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**Coping with locational advantage:
the economic development potential
of tourism at Seisia community,
Cape York Peninsula**

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ABSTRACT

This discussion paper focuses on economic issues raised in a consultancy report *Coping with Locational Advantage: Seisia and the Tourism Industry* commissioned by the Seisia Island Council and undertaken in November 1994. The consultancy was undertaken by Australian Outback Tourism Developments Pty Ltd and focused on the economic impact of tourism on the Seisia community located on Cape York Peninsula. Seisia is a Torres Strait Islander community of just over 100 people currently visited by nearly 15,000 tourists per annum. The community is strategically located on the northern coast of Cape York Peninsula adjacent to the sub-region's only deep-water harbour and near the tip of Cape York. In recent years, Seisia has increasingly developed tourism infrastructure to meet industry needs. This paper assesses the current economic impact of tourism on the Seisia community and then examines a range of wider economic development and policy issues. The central question raised is what is the potential for tourism to act as the leading sector of economic development for Seisia. Every attempt is made to rigorously address this question and to move beyond the particularities of the Seisia case to general policy issues.

Acknowledgments

The research on which this paper is based was undertaken jointly by Chris Burchett, principal of Australian Outback Tourism Developments Pty Ltd and myself, as a consultancy. I would like to thank Chris for the opportunity afforded to work with him and for his permission to publish parts of the consultancy report. The research has benefited from input from the numerous individuals interviewed. In particular, I would like to thank Joseph Elu, Daniel Elu, Arthur Wong and Mary Harris and Gary Wright and staff from Gary Wright Wilderness Safaris at Seisia. Other staff of the Council and others involved in enterprises at Seisia also assisted greatly. During the time spent on fieldwork, Injinoo, Bamaga, Pajinka, Thursday Island and Punsand Bay were visited. I would like to acknowledge generous assistance from people at all these locations. The Cape York Land Council and the Cape York Peninsula Land Use Strategy also assisted. An early version of this paper was presented as a seminar at the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) in November 1994; I thank participants for their input. Finally, thanks to Dr John Taylor, Dr Julie Finlayson and Ms Hilary Bek for incisive comment on an earlier draft, Ms Gillian Cosgrove and Ms Linda Roach for subeditorial and production assistance and Ian Haywood for cartography. I would like to emphasise that the particular issues raised here and the tenor of the paper reflect my own emphases.

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Foreword

In June 1994, Mr Bill Arthur and I visited Seisia while undertaking research on the Torres Strait regional economy. In discussion with Seisia Island Council chair Mr Joseph Elu, we were approached to undertake a brief consultancy on the economic impact of tourism on the community. I suggested to Mr Elu that it might be more appropriate for such a consultancy to be undertaken by Australian Outback Tourism Developments Pty Ltd, whose principal Mr Chris Burchett had extensive experience in indigenous tourism development issues. Subsequently, in October 1994, the Seisia Island Council engaged Australian Outback Tourism Developments Pty Ltd and myself (as co-consultant) to provide it with an overview of regional tourism development issues; to look at the current impacts of the tourism industry on the Seisia economy; and to provide guidance on how these influences could be best harnessed to maximise future economic benefits from tourism.

Chris Burchett and I visited Seisia and other tourist destinations on Cape York in November 1994, and completed a draft report for the Seisia Island Council in December 1994. This report was used by the Council and in a subsequent commercially-oriented consultancy by Deloitte in Brisbane. In September 1995, I wrote to Joseph Elu and sought permission to publish the consultancy report in the CAEPR Discussion Paper series. My reasons for this request were threefold. First, it would allow information about the economic impact of tourism to be disseminated more widely. There is a dearth of primary community-based research in this area. Second, it would place the research in the public domain and make it available for peer review. Third, it would be useful for future regional economic research that might be commissioned by the Torres Strait Regional Authority or by the Cape York Land Council. Later that month Daniel Elu, Council Clerk wrote to me supporting this request.

This paper is a significantly abridged version of the report to Seisia Island Council; the parts shortened deal with quantification of overall trends in tourism and issues of specific interest to the Council. Seisia Island Council has been generous in its willingness to have a report specifically commissioned for its constituency widely disseminated and I would like to thank the Council very much for initiating, participating in, and assisting this research. At a time when ownership of research material is all too often unproductively debated, it is encouraging to have the outcomes from such an active collaboration between an indigenous community, a consultancy company and a university-based research centre publicly available.

Jon Altman
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The tourism industry is regarded in a number of policy initiatives as a potential avenue for indigenous economic development. This is particularly so in the context of the Aboriginal Employment Development Policy (AEDP) that is currently being revised after review (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) 1994a) to focus on regional economic development options. ATSIC has released a draft tourism industry strategy (ATSIC 1994b), and as part of this has funded a number of pilot projects. Despite the perceived growing demand for indigenous cultural tourism, it has been noted before that there has been limited research on the supply side: to what extent do indigenous communities want to fully engage with the tourism industry, in either mainstream terms (the provision of goods and services) or in the marketing of indigenous culture, an area where indigenous people invariably enjoy a competitive advantage, if not a monopoly (Altman and Finlayson 1993; Altman 1993). And what is the available evidence that tourism has a positive economic impact on those indigenous communities that seek active engagement with the industry?

This discussion paper attempts to address some of these issues by focusing on the recent experience of a small Torres Strait Islander community, Seisia, on the northern tip of Cape York Peninsula (see Figure 1). The data on which this analysis is based were collected at the initiative of the Seisia Island Council who commissioned Australian Outback Tourism Developments Pty Ltd to undertake a brief study that provided an overview of regional (that is, northern Cape York) tourism development issues; to examine the current (1994) impacts of tourism on the Seisia economy; and to provide guidance on how tourism could best be harnessed to maximise future economic benefits for the community. I was engaged as co-consultant with Mr Chris Burchett to undertake this task, and in December 1994 completed an unpublished report *Coping with Locational Advantage: Seisia and the Tourism Industry* for the Council.

In September 1995, the Seisia Island Council was approached for permission to publish the report in the CAEPR Discussion Paper series. The reasons for the request were threefold. First, there are very few case studies that specifically examine the economic impact of tourism on indigenous communities, and none that focus specifically on a Torres Strait Islander community (although this community-based research can be contrasted with Davis's (1995) paper on the Saibai Island economy). Given the dearth of primary, community-based research in this area, it is important to make existing research publicly available. Second, as noted above, there is a growing policy shift to a focus on regionalism, and it is likely that in future both the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) and the Cape York Land Council or ATSIC (for the Peninsula region) will commission regional economic studies. Given the strategic geographic location of Seisia community, near the northern tip of Cape York and with the only deep-water harbour in the region (operating as one important

gateway to the Torres Strait), baseline information on Seisia could be of importance. Finally, and of greatest importance, the Seisia case study raises a number of issues that could inform indigenous communities, both within the region and more widely, which are considering involvement in tourism. This is especially so because, as the title of this paper suggests, while Seisia, like many remote indigenous communities is locationally disadvantaged in terms of access to mainstream labour markets, it is locationally advantaged in terms of opportunities in tourism. While tourist visitation to Seisia is not comparable in magnitude to some Aboriginal-owned locations in the Northern Territory, like Kakadu or Uluru National Parks (see Altman 1989), it is nevertheless significant. It is important to examine the economic spinoffs to tourism in such a better-case scenario. The Seisia Island Council endorsed the request to publish.

This paper begins by contextually and conceptually placing tourism and Seisia in a rather complex regional political economy. Next, the socioeconomic structure of Seisia is briefly described and its linkages with tourism assessed. An attempt is then made to estimate the direct, indirect and induced economic impacts of tourism on the indigenous component of the Seisia population. Finally, some wider implications of the Seisia experience with tourism are raised. The parts of the consultancy report excluded include detailed assessments of the future growth of tourism to northern Cape York (based on segmentation of the current market by origin and by primary purpose of visit) and specific development and marketing recommendations made to the Seisia Island Council. This paper does not aim to be comprehensive: it is based on a consultancy that was undertaken over only 24 consultant days, with 15 of these spent in the Cape York region in November 1994. From a personal point of view, it provides an invaluable opportunity to geographically broaden earlier community-based research on the economic impact of tourism on Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory (Altman 1988, 1989) and the Kimberley region of Western Australia (Altman 1987) to north Queensland.

Seisia in the regional polity

Seisia is a small Torres Strait Islander community with a population of just over 100 located on the most northern deep-water port of Cape York Peninsula. It lies within an area held under a Deed of Grant in Trust (DOGIT) by the Seisia Community Council. Seisia community is located close to Bamaga, a far larger community, from which Seisia splintered. An important contextual issue requiring emphasis is that Seisia is largely populated by Torres Strait Islanders who moved to mainland Australia in 1947 when Saibai, their home island, was inundated. Seisia now lies within a DOGIT area that was issued by the Queensland Government in 1986 over land which Aboriginal people now living at Injinoo claim custodial

responsibility. The DOGIT formalised arrangements made historically between the previous generation of Injinoo and Islander people; these arrangements remain contested.

The political landscape of Cape York Peninsula north of the Jardine River is further complicated by more recent political developments (see Sanders 1994). A number of authorities overlap in this sub-region. Seisia, and the nearby township of Bamaga, are primarily inhabited by Torres Strait Islanders and are formally included in the TSRA, a Commonwealth statutory body created by amendment to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Act in 1993 and operationalised from 1 July 1994. Both communities are also part of the Islander Coordinating Council established in 1984 under Queensland's community services legislation. The three other Cape communities (Injinoo, Umagico and New Mapoon) are primarily populated by Aboriginal people, are part of both the ATSIC Peninsula Region and the Aboriginal Coordinating Council, and are also members of the Cape York Land Council. All five Cape communities are notionally, at least, within the Torres Shire whose headquarters are on Thursday Island. However, all currently operate under the DOGIT and thus they do not pay rates to Torres Shire, except in the case of the Pajinka Wilderness Lodge (an Injinoo-owned enterprise) and the Punsand Bay Private Reserve (owned and operated by non-indigenous interests) both located off DOGIT lands. These key political features of the region are geographically highlighted in Figure 1.

Community and regional tourism goals

The regional tourism development aspirations of Cape communities are diverse in a manner that is not unusual for agglomerations of indigenous communities (see Altman 1988). Despite the fact that almost all overland visitors to the key regional attractions of Cape York drive through Bamaga, that community does not currently view tourism as a development priority. On the other hand, Injinoo owns and operates the strategic Jardine River vehicle-ferry and experiences the main impacts of tourist visitation to many destinations (mainly camping and fishing) that are located on its traditional lands. Injinoo owns the Pajinka Wilderness Lodge, an upmarket destination located adjacent to Cape York, but some distance from the Injinoo community (see Figure 1). Injinoo is aiming to enter the tourism industry mainly to control visitor impacts on its DOGIT lands, rather than to encourage its development; the exception is Pajinka where the community seeks to concentrate visitation. Injinoo's reluctance to fully enter the tourism industry may be due to its past experience when the community operated a well-developed camping ground near the entrance to Cowal Creek adjacent to the community. Umagico and New Mapoon, two other Aboriginal communities in the region, have very limited tourism involvement, although community shopping facilities are available to the general public. Of the five communities on the northern Cape, Seisia is

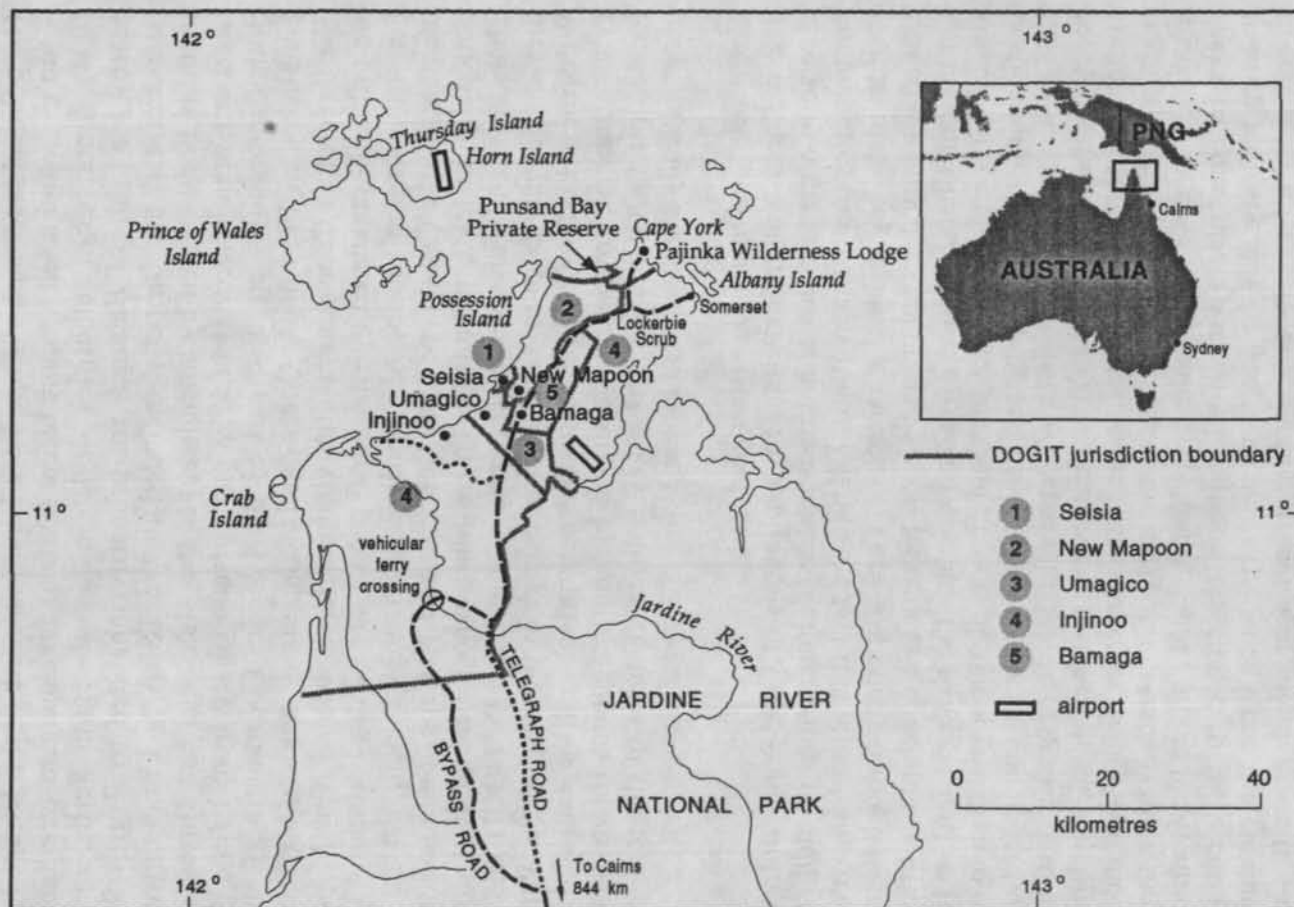


Figure 1. Northern Cape York Peninsula.

clearly the most developmentally oriented in terms of encouraging tourism, having a clearly articulated community council goal to become economically self-reliant on the basis of involvement in tourism by the year 2000.

In regional terms, the TSRA (of which Seisia is formally a part) also has a self-sufficiency goal, with appropriate and sustainable tourism development being regarded as one of the two main options (the other being commercial fishing) to generate income independent of government (TSRA 1994). The regional political alliances and cross-cutting cleavages between communities in the region loom large in discussions about tourism. For example, the Chairman of Seisia Island Council, who is also the ATSIC Commissioner for the Torres Strait, looks north to Torres Strait communities like Warraber (Sue) Island and Saibai Island when considering regional tourism development. There is little collaboration and coordination on the Cape between the diverse indigenous interests currently involved in tourism. Indeed relations are quite politically competitive. Competition is primarily about land and sea rights on the Cape, with the Injinoo Aboriginal community looking to assert its 'traditional ownership' of much of northern Cape York Peninsula in the aftermath of the High Court's native title decision and the passage of native title legislation. As a Torres Strait Islander community Seisia, with a very limited land base, is looking to develop tourism infrastructure as a strategic means of asserting its historic association with the land.

Tourism and Cape York

The main attraction of northern Cape York Peninsula is the very tip of the Cape itself, the northern-most point of continental Australia. But most tourists visit the 'Tip' as part of a more general holiday on Cape York, that includes a number of other attractions. These include some combination of four-wheel driving adventures, environmental and ecotourism, historical and cultural tourism and fishing. The Tip itself is not regarded as an icon like Ayers Rock; there are few tourists who want only to visit this locality. Tourist demand can be simplified into three broad, often overlapping segments: the ecotourism/wilderness experience seekers, the off-road adventurers and the fishing fraternity.

The trip north from Cairns to the tip of Cape York is touted as one of the great four-wheel driving adventures, particularly in the domestic market where it appeals to off-road enthusiasts wanting to tackle the hardest, the longest and the most northerly four-wheel drive track in Australia. It is this segment that makes up the majority of those currently arriving at the northern Cape and using the camping and other service facilities primarily at Seisia but also elsewhere in the region. Paradoxically, the off-road adventurers are not stereotypically just into bush bashing, but are also often the ecotourism/wilderness-experience seekers. Cape York Peninsula

includes several national parks and is an area of diverse wilderness, with a mixture of many broad ecosystems including the east coast rainforest (with UNESCO World Heritage listing); open eucalypt woodlands; drier inland ti-tree scrub; clear creeks and rivers; isolated waterfalls and pools; unsealed roads; few settlements and only basic facilities for travellers. Less surprising, off-roaders are often members of the fishing fraternity. There is a strong demand for the fishing opportunities of the region and three private fishing charter operations operate from Seisia, as well as from Punsand Bay and Pajinka. Salmon, queenfish, barramundi, trevally and other species popular with sportfishers abound in the rivers and the waters off the Cape.

Other, less significant, regional attractions include opportunities to participate in historical and cultural tourism. The former is mainly linked to visiting locations like the ruins of Somerset, an early colonial government outpost abandoned at the turn of the century, and the remnants of crashed planes from the second world war. A day trip by ferry to Thursday Island, the regional centre for Torres Strait with old world charm, is also a popular option for visitors. Cultural tourism on the northern Cape is currently largely limited to informal contact with indigenous Australians. At Seisia, for example, there is an opportunity to observe a small group of Torres Strait Island weavers and purchase baskets, while the open invitation to sit on the Seisia wharf and mingle with local fishers offers a cultural experience that fits comfortably with visitor expectations for local contact. At Seisia, there were opportunities to see Torres Strait Islander dancing, but this ceased at the end of 1993. A particular, but small, interest group that visits the north Cape are ornithologists who are specially catered for at Pajinka Wilderness Lodge.

All regional attractions can be readily accessed from Seisia and this is a logical location from which to access the northern Cape, whether for fishing, sight-seeing or going off-shore to Thursday Island. Seisia though does not have a monopoly as a tourism destination, and is competing to some extent with both Punsand Bay and Pajinka. However, each of these destinations also caters for particular market niches: Pajinka is the most upmarket with quality accommodation; Punsand Bay offers a safari camp atmosphere; while Seisia offers standard camping facilities. All three offer camping options.

Access

By far the most common entry to the northern Peninsula is by road along the unsealed, dry season-only access from Cairns via Laura, Coen and the Jardine River on either the Telegraph or Bypass Roads (see Figure 1). Visitors also arrive by air with daily flights out of Cairns landing at both Bamaga and Horn Island. Organised touring often involves packaging an overland entry with an air or sea exit. A 30-berth catamaran cruiser is used

by some organised touring interests, while self-drivers can return to Cairns by sea aboard the weekly coastal freighter. Ferry services operate daily during the tourist season between Seisia and Thursday Island offering another entry option. However, almost all visitors from Thursday Island (who generally arrive there via the airport on Horn Island) are day visitors.

Despite the absence of hard statistical data, estimates indicate that in the order of 8,000 'tourist' vehicles crossed the Jardine River during the 1994 dry season. This figure matches the estimate (from Injinoo community staff) at the Jardine River Ferry and the 4,500 vehicles recorded at the Seisia Campground which the operator estimated as accounting for about 55 per cent of the traffic using all accommodation facilities in the area (that is, Punsand Bay, Seisia and Pajinka).

Table 1. Estimated visitors and vehicles, Seisia 1991-93.

| | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 |
|---|--------|--------|--------|
| Vehicle numbers | 4,662 | 4,702 | 4,596 |
| Visitors | 12,536 | 14,225 | 14,433 |
| Visitor nights (fishers) | 15,043 | 17,070 | 17,320 |
| Visitor nights (four-wheel drive enthusiasts) | 20,000 | 22,720 | 27,680 |
| Total visitor nights ^a | 35,043 | 39,790 | 45,000 |

- a. It is estimated that fishermen stay an average of between five and seven nights (median six) while four-wheel drive enthusiasts stay an average of two nights. This concurred with the cursory observations of the consultants. To estimate visitor nights, an educated guess resulted in a 20:80 split fishers to four-wheel drive visitors, which were then multiplied out by average length of stay.

Source: G. Wright, Seisia Campground records.

Records from Seisia summarised in Table 1 provide a snapshot of tourist visitation to the community during the period 1991-93. On one hand, visitor numbers and vehicle numbers appear to have stagnated. On the other hand, total visitor nights have expanded by about 14 per cent per annum, which is a similar scale of tourism growth (18 per cent) to that experienced in the Cairns region in recent years.

Seisia's socioeconomic structure

The socioeconomic structure of Seisia described here is based on use of 1991 Census data and discussions with community members, especially Council members who assisted with a round-table census of the usual (de jure) population, and direct observation. The intention here is to describe

the population upon which tourism might potentially impact, since the stated community objective of economic independence is focused specifically on Seisia community members, and to assess employment levels within the community.

Population and demographic structure

In 1991, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census estimated that 103 persons (97 of Islander origin, three of Aboriginal origin and three of European origin) resided at Seisia; this accords with the general acceptance that Seisia is a Torres Strait Islander community (ABS 1994). A survey undertaken as part of the tourism consultancy in November 1994 indicated that there were 103 indigenous persons residing in the community and 24 non-indigenous persons. It is unclear why the latter group, many of whom resided at Seisia in 1991, were so significantly under-enumerated in the 1991 Census.

The regional population distributed between the five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as well as localities such as Punsand Bay and Pajinka totalled 1,750 in 1991, divided as follows: 887 Torres Strait Islanders, 667 Aborigines, 389 others. In overall terms then, Seisia only accounted for about 6 per cent of the regional population. Interestingly, in the intercensal period 1986-91, the population of Seisia grew from 47 to 103, while the population of nearby Bamaga declined from 582 to 538 (Arthur 1994; ABS 1994). In many ways, Seisia and Bamaga, only a few kilometres apart (see Figure 1), can be regarded as two parts of one community.

It is possible that over time the indigenous population of Seisia might expand; a clear current constraint is the absence of housing for any new arrivals (and for non-indigenous community members). The demographic structure of the population at November 1994 indicated that there were 43 people at Seisia aged under 15 years in 1994, or 42 per cent, a youthful population very typical of Australia's indigenous population (Taylor 1995). Thirty-eight people were identified as under 15 years of age in 1991.

Employment and income

Employment at Seisia, according to the 1991 Census and data collected in November 1994, is summarised in Table 2. There are some interesting ratios that can be derived from the data in this table. In 1991, the employment/population ratio was 58 per cent, a figure somewhat higher than the Torres Strait-wide ratio of 52 per cent (Arthur 1994). Only three years later, in November 1994, it was a relatively high 72 per cent, although it is acknowledged that the census question was not used to determine employment levels during the consultancy visit to Seisia. There are also some anomalies: in the 1991 Census, even with the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme in operation, there

were a maximum of 12 people employed part-time (if all 'not stated' are assumed to work part-time). However, information on hours worked for employed people contradicts this, as no information indicated people working less than 35 hours per week (of the 29 employed people, only, responding to the question).

Table 2. Employment in the Seisia labour market, persons 15 years and over, 1991 and 1994.

| Year | Full-time | Employed Part-time | Total | Unemployed | Not in the labour force | Total |
|------|-----------|-----------------------|-----------------|------------|----------------------------|-------|
| 1991 | 30 | 6 | 42 ^a | 3 | 28 | 73 |
| 1994 | 20 | 23 | 43 | 0 | 17 | 60 |

a. Includes six 'not stated' in the 1991 Census.

Source: ABS 1994; November 1994 consultancy survey.

Of people employed in 1991, a majority 65 per cent were tabulated in the private industry sector. 1991 Census data do not reveal that a large proportion of the Seisia labour force is employed elsewhere, especially at Bamaga. In November 1994, 19 of 43 employed people, or 44 per cent of employed people, were working outside Seisia. Similarly, it is interesting that while Seisia runs a CDEP scheme, only 13 of 40-45 participants in November 1994 were from Seisia community itself, with the remainder coming from nearby Bamaga and New Mapoon, communities that also participate in the CDEP scheme. A high proportion of employed people at Seisia work full-time; in November 1994, 47 per cent of employed persons worked full-time.

According to 1991 Census data, median individual income for people aged 15 years and over was just under \$11,000 per annum. This figure is slightly higher than for all indigenous Australians within the jurisdiction of the TSRA, but is quite high compared to indigenous Australians elsewhere in rural north Australia (Arthur 1994). This indicates a total household cash income at Seisia in the region of \$800,000 in 1991. There is little reason to believe that this changed greatly to 1994. This figure does not reveal the high participation of community members in subsistence fishing activities, both off the Seisia wharf and using dinghies, and its significant contribution to imputed household income and diet.

Information on educational qualifications of adults at Seisia according to the 1991 Census is somewhat unclear, partly because of a very high 'not-

stateds' category. Of people aged 15 years and over, 69 per cent said that they had no qualifications, 27 per cent did not state their qualifications and 4 per cent (three people) stated they possessed vocational skills. These levels of qualification are somewhat lower than for the TSRA region generally (Arthur 1994), but do not accord with the observed participation of local people in clerical employment at the Seisia Island Council office, in the stevedoring enterprise and elsewhere. It is interesting to note further that of those tourism-related positions at Seisia, five (55 per cent) were filled by Seisia people who indicated that they enjoyed interacting with visitors.

The housing stock at Seisia has developed rapidly in the last few years and currently there are 22 houses occupied by 103 persons with an average household occupancy rate of less than five persons per household; the range is from a one person household to a ten person multi-family household. Housing status is relatively high, and while 'the village' is tucked away from the major tourist thoroughfare, residential areas are open to tourists. A feature of this community is that the quality of the housing stock is high and consequently not an embarrassment as at some Aboriginal communities. Another feature is that while Islanders are well housed, the real pressure is on non-indigenous employees and business operators who live in caravans and demountables in a staff compound. This has been stated by some as a constraint on personal commitment to greater regional investment.

Seisia and tourism

The Seisia community has not actively encouraged tourism but rather found itself in a position to have to service the needs of visitors. Hence the title of this paper 'Coping with locational advantage'. Many of the service operations have developed in response to visitor needs and are conducted by non-indigenous entrepreneurs under fairly loosely-defined lease arrangements with the Seisia Island Council and within premises owned by the Council. The Council, the business operators and others are now recognising that these arrangements as becoming increasingly inappropriate and that they are not necessarily in the best interests of either the Seisia community or business interests. Each enterprise is briefly described as a means to provide an indication of the nature of Seisia's involvement in tourism.

Tourism infrastructure

Seisia Campground was established in the late 1960s as a State government initiative and full control was only assumed by the Seisia Island Council in 1987. It has approximately 50 sites, with an additional area set aside for peak-season overflows. It is one of only two tourism-dedicated facilities in

the community and is being operated under a two-plus-two year lease from the council for an annual fee of \$40,000. The two ablution blocks have an acceptable capacity for existing loads; however, growth in visitor numbers will necessitate additional facilities. Problems stemming from inadequate and aged water reticulation to the campground should be alleviated with plans to upgrade supply and storage capacities in 1995.

Seisia Seaview Lodge is located at the rear of the main campground and is managed, as part of the campground, under lease from the Council. The recently completed 'Lodge' comprises six rooms and communal facilities. It caters for a mixture of government personnel and other visitors. The Seaview 'Lodge' might be better described as a 'hostel': while it meets the needs of visiting government personnel it would be judged inadequate by mainstream tourist accommodation standards where self-contained facilities are standard (as at Pajinka), but is regarded as adequate by fishers. Some Council discussion has considered future expansion of accommodation and will need to determine the most appropriate style to match target markets.

Guided fishing safaris are available and are the second tourism-dedicated service at Seisia. The largest of the three operators, Seafaris, has a sophisticated and substantial safari operation based around a launch moored off Seisia. It caters to mostly fly-in fly-out clientele and operates extended, pre-booked fishing safaris. Two smaller operators (Cape York Rod and Rifle and York Explorer) are new and cater to self-drive fishing enthusiasts. Destinations include the creeks and inlets between the mouth of the Jardine River on the west and around the Cape to the Jackie Jackie Creek system in the east. Gebadi's Tackle Shop is a small shop run by a local entrepreneur in premises leased from the Council. A basic stock of handlines and appropriate gear for local conditions is held in the shop and specialist needs can be ordered from southern suppliers and flown in with little delay. While some tourists use the shop to purchase equipment, many come for information about fishing, especially off Seisia wharf which is a popular and productive fishing spot both for locals and visitors.

Seisia Kiosk is a combination fast food outlet and corner shop established some nine years ago and operating out of Council premises. It is leased for an annual fee of \$23,836 on a limited tenure. A combination of Council resources and ATSIC Community Enterprises Incentive Scheme funding has financed the construction of new premises completed in 1995. The management estimated that 95 per cent of kiosk turnover is generated from local trade and that non-local trade is mainly from workers staying at Seaview Lodge. Observations made during two brief field visits indicated a much higher use of the kiosk by visitors (at least 30 per cent of turnover) than estimated by the management.

Seisia Palms Service Station opened in new premises in 1992 and is run by the Council. It employs five Islander men part-time. It carries a very basic line of automotive needs and acts as a further source of tourist information about camping, fishing, swimming and other local attractions. Seisia Marine and Top End Motors are two small non-indigenous businesses both operating from premises leased from the Council. Seisia Car Rentals is a small household-based enterprise operated by a Torres Strait Islander couple.

Commercial linkages

To understand both the scale and relative significance of existing service operations, an attempt was made to estimate the economic linkages between each of these enterprises and tourism in 1994. These estimates of gross operating turnover and the significance of tourism were based on personal experience as well as on the estimates of key informants. Enterprise operators were not questioned on the gross turnover of their own enterprise, but were asked if they would agree to provide an estimate of others. The outcomes from this exercise are summarised in Table 3, with some information on each enterprise being provided below.

Table 3. Summary of estimated commercial linkages between Seisia-based enterprises and the tourism industry, 1994.

| Enterprise | Estimated turnover | Estimated % from tourism | Tourism revenue | Lease | Lease/rent |
|------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|------------|
| Gary Wright | | | | | |
| Safaris ^a | \$350,000 | 85 | \$297,500 | 2+2 year | \$40,000 |
| Seafaris | \$75,000 | 100 | \$75,000 | none | |
| Seisia Kiosk | \$600,000 | 30 | \$180,000 | 2+2 year | \$23,836 |
| Seisia Marine | \$50,000 | 20 | \$10,000 | renting | \$65/week |
| Top End Motors | \$60,000 | 25 | \$15,000 | renting | \$77/week |
| Gebadi's Tackle Shop | \$12,500 | 50 | \$6,250 | renting | \$40/week |
| Cape York Rod and Rifle | \$40,000 | 100 | \$40,000 | Gary Wright sub-lease | |
| York Explorer | \$20,000 | 100 | \$20,000 | Gary Wright sub-lease | |
| Seisia Car Rentals | \$30,000 | 10 | \$3,000 | Private residence-based | |
| Seisia Palms Service Station | \$560,000 | 40 | \$224,000 | Council enterprise | |
| Total | \$1,797,000 | 48 | \$870,000 | | |

a. Includes Seisia Campground, Seisia Seaview Lodge, Bamaga and Region Taxi Service and Peddell's Ferry agency.

The key features of Table 3 are as follows. Most enterprises at Seisia are small, with only the campground, the service station and the kiosk having significant estimated turnover. However, the significance of the tourism sector was highly variable, even for these enterprises. Only three enterprises were totally dedicated to tourism; the campground was almost entirely oriented to tourism, its wider clientele being due primarily to the diversity of the operation's business interests (like the Bamaga and Region Taxi Service). A number of enterprises are obviously commercially marginal being at an early establishment phase when profits are rarely made.

Economic impacts

The economic impacts of tourism on Seisia can be assessed in terms of revenue generated for the community both directly and indirectly as spinoff effects accrue to the wider regional economy. In the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs context, particularly in remote locations, the focus of community economic activity is invariably the public sector community council; a mainstream private sector is usually absent. In the case of Seisia, the private sector is primarily represented by tourism.

Direct economic effects

The direct economic benefits from tourism accrue to the Seisia Island Council from lease and rental payments from tourism-related enterprises. In general terms, and even assuming that all businesses exist solely for tourists, which they do not, only a maximum of 10 per cent of the Council's gross income of \$2.3 million per annum based on 1993-94 figures comes from such activities. This includes lease payments from the campground, lodge and kiosk, rentals from businesses, sales of artefacts, yellow phone receipts and 40 per cent of the receipts from the operation of the Seisia Palms Service Station. However, if the costs of running the service station are deducted and assessing the financial impact of tourism on Council accounts in net terms, in 1993-94 tourism had a zero fiscal impact on Council earnings.

At the household level, tourism can generate both employment and income. At a maximum, and again assuming that the Seisia Palms Service Station is a tourist facility, a total of nine jobs were generated in tourism for Islanders, five at the Service Station, one with Gary Wright Safaris, one at the tackle shop and two in a small crafts production enterprise. Of these nine jobs, seven were taken up by Seisia residents: 16 per cent of local employment was tourism-related. It should be noted though that seven of these jobs were funded by government labour market programs. Some jobs, particularly the private sector employment of a full-time assistant at the Seisia campground, were only seasonal. In the region of 16 jobs, mainly

full-time plus, were taken up in tourism and tourism-related enterprises by non-Islanders residing at Seisia.

It is extremely difficult to assess the impact of tourism-related employment on household income: in terms of Seisia, one household's income is derived almost entirely from a tourism-related car hire business, while the household where the indigenous tackle shop operator resides received a significant proportion of its income from the enterprise. It is unlikely that any more than 5 per cent of total household income at Seisia derived directly from tourism-related enterprises.

Indirect economic effects

As noted above the boundary between the tourism sector and services provided to community residents, regional residents and visitors to the community on business is difficult to differentiate. As estimates in Table 3 indicate, a number of businesses at Seisia are only partially involved in tourism. Importantly, a number may not be commercially viable without their tourism component; detailed financial statements for businesses were not available to enable such a distinction to be clearly made. For example, indirect local and regional spinoffs from tourism generated income of around \$80,000 in 1993-94 for the Seisia Stevedore and Hire Service, which unloads the weekly barge at Seisia wharf; this is a significant source of income for the enterprise.

Induced effects

The 14,500 tourists visiting Seisia obviously have spinoffs for other tourism and tourism-related businesses in the region. Property rights in all the region's main tourist attractions, namely the Cape itself, recreational fishing and the environment are poorly defined and/or are held in common. Certainly Seisia operates as a gateway to tourist visitation to Thursday Island with an estimated 60 per cent of tourists who camp at Seisia taking a day trip with Peddell's Ferry and Tour Bus Services. Benefits from this accrue to two Thursday Island tour operators, to a number of retail outlets on Thursday Island, to Peddell's Seisia agent collecting a commission on sales, and to the campground through extra nights spent there by most of the day-trippers. Visitors to Seisia also visit the hinterland, travelling to the Cape and Somerset through Bamaga, and possibly to the Jardine River and Muttee Heads. These travellers must generate income for a number of small regional enterprises, many of which are indigenous-owned and operated. Conversely, tourists who camp at Punsand Bay or stay at Pajinka Wilderness Lodge frequently visit Seisia.

Wider economic development and policy issues

Can the Seisia community, locationally advantaged with respect to tourism on Cape York Peninsula, move towards economic independence via tourism development? This question raises a number of economic development and policy issues. While the focus here is on the very particular and small-scale Seisia case, a number of these issues have wider general relevance to indigenous communities either considering or committed to the tourism route to economic development. Economic development is, of course, a longer-term process and any realistic assessment of the potential of tourism as a community-based leading sector must consider a complex set of inter-related demand and supply factors. The demand for tourism services will primarily be dictated by future visitor numbers and the ability of Seisia (in contrast to other regional tourism nodes) to meet their requirements. Of greater significance in this case, where a significant level of visitation has been attained, is the supply-side: how will Seisia community members respond to tourism opportunities and how can a significant share of regional tourism expenditure be captured? This issue is addressed by conceptually focusing on the availability of three factors of production, labour, capital and land and strategic approaches that might be needed to maximise their potential in this particular case. Finally, the potential for tourism to generate sufficient income to make a small community like Seisia economically independent is assessed.

Future tourism growth

Tourism to Cape York is seasonal, with the tourist season currently extending over a maximum eight months (April to December) each year. While some tourists might increasingly fly into the all-weather airstrip at Bamaga during the wet season and then travel to Seisia to stay at the Seaview Lodge, the majority of visitation is still by private vehicle or on an organised safari tour. It was estimated in Table 1 that currently 45,000 visitor nights per annum are spent at Seisia.

It is difficult to unambiguously assess the potential growth rate of visitation to Cape York, or more specifically to assess the Seisia proportion of any future growth. At a broader regional level, north Queensland has experienced unprecedented growth in visitation over the past six years averaging 18 per cent per annum. It is now predicted that this growth rate will flatten out, but projections to the year 2001 still anticipate significant annual growth rates, especially from interstate and international sectors (Queensland Office of the Co-ordinator General 1994). This optimistic view is shared by major policy initiatives like the National Ecotourism Strategy (Department of Tourism 1993), the National Aboriginal and Islander Tourism Strategy (ATSIC 1994b) and the Draft Queensland Ecotourism Plan (Department of Tourism, Sport and Youth 1995). This will have a flow-on affect, with northern Cape York continuing to attract

those looking for an off-road, nature-based holiday experience. Existing tourism product, limited to the Cape itself, the environment, some cultural activities and fishing, will meet this demand. With improved access and an extension of high season periods, it is likely that visitation will increase naturally by at least 10 per cent per annum, or 50 per cent in the next five years.

At present, owing to the structure of enterprises and the nature of lease arrangements with fixed returns to Seisia Island Council, there is limited incentive to aggressively promote Seisia as a destination, or to enter into direct competition with the other major camping alternatives, Punsand Bay and Pajinka. To some extent, Seisia merely copes with its locational advantage, somewhat reactively accepting any tourist that arrives seeking camping facilities. There remain opportunities to develop cultural touring activities and to expand and develop the service aspect of the industry at Seisia. Rather than merely relying on the locational advantage that Seisia presently enjoys, there are opportunities for a more strategic approach to the community's dealings with the tourism industry. A more proactive approach could see Seisia expand its market share of the existing and expected growth in visitor numbers into the area. Seisia could develop a marketing strategy that maximises its competitive advantages, minimises its disadvantages and develops a focus, or a theme (like 'Gateway to Torres Strait') to provide a marketing identity or niche for the community. The success of such an approach though would be dependent on both the response of other regional tourism enterprises and the willingness and potential for greater involvement by community members.

Tourism employment levels, aspirations and incentives

What impact will tourism have on the Seisia labour market? An assessment of the economic development potential of Torres Strait undertaken in 1989 used the term 'Islanderisation' in relation to the potential to replace non-local people with Torres Strait Islanders in employment (Arthur 1990, 1991). If all tourism and tourism-related jobs at Seisia were 'Islanderised' immediately, about 16 jobs in total would be generated. This would create 'full employment' at Seisia. However, this is an unlikely scenario for two reasons. First, most Seisia residents do not have the qualifications or managerial experience to operate tourism and tourism-related enterprises. Those with the requisite skills are already engaged full-time elsewhere. Second, and of greater significance, there is no evidence that Seisia residents are actively seeking a greater involvement in tourism employment. This is partly because other preferred employment options, including participation in the CDEP scheme, exist either at Seisia or at other communities in the region. Islanderisation then must be contrasted with 'localisation' which refers to the potential for recruitment of local Seisia community members into tourism. Hence, while the labour pool at Seisia is very small, there is a regional labour market that could provide

skilled and unskilled labour to work at Seisia. Indeed the geographic proximity of other communities, particularly Bamaga and New Mapoon, is an unusual feature of the northern Cape York situation and a number of people already commute to Seisia for employment.

A wider policy issue that arises is whether labour market programs are being actively used to provide training and work experience for indigenous people targeted at the tourism industry and whether such programs provide the appropriate incentive structure to facilitate tourism employment. For example, two people are employed by the Seisia Island Council to manufacture crafts on a full-time basis under labour market programs. However, revenue from craft sold is repaid to the council, hardly a mechanism to encourage independent employment in tourism. Similarly, CDEP scheme work teams clean up the campground, but such work merely subsidises the (private sector) campground operation, rather than providing a genuine means to consider options for tourism employment. Indeed the operation of the CDEP scheme at Seisia on a week-on week-off basis does not provide realistic work experience for those who might seek full engagement in the tourism industry.

A key supply of labour issue is whether local people, either from Seisia or from other communities in its immediate vicinity, aspire to be employed in the tourism industry. Evidence from elsewhere in Australia indicates that many indigenous Australians have chosen to avoid direct employment in tourism, choosing instead indirect options like manufacturing arts and crafts for sale to tourists or working for national park authorities (see Altman and Finlayson 1993). (There are some notable exceptions in north Queensland like the Tjapukai Dance Theatre that has been operating with indigenous staff for six years and is about to expand (see Finlayson 1995).) However, the overall standard of living at Seisia is relatively high and a combination of current, often part-time CDEP scheme employment and participation in significant subsistence fishing, might provide sufficient cash and imputed income for many households. It seems that many individuals at Seisia do not aspire to work in tourism, partly perhaps because appropriate incentives do not occur at the individual or household level to encourage such direct involvement.

Tourism enterprise development and joint venturing

Capital is often regarded as a major constraint on enterprise development in indigenous communities. The history of Seisia's recent enterprise development, especially since 1987, indicates that it has not been driven by private capital or the market, but primarily by government enterprise grants. Examination of the Council's most recent audited financial statement indicates that income in 1993-94 totalled \$2.35 million and expenditure (including wages and infrastructure development) totalled \$2.26 million. In per capita terms, Seisia received nearly \$23,000 per

capita, which is a great deal more than the estimated median income for adults of nearly \$11,000. This 'income gap' is primarily explained by considerable investment in tourism and community physical infrastructure, such as the lodge, an additional amenities block, a new service station and a new kiosk. The considerable public subvention of development at Seisia has two implications. First, it is unlikely to continue in the future, because agencies like ATSIC will now look for funded enterprises to stand alone. Second, a combination of the nature of land tenure and the public sector's role in development have not assisted the creation of a competitive entrepreneurial business environment, a scenario that is all too common for indigenous community-owned enterprises in remote regions.

The Seisia Island Council has deliberately and strategically chosen to develop tourism infrastructure and to lease most enterprises on a walk-in, walk-out basis to entrepreneurs from outside the community. This strategy recognises that local entrepreneurs are not available to operate such enterprises on the seven-day-a-week basis that the tourism sector requires. This is a sound strategy because the community retains ownership of its tourism assets base. However, it has some shortcomings. Because enterprises are leased on a short-term basis, there is limited incentive for operators to invest in these businesses as there is no security of renewal and no opportunity to realise capital gain and a return for goodwill when leases expire. Unless this limitation is addressed it is likely that there will be deficient private sector investment in tourism infrastructure. Interestingly, such disincentive to invest extends to local Torres Strait Islander entrepreneurs who also rent premises from the Council.

Future enterprise development at Seisia will need to address a number of issues that are generated in part by statutory constraints imposed by the inalienable nature of land tenure and its current leasing strategy. The Seisia Island Council needs to explore options for the development of genuine joint ventures at Seisia as it is unlikely that in the immediate future local community members will have the skills or desire to manage tourism facilities. Joint venturing might encourage greater external equity participation and might also provide options for influencing enterprise policies in relation to recruiting and training local labour. Existing statutory limitations on the forms joint ventures might take, in terms of leasing arrangements and corporate structures, need to be explored, especially in respect of the location of tourism infrastructure on inalienable DOGIT land.

The Seisia Island Council, like other indigenous communities, has to carefully balance conditions in lease agreements to ensure that a fair return on publicly-funded investments are received by the Council, without unduly stifling the incentives for entrepreneurs to invest and perform. Options utilised elsewhere in Australia include use of professional

commercial and legal expertise; independent commercial assessment of appropriate lease payments; imposition of per capita visitor fees; payment of a set or sliding scale share of turnover, assessed by independent auditors; and commercially-sensible lease periods. Conditions could be incorporated in agreements requiring lessees to provide employment and training for local people. While remaining aware of commercial sensitivities, the Seisia Island Council needs to gain access to far more information about the financial status of community-based tourism enterprises and options for independent audit of leased businesses need to be considered especially when renegotiating leases. It is important that lease conditions are monitored. Ultimately, both Torres Strait Islander and non-indigenous entrepreneurs need to be encouraged to invest as stakeholders in Seisia.

Rights in land and land use planning

It is often assumed that in remote locations land would be a plentiful factor of production for indigenous communities, especially when located on DOGIT (or other forms of reserved or inalienable) lands. Such a view though overlooks the complexity of customary land ownership rights that frequently override even statutory provisions. In Seisia's case, this situation is further complicated by the relatively recent migration of Torres Strait Islanders to the northern Cape. The DOGIT lands available to Seisia for tourism development are relatively small (see Figure 1) and the community faces real constraints on the availability of land. Even a slow expansion of tourism could create pressures on the available land base. Options to expand land ownership include negotiating to expand tourism development on to the New Mapoon DOGIT (with a possibility that Seisia would become a lessee) or alternatively on to Red Island just off the wharf, but within the Seisia DOGIT. Another option is to increase the size of the Seisia DOGIT in the context of current negotiations for a regional land agreement.

Land and land use loom as significant contemporary issues on Cape York Peninsula. As Figure 1 indicates, DOGIT lands 'north of the Jardine' are variably bestowed with some communities having a far larger land base than others. This partly reflects the recent arrival of Torres Strait Islanders on the northern Cape in 1947, but it is also a distribution that reflects traditional affiliation to country and does not reflect contemporary land use patterns, especially in tourism. There is a currently some uncertainty about how land interests will be formally recognised and divided between Cape communities in the aftermath of the passage of both land rights legislation in Queensland in 1991 and Commonwealth native title legislation in 1993. It is important that land ownership is clarified as soon as possible as uncertainty is neither conducive to investment nor to cooperation between indigenous regional tourism interests.

It is generally accepted at Seisia that tourism infrastructure development has occurred in an unsystematic manner responding to market demand. Given the identified constraint, it is important that land use is carefully planned. There is an urgent need to systematically plan infrastructure development at Seisia, both in terms of prioritisation of developments, location of new facilities, and inter-linkages between existing and new facilities. It remains unclear if limits will ever be placed on visitation, but the facilities available suggest that future demand may soon exceed supply. It might be necessary to limit visitor numbers, require pre-booking of camping sites or to provide camping alternatives. To date, financial assistance to develop facilities has been provided without rigorous feasibility assessment. It is important that future developments, especially of additional accommodation, be carefully assessed.

Indeed Seisia needs an overarching tourism development plan to allow the community to respond proactively to tourism. A tourism plan should incorporate a proposed layout for Seisia's expanding tourism infrastructure precinct. Planning should also aim to generate information about tourist numbers in the region, their needs, activity patterns and satisfaction with existing infrastructure and attractions. Measurement of satisfaction would allow Seisia to develop a particular tourism focus or focuses for the community for marketing purposes. There is also an urgent need for information to be provided to visitors about services in the region, protocols with respect to sites of significance and the environment generally, attractions, transport options and available services. Such information would assist visitors with their own planning (some information is provided by Injinoo at the Jardine River crossing).

Planning needs extend beyond Seisia to the entire northern Cape sub-region (and possibly to Torres Strait) owing to the regional nature of visitation, with multiple destinations onto a number of DOGITs. There is an urgent need to develop a regional land management strategy. Injinoo took a leadership role in this regard with the levying of a relatively high \$80 fee for use of its vehicle ferry to cross the Jardine River from early 1994. After considerable regional resistance, the Injinoo administration belatedly explained that the toll covers both the ferry fee at existing levels (\$40) and a fee to partially cover land management. There is a strong argument for the imposition of some visitor user charges in the absence of significant Commonwealth or State contribution to the management of tourism in the northern Cape. A problem with Injinoo's approach has been that it was not coordinated with other communities or tourism ventures in the region. Whether a land management fee should be imposed by Injinoo community at the Jardine River crossing remains a moot point. There is no doubt though that land management strategies need to be developed on a regional basis to both monitor and control growing numbers of visitors in a fragile environment. As elsewhere in national parks, after a critical point,

visitor activity must be regulated or environmental degradation can start to depreciate the very attractions that initially attracted visitors.

Tourism development and economic independence

The stated aim of the Seisia Island Council leadership is to develop tourism to a stage where the community is independent of government by the year 2000. This goal echoes AEDP goals that initially sought to establish economic equality between indigenous and other Australians by the year 2000. Given that the recent review of the AEDP has confirmed that AEDP goals will not be attained (ATSIC 1994b), can the Seisia community achieve such an ambitious task?

It is important to initially define the magnitude of the task on hand. Independence from government is clearly intended to refer to independence from special programs rather than from Commonwealth, State and local government 'citizenship entitlement' grants to operate as a township. The development of tourism to a stage where Seisia is independent of government should probably begin by examining avenues to generate sufficient funds for the community to phase out the CDEP scheme that received nearly \$800,000 in support from ATSIC. CDEP scheme participants currently work in a range of activities including stevedoring, local government-type services, campground clean up, housing and infrastructure construction, crafts, and so on. Each of these enterprises would need to generate sufficient income to allow a phase-out of CDEP scheme subvention if economic independence were to eventuate. In the interim, any transition of CDEP scheme jobs to full-time employment would also require additional government support in the form of training. Similarly, economic independence suggests that tourism enterprises would generate sufficient revenue to finance further infrastructure development and depreciation of the existing assets base.

An examination of data in this paper suggests that at current levels of visitation, tourism will not allow Seisia to be economically self-sufficient by the year 2000, even if there was a concerted community effort to fully engage in the tourism industry. This can be demonstrated with reference to utilisation of the three factors of production outlined above. It was suggested, with respect to labour, that full localisation of all employment opportunities would provide 16 full-time jobs. However, even if such full localisation were possible, it is unlikely that \$800,000 plus could be generated by salaries for these positions. Indeed, estimates of current gross tourism revenue of \$870,000 for Seisia provided in Table 3 suggest that at present all tourism enterprises cannot generate sufficient operational surpluses to offset the contribution of the CDEP scheme. Similarly, rentals from leased tourism infrastructure is limited. Indeed the net fiscal impact of tourism on community accounts in 1993-94 was nil, given that the service station operated at a loss. From 1994-95 this situation will be reversed.

However, to expand tourism to a point where it will provide the community with sufficient direct and indirect benefit to make it independent of government support will take considerable infrastructure and product development and aggressive marketing. And even if independence were attained, it would be at current levels of living rather than at those for the wider Australian community.

Conclusion

This paper describes the economic impact of tourism on a Torres Strait Islander community on northern Cape York Peninsula at one point in time. It then seeks to examine the potential for tourism to be the community's engine for economic development by analysing the linkages between the community economy and tourism, and the potential for these linkages to expand in the future. The paper's title 'Coping with locational advantage' indicates that tourism to the northern Cape has been imposed, or at the very least uninvited, as distinct from invited (see Altman (1989) for a broader discussion of this distinction in the indigenous Australian context). Under these circumstances, the Seisia community leadership has ambitiously articulated a goal to become economically independent of government, on the basis of tourism, by the year 2000. This though is not a goal that is currently shared by all community members, as evidenced by the limited participation of Seisia residents in tourism-related enterprises or employment.

The commendable goal of economic independence has links with the broader AEDP context and, more specifically, with ATSIC's National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tourism Strategy. But as the evidence presented here indicates, even under seemingly advantageous circumstances, the development potential that can be derived from tourism has both limits and limitations. In this case, limits are in part structured by limited access to private capital, appropriately-trained local labour and, somewhat surprisingly, land. Limitations arise from currently unresolved regional political complexities, unclear property rights in land and government programs hampered by poor incentive structures.

The Seisia community case study provides an indication of the difficulty that an entire indigenous community, even when locationally advantaged, will face in any attempt to achieve full economic independence from government based on tourism. The vision anticipating tourism revenue substituting entirely for government revenue appears overambitious. Policy realism and evidence from elsewhere suggest that in the medium term, a community goal of reduced dependency might be more appropriate. The wider lesson from the Seisia case that is applicable to other indigenous communities is that local and regional assessments of tourism's potential is

essential on a case-by-case basis. The local context is very important, and Seisia at least has realised that a tourism strategy is an essential first step in planning proactive involvement in the industry.

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