

KUR-World

Appendix 16

Indigenous Social Issues Paper

Environmental Impact Statement



KUR-World Indigenous Social Impact Study

Social Issues Paper – Local Kuranda Bama Aboriginal Communities

INTRODUCTION

The proposed KUR-World, involves the construction of facilities on existing farmland and in regrowth vegetation near Kuranda. The project site is located approximately 20 kilometres northwest of Cairns in Northeast Queensland. The KUR-World project is considered a 'controlled action' under the Environment Protection and Heritage Act 1999 (Commonwealth) (EPBC Act) due to the potential impacts on matters of national environmental significance. An environmental impact statement (EIS) is required to meet with the terms of reference set for this project by the Coordinator General (refer to CH report for details on ToR: Appendix A). An EIS requirement also triggers the undertaking of a Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) for the proposed development area.

Alice Buhrich and Åsa Ferrier were contracted by the project proponent to undertake the Indigenous cultural heritage assessments for the proposed KUR-World. The cultural heritage assessment was conducted in two parts. The first component comprised the cultural heritage study. This was conducted through consultation and site inspections with the Aboriginal party for the proposed development area - the applicants to the Cairns Regional Claim native title claim (QUD692/2016) and the Aboriginal party under the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act (ACHA). The aim of the cultural heritage study was the production of a CHMP developed with the Aboriginal party, to create a plan to minimise any potential harm to Aboriginal cultural heritage on the proposed project site. The cultural heritage study was submitted on May 8, 2017.

The Final Terms of Reference set for the KUR-World project also involve the identification of potential impacts on affected Indigenous communities in the local area. This was conducted through interviews with members from the broader Kuranda Aboriginal community. This paper presents some of the outcomes of these interviews and suggests pathways that ensures ongoing engagement between KUR-World and the broader Kuranda Aboriginal community.

Note: People interviewed did not wish to be named in the paper.

BACKGROUND

The second component of the KUR-World cultural heritage assessment recognises that there may be individual's other than the Aboriginal party that hold values and interests of the KUR-World site, for example through the Mona Mona Mission. A detailed background on the Aboriginal history of the

KUR-World development site and localities in the Kuranda area is presented in the Aboriginal cultural heritage study (Section 4) and will not be repeated here. However, of significance to the current social impact study is the formation of the Mona Mona Mission, which was established in 1913. When Mona Mona mission closed in 1962, many of the Aboriginal residents moved to the nearby townships of Mantaka, Kowrowa, Kuranda and Koah. The KUR-World development site is located close to these townships and is thus in an area that retains a great deal of significance to many local Aboriginal Kuranda Bama (rainforest) people. Although Aboriginal people had restricted access to the KUR-World site during the mission era and pastoralist activities, the area retains significance to local Aboriginal people from different clan groups. The area is believed to have held campsites, bora grounds, walking tracks, story places and important plant resources. The native title claimants recognise that the KUR-World site holds significant cultural values to local Aboriginal communities' other than the native title claimant group. The Indigenous social impact study is an important part of the overall cultural heritage assessment for KUR-World and seeks to inform and integrate the broad Aboriginal community.

METHODOLOGY

Buda-dji Aboriginal Development Association is part of a group of Corporations, collectively referred to as the Djabugay Aboriginal Corporations (DAC). DAC works across a wide range of areas including, Community Development, Native Title, Land Management, business, and economic development. These corporations share the same board and governance structure. Within DAC, Buda-dji Aboriginal Development Association Aboriginal Corporation is the administrative center. Buda-dji undertook a sub-consultancy to facilitate meetings with the broader Kuranda Aboriginal community. Buda-dji Senior Project Officer Barry J Hunter assisted with preparing and organising the interviews and hired two local Kuranda Aboriginal women to assist with the interviews; Shiela Brim and Maria Grauner. Before the interviews took place, the Buda-dji staff undertook consultation and facilitation of meetings to discuss the KUR-World EIS with the local Aboriginal Kuranda community. This included the identification, liaison, consultation, and provision of cultural advice for discussions with the Djabugay speaking clan groups and broader Kuranda Indigenous Community.

INTERVIEW PROCESS

An information package about the interview process was prepared by Hunter and his team, and a list of potential people to interview was put together. Deciding who should be approached for an interview was based on several things including: age, gender, locality, knowledge about the KUR-World project and the site, and being prepared to share information and concerns with us. Shiela and Maria spent two days approaching Djabugay descendants now residing in the Mantaka,

Kowrowa, Kuranda and Koah townships and created a short-list of people to follow up for an interview. During these initial meetings, people were provided with a KUR-World fact sheet and an opportunity to air any concerns they may have before the interview. A list of people selected to be interviewed and their individual concerns about the project was presented to one of us (ÅF) at a pre-start meeting on the first day of interviews, held at the DTAC office in Kuranda Village. This preparatory work by Shiela and Maria guaranteed that the interviews went smoothly, prepared people with information about the interview process, and provided them with some time to think about what concerns or social issues they would like to talk about in the interviews.

Informal interviews were carried out with a small number of members from the Aboriginal communities with the aim to identify potential impacts on the broader affected Indigenous communities. The interviews were constructed around cultural mapping methodology, using visual materials such as aerial photographs of the property, the KUR-World Master Plan (dated March 2017), historical maps from the late 19th century, and photographs of artefacts and cultural sites on the property taken during the cultural heritage survey. These visual aids facilitated discussions about the project and the development site and the social impacts it will have on local Aboriginal communities and the surrounding environment. Participants also shared information about any known Aboriginal cultural heritage within the project area.

The interviews varied in length of time, from 45 minutes to 2.5 hours. Time spent conducting an interview mostly came down to the number of participants. At the start of each interview, the KUR-World Master Plan was presented to the participants. This immediately generated a lot of discussion. Overall, people were keen to let us know of their concerns and share their knowledge as well as providing suggestions on how KUR-World can involve the broader Kuranda Aboriginal community. It was noted that many participants had not been contacted directly by KUR-World and were unaware of the ongoing public engagement process.

INTERVIEW PROCESS AND CULTURAL SETTING

The interviews took place over two days in April (20-21) and half a day in May (15) 2017. A total of 17 people were interviewed, comprising nine separate events. Most interviews (n=6) took place in people's homes, the remaining three were carried out at various public places in Kuranda Village. Interviews in people's homes were often conducted at the kitchen table over a cup of tea and biscuits, with maps and photographs laid out in front of the participants. Interviewing people in their own homes made them feel comfortable to discuss any issues and suggestions they have concerning the KUR-World development project with us. Table 1 shows the number of participants in each

interview, the date and location where it took place. Interview 8 and 9 took place in Kuranda but the participants are both Kowrowa residents.

Table 1. Numbers of participants in each interview, date, and location.

Interview	Number of participants	Gender	Location	Date
1	3	Female	Mantaka	20 April
2	2	Female	Mantaka	20 April
3	1	Male	Kuranda	20 April
4	4	Female (3) Male (1)	Mantaka	21 April
5	1	Female	Koah	21 April
6	1	Male	Kowrowa	21 April
7	2	Female (1) Male (1)	Mantaka	21 April
8	2	Female (1) Male (1)	Kuranda Village – Kowrowa	15 May
9	1	Female	Kuranda Village – Kowrowa	15 May

Most participants were females (12 out of the 17). This decision was taken by Buda-dji staff during their preliminary sub-consulting work, on the bases that a female view was warranted considering the predominantly male involvement during the cultural heritage surveys.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

Focus questions were used in the interviews to ensure that the Terms of Reference for the project were met. The section of the Terms of Reference to which each question relate are in brackets in the list below. The focus questions were developed by Alice Buhrich and Åsa Ferrier with additional input from Barry Hunter, Shiela Brim and Maria Grauner.

1. How do you/your community use the land, river, and creeks in the area? (11.38c)
2. How do you think the development might affect/change the way you/your family/your community currently use the places you mentioned in Question 1? (11.33f)
3. What do you see as positive and negative impacts from this development for our mob? (11.40)
4. What opportunities do you see the development bringing for our mob? (11.40)
5. Do you have any suggestions for how any of these issues you have described can be managed in the KUR-World development project? (13.39)

Participants were asked an additional question related to the Australian Governments inclusion of the National Indigenous Heritage values as part of the existing National Heritage Listing for the Wet

Tropics of North Queensland in 2012. From the 17 people interviewed, only two were aware of the listing. One person recalled having been consulted on Indigenous values around that time.

RESULTS

Overall, after each focus question long discussions followed. Negative and positive thoughts about the project and the consultation process were shared, as well as employment opportunities, business partnerships, education and training prospects, all issues were recorded in writing. The three most significant areas of social impact to the participants in the study were:

- Environment: water and land associated with the development site and in the surrounding region (Questions 1, and 5).
- Family and community; employment, education and small business opportunities, road access and safety concerns (Questions 3, 4 and 5).
- Cultural heritage; protection throughout the KUR-World development site, including construction and post-construction, a cultural centre on site, and cultural awareness education for staff and visitors (Questions 1-5).

Information gathered in the interviews related to the Terms of Reference for this project is presented in the following section. This section is based on statements made by the 17 participants from the Mantaka, Kowrowa, Kuranda and Koah Aboriginal communities and shared with Åsa Ferrier, Shiela Brim and Maria Grauner during the interviews. Participants shared their concerns, information, and suggestions during the interviews with the understanding that some of the information they provided would be used in a social impact study paper prepared for KUR-World.

The following summary is based on a combination of comments from all 17 participants. Overall, they shared very similar opinions about the KUR-World project and potential social impacts on the broader Kuranda Aboriginal community.

ENVIRONMENT

- Access

Most of the participants have vivid memories of the 1950s and 60s when they were allowed access to Barnwell Farm to go fishing, swimming, and camping along the creeks. The site has a known Bama camp site near Nyurrede Farm, including a flat area and camps on both sides of the creek. Elders used an old walking track on the property to traverse the rainforest to get to the Davies Creek area (i.e. sclerophyll forest). Along the Barron River and its tributaries, quandong, white and brown apple, Davidson plum and many other bush tucker items used to be collected, and pigs and wallabies were

hunted. Although KUR-World is not located on the Barron River, increased restricted access to its banks, at places such as Big Sand, started in the late 60s with non-Indigenous people stopping accessing to the river. However, the Barron River remains a culturally significant place to everyone interviewed. Here people collect grasses (*wujan*) used in basket weaving, and their extended families go swimming, fishing, hunting, and camping. Kids love using the river, swimming, and collecting bush-foods, while adults collect raw materials for spears and carry out cultural activities, including some fishing in accessible areas. Some non-Indigenous land owners have lately claimed the river bank as their private properties and are stopping access to the river by putting up fences and increasingly using the river, particularly for kayaking. One Mantaka participant stated that “white newcomers tend to leave their rubbish, but the council do not listen to our concerns”. There is concern that KUR-World could have a similar attitude to land and water. For example, people worry that they will not be allowed access to Owen Creek, another popular destination in the 50s and 60s for many families. The proximity of the development site to Mantaka township was of major concern to the participants who believe the development will bring even more people to the area who wants to use the river and the land. One of the questions raised in the interviews was: what will the effects be on waterways and rivers, and the flow-on effects on fishing for locals because of the KUR-World development?

- Water

Most of the participants raised concern about water use associated with the development and how this will impact on the surrounding environment. Owen Creek runs along the back of one Mantaka family’s property who raised concern about potential blocking and pollution of the creek. Another issue raised was that KUR-World could potentially block access to Owen Creek for local Bama people, which would have a negative social impact on the broader community.

The potential to access and use large amounts of bore water on the development site concerned the participants. Questions asked about the bores included: how many bores will they sink? What happens when there is a drought and the bores run dry? Will they build many more dams? Also related to water-use on the site is the proposed location of a sewage treatment plant close to Haren Creek (March 2017 KUR-World Master Plan). Suggestions to move the treatment plant to a different location were made, given the possibility of a pre-European Aboriginal camp site in this location, as well as an old walking track passing through it.

- Wildlife

The endangered Kuranda Tree frog and the culturally significant cassowary require ongoing protection on the KUR-World site. Revegetating water courses and banning animals such as dogs and cats were some suggestions made by the participants. Increased fencing on the property was of concern to one participant, which restricts access to habitats and food for animals such as the cassowary. One participant informed us the anti-KUR protest group is claiming a large part of the development is going to be for residential living, i.e. people buying a block of land and building a new home. This claim has been particularly upsetting for the local Aboriginal communities who are already witnessing a lot of new development in the area, including housing estates. These developments lead to continuous restrictions in terms of where people can go to look after country and to ensure that local wildlife can find safe habitats and wildlife corridors to travel across country.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

- Employment and education

Most participants wanted to see opportunities for younger Aboriginal people through education, employment and training. Past experiences with QRail and Skyrail have left people feeling disappointed, ignored, left behind and with a feeling that no one cares. One suggestion made was to invite children from the local school to do work experience at KUR-World, providing local training opportunities before leaving school. Generally, Aboriginal people do not want to leave their homes and families, but employment opportunities are few in the area. To improve the employment situation in the Kuranda area, the participants suggested a formal agreement – perhaps in the form of a business partnership - between the Aboriginal community and KUR-World operating through organisations like DTAC, RISE and Ngoonbi. Local schools could get involved with young people gaining work experience, trainee ships and local university places . It was suggested that such a formal partnership could lead to long-term employment for local Aboriginal people, create local business opportunities and in this process of engagement with KUR-World, people could develop additional skills and improve their lifestyles, which flows on to the whole community. One Mantaka participant mentioned that the model of a previous Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) could be applied at KUR-World, creating tailored training in line with the project development. “Work make people empowered to change their lives” was a comment made by several of the participants.

All participants agreed that employment opportunities, training and education, self-determination and empowerment have positive social impacts on Aboriginal communities. Many suggestions were put forward including: chefs training, cleaning, gardening, and maintenance contracts, operating a supermarket and cultural centre, running art and other cultural work-shops for the tourists and

creating a cultural healing centre in partnership with KUR-World. Overall, there is a strong sense of need for the Aboriginal community to be involved with the KUR-World development project as a positive way forward for their people, culture, community and, most significantly to all the participants, for their young. People think the project has the potential to create real and ongoing jobs for the young people. One participant argued that there is already opportunity to get Bama people involved in the KUR-World project, for example with weed management. This person argued that the situation for Kuranda Aboriginal communities will either remain *status quo* or improve. Very few people in the Kuranda area currently have any form of employment.

- Cultural centre

It was suggested that some of the local Aboriginal children could spend time on KUR-World being guided by their Elders, and learn from them how to conduct bush tucker walks and other cultural activities. One way forward would be to establish a cultural centre on the property, a space where Aboriginal people from the local communities can run Indigenous art classes and other cultural workshops for tourists. The community is concerned that Indigenous artefacts potentially sold at KUR-World would be made in China. Participants suggested that KUR-World should develop a real partnership with DTAC to ensure local cultural content on site, with artefacts for sale produced by local artists and products endorsed by Aboriginal native title groups.

- Nursery

The participants suggested that the establishment of an Indigenous nursery in conjunction with a cultural centre should be owned and controlled by the Indigenous community. They could grow and supply plants for the development site and plan and execute revegetation programs along the creeks; carry out bush-tucker walks and other cultural experiences for the tourists, as well as important weed management activities. This could be a cultural centre that recognised all Aboriginal people in the Kuranda area.

- Partnership and ongoing engagement

As already mentioned, some participants suggested that some type of partnership should be established between DTAC and KUR-World to ensure continuous engagement with the local Aboriginal people. People want to see more consultation with the wider Aboriginal community, something they think should have been in place earlier in the process, and in appropriate cultural settings. They were not in favour of visiting the Pop-up stall in Kuranda or joining a large group of white local Kuranda people on a bus tour of the property to get information about the development.

Two participants suggested that a cultural educational awareness program for staff and visitors should be developed as soon as possible.

- Traffic and services

Of concern to all the participants is the increased amount of people in and around Kuranda because of KUR-World and the negative social impact this may have on Aboriginal people. Concerns included increased traffic, road access, deterioration of roads and parking in Kuranda. Safety issues related to increased traffic around the schools were of great concern to everyone that participated in the interviews. The current use of Barnwell Road means all traffic to the property is currently passing the local school and the participants were unhappy about this situation. One question was repeatedly raised: how are all these people going to access the property?

One participant was concerned about the potential impacts on medical and ambulance services in the area with such a large increase on population. For example, there is currently no Doctor at the Medical Centre on weekends. Some of the participants thought the KUR-World development may bring additional and new services to the area, such as increased medical facilities, improved roads and perhaps provide them with better and increased access to the land. Another concern was that people staying at KUR-World may not visit Kuranda but spend their money at KUR-World meaning all the money will go back to China.

CULTURAL HERITAGE

- National Indigenous Heritage value - fire in the Wet Tropics

One of the Mantaka participants shared the role Aboriginal rainforest people in the Kuranda area had as the first caretakers of the rainforest. Their role was to look after the land, not pollute the river and to preserve things by not going back to the same place all the time and collect every plant for example. She explained how fire was used in the rainforest to clean the land and keep dirty scrub out to make it easy for animals and people to walk through rainforest. People would base their decision on when to burn based on the flowering of specific plants, an event that usually took place just before summer (early wet season). Many people would spread out and form a circle around the area they wanted to burn, carrying branches to whack the fire so no important trees or bushes were burnt, and meet in the middle. She explained that this is how people maintained walkways through rainforest and kept their large camp sites clear of vegetation.

RECOMMENDATIONS SUGGESTED BY THE PARTICIPANTS

The following recommendations to KUR-World were proposed by the participants during the interviews to implement positive social impacts on the broader Kuranda Aboriginal community:

1. To organise a bus tour of the property like the tours offered through the KUR-World Newsletter and Pop-Up stall in Kuranda Village to local Kuranda residents. Many of the Aboriginal participants do not have access to a computer or the internet and were not aware of the bus tours. When told about them, most people interviewed expressed a great deal of interest in visiting the property, carry out site inspections, and meet the KUR-World development team. A sensible way to organise a bus tour for the broader Kuranda Aboriginal community is to liaise with the DTAC office located in Kuranda Village¹.
2. Additional consultation with the local Aboriginal communities about potential negative and positive social impacts of the development, employment opportunities, education and training etc. The work carried out for this paper should only be regarded as a first step in engaging with the broader Kuranda Aboriginal community. For KUR-World to successfully bring local Aboriginal people and communities in on the project, it is essential that people have a voice throughout the whole process, and that they are not left feeling ignored or left behind as has often been the case in the past.
3. To establish a Kuranda Bama reference group that incorporates one elected member from each community. The elected reference group members would be responsible for maintaining direct contact with DTAC and KUR-World to receive updates and to pass on any relevant information related to the KUR-World development project to other community members.
4. To carry out a skills audit in Kuranda assisted by DTAC and RISE. Upskill and provide training opportunities to the younger people and create partnerships and employment opportunities to the community through KUR-World. Negotiating contracts for Aboriginal businesses on the KUR-World site will invigorate Bama culture and the general Aboriginal Kuranda community, as well as empower local Aboriginal people and communities.
5. To establish a cultural centre with displays on the Aboriginal history of Bama in Kuranda, offer workshops such as weaving, healing, and painting, and offer a range of services, including a ranger program, that all operate under one umbrella with an overall purpose of looking after country. An Indigenous nursery on site, owned and operated by local Aboriginal people, would also provide a wealth of opportunities. An area on one of the creeks should also be allocated to the local people, where the communities can reconnect with country and hold meetings and ceremonies.

¹ This suggestion was taken into account and a Bama day was organised on the KUR-World development site, which took place on September 10, 2017. On this day, people were showed around easily accessible areas in the northern part of the property and had the opportunity to meet and talk to the project team about KUR-World It also allowed an opportunity to express concerns and discuss future opportunities for Bama people.