails
- Support pilots, demonstrations and 'ground-up' development of new products and experiences
- Explore options for technology, including guiding apps and other tools
- Support groups to access business and financial planning resources and advice

**Collaboration with the industry**

- Develop a framework for Indigenous groups to identify and engage the tourism industry in order to build joint products and partnerships
- Connect with industry programs, state and federal organisations and networks

**MARKET & SUSTAIN**

**Increase Demand & Promote**

Establish the deserts as a unique tourism destination and build the resilience of products.

**Marketing**

- Develop a 'desert portal' to provide coordinated information, permit access, itineraries and experiences that promote Indigenous tourism in the deserts
- Collaborate with tourism organisations and craft a unique and compelling narrative for the desert to target the domestic market
- Collaborate with the industry to connect the desert with destination marketing campaigns targeting nature, heritage and Indigenous cultural tourism

**Link products and support critical mass**

- Develop itineraries that link experiences, products and iconic destinations
- Establish a network of iconic tracks and trails with suitable permit systems, infrastructure, signage and information
- Target the east coast drive tourism market through developing linking trails, loops and coordinated permit systems

**Adapting and telling the story**

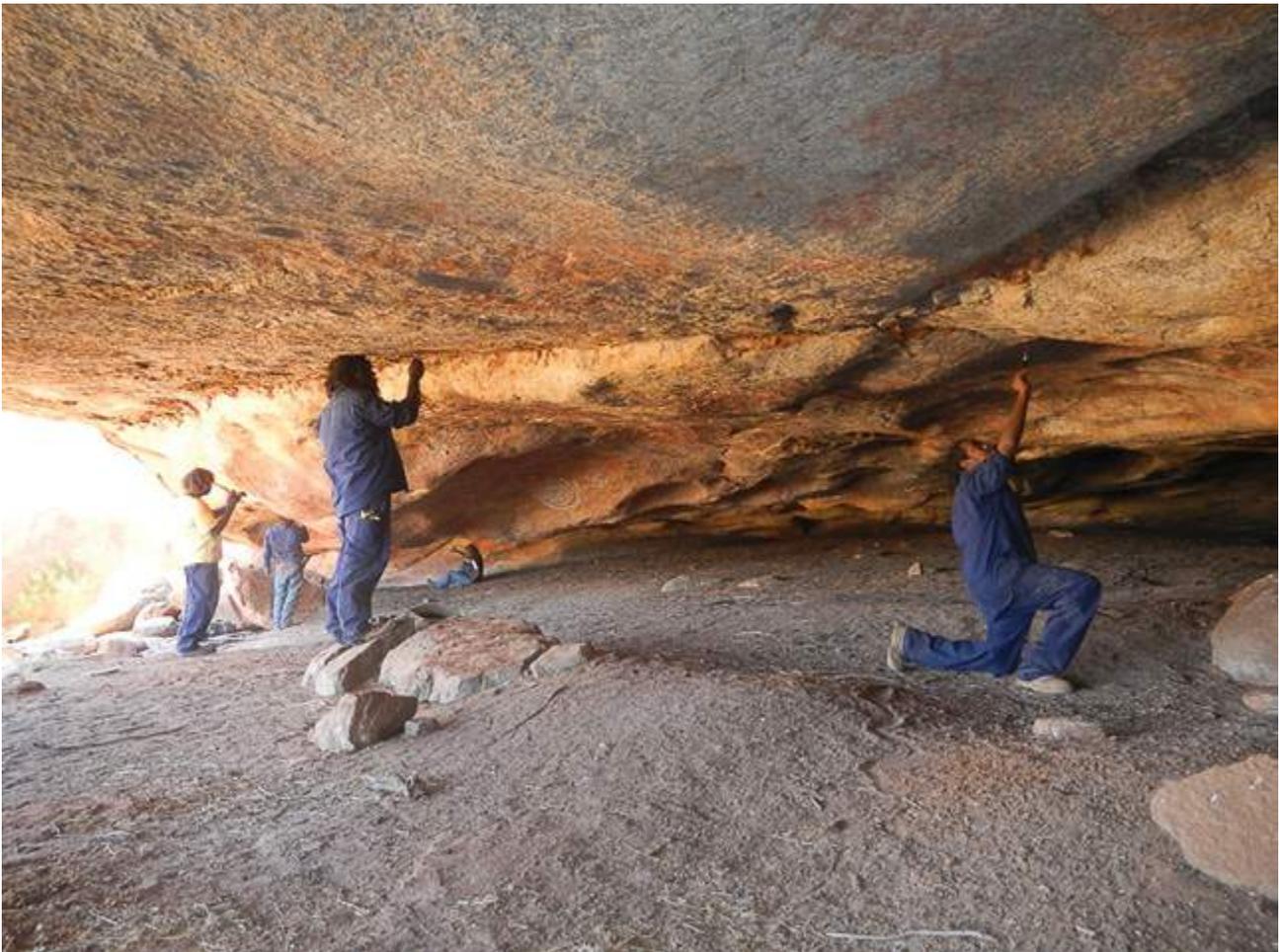
- Establish regional visitor data statistics for the desert regions
- Develop annual 'State of the Deserts' tourism report
- Conduct on-going market research

**Governance**

- Develop a working group to coordinate the implementation of this strategy

Figure 03

Key elements of Tourism Action Plan.



**Photo** — Rock art conservation work at Walka with the Kaltukatjara Rangers. *Credit: Central Land Council.*

## Initial Steps

This strategy aims to support Indigenous groups to better manage and develop tourism on their lands and to support groups at their various development stages to pursue their tourism development priorities. As such, the strategy has not pursued a sequential development process as this is not reflective of the different needs, aspirations, challenges and opportunities of groups in the desert. This is a strategic choice based on a core-set of development principles and a knowledge of what works across the desert.

The strategy has developed a framework to drive development and it is recommended that this is reviewed every three to five years and that the strategy is maintained until 2030.

The immediate next steps for the 10DP include:

- Facilitate the establishment of a working group and leadership forum to promote and oversee the implementation of this strategy
- Investigate the potential for government, industry and philanthropic funding to support the strategy
- Distribute the strategy to relevant stakeholders and Indigenous organisations

The strategy should be seen as an enabling document for both local and regional initiatives.

In the absence of any alternative governance arrangements across the deserts ownership for overseeing the implementation of the strategy, including seeking appropriate resources for the various proposed collaborative actions will reside with the 10DP tourism working group. The working group currently consists of representatives of various project partners and can be expanded to include other stakeholders as appropriate.

It should be noted that the role of the working group and 10DP more broadly does not restrict or limit individual partners or other Indigenous organisations from citing various actions outlined in the strategy and applying for and seeking funding where relevant to their aspirations and country.



Photo — Martu country. Credit: Kanyirrinpa Jukurpa.



Photo — Martu dance. Credit: Kanyirrinpa Jukurpa.



The executive summary forms part of the larger strategy document.

The full strategy can be accessed here:

[https://10deserts.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/INCO001\\_ST\\_Web\\_v7.pdf](https://10deserts.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/INCO001_ST_Web_v7.pdf)

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