



**Centre for
Appropriate
Technology**

ABN 93 080 271 156

www.icat.org.au

• **Central Australia**

HEAD OFFICE
Desert Peoples Centre
Desert Knowledge Precinct
South Stuart Highway
PO Box 8044
ALICE SPRINGS NT 0871
Tel: (08) 8959 6100
Fax: (08) 8959 6111
info@icat.org.au

• **North Queensland**

Level 1 – Unit 3
143 Buchan Street
Bungalow
PO Box 6182
Cairns QLD 4870
Tel: (07) 4031 0505
Fax: (07) 4031 0431
nq@icat.org.au

• **Northern Australia**

7 Searcy Street
PO Box 2875
Darwin City NT 0801
Tel: (08) 8981
7599
Fax: (08) 8981 7233
darwin@icat.org.au

**securing
sustainable
livelihoods
through
appropriate
technology**

Media Release

Alternative solutions for sustainable remote communities

Costs to government to support Aboriginal people to live in the bush wouldn't be prohibitive if the focus was appropriate technology and infrastructure that enables self-reliance and sustainability.

Today the Centre for Appropriate Technology's (CAT) new CEO Dr Steve Rogers said "the debate currently underway about the viability of small remote communities needs to include a debate about the sustainability of current service delivery models and the use of appropriate technologies".

CAT's work with remote communities over many years has demonstrated that where people are given the opportunity to acquire skills and knowledge to help manage essential services, service reliability and affordability improves.

Where this is also combined with appropriate technology, robustly designed and fit for purpose, people are not just able to live well in the bush, but also leverage from the amenity of service they have to develop enterprises and plan for future economic development.

For over ten years CAT ran the Bushlight project delivering renewable energy systems providing reliable 24 hour power to 130 small remote communities across Australia. For many of these communities reliable power was the catalyst for enterprise development.

Across the Dampier Peninsula WA, numerous community run eco-tourism ventures have emerged since Bushlight systems were installed and monies could be diverted from diesel fuel for generators into enterprise development.

When it comes to municipal and essential services in small remote communities a few clever technology investments and a little bit of innovation in how services are managed and delivered would go a long way to improving sustainability and reducing the impost on governments of escalating costs.

CAT's experience is that supporting local people to gain technical skills and capabilities is vitally important. If people are able to manage risks to their small water supplies thus keeping water safe to drink and effectively demand manage their renewable energy systems to extend the life of batteries and provide amenity 24 hours, costs go down and service reliability goes up.

Package such approaches with investments that connect communities to the world, and mechanisms to transform education and health access and develop local economies will emerge. Novel appropriate technologies such as the CAT Mobile Phone Hotspot system that extends the coverage from existing mobile tower infrastructure to areas where there was previously none is a good example of cost effective solutions.

In recent years CAT has designed and implemented new service models for housing repairs, maintenance and water supply management across Homeland clusters in the Laynhapuy/Marngarr and Utopia regions in the Northern Territory.

"Not only did we have 60% of the work crew comprising local residents, but we delivered accredited on the job training, engaged with every household to enable them to make decisions about the improvements they wanted, and we delivered on time and on budget" said CAT Chairman Peter Renehan. "It just goes to show there are better ways to run things, ways that empower Aboriginal people and don't increase costs to government".

"Aboriginal people in small communities already contribute their own money and time to supplement the services they receive from government. The evidence of how to improve service and infrastructure sustainability is available. The link between enabling technologies and economic development is proven. What is needed now is the will to implement" says Dr Steve Rogers.

There are many reasons people choose to live where they do, and for Aboriginal people the connection to culture and country is paramount, as is the desire to leverage the assets and traditional lands they do have for economic independence. For mining operations and pastoralists, the choice is equally obvious. The reality is that government investment in the largely underdeveloped and underserved outback is an essential precursor of economic development, private sector activity and community well-being.

CAT Ltd is an Aboriginal not for profit company delivering the enabling technologies that support community and economic development.

For more information:

CAT CEO: Dr Steve Rogers 0409 096 268
CAT Chairman: Mr Peter Renehan 0447 803 320
Media Contact: Metta Young 0404 467 814