

# Ensuring Economic and Environmental Equity for the Indigenous Land Owners on Cape York Peninsula, Australia

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**Cape York Institute**  
For Policy & Leadership

# Cape York's Indigenous people have embarked on a comprehensive social and economic reform program called Welfare reform

“Our struggle for rights is not over and must continue — but we must also struggle to restore our traditional values of responsibility. We do not have a right to passive welfare — indeed we can no longer accept it. We have a right to a real economy; we have a right to build a real economy.”

Noel Pearson, Executive Chairman, Cape York Institute







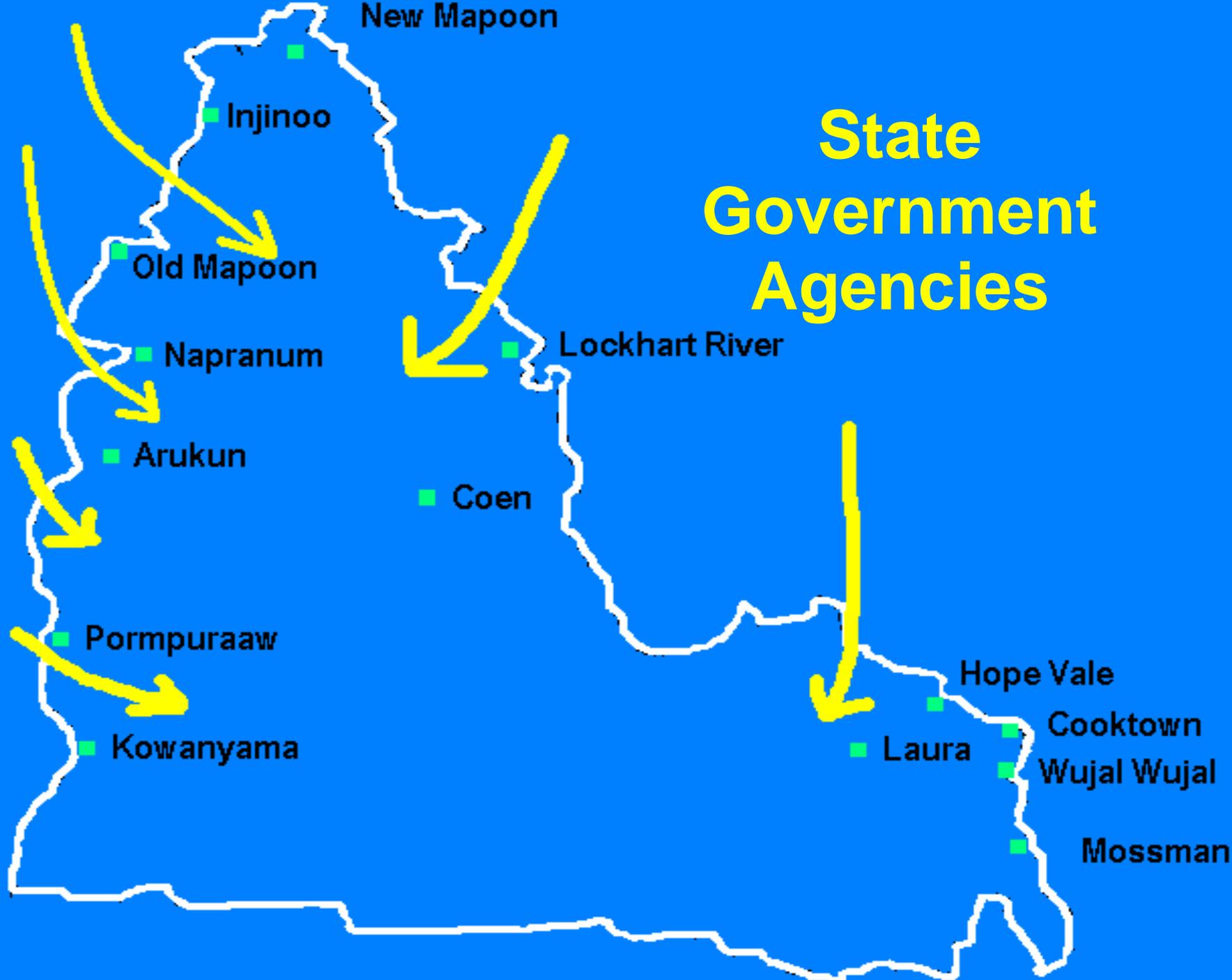




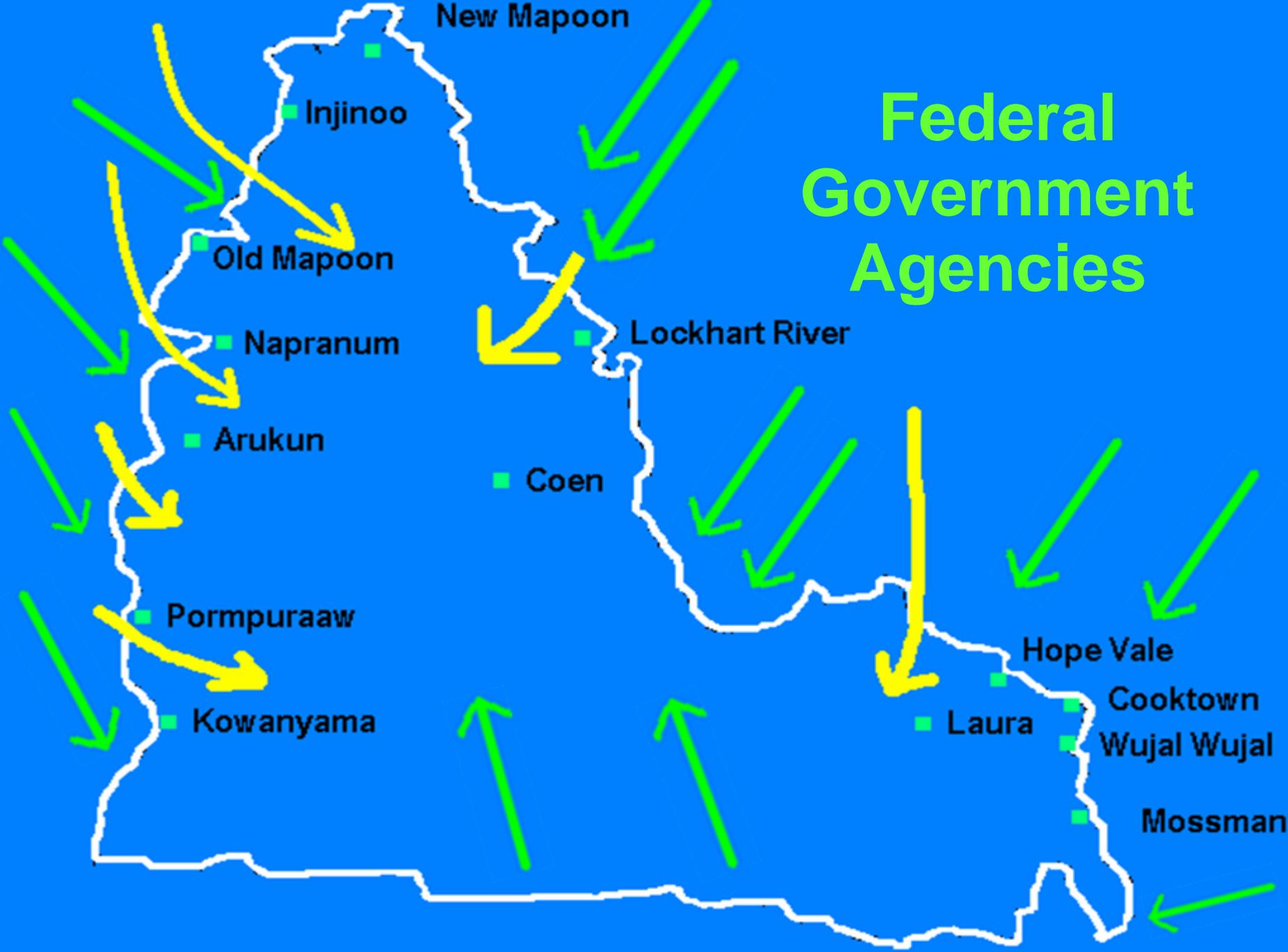




# State Government Agencies



# Federal Government Agencies



New Mapoon

Injinoo

Old Mapoon

Napranum

Arukun

Pormpuraaw

Kowanyama

Lockhart River

Coen

Hope Vale

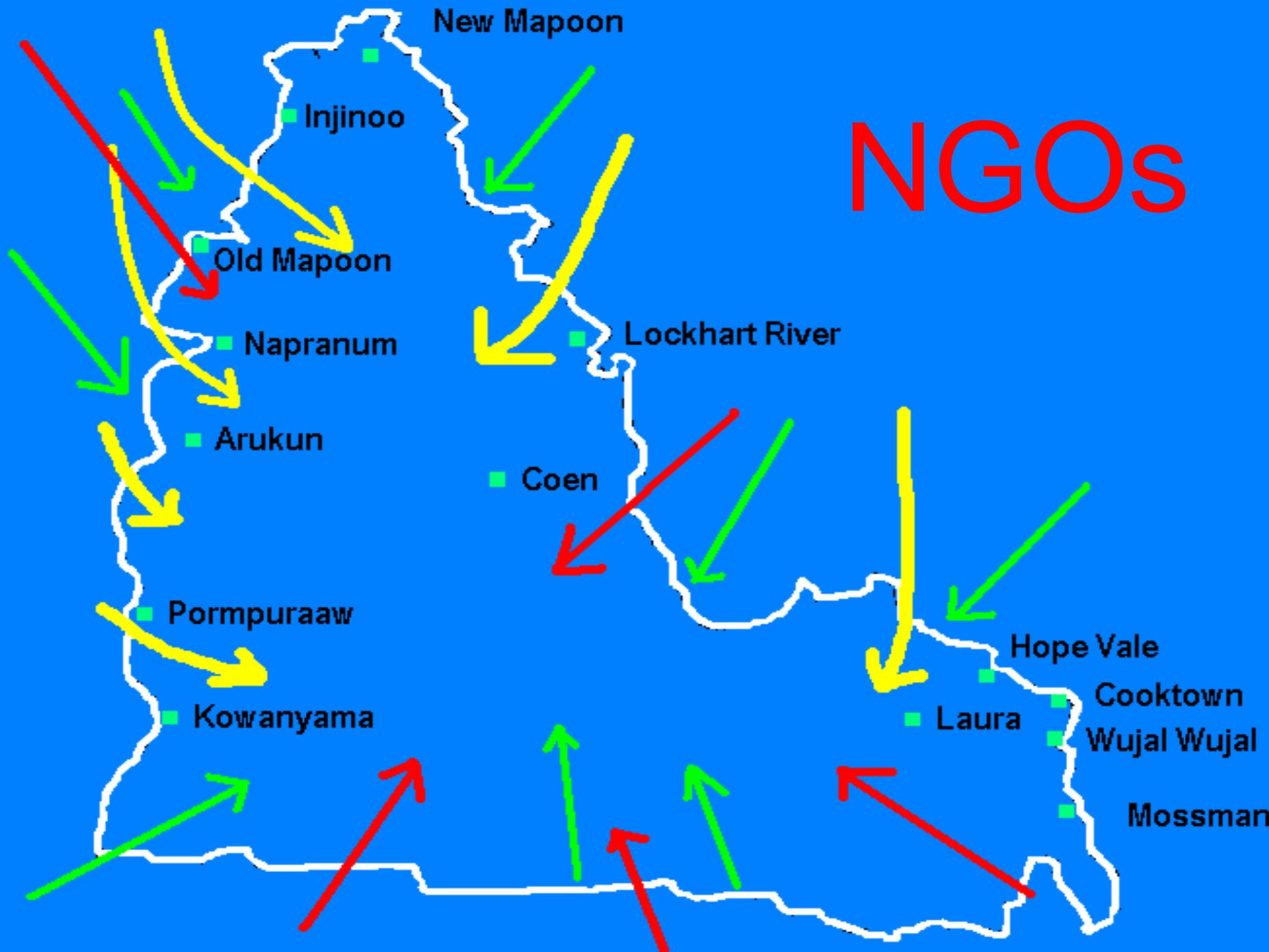
Laura

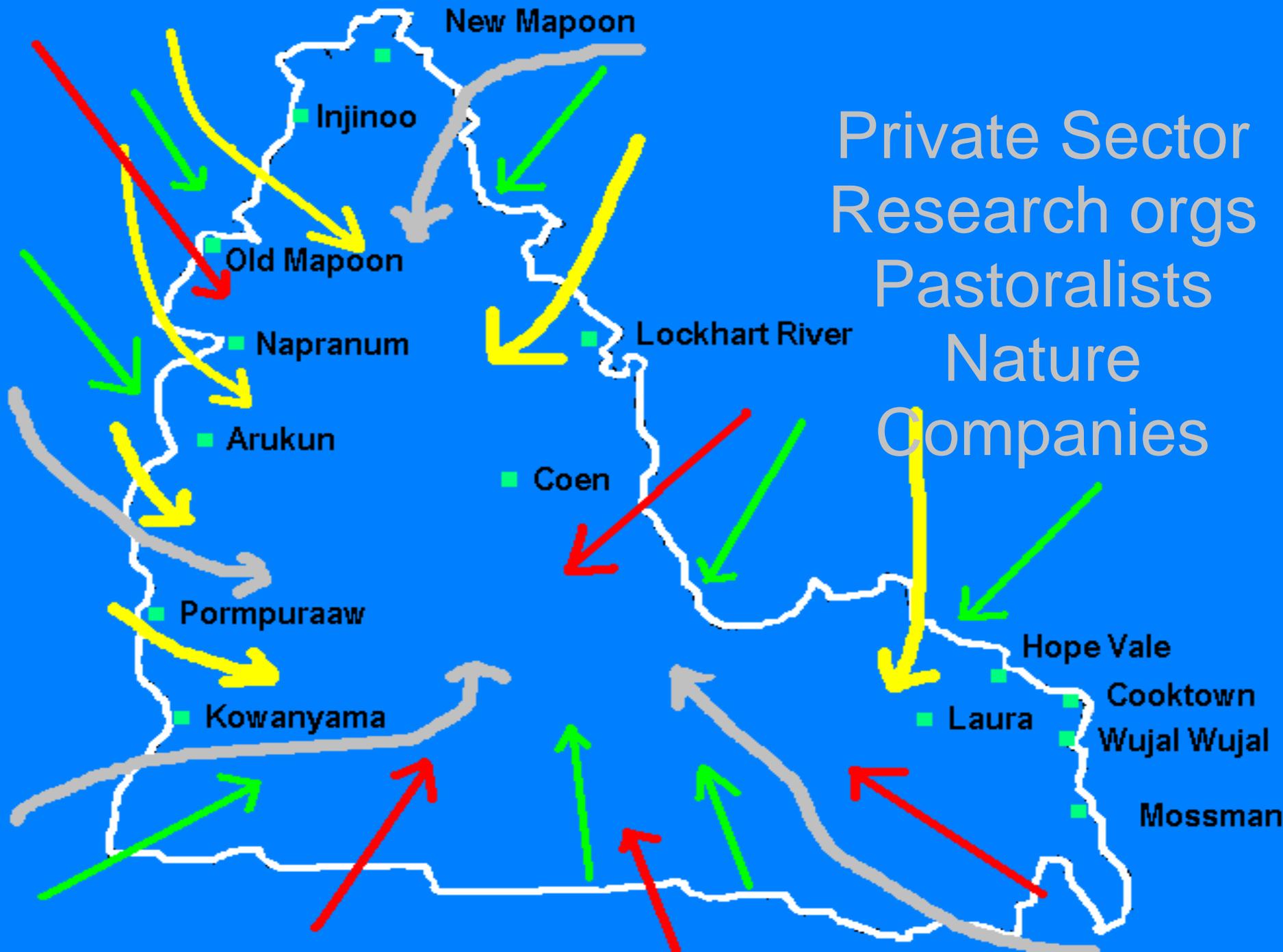
Cooktown

Wujal Wujal

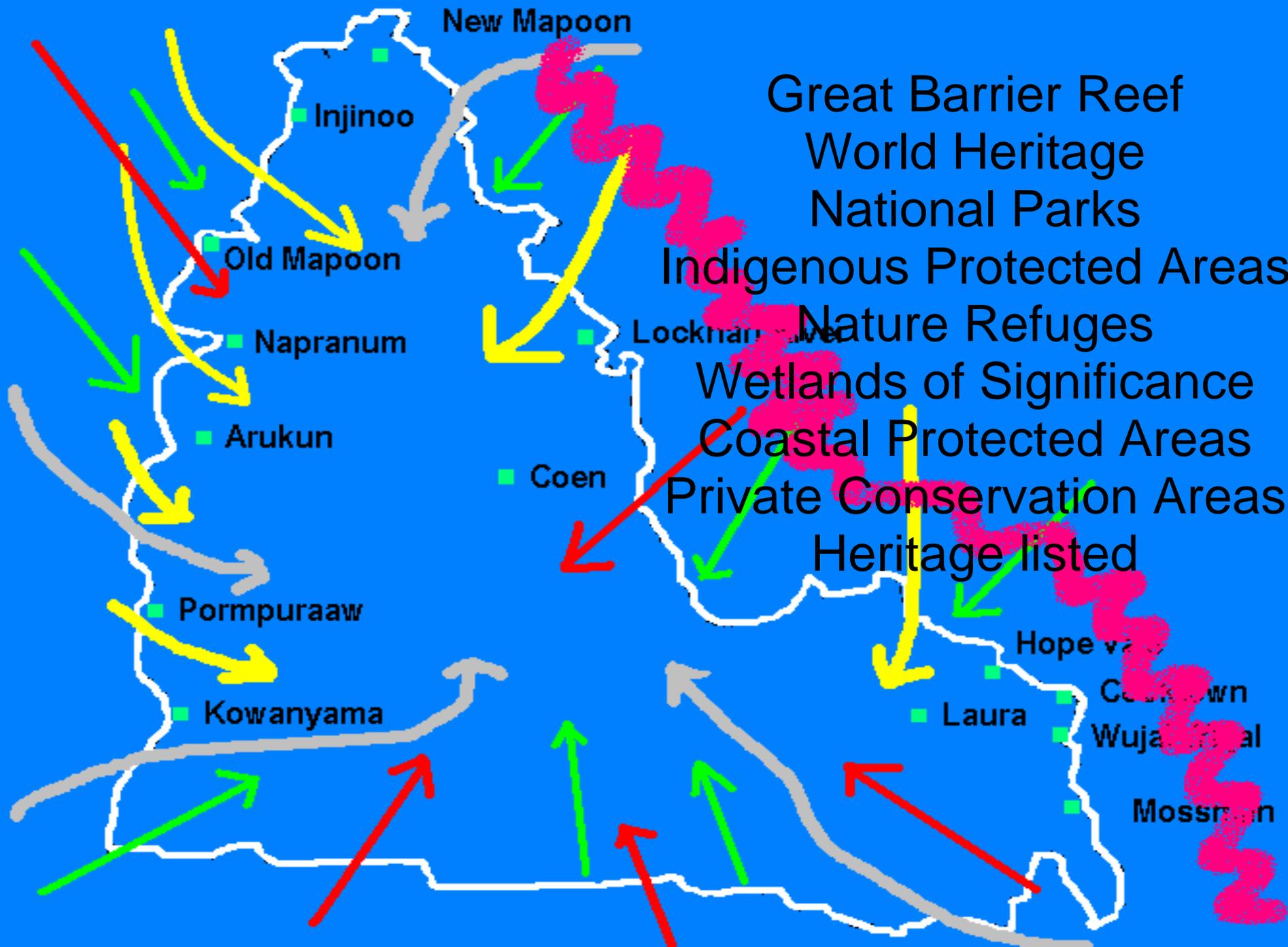
Mossman

# NGOs

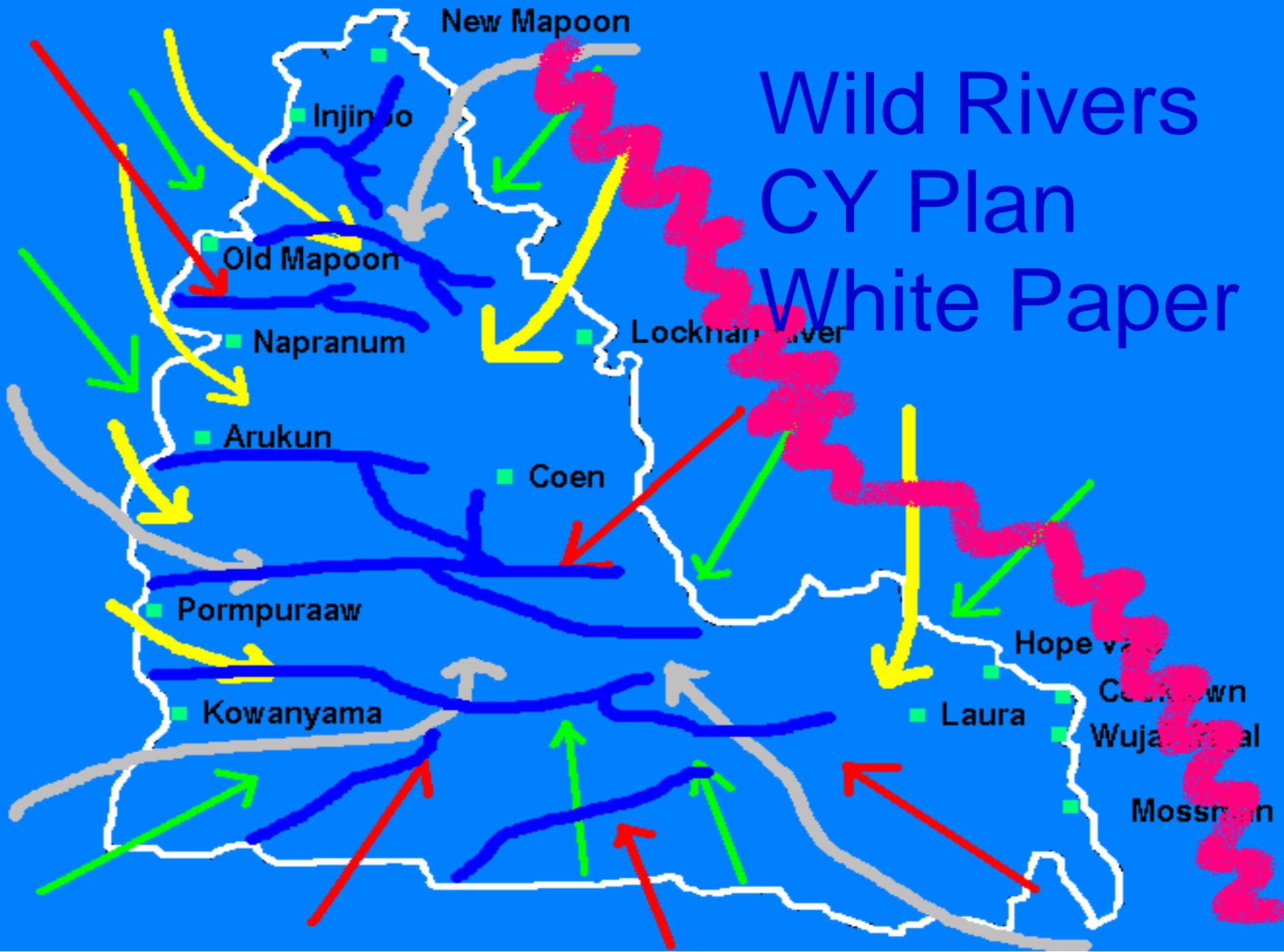


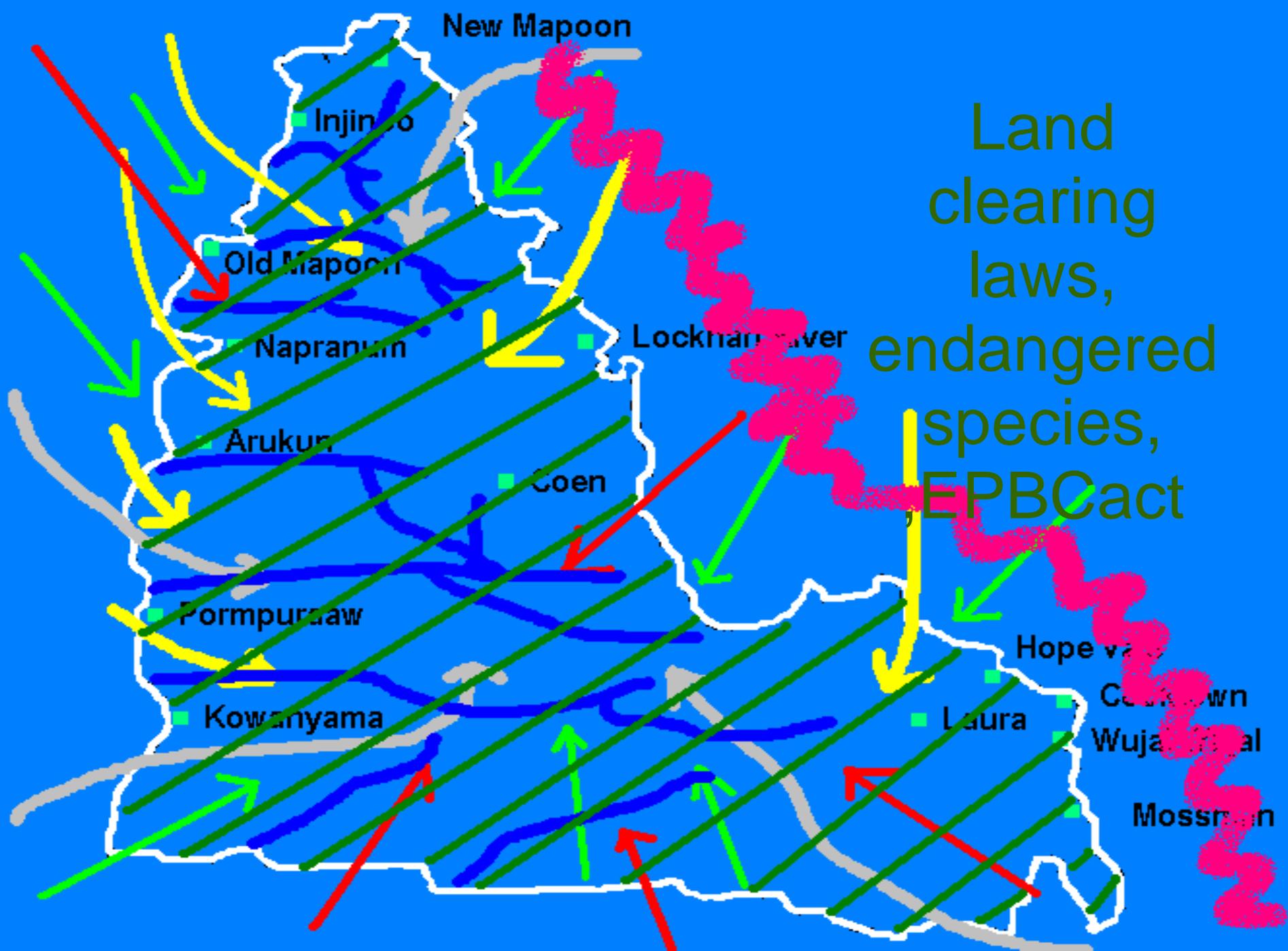


Private Sector  
Research orgs  
Pastoralists  
Nature  
Companies

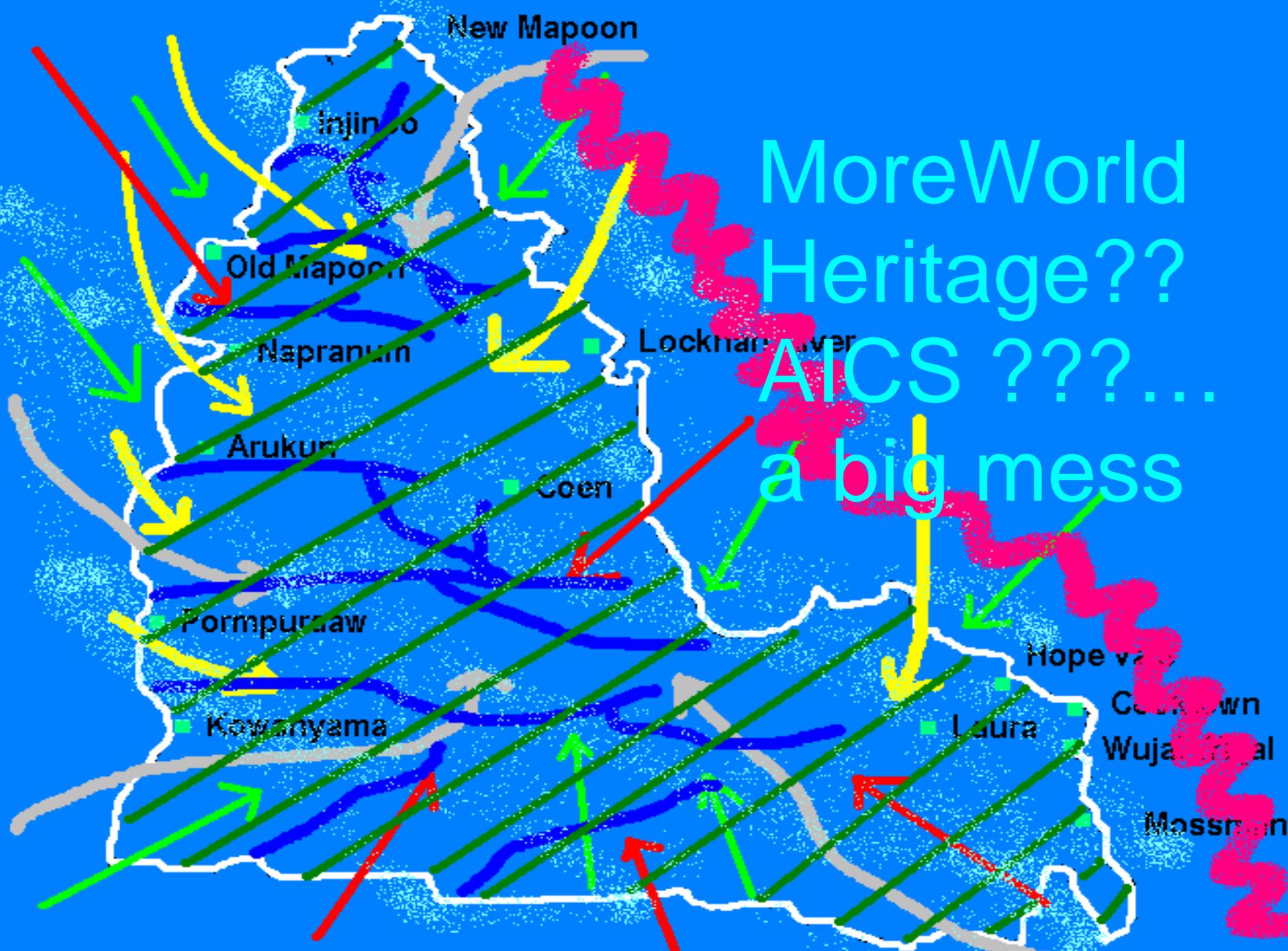


# Wild Rivers CY Plan White Paper





Land clearing laws, endangered species, EPBC Act



New Mapoon

Injinoo

Old Mapoon

Napranuan

Arukun

Coen

Pompueraaw

Kowanyama

Lockhart River

Hopevale

Laura

Cooktown

Wujal Wujal

Mossman

MoreWorld  
Heritage??

AICS ???...

a big mess

# Current Approach to Environmental Management

Current approach on Cape York is not delivering environment outcomes and constrains economic development aspirations of traditional owners

Insufficient Conservation funding results in:

- increased environmental risk
  - 2 million + feral pigs
  - 200 + major weeds
  - Uncontrolled poaching continues
  - High level bio-security risks

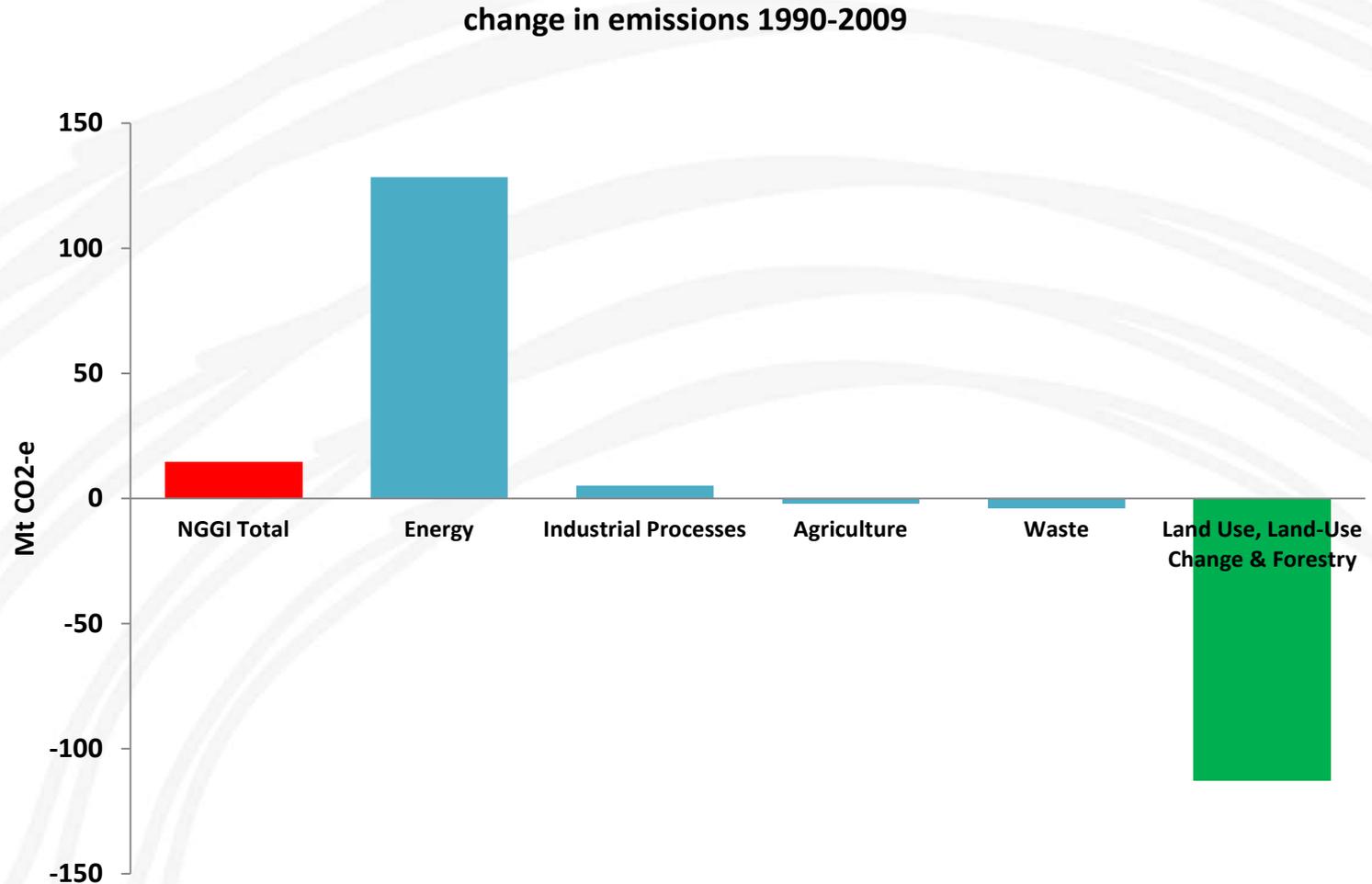
At the same time aboriginal property rights are being striped

The people who have benefited least from industrialisation are know being burdened the greatest share of environmental cost in this country

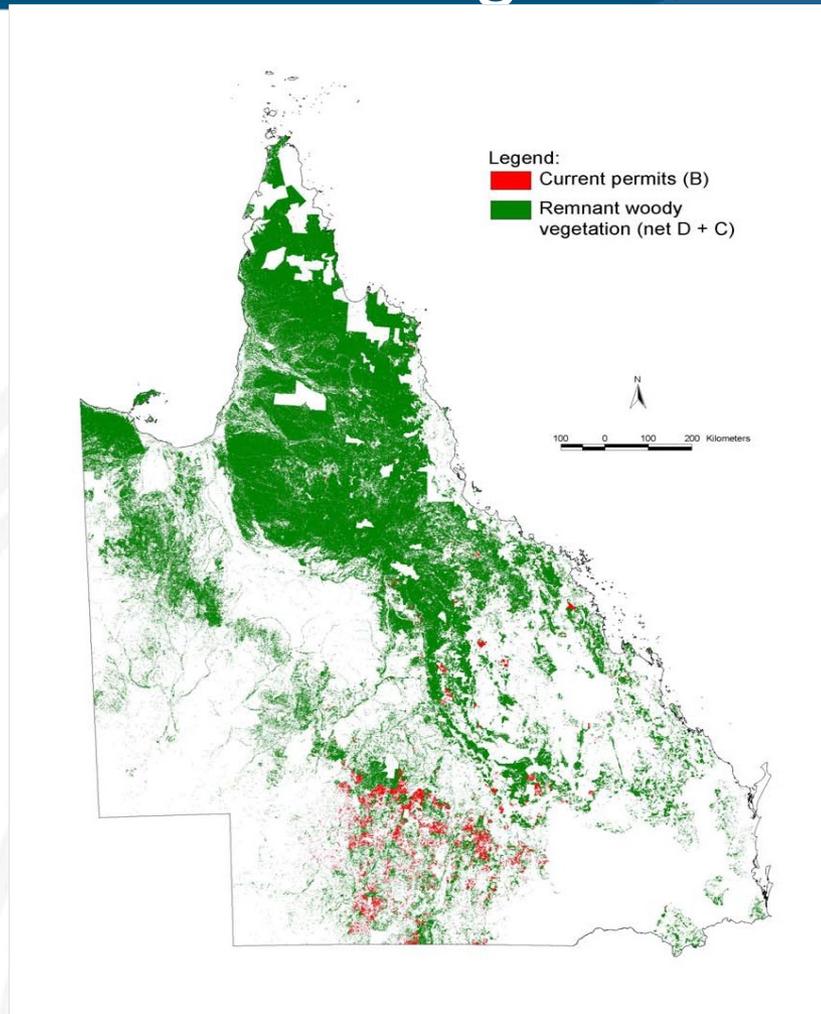
# There are many challenges in achieving land justice and effective conservation

- Over the last decade Aboriginal property rights have been severely diminished by conservation laws and regimes
- These laws have a proportionally larger impact on Aboriginal lands
- Green and political pressure to protect “what’s left” in Australia is focussing on the top end including the largest remaining Aboriginal Homelands
- The environmental development costs of the south are being offset cheaply through acquisition of environmental value or offsets in Cape York while leaving the management liability with those who can least afford it
- Indigenous land—Aboriginal freehold, DOGIT or Reserve land—is being treated as if it were public land, when it is privately held. Capture of such land within a Strategic Environmental Area has the effect of restricting the private land use rights of Indigenous landholders in the interests of the ‘public good’, and makes landholders responsible for the management of specific environmental values that are subject to external threats.

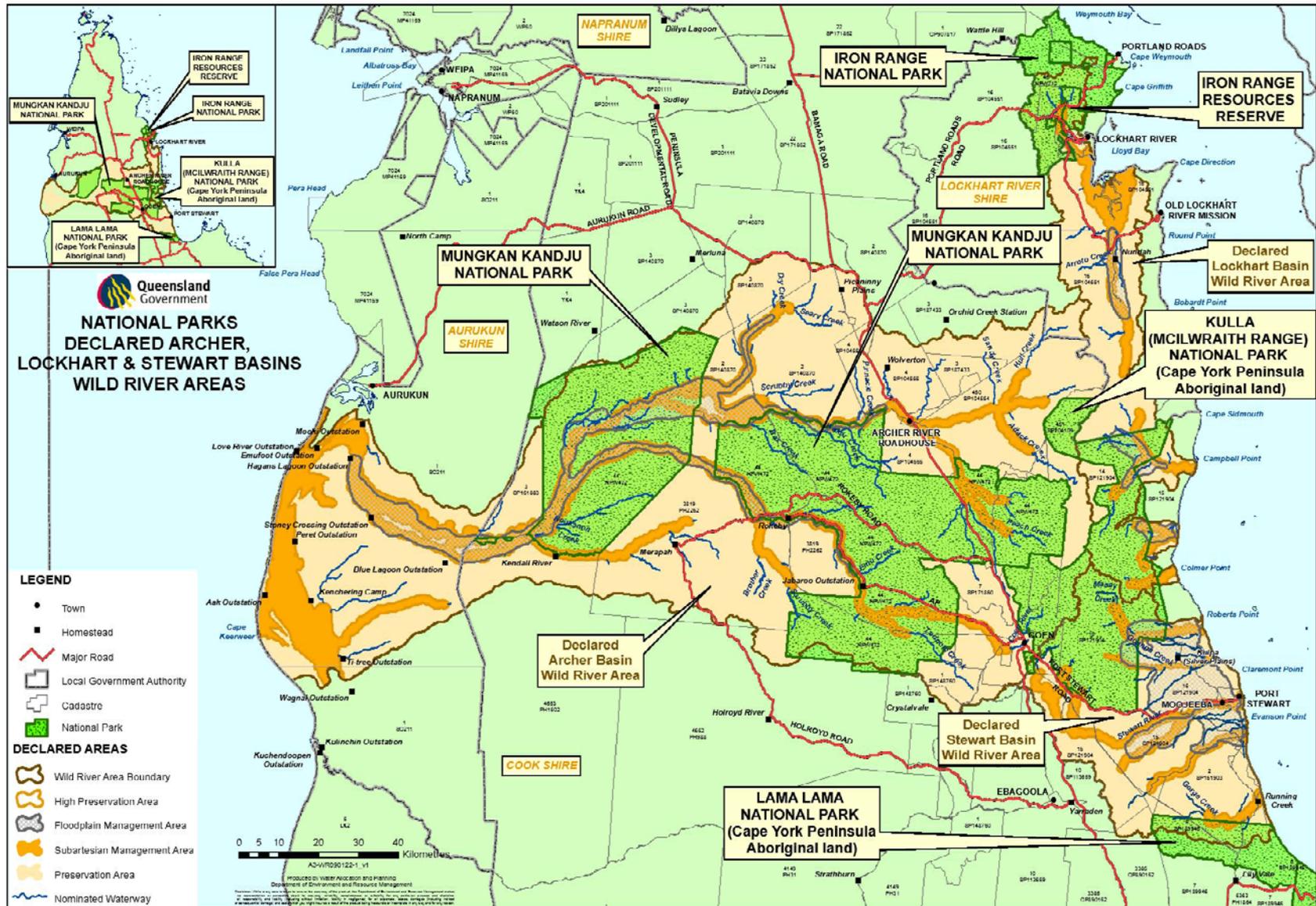
# How Australia will meet its Kyoto target?



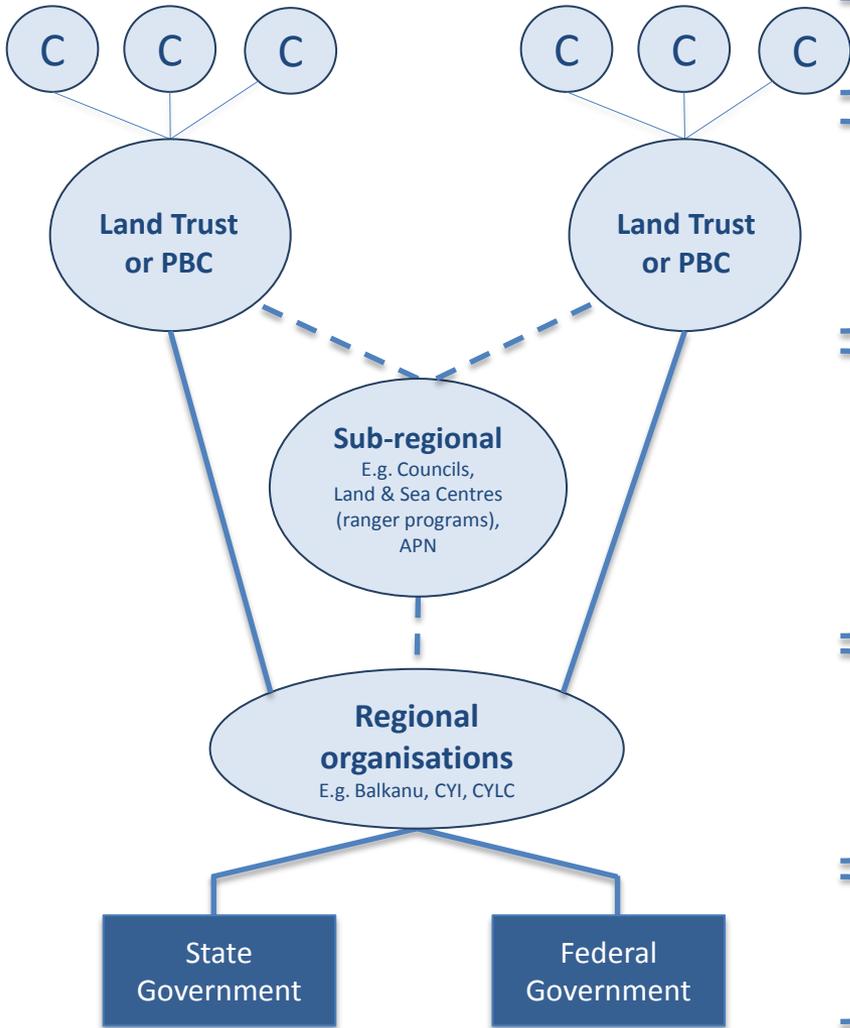
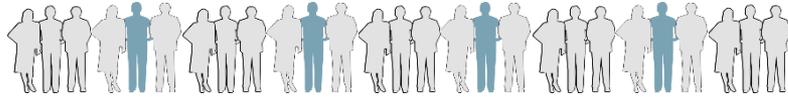
# The majority of remaining remnant woody vegetation is in Cape York



# Wild Rivers declared basins -



# Decision-making about land use and conservation on Aboriginal lands



## Individuals/families

Ideas, aspirations, needs

## Clan/family groups

Land use/planning for traditional country

## Land Trust/PBC

Sub-regional ILUAs/ granting commercial leases/ providing support to family groups

## Sub-regional

Provide support to Land Trusts, negotiate sub-regional issues with Land Trusts. Can, at times, coordinate and provide efficiencies between a number of Land Trusts (i.e. Hope Vale Congress)

## Regional organisations

Provide policy, fundraising, strategy, capacity and capability building, and regional coordination

## State & Federal Government

Pooled resources and legislative mechanisms.

- Governments often do not have a strong understanding of the roles of the multiple levels of governance/structures involved in making development or conservation decisions about Aboriginal land.
- A constant feature in dealing with governments is the reshuffling and fragmentation of functions to different levels of the system, with little understanding being shown of which roles/functions operate most effectively at which level. **This restricts progress and weakens Indigenous negotiation capability and outcomes.**
- Since 1999, Indigenous regional organisations in Cape York have promoted a model that recognises the decision-making needs at a **local, sub-regional and regional** level.
- We need a **recognised and consistent engagement and decision-making process for land use issues** if we are to maximise the potential of our economic development agenda and reduce conflict and duplication/resource waste in land use processes. An effective regional/sub-regional governance model has **clearly defined roles and responsibilities for decision-making** at each level and **clear relationships and procedures** between levels.

# Ensuring Economic and Environmental Equity

In sequential order;

1. Resolve and secure land tenure
2. Fair recognition of property rights
3. Giving Indigenous governance structures authority over Indigenous land
4. Capacity and capability of Indigenous orgs
5. Rights based approach to resource use and conservation decisions
6. Sufficient funding for effective land management – Ecosystem services and TEEB must be enabled
7. Stop the white horse syndrome

## WHICH WAY ???



There are a range of potential solutions for land management and use in Cape York that could be enabled. (Balkanu 2012)