# TRaCK
## Tropical Rivers and Coastal Knowledge

# A socio-economic snapshot of tropical river catchments

This research provides a clearer picture of the socio-economic characteristics of people living in tropical river (TR) regions, and adds to the biophysical information collected in other TRaCK projects, to enable better management of TR catchments.

The project has three main parts:

**A.** developing an understanding of tourism and population trends and projections of the catchments

**B.** developing a socio-economic snapshot of catchments within the TR region; and

**C.** creating an economic model of the region.

This fact sheet focuses on part B.

## What did we investigate?

Social and economic systems of tropical rivers were evaluated through the following activities:

- A conceptual framework to profile TR catchments that integrates social and economic aspects of tropical rivers grouped in the following data categories:

  - **Demographic variables:** such as age, the % of people that have moved in last 5 years, and the % of Aboriginal people in the catchment;

  - Economic factors: for example the % of people employed by industry type, average household income;

  - **Infrastructure and housing:** including the number of schools, home occupancy, the % of homes with no internet connection;

  - **Social and human capital:** for example the % of people volunteering in community organisations, educational levels;

  - **Environment, culture and land use:** for example the number of heritage listed sites, the % of land under various land tenures.

- Development of individual catchment profiles based on socio-economic characteristics



*Mitchell River. Photo: Anna Straton.*

Data[1] available across the catchments was summarised in two ways. For each catchment in the North, individual profiles were developed to include important information on people, economies and land uses in that catchment. See the report at:
**www.track.gov.au/research-projects/301**

In addition, GIS-linked maps were produced to demonstrate characteristics across all catchments, such as the % of people speaking Indigenous language at home (Figure 1), average household incomes (Figure 2) or remoteness index scores[2] (Figure 3).

## Comparisons of tropical river catchments

Socio-economic profiles of individual catchments were compared and contrasted using a statistical method that enabled an assessment of similarities and differences in catchments, based on their socio-economic profile characteristics. For example, similarities exist in the socio-economic characteristics

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1  Data was sourced from a variety of government and community databases.

2  Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA) is an index with values ranging from 0 (high accessibility) to 15 (high remoteness) that classified all localities in Australia. The index is based on road distance measurements from all populated localities in Australia to the nearest service centres.
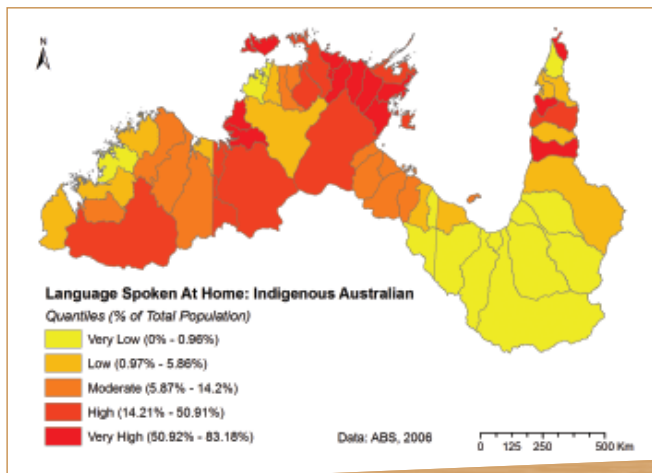
## River and Coastal Settings

*Figure 1. Percentages of population speaking Indigenous Australian languages at home, across TRaCK region.*
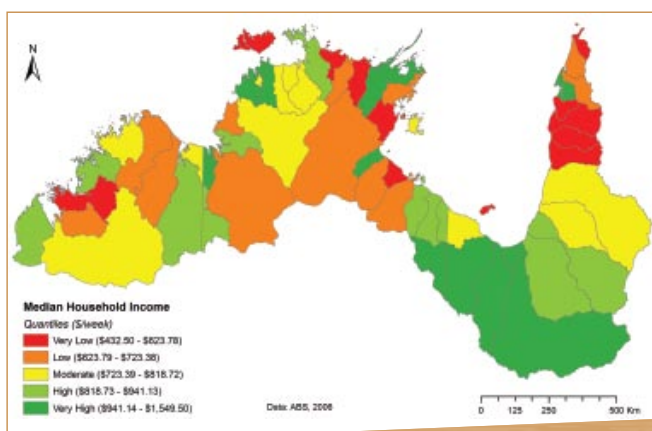

*Figure 2. Average household incomes across TRaCK region.*
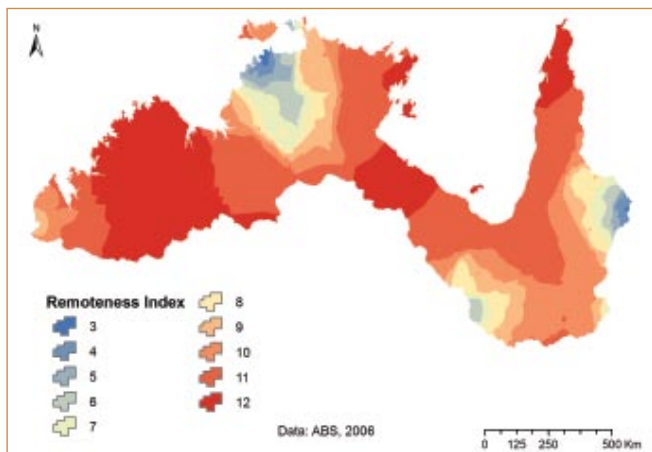

*Figure 3. Continuous values of the remoteness index (ARIA) for the TRaCK region (on scale from 1 - least remote to 15 - most remote).*

of the Flinders and Mitchell river catchments in Queensland and the Fitzroy and Daly river catchments in the Northern Territory.

The socio-economic profiling identified considerable differences both between and within many catchments in the North. Biophysical and cultural differences, as well as differences in human, social and institutional capital and available infrastructure will play a large role in determining both the opportunities for development (mining, agriculture, tourism) as well as capacities of the communities in those catchments to identify and capitalise on opportunities as they are presented.

Complete project results are available at:
**www.track.gov.au/research-projects/301**

## How has this research helped?

This project has identified knowledge gaps in understanding the social, cultural, institutional and economic features of the North, particularly in the areas of social and cultural values, perceptions, and human wellbeing. The gap analyses will contribute to identification of areas for further research in the North. Findings will also be used as input information for future economic and scenarios modelling in theTRaCK region.

## Who was involved

CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems
Silva Larson and Kostas Alexandridis, based in Townsville

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## Where to go for more information

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River and Coastal Settings