



Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research  
The Australian National University

Education, Training and Indigenous Futures  
CAEPR Policy Research: 1990-2007

## Research Summaries

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## Reference No. 2

Summarising: Altman & Finlayson (1992), *Aborigines, tourism and sustainable development*

Responsibility for the preparation of this research summary rests with the authors of the MCEETYA report *Education, Training and Indigenous Futures: CAEPR Policy Research 1990-2007* and not the original author(s) of the summarised material.

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**Title of Research:**

Aborigines, tourism and sustainable development

**Research Publication:**

CAEPR Discussion Paper No. 26/1992

<[http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/Publications/DP/1992\\_DP26.pdf](http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/Publications/DP/1992_DP26.pdf)>

**Name of Researcher (s):**

J.C. Altman and J. Finlayson

**Time Period:**

1991

**Geographic Location:**

Urban and rural areas of south-east Australia and remote areas of central and northern Australia

**Methodology:**

This paper is primarily the product of a literature review of tourism impacts and futures for Aboriginal people, and comparative material drawn from the authors' respective research experience in urban, rural and remote regions of Australia.

**Aims:**

This paper has three primary aims:

- Review research on the impacts of tourism on Aboriginal communities;
- Outline the characteristics of an ecologically sustainable tourism industry in the context of the industry's interface with Aboriginal communities; and
- Discuss policy alternatives to achieve an ecologically sustainable tourism industry for Aboriginal communities.

**Selected findings and insights:**

Developing a sustainable Indigenous tourism industry will be dependent upon achieving a balance between **economic** outcomes, continuity of **cultural** integrity and social cohesion and **ecological** maintenance.

Issues related to **education and training** that emerge in this research are:

- Whilst tourism is widely touted as an important economic opportunity for Indigenous communities to develop some independence from welfare and create pathways to employment, in reality this is often not the case.
- Employment in the tourism industry is problematic for many Indigenous people for several reasons:
  - Such employment generally requires high levels of **literacy and numeracy**
  - Such employment requires high levels of English-language proficiency and **communication skills**.

As a result employment opportunities are generally limited to unskilled or semi-skilled jobs.

Employment in the tourism industry (such as cultural performances, park rangers, tour guides, bush food tours etc.) usually requires certain **cultural styles** (such as outgoing or extroverted personalities) which are difficult or inappropriate for many Indigenous people to adopt.

In summary, many of the employment opportunities available through tourism thereby exclude a significant proportion of Indigenous people who do not have the requisite skills or who are uncomfortable in the roles that would be expected of them.

Apart from particular cultural styles, other cultural factors will also influence the nature of an Indigenous-based tourism industry. These apply especially to remote area communities where issues such as high levels of mobility and involvement in customary requirements will impact upon standard 'western' business practices.

At the same time there may be insufficient cross-cultural understandings from non-Indigenous business operators wishing to use the services offered by Indigenous people, or by customers themselves who have particular expectations.

#### **Educational implications:**

Increased educational **outcomes** is a priority if a sustainable Indigenous tourism industry is to be established. Higher base levels of literacy, numeracy and English language proficiency among young Indigenous people would contribute to better training and employment outcomes in tourism, especially the establishment of tourism-based enterprises owned and managed by Indigenous people. In addition to such basic skills training, this research suggests the creation of **curriculum** linkages between local secondary schools, focusing upon requisite skills for working in the tourism industry, and emerging or established tourism enterprises to promote an employment pathway for young Indigenous people. **[basic skills] [pathways]**

Generating tourism-related employment is clearly not just a case, however, of providing education and training programs to ready people for specific tasks. Elements of the intercultural encounter that defines such tourism are often uncomfortable or undesirable for many Indigenous people. Provisional training should be directed at better informing people about what they can expect out of tourism, and better preparing them for such encounters. Overall though, for socio-cultural reasons it appears most people will tend to prefer indirect engagement with tourists. Broad training is therefore perhaps not the answer. Rather, for example in regard to 'guiding', training could be targeted at those more gregarious or interculturally confident individuals who have a willingness to participate in such contexts. Other training could be more concentrated upon administrative and financial services to support the enterprises **[curriculum]**.

#### **Relevance:**

*Domain 5: Pathways to training, employment and higher education*

The challenge for pathways to training, employment and higher education

Participation, retention and achievement in training

Pathways and strategies for remote locations

#### **Related Papers**

J.C. Altman, 'Indigenous Communities and Business: Three perspectives, 1998-2000', *CAEPR Working Paper No. 9*, 2001.

<<http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/Publications/WP/CAEPRWP09.pdf>>