DESK-TOP REVIEW OF INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT IN THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE PROGRAM (NESP) PART 1

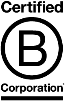
FINAL REPORT



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Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment

**Front Cover Photo:**

NT Rangers NT Ranger Forum discussing the *Our Knowledge Our Way* Guidelines. *Photo by Patch Clapp.*

**Rear Cover Photo:**

Stephanie Beaupark, Ngugi woman teaching Indigenous weaving techniques using Spiny- headed Mat-rush (Lomandra longifolia). Stephanie completed research for the CAUL Hub on air quality and Indigenous seasons and engaged with attendees through her practice. *Photo by Sarah Fisher.*

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## Acknowledgement of Country

SGS Economics and Planning acknowledges the Traditional Owners on whose Country we live and work.

SGS Economics and Planning acknowledges that the Indigenous peoples of Australia are the oldest living culture on Earth, have the oldest continuing land tenure system in the World, and have the oldest continuing land use planning and management system in the World.

We acknowledge that the you have suffered the indignity of having your land taken from you without your consent, without a treaty, without compensation. We acknowledge these matters are yet to be justly resolved.

Dr Ed Wensing Tara Callinan

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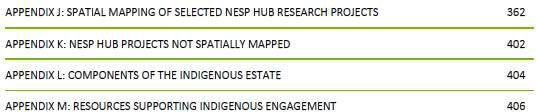
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## Abbreviations

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ABARES | Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences |
| ACA | Australia Council for the Arts |
| ACCSP | Australian Climate Change Science Program |
| ACL | Australian Consumer Law |
| ACoG | Agency driven co-governance |
| AFMA | Australian Fisheries Management Authority |
| AyG | Agency governance |
| AG | Australian Government |
| AHC | Australian Heritage Council |
| AHRC | Australian Human Rights Commission |
| AIATSIS | Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies |
| AIFS | Australian Institute of Family Studies |
| AIHW | Australian Institute of Health and Welfare |
| AIMS | Australian Institute of Marine Science |
| ALRC | Australian Law Reform Commission |
| AMOS | Australian Meteorological and Oceanographic Society |
| AMP | Australian Marine Park |
| AMSA | Australian Marine Science Association |
| ANAO | Australian National Audit Office |
| ANU | The Australian National University |
| APY | Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara |
| ARC | Australian Research Council |
| ASSA | Academy of the Social Sciences |
| ATSI Act | *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act 2005* (Cth) |
| ATSIC | Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission |
| BoM | Bureau of Meteorology |
| CAEPR | Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research |
| CANZUS | Canada, Australia, New Zealand, United States (of America) |
| CAR | Comprehensive. Adequate. Representative |
| CARE | Collective benefit, Authority to control, Responsibility and Ethics |
| CAUL | Clean Air and Urban Landscapes Hub |
| CBD | The Convention on Biological Diversity |
| CDU | Charles Darwin University |
| CERF | Commonwealth Environment Research Facilities |
| CEWO | Commonwealth Environmental Water Office |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| CLC | Central Land Council |
| CMP | Conservation Measures Partnership |
| COAG | Council of Australian Governments |
| CofA | Commonwealth of Australia |
| COVID-19 | The infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus. |
| CoTS | Crown of Thorns Starfish |
| CRC | Cooperative Research Centre |
| CRCAH | Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health |
| CSIRO | Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation |
| DAWE | Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment |
| DEE | Department of the Environment and Energy |
| DKCRC | Desert Knowledge Co-operative Research Centre |
| DoE | Department of the Environment |
| DRIP | Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples |
| ENSO | El Niño-Southern Oscillation |
| EPBC Act | *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth) |
| ESCC | Earth Sciences and Climate Change Hub |
| ESD | Ecological Sustainable Development |
| ESMS | Environmental and Social Management System |
| FaHCSIA | Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs |
| FAIR | Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organisation |
| FNEWG | First Nations Environmental Watering Guidance |
| FNEWO | First Nations Environmental Water Objectives |
| FPIC | Free, Prior and Informed Consent |
| GA | Geoscience Australia |
| GBR | Great Barrier Reef |
| GBRMPA | Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority |
| GBRWHA | Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area |
| GERAIS | Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies |
| GI | Geographical Indicators |
| GIDA | The Global Indigenous Data Alliance |
| GPS | Global positioning system |
| HCOANZ | Heritage Chairs and Officials of Australia and New Zealand |
| HRBA | Human Rights Based Approach |
| HREC | Human Research Ethics Committee |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| IAC | Indigenous Advisory Committee |
| IBRA | Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia |
| ICEC | International Conference on Engaging Communities |
| ICIP | Indigenous cultural and intellectual property |
| ICNRM | Indigenous cultural and natural resource management |
| ICoG | Indigenous-driven co-governance |
| IEPS | Indigenous Engagement and Participation Strategy |
| IG | Indigenous-governed collaborations |
| IGA | Inter-Governmental Agreement |
| IGAE | Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment |
| IGC | Intergovernmental Committee |
| IK | Indigenous knowledge(s) |
| IEIC | Indigenous Engagement Implementation Committee |
| IEK | Indigenous ecological knowledge(s) |
| ILSMPs | Indigenous Land and Sea Management Programs |
| IMCRA | Integrated Marine and Coastal Regionalisation of Australia |
| IP | Intellectual Property |
| IPA | Indigenous Protected Area |
| IPBES | Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services |
| IRG | Indigenous Reference Group |
| ISAC | Indigenous Strategic Advisory Council |
| ISE | Indigenous Science and Engagement |
| ITK | Indigenous traditional knowledge(s) |
| ISP | Indigenous Science Program |
| IUCN | International Union for the Conservation of Nature |
| KISSP | Kimberley Indigenous Saltwater Science Project |
| KLC | Kimberley Land Council |
| KLMRP | Kimberley Marine Research Program |
| KPI | Key Performance Indicator |
| LSMU | Land and Sea Management Unit |
| MAC | Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation |
| MB | Marine Biodiversity Hub |
| MDBA | Murray Darling Basin Authority |
| MLDRIN | Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations |
| MNES | Matters of National Environmental Significance |
| MRTCAG | Mitchel River Traditional Custodian Advisory Group |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| NAER | Northern Australia Environmental Resources Hub |
| NAILSMA | North Australia Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance |
| NBAN | Northern Basin Aboriginal Nations |
| NCCARF | National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility |
| NERP | National Environmental Research Program |
| NESP | National Environmental Science Program |
| NGO | Non-government organisation |
| NHMRC | National Health and Medical Research Council |
| NIAA | National Indigenous Australians Agency |
| NLC | Northern Land Council |
| NLP | National Landcare Program |
| NRM | Natural Resource Management |
| NRMMC | Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council |
| NRS | National Reserve System |
| NRSMPA | National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas |
| NSESD | National Strategy on Ecological Sustainable Development |
| PBC | Prescribed Body Corporate |
| PFII | Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues |
| PGPA Act | *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (Cth) (PGPA Act) |
| PM&C | (Department of the) Prime Minister and Cabinet |
| PNG | Papua New Guinea |
| QPWS | Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service |
| RAP | Reconciliation Action Plan |
| REAC | Research Ethics and Access Committee |
| RNTBC | Registered Native Title Body Corporate |
| RRRC | Reef and Rainforest Research Centre |
| SCFFR | Standing Committee of Federal Financial Reforms |
| SEED | Indigenous Youth Climate Network |
| SGSEP | SGS Economics and Planning |
| SoER | State of the Environment Report |
| SoFR | State of the Forests Report |
| SRoI | Social Return on Investment |
| SRWUIP | Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure Program |
| STEM | Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics |
| S-VAM | Shoreline Video Assessment Method |
| TBA | To be advised |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| TBD | To be determined |
| TCEs/EoF | Traditional Cultural Expressions/Expressions of Folklore |
| TEK | Traditional Ecological Knowledge(s) |
| TOs | Traditional Owners |
| TRaCK | Tropical Rivers and Coastal Knowledge research program |
| TSR | Threatened Species Recovery Hub |
| TSRA | Torres Strait Regional Authority |
| TSSAC | Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee |
| TUMRA | Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement |
| TWQ | Tropical Water Quality Hub |
| UA | Universities Australia |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNDG | United Nations Development Group |
| UNDRIP | United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples |
| UNFCCC | United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change |
| UNHRBA | United Nations Human Rights Based Approach |
| UNHRC | United Nations Human Rights Council |
| UNPFII | United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues |
| UWA | University of Western Australia |
| WALD | Centre for Water and Landscape Dynamics |
| WAMSI | Western Australian Maritime Science Institution |
| WCPA | World Commission on Protected Areas |
| WGIP | Working Group on Indigenous Populations |
| WIPO | World Intellectual Property Organisation |
| WMO | World Meteorological Organization |
| WoC | Working on Country |
| WTMA | Wet Tropics Management Authority |
| WTWHA | Wet Tropics World Heritage Area |
| WWF | World Wide Fund for Nature |
| YYNAC | Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation |

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SGSEP was commissioned by the then Department of the Environment and Energy (DEE) to undertake a desk- top review of Indigenous engagement in the National Environmental Science Program (NESP) to identify Indigenous environmental and climate science research themes and questions, to review existing resources to support Indigenous collaboration and to undertake some virtual consultations with Indigenous research stakeholders. Specifically, the brief required SGSEP to:

* Scope Indigenous environmental and climate science research themes and questions;
* Where documented research themes could not be found online, to consult with relevant Indigenous organisations;
* Collate existing resources to support Indigenous collaboration in environmental and climate science research; and
* Liaise with Indigenous stakeholders about the draft findings via online platforms and phone calls given the constraints on face-to-face meetings due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This report presents our findings and recommendations. However, as this research was desk-top based and the authors of this report are not Indigenous, our findings and recommendations do not represent the collective views of Indigenous peoples about their environmental and climate science research themes and questions. As we make clear in our recommendations, it will be necessary at the commencement of NESP2 to undertake consultation with Indigenous peoples around Australia to ascertain their environmental and climate science research needs and priorities.

### **Scoping Indigenous research themes and questions - and NESP Indigenous engagement**

Scoping Indigenous environmental or climate science research themes and questions was undertaken by analysis of selected NESP research projects that involved Indigenous people and Country, Indigenous engagement activities undertaken by the NESP Hubs and from various other source documents, including selected Commonwealth agencies and departments and IPA management plans (See Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6 and Appendices C to H and J). Our findings are grouped to align with the four thematic hubs of NESP2: Resilient Landscapes, Marine and Coastal, Sustainable Communities and Waste, and Climate Systems (See Chapter 8).

It was not a requirement of the NESP that Hubs specifically identify Indigenous environmental or climate science research priorities. Most of the NESP Hub research projects that involved Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their Country were not necessarily initiated by Indigenous peoples as a reflection of their needs *per se*, but rather were initiated by other end-users or the research project arose from NESP Hub or end-user priorities. Only a handful of projects were led by Indigenous people and less than 30 projects were genuinely co-designed and co-produced from start to finish

Research for this brief was largely desk-top based and therefore cannot reflect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ voices about their environmental and climate science research themes and questions. There are also conceptual matters. For Indigenous people, getting the relationships right is often a higher priority than deciding what the research question(s) may be. The Indigenous peoples of Australia value land and water and all the life systems associated with them as integral to their life and well-being. Indigenous Knowledge (IK) views life holistically and is applied to land management so all life is sustained for present and future generations. Western science tends to compartmentalise knowledge into separate components. Hence,

Indigenous peoples’ research themes and priorities may or may not always align with those of Western science, and these differences should not be seen as conflicting priorities, but rather as different world-views worthy of equivalent respect, consistent with relevant Articles of the *Convention on Biological Diversity* and of

the UN *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. Indeed, SGSEP found several commitments to those international instruments in NESP Hub and Commonwealth agency and departmental documentation.

SGSEP found that NESP research in environmental and climate science with Indigenous peoples provides many opportunities for cross-cultural integration of Indigenous Knowledge (IK) and Western science, which aligns closely with Indigenous peoples’ philosophy of ‘two-way’ learning between different cultures. We also found that the Caring for Country concept embodies a stewardship approach to land and sea management which is deeply embedded in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, because as Traditional Owners or Custodians, they cannot ignore their custodial responsibilities. Importantly, a number of NESP Hub projects enabled cross-cultural integration of IK and western science enhancing existing scientific knowledge. This knowledge co-production is an evolving and exciting sphere of research practice in the NESP.

Our most significant finding is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are more concerned about getting the processes for research right, rather than agreeing on a list of topics and priorities. Good engagement has to be built on the premise of mutual respect, cultural understanding, continuing trust and honest dialogue and that everyone has a mutual responsibility to engage, consult, achieve and communicate shared outcomes. Hence, issues of research process and approaches to working with Indigenous peoples and accessing their ecological or traditional knowledge are identified as matters of priority when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The research shows that where the process is driven by genuine co-governance arrangements there are better prospects for integration of Indigenous Knowledge (IK) with Western science and better outcomes for the sustainability of social and ecological systems.

Our overall finding about Indigenous engagement by the NESP Hubs is that they embraced the Program's Indigenous engagement directions and research priorities, and many ground-breaking Indigenous engagement products and processes have ensued. Three of the NESP Hubs were able to build on previous long-standing relationships and networks with Indigenous peoples and communities. The other three NESP Hubs started from a different position and with the support of the first three Hubs, were able to build new networks and developed their own engagement policies and practices.

While considerable gains have been made in the level and nature of Indigenous engagement in the NESP compared to its predecessor programs, there is room for further improvement.

* Firstly, by undertaking a series of meaningful conversations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia about their environmental and climate science research needs and priorities in the early phases of NESP2.
* Secondly, in the transition to NESP2, by valuing the networks of trusted relationships that have been developed and maintained with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples under NESP to avoid the loss of trust and good faith. As Martin Parkinson (2017), the former Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, has so astutely observed, the culture of constant change in public policy and programs presents opportunity costs, including the risk of collateral damage to relationships of trust and good faith with the Indigenous peoples of Australia, which takes years to build.
* Thirdly, by quarantining a significant proportion of funds within each of the NESP Hubs for Indigenous conceived research projects to be designed, led, implemented and communicated by Indigenous researchers.
* Fourthly, by encouraging Traditional Owner organisations to develop engagement resources similar to those developed by the Kimberley Indigenous Saltwater Science Project (KISSP) under the auspices of Western Australian Maritime Science Institution (WAMSI) and the NAER Hub (discussed below).

### **Aligning NESP research with spatial information and Indigenous land and sea Country planning**

In order to reach our findings in relation to gaps in Indigenous environmental and climate science research themes and questions, it was first necessary to identify where Indigenous environmental and climate science

research projects have taken place. SGSEP therefore mapped the selected NESP Hub projects with high levels of Indigenous engagement against a number of thematic environmental databases, including the Integrated Marine and Coastal Regionalisation of Australia (IMCRA), the Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia (IBRA), the Natural Resource Management regions, the network of IPAs across Australia and the Indigenous estate.

SGSEP found that more Indigenous research projects were undertaken in the north of Australia with less projects in the southern parts of Australia, in both terrestrial and marine contexts. SGSEP also found there are very few NESP Hub Indigenous research projects1 in many of the bioregions that are under-represented in the NRS. While there is some correlation between the NESP Hubs’ research projects and the IMCRA and IBRA regions, it would be helpful to have a better understanding of Indigenous peoples’ environmental and climate science research needs and particularly how their cultural knowledge may add value to the IMCRA, the IBRA and the National Reserve System (NRS), especially in areas that are not able to be dedicated as IPAs. SGSEP concludes that further investigation is required to ascertain correlations between these and other geospatial layers of information and Indigenous environmental and climate science research needs and priorities that could potentially add value to Australia’s environmental and biodiversity resources.

SGSEP also concludes that given it is now over 25 years since the inception of the IPA program, there would be considerable value in undertaking a meta-analysis of IPAs and their management plans to ascertain a better understanding of their value to the IBRA and IMCRA, the threats they face and the identification of the environmental and climate science research needs of the IPA managers and/or TOs. Our analysis found that many of the IPA management plans were prepared before 2015 and are due for renewal.

### **Respectful research practice and Indigenous Knowledge**

SGSEP identified and assessed over 44 Indigenous engagement resources applicable to environmental research, finding 17 resources of which we categorised as NESP research ‘Must Comply’, 15 as Highly

Applicable’, 9 as ‘Moderately Applicable’ and 3 of ‘General Relevance’ to the NESP Hubs’ research engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. SGSEP found that there is a framework for ethical research in Australia, comprising the National Statement by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), the Code of Conduct by the Australian Research Council (ARC) and the Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies (GERAIS) by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS)2 that all researchers must conform with when conducting research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia. While the third element of this framework is still a guideline, it is in the process of being elevated to a mandatory Code of Ethics, which will in due Course replace the GERAIS.

SGSEP found that Indigenous engagement in environmental and climate science research has given increased access to IK and observance of Indigenous cultural practices, and as a consequence, significant contributions have been made to or have enhanced existing scientific knowledge of environmental issues (including but not limited to, threatened species, land and water management, fire management, climate change), and contributed to the development of practical environmental solutions. In part, this can be attributed to the co- design and co-production of research projects by Indigenous peoples. However, co-design and co-production of research projects are not without their challenges, including the need for leadership and trusting relationships; a willingness to share power to reshape accountabilities and align to organisational structures; the need for an organisational culture that supports such ways of working; and better evaluation of what works and what does not work.

1 By this turn of phrase, we mean NESP Hub projects with a high level of Indigenous engagement.

2 AIATSIS is planning to release a new *Code of Ethics* in September 2020 with a 12-month implementation period. Other supporting resource material will be developed and released across the length of the implementation period. [https://aiatsis.gov.au/research/ethical-research/aiatsis-code-](https://aiatsis.gov.au/research/ethical-research/aiatsis-code-ethics?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=AIATSIS%20News%20July%202020&utm_content=AIATSIS%20News%20July%202020%2BCID_a316994b584e505636ac9907de2edb48&utm_source=Email%20marketing%20Campaign%20Monitor&utm_term=Find%20out%20more) [ethics?utm\_medium=email&utm\_campaign=AIATSIS%20News%20July%202020&utm\_content=AIATSIS%20News%20July%20202](https://aiatsis.gov.au/research/ethical-research/aiatsis-code-ethics?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=AIATSIS%20News%20July%202020&utm_content=AIATSIS%20News%20July%202020%2BCID_a316994b584e505636ac9907de2edb48&utm_source=Email%20marketing%20Campaign%20Monitor&utm_term=Find%20out%20more) [0+CID\_a316994b584e505636ac9907de2edb48&utm\_source=Email%20marketing%20Campaign%20Monitor&utm\_term=Find%2](https://aiatsis.gov.au/research/ethical-research/aiatsis-code-ethics?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=AIATSIS%20News%20July%202020&utm_content=AIATSIS%20News%20July%202020%2BCID_a316994b584e505636ac9907de2edb48&utm_source=Email%20marketing%20Campaign%20Monitor&utm_term=Find%20out%20more) [0out%20more](https://aiatsis.gov.au/research/ethical-research/aiatsis-code-ethics?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=AIATSIS%20News%20July%202020&utm_content=AIATSIS%20News%20July%202020%2BCID_a316994b584e505636ac9907de2edb48&utm_source=Email%20marketing%20Campaign%20Monitor&utm_term=Find%20out%20more)

Combining IK with Western science can be affected by numerous factors, including the adaptive co- management context, the intrinsic characteristics of the natural resources, and the many different governance and management systems for different environmental components. SGSEP found that research projects with strong co-governance arrangements provides better prospects for integration of IK and western science for the sustainability of social-ecological systems and ultimately for the benefit of all Australians. The integration of IK with Western science also brings into sharp relief the lack of legal protections for accessing and applying IK.

SGSEP found that formal research agreements are rarely used by the NESP Hubs and that locally and regionally developed protocols are the more preferred arrangement. This is consistent with recent research by Janke (2019:328) which found that protocols based on good faith and mutual understanding enable the parties to arrive at an arrangement that respects Indigenous cultural ownership, values and practices as the primary holders, guardians, reproducers and interpreters of the cultures and interactions. However, SGSEP found that most protocols are deficient in relation to adequate protection of ICIP in all its forms, data sovereignty and in dispute resolution mechanisms. SGSEP concludes there is a case for including more specific performance indicators and reporting requirements on the NESP Hubs in relation to the protection of IK and data sovereignty in environmental and climate science research and in relation to the inclusion of dispute resolution mechanisms in all research protocols. SGSEP also concludes that Terri Janke’s True Tracks Principles and Framework provides an excellent framework for the negotiation of research protocols with Indigenous peoples to protect their IK and data sovereignty.

SGSEP found that the *Collaborative Science on Kimberley Saltwater Country – A Guide for Researchers* produced by the Kimberley Indigenous Saltwater Science Project under the auspices of Western Australian Marine Science Institution (Lincoln *et al* 2017) and the *Our Knowledge Our Way in Caring for Country Best Practice Guidelines* produced under the auspices of the Northern Australia Environmental Resources NESP Hub (Woodward *et al*, 2020) are invaluable because they have been prepared by Indigenous peoples and are specifically about how they want others to work with them in respectfully accessing and sharing their unique knowledges. While these two resources have particular relevance to specific TO groups and their land and sea Country, the authors of the two resources have said that the principles and frameworks embedded in them are replicable by other TO groups and custodians subject to the free, prior and informed consent of the TOs and Custodians that prepared them.

### **Drawing on the lessons of NESP and aligning Indigenous engagement in NESP 2 with good practice**

SGSEP was able to undertake a small number of virtual consultations with key stakeholders, including some members of the Minister’s IAC, on our preliminary findings. Throughout the course of the review, SGSEP also held several consultation meetings with NESP Hub Knowledge brokers, researchers, Commonwealth agency staff and various stakeholders. These consultations yielded valuable information and views about experiences with Indigenous engagement in the NESP. SGSEP was therefore able to reach several conclusions about the design of NESP, measures for improving Indigenous engagement in NESP research and governance, the usefulness of key performance indicators, the need to plan for Indigenous engagement from the outset of research projects, the value of the National Indigenous Gathering in Canberra in 2018 and the value of Indigenous researchers being able to share the results of their research with decision makers in Canberra.

SGSEP has therefore identified several elements as a matter of good practice for NESP2. Our recommendations follow.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made by SGSEP to help inform the roll-out of the next phase of the program (NESP2) and while not expressly requested by the brief, they emerged as critical from the conclusions of the desk-top analysis and consultations with Indigenous research stakeholders about this review.

### **Building relationships and identifying Indigenous research needs and questions**

* + 1. As part of the first phase of research planning for NESP2, a gathering of the proposed Indigenous Facilitation Network for NESP 2 be convened to assist in the identification of Indigenous research needs and interests within and across hubs and their missions, drawing on this report and the engagement resources (see Chapter 7 and Appendix M) as a starting point for meaningful conversations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities across Australia.
    2. The proposed Indigenous Facilitation Network to be established under NESP2 commence a series of conversations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples around Australia, and that the ESCC Hub’s planned national gathering on climate change, delayed because of COVID-19 in the current NESP, be explored as one important opportunity to commence those conversations.
    3. Care be taken in the transition to NESP2 to ensure that the long-term relationships and trust that have been established between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and NESP Hub research scientists, are not lost. SGSEP further recommends therefore that opportunities for maintaining long- established regional relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities should be documented and valued in the assessment process for the new Hubs.
    4. A significant proportion of the funds within each NESP Hub be quarantined for Indigenous conceived environmental and climate science research projects, to be designed, led, implemented and outputs communicated by Indigenous researchers. SGSEP suggests a minimum of 10 to 15 per cent of NESP funds over the life of NESP2, that the outcomes of the research assist Indigenous peoples to conserve and sustainably manage areas of high biodiversity and conservation value. SGSEP also suggests that the research from this pool of resources be oversighted by the proposed Indigenous Facilitation Network to be established under NESP2 and be guided and assisted by the relevant NESP Hub.
    5. NESP2 encourage other TO organisations to develop similar engagement resources for research praxis in their regions, based on the principles and frameworks developed by KISSP/WAMSI for the *Collaborative Science on Kimberley Saltwater – A Guide for Researchers* and the NAER Hub for the *Our Knowledge Our Way in Caring for Country Best Practice Guidelines* (see Case Studies 9 and 10).

### **Aligning NESP research with spatial information and Indigenous land and sea country planning**

* + 1. Stronger correlations be made between the various geo-spatial thematic layers of information about Australia’s terrestrial and marine environments held by DAWE (such as the IMCRA, the IBRA, the NRS, the IPAs, and the Indigenous estate) with the identification of Indigenous environmental and climate science research needs, as such correlations will provide useful guidance on setting research priorities for NESP2 and beyond.
    2. Building on Recommendation 6. A meta-analysis of IPAs and their management plans be undertaken to ascertain a better understanding of their value to the IBRA and IMCRA, the threats the IPAs face, and to identify the environmental and climate science research needs of the IPA managers and/or TOs. As part of this analysis, SGSEP also recommends that:
       - Efforts to scale up management support be explored, including to undertake regular updates or reviews of IPA management plans;
       - Options for scaling up the level of protection for IPAS from external threats be explored;
       - Better policy and legal options be explored for enabling native title holders to leverage their native title rights and interests over IPAs to undertake their management activities consistent with, or as part of, their native title rights and interests; and that
       - Functional and administrative responsibility for the IPA Program and Indigenous Ranger Program should be returned to DAWE so the Programs can be re-integrated into the Department’s biodiversity conservation and environmental policy and management responsibilities and to improve alignment between NESP research and IPA management.

### **Respectful Research Practice and Indigenous Knowledge**

* + 1. The principle of free, prior and informed consent be applied to all research activities by the NESP Hubs that involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, without exception, and that relevant KPIs be developed that require the NESP Hubs to report regularly on their performance with its application.
    2. Formal protocols be negotiated between the NESP Hubs, researchers and the Indigenous peoples and communities from the very outset of research engagements involving Indigenous peoples, and that such protocols include sufficient provisions for dispute resolution and alternative dispute resolution, and sufficient provision for the ongoing protection of IK.
    3. Building on Recommendation 9. The True Tracks Principles and Framework developed by Terri Janke and Company be adopted as the minimum standard for protocols between the NESP Hubs and Indigenous peoples for the protection of IK in all their forms. The protocols must also include dispute resolution processes, including provisions for the appointment of an independent mediator.
    4. Key performance indictors be developed (in consultation with Terri Janke and Company) for the NESP Hubs on the measures put in place for the ongoing protection and integrity of IK, including the application of the True Tracks Principles and Framework, as part of their annual plan and reporting requirements.
    5. The NESP Hubs be made aware of Global Indigenous Data Alliance (GIDA) and its objectives with respect to Indigenous data, and the NESP Hubs take account of GIDA’s FAIR and CARE principles relating to Indigenous data, especially in relation to access and use of Indigenous data by non- Indigenous users.

### **Drawing on the lessons from NESP and aligning Indigenous engagement in NESP2 with good practice**

* + 1. NESP2 include the following elements as a matter of good practice:

1. Greater opportunities for engagement between the NESP Hubs and the Minister’s IAC on identifying Indigenous research themes and priorities; KPIs for monitoring and reporting on Indigenous co-governance, engagement practices, communication and dissemination of research outcomes, and integration of Indigenous knowledge and research outcomes into recovery plans, management plans and environmental impact assessments under the EPBC Act.
2. All research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples must conform with the ethical research framework (The NHMRC *National Statement*, the ARC *Code of Conduct* and the AIATSIS *Code of Ethics* [to be released in September 2020]).
3. The Department review its IEPS for the NESP to reflect the recommendations arising from this review, and the Indigenous Engagement resources (see Chapter 7 and Appendix M).
4. A clear set of consistent objectives for Indigenous engagement to be developed in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The Hubs be allowed to build on these objectives relevant to their particular field of research, but not detract from the core objectives.
5. The KPIs for Indigenous engagement be developed in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. KPI’s should include both qualitative and quantitative indicators or measures. The Hubs be required to report against the KPIs, year-on-year and to show improvement in performance.
6. Allow the Hubs to provide support for Indigenous leadership of research projects, including flexibility to respond to Indigenous research priorities that may emerge during the course of research;
7. Allow sufficient time and funds for Indigenous peoples to have input into the research design and the development of appropriate research protocols for each project. The research protocols must include sufficient protections for ICIP and provisions for dispute resolution.
8. Include capacity to support the development of Indigenous researchers from high school through to university, in skills transfer and as early career researchers.
9. Ensure that cultural capability training for researchers is an essential part of future research programs and where possible, be delivered by local Indigenous groups involved in the research.
10. National Indigenous Gatherings be planned early in the life of NESP2, at midterm and again toward the end of NESP2 as a way of enabling information gathering and sharing between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other stakeholders, including the NESP Hubs and the Department and relevant Commonwealth agencies.
11. Canberra briefings be held in line with significant research project outcomes to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other researchers to present and share their findings with key decision-makers.
12. The NESP Hub websites include up to date information and better links between research projects and their outputs to make them more accessible.