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Old know-how used in new ways

In the recent six months, there appears to have been a distinct increase in the number of announcements on new initiatives involving the application of Aboriginal knowledge to natural resource management scenarios. It seems to represent positive thinking on sustainable practice and a willingness for wider thinking on the current environmental challenges.

It has, of course, been known for some time that an understanding of Indigenous management of 'country' – especially through the deft use of fire regime – has helped inform resource managers about the evolved characteristics of Australia's various habitat types, which have generally then been managed with Western, scientific approaches. But now, we're seeing the direct application of Aboriginal management techniques and environmental know-how to resource management challenges – an important shift in the place that Indigenous knowledge has in contemporary environmental planning.

Also noteworthy is the fact that, through recent national initiatives, Indigenous Australians are increasingly being more fully engaged in resource management planning – particularly in the north – and have wider, independent as well as cooperative, management responsibilities. This seems to coincide with a growing theory that it will work better all-round for Aboriginal people to be back on country where possible; a healing re-association, to assist its healthy management.

In this issue we look at some recently announced initiatives, but devote the Focus on page 10 to an overview of the contribution that Aboriginal knowledge can make to sustainable practice and



thinking in Australia. We've tried to look beyond its application to practical environmental management to how Indigenous cultural perspectives, which

prioritise nature, might inform and effect more holistic thinking in contemporary citizens – even in our urban areas, more separated from the immediacy of a nature connection.

The second Focus reviews recycling in Australia for progress, and, I hope, gives some useful update on what's being done well, and who's embracing the emerging era of 'zero waste' recycling. The coverage of the world-leading UR-3R facility in NSW is particularly heartening reading given our mounting municipal waste problem.

In *The Green Frontier* Graeme O'Neill profiles the exciting new potential of genetic RNAi technology and its imminent applications to environmental, agricultural and health causes. There hasn't been much coverage of this very significant research – in which Australia is playing a key part – in the mainstream media, so we're pleased to be providing an outline.

Enjoy your reading.

James Porteous
Managing Editor



Next, in issue 126

Focus sections on Sustainability in the resources sector and Consumption, and a feature on the King of Thailand's sustainable practice demonstration, at home.