



Indigenous land and sea management programs generate many benefits, photo Sebastian Bourges Photography.



**Northern Australia  
Environmental  
Resources  
Hub**

National Environmental Science Programme

## Multiple benefits of Indigenous land & sea management programs

Wrap-up factsheet

### **ILSMPs are important to Indigenous communities and can contribute to the development of northern Australia**

Indigenous land and sea management programs (ILSMPs) are gaining a reputation for providing a core function in communities, with growing evidence of a variety of environmental, cultural, social and economic outcomes being delivered. This research provides quantified and comparable information about multiple, local to national scale socio-economic and wellbeing benefits associated with ILSMPs.

It is important that governments, Indigenous organisations, industry and others fully recognise these benefits and that appropriate data are collected to better measure them, otherwise ILSMPs may be undervalued and overlooked in investment and development decisions.

### **We need better methods to value the benefits provided by ILSMPs**

In addition to their well-known environmental outcomes, ILSMPs generate a range of socio-economic benefits, from those that flow to individuals to those that benefit society, and from simple benefits (e.g. jobs) to complex (e.g. maintenance of culture). Methods to economically value these benefits are still developing and different methods are suited to assessing different types of benefits. Current commonly used methods are adept at highlighting the

### **Key findings**

This research shows that well-designed ILSMPs can:

- contribute to northern development and help close the (income) gap
- promote Indigenous business development and economic independence
- promote Indigenous wellbeing
- facilitate knowledge exchange, which is important to Indigenous wellbeing
- help Indigenous communities meet their wider aspirations.

It also highlights that we need better methods to measure and value goods and services which deliver benefits beyond face value, and which benefit communities rather than individuals.

value of simple individual goods, and there has been recent progress in tools to value complex individual goods. Better methods are however urgently needed to estimate the value of complex goods and services that benefit whole communities, such as those provided by ILSMPs, or we risk simply investing in those that are easy to measure rather than those providing the greatest benefits.<sup>1</sup>

This research has contributed to improving methods by elucidating these limitations (Figure 1) and by adapting

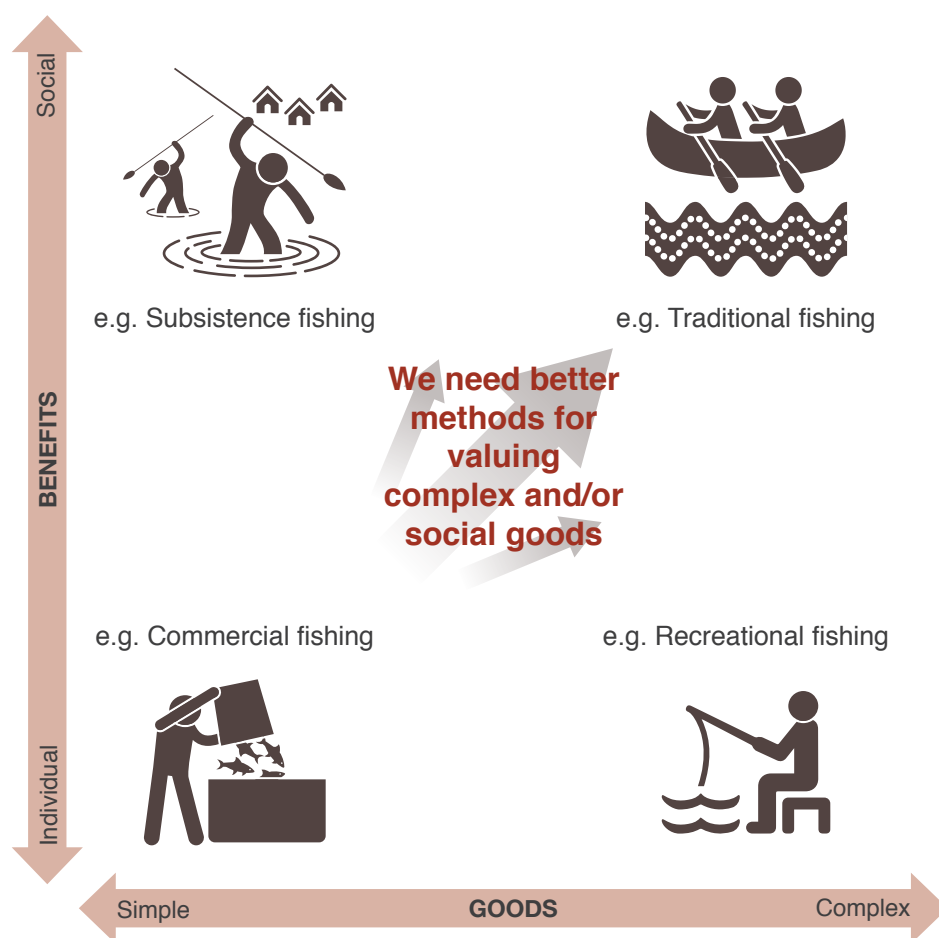


Figure 1. An example of a **simple** good that generates **individual** benefits is commercial fisheries (bottom left), where an individual earns money and food for themselves.

A **complex** good that generates **individual** benefits is recreational fishing (bottom right), where the individual may catch food for themselves and also enjoy a day on the water even if they don't catch any fish.

A **simple** good that generates **social** benefits is small-scale or subsistence fisheries (top left), where the fish are caught to provide food for the entire community, particularly people who are unable to fish for themselves.

Traditional Indigenous fisheries are **complex** goods that generate multiple interconnected **social** benefits (top right) by providing food for individuals and the broader community while maintaining important shared socio-cultural practices such as traditions, stories and ceremonies.

ILSMPs provide many complex, social benefits that are difficult to value.

the 'life satisfaction' approach – a method that measures the contribution of selected factors to an individual's wellbeing – to assess the value to communities of complex goods related to ILSMPs.<sup>8</sup> We are also investigating other methods such as the Participatory Project Selection Tool.<sup>6</sup>

## ILSMPs can generate national and local benefits

ILSMPs can generate national benefits by stimulating regional economies and achieving the government policy objective of equitably closing the income gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. By providing greater economic benefits to Indigenous households than other investments, ILSMPs can support the creation of self-sustaining Indigenous economies (Figure 2).

These programs also improve Indigenous wellbeing by improving things that many Indigenous people feel are important – particularly caring for country, providing access to country, having positive role models in the community, and knowledge exchange. ILSMPs can also enable communities to meet wider aspirations by overcoming constraints and structural barriers to development. When ILSMPs empower communities they can also help close the 'governance' gap.

### ILSMPs contribute to northern development and help close the gap<sup>2</sup>

- ILSMPs provide greater economic 'knock-on' benefits than many other industries – so investing \$100 in ILSMPs may enable regional economies to grow faster than investing \$100 in agriculture or mining (Table 1).
- ILSMPs can provide relatively greater income benefits to Indigenous households than non-Indigenous households.
- Investing in ILSMPs results in regional economic growth, which enables both Indigenous and non-Indigenous businesses to grow.
- ILSMPs could contribute further to closing the income gap by increasing the proportion of Indigenous workers within their payroll and encouraging purchasing from local businesses that are Indigenous owned and/or employ Indigenous staff.

Industry	Kimberley	Northern Territory	Far north Qld
Accommodation & food services	1.9	2.4	2.5
<b>ILSMPs</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>2.5</b>
Agriculture	1.6	1.5	2.1
Beef cattle	1.5	2.1	2.0
Mining	1.4	2.0	2.0

Table 1. Economic multipliers for ILSMPs are higher than those for some other major industries. The numbers show how much \$1 of investment multiplies through the regional economies.

### ILSMPs promote Indigenous business development and economic independence<sup>3</sup>

- The remote Indigenous economy is different to the Western urban economy – growth in ‘standard’ western industries will not always create growth for Indigenous communities.
- ILSMPs are able to grow Indigenous economies in a way that aligns with cultural values.
- Expenditure on ILSMPs causes self-sustaining growth in Indigenous businesses, including businesses that are not themselves directly involved in land management.
- It can take up to three years before significant business income growth occurs.

### ILSMPs promote Indigenous wellbeing<sup>4</sup>

- ILSMPs increase the overall life satisfaction (wellbeing) of Indigenous people.
- Life satisfaction increases because ILSMPs improve things that many Indigenous people feel are important – particularly caring for country, providing access to country and having positive role models in the

community. When planning and implementing ILSMPs, care should be taken to focus on the things that matter the most to the communities involved.

- ‘Owning your own business’ was an important factor for a relatively small group of people (not surprising, since there are few Indigenous businesses) but this factor made a big contribution to overall life satisfaction for those people.

### ILSMPs facilitate knowledge exchange, which is important to Indigenous wellbeing<sup>7</sup>

- Knowledge exchange is an important part of people’s wellbeing and overall life satisfaction – often even more important than financial factors.
- ILSMPs facilitate the exchange of both traditional and Western generated knowledge.
- People who are involved in ILSMPs gain direct and indirect benefits from the knowledge exchanges ILSMPs facilitate such as improved training and education (including business skills), learning more about their country and culture, and opportunities for being a role model or to be mentored by a role model.

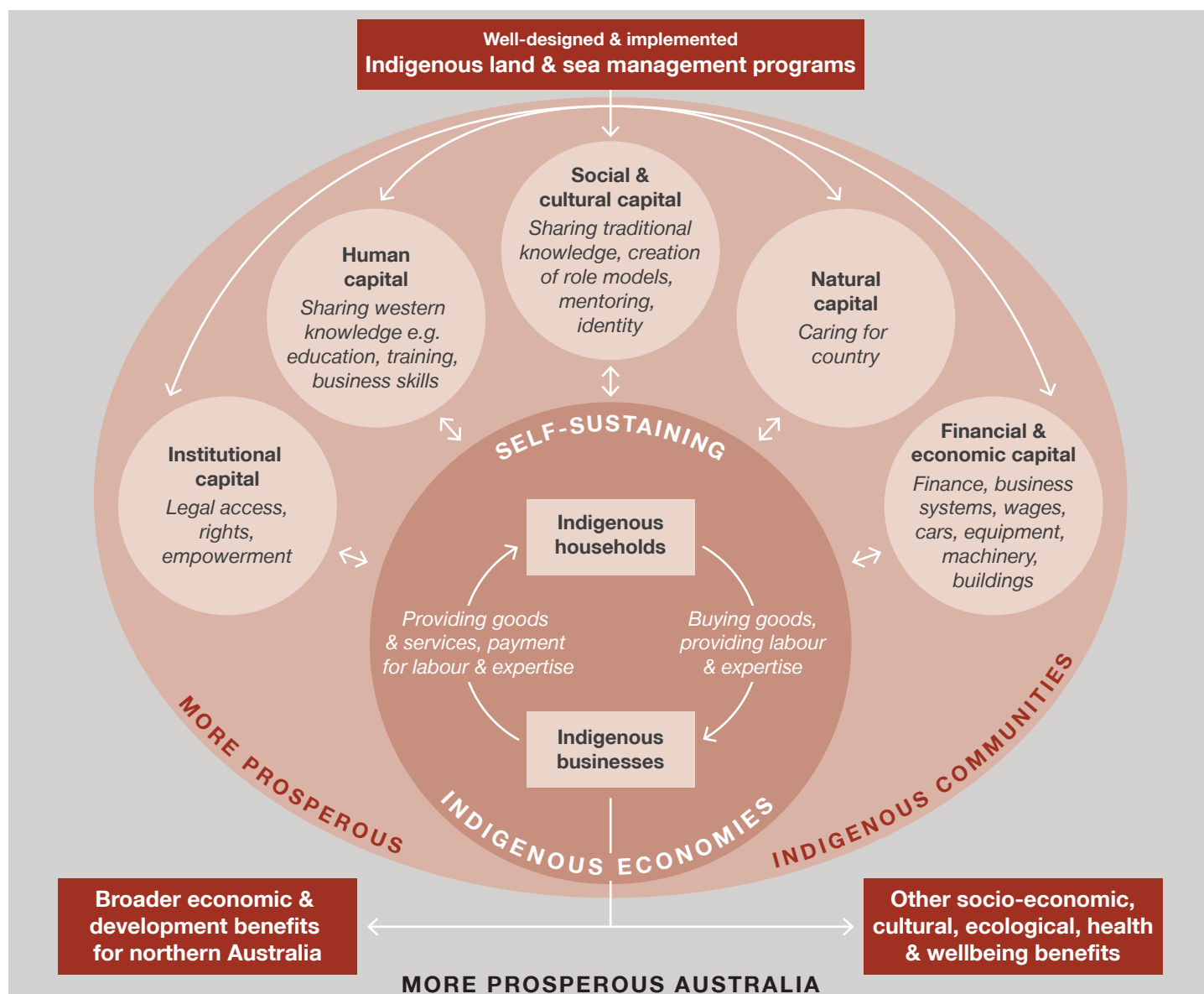


Figure 2. Funding for ILSMPs generates improvements in many different forms of ‘capital’. These flow through to Indigenous households and businesses, stimulating Indigenous economies and contributing to prosperous Indigenous communities and multiple other benefits.



## ILSMPs can help Indigenous communities meet their wider aspirations<sup>5</sup>

- Governments often focus on things like employment and income when assessing 'development'. Communities tend to view development more broadly – particularly important to communities is having the 'freedom' to choose which things they would like to develop (income, employment or something else).
- Some communities stated that ILSMPs have contributed towards 'freedom' – their vision of development.
- Communities (and government) are also able to use ILSMPs in a strategic way to overcome constraints to achieving community development.

## Monitoring ILSMP objectives can reveal benefits

Proving the effectiveness of ILSMPs is crucial to secure continued funding, but current monitoring typically doesn't adequately track progress towards ILSMP socio-economic objectives and related benefits. Data

### Key recommendations

1. Invest in ILSMPs for regional economic growth, community development and individual wellbeing
2. When planning and implementing an ILSMP, empower communities to be part of the design and implementation, and focus on the priorities of the community(s) involved
3. Maximise the proportion of Indigenous workers employed in an ILSMP and encourage ILSMPs to purchase from local businesses that are Indigenous owned and/or employ Indigenous staff
4. Ensure appropriate methods are used when weighing up investment in ILSMPs versus other industries or when valuing the benefits of ILSMPs
5. Collect data that capture progress towards ILSMP objectives and related benefits to assist ongoing ILSMP improvement and well-targeted investment.

to measure progress is limited, with monitoring mostly focussing on activity rather than outcomes, and on individual benefits rather than community benefits. Monitoring and reporting also need to better account for the time lag between investment and some socio-economic outcomes.

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### Further information

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This factsheet, other summaries and further information are available from the project webpage at [nespnorthern.edu.au/projects/nesp/multiple-benefits-knowledge-systems-ilmps](http://nespnorthern.edu.au/projects/nesp/multiple-benefits-knowledge-systems-ilmps)



*In WA, this project is partnering with Bunuba, Gooniyandi, Walmajarri & Nyikina-Mangala Traditional Owners. In Qld, this project partners with Ewamian Traditional Owners.*



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