

Plant Business project

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NINTI ONE **CRC** **REMOTE ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION**

CRC for Remote Economic Participation

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The context

Previous research about Bush Tomato (*Solanum centrale*) identified that development of a commercial industry based on the plant requires a variety developed specifically for horticultural production. Such an industry could provide economic participation for Aboriginal people, but it must be developed while protecting Aboriginal Intellectual Property via instruments of IP law and ethical marketing, applying these to horticultural varieties of Bush Tomato identified by the project. This work can be extended to IP protection and commercialisation of other traditionally used plants to lead to opportunities for skills development and economic participation by people in remote Australia.

The research

The project is engaging Aboriginal people, obtaining their cultural approval and involvement in collecting a broad range of Bush Tomato plant samples and associated stories. Environmental distinctions between different plant collection locations will be recorded, and assessments produced on genetic and chemical factors. This data will aid the selection of prospective superior Bush Tomato varieties from scores of collected plant samples that will be propagated to provide the basis for horticultural field assessment trials. Data will be recorded to underpin legal protection of varieties on behalf of the traditional custodians.

Methods for the protection of intellectual property associated with cultural heritage, involving both legal and market-oriented strategies, will be investigated and a range of options developed. These approaches will have broader application to safeguarding all forms of culture-based products.

Research partners and locations

CRC-REP Partners involved in the project include Southern Cross University, RemoteBiz, University of New England, Northern Territory Government, Desert Garden Produce, Robins Foods, Coles, CleanGROW, Centrefarm and Outback Spirit.

Stakeholders already involved in bush food businesses, including traditional custodians of bush food knowledge and lore or people who can speak for them, have been engaged to provide advice and guidance to the project. Stakeholder gatherings will periodically be organised to present the progress and findings of the project to the broader community of interest.

The outcomes

The project aims to create a model for horticultural development applicable to traditionally used plants, in ways acceptable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Associated biological information and cultural knowledge of Bush Tomato plants will enable better understanding of the plant and support protection of the plant varietal intellectual property. Strategies and recommendations will be provided for safeguarding Aboriginal Intellectual Property will be applicable to plants and other products based on Traditional Knowledge.

The project will lead to expansion of horticultural production, providing a foundation for growth of successful Bush Tomato businesses and jobs in communities of remote Australia, and to promote benefit sharing for traditional custodians. Related training opportunities and employment for people in remote Australia will lead to financial and social benefits to communities, and extension of this approach will result in development of successful enterprises with other bush food species.