



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

FINAL REPORT
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Independent
insight.



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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgement of Country	iii
Abbreviations	x
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	XV
RECOMMENDATIONS	XIX
1. ABOUT THIS REPORT	1
1.1 The Client	1
1.2 NESP2 Announcement by the Minister for the Environment	1
1.3 The Brief for a review of Indigenous engagement in NESP	3
1.4 Report Structure	4
1.5 Additional Outputs	5
1.6 Acknowledgements	5
1.7 Caveats and Limitations	6
1.8 Notes on Concepts and Terms used in this Report	7
1.9 Disclaimer	9
2. BACKGROUND TO THE NESP AND INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT	10
2.1 Introduction	10
2.2 The National Environmental Science Program (NESP)	10
2.3 Indigenous Engagement in the NESP	12
2.4 Performance Indicators for Indigenous engagement in the NESP	14
2.5 Mid-Term Evaluation of the NESP	15
2.6 NESP Research Priorities from 2017	16
2.7 NESP Indigenous Gathering – February 2018	17
2.8 Survey about the NESP – June 2019	19
2.9 Summary Details about the NESP Hubs	20
2.10 Findings and Conclusions	24
3. INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT BY THE NESP HUBS	25
3.1 Introduction and Approach	25
3.2 NESP Hubs’ commitment to Indigenous Engagement	26
3.3 NESP Hubs’ Indigenous Engagement and Participation Strategies	28
3.4 NESP Hubs’ Approaches to Indigenous Engagement	34
3.5 NESP Hubs’ Key Performance Indicators for Indigenous Engagement	38
3.6 NESP Hubs’ Cross-Hub Activities	41
3.7 NESP Hubs’ Synthesis or Ground-Breaking Activities	42
3.8 NESP Hubs’ Research and Indigenous Engagement Activities	43
3.9 Findings and Conclusions	54

4. COMMONWEALTH AGENCIES, NESP RESEARCH AND INDIGENOUS RESEARCH THEMES/ QUESTIONS	61
4.1 Introduction and Approach	61
4.2 Commonwealth Agencies and Departments, Indigenous Engagement and Research Priorities	61
4.3 NESP Hub Collaboration with Commonwealth Agencies and Departments	81
4.4 Findings and Conclusions	84
5. NESP HUB INDIGENOUS RESEARCH PROJECTS – LOCATION AND REGIONAL GAPS	88
5.1 Introduction and Approach	88
5.2 Spatial Mapping of Indigenous NESP Hub Research Projects:	88
5.3 Findings and Conclusions	102
6. INDIGENOUS PROTECTED AREA (IPA) MANAGEMENT PLANS AND INDIGENOUS RESEARCH THEMES / QUESTIONS	105
6.1 Introduction and Approach	105
6.2 Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs)	105
6.3 Establishing an IPA	106
6.4 Benefits of IPAs	107
6.5 New IPA's in the planning stage	108
6.6 NESP research on IPAs	108
6.7 IPA Management Plans	110
6.8 Analysis of IPA Management Plans	111
6.9 Indigenous Ecological Knowledge (IEK) and research methods	116
6.10 Indigenous research themes and questions arising from IPA Management Plans	119
6.11 Findings and Conclusions	120
7. RESOURCES SUPPORTING INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT	123
7.1 Introduction	123
7.2 Indigenous Engagement Resources	123
7.3 Defining 'engagement' and 'effective engagement'	133
7.4 Opportunities for integrating IK and Western Science	135
7.5 NESP Hub Research Agreements and/or Protocols	137
7.6 The AIATSIS GERAIS is to become a Code of Ethics	139
7.7 Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Data Sovereignty	141
7.8 Reflections on Indigenous peoples' experiences in Land and Water Research	147
7.9 Findings and Conclusions	152
8. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	154
8.1 Introduction	154
8.2 Task 1: Scoping Indigenous environmental and climate science research themes and questions	154
8.3 Task 2: Indigenous Research gap analysis	165
8.4 Task 3: Resources supporting Indigenous engagement	166
8.5 Task 4: NESP Hub Performance and Consultation Outcomes	170

REFERENCES	174
Legal Authorities	174
Legislation	174
Books, Book Chapters, Journal Articles, Reports, etc.	174
APPENDIX A: LIST OF VIRTUAL CONSULTATIONS	188
APPENDIX B: OPPORTUNITIES ARISING FROM NESP INDIGENOUS GATHERING 2018	189
APPENDIX C: OBJECTIVES OF EACH OF THE NESP HUB'S IEPS	192
APPENDIX D: SELECTED NESP HUB RESEARCH PROJECTS AND DETAILS OF INDIGENOUS INVOLVEMENT OR ENGAGEMENT	195
APPENDIX E: NESP HUB RESEARCH PROJECTS BY DETAILS OF 'INDIGENOUS LED'	293
APPENDIX F: INDIGENOUS PARTICIPATION KPI'S 2017, 2018 AND 2019	297
APPENDIX G: SELECTED NESP HUB SYNTHESIS OR GROUND BREAKING PROJECTS OF ENDURING VALUE	302
APPENDIX H: COMMONWEALTH AGENCIES AND DEPARTMENTS, INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT AND RESEARCH PRIORITIES	308
APPENDIX I: IPA CONSULTATION PROJECTS FEBRUARY 2020	359
APPENDIX J: SPATIAL MAPPING OF SELECTED NESP HUB RESEARCH PROJECTS	362
APPENDIX K: NESP HUB PROJECTS NOT SPATIALLY MAPPED	402
APPENDIX L: COMPONENTS OF THE INDIGENOUS ESTATE	404
APPENDIX M: RESOURCES SUPPORTING INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT	406

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: NESP 2 Research Hubs and Focus of Research Missions	3
Figure 2.1: Survey Respondents views about Indigenous inclusion in the NESP/Future Program	19
Figure 3.1: CAUL Hub IEPS Key Activities	56
Figure 3.2: National Indigenous Dialogue on Climate Change 2018 - Statement on Indigenous people and climate change.....	57
Figure 3.3: MB Hub selected Research projects 2016-2019	59
Figure 4.1: Savanna Burning for reduced carbon emissions (left). Applied research supporting Indigenous heritage management (right)	72
Figure 4.2: Integrated Marine and Coastal Regionalisation of Australia (IMCRA v4.0)	73
Figure 4.3: Australian Marine Parks.....	74
Figure 4.4: Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation of Australia, Version 7	75
Figure 4.5: Indigenous Protected Areas and Consultation Projects –February 2020	76
Figure 4.6: National Landcare Program 2018 Regional Land Partnership Management Units	78
Figure 4.7: The Indigenous Forest Estate by land ownership and management category.....	80
Figure 5.1: Selected NESP Indigenous research projects by Hub and Jurisdiction as at March 2020	89
Figure 5.2: Selected MB Hub Indigenous research project locations by IMCRA Bio Regions	90
Figure 5.3: Selected NESP Hub Indigenous research projects by NRS and NRSMPA	91
Figure 5.4: Selected NESP Hub Indigenous research projects by National Reserve System (NRS).....	92
Figure 5.5: Selected NESP Hub Indigenous research projects by Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs)	93
Figure 5.6: Selected NESP Hub Indigenous research projects by National Landcare Program Management Units	94
Figure 5.7: The Indigenous estate under three land titles (as at 2013)	95
Figure 5.8: Vegetation condition (2006) and exclusive possession native title or Indigenous lands (2013).....	96
Figure 5.9: Threatened species count (2008) and exclusive possession native title or Indigenous lands (2013).....	97
Figure 5.10: Disturbance of riparian zones (2008) and exclusive possession native title or Indigenous lands (2013)	98
Figure 5.11: The Indigenous estate and national conservation lands.....	99
Figure 5.12: Indigenous and other components of the terrestrial conservation estate	100
Figure 5.13: Selected NESP Hub Indigenous research projects by Indigenous Land Categories.....	101
Figure 6.1: Indigenous Protected Areas and Consultation Projects –February 2020	106
Figure 6.2: Purpose and Background to Our Country Our Way Guidelines	111
Figure 7.1: How the complementary products of the Kimberley Indigenous Saltwater Science Project relate to one another	130
Figure 7.2: How ICIP is affected by more than IP laws	144
Figure 7.3: True Tracks Principles Diagram	145
Figure 7.4: True Tracks Principles and Framework.....	146
Figure 7.5: Word Cloud for Aboriginal Research Teams On-Country	148
Figure 7.6: Word Cloud for Aboriginal Academics.....	149

Figure 7.7: Word Cloud for Non-Aboriginal Scholars149
Figure 7.8: Word Cloud for all Participants Combined150
Figure 7.9: Exploring views related to traditional custodial identity.....151
Figure 8.1: The principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent.....168

TABLE OF TABLES

Table 2.1: New Indigenous Research Priorities from 2017	17
Table 2.2: NESP Hub Details as at May 2020	21
Table 3.1: NESP Hubs and Indigenous Engagement (as at December 2019)	27
Table 3.2: NESP Hub IEPS by Date and Version	29
Table 3.3: NESP Hub Indigenous Engagement and Participation Strategy Objectives	31
Table 3.4: Summary of Indigenous engagement KPIs as reported in NESP Hubs' Annual Progress Reports 2017 - 2019	40
Table 3.5: NESP Hub Research activities involving Indigenous partners – Definitions	44
Table 6.1: IPA and Other Management Plans and timeframes of when they were prepared	112
Table 6.2: IPA Management Plans, Indigenous specific research priorities and alignment with NESP2 Hubs	114
Table 6.3: Non-IPA Management Plans, Indigenous specific research priorities and alignment with NESP2 Hubs	115
Table 6.4: Subjects relevant to NESP2 Resilient Landscapes Research	119
Table 6.5: Subjects Relevant to NESP2 Marine and Coastal Research Hub	120
Table 6.6: Subjects Relevant to NESP2 Climate Systems Research Hub	120
Table 7.1: Resources supporting Indigenous engagement and their applicability to NESP research activities	124
Table 7.2: Analysis of manifestations of IEK and Western science integration according to governance types	137

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	<i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act 2005 (Cth)</i>
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	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth)</i>
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	<i>Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 (Cth) (PGPA Act)</i>
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
SRol	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-ethics?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=AIATSIS%20News%20July%202020&utm_content=AIATSIS%20News%20July%202020+CID_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

6. 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.
7. 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

8. 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.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. Key performance indicators 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.
12. 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

13. NESP2 include the following elements as a matter of good practice:
 - a) 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.
 - b) 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]).
 - c) 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).

- d) 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.
- e) 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.
- f) 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;
- g) 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.
- h) Include capacity to support the development of Indigenous researchers from high school through to university, in skills transfer and as early career researchers.
- i) 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.
- j) 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.
- k) 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.
- l) The NESP Hub websites include up to date information and better links between research projects and their outputs to make them more accessible.