



**Marine
and Coastal**

National Environmental Science Program

Scoping Study: Indigenous Participation and Research Needs

Project 1.31

Project Summary

This scoping study will explore how best to execute increased Indigenous ownership over participatory research and how such a program can deliver on meaningful and substantive engagement of Traditional Owners. This scoping study will bring together key Indigenous leaders and groups to plan, prioritise and evaluate potential research directions. Specifically, this scoping study will engage with Indigenous Australians to develop a cohesive set of prospective projects for investment under future Hub research plans, that deliver up to large-scale, broader picture goals for Indigenous people. We are seeking ethical Indigenous engagement, equitable participation and co-design and co-delivery of national environmental research priorities, while substantially increasing the outcomes for social, economic and cultural terms for Indigenous people.

Problem

Today the Indigenous Estate covers > 45% of Australia (greater than 78% of Northern Australia); as confirmed through 450+ registered Native Title determinations, in conjunction with 1,230 registered Indigenous Land Use Agreements and 76 proclaimed Indigenous Protected Areas. However, the capacity for economic, social and cultural development on this vast and growing estate has not achieved its potential due to a lack of an enabling policy and practical environment that supports improved education, health, housing, innovation and technology uptake. Traditional Owners are 'land rich and cash poor' – the land and sea scape (the environment) are their most significant economic asset. Traditional Owners argue that there has been little formal research and development support for developing and examining how the land and sea scape (through approaches such as 'ecosystem services') can contribute to culture-based economies on country, where development aspirations are met while cultural and environmental assets are protected.

How Research Addresses the Problem

This scoping study, which we propose as a cross-Hub activity between the Marine and Coastal Hub, and the Resilience Landscape Hub, proposes to ethically and actively engage with a network of Indigenous leaders (Traditional Owners and Native Title Holders) to assist Department of Water and the Environment (DAWE), researchers and the identified NESP Indigenous facilitators to develop a strategic, cohesive and co-designed series of projects for consideration under future Hub research plans. The scoping study will explore the potential strengths, benefits, and costs of a coordinated platform for Indigenous engagement that will support the mainstreaming of Indigenous participation and knowledge repatriation in environmental research.

General Project Information

The scoping project will conduct a series of facilitated workshops and direct engagements with identified stakeholders to determine the priority research directions for future Marine and Coastal Hub investments on Indigenous issues. This engagement and consultation will be conducted in such a way as to:

- Improve the adoption of best practice principles (UNDRIP/FPIC) to ensure NESP research is relevant to Indigenous peoples, best practice, innovative, measurable and while delivering environmental outcomes also delivers enduring economic, social and cultural benefit.
- Ensure the NESP research paradigm is compatible with collective consensus decision making, is ethical and recognizes the ownership of natural resources (land, biota, and knowledge).
- Create efficient governance reflecting local and regional input into the NESP research needs, program design and implementation and the subsequent evaluation of outcomes including knowledge transfer/brokering.
- Achieve greater impact – through co-development of research priorities, approaches and partnerships that build resilience and prosperity in the Indigenous and broader community which will generate opportunities and benefits and that are currently being missed.
- Amplify the recognition, use and value of Traditional knowledge, customs and practice while increasing the opportunity for intergeneration knowledge transfer in the Indigenous community; and
- Support the current Indigenous Facilitators and create succession, leadership and pathways for the Indigenous research sector to generate enduring employment, economic, social and cultural outcomes at a national level.

Outcomes from these extensive consultations will be recorded in a report that captures the outcomes of the workshops and any recommendations for improved engagement with Traditional Owners for research and land and sea management, especially associated with the Indigenous Estate.



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