

PINE CREEK

EMPLOYMENT AND ENTERPRISE SCOPING PROJECT

NOVEMBER 2002



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Executive Summary

Pine Creek is one of the Northern Territory's oldest towns. It is a tough resilient community that has faced a cyclical history of boom and bust. Over the past century, Pine Creek has been a significant player in the economic life of the Top End, with housing and community service infrastructure in the town expanding in step with mining activity.

The community has endured a number of mining-related boom and bust cycles, and is currently experiencing a quieter time with the closure of the Enterprise (PCGL) mining operation. Mining still remains an influential factor in the area, with Union Reef (AngloGold Australia Pty Ltd) operating an open pit goldmine about 12 km north of the town, and mining leases covering much of the region. However the Union Reef operation is drawing to a close, extraction is expected to cease by the end of 2002 and processing a year later.

Pine Creek's location at the intersection of the Kakadu and Stuart Highways, 220 km south of Darwin makes tourism a key component of the local economy. Visitors are drawn by Kakadu National Park, Umbrawarra Gorge, historic railway and mining exhibits, opportunities for gold panning, the area's unique natural landscapes and man-made lakes, accommodation and food supplies.

The Northern Territory Area Consultative Committee (NTACC) has provided funding to the Pine Creek Community Council to undertake an Employment and Enterprise Scoping Project (EESP). EESP's are used to provide the basis for a detailed community economic development plan. The needs of the community are paramount and the process involves extensive consultations with the community, raising awareness of potential areas for development, opportunities and challenges and the development of an achievable implementation plan. R & M Consultants (NT) Pty Ltd have been contracted to carry out the EESP subject to a Terms of Reference entered into with the Community.

Pine Creek has been the subject of a number of studies over the years, these have been many and varied and include;

- A series of *Heritage Studies* during the 80's and 90's
- A *Pine Creek Tourism Strategy in 2001*
- The *Pine Creek Planning and Land Use Objectives 2001*

Principally these studies identified the heritage and tourism assets of Pine Creek, its reliance on mining for economic growth and the strength of its geographic position as the gateway to Kakadu and other Top End attractions.

Profile of the Pine Creek

An Overview of Regional Circumstances

Today Pine Creek is typical of a small regional centre. It enjoys a monsoonal climate with two seasons (the wet and the dry). Pine Creek has a range of essential community services including a pre-school, primary school, police station, fire station, post office, community council office, council depot, public library, medical clinic and a multi-purpose resource centre comprising a hall, tennis courts, public toilets and indoor recreation facility.

The Indigenous community is primarily located 6km south of Pine Creek in an area known as Kybrook Farm, some other Indigenous families reside closer to Pine Creek at an area known as "Town Camp".

The Stuart Highway passes east of the town. It has been re-routed on a number of occasions due to mining activity and safety concerns. The current route bypasses the main town area.

Pine Creek has a population of over 600 people however the current mining operation employs 140 workers most of whom will leave when the mine closes in 2003. Pine Creek's core permanent population is closer to 400-450 people.

Current business activity in the town falls into three broad categories

- Mining Support Services
- Tourism & Hospitality
- Community & Other Services

Currently local business is doing reasonably well under the influence of the existing mining operation and the presence of a large Adrail camp. Both these factors are subject to dramatic change over the next 18 months. Pine Creek's core Retail and Service businesses are confident they can operate through any short term impacts resulting from a reduction in mining and the end of Adrail's presence.

Inevitably such a large reduction in population and economic activity must flow through to the less essential businesses in the Tourism, Hospitality and Service sectors.

Anecdotally the consultants were informed that there is very little unemployment in Pine Creek. During interviews for this project we were advised a number of times that only 2 or 3 people were out of work. However this does not take into account the participation of the Indigenous population in the workforce, in particular Kybrook Farm residents who are poorly represented in mainstream employment in Pine Creek.

The Pine Creek labour market reflects the current high level of employment opportunities that are available to skilled workers. Unskilled workers, predominantly indigenous residents suffer from high levels of unemployment. Employment opportunities for the unskilled people are very limited and seasonal in nature.

Employment and Enterprise Opportunities

Pine Creek's economy is dependent on the mining industry for its underlying strength. The current mining operation, Union Reefs, owned by AngloGold Australia Limited employs approx 140 staff who live in the Pine Creek township. Mining activities have a direct impact on the manufacturing, service and hospitality sectors in Pine Creek.

Tourism and hospitality are having increasing importance as a source of business and this sector has seen significant growth in the last 20 years.

Retail operations have remained stable over a long period and it would require an expansion in population to generate an increase in this sector.

The Community Sector is steady and is also dependent on the maintenance of current population levels. Services such as the School, Clinic and Town Council have their funding linked to the regions population.

Pine Creek will always be a mining town and mining will be the key to long term economic stability.

Tourism will play a key part in Pine Creek's economic future and the region is well placed to take advantage of any growth in this sector.

Expanding agricultural and horticultural activities may also offer opportunities in the longer term subject to the availability of land and water resources.

A growth in mining, tourism or agricultural activities will open up opportunities for other service industries in Pine Creek. In the medium term the town's well being will be improved by better marketing of existing assets, infrastructure improvements and the development of a more diversified local economy. Population stability and ideally growth is a key element as many services are linked to population levels.

Implementation Arrangements

The Pine Creek Community Council as the elected representative of the community is the key to the regions economic development. The decisions and actions taken by the Council will be critical to the implementation of the strategies detailed in this Report. Additionally they are best placed in terms of infrastructure and expertise to take these strategies forward. However they should not act alone. It is also vital that Government Agencies also respond proactively to ensure issues are addressed and progress made.

This report recommends a number of actions (pg 12) that need to be taken by the Pine Creek Community and Government Agencies in partnership. They focus on the regional issues identified through this project (pg 11) in particular;

- developing a capacity for action
- maximising the opportunities provided by the mining sector
- expanding tourist services and infrastructure
- improving infrastructure
- the coordination of Government services and assistance
- building economic partnerships with the Indigenous Community

Conclusion

At the beginning of a new millennium Pine Creek still offers enormous potential as a major regional centre and a significant contributor to the Northern Territory's economic, social and cultural future. Given the opportunity Pine Creek can be a service centre for mining, a major tourist attraction as, for example, a working steam museum and a storehouse of architectural and cultural heritage.

This potential will not be realized without action, co-ordinated, concerted and long term action by the Pine Creek Community, Pine Creek businesses, Commonwealth and Territory Governments and their Agencies.

Pine Creek offers a unique opportunity for Governments and their Agencies to demonstrate the effectiveness of the range of support they offer. A holistic approach is needed. One that brings together all stakeholders under a common set of goals and that allows planned co-ordinated development to take place.

1 Introduction, Background and Purpose for the Project.

Pine Creek is one of the Northern Territory's oldest towns. It is a tough resilient community that has faced a cyclical history of boom and bust. The town was established after gold was discovered in the area during the construction of the Overland Telegraph Line in 1871. It is one of the few remaining gold rush towns in Australia and the numerous buildings and equipment from that era attests to its historic role.

Over the past century, Pine Creek has been a significant player in the economic life of the Top End, with housing and community service infrastructure in the town expanding in step with mining activity.

The community has endured a number of mining-related boom and bust cycles, and is currently experiencing a quieter time with the closure of the Enterprise (PCGL) mining operation. Mining still remains an influential factor in the area, with Union Reef (AngloGold Australia Pty Ltd) operating an open pit goldmine about 12 km north of the town, and mining leases covering much of the region. However the Union Reef operation is drawing to a close, extraction is expected to cease by the end of 2002 and processing a year later.

Pine Creek's location at the intersection of the Kakadu and Stuart Highways, 220 km south of Darwin makes tourism a key component of the local economy. Visitors are drawn by Kakadu National Park, Umbrawarra Gorge, historic railway and mining exhibits, opportunities for gold panning, the area's unique natural landscapes and man-made lakes, accommodation and food supplies.

The Northern Territory Area Consultative Committee (NTACC) has provided funding to the Pine Creek Community Council to undertake an Employment and Enterprise Scoping Project (EESP). EESP's are used to provide the basis for a detailed community economic development plan. The needs of the community are paramount and the process involves extensive consultations with the community, raising awareness of potential areas for development, opportunities and challenges and the development of an achievable implementation plan. R & M Consultants (NT) Pty Ltd have been contracted to carry out the EESP subject to a Terms of Reference entered into with the Community.

The Project is managed by a local Reference Group consisting of:-

- Sue Valentine – Council Clerk, Pine Creek Community Council
- Ray Wooldridge – President, Pine Creek Community Council
- Pat Smith – Diggers Rest Motel
- Ross Mitchell – BP Service Station
- Sahdi Garling – Co-ordinator, Pine Creek Aboriginal Advancement Corporation
- Brian Skinner – Pine Creek Plumbing

The Reference Group agreed to the Terms of Reference (TOR) at a meeting on 21 August 2002. The Terms of Reference can be found at Attachment A

2 The relevance of recent Reports, Projects and Reviews.

Pine Creek has been the subject of a number of studies over the years, these have been many and varied and include;

- A series of *Heritage Studies* during the 80's and 90's
- A *Pine Creek Tourism Strategy in 2001*
- The *Pine Creek Planning and Land Use Objectives 2001*

Principally these studies identified the heritage and tourism assets of Pine Creek, its reliance on mining for economic growth and the strength of its geographic position as the gateway to Kakadu and other Top End attractions.

The *Pine Creek Tourism Strategy in 2001* stresses the importance of improving the general appearance of the town, marketing Pine Creek as a tourist destination and over time developing more tourism infrastructure. It identifies the lack of a central visitors centre, road access and interpretive signage as weaknesses.

The *Pine Creek Planning and Land Use Objectives 2001* reflect a recommended land use pattern for Pine Creek to accommodate the current needs and future growth of the area.

It identified the following land use objectives:-

- to enhance the town's amenity for residents and visitors.
- to enhance the town's pioneering and mining heritage and protect buildings, infrastructure and settings associated with this history.
- to enhance the economic base of the town through promoting tourism, protecting extractive resources and encouraging new industries.
- to explore the potential recreational and tourism opportunities associated with the Goldfields process water reservoir.
- to recognize and protect known mineralisation and extractive mineral zones.
- to encourage agricultural and horticultural activities in appropriate areas on land that is capable of supporting such use.

A number of studies with a heritage focus have also been undertaken including early studies for the National Trust and the *Pine Creek District Heritage Scheme Management Plan* completed in 1985. They identified the many pioneering attractions of the region and urged their protection and restoration. The *Pine Creek District Heritage Scheme Management Plan* encapsulates Pine Creek's many heritage attractions with these words;

"....if one wanted to see how the Chinese mined for gold and tin or how they lived, or to see a Chinese oven, or a Chinese store, or a corrugated iron mining pub or the railway station where "We of the Never Never" was filmed, or see an underground explosives magazine.....or see ghost bats or where the best Aboriginal stone implements in Australia were made, then a visit to Pine Creek...is the answer"

3. Project Methodology

The methodology described below was developed in conjunction with the Local Reference Group and used the Employment and Enterprise Scoping Template as a basis.

Phase 1 Terms of Reference

- Desk top data collection, background research, draft action plan
- Establish a local Pine Creek Steering Committee and develop endorsed Terms of Reference Agreement with the Pine Creek Community
- Phase 1 progress report to ACC Steering Committee.

Phase 2 Consultation Phase

- Stakeholder Consultations:
Face to face interviews with key stakeholders
- Planning Workshop
- Draft project priorities and have reviewed by Pine Creek Steering Committee.
- Phase 2 progress report to ACC Steering Committee

Phase 3 Feasibility Profiles

- Examination and analysis of the identified project priorities. (SWOT)
- Undertake consultations with stakeholders critical to success to identify barriers and solutions.

Phase 4 Drafting and Documentation

- Document the comment, feedback and research into the draft EESP including options for action.
- Submit final EESP to the local Pine Creek Steering Committee for consideration, amendment and final verification.
- Phase 3 - Present EESP to NTACC Steering Group

4. A Profile of the Pine Creek Community and Local Government Region

4.1 An Overview of Regional Circumstances

Pre European settlement the Pine Creek area was home to the Wagaman, Asgicondi, Arigoola and Jawoyn peoples. Aborigines used the local rock as a source for tools. Surveys have indicated that the largest known complex of Aboriginal quarries in the Northern Territory was established in the region. There are also a number of recorded Aboriginal sacred sites within the area. Other sites not yet recorded may also be present.

The town was established after gold was discovered during the construction of the Overland Telegraph Line. In 1874 Chinese and Malay immigrants were brought in to work the mines, 10 years later the population of Pine Creek comprised 200 Europeans and 4000 Chinese.

Consequently Aborigines, Europeans and Asians have all contributed to the heritage of the Pine Creek area. In 1889 a railway was constructed between Darwin and Pine Creek to service the mines and extended to Katherine during the 1920s to service the pastoral industry. Throughout the 20th Century the interest in mining rose and fell in response to the global price of minerals. Mining has always been the principal reason for Pine Creek's existence, the region still has a high potential for mineral development. Currently AngloGold (Australia) operates the Union Reef mine however they will cease extraction at the end of 2002 and processing a year later. Recently Burnside Joint Venture has purchased a number of leases in the area and for the first time one company has all the leases under its control. This will make future operations more economical.

Today Pine Creek is typical of a small regional centre. It enjoys a monsoonal climate with two seasons (the wet and the dry). Compared to coastal areas the temperatures show wider variation and rainfall is lower (1140mm) because Pine Creek is at the cusp of the temperate and arid zones. Pine Creek has a range of essential community services including a pre-school, primary school, police station, fire station, post office, community council office, council depot, public library, medical clinic and a multi-purpose resource centre comprising a hall, tennis courts, public toilets and indoor recreation facility.

The Indigenous community is primarily located 6km south of Pine Creek in an area known as Kybrook Farm, some other Indigenous families reside closer to Pine Creek at an area known as "Town Camp". Kybrook Farm was originally established as a transit camp and today still hosts a range of family groups. The population varies with the season as a number of people return to their homelands for the dry.

The Stuart Highway passes east of the town. It has been re-routed on a number of occasions due to mining activity and safety concerns. The current route bypasses the main town area.

Pine Creek is administered by the Pine Creek Community Council an elected body under the NT Local Government Act 1993. It is staffed by a full time Council Clerk, Works Supervisor, a part time administrative assistant, a part time Art and Recreation Officer and library assistant. Contracted labour is also used depending on finances and the demand for services.

4.2 The Demographics of the Region

4.2.1 Population

The Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001 Census of Population and Housing data identifies population numbers for Pine creek and Outer Pine Creek (CR4909) an area of 403.5 square kilometers.

Category	Males	Female	Persons
Total persons (includes overseas visitors)	377	242	619
Aged 15 years and over	311	190	501
Aged 65 years and over	25	20	45
Aboriginal	67	64	131
Born in Australia	299	199	498
Born overseas	42	25	67

A deeper examination of the data however identifies the transient nature of Pine Creek's population and its dependence on relocated mine workers to maintain population levels.

Category	Males	Female	Persons
Counted at home	255	175	430
Usual residence in another state (i.e. tourist & mine workers)	104	55	159
Overseas visitors	16	13	29
Counted in private dwellings	271	224	495
Counted elsewhere	106	18	124
Visitors from within Australia living in private dwellings (probably mine workers)	47	40	87

This dissection puts Pine Creek's core population at 430 people.

4.2.2 Age Distribution:

Category	Males	Female	Persons	%
0 – 14	63	46	109	18%
15 -24	23	42	65	13%
25 – 54	203	104	307	52%
54 – 99	67	42	109	17%

The significant feature in this table is the small percentage in the 15 – 24 age group and the larger representation of older residents.

4.3 Profile of the Business Environment

Current business activity in the town falls into three broad categories

- Mining Support Services
- Tourism & Hospitality
- Community & Other Services

Currently local business is doing reasonably well under the influence of the existing mining operation and the presence of a large Adrail camp. Both these factors are subject to dramatic change over the next 18 months. Recently the BP Service Station re-opened under new management however the Mango Winery and Bird Park have recently ceased operations.

Pine Creek’s core Retail and Service businesses are confident they can operate through any short term impacts resulting from a reduction in mining and the end of Adrail’s presence.

Inevitably such a large reduction in population and economic activity must flow through to the less essential businesses in the Tourism, Hospitality and Service sectors.

Pine Creek’s major operating businesses are;

BUSINESS	SECTOR
Ah Toys Store	Retail
Bonrook Resort	Tourism - Hospitality
BP Service Station & Caravan Park	Retail – Hospitality
Pine Creek Diggers Rest Motel	Hospitality
Driffield Engineering	Mining Services
Golden Flower Art Gallery	Tourism
Gun Alley Gold Mining	Tourism
Kakadu Gateway Caravan Park	Hospitality
Lazy Lizard	Tourism – Hospitality
Mayse’s Café	Retail
North Australian Laboratories	Mining Services
Pine Creek Plumbing	Services
Pussycat Flats Turf and Golf Club	Hospitality
Pine Creek Hotel/Motel	Hospitality
Roche Brothers	Mining Services
Daryl Mugridge Electrician	Services
Australia Post – Commonwealth Bank Agency	Retail
Pine Creek Mango Plantation	Agriculture

4.4 Analysis of the Local Labour Market

Anecdotally the consultants were informed that there is very little unemployment in Pine Creek. During interviews for this project we were advised a number of times that only 2 or 3 people were out of work. However this does not take into account the participation of the Indigenous population in the workforce, in particular Kybrook Farm residents who are poorly represented in mainstream employment in Pine Creek.

Kybrook Farm operates a CDEP project with approximately 35 participants but struggles to maintain numbers and a focus on activities. The CDEP project concentrates its efforts on Kybrook Farm and does not operate within the Pine Creek town ship.

Employment opportunities come from those businesses listed in section 3.3 as well as community services such as the Town Council, School, Clinic, Police Station and Pine Creek Aboriginal Advancement Association (Kybrook Farm). Mining operations employ 140 staff.

Consequently there is currently a broad skill base in Pine Creek covering administrative, hospitality, services and trades related occupations. The best indicator available for unemployment or under employment is detailed in the data below

Weekly Income < \$200 per week	147 persons	28%
Weekly Income > \$200 per week (Source: ABS Census 2001)	387 persons	52%

The skills base data also reflects low levels of education amongst the Indigenous population.

CATEGORY	INDIGENOUS	NON-INDIGENOUS	NOT STATED	TOTAL
Highest level of school completed				
Year 10 or below	68	182	8	258
Year 11 to 12	3	167		170
Still at school		3		3
Never attended school	6	6		12

This data illustrates that amongst the Indigenous population only 2% have gone on to Year 12, compared to 37% of the non – Indigenous population.

In summary, the Pine Creek labour market reflects the current high level of employment opportunities that are available to skilled workers. Unskilled workers, predominantly indigenous residents suffer from high levels of unemployment. Employment opportunities for unskilled people are very limited and seasonal in nature.

5. An Employment and Enterprise Opportunities Profile

The process of undertaking the consultations and discussions involved in this part of the project was assisted through the conduct of a community workshop on 9 September 2002. The outcomes that emanated from the workshop are included at Attachment C.

5.1 Existing Economic Activity

Pine Creek’s economy is dependent on the mining industry for its underlying strength. The current mining operation, Union Reefs, owned by AngloGold Australia Limited employs approx 140 staff who live in the Pine Creek township. Mining activities have a direct impact on the manufacturing, service and hospitality sectors in Pine Creek.

Tourism and hospitality are having increasing importance as a source of business and this sector has seen significant growth in the last 20 years.

Retail operations have remained stable over a long period and it would require an expansion in population to generate an increase in this sector.

The Community Sector is steady and is also dependent on the maintenance of current population levels. Services such as the School, Clinic and Town Council have their funding linked to the region's population.

5.2 Potential Economic Activity

Pine Creek will always be a mining town and mining will be the key to long term economic stability. *The Pine Creek Planning Concepts and Land Use Objectives 2001* indicated that the region has a high potential for mineral development. It pointed out that because mining is a cyclical industry, affected by world and regional economies, new discoveries and new extraction processes, there is a strong likelihood that more mining activity will occur, generating further growth in the town. Considerable extractive resources have been identified throughout the region and Mining Exploration Licences in place mean that subject to environmental assessment mining could occur just about anywhere. The recent amalgamation of all local mining leases under the one company (The Burnside Joint Venture) and growing indications that they will begin exploration and extraction in the short term ensures that mining will continue as the key driver of the Pine Creek economy. There are good indicators that a new mining venture will be under way by the time the current operation ceases at the end of 2003. However these interests only have the potential to reactivate mining in the Pine Creek area for 2 years (*Source: Mines Division NT DBIRD*). The challenge is to encourage the development of businesses that can continue to support mining operations whilst at the same time diversifying the local economy to minimize the impact of the cyclical reductions of mining that have characterised the region.

Tourism will play a key part in Pine Creek's economic future and the region is well placed to take advantage of any growth in this sector. Before the 1980s tourism was not a major aspect of the local economy. The growth of the self drive market over the last 20 years has resulted in an increased focus on tourism in the region. This market is predicted to expand rapidly through the next decade and Pine Creek is well placed to take advantage of this. Tourism is now seen as a viable economic activity for the region to complement existing and future mining activities.

Expanding agricultural and horticultural activities may also offer opportunities in the longer term subject to the availability of land and water resources. Land tenure and ownership are important factors affecting the availability and rate at which land can be developed. Four pastoral leases surround the town. Of the 1500 ha available in the town, about 1300 ha are vacant crown land subject to Native Title legislation. Land tenure issues will be a significant challenge to any agricultural expansion in the region. Kybrook Farm has a significant area of land suitable for agriculture but lacks the resources and expertise to develop it. Strategic partnerships with other stakeholders could allow its future development.

A growth in mining, tourism or agricultural activities will open up opportunities for other service industries in Pine Creek. In the medium term the town's well being will be improved by better marketing of existing assets, infrastructure improvements and the development of a more diversified local economy. Population stability and ideally growth is a key element as many services are linked to population levels.

5.3 Regional Issues

During the course of our research and consultations the following issues were identified;

- Tourism infrastructure in Pine Creek needs upgrading. Tourist visitations are increasing.
- Some Tourism ventures operate for a period then close. Recent examples are the Bird Park and Mango Winery
- There is no co-coordinated marketing strategy or the resources to implement it.

There are two significant impediments to further development in the Pine Creek region.

- Firstly Native Title delays or prevents timely access to land for development and mining and the resolution of Native Title issues can incur large costs. Examples include;

Delivery of water for town beautification from the Enterprise Mine Pit is complex due to Native Title issues.

Access to land for agricultural development is also subject to Native Title negotiations and requires considerable capital. Pine Creek however has a unique microclimate; it is the highest community in the Northern Territory resulting in a microclimate that differs from the surrounding region and Darwin. This may offer opportunities for a competitive advantage.

- Secondly, too often one hand of Government seems unaware of the other.

A case in point is the closure of the Umbrawarra Gorge road which, whilst recommended by a tourism study in 2001, is still facing resistance from some decision makers 12 months later. The Council would like to close the existing road access to Umbrawarra Gorge with a new access road being built that would direct travelers through the Pine Creek township. The new road would also provide direct town access for Kybrook Farm residents. Currently they have to enter the Stuart Highway at a dangerous intersection and travel along the Highway to reach Pine Creek.

- Mining activity is about to reduce, a cyclical pattern typical of Pine Creek. There is however considerable remaining resources and recently a number of potentially productive leases have been unified by the Burnside Operations Joint Venture who is undertaking a drilling program with a view to extraction over the next 5 years.
- ADRAIL has a considerable (160 workers) but a temporary presence in Pine Creek
- Unemployment amongst the non-indigenous population is non-existent. Anecdotally 2 to 3 people are unemployed. Conversely indigenous unemployment is very high probably 80%.
- Indigenous residents live either in the area known as "Town Camp" or at Kybrook Farm 6 km out of Pine Creek. There appears to be little interaction between the European and Indigenous populations at the economic level, however sporting and social linkages are strong.
- Existing businesses where properly managed are currently going OK.

- Long term residents are not panicked by the impending mine closures – they have seen it all before – “Pine Creek always seems to survive”
- Re- routing of the highway back through the town whilst desirable from an economic standpoint is unlikely due to safety and traffic flow concerns.

These issues were the focus of a Community Workshop held in Pine Creek on Monday 9th September. The Workshop Outcomes are summarised at (Attachment C)

In consultation with the Local Steering Committee a range of Economic Development Priorities (Attachment D) were identified and are the subject of the following section of this report.

6. Implementation Arrangements for the Preferred Employment and Enterprise Opportunities

The final phase of the project required the identification of 2 or 3 key priorities on which to focus the attention and effort of the Consultants. The aim is to produce a document that will act as a pathway to achieving Pine Creek’s aspirations. A summary of the Final Phase Priorities can be found at Attachment D

The final phase priorities and recommended actions are detailed below;

6.1. Develop an Action Plan that will allow the Pine Creek Community Council to acquire the capacity (through the employment or contracting of expert assistance) to progress projects in the mining, tourism, infrastructure and community sectors;

The Pine Creek Community Council as the elected representative of the community is the key to the regions economic development. The decisions and actions taken by the Council will be critical to the implementation of the strategies detailed in this Report. Additionally they are best placed in terms of infrastructure and expertise to take these strategies forward. However they should not have to act alone. It is also vital that Government Agencies also respond proactively to ensure issues are addressed and progress made.

The Regional Australia Summit, held in October 1999, developed almost 250 strategies to address the various challenges facing regional Australia. The Summit Communiqué identified a wide range of actions for government, for business, for individuals and for local communities – actions that must be taken in partnership, and guided by the knowledge that solutions must be approached from the bottom up, that is, focusing efforts and resources locally.

The Summit developed a Vision for Regional Australia, which it commends as a national goal:

"A strong and resilient regional Australia which, by 2010, has the resources, recognition and skills to play a pivotal role in building Australia's future and is able to turn uncertainty and change into opportunity and prosperity".

It is acknowledged that this cannot be achieved overnight but requires a sustained long term effort.

The first step in the further development of the Pine Creek economy is to ensure that economic development remains a focus of the Community. It is also desirable to provide a recognizable contact point for potential funding agencies. It is also apparent that Agencies feel more comfortable dealing with entities that have a clearly definable and relevant objective. A small community like Pine Creek also has difficulty marshalling enough assistance from within. The same group of people usually on a volunteer basis drives most community activities. To address these issues the following action is recommended.

Action No. 1 The Pine Creek Community Council form an Economic and Tourism Development Committee as a sub committee of Council to co-ordinate the implementation of this strategy, to act as a contact point for funding agencies, to keep Council and the Community informed of progress and to respond to new initiatives and opportunities as they become available.

This action whilst addressing the issues outlined above would also provide Council with the capacity to draw in community expertise as required and when available without relying on the three year cycle of Council elections. It would also allow the participation of community members who were interested in a particular issue but not interested in being a Council member.

A typical Committee structure might be two elected Council members, town clerk, a representative of the business sector and a non specific community member.

Pine Creek also needs to acquire the capacity to implement and co-ordinate a range of strategies across a wide spectrum of issues. To achieve this the following action is recommended.

Action No. 2 The Northern Territory Area Consultative Committee sponsor an application to the Department of Transport and Regional Services under their Regional Solutions Program (Attachment H1) and/or the Northern Territory Department of Business Industry and Regional Development and/or the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (Attachment H3) for the funds to contract a suitably experienced organisation (Role Description Attachment F) whose role will be to identify further funding opportunities and submit applications for funding as appropriate. They will also oversee the letting of further contracts as funding is accessed and monitor their progress and outcomes to ensure the focus remains on the priorities identified in this strategy.

Population is critical to Pine Creek's future and is possibly the one factor most under immediate threat. Currently Pine Creek's population is boosted by mining operations (approx 140 people) and the presence of a temporary Adrail camp (approx 160 people). Both these factors will change over the next 12 months. It is imperative that Pine Creek maintains a viable permanent population because a range of community service funding uses population as its basis. Furthermore population levels also provide underlying strength to the business sector whilst transient visitors add to the business profitability. The following action seeks to put in place a strategy to ensure a stabilisation and possibly growth in Pine Creek's population over the next 5 years.

Action No. 3 **Seek funding from Northern Territory Area Consultative Committee under their Regional Assistance Program (RAP) (Attachment H2) and/or Department of Transport and Regional Services through the Regional Solutions Program (Attachment H1) and/or Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (Attachment H3) to develop and implement an Australia wide "Living in Pine Creek" promotion designed to encourage people to move to the region.**

6.2 Mining

Pine Creek will always be a mining town and mining will be the key to long term economic stability. Considerable extractive resources have been identified throughout the region and Mining Exploration Licenses in place mean that subject to environmental assessment mining could occur just about anywhere. Pine Creek has the Northern Territory's only assay laboratory. The challenge is to encourage the development of businesses that can continue to support mining operations whilst at the same time diversifying the local economy to minimize the impact of the cyclical reductions of mining that have characterised the region. However whilst Native Title continues to be a slow, drawn out and costly process it remains as an impediment to Mining development. The following recommendations seek to maximise local involvement in the opportunities emanating from the mining industry, develop strategies to attract new mining service industries, and facilitate and encourage further mining projects.

Action No. 4 **Seek funding from Northern Territory Area Consultative Committee under their Regional Assistance Program (RAP) (Attachment H2) and/or Department of Transport and Regional Services through the Regional Solutions Program (Attachment H1) and/or the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (Attachment H3) to identify the current and future skill, supply, accommodation and other service needs of local mining operations and implement strategies that will see the Pine Creek Community taking full advantage of the opportunities on offer.**

Action No. 5 **Seek funding from Department of Transport and Regional Services through the Regional Solutions Program (Attachment H1) and/or the Northern Territory Department of Industry and Regional Development (Mines Division) and/or the Northern Territory Area Consultative Committee under their Regional Assistance Program (RAP) (Attachment H2) and/or the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (Attachment H3) to contract a suitable organization to develop a Pine Creek mining promotional and consultative strategy, including updating the existing resource kit, that will provide mining companies and mining servicing businesses with information on the services, facilities and advantages Pine Creek can offer their operations. Assistance may also be available through the Mines Division of the Department of Business Industry and Regional Development (DBIRD)**

- Action No. 6** **Utilise the range of business support and mentoring services available through Business Enterprise Centres, the Department of Business Industry and Regional Development (DBIRD), and the Northern Territory Area Consultative Committee to assist local businesses develop skills that will increase their capacity to access opportunities that arise from mining activity.**

6.3 Tourism

The *Pine Creek Tourism Strategy* in 2001 stressed the importance of improving the general appearance of the town, marketing Pine Creek as a tourist destination and over time developing more tourism infrastructure. It identifies the lack of a dedicated central visitors centre, road access and interpretive signage as weaknesses. It also contains a detailed action and implementation plan. Tourism businesses and the Pine Creek Community Council have been doing their best to implement these strategies whilst at the same time running their businesses in a sometimes difficult and competitive environment. For example the Diggers Rest Motel has been providing tourist information services on a voluntary basis for a long period out of their own premises and two local business people have been operating a Pine Creek display at the Mindil Markets. However progress has been slow and adhoc and limited by a lack of seed funding and time. This recommendation seeks to provide Pine Creek with the capacity to analyse existing marketing activities and upgrade services accordingly to rectify any deficiencies identified, and acquire the funding and infrastructure for an upgraded Tourist Information Centre.

- Action No. 7** **Seek funding from Department of Transport and Regional Services through the Regional Solutions Program (Attachment H1) and/or the Department of Industry Tourism and Resources under their Regional Tourism Program (Attachment H4) and/or Northern Territory Area Consultative Committee under their Regional Assistance Program (RAP) (Attachment H2) to contract a suitable organization to review the existing tourism marketing strategies, develop new marketing materials, develop a dedicated tourist information service in Pine Creek and in other locations, in the media and on the internet. A particular focus of this work should be on the niche markets Pine Creek offers in Indigenous and Chinese culture, bird watching, unique flora and fauna, railways, and mining heritage. Assistance may also be available from the Katherine Regional Tourism Association**

There is clearly a need for some Pine Creek tourism enterprises to develop their tourism and hospitality capacity. One identified need, for example, was for an induction program for new staff at tourism/hospitality outlets, designed to provide them with an overview of Pine Creek's services and attractions that they could pass on to customers in the course of their work. Other skills in marketing and customer service would enhance the tourist experience and lead to further visitations. To achieve this it is recommended that Pine Creek Community Council,

- Action No. 8** **Seek assistance from the NT Northern Territory Area Consultative Committee under their Regional Assistance Program (RAP) (Attachment H2) or their Small Business Enterprise Culture Program (Attachment H5) and/or Northern Territory Department**

of Industry and Regional Development to develop a small business assistance strategy designed to provide support and training to existing small businesses and their staff. Assistance may also be available from the Katherine Regional Tourism Association

6.4 Infrastructure

Pine Creek has a range of heritage assets that if restored and maintained could add significantly to the economic development of the region. These include;

- Railway Precinct
- Bakery
- Old Bonrook Station Homestead
- Old Police Lock Up
- Old Butchery
- Old Post Office and Repeater Station

Generally these sites are in urgent need of maintenance and repair. Action needs to be taken to maintain and restore local heritage assets, and progress the further development of the railway precinct and heritage railway.

Action No. 9 Seek funding from the Department of the Environment and Heritage under its Cultural Heritage Projects Program (CHPP)(Attachment H6) and/or Department of Transport and Regional Services through the Regional Solutions Program (Attachment H1) and/or the Department of Industry Tourism and Resources under their Regional Tourism Program (Attachment H4) and/or NT Area Consultative Committee (ACC) under their Regional Assistance Program (RAP) (Attachment H2) to restore and develop the many heritage attractions in Pine Creek including the completion of the heritage railway project.

Two infrastructure projects were identified as those that may benefit from an improved understanding and co-ordination of Government services. They were building a new access road to Umbrawarra Gorge, and delivery of water for the greening of Pine Creek. Action 1 identifies the need of a co-coordinating organization – part of their role would be to promulgate Pine Creek’s strategic goals to appropriate Government representatives and agencies. In so doing the aim would be to present an overview of Pine Creek's goals and provide Agencies a relevant framework in which to make decisions. The progress of these two priorities has been hampered by bureaucratic, legislative and administrative impediments resulting from the narrow view taken by responsible Agencies.

Action No. 10 The coordinating organization’s role, contracted under Action 1.1, would also facilitate negotiations with agencies and other stakeholders on issues as they arise and ensure that stakeholders fully understood Pine Creek’s strategic goals and their Agencies part in achieving those outcomes.

Pine Creek has the potential for further agricultural production in the long term. Some of the land within the town, and areas in the adjoining pastoral leases may be suitable for additional agriculture/horticultural development providing that soils and water are available. It has a unique micro climate due to its elevation, land is available although subject to access restrictions and the Alice Springs Darwin railway will provide quick access to new markets. Now is the time to examine the viability of an expanded agricultural industry in the Region.

Action No. 11 **Seek funding from Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and/or Department of Transport and Regional Services through the Regional Solutions Program (Attachment H1) (Attachment H1) and/or Northern Territory Area Consultative Committee under their Regional Assistance Program (RAP) (Attachment H2) to contract a suitable organization to undertake a study on the viability of the long term development of an expanded agricultural/horticultural industry in the Pine Creek region.**

6.5 Government Services

The co-ordination of funding and support is critical to the implementation of this report. It is also a strategy identified by the Regional Australia Summit. A strategy is needed to engage Government stakeholders and funding providers so that they are fully aware of developments being pursued by the Pine Creek community and that their efforts to assist are implemented in a co-coordinated manner.

Action No. 12 **Engage the co-coordinating organization identified in Action 1.2 to publish and promote a Pine Creek Strategic Plan based on this document and to co-ordinate regular stakeholder meetings, including Community, Government and Agency representatives, designed to keep the economic development of Pine Creek in focus and on track.**

6.6 Develop strategies to engage the Indigenous community in cross cultural and civil works projects and formulate partnerships for the economic benefit of Pine Creek and Kybrook communities.

The Indigenous community is primarily located 6km south of Pine Creek in an area known as Kybrook Farm. Kybrook Farm consists of a well established Community Centre, workshop and nursery, housing and equipment. However most of these assets are in need of repair and maintenance. Anecdotally about 200 people live at Kybrook Farm. The community is managed locally and employs a coordinator. A CDEP project is in operation. Whilst there is social participation between the Indigenous and non Indigenous populations there is very little economic interaction. Kybrook farm residents are poorly represented in the Pine Creek workforce and no Indigenous enterprises are operating. To address this it is recommended that the Northern Territory Area Consultative Committee assess the interest of the Kybrook Community in enterprise development and if appropriate take the following action.

Action No. 13 **The Northern Territory Area Consultative Committee be asked to sponsor an Employment and Enterprise Scoping Project for Kybrook Farm with a focus on developing economic partnerships with the wider Pine Creek community especially in the areas of tourism and civil works.**

Increasingly Local Government is recognizing the benefits of developing economic partnerships with its Indigenous citizens. An agreement or statement of commitment with Indigenous peoples can be a key to developing mutual respect and understanding in the wider community and can produce very real social and economic benefits. Agreements assist in building strong harmonious communities that value all its citizens and respect their rights. They help to increase cultural awareness and understanding and involve Indigenous citizens in the processes of local governance.

Action No 14 The Pine Creek Community Council consider seeking assistance, from a suitably qualified organization, in developing a formal agreement with the Kybrook Farm community using the model developed by the Australian Local Government Association and ATSIC in their publication "Working out Agreements A Practical Guide to Agreements between Local Government and Indigenous Australians". Funding for this action may possibly be sourced through ATSIC, the Department of Transport and Regional Services through the Regional Solutions Program (Attachment H1) (Attachment H1) or NT Area Consultative Committee (ACC) under their Regional Assistance Program (RAP) (Attachment H2)

The benefits for all parties that can be derived from an agreement are unlimited and can include;

- improved governance and service delivery arrangements.
- clear statements of respect and recognition.
- statements of shared objectives.
- a framework for sharing responsibility for land and water to which Indigenous Australians have cultural heritage and/or native title rights and interest.
- joint access to funding and other support mechanisms
- cost benefits from the sharing of resources

Agreements require recognition of the legitimate aspirations of all parties and preparedness to build new relations for the lasting benefit of future generations. Agreements are also an effective means of developing a comprehensive approach to the need of the community. They can dispel the level of anxiety and misunderstanding in the general community which often occurs when native title claims are made. They may offer an alternative to costly and time consuming delays of determining specific native title claims via the courts. They offer the opportunity for all parties to come together to develop a shared management plan for the land and its resources that can offer economic, environmental and social benefits for all concerned. In it itself, this process provides opportunities for people to get to know each other, build trust and to learn more about each other's culture, concerns and aspirations.

7. Conclusion

The implementation strategy described in this Report is not exhaustive. Over time priorities will change, circumstances will be different, funding programs will come and go, and there are other sources of funding not fully investigated. In spite of Governments' best efforts over recent times funding and other support programs for Regional Australia is still a complex maze requiring skill, determination and patience to navigate.

The key message of this report is that action be taken. Co-ordinated focused action driven by the Community and proactively supported by Governments, Local, Territory and National, and their Agencies.

The Federal Government sets out in its "Stronger Regions, A Stronger Australia" policy an approach to Regional Development that includes;

- Taking a planned, cooperative approach to dealing with the social and economic impacts of structural change
- Improving the business and investment environment and encouraging the growth of regional businesses and employment
- Addressing pressing social issues faced by regional communities and building community skills
- Putting in place organisational arrangements that enhance Government's responsiveness to regions' needs

Pine Creek represents an ideal platform for putting this rhetoric into action.

At the beginning of a new millennium Pine Creek still offers enormous potential as a major regional centre of economic and cultural significance and a contributor to the Northern Territory's economic, social and cultural future. Given the opportunity Pine Creek can be a service centre for mining, a major tourist attraction as, for example, a working steam museum and a storehouse of architectural and cultural heritage.

This potential will not be realized without action, co-ordinated, concerted and long term action by the Pine Creek Community, Pine Creek businesses, Commonwealth and Territory Governments and their Agencies.

Pine Creek offers a unique opportunity for Governments and their Agencies to demonstrate the effectiveness of the range of support they offer. A holistic approach is needed. One that brings together all stakeholders under a common set of goals and that allows planned co-ordinated development to take place.

Like many regional communities across Australia, Pine Creek deserves this focus and effort. 600 people currently live in the community, thousands more visit every year, and many more could live and work there.

The Actions recommended in this Report will hopefully help Pine Creek to address the range of economic development priorities identified by the Pine Creek Community through this Project.