6. ‘Achieving white dreams whilst being black’: Agency and ambivalence at Century mine

Introduction

Negotiations between Conzinc Rio Tinto of Australia (CRA) and the Gulf communities concerning the development of the Century deposit and associated pipeline and port facilities began in 1991 (Blowes and Trigger 1998), at about the same time that Hamersley Iron, a subsidiary of CRA, was involved in the Marandoo dispute in the Central Pilbara (see Chapters 2 and 5). Complex negotiations saw the intervention of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) and state-appointed mediators (including ex-Governor General Bill Hayden); disputation amongst Indigenous groups with interests in the project area; several overlapping native title claims; and militant action by the Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (CLCAC) that included an extended occupation of the Lawn Hill National Park, and the fostering of links with the Bougainville Revolutionary Army.\(^1\) The culmination was the signing of the Gulf Communities Agreement (GCA) in 1997, between the Queensland Government, Century Zinc Limited (CZL) and the Waanyi, Mingginda, Gkuthaarn and Kukatj people (Blowes and Trigger 1998; Smith and Altman 1998; Trigger 1997b; Trigger and Robinson 2001).

To recapitulate, the agreement provides for $60 million in community benefits over the 20 year life of the mine. Desired outcomes of the agreement include a reduction in welfare dependency, promotion of economic self-sufficiency, residence on traditional lands, environmental and cultural heritage protection, and general improvement of status against standard social indices. Community benefits are defined in 10 schedules to the agreement that outline provisions for employment and training, environmental protection, heritage protection, the return and management of lands, and business enterprise and social development programs (for further detail see Chapter 3).

Since the signing of the GCA, and the subsequent construction of Century mine, Indigenous parties to the agreement remain factionalised in relation to the agreement, its associated structures, the mine and each other. Diverse Indigenous attitudes, whilst grounded both in the opposition and accommodation

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\(^1\) Letters of support from Frances Ona, who was instrumental in the closure of CRA’s Panguna mine, were displayed on the Doomadgee shop notice board. These letters dated from the period of negotiations.
surrounding the negotiations as described by Trigger (Blowes and Trigger 1998; Trigger 1997b; Trigger and Robinson 2001), are now, because of the existence of the mine, characteristically ambivalent. Complexity in the politics associated with the mine does not fully explain the dichotomy between Indigenous people for or against the mine, a number of individuals, families and organisations in the region expressing divided sentiments. Indigenous agency is motivated by consideration of the potential costs and benefits presented by the mine, but is bounded by the realities of a large scale limited life (20 years) zinc mine, its associated infrastructure, and the terms of the GCA. The Indigenous polity constantly weighs these costs and benefits of engagement via the GCA against multiple and diverse outcomes. Many individuals, families and organisations support the mine; others, who were generally opposed to its establishment, monitor the outcomes of the GCA and hold the company and the State of Queensland to account via the threat of protest. An occupation of the mine by approximately 150 Waanyi people in 2002 threatened its closure (Meade 2002). Such action asserted the centrality of the GCA and Indigenous stakeholders by highlighting the mine’s vulnerability to Indigenous direct action.

The significant diversity of Indigenous responses to the development of the mine is shaped by ‘the nature of alliances across diverse Indigenous groupings’ (Blowes and Trigger 1998: 87), which produce strategies, both pro- and anti-mine, that draw upon Indigenous social relationships and political institutions to seek support within the Indigenous polity of the region. Historical, cultural, and political influences, such as the movement of Indigenous people within the region, mission settlement, involvement in the pastoral industry (see Chapter 2) and, more recently, the negotiation of the GCA itself, inform alliances and enmity in social relationships across the Gulf. A five-year review of the GCA undertaken by the Gulf Aboriginal Development Corporation (GADC), Pasminco and the State of Queensland (Pasminco, The State of Queensland and GADC 2002), and disputation surrounding the conduct of the review (CLCAC 2004), highlight such political divisions. Trigger (1997b: 110) notes that social relations amongst Indigenous people can be a major determinant of outcomes in engagement with large-scale resource development. In his analysis of the political divisions associated with the Century mine, Trigger shows how the mine and the associated agreement are incorporated into a complex interplay of local politics. Nine years since he wrote, it is clear that the integration of the mine as a site of contestation is a product of the engagement fostered by the GCA which inserts what Trigger terms the politics of ‘indigenism’ into the pursuit of economic development objectives.

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2 The GADC is the body established by the GCA to manage trust funds. As noted in Chapter 3, the GADC is not adequately resourced by the agreement to perform its functions.
Fig. 6.1 The southern Gulf of Carpentaria map

Source: CAEPR, ANU

An underlying argument of this chapter is that Indigenous ambivalence produces Indigenous strategies of opposition and accommodation aimed at asserting the legitimacy of Indigenous identity, the reproduction of cultural traditions, and at the same time the garnering of sufficient economic resources for the maintenance of these priorities. The first part of this proposition has been discussed in Chapter 1, and again in Chapters 4 and 5. This chapter will consider how Indigenous agency concerning the mine and the GCA is grounded in networks of relatedness to kin and place, and how Indigenous people actively seek the development of appropriate institutions to support and enhance diverse livelihood aspirations. Such aspirations include access to pastoral land for use as rangelands, the development of outstations, and the maintenance of sacred sites and the knowledge systems that surround them. These activities are both informed by and inform the maintenance of distinct Indigenous identities. Economic aspirations associated with availability and access to paid employment, business development and compensatory regimes associated with the mine and the GCA are critical to supporting typically
Indigenous livelihoods. In this context Indigenous agency is focused on the mine and motivated by the perception that the State of Queensland has abrogated its service delivery responsibilities to Indigenous people in the southern Gulf of Carpentaria, resulting in entrenched social and economic disadvantage among the Indigenous population. The 20 year life of the mine creates a sense of urgency in Indigenous attempts to realise these aspirations, and uncertainty about the potential impacts of mine closure (Miles, Cavaye and Donaghy 2005).

Trigger (1998) outlines the marginality and lack of affinity that characterised Indigenous responses in the southern Gulf of Carpentaria to the development of the Century mine. The mine’s development implied a broader project of national identity building, an objective premised on mineral development as a means of ‘making the land productive’. This lack of affinity with a pro-development ideology and its associated assumptions, highlights what Trigger (1998: 155) describes as the contested nature of citizenship, ‘that entails struggle over the meaning of “membership” in societies such as contemporary Australia’. Initial Indigenous opposition focused on apprehensions about loss of the integrity of country and concerns about environmental pollution, with gradual support from some sectors of the Indigenous polity during negotiations arising from ‘a desire to obtain whatever benefits are possible in the face of what seems inevitable’ (Trigger 1998: 159). Whilst initial development of the Century project was supported by ‘a powerful nexus between government, industry and a substantial degree of popular sentiment’ (Trigger 1998: 163), this chapter considers how Indigenous demands can influence corporate decision making and elicit responses that are derived from pragmatic and self-interested commercial considerations of corporations. Trebeck (2007: 5) characterises corporate social responsibility and the activities other than commercial outputs of mining companies that address social and environmental concerns, but nonetheless ensure corporate viability, as activities that ‘are conducted in response to community demands, rather than stemming from a sense of moral responsibility’. Demands and actions of Indigenous people associated with the GCA demonstrate the vulnerability of the Century project and the limitations of CZL to be responsive to Indigenous demands, and highlight a fundamental point made by Trebeck (2007: 24) about the role of the state as an ultimate regulator and provider: the mandate of corporations is to make profit, and as such they ‘…lack the authority of government concerning morals, social issues or politics’. Within the relationships between Century mine and Indigenous people in the southern Gulf of Carpentaria, it is possible to discern a challenge to notions of national identity and citizenship entailed in pro-development ideology (Trigger 1998). This is a challenge to accept and incorporate Indigenous worldviews and practices.
Within this context the outcomes of the GCA have been varied. This chapter begins by describing the successful Indigenous employment program at the mine arising from a combination of flexible recruitment and training provisions and a heightened corporate awareness of the GCA as a key element of mine operation. This heightened awareness is brought about by the militancy of sectors of the southern Gulf of Carpentaria Indigenous polity. The presence of a large group of local Indigenous workers on site at any one time further promotes an awareness of the GCA, and co-opts the mine site into a broader realm of regional social and political relations. The focus then turns to the social organisation and description of the western groups associated with the GCA to examine aspects of the intersection of the mine and local Indigenous politics. Like the Pilbara, not all Indigenous parties to the GCA are capable or willing to participate in mainstream programs of economic development associated with the agreement. When other aspects of the GCA community benefits package are examined, it reveals the poor outcomes in accessing benefits for many Indigenous people associated with the agreement. Poor outcomes, it is argued, arise from inadequate organisational structures, the inadequate scale of the agreement against the outcomes it seeks, and how the agreement’s predominant focus on employment and training overlooks other forms of economic activity.

The mine site

Fieldwork in the southern Gulf of Carpentaria commenced in 2003 and coincided with NAIDOC (National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee) celebrations hosted by CZL on the Century mine site. Approximately 250 Indigenous school children from Doomadgee, Burketown, Mornington and Bentinck Islands and Normanton were invited to the mine for a week of cultural activities, and sporting clinics. In addition, many adult residents of these communities attended. The mine canteen, which had been the site of a nine-day protest and occupation by Waanyi people the year before (see below), was adorned with artworks by local schoolchildren, a display of paintings and artefacts by Lardil artists from Mornington Island, and profiles of Indigenous mine workers. Staff profiles indicated the sector of the mine in which people worked, where they came from, their language group, their Aboriginal name, and how they maintained their cultural ties. The profiles were displayed on the windows of the canteen. An Indigenous man and superintendent in the GCA Support Department, a member of the employment/environment committee (see Chapter 3) and the most senior Indigenous employee on the mine, stated in his profile that he maintained his cultural ties (interview, 6 July 2003).

By helping my people achieve their white dreams but staying black to do them and also by sitting with my old people and listening to stories.
This Gangalidda man's country is in the vicinity of Burketown to the north of the mine. His statement reflects the nature of his job at the mine, to seek engagement between Indigenous parties to the GCA, with CZL and the State of Queensland. By staying ‘black’ he draws what might appear an obvious boundary both for himself and ‘his people’ over how such engagement should occur. The need to draw a boundary that delimits modes of social action reflects the perception of many Indigenous parties to the GCA that the agreement and the mine challenge the legitimacy of Indigenous identity and cultural institutions. High Indigenous employment at Century presents a counter challenge to the mine to incorporate Indigenous identity and its incumbent institutions within its commercial operations. He also invokes the importance of the transmission of knowledge from old people to younger people, a central part of the maintenance of Indigenous identity and institutions associated with connection to land. In addition, the statement, taken in the context of NAIDOC celebrations on the mine site, co-opts the mine as existing in a broader realm of Indigenous social relations in the southern Gulf of Carpentaria.

Blowes and Trigger (1998: 110) point out how the GCA to Indigenous parties is not just a business deal but also a symbolic expression of the capacity of CZL and the State of Queensland to build social relationships with Indigenous people party to the agreement. The fostering of such social relationships is seen as a key factor in the redress of Indigenous disadvantage through economic engagement. It is also viewed as a step towards gaining respect for and recognition of the distinctiveness of Indigenous identity. Indigenous agency ensures that the GCA and the mine site remain contested spaces for the negotiation of relationships both within the Indigenous polity of the region, and relationships with the company and the State of Queensland. A key feature of the Century experience is the desire of Indigenous people associated with the mine to seek redress for social and economic disadvantage, though the means and strategies of attaining this are disparate and diverse. A fundamental point of friction in the relationships between Indigenous people, the mining industry and the State of Queensland is over the extent to which Indigenous people are prepared to be the ‘subject’ of programs and strategies established without adequate Indigenous input.

As at 2007, Century mine boasted the highest rate of Indigenous employment of any mine in Australia (see Chapter 3), success due to the provisions of the agreement, the proactive efforts of onsite recruitment and training personnel and the contribution of the State of Queensland to mine related training in the region. Century mine is predominantly a zinc mine, but also produces lead and silver (Zinifex 2005). At the time of fieldwork CZL was the holding company of the mine, which was owned by Zinifex, a company created after Pasminco went into voluntary liquidation. In 2008 Zinifex merged with Oxiana Limited to form Oz Minerals which was subsequently acquired in 2009 by MMG Limited
a subsidiary company of China Minmetals. As this chapter relates to operations of Century mine in the period 2004–2007, mining entities in existence at that time are referred to in order to avoid confusion associated with changing mine management, and also to avoid the risk of misrepresenting current corporate approaches at the mine. Pasminco had purchased the mine from CRA (now Rio Tinto) following the vitriolic negotiation of the GCA, but prior to the commencement of construction. The GCA was transferred with the sale of the mine. Operations at the mine were divided between Zinifex and a number of contractors, who are also bound by the GCA.³ The largest contractor is the Roche Eltin Joint Venture (REJV), which operated extraction of ore from the mine pit. REJV employed the largest number of Indigenous people on the site. Processing of ore on-site, and transportation via a 300 kilometre pipeline from the mine site to a purpose built port at Karumba, some 300 kilometre to the northeast, was Zinifex’s responsibility.

Within CZL, responsibility for administration of the GCA was held centrally by a specifically designated unit within the mine’s Human Resources section known as the GCA Support Department (Barker and Brereton 2005: 16). In addition to the Gangalidda man who was superintendent in the GCA Support Department, the GCA consisted of a community development position, a human resources position, a training position, and community liaison officers, who were permanently stationed in Doomadgee, Mornington Island and Normanton. All positions were answerable to the Human Resource Manager. At the time of fieldwork Indigenous people from the Gulf of Carpentaria occupied all positions except the training position.

The responsibility of the GCA Support Department, according to its manager, is to ensure integration of Indigenous issues across the mine organisation and to make it core business (interview, 5 July 2003). Ian Williams, who was in charge of construction at the mine in 1998–99, recognised the complexities associated with the agreement and tried to make the GCA part of ‘line management’.⁴ However, the diversity of issues contained in the GCA did not fit comfortably within line management; for example, the management of company held pastoral properties and liaison with the Queensland Government in relation to their commitments under the GCA (interview, GCA Manager, 5 July 2003) (see Fig. 3.3). The GCA

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³ As noted in Chapter 3, the GCA was negotiated by CRA, who owned the project prior to development. CRA sold the Century Zinc project to Pasminco in 1997, which formed the company CZL. Subsequent to fieldwork, Pasminco underwent a restructure, resulting in a name change of the company to Zinifex. However, Century Mine still operates under the name, Century Zinc Limited. The acronym CZL and the name of the mine are used throughout this chapter to avoid confusion relating to ownership changes.

⁴ Ian Williams was also involved in the negotiation of the YLUA and as noted in Chapter 5, at the time of fieldwork was sitting on the board of the IBN Corporation. Line management concerns expenditure against an approved budget. In this case the GCA presented areas of expenditure that were outside the normal realms of mine operation.
forms a central part of the management structure of the mine. According to the (then) general manager of the mine, GCA issues took 50 per cent of the time allocated to mine management meetings (interview, 4 July 2003).

**The mine workforce**

According to the work of Barker and Brereton (2004: 6) the Indigenous workforce at Century is in the range of 15–20 per cent of the total workforce, which is significantly higher than the national average of Indigenous employment in the mining industry of 4.6 per cent (Pasminco, The State of Queensland and Gulf Aboriginal Development Corporation (GADC) 2002: Appendix 3; Tedesco, Fainstein and Hogan 2003). *The Five Year Review of the GCA* notes that up until the date of the review around 550 Indigenous people from the Southern Gulf area had been employed in the life of the mine, and $24 million in wages had been paid (Pasminco, The State of Queensland and GADC 2002: schedule 2). CZL is identified as being the largest private employer of Indigenous people in Queensland (Miles, Cavaye and Donaghy 2005: 10). However, a recent study of the economic impacts of the Century mine on the regional economy notes that, despite making a substantial contribution to Indigenous labour force participation and training outcomes, the mine has only contributed marginally to overall Indigenous employment in the region (Miles, Cavaye and Donaghy 2005: 10). Favourable employment conditions at the Century mine encourage higher than usual Indigenous employment. Such conditions include the provision of a fly-in-fly-out service from Townsville and, importantly, local settlements such as Doomadgee, Mornington Island, and Normanton; competency based training and recruitment provisions; and the preparedness of the company and its main contractor, REJV, to rehire ex-employees (see Chapter 3).

Indigenous people are employed in a range of occupations, including mine administration, catering and cleaning, with pit operators (e.g. Haulpac driving, grader driving or shovel operation) forming 47 per cent of the mine’s Indigenous employees (Barker and Brereton 2004: 12). Barker and Brereton (2004: 13) credit the higher rates of employment in the pit to the commitment of REJV in sourcing local Indigenous workers, and the possibility of gaining employment in the pit without possessing formal qualifications.

REJV are proactive in seeking Indigenous employees from the local area in accordance with the GCA. Turnover of Indigenous employees in the mine pit is 41 per cent, which is lower than the turnover for REJV’s total workforce on the mine (Barker and Brereton 2004: 8). During the first fieldwork period (2003), the mine pit operated on a three weeks on and one week off roster (3:1), which was subsequently changed to a 2:1 roster. The REJV Human Resource
Manager, believed that the old shift regime was a major contributor to the high turnover. Zinifex’s mill operation at the mine works on a 2:1 roster. Whilst high turnover in pit operations is common to the mining industry, a number of Indigenous workers stated that shift work placed significant pressure on family and community life (Barker and Brereton 2005: 14). The majority of employees on the mine work a 12.5 hour shift, including those in administration and contracting positions.

In their study of turnover at Century mine, Barker and Brereton (2005: 11–12) identify ‘personal management issues’ and ‘family reasons’ as the most common reasons for voluntary separation. Such family reasons included insufficient time for family interaction, lack of availability of carers or babysitters, and the arrival of new babies. In the second period of fieldwork the roster had been changed to a 2:1 week shift regime, which was considered by a number of workers to be less arduous in terms of their home lives. In addition, a number of ex-employees who had left the mine stated that they had become burnt out by the work regime, a finding supported by Barker and Brereton (2005: 13). Many of them expressed a desire to seek employment at the mine at some point in the future, also supported by Barker and Brereton (2005: 18). This is consistent with patterns of employment at the mine: a number of Indigenous employees are on their second and, in some cases, third stint of employment. The current study found that there is also considerable movement between employment at the mine, employment with local Shires in the southern Gulf of Carpentaria, and engagement in livelihood pursuits associated with outstations and settlement life. In their survey of Indigenous voluntary separations from the mine workforce, Barker and Brereton identify that 39 per cent of ex-Century Indigenous employees were not in the labour force, 28 per cent were in other employment, 10 per cent were employed in mining related jobs, and 23 per cent were engaged in Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) activities (Barker and Brereton 2005: 17).

Barker and Brereton (2004: i) note that ‘Aboriginal employment is concentrated in occupations and areas of the mine that require only basic entry level skills’. Requirements for employment in the mine pit include the possession of a heavy vehicle licence, and the ability to read and write. The possession of heavy vehicle licences is common, particularly amongst those who have previously been employed by local councils. Literacy levels are assessed on-site rather than the possession of formal qualifications. According to Barker and Brereton (2004: i) approximately 50 per cent of the respondents in their 2005 study possessed the necessary entry-level skills at the commencement of their employment. Operators in the pit are initially recruited as trainees, but the training period is flexibly adjusted in accordance with the competence of the worker. Some

5 These figures would suggest that 62% of the study group were unemployed.
Haulpac drivers indicated that their training period was reduced to a two-week period, from which time they were receiving a full wage. Haulpac driver starting wages are in the vicinity of $75,000 per annum, with grader operators and shovel operators attracting higher wages.

Higher proportions of Indigenous people were recruited from Normanton and Burketown than from the communities of Doomadgee and Mornington Island in 2001–02 (Barker and Brereton 2004: 10). This issue was raised in the Five Year Review of the GCA (Pasminco, The State of Queensland and GADC 2002: Appendix 3). An increase in the recruitment from Doomadgee and Mornington Island occurred in 2003 (Barker and Brereton 2004: 10–11). This seems to reflect the company’s responsiveness, particularly the REJV, to Waanyi concerns of under-representation in the Century workforce subsequent to the 2002 sit-in. As Barker and Brereton suggest, the company’s response included focused pre-vocational programs and recruitment drives in Doomadgee.

Approximately 30 per cent of Indigenous workers at Century mine are female. This is consistent with the percentage of women employed across the operation (Barker and Brereton 2004: 15–16), and represents a decline from 40 per cent in 2001. Barker and Brereton relate this to the drop in utility positions at the mine and the increased prevalence of mining operator positions. However, a number of Indigenous women work in the mine pit as Haulpac drivers.

The entire workforce at the mine is fly-in-fly-out: workers mostly commute from or via Townsville. A number of Indigenous workers from southern Gulf locations have relocated to the regional centres of Mt Isa and Townsville during the course of their employment. Barker and Brereton (2005: 9–10, 26–27) have identified that employment at Century mine promotes mobility in the region: educational, employment, and lifestyle opportunities are cited as reasons for moving to other locations. Memmott, Long and Thomson’s study (2006: 3) of Indigenous mobility at two settlements south of Mt Isa, stresses the importance of Mt Isa and, to a lesser extent, Townsville, as regional migration destinations, but states that such migration is not a recent phenomenon. They identify a culture of Indigenous mobility essential to the maintenance of relationships to places and kin, which is motivated by ‘a distinct range of socio-cultural, economical and political factors and aspirations’ (Memmott, Long and Thomson 2006: 6). Whilst maintenance of kin relations drives Aboriginal mobility, other motivating factors include travel for sporting events, recreation, hunting, bush resources, shopping, employment, visiting traditional country and accessing health services (Memmott, Long and Thomson 2006: 3). Limited social services in the southern Gulf region also motivate travel to regional centres (Earth Tech 2005: 23). For example, like many remote settlements, Doomadgee only has one shop. Employment opportunities are limited to CDEP, the council and Century mine. Estimates of housing need indicate that Doomadgee requires an additional
90 houses, as occupancy in some three bedroom houses is in excess of 20 people (Miles, Cavaye and Donaghy 2005: 17). The Doomadgee School offers education to Year 10, a higher level of education than offered at many schools in remote settlements in north Australia. A number of parents indicated that they have greater aspirations for the education of their children.

Median Indigenous annual income at Doomadgee is $6 000 per annum, compared with $10 000 per annum in nearby Normanton, and $13 000 for Aboriginal people in the remainder of Queensland (Earth Tech 2005: 24). Considerable research pertaining to the relationship between Indigenous people in the southern Gulf of Carpentaria and Century mine refers to the relative disadvantage of Doomadgee and Mornington Island compared to the residential locations of non-Indigenous populations and also of Indigenous people in Queensland generally (Barker and Brereton 2004; Blowes and Trigger 1998; CLCAC 2004; Crough and Cronin 1995; Flucker 2003b; Martin 1998; Memmott and Kelleher 1995; Pasminco, The State of Queensland and GADC 2002; Trigger 1997b). Within the region, Indigenous people account for ‘80 per cent of the social security recipients […] with fishing and hunting used to supplement this income and relied upon fully when food or money run out’ (Earth Tech 2005: 24). Life expectancy of Indigenous people in the Gulf of Carpentaria is 56 years for males and 60 for females. This is significantly lower than the average life expectancy in Queensland generally—74 for males and 80 for females (Earth Tech 2005: 24). The socioeconomic status of Indigenous people in the region is characterised by the Southern Gulf Catchments Natural Resource Management Plan as being subject to ‘social difficulties, low income levels, high mortality rates and minimal access to basic social infrastructure’ (Earth Tech 2005: 24).

A Waanyi man from Doomadgee, works at the crusher for REJV. His brother is a shovel operator and another brother is a trainer. He is on his second period of employment at Century. He maintains that the old shift regime made maintaining family relationships difficult. In between his first and second stint at the mine he worked for the Doomadgee Council. Whilst he still lives at Doomadgee he is considering moving to Mt Isa for his children’s education. He is aware that a number of his co-workers have moved from the Gulf region to the coast or to Mt Isa, and states that they did this for educational opportunities for children, but also to see and experience other places. Although he is considering making such a move himself, he emphasises the importance of his knowledge of Waanyi country, gained by ‘walking the country’ since he was a child with his parents, and of passing on such knowledge to his children. His job at the mine has enabled him to purchase a four-wheel drive vehicle and a boat. When he gets the opportunity he takes his family onto Waanyi country to hunt, fish and camp, and in the process he is educating his children in ‘culture’ (interview, 18 August 2003). The purchase of four-wheel drive vehicles is supported by high wages
gained through mine employment. It was anecdotally recounted that a number of mine employees had obtained vehicles via higher purchase agreements, but the high turnover at the mine, makes the repossession of vehicles common (interview, 2004).

A number of mining company staff surmised that out-migration was also a product of the pressure of ‘demand sharing’ upon wage earners at the mine (interview, Manager of REJV, 4 July 2003; interview, Manager of Engineering and Site Services, 5 July 2003). Demand sharing relates to the pressure to share income with kin. Recent research by Trigger (2005) and Peterson (2005) points to the obstacles posed by Indigenous cultural dispositions to engagement in the market economy, particularly through employment. Both authors refer to the connection between economic and cultural activity, and note that such a relationship is not exclusive to Indigenous society. Peterson (2005: 11) uses the concept of the ‘moral economy’ to describe ‘the allocation of resources to the reproduction of social relationships at the cost of profit maximisation and obvious immediate personal benefit’ in Indigenous society. He emphasises the role of sharing of resources along kinship determined principles that define relatedness and entail an ethic of generosity. As such, Peterson’s (2005: 14) Indigenous domestic moral economy is focused on ‘circulation and consumption’ rather than ‘production’ and is supported by welfare payments, ‘subsidies, grants, loans, royalty payments, casual employment [and] target working’. While consumer dependency can be serviced from such sources, he asserts that the imperatives for engaging in the market economy by ‘selling labour’ are subsumed by the principles of circulation. Peterson notes that with the current policy focus on attaining statistical equality ‘it seems inevitable that […] work, mainly in the form of selling labour, is going to be the lot of Aboriginal people as it is for the population at large’ (Peterson 2005: 7).

Trigger (2005: 44) focuses on everyday custom and belief and seeks to locate economic engagement with the market as central to material improvement across most Aboriginal communities. Tacitly referring to current liberal-economic agendas in Indigenous policy direction, he notes that his approach may be regarded in policy circles as less than central to practical matters (Trigger 2005: 42). He identifies a problem experienced by many Indigenous people in remote Australia who, when confronted by large-scale mineral development, struggle within development discourse to express the centrality of everyday custom and belief to their future priorities, and to the style and nature of their engagement. Trigger outlines the international literature concerning the cultural limitations to economic development, and draws upon Sutton’s consideration of ‘cultural underpinnings of disadvantage’ within the recent local debate about Indigenous economic engagement in Australia (Martin 2001; Pearson 2000; Sutton 2001b). The relationship between economic engagement and cultural prerogatives is
complicated by egalitarian ideals such as encompassed by demand sharing, family loyalties, and ‘the rejection of material accumulation as an ideal’ (Trigger 2005: 47–9). Whilst raising the question of the incontrovertibility of such prerogatives, Trigger adds that they should not be incommensurate with the attainment of economic development goals. Trigger (2005: 55) notes that ‘the research literature squarely suggests that a form of fundamental cultural change is implicated in economic-development based solutions to Indigenous disadvantage [and that] new ways must be found of articulating market participation with a number of key Indigenous values’. However, he urges us ‘to consider with moral courage the kinds of changes in Indigenous cultural life that may improve the chances for real improvement in the life circumstances of young people as they grow to seek both engagement and distance from the wider Australian society’ (Trigger 2005: 55). Central to the argument made in this monograph, is that cultural transformations are envisaged by Indigenous people themselves in their diverse aspirations associated with the mining industry, and are based on self-assessment of capacity and skills, and the knowledge of structural obstacles that have arisen from historic economic and social exclusion.

The role of ‘habit and custom’ in the perpetuation of economic disadvantage is denied to some degree by the diverse and often sophisticated worldviews and responses of Indigenous people themselves who tackle such issues in their daily (working) lives. For example, a Waanyi man and a Kaiadilt man told me during fieldwork that demand sharing was not a significant issue, and that whilst they did support extended family from their wages, they controlled the extent to which they did so (interviews, 5 July 2003 and 18 August 2004). When talking about the fly-in-fly-out regime and being away from home, the Waanyi man stated, ‘its Waanyi country from here to here. I don’t think there is too much room for being homesick’ (interview, 18 August 2004). In relation to the GCA and politics surrounding its implementation, he sees the real benefit of the agreement is in paid employment. Having attained a number of operating tickets whilst at the mine, he states that he will be able to work on any mine after Century closes.

As in the Pilbara, Indigenous people in the southern Gulf of Carpentaria are conscious of structural impediments to Indigenous employment such as low educational standards, poor health, and substance misuse. These issues preclude many from seeking work at the mine. A number of people not engaged in mine employment expressed a desire that more jobs be available at the mine for young people. A number of workers at the mine also emphasised the importance of meeting the obligations associated with being an Indigenous person in relation to land and the maintenance of family and kin relationships. For some, the obstacles identified by Trigger (2005) and Peterson (2005) are clearly part of
a tension arising from the conflicting cultural dispositions of both Indigenous people and the mine environment. For others, however, working at the mine is rationalised as an extension of their cultural obligations.

In Chapter 3 it was noted that a cyclone-mooring buoy associated with the CZL barge operation out of Karumba had been placed on a sacred site in the marine estate of the Kaiadilt people. A Kaiadilt man recounted whilst driving a Haulpac truck in the mine pit ‘we really disagreed on the mooring buoy. They put it on a Jindirri reef\(^6\) and we didn’t get compensation for it. We asked but the company didn’t support us’ (interview, 5 July 2003). The mooring buoy became the subject of an unsuccessful Federal Court case, and a subsequent appeal to the full bench of the Federal Court was unsuccessful.

Kaiadilt people regard the buoy as a critical issue in their relationship with Zinifex. As Marr notes, and as recounted by the Kaiadilt man mentioned above and a Kaiadilt woman who is a fellow Zinifex employee, one of the divers involved in the installation of the buoy died in the process, and his body was never recovered (Marr 2001; see also Memmott and Channells 2004). In addition, at the time of the Federal Court’s first negative decision for the Kaiadilt, a plane carrying a number of Bentinck and Mornington Island elders crashed, leaving no survivors. Such tragic events can have serious implications for resource projects like Century, especially when they generate the opposition of Indigenous people. Due to the lack of consultation, the cyclone-mooring buoy was not sited in a place approved by the traditional knowledge and law of the Kaiadilt. This man stated, ‘we are saltwater people and we know about all the sites in the water, we know that place is dangerous’ (interview, 5 July 2003). The spirituality of the land and, in this case, sea country, is invoked to assert authority in relation to place, and also to counter the company’s justifications of its failure to consult or, indeed, compensate. The Kaiadilt view the deaths of six people as a sign that the law has been broken, and this confirms the attitudes of those who criticise the activities of the company.\(^7\)

However, this man was reconciled to working for the mine, despite his opposition to the activities of the company in his sea country. Whilst it was not his sole reason for working at the mine, he regarded it as important that Kaiadilt people be in proximity to those interfering with their country in order to educate and direct them. As a quiet person it was clear that he was referring to just his presence and knowledge that he was Kaiadilt.

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\(^6\) The reef is associated with the Willy Wagtail and Wind ancestral beings.

\(^7\) A similar situation arose in the Northern Territory following the death of four people in a helicopter crash whilst surveying the Trans Territory Pipeline. Traditional owners of land in the vicinity of the crash saw it as proof that the project would breach the landscape and therefore the law, and should not be allowed to proceed.
High rates of Indigenous employment at Century demonstrate that Indigenous people themselves are capable of adapting aspects of cultural life in order to participate in the mainstream mine economy, as Trigger suggests. A fundamental issue, however, appears to be the autonomy associated with choosing, or at least shaping, the terms of engagement. Comments from Indigenous respondents recorded by Barker and Brereton (2005: 16, 20) in relation to Indigenous workforce retention at the mine, suggest that adaptations in corporate culture are also important in such a process. Comments included that provisions be made for Indigenous workers to be allowed to go fishing during roster breaks; that bush tucker be available at the mine; that cultural awareness programs consider relationships to country; and that family could visit the mine site.

A criticism of the work skills gained through mine employment was that due to the predominance of operator positions, the skills gained were not really relevant to community life at the conclusion of employment. Significantly, a number of people resident in Doomadgee expressed a preference for working for the council rather than for the mine, despite wages being considerably lower. Reasons for such a preference accord with the reasons given for leaving employment at the mine (i.e. personnel reasons associated with higher management, lack of teamwork, and discrimination, see Barker and Brereton 2005: 11–13) and were predominantly expressed in terms of the maintenance of family relations, but included a commitment to maintaining a skills base, particularly in the communities of Doomadgee and Mornington Island. Some also cited opposition to the mine, in terms of the destruction of country and the inadequacy of beneficial arrangements for Indigenous people in the GCA, as reasons for not seeking employment there.

A high degree of loyalty to the mine was expressed across the Century workforce. A number of non-Indigenous workers commented that the worksite was unique amongst Australian mines due to the high presence of Indigenous people. Bonds and friendships built on site had resulted in a number of non-Indigenous people being hosted in southern Gulf communities during their rostered time off and engaging in activities such as fishing and camping out with traditional owners. Such activities contributed to a high awareness of Indigenous issues on site generally, but also specifically in relation to the mine and the GCA. On site camaraderie was also reflected in the comments of Indigenous respondents recorded in Barker and Brereton (2005: 13), with ‘the social aspects of work, in terms of meeting new people and a friendly atmosphere, [being] the most frequently cited positive work aspect’.

Whilst a high degree of camaraderie existed on the mine site at the time of fieldwork, the interplay of Indigenous politics was manifest both in intra-Indigenous relationships and on a broader political level where CZL and the State of Queensland are drawn into the management of issues arising from the
GCA. Key members of a number of Indigenous factions in the southern Gulf of Carpentaria were employed at the mine. The Human Resource Manager of REJV maintained a close relationship with an employee, a key Waanyi man and founding member of the ostensibly pro-mine Traditional Waanyi Elders Aboriginal Corporation (TWEAC), described below. Similarly, the Gangalidda man who is still the superintendent in the GCA Support Department has family closely aligned with the CLCAC, which has maintained a long term oppositional stance to the mine. Such relationships afford an important intersection between mine management and local Indigenous issues. To some degree factions amongst the Indigenous polity of the region are reflected in relationships between sectors of the mine operation in relation to the GCA. Tension exists between REJV and CZL over issues such as the recruitment and support of Indigenous people employed at the mine, and the approaches of on-site employers to the implementation of the GCA vary (interview, Waanyi mine worker, 10 July 2003). A comparison can be drawn between these relationships and the corporate affiliations of the Gumala Aboriginal Corporation with Pilbara Iron, and the IBN Corporation with BHP Billiton in the Pilbara (see Chapter 5).

The sit-in and the GCA

The 2002 sit-in of the mine site by Waanyi people was the most palpable example of the intersection of local Indigenous politics in the operation of Century mine. The sit-in catalysed CZL into incorporating issues arising from the GCA across all sectors of the mine’s management. In 2002, after a meeting held at Bidanggu outstation to discuss a review of the GCA, approximately 150 Waanyi men women and children (Townsend 2002) drove to the Century mine site and announced their presence at the site office and then occupied the mine canteen. The Queensland Government ordered the mobilisation of the police special squad to the mine site, but was thwarted in its initial efforts to dislodge the protestors by declarations in the media by Waanyi spokespeople that the protestors were unarmed and mainly elderly people and children. Intense negotiations began between the general manager of the mine and the protestors. The sit-in lasted for nine days and severely disrupted the meal routines for the approximately 400 strong fly-in-fly-out workforce. In addition, the unprecedented move to occupy part of the mine site sent shock waves through the business community and threatened to halt production at the world’s largest zinc mine (Meade 2002). The sit-in exposed the mine to serious financial risk which could have been critical for the continuation of the operation given that Pasminco was experiencing financial difficulties at the time.

The sit-in arose through dissatisfaction with the perceived limited scope and lack of independence of The Five Year Review of the GCA undertaken by Pasminco,
The State of Queensland and GADC (2002). Accounts of the sit-in provide three key reasons for the action: the recent exposure of a deposit of red ochre in the mine pit; dissatisfaction with arrangements for storage of archaeological material salvaged during the construction of the mine; and the dysfunctional structures established under the GCA for the provision of compensatory payments. This last point refers to the status of eligible bodies nominated in the GCA to be in receipt of compensatory benefits, which will be outlined below. Of the four Waanyi eligible bodies, three had become ineligible due to lack of compliance with the *Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act*. A consequence was that a substantial amount of money was also held in trust by the GADC on behalf of the eligible bodies and for unidentified Waanyi people. A number of other issues arose in the course of the sit-in relating to the perception of unmet commitments on the part of CZL and the State of Queensland, that had resulted in poor employment outcomes, particularly for Waanyi people resident in Doomadgee and Mornington Island (O’Malley 2002).

Whilst seeking redress of the grievances listed above, the sit-in also served as a symbolic act to highlight inadequate outcomes for Indigenous people from the GCA, and to reassert the centrality of the GCA to the functioning of the mine. Financial difficulties had resulted in a number of redundancies in the GCA unit. A number of Indigenous people remarked that Pasminco had ‘taken their eye off the ball’ in relation to the implementation and management of the GCA (interview, Doomadgee residents, 19 August 2004). In addition, the sit-in also served to legitimise the newly formed Waanyi Nation Aboriginal Corporation (WNAC), which purports to represent all Waanyi interests (see below).

Through the sit-in, the relationship between the mine and Indigenous people was inserted into a regional debate about alleviating Indigenous disadvantage through the promotion of economic activity and the streamlining of government services. This debate has been central to the negotiation of the GCA, with the Indigenous people opposed to the mine asserting that if the government addressed the material needs of Indigenous communities then an agreement with the miners would not be necessary (Trigger 1997b: 115). Like the current relationship with the company, the relationship between Indigenous people and the state is as much based on the interaction of individuals as it is on institutions and organisations. An example is the fractious relationship between a number of Indigenous leaders in the region with Tony McGrady, the local member for Mt

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8 Red ochre is an important substance in the ceremonial domain of many Indigenous people. The identification of the substance in the mine pit caused disquiet amongst Indigenous workers. Garrawa ceremonial leaders were drawn into the dispute to mediate the management of this intersection of Indigenous custom and the mine.

9 Trebeck (2007: 15) notes that within the company the departure of key personnel resulted in a loss of corporate memory. Residual knowledge of community engagement was overwhelmed by increasing preoccupation with financial problems that the company was experiencing.
Isa in the Queensland Parliament at the time of fieldwork. At the time of the sit-in, Mr McGrady was the Minister for Police and Corrective Services. Previously he had held a number of portfolios relating to minerals and energy, including Minister Assisting the Premier on the Carpentaria Minerals Province (2001–04). A number of Indigenous people alleged that in balancing the issues of regional and state development against local Indigenous opposition to Century mine, the minister had instituted a regime of police harassment in the area, a claim he strenuously denied (Queensland Legislative Assembly 2002: 2821).

As a result of the sit-in archaeological material was removed from the mine offices to the nearby Lawn Hill National Park, an undertaking was given for the management of red ochre in the mine pit, and CZL instructed the GADC to release a total of nearly $800 000 of unpaid compensatory payments to two of the eligible bodies and the unallocated Waanyi money to the WNAC. These funds derive from the untied cash component of the agreement of $750 000 per annum for the first three years, and then $500 000 per annum thereafter for the life of the mine, with a total in the vicinity of $10 million (Williams n.d.). A key outcome of the sit-in was the provision of resources for the conduct of a counter review by the CLCAC on behalf of Waanyi people. This counter review is highly critical of the GCA and asserts that Waanyi should be given preferential distribution of benefits from the agreement on the basis that 60 per cent of the project occurs on Waanyi country (CLCAC 2004; Flucker 2003a, 2003b).

Whilst the GCA has a primary focus on employment and training (Sarra and Sheldon 2005: 23), outcomes for Waanyi people, particularly those residing in Doomadgee and Mornington Island, had not been as successful as for Gkuthaarn and Kukatj residing in Normanton. Criticism of the five-year review undertaken by Pasminco, the GADC and the State of Queensland focused on the limited scope of the review and the lack of involvement of Indigenous parties to the agreement (CLCAC 2004). Whilst agreeing on some issues identified by the original review, notably the lack of resources available for agreement administration via the GADC, the CLCAC/Waanyi review indicated that a broad number of initiatives contemplated by the agreement had not been implemented.

Commitments to the GCA by the State of Queensland, accounting for $30 million of the community benefits package, are subject to considerable conjecture. These commitments include the conduct of a social impact assessment, the establishment of birthing centres at Doomadgee and Mornington Island,

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10 Notably, during a raid of the house of Gangalidda man Murrando Yanner in Burketown in 1994, police found carcasses of two juvenile freshwater crocodiles in his freezer and charged him with illegal hunting. Yanner successfully defended the charge through the Queensland Magistrates Court, the Queensland State Court of Appeal and ultimately to the High Court of Australia (1999). The success of this case, which ultimately considered the nature of property, and principles of native title extinguishment, has become symbolic for many Indigenous people of their right to harvest wildlife.
funding for the conduct of a land claim over Lawn Hill National Park, additional funding for vocational training and education, and the improvement of roads in the region. The *Five Year Review of the GCA* noted shortcomings in the carriage of the Queensland commitment, including the lack of conduct of a social impact study, stating that ‘90 per cent of the $30.29 million commitment has been allocated or committed, with substantial additional funding provided to training initiatives’ (Pasminco, The State of Queensland and GADC 2002: 2).

However, the counter review undertaken by the CLCAC on behalf of Waanyi people asserts that a social impact assessment has not occurred, little progress had been made on the Lawn Hill National Park land claim, the establishment of birthing centres did not occur in the manner envisaged, and that roads constructed are for the purpose of providing all weather access to the mine rather than to the region (CLCAC 2004: 49–65). This counter review asserts ‘of the $30 million provided by the State under the agreement, approximately $23 million should be classified as “normal service delivery”, which should have been provided in any event despite, or without, the development of the Century mine’ (CLCAC 2004: 49). Similarly, the establishment of an outstation resource centre has not occurred, and compensation payments for the acquisition of the pipeline corridor are still held in trust by the GADC. Return of pastoral leases also remained a vexed issue.

At the time of negotiating the GCA, CRA—the then parent company of CZL (see Chapter 3)—was the largest land-holder in the region. Pastoral leases held by the company were Lawn Hill, Riversleigh, Turn Off Lagoons, Pendine and Konka, comprising a total land area of 14,924 square kilometres, and almost completely surrounding Aboriginal land holdings of the Doomadgee DOGIT (Deed of Grant in Trust) and the Gangalidda Land Trust at Old Doomadgee (Crough and Cronin 1995: 9) (see Fig. 6.1).  

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Crough and Cronin (1995: 9) note:

> It is not the mining company’s responsibility to ensure that Aboriginal people have access to citizenship services. Nor is it the mining company’s responsibility to redress the wrongs of the past. However, the mining company, given its ownership of so many of the pastoral leases in the region, controls some of the key resources in the region that are of fundamental importance to the Aboriginal population.

A corollary can be drawn between the historic experience of Indigenous people and pastoralists in the Southern Gulf of Carpentaria, which was characterised by competition for resources relating to land such as water, game and access to living areas in proximity to such resources (see Chapter 2). The GCA makes provisions for the staged return of pastoral holdings of CZL, and to date Waanyi people have

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11 DOGIT refers to the provision for land to be gazetted under the Queensland Aboriginal Land Act before it can be claimed under that legislation.
assumed title for Turn Off Lagoons. Gangalidda people, who are not formally parties to the GCA, but who are integrally involved in the political landscape surrounding the mine through their associations with the CLCAC, have received title to Pendine and Konka Stations. However, like the experience of Indigenous people in the Central Pilbara, the return of land remains contentious. Structures of land-holding corporations defined by the GCA, particularly in relation to the pastoral management of Lawn Hill and Riversleigh Stations, are perceived by some Indigenous people to be incompatible with Indigenous notions of how such land can be productive. These leases are profitable cattle enterprises. Currently, Lawn Hill is leased to the Australian Agricultural Company Pty Ltd, a major pastoral land-holder in the southern Gulf of Carpentaria, and it carries 40 000 head of cattle (Earth Tech 2005: 46, 242).

Attitudes towards the management of pastoral land holdings reflect considerable diversity amongst the Indigenous polity and range from a desire to utilise such lands for hunting, fishing, education of children, and the establishment of living areas away from the negative social pressures of existing settlements in the region. Others accept that there will necessarily be a compromise between such Indigenous land uses and the viable economic management of properties such as Lawn Hill, which entails restricted access to such land, particularly during mustering (interview, North Ganalanja Association member, 19 August 2004).

Gangalidda aspirations concerning these properties emphasise the nature of their relationship to the land, rather than a desire to make them commercially viable. A number of Gangalidda people indicated that Pendine and Konka have other values than those typically associated with pastoralism, and use the term ‘rangelands’ to describe these tracts of land. The importance of rangelands is asserted in terms of the availability and access to land for the purposes of hunting game, maintaining the integrity and knowledge of sacred sites and the availability of land for residential purposes in the form of outstations. Similarly, Waanyi people expressed their aspiration to obtain rangelands. Whilst sentimentality for pastoral operations exists amongst Indigenous people in the Gulf, which is common amongst Indigenous people whose histories have been integrally tied to pastoralism, it was clear that a number of Waanyi remain indifferent to the commercial operations at these locations and the restrictions that such operations place on their preferred use of country. Consultations undertaken by Crough and Cronin with Waanyi people refer to the lack of land access in the region, particularly in relation to Lawn Hill Station. Such sentiments are

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12 The Australian Agricultural Company currently holds eight pastoral leases in the region, totalling 1.76 million hectares and 176 000 head of cattle; through a separate business it manages a further ‘…60 000 head of cattle across 16 properties on behalf of other owners’ (Earth Tech 2005: 242).

13 These properties are not considered to be as commercially viable as Lawn Hill and Riversleigh due to poor soils.
still in evidence, despite the fact that 51 per cent of Lawn Hill Station has been transferred to Waanyi ownership. The CLCAC/Waanyi review of the agreement is critical of the transfer of leases on Waanyi country, in particular that the Lawn Hill and Riversleigh Pastoral Holding Company (see Chapter 3) established by the GCA has prevented the timely return of these properties, and inhibited Waanyi ‘return to country’ and outstation development (CLCAC 2004: 41). The same review highlights the return of Gangalidda lands despite their not being a party to the GCA (CLCAC 2004: 41).

The community

The inland Century mine pit occurs on Waanyi country. The 300 kilometre pipeline traverses the country of Mingginda and Kukatj people, and the port facility at Karumba on the Gulf of Carpentaria is on Gkuthaarn country. All these groups are party to the GCA on the basis of their native title rights encompassed by countrywide claims. However, Kaiadilt, Lardil, Yangkaal, and Gangalidda people, the successful claimants in the recent Wellesley Islands sea claim, are not parties to the GCA. This is despite their maintaining that the project’s barge loading facility operating out of Karumba impacts their marine estate.

Initial design of the Century project included a proposed slurry pipeline through Gangalidda country, with a port facility in the vicinity of Point Parker, or Old Doomadgee. This area is of great significance to Gangalidda people and is one of the few areas of Aboriginal land trust land in the region. Blowes and Trigger (1998: 91) observe that the proposal to use this area ‘started a groundswell of absolute opposition to transport by slurry pipeline and shipping through Gulf Waters’ (see also Trigger 1997b). Ultimately, the pipeline route chosen headed east to Karumba and did not intersect Gangalidda country (see Fig. 6.1). Concerns of these groups about management of their marine estate are expressed in terms of the exercise of Indigenous law and the maintenance of marine resources, necessary for sustenance (Memmott and Channells 2004; Memmott and Trigger 1998). Clearly, concerns about the transportation of zinc concentrate are considered against the potential threat this might have on livelihood activities. At the time of writing, a cyclone in the southern Gulf of Carpentaria had crippled a Zinifex barge carrying 5,000 tonne of zinc concentrate. Marandoo Yanner commented on the potential spill, stating ‘any pollution at all is a threat to our livelihood and the small communities in the Gulf’ (Australian Broadcasting Commission 2007). Possibly a larger threat to such livelihoods is the recently documented incidence of four cases of infection caused by marine *Vibrio* species in the McArthur River region; it causes severe necrosis and resulted in three deaths between 2000–03 (Ralph and Currie 2006). A factor identified in these cases is the ‘ability of *Vibrio* species to adapt to altered marine environments, such as
polluted waterways’ (Ralph and Currie 2006: e3). Geographical clustering of these infections is attributed to ‘sedimentary stratiform zinc-lead-silver deposits and a major mining operation’—in this case the major mining operation is the Macarthur River lead-zinc mine approximately 250 kilometres to the north west of the Century mine (Ralph and Currie 2006: e1). All infection cases were the result of saltwater contact with the skin in this region.

The GCA has a broad scope to alleviate disadvantage across its region of influence; the agreement is neither inclusive nor exclusive, but nonetheless is intended to operate at both levels. Whilst the agreement is made with Waanyi, Mingginda, Gkuthaarn and Kukatj people, whose land interests are overlayed by the project, there is no clear definition of the membership of these groups for the purposes of agreement administration. Anecdotal accounts suggest that the combined members of these groups total around 900 people. In 1995 Memmott and Kelleher (1995: 48) estimated the Gkuthaarn and Kukatj population was in the vicinity of 230. The number of Gangalidda people listed in the Wellesley Islands Sea Claim, including children, was about 2 000 people. A conservative estimate of Waanyi and Gangalidda populations would put each of the groups at around 1 000 adult members (interview, David Trigger, 21 February 2007). Whilst the total number of GCA beneficiaries entailed by membership of one of the four language groups is likely to be significant, an added factor in attempting to establish numbers is that many people are likely to legitimately claim affiliation with more than one group through different lines of descent.

As noted, the GCA intends that cash payments be made to six eligible bodies, one of which represents Gkuthaarn and Kukatj, one representing Mingginda, and four that represent Waanyi people. The membership lists of these organisations suggest that there are about 650 GCA beneficiaries. However, these lists contain obvious omissions and considerable overlap. Further, until the 2002 sit-in, the GCA had set aside money for ‘unidentified Waanyi interests’ against the apparent knowledge that the nominated eligible bodies did not represent all Waanyi interests. A number of people in Doomadgee refer to themselves as the ‘Forgotten Waanyi’. Some members of this group recount that they removed themselves from the negotiation process because of the animosity that it engendered between Waanyi people. Others view the Forgotten Waanyi as a disaffected group of people whose assertions of Waanyi identity cannot be substantiated beyond their historical association with Waanyi people and country. In any case, the existence of a group referring to themselves as the Forgotten Waanyi and unallocated Waanyi compensation funds indicates a shortcoming in the definition of the affected community in the GCA.

In addition, the Gangalidda were found to have succeeded to Mingginda country in the recent Wellesley Islands Sea claim (Behrendt 2004; Lardil Peoples v the State of Queensland 2004; Memmott and Channells 2004). The identification
of Mingginda interests appears to have been based on the historic record, and the early mapping of land interests by Tindale (1974). Some Indigenous people suggested that the inclusion of Mingginda in the GCA as a separate group, might also have been a result of the conciliatory relationships between a number of key pro-mine supporters who identify variously as Gangalidda and Mingginda, and representatives of the Queensland Government, and CRA at the time of negotiations (interview, 30 June 2003). The formal recognition of Gangalidda succession also demonstrates the ongoing negotiation of land interests and associated tensions within the Gangalidda group and with those asserting Mingginda identity since the GCA was signed. The implications of the Wellesley Islands decision for the GCA are clear. If Gangalidda have subsumed Mingginda interests, then Gangalidda should become parties to the GCA. However, as noted in the *Five Year Review of the GCA* (CLCAC 2004; Pasminco, The State of Queensland and GADC 2002), and similarly with the five-year review of Gumala in the Pilbara (Hoffmeister 2002), there is little capacity for amendment in the terms of the respective agreements.

The lack of definition of the beneficiary group arises from the difficult and ongoing negotiations concerning the GCA, and the diverse positions of Indigenous people in the southern Gulf towards the mine (Trigger 1997b). Lack of definition strains the delivery of ‘community benefits’ and contributes to the Waanyi people’s perception that they have been excluded from opportunities provided by the GCA (CLCAC 2004). Miles, Cavaye and Donaghy (2005: 6, 10) record a drop in unemployment and a rise in individual and family income in the region, and state ‘the economic contribution of the mine to the southern Gulf communities has been significant’. However, it is difficult to quantify positive and negative outcomes from the GCA for the named Indigenous parties to the agreement. Miles, Cavaye and Donaghy (2005: 11) claim that at 2001:

indigenous communities in the southern Gulf still lagged behind the rest of the region in terms of median age, income, employment and labour force participation rates. CDEP adjusted unemployment in 2001 ranged from 83 per cent for the Mornington Indigenous Area to 18 per cent for the Carpentaria Indigenous area despite significant investments in GCA funded employment strategies and training programs.

Based on 2001 Census data, the authors identify the unemployment rates across four southern Gulf shires as ranging between 3.7 per cent (Burke Shire) and 6.5 per cent (Mt Isa Council area) (Miles, Cavaye and Donaghy 2005: 5).

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14 The use of the term ‘southern Gulf’ communities in this instance does not refer solely to the Indigenous population of the region, but rather the entire population of the Burke, Carpentaria, Cloncurry and Mt Isa Shires.
The lack of definition of the intended beneficiary group is further confused by the tendency of CZL and the State of Queensland to equate the Gulf communities with the settlements of Doomadgee, Mornington Island, Burketown, Bidanggu, and Normanton. This is particularly the case in the provision of training and employment initiatives that target ‘local Aboriginal people’. This undoubtedly expands the available pool of participants in such programs, and contributes to the success of employment initiatives at the mine. It also reduces the capacity of CZL to target those whose specific land interests are impacted by the project. In addition, the regional focus of the agreement highlights the inadequacy of the $60 million community benefits package to meet the objectives of the GCA, given that there are approximately 6 000 people of Aboriginal descent residing in the southern Gulf of Carpentaria region (Earth Tech 2005: 20). A crude calculation of the total value of the package against this population indicates a total allocation of $10 000 per person ($500 per annum per person) over the 20 year life of the mine. Similarly, if just the cash payment were considered against the minimal estimate of 900 members of the four language groups, the individual allocation would be $66 660 over the life of the mine, or $3 333 per person per annum. This figure would more than halve if a conservative estimate of 2 000 members of the four language groups is taken.

Indigenous perceptions and experience of unfulfilled expectations arising from the GCA are supported by the limited financial capacity of the agreement to meet its objectives. Poor definition of the intended community associated with the GCA dissipates potential benefit across the region and devalues the rights and interests of those who have customary authority over the land impacted by the project—that is, those with whom the agreement is struck. The following section outlines principles of the Indigenous land tenure system in the region in order to emphasise the manner in which Indigenous people in the region conceptualise community and relatedness.

Social organisation

Waanyi, Gangalidda, Lardil and Kaidiilt are all closely related through territorial association, ceremonial relationships, and more recently through the common experiences of the colonial encounter. The following discussion focuses primarily on Waanyi, giving particular attention to the similarities in social organisation amongst the western southern Gulf of Carpentaria groups. The primary focus on Waanyi is reflective of the nature of fieldwork undertaken in the southern

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15 The Southern Gulf Catchments Management Plan region, for which population figures are given, roughly equates with the Queensland Regional Bodies Information System’s North West Statistical Division (Earth Tech 2005: 18). The region encompasses the Shires of Burketown, Mornington, Mt Isa, Cloncurry, McKinlay, Carpentaria, Richmond and Flinders, with a total estimated population of 30 000.
Gulf of Carpentaria and the broad scope of this study. Memmott and Kelleher (1995: 12) note in reference to Gkuthaarn and Kukatj, ‘these two tribes formed a wider cultural grouping […] and were distinct from groups to the west who practised different forms of initiation and employed a different type of social class system’. A general description of the kinship system across these groups will demonstrate how the groups define relatedness to land, and between kin. The system has important implications for economic activity both in terms of access to land and sea based livelihood resources, and for interaction with the mining industry. Whilst the description below is ideal, exceptions occur and were no doubt always a part of Indigenous social organisation (see Trigger 1982, 1997b: 122 with reference to the Century mine negotiations). In addition, there is little doubt that the system has been shaped by the colonial encounter.

Waanyi, Gangalidda, Lardil and Kaiadilt share a kinship system based on an Arandic system which features eight subsection classes and four semi-moiety classes (McKnight 1999; Memmott and Trigger 1998; Reay 1962; Trigger 1982). According to Trigger whilst Waanyi people predominantly use subsection terms, the use of semi-moiety terms has been adopted as a consequence of interaction with neighbouring Garrawa people, whose country is predominantly in the Northern Territory in the northern part of the Nicholson River Land Trust (Trigger 1982: 8). Similarly, Memmott and Trigger (1998: 118) identify adaptation in the system of Lardil in relation to Kaiadilt, Gangalidda and Yanyuwa kinship systems. Research clearly indicates the flexibility of these groups to incorporate each other’s societal organisation for the purposes of mutual understanding, and social and economic interaction (McKnight 1999; Trigger 1982, 1992). Of note are the eastward relationships between Garrawa and Waanyi and Gangalidda people, and also those between Lardil and their easterly seaward neighbours, the Yanyuwa. Referring to Gkuthaarn and Kukatj people, Memmott and Kelleher (1995: 12) indicate that traditionally a similar four section system and patri-clans were employed, but that currently the ‘mode of Aboriginal land tenure in use by the contemporary Aboriginal people of Normanton appears to be based on linguistic affiliation and language group territories’. Gkuthaarn and Kukatj are socially and politically more aligned with the Cape York communities of Kowanyama and inland Croydon. Broadly speaking, two cultural blocs are encompassed by the Century Mine project area, with internal linguistic divisions within them bridged by kinship structures that are mutually intelligible.

Subsections are commonly used amongst Waanyi to designate social relatedness. Subsections classify all individuals into one of eight named socio-centric categories. Each subsection has separate male and female terms. Alternate terms deriving from language difference are recognised as equivalent amongst all the groups under discussion. The subsection system is characterised by a distinction
between alternate generations. A man will have a different subsection to his father and his son, but the same subsection classification as his father’s father and his son’s son. Together the alternate generations form a patri-couple. A patri-couple is equivalent to a semi-moiety. The relationship between subsections and semi-moieties and demonstrated rules of ideal marriage is shown in Fig. 6.2. The relationship between semi-moieties and their constituent patri-couples is depicted in Fig. 6.3.

**Fig. 6.2 Waanyi and Garrawa subsections and semi-moieties**

As a consequence of close social and ceremonial ties with Northern Territory based language groups, the semi-moiety system is also utilised by some individuals to describe land interests. Semi-moieties are uninterrupted lines of patrilineal descent (Reay 1962: 95). If ideal marriage rules are followed a man will be in the same semi-moiety as his father, his father’s father, his son, and his son’s son. The four semi-moieties in the region form two patri-moieties: Wuyaliya and Wurdaliya form one, and Rhumburriya and Mambaliya the other. As depicted in Fig. 6.2, marriage between appropriate subsections will result in
a man marrying a woman from one of the semi-moieties of the opposite patri-moieties. However, a man’s wife will not belong to the same semi-moiety as his father’s wife. For example, a Rhumburriya man of the Narigbalangi subsection, whose mother is Wudaliya and Jaminyanyi subsection, will marry a Wuyaliya woman of the Nurulama subsection. His father’s mother will also be Wuyaliya, and his mother’s mother will be Mambaliya. In this way an individual is related to all four semi-moieties through the key lines of descent namely father’s father, father’s mother, mother’s father and mother’s mother.

Fig. 6.3 Waanyi semi-moieties and subsection relationship

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<th>Semi-moiety</th>
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<td>Burrarangi</td>
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Note: Male terms are capitalised with equivalent female terms in brackets. Equivalent Lardil subsection terms, where different, are shown in italics.

Source: McKnight (1999: 44)

All land has a semi-moiety classification and such categories delineate the affiliations of groups of people with the land and the actions of mythic beings, or ancestral heroes, associated with that land. A semi-moiety relationship with land also defines a person’s responsibilities to it, in terms of ritual and ceremony and, the practice of ‘traditional ecological knowledge’, or in local parlance ‘looking after country’. Such activity, which includes the maintenance of resources through burning country and the protection of sacred sites, is
intricately associated with the ritual realm. Ancestral heroes that influence the landscape are also affiliated with semi-moieties and this association is critical to the practice and conduct of ceremonial and ritual activity.

The classifications Minggirringi and Junggayi, based on semi-moiety affiliation, define such responsibility in relation to land and ceremony. In its purest sense Minggirringi denotes a genealogical relationship to land through ego’s father’s father. In its purest sense Junggayi denotes a genealogical relationship to land through ego’s father’s mother’s (brother). The relationships of mother’s father and mother’s mother are also utilised to describe the category of Junggayi. These terms have been equated through definition in the Northern Territory land claim process with English terms of ‘owners’ and ‘managers’ respectively. All people are therefore, in a relationship of both Minggirringi and Junggayi to the various estates of their antecedents and the rituals of the ancestral heroes associated with such estates.

The terms Minggirringi and Junggayi can be used in a number of ways. For example, Minggirringi can denote specific responsibility to sites and tracts of land; to incorporate individuals who have the correct semi-moiety affiliation, but who may not be related genealogically, on the basis of appropriate ritual knowledge of a land holding group’s country (Holcombe and Scambary 2002: 33). Such knowledge and responsibility is intricately embedded in the spheres of ritual and ceremonial performances. The fact that the conduct of ceremony was discouraged at the missions of Doomadgee and Mornington Island (see Chapter 2) has resulted in the formation of close alliances with neighbouring Northern Territory groups in the realm of ritual and also in the mediation of land interests. Citing Trigger’s research for the Wellesley Islands sea claim, Memmott and Channells (2004: 42) note in relation to Gangalidda that from the mid 1970s there had been a revival of traditional culture assisted by ‘lawmen’ from Borroloola in the Northern Territory. Similarly, Waanyi people co-opt knowledgeable Garrawa people as regional ceremonial experts into the mediation of Waanyi territoriality through the use of the terms Minggirringi and Junggayi. Memmott and Channells (2004: 42) note that this cultural revival ‘laid a foundation for the assertion of traditional rights with a new authority […] not just over other Aboriginal people but any people’. The extensive knowledge of the symbolic and spiritual aspects of the landscape of a number of Garrawa individuals was invoked in the assessment of cultural heritage at the Century mine prior to its construction and also during the 2002 Waanyi occupation of the mine site.

As noted above, the kinship structures outlined are ideal and they do vary in substance and application across the region. Notable exceptions occur in relation to marriages with non-Indigenous people, and ‘wrong way’ marriages. However, the system described is the underlying basis of social networks in
Waanyi

Waanyi country can generally be described as the inland area between the Nicholson and Gregory Rivers, encompassing the Lawn Hill National Park, and the pastoral stations of Lawn Hill, Riversleigh, and Turnoff Lagoons, and the DOGIT land surrounding the community of Doomadgee in Queensland. Waanyi country also extends into the Northern Territory to encompass the southern part of the Nicholson River Land Trust. The extent of Waanyi country has been well documented (Capell 1963; Mathews 1901, 1905; Oates 1973; Tindale 1974); and more recently by Trigger and Robinson (2001). In addition John Dymock has undertaken extensive research in the region in unpublished reports.

Doomadgee and Mornington Island are the largest residential concentrations of Waanyi people, and are also considered to be the poorest townships in the region (Earth Tech 2005). The population of Doomadgee is about 1,356 and of Mornington Island, 1,140 (Taylor and Bell 2003: 15). Waanyi people also reside at Burketown, Mt Isa, and the outstation known as Bidanggu adjacent to the settlement of Gregory on Gregory Downs Station. Other Waanyi people live in the Northern Territory at approximately six outstations on the Waanyi Garrawa Aboriginal Land Trust (aka Nicholson River) (Bartlett et al. 1997: 104), at the Garrawa Aboriginal Land Trust (aka Robinson River), and regional Northern Territory towns such as Borroloola, and Elliot.

Land interests of Waanyi people are undoubtedly affected by the historical experience of colonisation (Roberts 2005; Trigger, 1982, 1992). Traditionally such land interests were characterised by the existence of bounded areas of influence in accordance with semi-moiety affiliation (described above). Such interests are clearly documented in relation to the southern portion of the Nicholson River land trust (Trigger 1982). However, the disruption of the system through the activities of the Plymouth Brethren at Doomadgee, and the atmosphere of contestation associated with the Century project, such specific interests are not recorded in the public domain for the Century project area. In the course of fieldwork, interpretations were made by a number of elderly Waanyi about the ‘traditional ownership’ of the mine site. Such interpretations were made on the basis of semi-moiety affiliation that coopted non-Waanyi people into the land-owning group on the basis of ceremonial knowledge of the area and their associated status. As in the Central Pilbara, the negotiation of land interests amongst Waanyi is the subject of considerable contestation. The difficulty in
reaching consistent descriptions of land ownership is a limitation of the type of fieldwork undertaken for this study. A number of issues emerge however from the historical experience of Waanyi people that defines the asserted, contested and actual land interests of Waanyi in their Queensland territory.

As Trigger notes, the historic relationship between Indigenous people of the Gulf of Carpentaria and Europeans was defined by a relationship of co-dependence associated with the need on the Indigenous side for respite from frontier brutality and degradation of traditional subsistence resources that occurred with the introduction of cattle, and on the non-Indigenous side by the need for labour to assist in the development of pastoral lands (Roberts 2005; Trigger 1992). Consequently Indigenous people gravitated to areas of non-Indigenous settlement (Trigger 1992: 38). In the study area such foci included pastoral leases, the Chinese market gardens at Louie Creek on Lawn Hill Station, the police reserve at Gregory station (the current location of Bidanggu outstation), the early towns of Burketown and Borroloola, and later the mission settlement of Doomadgee. Long-term residence at these locations combined with the impact of colonialism has fostered attachments that are based on traditional affiliations and historical association (Trigger 1992: 38). The burial of Waanyi antecedents at Bidanggu and Louie Creek create further layers of attachment. Further targeted research is likely to reveal more specific land interests to the area defined as Waanyi country in Queensland.

The GCA nominates land-owning groups with reference to their status as native title claimants. At the time the agreement was negotiated there were nine Waanyi native title claims. Blowes and Trigger (1998: 121) state prior to the Century mine a ‘vibrant arena of Aboriginal politicking’ existed, and that amongst the groups whose country is impacted by the project some groups were more geographically and socially distant from the core population residing in the immediate area of the mining development. The agreement defines Waanyi interests in terms of four named ‘eligible bodies’, or Indigenous organisations, whose membership have interests in the project area. Of the four Waanyi eligible bodies, two predate the GCA and have a geographic association with the outstations of Bidanggu (Gregory) and North Ganalanja on the Nicholson River Land Trust. Initial native title claims affecting the Century project were lodged by the CLCAC and these two organisations act on behalf of all Waanyi people (Crough and Cronin 1995: 7), ultimately these claims progressed to the High
The other two Waanyi eligible bodies—TWEAC and Ngumarryina Aboriginal Development Corporation—reflect social and political affiliations at the time that the GCA was negotiated, rather than specific land interests. These four bodies, and the emergent Waanyi Nation, will be outlined below as Waanyi structures associated with the GCA.

**Bidanggu Aboriginal Corporation**

Bidanggu is the Waanyi name for an outstation on Gregory Downs Station adjacent to the Gregory River and a small European settlement focused on the Gregory Hotel. The outstation is established on land that had been a police reserve, and had historically been used as a wet season camping area during the ‘station break’. Long term Indigenous residence at this location is evidenced by a number of Waanyi burials there. Historical attachments to the area have been the source of longstanding requests to formalise Bidanggu as an outstation, which became a central part of the negotiation of the GCA. However, the Burke Shire Council, which has local government jurisdiction over the area, maintained opposition to the formalising of an outstation at this location. This opposition demonstrates the fraught nature of race relations in the area and ongoing tension between the Burke Shire and Indigenous organisations, particularly the CLCAC. The Queensland Government commitment to the GCA included the provision of infrastructure in the form of housing and electricity at Bidanggu.

Three Waanyi families, principally Rhumburiya, are associated with Bidanggu outstation. Residents at the settlement numbered approximately 10 at the time of fieldwork, though there is considerable movement of people between Bidanggu and Doomadgee. Membership of the Bidanggu Aboriginal Corporation is 107.

Century mine provides ongoing assistance to Bidanggu outstation, but the relationship remains vexing for the company and mixed for Bidanggu residents. Company staff recount the assistance that they have provided to Bidanggu in terms of generator repairs, and regular provision of fuel for the generator. However, they maintain that Bidanggu residents have become overly reliant on the mine for assistance and they allege that the understanding has been abused by their selling fuel provided by Century (interview, Manager of GAC Support, 5 July 2003). Bidanggu residents acknowledge the assistance from the mine.

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16 In 1993 CRA lodged an application for a mining lease with the Queensland Government. In the lease application there were details of an historic camping and water reserve within the lease area. A native title claim was lodged over this area in 1994, but a decision not to accept the claim was made after a hearing before the President of the National Native Title Tribunal. Appeals to the Federal Court and the High Court of Australia by Waanyi were ultimately successful and the Tribunal was ordered to accept the claim. This forced the State of Queensland to issue s.29 notices under the *Native Title Act 1993* (NTA), thereby commencing the ‘right to negotiate’ process that Queensland had tried to avoid (Blowes and Trigger 1998).
However, a Bidanggu resident qualified the nature and extent of such assistance when he commented ‘but look what they are pulling out of our country’ (interview, 27 August 2004). Another Bidanggu resident noted in referring to the generator repairs that the mine charged Bidanggu for the assistance provided. Mine personnel delivered a tractor purchased from Hookey’s contracting for Bidanggu, but in the process the phone line to the community was brought down, necessitating the installation of a satellite telephone. This Bidanggu resident and her sister, who is now resident in Camooweal, state the need for more houses at Bidanggu and for a fence. There is already a school established at Bidanggu but currently there are very few school-aged children resident at the outstation. The two women maintain that further infrastructure development will mean that other Doomadgee residents associated with the Bidanggu area will return to their country. Social problems at Doomadgee associated with alcohol, a recent resurgence of petrol sniffing and poor employment prospects, they maintain, are motivating factors in people wishing to return to their country and establish outstations (interview, 31 August 2004). According to these Bidanggu residents, life there affords social stability and ease of access to a range of bush resources that are not as accessible at large settlements such as Doomadgee.

The ambivalence of Bidanggu residents to the mine is clearly expressed when discussing the types of opportunity and assistance it affords, and the opportunities for the maintenance of Indigenous livelihood through residence at Bidanggu. The male Bidanggu resident mentioned above, who maintains he was opposed to the mine from the start, states that he would like to see more Indigenous people working there. However, he is also of the view that the enduring poverty of Indigenous people in the Southern Gulf of Carpentaria ‘will be just the same when the mine closes’ (interview, 27 August 2004). Two Bidanggu residents had undertaken vocational mine training through the Normanton TAFE, but claimed that no jobs were available at the end of the training (interviews, 27 August 2004; see also Sarra and Sheldon 2005: 23). Such a view is shared by many Indigenous people in the region, and was raised in the Five Year Review of the GCA (Pasminco, The State of Queensland and GADC 2002). The provision of infrastructure to Bidanggu was a central feature of the GCA, but the residents there believe that the GCA was merely an instrument in overcoming a longstanding deadlock, with the local shire formalising what had been an historic living area.

A young Waanyi woman and Bidanggu resident undertook a traineeship through Century in the hope of gaining book-keeping skills. She was primarily motivated by Bidanggu’s need for a book-keeper. However, as part of her traineeship she worked behind the bar at the mine. Her mother withdrew her from the traineeship as she was only 17. The attitudes of people interviewed at Bidanggu
6. ‘Achieving white dreams whilst being black’: Agency and ambivalence at Century mine

to employment opportunities at the mine are balanced by a range of alternate opportunities afforded by their residence on the outstation. The proximity of the outstation to the Gregory River provides an important source of food resources regularly utilised by Bidanggu residents. This young woman maintains that ‘shop food costs too much’ and she goes fishing every day and is always assured of catching something (interview, 31 August 2004). Environmental concerns about the use of the Gregory River by pastoral stations, the crossing of the river by the mine’s slurry pipeline, and the observation of changing water levels in the river since the mine commenced operation are raised as tangible threats to the availability of bush resources. In addition, the mythic significance of the Gregory River is invoked to show the potential cost of the Century mine to the residents at this location. The Gregory River is of major spiritual significance to Waanyi people, and changes in its physical characteristics are considered to symbolise the lack of consideration of Indigenous worldviews in the operation of the mine—that is, the lack of regard for Indigenous law entailed in major landscape intervention. In commenting on the impact of the mine on Bidanggu and the region generally, the woman resident at Bidanggu described above stated: ‘We don’t rely on the mine, and it won’t make a difference to us when it closes; I can’t see much evidence of a sustainable economy from that mine around here’ (interview, 31 August 2004). Such a statement indicates the pride some people derive by maintaining their autonomy from the mine economy.

Like the other Waanyi eligible bodies, the Bidanggu Association is entitled to payments derived from the GCA made via the GADC. However, until the 2002 Waanyi sit-in at the mine, Bidanggu had only received one payment before becoming ineligible due to a lack of administrative compliance (interview, Waanyi man and Doomadjie resident, 18 August 2004).

North Ganalanja Aboriginal Corporation

North Ganalanja Aboriginal Corporation is primarily established as an outstation organisation for the Najabarra outstation in Wuyaliya country on the Nicholson River Land Trust. Ganalanja is the Waanyi name for the Nicholson River. Membership of this association is largely based on affiliation with the Waanyi Garrawa Aboriginal Land Trust adjacent to the Queensland-Northern Territory border, about 80 kilometres to the west of Doomadjee. This area was granted as Aboriginal freehold after the conduct of a successful land claim under the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 (ALRA). Membership of the North Ganalanja Aboriginal Corporation is 105, but at the time of fieldwork included non-Waanyi spouses and relatives who utilised the outstation. The fortune of the Najabarra outstation is indicative of Waanyi aspirations for a return to country, which in Queensland is limited by the accessibility of
processes to obtain appropriate land tenure. In addition, lack of resources, cross-border issues, and poor governance have limited the membership’s ability to utilise the outstation.

In the late 1990s the Najabarra outstation was damaged by flood. Like the Bidanggu Aboriginal Corporation, the association had become ineligible to receive funds from the GCA due to its failure to lodge financial returns to the Registrar of Aboriginal Corporations. Consequently, at the time of fieldwork, the association had only received one payment from the GCA. Lack of vehicles amongst Waanyi people resident at Doomadgee meant that the outstation remained unoccupied for a period of time. As is common in remote pastoral regions of North Australia, the deserted settlement became the target of thieves, who stole equipment such as generators. This was further compounded by the removal of the Telstra phone tower at the location, presumably on the basis that the outstation was unoccupied.

The North Ganalanja Association was further impacted by events surrounding the 2002 sit-in of the Century mine. The sit-in focused on the release of the funds held by the GADC to the bodies that had become ineligible. Under pressure, CZL released money held in trust to the Waanyi Nation, Bidanggu and North Ganalanja. However, in the days after the release of funds approximately $180,000 was misappropriated from North Ganalanja by one of the spokespeople of the sit-in, who was also the chairperson of the association. The inability of the membership to prevent this, and to seek redress, points to the lack of governance structures of North Ganalanja, but also the minimal safeguards in the GCA for dealing with such a situation. The question of balance in agreements between autonomy over agreement resources and the need for appropriate institutional and organisational frameworks is a theme common to all agreements subject of this study. The GADC is not sufficiently resourced by the agreement, and has limited capacity to assist the eligible bodies in the arena of governance and to prevent such situations arising (see Chapter 3). Staff at Century mine indicated that they had offered assistance in seeking redress for the misappropriation. The situation was clouded by speculation about how the funds had been misappropriated and spent. This raised a number of complex issues associated with family allegiances and old disputes into consideration of the matter. Members of North Ganalanja were, therefore, reluctant to involve the company in its affairs.

**Traditional Waanyi Elders Aboriginal Corporation**

The Traditional Waanyi Elders Aboriginal Corporation (TWEAC) was established in the course of the negotiations over the Century deposit to represent a group
of Waanyi people who ostensibly supported the mine. The organisation was incorporated when its key members decided to lodge a native title claim. Membership of the organisation is 26, and some members are also members of other eligible bodies. Opposing factions in the negotiations hold that TWEAC had government and company support in its establishment (interview, Waanyi mine worker in Doomadgee, 18 August 2004). A key Indigenous leader in the region recounts that a lawyer engaged by CZL assisted in the establishment of the organisation and the lodgement of a native title claim, and believes that TWEAC was established to undermine the oppositional stance of the CLCAC (interview, Murrandoo Yanner at Burketown, 23 August 2004). It appears that TWEAC was viewed as a model organisation for the purposes of the GCA. The membership of TWEAC was given additional legitimacy through the inclusion of a number of senior Waanyi people.

Key members of TWEAC are engaged with the structures established by the GCA, and in some cases are directly employed at the mine. An observation from fieldwork is that key supporters of the mine in early negotiations are now actively engaged in the mine economy. TWEAC management is undertaken on a voluntary basis by a staff member of the Aboriginal Development Benefits Trust (ADBT), who also manages the under-resourced GADC on a voluntary basis. Another founding member of TWEAC currently works in the mine pit for REJV—his relationship with the Human Resource Manager of REJV is an important link between the mine and the settlement of Doomadgee, where he resides. In addition, this relationship is a key intersection of the mine with Indigenous politics in the Gulf generally.

An important TWEAC member is Reg Hookey, who operates an earth works business established with the assistance of the ADBT. His business enjoys favourable contracting opportunities with CZL (interview, Waanyi man at Burketown, 30 August 2004). Factions opposed to the mine maintain that favourable contracting opportunities arise from the support for the mine shown by Mr Hookey during negotiations (interview, Murandoo Yanner at Burketown, 23 August 2004). Mr Hookey was the ATSIC Commissioner for the Mt Isa region when ATSIC assumed control of the negotiation process (Smith and Altman 1998).

TWEAC is the only Waanyi eligible body that has managed to maintain its eligible body status and, therefore, remain in receipt of compensatory payments. The organisation primarily functions as a funeral fund that assists all Waanyi regardless of their membership. Members of the board of TWEAC maintain that the funds flowing from the GCA on an annual basis are insufficient to carry out more extensive programs (interview, Waanyi woman employed by TWEAC and ADBT, 10 September 2004). Clearly the assistance they provide is in high demand and fulfilling a service delivery need.
Ngumarryina Aboriginal Development Corporation

The membership of the Ngumarryina Corporation is generally resident and associated with the towns of Mt Isa and Camooweal. There also is a strong cultural and historical association with the Barkly Tableland region of the Northern Territory. Membership of the organisation is currently 41. Blowes and Trigger (1998: 121) note that during negotiations a number of Waanyi people were geographically remote from the project, and that some of these groups lodged native title claims over the area. The membership of the Ngumarryina Corporation lodged a countrywide Waanyi native title claim in response to the issuing of s.29 notices under the *Native Title Act 1993* (NTA), and falls into this category (see below). The lodgement of this claim ignored the strategy of the CLCAC, which was pursuing a discrete native title claim over an historic camping reserve, within the bounds of the mining lease (see above). The Ngumarryina claim was criticised by the CLCAC for introducing numerous respondent parties into the claims process, bringing additional complexity into the mine negotiations.  

In addition to their geographic distance from the main Waanyi residential areas, a significant criticism of the Ngumarryina Association is its name. Ngumarryina is the Waanyi name for the Gregory River, which is of great spiritual significance to Waanyi, as noted. By using this name for the organisation the membership invoked such spirituality and were also perceived to be asserting the primacy of their rights in relation to the river. The Ngumarryina Association importantly drew on the knowledge of Garrawa people from the Northern Territory for support. A senior Garrawa man noted that ‘Waanyi wanted to cut the Ngumarryina mob out of the claim, but we told them no they belong there’ (interview, 20 August 2004). A key member of the Ngumarryina Aboriginal Corporation states that they are associated with the Louie Creek-Lawn Hill area (interview, 17 August 2004).

Aspirations of the Ngumarryina group arising from their engagement with Century mine include the establishment of business enterprises particularly in the Queensland town of Camooweal, the development of investments, and the distribution of cash to the membership. The member of the Ngumarryina Aboriginal Corporation mentioned above is opposed to the agreement–based structures, such as the ADBT and the GADC, and thinks that agreement money should be controlled by directly ‘tribal groups’. She states (interview, 17 August 2004):

17 It is important to note that in the early days of the NTA a strategy of native title representative bodies (NTRBs) was to attempt to test legal issues associated with the new legislation. Key to this strategy was the lodgement of discrete native title claims that minimised the number of respondent parties and therefore focused the court on points of law rather than issues of detriment.
Let’s get serious about recognising traditional institutions in the design of organisations. We already have structures for traditional decision making, and we have our groups—Waanyi and Garrawa, Gangalidda and Mingginda, Gkuthaarn and Kukatj, and our rivers and landscapes are our boundaries.

The establishment of outstations is also a key aspiration. She emphasises:

But our first priority is land. Pasminco said they would help us get an outstation but it never happened. This is what we really, really want. But the pastoral holding company and the State Government are opposed to the excision of land for outstations.

A senior member of the Ngumarryina Corporation is also on the board of the Lawn Hill and Riversleigh Pastoral Holding Company set up under the GCA (see Chapter 3). Tensions within the group, concerning aspirations for an outstation, and the control of agreement derived funds, led him to conclude that the most profound impact of the GCA on the Ngumarryina membership has been division in family relationships (interview, 17 August 2004). It was noted during fieldwork that the first payment of GCA funds to the organisation had been misappropriated. However, circumstances surrounding these events were difficult to ascertain. Despite the diversity amongst Waanyi people arising from their historical experiences, access to land and mainstream economic engagement are key aspirations.

**Waanyi Nation Aboriginal Corporation**

The WNAC was formed after successful mediation undertaken by the National Native Title Tribunal to consolidate overlapping Waanyi native title claims. Under the umbrella of the CLCAC, the WNAC developed into a body that purports to represent all Waanyi, though only names 92 Waanyi people as members.\(^\text{18}\) The representativeness of the WNAC is asserted by the CLCAC counter-review to support its argument that the organisation should be recognised as an eligible body under the GCA (CLCAC 2004: 3–4). The intent of the Waanyi Nation is to bring all the existing eligible bodies under its umbrella. An important element of the sit-in was the assertion of the representation of Waanyi interests by the WNAC, and the release of funds allocated for unidentified Waanyi people to the organisation.

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\(^{18}\) Of these, 27 are also listed as members of the Bidanggu Aboriginal Corporation and four are members of Ngumaryina. Membership lists were not available for TWEAC or North Ganalanja Aboriginal Corporation.
Support for the WNAC amongst the Waanyi polity is variable; many people express in principle support for a unified Waanyi organisation. Such support is often qualified by a desire for further information about its governance. At the time of fieldwork it was apparent that considerable discussion and, indeed, speculation had occurred over the WNAC and the possibility of it becoming an eligible body that would replace the other four organisations and, in turn, be given the funds that they currently receive. But, lack of coordinated meetings or consultation subsequent to the review and the sit-in has left the membership of WNAC confused and in some cases distrustful of the organisation. For some, their distrust arises from the close association between the WNAC and the CLCAC. This association is evidenced by the role of the CLCAC in establishing the WNAC, the role of key CLCAC officeholders in the 2002 sit-in, and the management of WNAC affairs by the CLCAC.

Whilst being a NTRB, the CLCAC is not universally accepted by Indigenous people with interests in its jurisdiction. As with other organisations in the region, support or enmity is determined by local political and familial networks and individual relatedness. The CLCAC also played a pivotal role in supporting the opposition of Gangalidda and Waanyi people to the establishment of the mine. The role of the CLCAC in negotiations exposed limitations of the NTA concerning large-scale developments like Century mine. The CLCAC was criticised because its oppositional stance was not representative of the entire constituency of the organisation (Smith and Altman 1998). Direct action in the negotiations—including intimidation of mining company staff, undermining of consultation processes, and occupations of Lawn Hill National Park and the bulk sampling pit at the mine, combined with the ‘right to negotiate’ process under the NTA—were instrumental in forcing the compensatory package to be increased from an initial offer of $70 000 to its final figure of $60 million over the 20 year life of the mine (Blowes and Trigger 1998: 91; Trebeck 2005). Altman (2001b: 111) identifies a tension between the often adversarial negotiation phase of agreements and the implementation phase, when native title parties become long term stakeholders in development. He notes (2001b: 115) that to bolster leverage in negotiations, native title parties require an adversarial approach, and that they ‘need to be clear about the nature of native title leverage (which might be cultural) and its commercial value’—to ensure their transition to being stakeholders in development. In the case of Century mine the use of levers has extended beyond the negotiation phase into the implementation of the GCA and is used strategically to hold other agreement parties to account via civil action, such as the sit-in of the mine site.

The Waanyi Nation is an important factor in the multiple strategies of Indigenous people in the Southern Gulf to gain forms of economic equity and to reassert the Waanyi stake in the Century project. The Waanyi Nation could also be viewed
as a way of vicariously drawing the CLCAC into a role of mediating relationships between the parties to the GCA. A clear intent of the WNAC is to incorporate the mine into broader social obligations as implied by the commitments of the GCA (CLCAC 2004). A Waanyi man expresses the willingness of sectors of the Indigenous polity to undertake further direct action against the mine as follows (interview, 16 August 2004):

After the sit-in they put up a big fence around the whole mine. But if we wanted to do it again, that is, if Pasminco makes us do it again, we have all our black brothers and black sisters on the inside.

In addition to the key aspiration of creating a single entity to represent Waanyi interests, the WNAC is also pursuing the broader agenda to create a regional authority to centralise service delivery and economic development opportunities for Waanyi people. As with other strategies, such as working on the mine, or supporting organisations that are reliant on the mine, the Waanyi Nation is not universally supported. The release of compensatory money to the WNAC drew criticism, particularly from the key members of TWEAC, who were supporters of the mine and are now engaged in a number of mine associated agencies, such as the GADC, or in employment at the mine (as noted). TWEAC members assert that such payment rewarded the anti-mine factions to the detriment of those who had supported and worked for the mine. One man who works in the mine pit for REJV, was vehemently opposed to WNAC, despite having been its chairperson at one point. His opposition was firmly grounded in the oppositional politics relating to the mine, and consequent affiliations with organisations in the region. Another key TWEAC member surmised that the CLCAC would undertake cost recovery from the WNAC for the creation of economic development and business plans, which she criticised as being a ‘user pays form of representation’ (interview, Waanyi man, 10 September 2004). She holds that the emergence of the WNAC is due to the dysfunctional nature of the structures associated with the GCA for the delivery of non-employment related community benefits, and that this dysfunction arises from the lack of resources in the agreement for their administration.

Cash payment

The inability of three of the four Waanyi eligible bodies to maintain their eligibility status in accordance with the terms of the agreement highlights problems in the governance capacity of organisations. In part this arises from the

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19 In discussion with key WNAC proponents, comparisons were made with the defunct United Gulf Region Aboriginal Corporation, which had played a significant role in the Century negotiations (Blowes and Trigger 1998; Trigger 1997b).
GCA itself, which makes minimal provision for resources to support agreement structures, including the GADC and the eligible bodies (Pasminco, The State of Queensland and GADC 2002).

As noted, TWEAC is the only Waanyi eligible body to have maintained its eligibility status for the purposes of the GCA. Of the other two non-Waanyi eligible bodies—Mingginda Aboriginal Corporation and Gkuthaarn Aboriginal Corporation—only the Gkuthaarn Aboriginal Corporation has maintained its eligibility. The success of TWEAC compared to the other Waanyi organisations is directly related to its having access to the necessary administrative resources to maintain compliance. A key member of TWEAC occupies a paid position with the ADBT. As noted, the GADC is currently administered on a voluntary basis by the same key TWEAC member, who is also responsible for TWEAC’s administrative support. In this sense TWEAC is fortunate in its ability to vicariously draw upon resources from other parts of the agreement. In addition, the personal commitment of the individual concerned and her administrative expertise are also factors.

Whilst the other eligible bodies have nominated office bearers and constitutions in accordance with the *Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act 1976*, they do not have paid employees to administer their affairs, nor do they have recourse to other administrative structures.\(^\text{20}\) The GADC might be the appropriate body to assist, but such assistance is limited by the capacity of the voluntary staff member (Pasminco, The State of Queensland and GADC 2002). In addition, the association between the GADC, TWEAC and CZL is seen as a critical and divisive factor in the Indigenous politics associated with the GCA (see Trigger 1997b: 114). By highlighting a spectrum of problematic and optimal extremes, Altman (2001b: 112) identifies the potential development tensions that can arise for Indigenous beneficiaries from agreements. His analysis of the three ineligible Waanyi organisations against the spectrum suggests that they fall into the problematic extreme with poorly defined and weak property rights and, hence, poorly defined beneficiaries, individualistic strategies for financial expenditure and meeting immediate timeframes; and opaque accountability. The CLCAC (2004: 3) review of the GCA, commenting on the Waanyi eligible bodies, states that:

> …there have been problems with mismanagement and a lack of necessary skills in running organisations. The problems encountered by the deemed eligible bodies have resulted in the Waanyi becoming disenfranchised and further disadvantaged under the GCA.

\(^{20}\) At the time of writing the eligible bodies were receiving direct assistance from CZL with administrative matters (interview with CZL representative, 21 July 2007).
Clearly, many people who participated in this study expected the agreement would provide access to cash payments (interviews, 7 July 2003, 17 and 19 August 2004, 2 September 2004). As in the Pilbara, a key aspiration is the purchase of vehicles. Also, like the Pilbara, significant numbers of the groups party to the GCA are either elderly or infirm and, therefore, unlikely to avail themselves of employment or business development opportunities associated with the agreement. This confines the scope for attaining compensatory or rental benefit from the GCA to other parts of the community benefits package, and particularly to the distribution of funds to the eligible bodies, and ad hoc assistance from the mining company. Whilst employment, training and business development may bring secondary benefit to people unable to participate, this benefit is reliant upon family members availing themselves of such opportunities, and the existence of an ethos of sharing, as Peterson (2005) suggests. Similarly, important environmental and heritage protection initiatives associated with the GCA, are aimed at maintaining the status quo rather than bringing any specific advantage. Like the Pilbara, return of pastoral leases is seen as a critical means of accessing the range of opportunities and resources associated with land.

Whilst the GCA appears to have had little impact on overall Indigenous economic activity, despite high rates of employment at the mine and in businesses (see Chapter 3), other initiatives are occurring in the southern Gulf of Carpentaria. For example, on Bentinck Island a group of seven elderly Kaiadilt women have recently started exhibiting artworks in Brisbane, with their works attracting ‘price tags in the five-figure range’; funds derived from art sales are being used to ‘build an outstation on their ancient homeland and facilitate[e] the return of young Kaiadilt’ (McIntosh and Memmott 2006).

Initiatives focusing on the integration of Indigenous ecological knowledge include the establishment of the Southern Gulf Catchments, an organisation emerging from a range of government funding sources relating to natural resource management, including the Commonwealth Government’s National Heritage Trust program. The Southern Gulf Catchments Natural Resource Management Plan acknowledges the high Indigenous population in the region as a resource for natural resource management in the region, and seeks to establish a Land and Sea Centre to meet Indigenous aspirations for sustainable use and management of the area (Earth Tech 2005: 23). In addition, the Southern Gulf Catchments (2007) is involved in partnership with the CLCAC, the Burke Shire, the Tropical Savannas Cooperative Research Centre and other local agencies in a fire management project that combines local Indigenous fire management knowledge, with western science and technology. This project works in partnership across the Northern Territory-Queensland border with the Waanyi.

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21 An ethos of sharing of course, may or may not exist, and is likely to be determined by the context of requests made, the nature of kin relationships, and the extent of resources available.
Garrawa ranger group, which is established under the Caring for Country Project of the Northern Land Council (NLC 2006: 80–81). These projects aim to establish Indigenous contracting teams for fire and natural resource management, weed control and fencing. The six-member ranger fire crew has received expressions of interest for the provision of ongoing hazard reduction services from Century mine and other regional mining companies (Southern Gulf Catchments 2007).

In addition, the Lardil, Kaiadilt, Yangkaal, and Gangalidda, with assistance from the National Oceans Office, have prepared a marine management plan that emphasises cultural relationships and obligations in the sustainable use and management of their marine estate (Lardil Yangkaal Kaiadilt and Gangalidda peoples 2006). Associated with this plan is the establishment of ranger groups with the support of the North Australia Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance. Ranger groups focus upon working with a broad range of agencies to identify conservation needs of the marine environment, fire management, tourism management, and associated research. A Mornington Island participant in a North Australia Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (2004) workshop stated:

I like to have peace and quiet in my country and be able to help people (white people and Aboriginal people) when they come to our community so we can show them our custom and way of life […] it’s important for us and if it’s important for us than [sic] it’s important for the whole of Australia and all Indigenous people from this country.

The emerging role of Indigenous knowledge in biodiversity and land management in northern Australia represents a tangible intersection of the customary and market economies that recognises the unique capacities of Indigenous people. The maintenance of such knowledge is, however, contingent upon access to land. The desire to establish rangelands and outstations is seen as a key to the continuation of customary practice that informs and is informed by such knowledge. Resources obtained through mainstream economic engagement, whether through the sale of art, mining work, or land management, are often directed at the customary sector. The mining industry, as the major representative of the mainstream economy in areas such as the southern Gulf of Carpentaria, is viewed as a potential source of support, both in terms of compensatory payments, and paid employment. That not all Indigenous people associated with the GCA can engage in mine employment clearly indicates the scope for expanding the terms of economic engagement in mining agreements to reflect typically Indigenous priorities associated with land.
Conclusion

The GCA seeks to bring together diverse Indigenous interests in order to alleviate disadvantage, and establish economic independence through promoting economic development for all parties. In the case of the GCA, such objectives directly result from Indigenous people seeking symbolic recognition of ‘broad “social justice” in the light of a very troubled history’ (Blowes and Trigger 1998: 109). High Indigenous employment rates at Century mine are an important achievement of the agreement, which results from innovative corporate recruitment and training strategies, and Queensland State Government investment in training. The presence of Indigenous workers at the mine promotes active consideration of corporate commitments under the GCA and constant reassertion of the conditions that provide the company with its ‘social licence to operate’. On-site relationships between mine management and key Indigenous workers, and the threat of militant action against the mine by some sectors of the Indigenous polity, draw the mine site into a broader realm of Indigenous politics and social relationships.

The broad objectives of the GCA to alleviate Indigenous disadvantage are unrealistic given the scale of resources associated with the agreement, the lack of definition of whom the agreement seeks to assist, and the inadequate structures associated with the delivery of benefits other than employment and training arising from the agreement. The general tenets of Indigenous social organisation in the region outlined here demonstrate how Indigenous politics intersect with the mine. The poor definition of intended Indigenous beneficiaries to the agreement undermines other mechanisms in the agreement to deliver community benefits. Notably, the lack of resources available for the administration of the GADC has serious consequences for the local Indigenous organisations that the GADC is designed to assist.

The GCA arose from a highly contested negotiation process and the broad objectives of the agreement arise from Indigenous dissatisfaction with levels of government service delivery in the region (see Miles, Cavaye and Donaghy 2005). This has placed wider Indigenous social objectives on the agenda, and made relationships with CZL and the mining industry in general central to their attainment. Tension exists over the industry’s capacity and willingness to assume service delivery functions normally associated with government. However, when commitments are not forthcoming, the industry is held to account, as in the case of the 2002 sit-in. The potential impact on the profitability of the Century enterprise via such action highlights the effectiveness of Indigenous political leverage to demand incorporation of Indigenous worldviews and practices in development ideology, and to enhance democratisation at the local level (Trebeck 2005). Such action also demands a response from the state, which
‘alone has the ability and mandate to co-ordinate, regulate, administer and deliver beyond the local level and the efforts of specific companies’ (Trebeck 2007: 558).

Indigenous ambivalence to the mine is also reflected in the political relationships entailed in the agreement. Clearly, the 2002 sit-in had the capacity to impact upon the commercial operation of the mine. If the occupation had moved to the pit, then production would have been halted (then) mine general manager, 4 July 2003). The decision not to occupy the pit (key regional Indigenous leader, 28 August 2004) was clearly made against the potential costs that forced mine closure would have entailed for Indigenous people of the southern Gulf of Carpentaria. Such costs would include negative political and legal ramifications, but also the potential cessation of the GCA, which would have consequences for the attainment of aspirations that have come to be associated with it.