



National
Environmental
Science
Programme

PROJECT 3.2

Developing a National Indigenous Environmental Research Network

The challenge

Northern Indigenous Australians own, manage, or have other rights over extensive coastal waters and nearly 60% of the land. The organisations and individuals responsible for the sustainable utilisation and management of these natural resources utilise both Traditional Knowledge and newer scientific knowledge.

Previous research (NESP Project 1.31) found that Custodian managers' needs regarding research priority topics of community and 'country' research, are often overlooked. As well, Traditional Knowledge is insufficiently recognised by mainstream researchers, and Indigenous People seldom participate in research conception, design, planning and implementation, nor in interpreting findings.

The solution is a National Indigenous Environmental Research Network, with appropriate resourcing, to facilitate and streamline inclusive and relevant research. A national Indigenous-led strategic initiative that supports Indigenous leadership and decision-making in environmental research and management.

This project will scope the needs to progress the establishment of this Network.

The approach

Using an inclusive approach, Project 3.2 will undertake the research and actions required to create this Network by convening a National Project Steering Committee of Indigenous leaders and key government agents, who together will:

- analyse current research for inclusive processes, or factors that create exclusion;
- propose the roles and functions of a national network, along with the membership model and operational business structure;
- identify the research priorities of various Indigenous communities and organisations;
- investigate case study projects to provide practical learnings and develop and test approaches and concepts;
- gather feedback from Indigenous groups, researchers and governments on the design of the network;
- propose an approval process for research; and
- progress establishment of the Network.

Expected outcomes

- Indigenous economic, social and country values considered in scientific research.
- Ensure Indigenous-led decision-making in environmental research.
- A National Indigenous Environmental Research Network delivering mutually beneficial outcomes for Indigenous inclusive research.
- Provide a cultural authority and integrity network for NESP and other environmental research providers.
- Improved application of research outcomes for Indigenous communities, land and seascapes.

Project leaders

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FRONT: Indigenous participants come to listen and discuss NIERN at a recent conference. Credit: NAILSMA. BACK: (Top) Measuring vegetation and installing ant pitfall traps to assess biodiversity in feral ungulate damaged wetlands in Kakadu National Park. Credit Valerie Hagger. (Bottom) NAILSMA staff working with Land and Sea Rangers. Credit: NAILSMA.



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