

Tourism Futures

Building a prosperous and resilient future

Building on the established position of Alice Springs as a tourist hub of central Australia, CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems is working on a joint project with the Alice Springs Town Council and the Northern Territory Tourist Commission to explore where tourism may take the region in the future.

The Central Australia Tourism Futures project involves tourist operators and the local community working together to create an understanding of how regional tourism could develop over the next five to ten year period.

The key objective is to ensure a prosperous and resilient future for tourism by:

- * Identifying the best ways to develop tourism and subsidiary industries in the region.
- * Developing strategies to increase the benefits of tourism in creating expanded regional economic growth.
- * Helping to build local and regional capacities for strategic planning and optimising opportunities.
- * Increasing the region's capacity to respond to and plan for change.



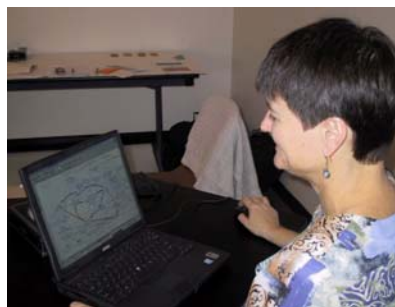
Members of the local community contribute to a diagram capturing their understanding of how the region 'works'

Over a two-week period, the CSIRO project team held one-on-one interviews with various people involved in tourism or related agencies. These discussions highlighted key issues facing the industry.

Some of the issues included: the importance of Aboriginal cultural tourism; training availability; transport constraints; loss of smaller operators; and increasing people's awareness of the key role that tourism plays in the regional economy.

Further group input into the project took place through a series of workshops conducted in early June, involving discussions with over 40 members of the community.

These workshops focused on exploring the interactions amongst the different areas of the industry as they influence the economic, social and environmental aspects of tourism growth in a region. For example, with employment issues, it is important to identify who benefits from tourism development, how it affects the unemployment rate in the region, and how the changing structure of employment might affect future development.



The interactions between activities that the workshop participants see as important in a region are entered on a computer in real time so that an immediate analysis of the linkages can be made

The systems approach of these workshops took the focus away from looking at issues individually. It encouraged participants to focus on how particular issues or actions interact within a systems framework. For example, achieving an increase in corporate visits may boost turnover in restaurants but disadvantage takeaway food outlets. Sealing a road may speed up bus trips but affect four wheel

drive experiences. There are endless scenarios, but understanding their different impacts is not insurmountable.

How will this work?

In the short term, the workshop outcomes have been used to build two simple simulators that will show how scenarios for future tourism development can be designed and quantitatively evaluated. These simulators are being used to evaluate and compare scenarios in the final project workshops in September 2002.

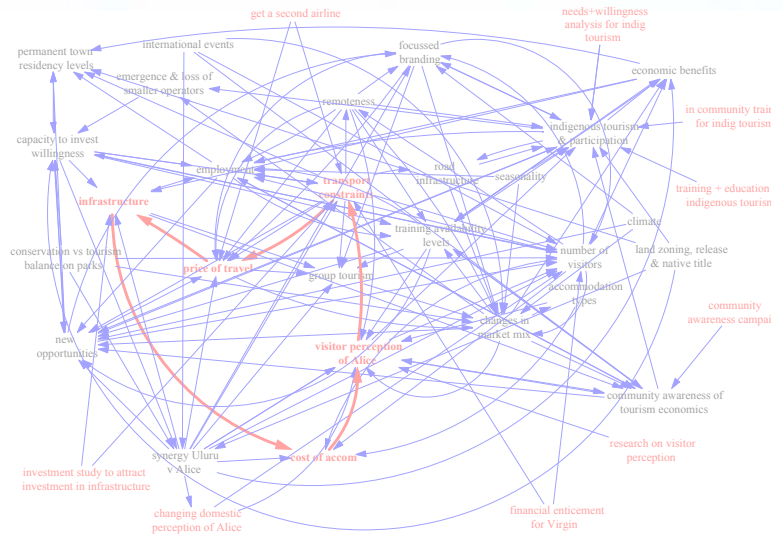
In the longer term, if the community is convinced that this approach offers real benefits to tourism and the central Australian region in general, then a more comprehensive **Futures Simulator** will be developed. This phase will include new data collection by industry, targeted closely to the relationships which are found to be important in the model but which are poorly quantified.

The outcome will be:

- understanding of how best to grow tourism and all its subsidiary industries in central Australia
- strategies for increasing the benefits of tourism and promoting regional economic development
- increased local and regional capacity for strategy planning and scenario evaluation
- better understanding of the tourism industry as a system
- enhanced regional capacity to respond to, and plan for, change.



Using the computer modelling developed by CSIRO, it is possible to 'tell the story' about the region by tracing pathways that link 'drivers' and their impacts. This helps to identify flow-on consequences of actions or decisions. Similar techniques can be applied to a wide range of other regional issues.



A typical workshop "systems diagram" (also known as a horrendogram!) which captures the complexity of how a region operates. Researchers use this rich community understanding as a basis for sorting out the critical links for modelling



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