

National Indigenous Environmental Research Network (NIERN): Governance Advice

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Independent
insight.



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OFFICES IN CANBERRA, HOBART, MELBOURNE, AND SYDNEY ON THE COUNTRY OF THE NGAMBRI/NGUNNAWAL/NGARIGO, MUWININA/PALAWA, WURUNDJERI, AND GADIGAL PEOPLES.

Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
1. INTRODUCTION	4
1.1 NIERN PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES	4
1.2 PROJECT OBJECTIVES	5
2. INSTITUTIONAL LANDSCAPE MAPPING	6
2.1 INSTITUTIONAL LANDSCAPE MAPPING METHOD	6
2.2 INTERPRETING THE INSTITUTIONAL LANDSCAPE MAPPING	12
2.3 SUMMARY	14
3. CASE STUDIES	15
3.1 LOWITJA INSTITUTE	15
3.2 SUPPLY NATION	20
3.3 SUMMARY	23
4. GOVERNANCE, MEMBERSHIP AND INCORPORATION	24
4.1 OPTIONS FOR DEVELOPING A FORMALLY CONSTITUTED ENTITY	24
4.2 ESTABLISHMENT AND EARLY YEARS GOVERNANCE EXAMPLES	25
4.3 SUMMARY	30
5. FUNDING SOURCES	34
5.1 GOVERNMENT GRANT PROGRAMS	34
5.2 PHILANTHROPIC FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES	35
5.3 RESEARCH GRANT FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES	36
5.4 PRIVATE PHILANTHROPIC FUNDING AND PHILANTHROPIC GRANT SEARCH ORGANISATIONS OR PLATFORMS	45
5.5 SUMMARY	46
6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	48
6.1 CONCLUSION	48
6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS	48
REFERENCES	50
APPENDIX A: SUMMARY OF INSTITUTIONAL LANDSCAPE MAPPING	52
1. NATIONAL NATIVE TITLE COUNCIL (NNTC)	52
2. NORTH AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS LAND AND SEA MANAGEMENT ALLIANCE (NAILSMA)	53
3. COALITION OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEAK ORGANISATIONS (CAPO)	54
4. LOWITJA INSTITUTE	55
5. ARC TRAINING CENTRE FOR HEALING COUNTRY	56
6. ARC CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR INDIGENOUS FUTURES	57
7. ARC CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR INDIGENOUS AND ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORIES AND FUTURES (CIEHF)	58
8. NATIONAL INDIGENOUS RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGES NETWORK (NIRAKN)	59
9. NATIVE TITLE REPRESENTATIVE BODIES (NTRBs) & NATIVE TITLE SERVICE PROVIDERS (NTSPs)	60
10. PRESCRIBED BODIES CORPORATE (PBC) AND REGISTERED NATIVE TITLE BODIES CORPORATE (RNTBC)	61

11.	NORTHERN TERRITORY LAND COUNCILS:	62
12.	NEW SOUTH WALES ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCIL (NSWALC)	66
13.	DESERT KNOWLEDGE AUSTRALIA	67
14.	KIMBERLEY LAND COUNCIL (KLC)	68
15.	CAPE YORK LAND COUNCIL (CYLC)	69
16.	YAMATJI MARLPA ABORIGINAL CORPORATION (YMAC)	70
17.	GUR A BARADHARAW KOD SEA AND LAND COUNCIL TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CORPORATION (GBK).....	71
18.	MURRAY LOWER DARLING RIVERS INDIGENOUS NATIONS (MLDRIN)	72
19.	NORTHERN BASIN ABORIGINAL NATIONS (NBAN).....	73
20.	MARTUWARRA FITZROY RIVER COUNCIL (MFRC).....	74
21.	GREAT BARRIER REEF FOUNDATION (GBRF) TRADITIONAL OWNER PARTNERSHIPS	75
22.	REEF TRADITIONAL OWNER TASK FORCE (REEFTO)	76
23.	INDIGENOUS DESERT ALLIANCE (IDA)	78
24.	INDIGENOUS SALT WATER ADVISORY GROUP (SWAG) (KIMBERLEY).....	79
25.	SEA COUNTRY ALLIANCE (SCA)	80
26.	DESERT SUPPORT SERVICES.....	81
27.	NOONGAR LAND ENTERPRISES (NLE).....	82
28.	AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH COUNCIL (ARC) INDIGENOUS FORUM	83
29.	CSIRO – INDIGENOUS SCIENCE AND ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM (ISEP).....	84
30.	ATLAS OF LIVING AUSTRALIA (ALA)	85
31.	COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER WATER INTERESTS (CAWI)	86
32.	NORTHERN AUSTRALIA INDIGENOUS REFERENCE GROUP (NAIRG)	87
33.	INDIGENOUS ADVISORY COMMITTEE OPERATING UNDER THE <i>EPBC Act 1999</i> (IAC)	88
34.	FISHERIES RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (FRDC) INDIGENOUS REFERENCE GROUP (IRG)	89
35.	AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STUDIES (AIATISIS).....	90
36.	NATIONAL INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS AGENCY (NIAA)	91
37.	INDIGENOUS LAND AND SEA CORPORATION (ILSC)	92
38.	DEPARTMENT OF CLIMATE CHANGE, ENERGY, THE ENVIRONMENT AND WATER (DCCEEW)	93
39.	MURRAY-DARLING BASIN AUTHORITY (MDBA)	94
40.	NATIONAL CENTRE FOR INDIGENOUS GENOMICS (NCIG) (ANU).....	95
41.	AUSTRALIAN LAND CONSERVATION ALLIANCE (ALCA).....	96
42.	COUNTRY NEEDS PEOPLE (CNP)	97
43.	ECOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (ESA) INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT WORKING GROUP	98
44.	ENVIRONMENT INSTITUTE OF AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND (EIANZ) INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT WORKING GROUP (IEWG)	99
45.	SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY AUSTRALIA.....	100
46.	CENTRE FOR ROCK ART RESEARCH AND MANAGEMENT, UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA.....	101
47.	TERRESTRIAL ECOSYSTEM RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE (TERN)	102
48.	AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF MARINE SCIENCE (AIMS)	103
49.	NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR ECOLOGY, EVOLUTION AND CONSERVATION (NCEEC), AUSTRALIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCE	104
APPENDIX B: LOWITJA INSTITUTE – CASE STUDY SUMMARY		105
KEY DOCUMENTS		105
LOWITJA INSTITUTE’S PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES		105
LOWITJA INSTITUTE’S BUSINESS STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE.....		107
HOW THE LOWITJA INSTITUTE FUNCTIONS		109
LOWITJA INSTITUTE’S SOURCES OF REVENUE AND LONG-TERM FUNDING		110
ORGANISATIONAL ESTABLISHMENT STAGES / PHASE AND LONG-TERM PROJECTION		113
TIMELINE OF ESTABLISHMENT AND INCORPORATION.....		114

DRIVING FORCES/PEOPLE	116
EXAMPLES OF KEY RESOURCES INCLUDE:	116
APPENDIX C: SUPPLY NATION – CASE STUDY	118
KEY DOCUMENTS	118
SUPPLY NATION’S PURPOSE	118
SUPPLY NATION’S OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES.....	118
SUPPLY NATION’S BUSINESS STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE	119
VERIFYING ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER BUSINESSES.....	120
SUPPLY NATION’S SOURCES OF REVENUE AND LONGER-TERM FUNDING.....	120
SUPPLY NATION’S GROWTH TRAJECTORY	123
SUPPLY NATION’S RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY ROLE	124
APPENDIX D: INDIGENOUS ORGANISATIONS EXAMINED FOR GOVERNANCE MODELLING	126
FIRST NATIONS HERITAGE PROTECTION ALLIANCE (FNHPA)	126
NATIONAL ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY CONTROLLED HEALTH ORGANISATION (NACCHO).....	127
FIRST NATIONS CLEAN ENERGY NETWORK (FNCEN).....	128
INDIGENOUS CARBON INDUSTRY NETWORK (ICIN)	129
SUPPLY NATION (SN).....	130

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1: LANDSCAPE MAPPING ORGANISATIONS BY PURPOSE/ GOVERNANCE MODEL	7
TABLE 2: POTENTIAL AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT GRANT FUNDING	34
TABLE 3: PHILANTHROPY FUNDING	35
TABLE 4: POTENTIAL RESEARCH GRANT AND RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING SOURCES	37
TABLE 5: THE LOWITJA INSTITUTE’S REVENUE SOURCES AND QUANTUM 2012 TO 2023 FINANCIAL YEARS	111
TABLE 6: SUPPLY NATION’S REVENUE SOURCES AND QUANTUM 2013 TO 2023 FINANCIAL YEARS.....	122

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1: LANDSCAPE MAPPING.....	11
FIGURE 2: LOWITJA INSTITUTE’S REVENUE SOURCES 2012-2023 IN NOMINAL TERMS	18
FIGURE 3: LOWITJA INSTITUTE’S REVENUE SOURCES 2012-2023 IN PERCENTAGE TERMS.....	18
FIGURE 4: SUPPLY NATION’S REVENUE SOURCES 2013-2023 IN NOMINAL TERMS	22
FIGURE 5: SUPPLY NATION’S REVENUE SOURCES 2013-2023 IN PERCENTAGE TERMS.....	22
FIGURE 6: NTRB AND NTSP AREAS.....	60
FIGURE 7: LOWITJA INSTITUTE’S REVENUE SOURCES 2012-2023 IN NOMINAL TERMS	112
FIGURE 8: LOWITJA INSTITUTE’S REVENUE SOURCES 2012-2023 IN PERCENTAGE TERMS.....	112
FIGURE 9: THE LOWITJA INSTITUTE’S TIMELINE FROM 1997 TO 2023.	115
FIGURE 10: SUPPLY NATION’S REVENUE SOURCES 2013-2023 IN NOMINAL TERMS	121

FIGURE 11: SUPPLY NATION’S REVENUE SOURCES 2013-2023 IN PERCENTAGE TERMS 121

FIGURE 12: SUPPLY NATION’S HISTORICAL TIMELINE..... 123

FIGURE 13: SUPPLY NATION’S GROWTH OF SUPPLIERS FROM 2009 TO 2024..... 123

FIGURE 14: GROWTH OF SUPPLY NATION MEMBERS FROM 2009 TO 2024 124

FIGURE 15: SUPPLY NATION’S RESEARCH REPORTS AND POLICY BRIEFINGS..... 125

Executive summary

The National Indigenous Environmental Research Network (NIERN) is conceived as an Indigenous-led entity that will enable and empower Indigenous Australians to have greater input into and benefit from the environmental research that occurs on their land and sea country. NIERN seeks to have input and influence in the national environmental research agenda and the ethics processes in environmental research across Australia. This report explores a range of governance considerations for the establishment of NIERN and its formative years.

Indigenous Australians have long been lobbying for greater involvement in the life cycle of environmental scientific research projects, from the design phase through to the delivery of research outputs, especially when that research is on land, waters or sea Country owned or managed by them. More specifically, NIERN will mobilise investment opportunities for Indigenous researchers and communities and improve the capacity and capability of Indigenous Australians to participate in the national environmental science research agenda, through:

- Supporting Indigenous environmental research needs and priorities;
- Enhancing Indigenous-led decision-making in the environmental research and management sectors;
- Ensuring mutually beneficial outcomes from environmental, cultural and socioeconomic research for Indigenous groups and research providers;
- Offering a cultural authority and integrity entity for NESP and other environmental research providers; and
- Empowering Indigenous Australians to participate in national environmental scientific research, biodiversity conservation and environmental management agendas.

Uniqueness

An institutional landscape map of 49 organisations mapped for their institutional focus and their national or local mandate, ascertains that NIERN would not be duplicating the efforts of existing entities, and that there are currently no other organisations operating in NIERN's intended sphere of influence.

Governance

An exploration of governance options for NIERN to form as a separate Indigenous community-controlled organisation suggests the most suitable governance options for the early establishment phase of NIERN is either, as an alliance arrangement with another like-minded organisation willing and able to be the legal personality with contractual ability for and on behalf of NIERN for a limited time frame, or establishing a public company limited by guarantee (CLG) under the *Corporations Act 2001*

(Cth). The establishment of a public company limited by guarantee under the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth) offers the independence from inception that NIERN aspires to.

SGS's review of Indigenous engagement in the NESP found that without dedicated effort and resourcing, the level of Indigenous input into and benefit from environmental research will remain low (Wensing and Callinan, 2020).

Funding

Case studies of the Lowitja Institute and Supply Nation demonstrate that it takes a long time to establish networks that have long term intergenerational effects for Indigenous Australians. Both organisations began from an idea germinated by a shortage of dedicated Indigenous research in a particular field of endeavour, or effective action required to improve the overall wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, in health and in Indigenous enterprises. The case study of the Lowitja Institute suggests it is a replicable model of where NIERN seeks to be positioned in the field of Indigenous environmental research. Demonstrated by the Lowitja Institute, own source revenue makes up a very small component of operational budgets and project funding. Other organisations, such as Supply Nation, have been able to develop a range of what they term 'membership services' to bolster their own-source revenue principally through fees and charges, to reduce dependency on grant funding.

A wider discussion of funding sources and mechanisms, informed by lessons from the case studies, landscape mapping analysis and engagement, suggest that the primary source of relevant Australian Government grant opportunities is from the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA), the Department of Education and the Department of Climate Change, the Environment, Energy and Water (DCCEEW). The primary difficulty with these sources of grant funding is that they are targeted at very specific outcomes, have limited funding caps, and do not appear to offer a great deal of flexibility and are not conducive to long-term funding.

Co-operative Research Centre (CRC) Grants present a key opportunity for NIERN's establishment phases because it enables industry and academia to form a partnership and providing sufficient flexibility for NIERN to determine its own direction and growth trajectory. It is very rare for more than two CRC grants to be made, however, a review of the Lowitja Institute found that they were successful in securing a third round of CRC funding to progress their growth to become a full Indigenous-owned and operated corporation.

There is a growing interest among philanthropic foundations and trusts, such as the Ian Potter Foundation and others, to support Indigenous organisations. Some of the organisations included in the landscape mapping have managed to secure long term funding from philanthropic sources. Building relationships with philanthropic foundations may assist NIERN in diversifying funding away from government sources. Philanthropy Australia provides advice about philanthropic sources of funding that may not have a national public profile but are keen to make a contribution to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' endeavours.

Conclusions and Recommendations

1. That the NIERN Reference Group considers seeking an alliance with a like-minded Indigenous organisation (for example, the National Native Title Council) in the short term to enable the foundations for NIERN to be laid.
2. That the NIERN Reference Group gives consideration to incorporating NIERN as a public company limited by guarantee (CLG) under the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth) when the circumstances require the organisation to become a separate entity.
3. That the NIERN Reference Group gives consideration to having a two-tier form of membership from the outset, comprising Endorsing organisations and Partner organisations, along the lines discussed in Part 4.2 of this report.
4. That the NIERN Reference Group gives consideration to seeking meetings with the relevant federal government agencies and departments (NIAA, DCCEE, DoE) to explore the possibility of drawing funding from their relevant programs to enable NIERN to be established.
5. That the NIERN Reference Group explore the possibilities of philanthropic funding as an alternative to seeking government funding.

1. Introduction

The National Indigenous Environmental Research Network (NIERN) is conceived as an Indigenous-led strategic initiative to establish an ‘entity’ that will support Indigenous leadership and participation in environmental research across Australia.

1.1 NIERN purpose and objectives

The purpose of NIERN is to enable and empower Indigenous Australians to have greater input and benefit from the environmental research that occurs on their land and sea Country. NIERN will mobilise investment opportunities for Indigenous researchers and communities and improve the capacity and capability of Indigenous Australians to participate in and set the national environmental science research agenda.

Indigenous Australians have been lobbying for over a decade to be engaged earlier in the lifecycle of environmental scientific research, from the design phase through to the delivery of research outputs, especially when that research is on land, water or sea Country managed or owned by them. It is still the case that national environmental research priorities are largely devoid of Indigenous-led aspirations and place-based research priorities. The establishment of a national Indigenous environmental research network is intended to facilitate and centralise Indigenous-led environmental research priorities, research protocols and policy settings to make it easier to access and engage with.¹

NIERN will:

- Support Indigenous environmental research needs and priorities.
- Enhance Indigenous-led decision-making in the environmental research and management sectors.
- Ensure mutually beneficial outcomes from environmental, cultural and socio-economic research for Indigenous groups and research providers.
- Offer a cultural authority and integrity entity for NESP and other environmental research providers.
- Empower Indigenous Australians to participate in national environmental scientific research, biodiversity conservation and environmental management agendas.

NIERN will achieve its purpose by:

- Promoting Indigenous leadership and illuminating Indigenous voices within the sector; prioritising Indigenous knowledges, practices and perspectives in determining the direction and priorities of the national environmental science arena.
- Advocating for environmentally and culturally safe research policies and practices that protect and strengthen Indigenous rights, delivers benefits to Indigenous peoples and communities and supports healthy Country and enduring wellbeing outcomes.

¹ Resilient Landscapes Hub, Research Plan 2023: Project Plans

- Providing cultural integrity and authority by ensuring the interests and rights of Indigenous land and sea managers are represented and respected in all levels of decision-making with regards to the environmental research agenda.
- Building the capacity of Indigenous Australians to engage equitably in right-way science and Indigenous-led environmental research.
- Promoting Indigenous Science as the first science and equal to Western science.
- Promoting fit for purpose research programs that are Indigenous-led and conform to best practice standards in relation to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) and Indigenous data sovereignty and governance, in particular the FAIR and CARE principles for Indigenous data governance (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable [FAIR] and Collective Benefit, Authority to Control, Responsibility, Ethics [CARE]).

1.2 Project objectives

SGS has been commissioned to provide:

- High level advice on possible Governance frameworks informed through a process of landscape mapping and case study analysis; and
- A business case to validate the costs required to establish an enduring entity.

This report addresses the first deliverable, with the business case provided in a separate report.

Report structure

Section 2: maps the institutional landscape in relation to Indigenous involvement and interests in environmental research and research ethics. The mapping plots a selection of 49 organisations across a spectrum of the depth of their institutional mandate for Indigenous environmental research and their National or Local focus, to ascertain the uniqueness of NIERN. A summary of all the landscape mapping institutions is provided in **Appendix A**.

Section 3: summarises analysis of two case studies as examples of Indigenous led research organisations and their governance and operational models. Case studies are provided in full in **Appendix B** and **Appendix C**.

Section 4: explores governance options for NIERN as an Indigenous community-controlled organisation.

Section 5: includes a discussion of possible funding sources and mechanisms, informed by lessons from the case study and landscape mapping analysis and engagement.

Section 6: provides concluding observations and recommendations.

2. Institutional Landscape Mapping

The following section examines the institutional landscape of Indigenous environmental research to show where NIERN would sit in relation to existing organisations.

2.1 Institutional Landscape Mapping Method

For the purposes of understanding the wider Indigenous environmental research sector, SGS undertook an institutional landscape mapping exercise of 49 organisations with an involvement or interest in Indigenous environmental research and research ethics across Australia. The organisations were selected in consultation with the NIERN Indigenous leadership group. They were identified on the basis of meeting four key attributes, seen to be necessary for developing an understanding of the wider sector and how NIERN would fit within it. These attributes are:

1. Having a core focus on Indigenous environmental research (and ethics);
2. Having a national mandate;
3. Being Indigenous owned and managed and independent of government discretion; and
4. Be enduring beyond three-yearly government budgetary cycles.

NIERN is proposed to fill a void for consolidated Indigenous research guidance at the national level, and to provide a focal point for Indigenous environmental researchers, to influence the National research agenda and research priorities and improve research ethics in Indigenous environmental research in line with best practice in other fields (i.e. Indigenous health research). The object of the landscape mapping exercise is to demonstrate the gap NIERN seeks to fill, and to represent where NIERN would sit in relation to the wider sector. A summary of each of the organisations is included in **Appendix A** detailing:

- What the organisation is
- What the organisation does
- How the organisation functions
- What role the organisation plays in relation to Indigenous environmental research (and ethics).

The Australian Research Council (ARC), the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) are included in the landscape mapping analysis because they play a central role in regulating human research ethics and integrity. Other organisations, such as Land Councils and Prescribed Bodies Corporate (PBCs), are playing an increasing role in applying research ethics protocols at local and regional scales. The application of these local or regional protocols are often in addition to the codes, protocols and guidelines applied by the ARC, NHMRC and AIATSIS. For this reason, the first attribute was expanded to include organisations with an Indigenous research ethics focus as well as those with an Indigenous environmental research focus.

Organisations in **Table 1** are grouped according to their purpose and governance model, and are not listed in any particular order.

Table 1: Landscape Mapping Organisations by Purpose/ Governance Model

Group	Organisation	Acronym
Peak Bodies		
1	National Native Title Council	NNTC
2	North Australia Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance	NAISMA
3	Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations	CAPO
Aboriginal Community-Controlled Research/ Education / Training Organisations		
4	Lowitja Institute	
5	ARC Training Centre for Healing Country	
6	ARC Centre of Excellence for Indigenous Futures	
7	ARC Centre of Excellence for Indigenous and Environmental Histories and Futures	CIEHF
8	National Indigenous Research and Knowledges Network (ceased in 2020)	NIRAKN
Statutory bodies		
9	Native Title Representative Bodies / Native Title Service Providers	NTRBs/NTSPs
10	Prescribed Body Corporates / Registered Native Title Body Corporates	PBCs/RNTBCs
11	NT Land Councils: Central Land Council Northern Land Council Tiwi Land Council Anindilyakwa Land Council	CLC NLC TLC ALC
12	NSW Aboriginal Land Council	NSWALC
13	Desert Knowledge Australia	
Non-Statutory bodies		
14	Kimberley Land Council	KLC
15	Cape York Land Council	CYLC
16	Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation	YMAC

17	Gur A Baradharaw Kod Sea and Land Council Torres Strait Islander Corporation	GBK
Geographically focussed bodies		
18	Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations	MLDRIN
19	Northern Basin Aboriginal Network Ltd	NBAN
20	Martuwarra Fitzroy River Council	MFRC
21	Great Barrier Reef Foundation Traditional Owner Partnerships	GBRF
22	Reef Traditional Owner Taskforce	REEFTO
23	Indigenous Desert Alliance	IDA
24	Indigenous Salt Water Advisory Group (Kimberley)	ISWAG
25	Sea Country Alliance	
26	Desert Support Services	
27	Noongar Land Enterprise	NLE
Government-appointed advisory bodies		
28	Australian Research Council Indigenous Forum	ARC
29	CSIRO Indigenous Science and Engagement Program	ISEP
30	Atlas of Living Australia	ALA
31	Committee on Aboriginal Water Interests	CAWI
32	Northern Australia Indigenous Reference Group	IRG
33	Minister's Indigenous Advisory Committee (under the EPBC Act)	IAC
34	Fisheries Research and Development Corporation Indigenous Reference Group (IRG)	FRDC
Government bodies		
35	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies	AIATSIS
36	National Indigenous Australians Agency	NIAA

37	Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation	ILSC
38	Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water	DCCEEW
39	Murray-Darling Basin Authority	MDBA
40	National Centre for Indigenous Genomics (ANU)	NCIG
Non-Government Non-Indigenous organisations		
41	Australian Land Conservation Alliance	ALCA
42	Country Needs People	
43	ESA Indigenous Engagement Working Group	ESA IWG
44	EIANZ Indigenous Engagement Working Group	EIANZ IEWG
45	Science and Technology Australia	STA
Non-Indigenous Research Centres		
46	Centre for Rock Art Research and Management UWA	CRAR+M
47	Terrestrial Ecosystem Research Infrastructure	TERN
48	Australian Institute of Marine Science	
49	National Committee for Ecology, Evolution and Conservation (Australian Academy of Science)	NCEEC

Organisations identified above are mapped across two axes to indicate where they sit across continuums of specialisation and scale, see **Figure 1**. This exercise is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all organisations with an involvement or interest in Indigenous environmental research and ethics, but rather to be indicative of the kinds of organisations involved in this space in Australia and how they currently intersect.

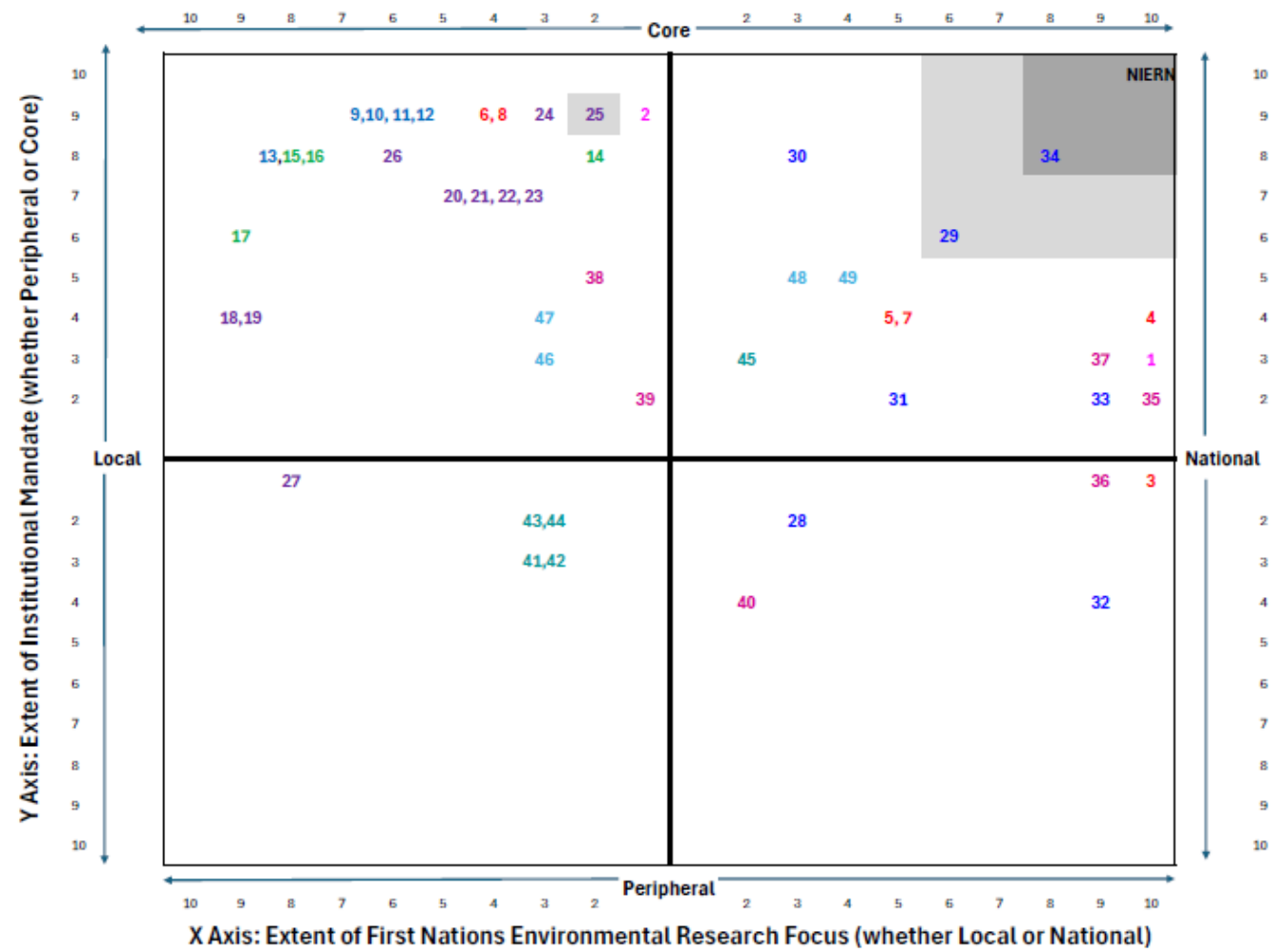
The following dot points will assist with interpreting the matrix in **Figure 1**:

- The **Horizontal X Axis** plots whether the organisation's First Nations Environmental Research Focus is either more 'Locally' oriented (i.e. to the left of the centre of the matrix), or whether it is more 'Nationally' oriented (i.e. to the right of the right of the centre of the matrix).
- The **Vertical Y Axis** plots whether the organisation's First Nations Environmental Research Focus is either 'Peripheral' to its primary purpose and functions (i.e. below the centre of the matrix), or whether it is 'Core' to its primary purpose and functions (i.e. above the centre of the matrix).

- The location of an organisation in the matrix is therefore a combination of the organisation's purpose/functions and its geographical scope of local and/or national focus.
- The organisations located close to the centre of the matrix have a combination of both elements. That is, a core commitment to First Nations Environmental Research and a wide geographical scope encompassing both a national and local focus. Which quadrant they fall into was dependent on an examination of their Constitutions or documents relating to their establishment and governance.
- The organisations located closer to the top right-hand corner have a stronger focus on First Nations Environmental Research and a national focus. That part of the matrix has a light grey background colour and includes **No.29** the CSIRO's Indigenous Science and Engagement Program (ISEP) (discussed below).
- The organisation located just inside the darker grey part of the top right-hand corner has a much stronger focus on First Nations Environmental Research and a national focus, and includes **No. 34** the Fisheries Research and development Corporation (FRDC) and their Indigenous Reference Group (IRC) (discussed below).
- The key consideration for getting into the top right-hand corner is whether the organisation is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO).

NIERN is envisaged to occupy the very top right-hand corner of the matrix because its focus will be on First Nations Environmental Research and with a national mandate. It will also be an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aboriginal Community Controlled organisation, which organisations numbered 29 and 34 are not.

Figure 1: Landscape Mapping



Source: SGS Economics and Planning, 2025

2.2 Interpreting the institutional landscape mapping

The **top right quadrant of the matrix** includes those organisations or institutions which have a national or core focus on Indigenous environmental research and research ethics. These organisations are the most relevant for NIERN to ensure it does not duplicate efforts.

The extreme top right corner of the matrix is where NIERN would expect to operate as the peak national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community owned organisation for Indigenous environmental research and environmental research ethics. **Figure 1** indicates that there are no Indigenous-owned organisations with this national focus. The formation of NIERN will therefore not interfere with the work of existing Indigenous organisations that have an active involvement or interest in Indigenous environmental research at the national scale.

In the **top right quadrant** are organisations with a national and core interest in Indigenous environmental research and in research ethics more generally, including several national organisations and government bodies such as the Lowitja Institute (**No. 4**) and AIATSIS (**No. 35**). These organisations are included in the top right quadrant because they play a key national role in Indigenous health research (Lowitja Institute) and in Indigenous research ethics (AIATSIS).

The Lowitja Institute (**No. 4**) is included in this analysis because it is an existing organisation with a related mandate to NIERN in the health research sector. The Lowitja Institute sits close to the top right corner of the quadrant because it is Australia's only independent and community controlled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research institute, working nationally to prioritise Indigenous health research. The Lowitja Institute serves as a model for NIERN, as it would occupy the desired top right-hand quadrant if a similar matrix was compiled for the Indigenous health research space.

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) (**No. 35**) is included because it is Australia's only national institution focused exclusively on the diverse history, cultures and heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia. The statute which establishes AIATSIS gives the organisation a clear mandate to provide leadership in relation to research ethics, including the development of the Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research, which came into force in 2020 (AIATSIS 2020). Compliance with the AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research (AIATSIS 2020) is mandatory in any research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people or communities. The formation of NIERN would not replace nor interfere with AIATSIS's statutory role. NIERN would work collaboratively with AIATSIS in relation to the application of the Code and any modifications to improve it, and on the Code's relevance to Indigenous environmental research.

The mapping undertaken for this exercise shows that there are no independent, Indigenous-owned and operated organisations with an enduring national involvement in Indigenous environmental research. There are several other organisations in this space, but they are not Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-owned and operated and none with a specific purpose of advancing Indigenous' environmental research interests.

- The matrix shows that there are two organisations that have a direct and enduring interest in Indigenous environmental research: CSIRO Indigenous Science and Engagement (**No. 29**), and the Indigenous Reference Group of the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation FRDC (**No. 34**). These two organisations are shown in the light and dark grey shaded parts of the top right

quadrant because, in our assessment they are the only two organisations that come anywhere near where NIERN wants to be in the quadrant. However, both of those organisations are government-appointed bodies. Being government appointed bodies, their roles and functions are limited by their terms of reference, and their composition is determined by the relevant Minister or government agency under whose control they fall.

- CSIRO is Australia's national science agency, and its research focus is much broader than environmental research. CSIRO does engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in many ways across the full range of CSIRO's research activities. The Indigenous Science and Engagement Program (ISEP) within CSIRO is intended to be a disruptive and sustainable organisational change, enabling CSIRO to lead Australia's scientific research through an Indigenous knowledge and science lens for the research that CSIRO undertakes. The ISEP enables CSIRO to expand existing collaborations and develop new best practice models across the organisation, equipping CSIRO to undertake large scale multi-disciplinary scientific research for the priorities identified by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations. While these actions and ambitions have relevance to NIERN, the formation of NIERN would not duplicate CSIRO's ISE, it would seek to inform CSIRO's research agenda, which is otherwise not limited to environmental research.
- The Indigenous Reference Group (IRG) of the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) (**No. 34**) is a committee comprising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from diverse backgrounds with expertise across Australian fishing and aquaculture. The IRG's role within the FRDC is to provide strategic and program level advice on the fisheries and aquaculture research, development and extension ('RD&E') needs of Indigenous peoples across Australia, to ensure Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and perspectives are woven into Australia's fisheries and aquaculture sectors. The IRG's role is limited to fisheries research and it is a government appointed advisory body. Because of the specific scope of the FRDC, NIERN would not be a duplication of its functions, despite areas of common interest for research priorities.
- The third organisation worth highlighting is the National Committee for Ecology, Evolution and Conservation (NCEEC) of the Australian Academy of Science (**No. 49**).
 - The National Committee on Ecology Evolution and Conservation (NCEEC) (**No. 49**) is one of 19 advisory committees of the Council of the Australian Academy of Science. The broad aims of the Council's advisory committees are to foster a designated branch, or theme, of natural science in Australia and to serve as links between Australian and overseas scientists in the same field. The National Committees advise the Academy's Council on Australia's representation for the unions and multidisciplinary bodies of the International Science Council (ISC) and other international bodies. The NCEEC advise the Council on ecology, evolution and conservation sciences in Australia and internationally. The formation of NIERN in Australia will not duplicate or replace NCEEC because the NCEEC's remit and membership is much broader than Indigenous matters.
- The other organisations in the top right quadrant of the matrix have varying levels of direct involvement or interest in Indigenous environmental research. The formation of NIERN will not replace or duplicate their roles and functions in their respective fields, largely because NIERN will be Indigenous owned and controlled. The formation of NIERN should lead to greater cooperation

and coherence around national priorities and the ability to influence the priorities of these other organisations about Indigenous' environmental research needs and aspirations.

In the top left quadrant are organisations with a more sub-national, regional or local core focus in Indigenous environmental research. There is a plethora of organisations in this space, however, their involvement or interest is more geographically focused. While Indigenous environmental research may be a high priority for their area of interest, they do not perform a national function.

In the bottom right quadrant are organisations with a national focus, but where Indigenous environmental research is peripheral to their core functions.

In the bottom left quadrant are organisations with a local or regional geographical focus and with only a peripheral interest in Indigenous environmental research. Most of these entities are Non-Government, Non-Indigenous organisations.

2.3 Summary

The analysis for the matrix was based on a review of each organisation's aims and objectives, terms of reference or charter and a review of their strategic plans or annual reports. The range of organisations included in the analysis was compiled by SGS Economics and Planning in collaboration with the NIERN Reference Group. The analysis is largely subjective, with reviews made to the matrix following direct advice and feedback from the NIERN Reference Group.

The institutional landscape mapping shows there are no existing Indigenous owned and controlled organisations occupying NIERN's desired space in the network. Analysis shows there are only two organisations that have a direct and enduring interest or responsibility in Indigenous environmental research, and they are shown in the grey shaded parts of **Figure 1** near the top right-hand corner (CSIRO Indigenous Science and Engagement **No. 29** and Indigenous Reference Group of the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation FRDC **No. 34**). However, both organisations are government-appointed bodies, with their roles and functions limited by their terms of reference and their composition determined by the relevant Minister or government agency under whose control they fall. There is no risk that NIERN will come anywhere near replicating their functions, primarily because NIERN will be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned, and it will be completely independent of government in terms of its internal governance arrangements and its aims, objectives, purpose and functions.

3. Case Studies

The following section examines the Lowitja Institute and Supply Nation as two case study organisations identified as examples of possible governance and network models for the long-term vision of NIERN.

The following summaries provide an overview the organisational purpose, operations, financial performance and organisational evolution. More detailed analysis on each case study is provided in **Appendices B and C**.

3.1 Lowitja Institute

Trading Name	Lowitja Institute
Organisation Name	National Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research Limited
Incorporation Status	Company limited by guarantee under the <i>Corporations Act 2001</i> (Cth) and a registered charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission (ACNC)
Established	2010

The Lowitja Institute is Australia's only independent and community-controlled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research institute, working across Australia to prioritise Indigenous health research that benefits Indigenous peoples.

The Lowitja Institute's principal activities are an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation working for the health and wellbeing of Australia's First Peoples through high impact quality research, knowledge translation, and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health researchers. As a community-controlled organisation, the Lowitja Institute focuses on supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health organisations and researchers. The Institute supports knowledge translation of Indigenous health research into policy and practice; develops Indigenous health research capabilities; and advocates on behalf of Indigenous health researchers.

The Lowitja Institute grew out of the need for a much stronger focus on the health research needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. While the Lowitja Institute was formally established in 2010, its origins can be traced back to 1997 when the first Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for Aboriginal and Tropical Health was established (see **Appendix B**). Since then, the Lowitja Institute and the CRC organisations have led a substantial reform agenda in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research by working with communities, researchers and policymakers, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people setting the agenda and driving the outcomes.

Funding from the Australian Government's CRC Program from 1997 to 2019 supported the 'public good' CRCs which aimed to apply research results in policies and programs to produce social benefits. The ongoing success of the CRCs enabled the development of long-term partnerships between researchers and organisations, and contributed to the growing body of evidence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and medicine. Such contributions have led to translating research findings into practice, by improving the quality of and access to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health care.

A recent economic and social impact evaluation of the Lowitja Institute and its predecessor CRCs concluded that the investment has yielded good value for money in terms of contributing directly to research activities; advanced knowledge about Indigenous health; built capability and empowered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers; contributed to a wider focus on social and emotional wellbeing and the social determinants of health centred rather than just biomedical research; and contributed to better understanding of the social and physical environmental factors impacting on the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Deloitte Access Economics, 2020). The Institute has also made significant contributions to the cultural safety and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture in health service delivery.

Importantly, the social-economic evaluation also concluded that while some impacts of the Institute's work are able to be quantified, many of the Institute's important contributions, such as empowering the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice in academia, cannot be quantified with the available data. Notably, the socio-economic evaluation concluded that the Institute's contribution to more recent research projects would be expected to grow overtime, alongside the evidence base which demonstrates the value of the Institute to Australian society.

Governance

Governance of the Lowitja Institute has evolved over time, as the CRC's evolved through different phases before the Lowitja Institute reached the point where it could become an independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned and operated organisation.

As the 'Changing the Narrative' report notes:

'The Lowitja Institute's journey began long before the first CRC was established in Darwin in 1997. Its roots lay in calls by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over many decades for real change in health status and health delivery for their communities. Paramount to that was the need for a new research paradigm, amid a growing sense and concern that research into the alarming evidence of health disparity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples was descriptive and too often serving the priorities of researchers and non-Indigenous people. In other words, for too long research had been done on Aboriginal communities not by or with Aboriginal communities. At the time, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people argued they had been 'researched to death' with little benefit.

Each of the subsequent CRCs has built on the legacy of the preceding organisation; gathering supporters, partners and a wider network of researchers committed to its mission, values and methodologies. This has been underpinned by the philosophy that effective health research requires a process that reflects community priorities and earns trust and community engagement. Each CRC also owes much of its success to the energy and determination of key individuals who

came together, regardless of differences and gaps in their background and experiences, to build something they knew could be important' (Lowitja Institute, 2017:1).

The establishment of the Lowitja Institute in January 2010 coincided with the transition from the CRC for Aboriginal Health (CRAH) to the CRC for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health. The establishment of the Institute saw significant changes to the structure of the organisation – principally, that the CRC would be hosted by the Institute, and that in addition to CRC Participants, the Lowitja Institute would have its own members.

Membership

The Institute's Constitution currently enables four categories of membership, including:

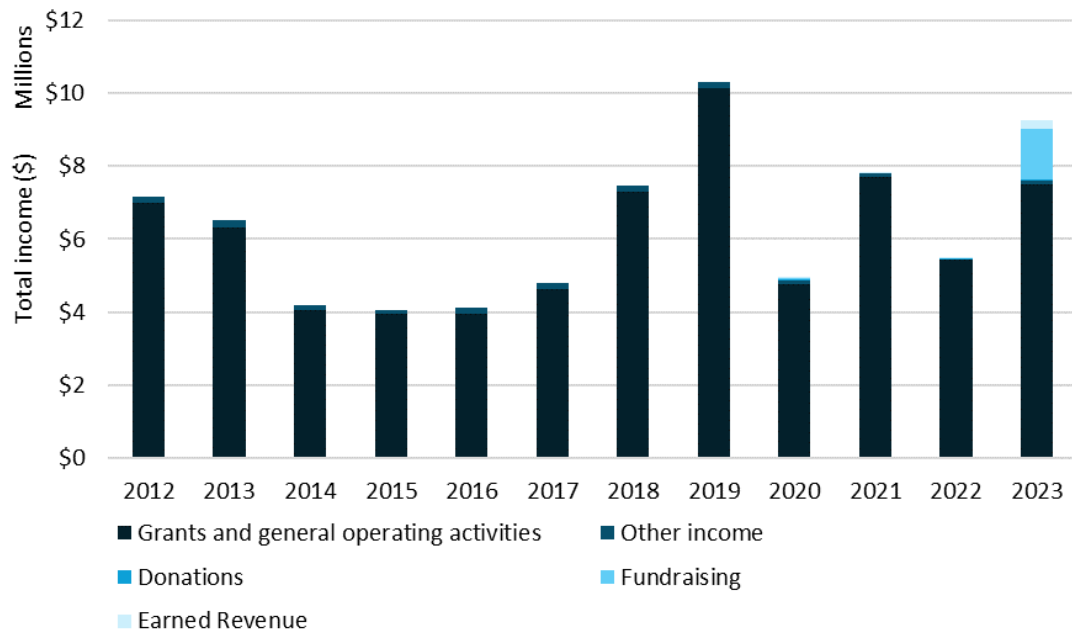
- **Full Member Organisations (Class A)** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations committed to the purpose and values of Lowitja Institute, with voting rights,
- **Associate Organisations (Class B)** non-Indigenous organisations committed to the purpose and values of Lowitja Institute, no voting rights,
- **Lowitja Institute Scholars (Alumni) (Class C)** Lowitja Institute Scholarship recipients, past and present alumni, no voting rights, and
- **Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander individual (Class D)** Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people who demonstrates support for, and contributes to, the purpose and values of the Institute and do not satisfy the eligibility criteria for admission as a Class C Member.

As an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisation, the Lowitja Institute has an all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Board, comprising the Chairperson and seven Directors. The Constitution requires that the Board will be composed of four persons appointed by the Class A Members and five persons appointed by the Directors, and they must be comprised of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons, with at least one Torres Strait Islander person (see **Appendix B** for more details).

Revenue

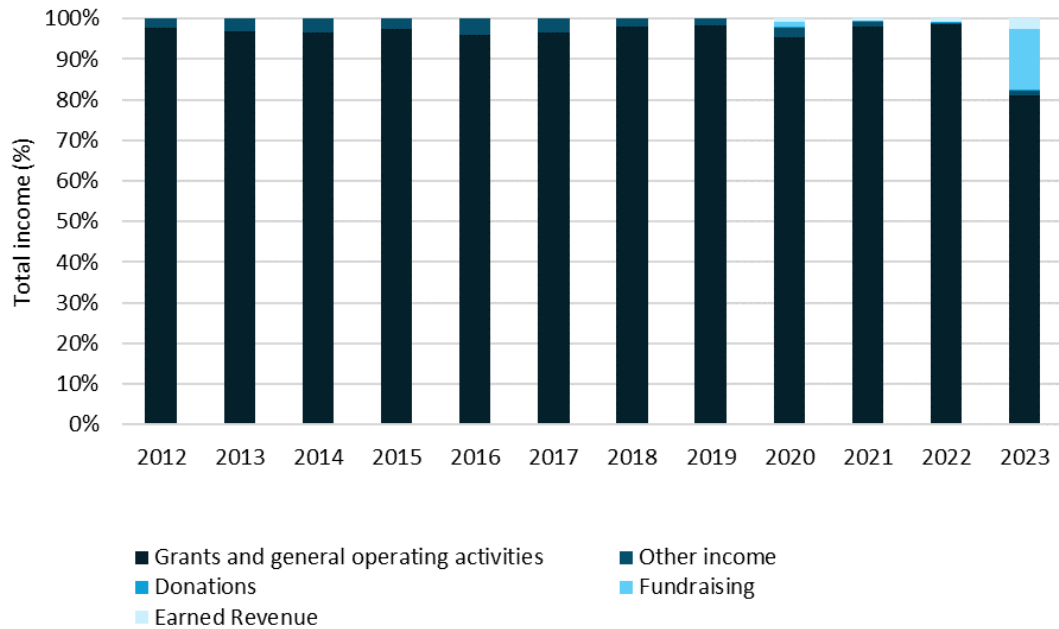
An analysis of the Lowitja Institute's sources of revenue from 2012-2023 in nominal terms in **Figure 2** shows that the Institute's income has fluctuated over time depending on economic, political and other attenuating circumstances. The same data is shown as percentages in **Figure 3**. The data also shows that the Lowitja Institute's primary source of revenue over the period from 2012 to 2013 has been from government grants and general operating activities, comprising about 90 per cent of the Institute's primary source of income over many years.

Figure 2: Lowitja Institute's Revenue Sources 2012-2023 in nominal terms



Sources: Annual Financial Statements from ACNC Register.

Figure 3: Lowitja Institute's Revenue Sources 2012-2023 in percentage terms



Sources: Annual Financial Statements from ACNC Register.

The Lowitja Institute's Annual report for the 2022-23 financial year includes several measurable indicators:

- Lowitja Institute membership base more than doubled to over 436 individuals and organisations
- Eight scholarships awarded
- 15 major research project grants and nine seeding grants awarded
- The Lowitja Institute is a partner or chief investigator on six research projects
- 60 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people engaged as researchers across the Institute's funded major grants
- Lowitja Institute staff participate on four national or state research project reference groups and are members of six Boards in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health
- Participated in the 22nd session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York, USA
- Lowitja Institute is a member of five National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander coalitions, including the Coalition of Peaks, National Health Leadership Forum, Partnership for Justice in Health, OWL Network, and OCHRe National Network
- Lowitja Institute worked on 19 national committees, reference or advisory groups focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and/or health research
- Nearly \$3 million was awarded to Lowitja Institute in partnership with the University of Newcastle to establish a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and Medical Research ethics Committee (NAHREC)
- Four research reports and discussion papers published
- Supported the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander referendum Engagement Group on communications and policy work in the lead up to the referendum on an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice
- Founded an international journal titled 'First Nations Health and Wellbeing' to showcase the best in health research by Indigenous health researchers around the world
- Hosted 23 Lowitja Institute events, Knowledge Translation (KT) roundtables, KT forums and KT summits reaching over 770 people
- 11 Lowitja Institute workforce development opportunities, webinars, community of practice sessions and online courses with 100 participants and
- Launched the Lowitja O'Donoghue Foundation in August 2022 in honour of the Institute's patron Dr Lowitja, to create opportunities for advancement and change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

The Lowitja Institute's future is secured until 2026-27 through a new five-year core funding agreement with the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care which was settled at the commencement of the 2022-23 financial year.

3.2 Supply Nation

Trading Name	Supply Nation
Organisation Name	Australian Indigenous Minority Supplier Office Limited
Incorporation Status	Company limited by guarantee under the <i>Corporations Act 2001</i> (Cth) and a registered charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission (ACNC)
Established	2012

The stimulus for the establishment of the Australian Indigenous Minority Supplier Council was a House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs inquiry into Indigenous Economic Development. The report recommended that an Australian Indigenous Minority Supplier Council (AIMSC) be established to follow the success of the National Minority Supplier Diversity Council in the United States (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, 2008).

Supply Nation was first established in 2009 and was formally incorporated in 2012. In 2013, it became known as Supply Nation. Over the years, Supply Nation has grown steadily, working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and with procurement teams from government and corporate Australia to help shape today's rapidly evolving Indigenous business sector.

Supply Nation's principal purposes are to facilitate the integration of Indigenous Businesses into the supply chain of private sector corporations and Government institutions and to advocate for the Indigenous business community in the context of its relationship with private sector corporations and Government institutions through partnerships, exchanging information and conducting research.

Supply Nation maintains that it has achieved its objectives over the last 15 years by growing its network to more than 5,000 Indigenous businesses and more than 820 corporate and government members (buyers). From 2009 to 2023, Supply Nation has facilitated more than \$14.7 billion in procurement spend between Supply Nation Indigenous suppliers and members (Supply Nation, 2024b:9). In 2022-23, procurement spend with Supply Nation's Indigenous businesses was more than \$4.1 billion, and growing (Supply Nation, 2024b:4). See **Appendix C** for more details.

Supply Nation is the custodian of Australia's largest and most respected database of Indigenous businesses, Indigenous Businesses Direct. All businesses listed on Indigenous Business Direct are not only Indigenous owned but are also regularly audited for changes in company structure and ownership to ensure the integrity of the data base as comprising genuinely Indigenous owned and operated businesses. The 5-step verification process that Supply Nation has developed to maintain the directory is regarded as world-leading.

Supply Nation partners with its members from government, corporate and not-for-profit sectors to include supplier diversity in procurement policies, and to develop and support supplier diversity practices, based on world's best practice that enable greater participation of the Indigenous business sector in the mainstream economy.

More recently, Supply Nation has established an internal research capacity to undertake research on topics of relevance to Supply Nation's mission and Indigenous Business. The purpose of this research is to develop a better understanding of the contours, trends and contributions the Indigenous Business sector makes to the broader national economy, as well as its contribution to Indigenous well-being and self-determination. Supply Nation's policy briefings provide concise summaries of key areas of research or policy of relevance to the Indigenous Business sector and key stakeholders.

Supply Nation's research is the product of collaboration with a range of university centres, government and independent research agencies on projects of relevance to Indigenous Australians and Indigenous businesses.

What is also significant about Supply Nation, is that its creation arose from Parliamentary Committee inquiry and it has enjoyed significant government and private sector support over a very long time. As the current CEO of Supply Nations states in Supply Nation's latest publication on its 15-year legacy, there has been a long-term commitment to a values-based approach in business, a commitment to sustainability and protecting natural assets as fundamental factors in economic success, and globally, businesses and governments are placing increasing importance on environment, social, and governance issues, coupled with an appetite for greater recognition and interest in Indigenous culture and business entrepreneurship. There has also been an interest by governments and businesses to increase the procurement opportunities for Indigenous businesses, thereby creating a conducive environment for Supply Nation to grow.

Governance

The Constitution requires that the minimum number of directors is three (3) and the maximum number is nine (9), unless the company in general meeting resolves otherwise. The directors must not fix a maximum which is less than the number of directors in office at the time. The directors may appoint any individual as a director, provided the number of directors does not exceed the maximum number fixed under rules in the Company's Constitution, and before appointing the director, that individual signs a consent to act as a director. A director holds office for a maximum of 9 years from the date of appointment, unless the directors otherwise decide for any particular director, the person is not disqualified from managing a corporation under the Corporations Act nor disqualified from being a responsible entity under the ACNC Act.

Membership

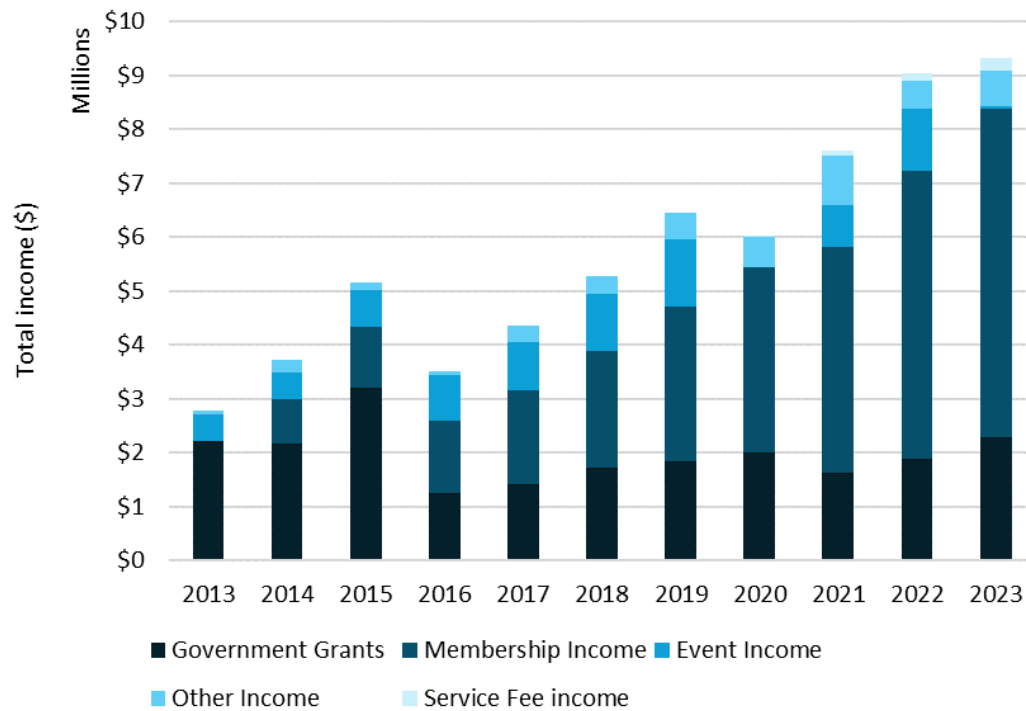
Membership of the company is limited to its Directors.

Revenue

An analysis of Supply Nation's sources of revenue from 2013-2023 in nominal terms in **Figure 4** shows that Supply Nation's income has grown steadily over time. The same data is shown as percentages in **Figure 5**.

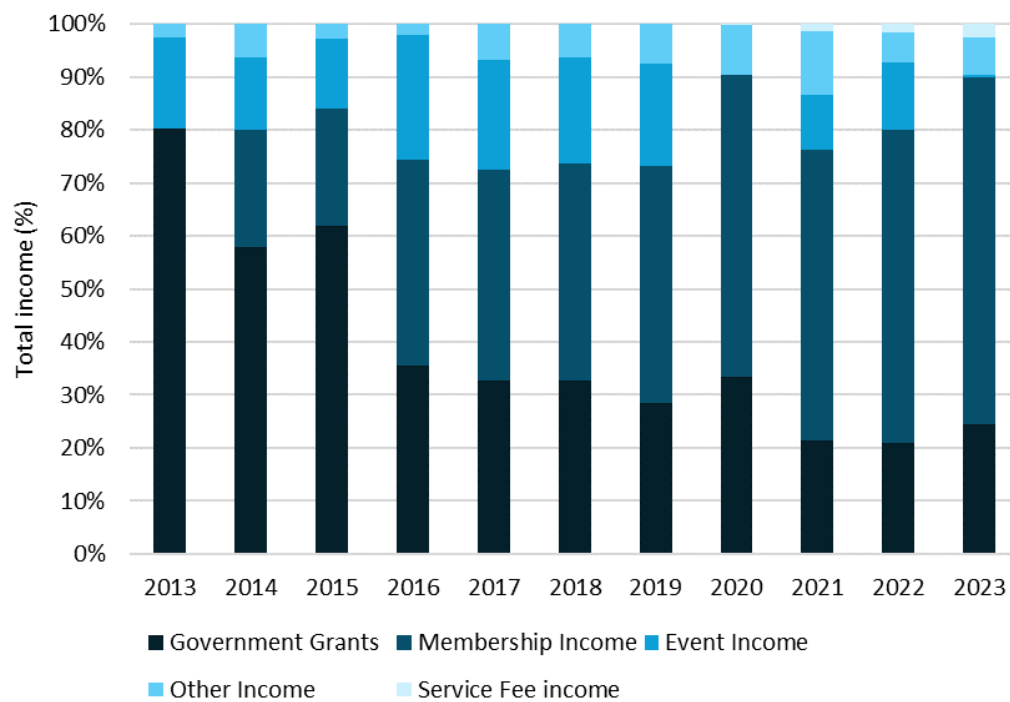
The data shows that Supply Nation's primary source of revenue over the period from 2013 to 2023 has shifted from Government grants to Membership services, and that as a proportion of total income it has grown from about 12 per cent of revenue in 2014 to about 65-70 per cent of revenue in 2023.

Figure 4: Supply Nation's Revenue Sources 2013-2023 in nominal terms



Sources: Annual Financial Statements from ACNC Register.

Figure 5: Supply Nation's Revenue Sources 2013-2023 in percentage terms



Sources: Annual Financial Statements from ACNC Register.

Supply Nation's annual report for the 2022-23 financial year shows that Supply Nation's members spending a record \$4.1 billion with Supply Nation verified Indigenous businesses. Supply Nation also surpassed 4,600 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses listed on Indigenous Business Direct and over 760 members from across the corporate, government and not-for-profit sectors commit to embedding Indigenous businesses into their supply chains.

3.3 Summary

The two case studies above demonstrate that it takes a long time to establish networks that have enduring effects for Indigenous Australians. Both organisations began from an idea germinated by a shortage of dedicated Indigenous research or effective action required to improve the overall wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Lowitja Institute is a replica model of where NIERN wants to position itself in relation to Indigenous environmental research. The Lowitja Institute has, over more than twenty-five years, been able to establish the organisation as 'the' place for Indigenous health research and as a place for Indigenous health researchers to gain professional recognition and backing for their work.

Supply Nation serves more as a growth model for procurement opportunities for Indigenous owned businesses. Supply Nation provides a good example of Indigenous businesses taking matters into their own hands and developing a network supporting their interests, noting that the impetus for the establishment of Supply Nation arose from a Parliamentary Committee inquiry.

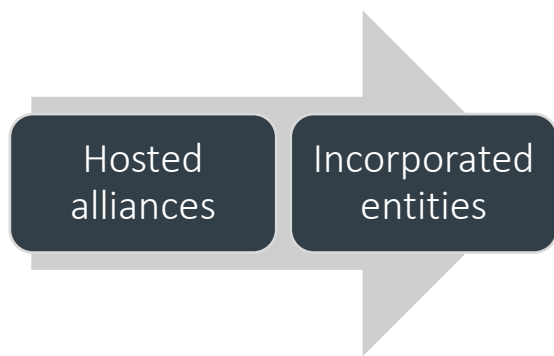
Given the longevity of both organisations, it was difficult to make contact with people who were involved in the early establishment of these organisations. Fortunately, both organisations have produced reports in recent years about their respective legacies, which provided useful historical information, a summation of which is included in **Appendices C and D**.

4. Governance, Membership and Incorporation

This section outlines options for governance and incorporation for the establishment of NIERN as a separate Indigenous community-controlled organisation.

4.1 Options for developing a formally constituted entity

A scan of Indigenous organisations with a focus on influencing national policy outcomes across a range of public policy areas reveals a range of options for representation and governance as well as being ‘fit for purpose’ given the nature of the agenda being pursued.



At one end of the spectrum are alliances being hosted by another organisation, and there are variations within this option. The distinct advantage of these options is that they can be tailored for a very specific purpose and for a specific time frame, with the simplest of incorporation and a high degree of flexibility, should needs change.

At the other end of the spectrum are formally incorporated organisations governed by a constitution and the relevant legislation under which they are incorporated, and there are also variations within this option. The distinct advantage of a more formalised arrangement is a higher degree of permanency about their governance arrangements. The organisation has a legal personality, can be more business minded, be able to attract public and philanthropic funding and have the necessary contractual ability to pursue their objectives and independently advance their purposes.

The object of formally constituted organisations is to focus on longevity and not just short-term outcomes. A potential disadvantage is they may have less flexibility to adapt and change, should the need arise. Areas for variation within this structure include:

- Organisations or entities incorporated under Australian law(s) with formal constitutions;
- Membership criteria;
- Sources of reasonably secure income from membership fees and/or the provision of goods or services for members, and
- Established for very specific purposes and with a clear set of specific aims and/or objectives.

Examples from the landscape mapping include the National Native Title Council (NNTC), the North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance Ltd (NAILSMA) and Supply Nation (SN). These

organisations are membership based and play a vital representative and influential role in their respective areas of interest or purpose.

Another group of organisations that sits outside this membership governance frame, is a range of advisory bodies appointed by governments. Invariably, membership of these bodies is selected by the relevant Minister based on a person's expertise and not on representation of a particular interest group or organisation. These include bodies such as the Council for Aboriginal Water Interests (CAWI), the Indigenous Reference Group (IRG) to the Ministerial Forum on Northern Development and the Indigenous Advisory Committee (IAC) under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth) (EPBC Act). An advantage of this structure is that they have the ear of the relevant Minister(s). A significant disadvantage is that such bodies are not decision-making bodies, they can only advise government on matters within the scope of their terms of reference. A further disadvantage is that members are appointed for their expertise and not representation. The advisory body's existence is at the whim of the government of the day. Appointments are generally time-limited, and if the advisory body is not required by statute, it can be abolished at any time. This is why the supporters of the Voice to Parliament arising from the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* were seeking to have a national advisory body enshrined into Australia's Constitution. The track record of Indigenous advisory bodies over the last 50-60 years shows that several national Indigenous advisory bodies have existed over the years, but their tenure has always been precarious.

4.2 Establishment and early years governance examples

In our landscape mapping scan of organisations that have developed in recent years, five organisations were selected for further investigation. While none of these organisations has a role in Indigenous environmental research and ethics, they do present reflections for governance arrangements during their early years that might be applicable for NIERN. The organisations examined are:

- First Nations Heritage Protection Alliance (FNHPA);
- National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO);
- First Nations Clean Energy Network (FNCEN);
- Indigenous Carbon Industry Network (ICIN); and
- Supply Nation (SN).

A summary of each organisation is included in **Appendix D**. The following is a brief overview of the governance model of each of the example organisations.

Alliances operating under a formal Governance Charter

It is possible for an alliance of interests to be formed in the first instance, with an existing Indigenous-owned organisation providing the necessary governance infrastructure for matters that require a legal personality or contractual ability that could provide the institutional supports for an alliance for a limited period.

An example is the First Nations Heritage Protection Alliance (FNHPA), which is a coalition of member organisations representing First Nations Peoples across Australia including major native title, land rights, traditional owner, and community-controlled organisations. A *Leadership Working Group*

manages the business of the Alliance between general meetings. Under this charter, the National Native Title Council (NNTC) acts as an agent for the FNHPA in matters that require legal and contractual status and capability. NNTC also hosts the Alliance Secretariat, with funding provided by the federal Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW).

FNHPA is a signatory to a Partnership Agreement with the Commonwealth which gives the Alliance membership of a Joint Working Group comprising equal representation of FNHPA and the Commonwealth parties, which is primarily focused on the co-design of standalone Indigenous cultural heritage legislation at the national level. The Partnership Agreement has a fixed term which is due to expire in November 2024.

Another example is the Sea Country Alliance (SCA). The SCA's purpose is to enhance the capacity of First Nations in Australia, and elsewhere in the world, to achieve self-determination through the collective actions of its members and to wholly control all aspects of their rights and interests, both economic and cultural, in Sea Country. The SCA is an unincorporated association whose members agree to operate collectively to achieve the purpose in accordance with the terms of the Governance Charter. The SCA was formed following a national meeting of Traditional Owners with offshore rights in November 2023 to enable Australia's Traditional Owners with responsibility for Sea Country to come together to speak with one voice. The SCA operates under a Governance Charter with the National Native Title Council Ltd (NNTC) acting as agent for the SCA in matters that require a legal personality or contractual ability. The NNTC is also a member organisation of the SCA.

Alliances operating under formal Terms of Reference

A further example of an alliance arrangement is where a lead organisation plays a role in forming and supporting an alliance of (peak) organisations and operates under a Terms of Reference from the lead organisation.

An example is the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations (CAPO). The Coalition of Peaks is made up of more than 80 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled peak bodies and members across Australia, who represent some 800 organisations in the refresh of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. The Coalition of Peaks bring forward the views of their members and communities to all their discussions with governments.

CAPO operates under a formal Terms of Reference, with a lead convenor elected by members. CAPO is supported by a small secretariat hosted by the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (NACCHO). Unlike the relationship between FNHPA and NNTC, NACCHO does not act for CAPO in matters that require legal and contractual status and capability.

The supporting policy and secretariat team support CAPO members to implement the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, supporting the work of the Lead Convenor and Deputy Lead Convenors, developing policy and agenda papers, providing advice, developing engagement materials for CAPO Members to assist with building understanding of the National Agreement, maintaining and updating public materials on the National Agreement, and other administrative functions.

Alliances loosely supported by other organisations

A further example of an alliance arrangement is where an organisation is formed to play a role in a new industry sector with the clear support of peak organisations relevant to that sector.

An example is the First Nations Clean Energy Network (FNCEN). The FNCEN is a member-based national coalition led by a Steering Group of First Nations leaders. It is an independent network of Indigenous groups, community organisations and land councils collaborating with unions, academics, industry groups, technical advisors, legal experts, renewables companies and others, working to ensure that First Nations share in the benefits of Australia's clean energy transition beyond a social-licence-to-operate. The FNCEN also supports communities to address the barriers to clean, affordable and reliable power, securing jobs and creating economic opportunity creating more opportunities to continue to live and work on Country.

FNCEN achieves this through (i) supporting communities to drive the development of clean energy projects, (ii) an innovation hub promoting the implementation of best practice principles for companies when working with First Nations people in the renewable energy sector and (iii) advocacy for policy reform. The FNCEN along with DCCEE and the National Indigenous Australians Agency is developing the First Nations Clean Energy Strategy as part of the Commonwealth's National Energy Transformation Partnership. FNCEN receives flexible support from Original Power and 16 "launch partners". It is a less-formal alliance than the two alliance models discussed above.

Institutions incorporated under Commonwealth statutes.

Institutions incorporated under Commonwealth statute are typically established for very specific purposes, have formal constitutions and membership criteria, and sources of reasonably secure income from membership fees, external funding or the provision of goods or services for their members. Such organisations can be more business-minded and attract public and philanthropic funding to advance their purpose. A potential disadvantage is they may have less flexibility to adapt should the need arise.

Examples include the NNTC, ICIN and NAILSMA (noting that NNTC is largely government funded). These organisations are membership-based and play a vital representative and influential role in their respective areas of interest or focus.

Institutions established under Commonwealth or State statutes.

Institutions established under specific Commonwealth or State statutes are required to perform specific functions set out in those statutes. Their governance arrangements are dictated by the statutes, with limited discretion for determining membership and their internal governance arrangements. Such entities established under Commonwealth law are subject to the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (Cth) (PGPA Act) and the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014* (PGPA Rule) and subject to periodic performance review by the Auditor-General. They are also able to take on other functions that align with their primary purpose and consistent with their members' needs and aspirations.

Examples of institutions established under Commonwealth statutes include the four Land Councils in the Northern Territory established under Commonwealth statute and the NSW Aboriginal Land Council established under State statute. These organisations are membership based within a defined geographical area and are fully responsible for the internal governance and accountability of the organisation.

Examples of institutions established under State legislation include the NSW Aboriginal Land Council (NSWALC) and the network of 120 Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs). The NSW Aboriginal Land

Council (NSWALC) is the peak representative body of Aboriginal people in NSW. Under the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983* (NSW) it has a mandate to pursue land rights for the Aboriginal people of NSW through its network of 120 Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs). Its functions include the creation of an economic base for Aboriginal communities, the protection and enhancement of Aboriginal cultural heritage and to act as an advisor to governments and others to ensure the preservation of Aboriginal land rights in NSW. Membership of LALCs is available to all adult Aboriginal peoples who reside in the LALC's jurisdictional area or is an Aboriginal Owner in relation to land in the LALC area.

Advisory bodies appointed by governments.

Advisory bodies are typically established for specific purposes over a fixed term and whose membership is appointed by relevant Ministers or government departments based on a person's expertise and not on representation of a particular interest group or organisation. These include bodies such as Council for Aboriginal Water Interests (CAWI), the First Peoples' Water Engagement Council (FPWEC) (which no longer exists), the Indigenous Reference Group (IRG) to Ministerial Forum on Northern Development and the Indigenous Advisory Committee (IAC) under the EPBC Act.

An advantage of these groups is that they are designed to have a direct influence on policy formulation within governments. Disadvantages are they can only advise governments on matters within the scope of their terms of reference and many of these bodies are vulnerable to changes of government.

Public company limited by guarantee under the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth)

A public company limited by guarantee (CLG) under the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth) is a legal entity, distinguishable from its members, and which is capable of performing the powers of a body corporate, capable of suing and being sued in its own name, has perpetual succession, the power to acquire land or other assets and to dispose of them. A public company can be limited by guarantee, and that guarantee can be any amount (commonly \$10) and is only payable by the members on the winding up of a company if it is unable to meet its debt. Incorporation as a company under the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth) enables operation throughout Australia. Companies are classified according to their revenue levels: Tier 1 with revenue of less than \$250,000, Tier 2 with revenue of less than \$1M, Tier 3 with revenue of more than \$1M in accordance with certain criteria set out in the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth).

If the company is registered as a charity, it will also be governed by the *Charities Act 2013* (Cth) and the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission Act 2012* (Cth) (ACNC Act) and regulations. A company is not required to have a Constitution and may instead rely on the replaceable rules in the Corporations Act, but they are generally inappropriate for not-for-profit organisations. If the organisation is to be registered as a charity under the *Charities Act 2013* (Cth) and the ACNC, then the company must provide a copy of its governing document to the ACNC. Companies registered under the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth) are able to access government and other funding. If also a registered charity, they may be eligible for philanthropic grants or donations.

NAILSMA is an example of a not-for-profit public company limited by guarantee under the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth) and is also a registered charity with the ACNC under the *Charities Act 2013* (Cth).

A body incorporated under the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* (Cth)

A company with the specific incorporation and regulation of the cultural requirements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in mind, can be incorporated under the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* (Cth) or CATSI Act. A corporation incorporated under the CATSI Act is classified as either small, medium or large in accordance with certain criteria set out in the Act. If the company is registered as a charity it will also be governed by the *ACNC Act 2012* and Regulations.

The corporation may use any available name, but the name must include one of the following sets of words:

- Aboriginal corporation;
- Torres Strait Islander corporation;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporation;
- Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal corporation;
- Indigenous corporation, or if applicable,
- 'registered native title body corporate' or 'RNTBC'.

The CATSI Act lists the main internal governance provisions and indicates which of those are replaceable rules. https://www8.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdoc/au/legis/cth/num_act/catsia2006510/s57.5.html

CATSI corporations must include certain mandatory provisions within their constitution. For example, the constitution must set out the corporation's objects and a dispute resolution mechanism for internal disputes. The constitution may also modify/replace rules in the CATSI Act and/or set out other internal governance rules. If registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission (ACNC), the CATSI Corporation must provide a copy of its governing document for inclusion on the ACNC Register

For a corporation to be registered under the CATSI Act, the corporation must have a minimum of five members, unless approval for a lesser number is granted by the Registrar. Members must be at least 15 years old and must satisfy the indigeneity requirements as follows:

- Corporations with five or more members: at least 51% of their members must be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- Corporations with two to four members: at least all but one of their members must be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; and
- Corporations with one member: that member must be an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person.

The governing document of a corporation can require up to 100 per cent Indigenous membership. It is up to the corporation whether they want to allow non-Indigenous members and how many (subject to the above).

The corporation must be a separate legal identity, distinguishable from its members and:

- is capable of performing all the powers of a body corporate;
- is capable of suing and being sued in its own name; and

- has perpetual succession and power to acquire land and dispose of property.

The minimum number of directors depends on the number of members. A corporation that has one member must have at least one director, if it has two members it must have at least two directors and if it has more than two members it must have at least three directors, the majority of which must:

- be an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person;
- ordinarily reside in Australia;
- be members of the corporation; and
- not be employees of the corporation.

4.3 Summary

The NIERN working group has stated that it wants NIERN to be an independent entity and not tethered to Government discretion as an advisory body appointed by government or as an institution established under Commonwealth or State law for a legislated purpose.

Consequently, there are a limited range of governance options available. Research suggests the most suitable governance options for the early establishment phase of NIERN is either:

- A) Pursuing an alliance arrangement with another like-minded Indigenous organisation that is willing and able to provide support for the new organisation and be the legal personality with contractual ability for and on behalf of the new organisation for a limited time frame. This would be sufficient to enable NIERN to mature to the point where NIERN will be capable of taking on those responsibilities for itself.
- B) Becoming a public company limited by guarantee (CLG) under the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth) or becoming a fully Indigenous-owned company under the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* (Cth) or CATSI Act. These two options tend to be where most Indigenous organisations land in terms of underpinning their incorporation and governance arrangements in the longer term.

While each have their merits, the establishment of a public company limited by guarantee under the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth) offers the better option for future development, primarily because the entity will be independent from the outset and be able to chart its own course and set out its own growth over time.

The option of using an alliance with an existing like-minded Indigenous organisation also has some merit, especially for the early formative stage. The First Nations Clean Energy Network (FNCEN) was supported by Original Power in its formation years, and the First Nations Heritage Protection Alliance (FNHPA) was supported by the National Native Title Council (NNTC). The FNCEN has progressed to becoming a public company limited by guarantee, whereas the FNHPA's existence will most likely only be for the duration of the national heritage legislation reform process. It is understood that the NNTC has indicated it may consider entering into an alliance arrangement to provide institutional support in the early formative stages of NIERN's development. This option should be explored in more detail with like-minded Indigenous organisations, such as the National Native Title Council (NNTC).

In relation to membership, it is worth drawing on the experience of the Lowitja Institute, primarily because the Lowitja Institute is a replica model of where NIERN wants to position itself in relation to Indigenous environmental research.

A review of the Lowitja Institute's trajectory over the 25-year period of its evolution from a CRC to an independent Indigenous-led organisation shows that its membership base changed over time to reflect the growth of the organisation and to accommodate changes that were necessary for the organisation to survive. Discussion with Aunty Pat Anderson revealed that these developments were not without their challenges and many of the changes the organisation had to make to its membership over the years have not always been easy. The lesson that NIERN can draw from this experience is the need for flexibility, but with a constant eye on the end game of developing a competent Indigenous-led organisation.

It is therefore recommended that NIERN give consideration to having a two-tier form of membership comprising:

- Endorsing organisations. This would include organisations which are mostly, but not exclusively, Indigenous organisations and who are willing to provide letters of support for the formation of NIERN and to lend their powers of moral suasion to the effort required to establish NIERN as a functional entity for the purposes of advancing Indigenous environmental information and research. Ideally, this list could include the following Indigenous organisations to ensure there is geographical coverage across Australia, including peak organisations with a network of members around the country:
 - National Native Title Council (NNTC);
 - Indigenous Desert Alliance (IDA);
 - North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA);
 - Sea County Alliance (SCA)
 - Indigenous Salt Water Advisory Group (ISWAG);
 - Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations (FVTOC);
 - Martuwarra Council;
 - Great Barrier Reef Traditional Owner Taskforce (ReefTO);
 - Country Needs People (CNP);
 - Desert Support Services;
 - Noongar Land Enterprise (NLE).
- The list above is indicative only. It may well be that some of these organisations may also see themselves as partner organisations and access the services that NIERN will have on offer.
- Partner organisations. This would include organisations that are willing and able to make a financial contribution toward the establishment of NIERN and/or to pay a fee for services provided by NIERN when required, including place-based or research approach and engagement advice. Ideally, this list could include the following organisations:
 - Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation (ILSC);

- Indigenous Business Australia;
- National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA);
- Australian Research Council Indigenous Forum;
- NESP Hubs;
- Atlas of Living Australia;
- CSIRO's Indigenous Science and Engagement Program;
- Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW);
- Fisheries Research and Development Corporation Indigenous Reference Group;
- Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS);
- Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA);
- Australian Land Conservation Alliance;
- Ecological Society of Australia (ESA) SA Indigenous Engagement Working Group;
- Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand (EIANZ); Indigenous Engagement Working Group);
- Science and Technology Australia;
- Terrestrial Ecosystem Research Infrastructure (TERN);
- Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS);
- National Committee for Ecology, Evolution and Conservation (NCEEC), Australian Academy of Science;
- Greening Australia;
- Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF);
- Bush Heritage.

The list above is indicative only. It is suggested that the net for Partner organisations should be cast as wide as possible, as the services NIERN is likely to offer will not only be to the scientific and academic research community, but also to private sector organisations working in the environment space more generally, including organisations undertaking environmental impact assessments for corporations in the resource extraction and property development sectors. This would more likely yield a wider membership and support base than focussing solely on the academic and scientific research sectors.

The criteria for selecting an alliance partner to host NIERN in its formative years include the following:

- The organisation must be Indigenous owned
- Have an Indigenous board of management
- The organisation's reputation is intact and within sight of the wider Indigenous community
- The organisation is able to act as an agent for NIERN for legal and contractual purposes
- The organisation must be financially sound and have the capability and systems in place to assist NIERN

- The organisation must have a clear audit record
- The organisation must have effective IT systems
- The organisation must have appropriate insurance cover and record, and
- The organisation must have the support of its Board to enter into a formal alliance with NIERN for a period of time.

The role of the host organisation will:

- Not have any decision-making role in NIERN
- Not have rights over NIERN other than for the purposes set out in an alliance arrangement between the parties
- Hold and auspice funds for NIERN
- Release funds when authorised by NIERN to do so
- Make travel arrangements for NIERN
- Provide administrative support for NIERN on a contractual basis
- Act as agent for and on behalf of NIERN, and
- Be willing to review hosting arrangement on an annual basis.

It was not possible to obtain copies of existing alliance arrangements during the course of this research. We suggest that NIERN approaches the relevant organisations with a request for a copy of any existing alliance and/or hosting arrangements to ascertain their suitability.

5. Funding Sources

The section explores funding opportunities for the establishment phase of NIERN. Three different sources of funding are discussed including government grant programs, philanthropic funding opportunities and research funding opportunities.

5.1 Government grant programs

As discussed in the institutional landscape mapping and the case studies, many organisations have relied predominantly on government grant funding to establish and sustain their operations and to deliver services to their members. As demonstrated by the Lowitja Institute, own source revenue makes up a very small component of operational budgets and project funding. Other organisations, such as Supply Nation, have been able to develop a range of what they term ‘membership services’ and fees and charges to bolster their own-source revenue and to reduce dependency on grant funding.

Presented in **Table 2** is an outline of government grant funding opportunities that NIERN may be eligible to apply for. The primary source of these grant opportunities is from the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA).

Table 2: Potential Australian Government grant funding

Grant funding	Funding agency	Upper Limit	Due Date	Details
Local Investment Funding	NIAA	\$100,000	30/06/25	The Local Investments Funding Grant Opportunity enables strategic and rapid response to address local issues to benefit First Nations people and facilitate improved community and government engagement. The objective of the program is to deliver outcomes aligned to community needs, government priorities and Closing the Gap Targets. Applicants must be invited by NIAA to apply for funding.
Community Initiated Proposals	NIAA	-	30/12/25	Under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy, NIAA considers grant proposals that address a need for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Proposals must be developed with the community or group who will be impacted by the activity. This funding approach may possibly be used to present a proposal to NIAA where a need has been identified in the community and there are no other current funding avenues

				available. The proposal must be discussed with NIAA before making any application.
Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS): Support or Community Sector Organisations	NIAA	-	30/06/25	Relevant for community sector organisations (CSOs) already receiving an Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) grant. The purpose of this funding is to support organisations in need of funding supplementation due to additional staff wages pressures and high inflations rates.

The primary difficulty with these sources of grant funding is that they are targeted at very specific outcomes, have limited funding caps, and do not appear to offer a great deal of flexibility.

In separate research that SGS is undertaking for an Indigenous peak organisation, it was noted that government grant program funding programs are typically short-term and insufficient to meet the Corporation's needs, and that multi-year block funding is preferred to ensure continuity and stability in the organisation's activities and operations.

Nevertheless, it may be worth approaching NIAA to see if NIAA is willing to work with DCCEEW and the Department of Education on some kind of joint funding arrangement between various government agencies and departments.

5.2 Philanthropic funding opportunities

Philanthropic funding is considered as an additional avenue for revenue generation in Australia. There is a growing interest among philanthropic foundations and trusts, such as the Ian Potter Foundation and others, to support Indigenous organisations wanting to address their particular needs in fields such as education, health, economic development, natural resource management and looking after Country. Some of the organisations included in the landscape mapping have managed to secure long term funding from philanthropic sources, thereby enabling them to stop or reduce reliance on government grant funding. Building relationships with philanthropic foundations may also assist NIERN in diversifying funding away from government sources.

Potential philanthropic foundations that are currently supporting various Indigenous organisations are outlined in **Table 3**.

Table 3: Philanthropy funding

Funder	Details
Ian Potter Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Seeks to support innovative, ambitious research undertaken by universities and research institutes. – Does not provide funding for projects or items of equipment that might be funded internally or by a government agency such as the NH&MRC or the ARC. – Has specific funding objectives within each program area. Relevant program areas include community wellbeing and environmental sustainability.

Colonial Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Provides a limited number of high value grants that extend over multiple years providing sustained support in building the capacity of the recipient organisation. – Strategic themes include disease diagnosis treatment and prevention, overcoming inequity and advancing regional and rural Australia.
Bensen Family Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Has four priority areas for grants including: arts and culture, Jewish community, early childhood and environment. – Has a focus on conservation.

Philanthropy Australia can also provide advice and information about other philanthropic sources of funding that may not be as well-known as the ones that have a national public profile, as their membership includes several smaller philanthropic organisations and individuals who are not interested in a public profile but are keen to make a contribution to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' endeavours.

5.3 Research grant funding opportunities

In August 2024, the Minister for Industry and Science (Husic, 2024) announced Australia's National Science Statement (Australian Government 2024a) and released Australia's National Science and Research Priorities (Australian Government 2024b). The policy statement and the research priorities were developed following an exhaustive nationwide consultation process speaking to hundreds of people across science, research and industry, as well as everyday Australians.

Under a more focussed framework, there are five National Science and Research Priorities that will guide government, university and private sector efforts. It is noteworthy that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are mentioned 29 times in the Research Priorities document, specifically in relation to four of the five priorities (Australian Government 2024b). The priorities are:

1. Transitioning to a net zero future;
2. Supporting healthy and thriving communities;
3. Elevating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems;
4. Protecting and restoring Australia's environment; and
5. Building a secure and resilient nation (Australian Government 2024b:4).

In relation to Priority 3, the document states:

Australia celebrates the deep history and knowledge systems embedded in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures and Countries. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples well-established and sophisticated systems for trading knowledge are preserved.

The science and research system will evolve to protect and elevate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges. It will build practices that can weave in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges. It will position Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to lead research that affects them – as community leaders, traditional knowledge holders or researchers.

Science and research outcomes

To get where we want to be, we need the science and research system to work towards these outcomes:

- *research that affects or draws from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and knowledge systems is done in collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people*
- *policy to improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is shaped by science, research and strong partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their communities*
- *a science and research system that is culturally safe*
- *respect for, preservation and protection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditional knowledges, language, data sovereignty, cultural expressions and other intellectual property.*

Critical research

To achieve these outcomes, we need research that addresses:

- *incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge into the development and application of critical and emerging technologies, particularly digital and data technologies*
- *approaches for protecting and managing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural and intellectual property*
- *approaches to preserving language and promoting bilingual education*
- *approaches to climate change adaptation to support regional and remote communities.*

To achieve the best outcomes, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should guide research.

Supporting leadership means supporting Aboriginal and Torres Islander people to thrive through the education system – from early learning through to research careers (Australian Government 2024:6-7).

In this context, possible source of research grant funding and research infrastructure sources are outlined in **Table 4**.

Table 4: Potential Research Grant and Research Infrastructure Funding Sources

Grant funding	Funding agency	Upper Limit	Due Date	Suitability
Discovery Program	Australian Research Council (ARC)	\$500,000	2025	Given that only Australian Universities are eligible for these grants, it is doubtful that an ARC Discovery Program grant can be used to establish NIERN. Nevertheless, it may be worth exploring these matters with the ARC directly or for future stages of development.

Objectives of the grant are to:

- support excellent pure basic, strategic basic and applied research, and research training, across all disciplines excluding clinical and other medical research, that addresses a significant problem or gap in knowledge and represents value for money;
- expand research capacity in Australia by supporting excellent researchers and teams;
- foster national and international research collaboration;
- create new knowledge with economic, commercial, environmental, social and/or cultural benefits for Australia; and
- enhance the scale and focus of research in Australian Government priority areas.

The Grant Opportunity Guidelines (formerly known as Funding Rules) are not published on the ARC website.

The ARC now uses GrantConnect to publish all Forecast Opportunities, Grant Opportunities, all Grant Opportunity Guidelines and all addenda/alterations. In order to access this information, it is necessary to create a User Registration Account in GrantConnect. **GrantConnect** is the Australian Government's whole-of-government, centralised, web-based, grant information system, providing a free, simple and effective service for all potential grant applicants to find and access Commonwealth grant opportunities and related grant documentation.

The Discovery Program is one of two Programs under the ARC National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP).

The Discovery Projects scheme is funded under the Discovery Program. The Discovery Projects scheme has a two-stage application process, commencing with an Expression of Interest (EOI). Shortlisted applicants will be invited to submit a full application. The grant commencement date and active project assessment dates for each Discovery Projects grant opportunity are available on the ARC website.

For each Discovery Projects grant opportunity, project funding can be between \$30,000 to \$500,000 per year and the duration can be up to five consecutive years. However, only Australian Universities are eligible to apply for ARC Discovery Program grants.

The Discovery Program supports research activities that meet the definition of 'research' in the Glossary to the program guidelines. The definition is as follows:

- for the purposes of these grant guidelines, the creation of new knowledge and/or the use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way so as to generate new concepts, methodologies, inventions and understandings. This could include synthesis and analysis of previous research to the extent that it is new and creative.

This definition of research is consistent with a broad notion of research and experimental development comprising "creative and systematic work undertaken in order to increase the stock of knowledge – including knowledge of humankind, culture and society – and to devise new applications of available knowledge" OECD (2015), Frascati Manual 2015: Guidelines for Collecting and Reporting Data on Research and Experimental Development (p.378).

The grant can only be spent on eligible expenditure items that directly support the project and in accordance with any additional special conditions in the grant agreement. Eligible expenditure items may include:

- a) salary support for other personnel, for example, research associates and assistants, technicians and laboratory attendants at an appropriate salary level, including 30% on-costs, at the employing organisation;

- b) stipends for HDR at 1.0 full time equivalent (FTE) each at the level indicated on the 'Salaries and Stipends' page of the ARC website;
- c) teaching relief for CIs up to a total of \$50,000 per CI per year per project;
- d) equipment (and its maintenance) and consumables, including specialised computer equipment and software essential to the project;
- e) travel costs essential to the project may be supported up to \$50,000 over the project activity period. The following travel costs are not included in this \$50,000 limit:
 - i. expenditure on field research essential to the project, including technical and logistical support, travel expenses (including accommodation, meals and incidental costs); and
 - ii. reasonable essential costs to allow a participant who is a carer, or who personally requires care or assistance, to undertake travel essential to the project.

Grant funding	Funding agency	Upper Limit	Due Date	Suitability
Co-operative Research Centre (CRC) Grants	Australian Government	-	-	<p>All funded CRCs must be established and governed as an incorporated company, limited by guarantee (the CRC Entity).</p> <p>The CRC funding presents the best opportunity for NIERN's establishment phases because it enables industry and academia to form a partnership and provides sufficient flexibility for NIERN to determine its own directions and growth over time. The only constraint is that it is very rare for more than two CRC grants to be made. Our review of the Lowitja Institute found that they were able to use the CRC program as seed funding for their establishment and growth phases. The Lowitja Institute was also very fortunate to succeed in securing a third round of CRC funding in order to progress their growth to become a full Indigenous-owned and operated corporation.</p> <p>It is noted that one of the founding members of the Lowitja Institute revealed that it was a difficult path.</p>

Cooperative Research Centres (CRC) Grants provide support for medium to long-term, industry-led research collaborations, with funding for up to 50% of eligible grant project costs to solve industry identified problems. A research collaboration must be between at least one Australian industry organisation and one Australian research organisation.

The CRC Program supports industry, research and the community in 2 ways:

- CRC Grants – support medium to long term industry-led collaborative research, for up to 10 years.
- CRC Projects (CRC-P) grants – support short term, industry-led collaborative research, for up to 3 years.

CRCs must:

- be a medium to long-term industry-led collaborative research program
- aim to solve industry identified problems and improve the competitiveness, productivity and sustainability of Australian industries
- include an industry-focused education and training program, including a PhD program that builds capability and capacity
- increase research and development (R&D) capacity in small to medium enterprises (SMEs)
- encourage industry take up of research.

There is no specified limit to funding for each CRC. However, the number of CRC Grants funded in each selection round depends on the applications received and available funding.

CRC grant applications are open to all industry sectors, research disciplines and community sectors. Applicants must at least match the amount of grant funding sought through cash and/or in-kind contributions. To be eligible, the applicant must:

- submit an application from a group that has agreed to collaborate
- have at least one Australian industry organisation and one Australian research organisation in the collaboration
- show that the applicants are able to at least match the grant funding
- if successful, establish the CRC as an incorporated company, limited by guarantee
- be a medium to long term industry-led collaborative research project aimed at solving industry-identified problems and improving the competitiveness, productivity and sustainability of Australian industries
- include an industry-focused education and training program, which must include, but is not limited to, a PhD program which complements the research program and increases engagement, technology development, skilled employees and R&D capacity within industry entities
- implement strategies which build the R&D capacity within SMEs
- deploy research outputs and encourage take-up by industry.

Eligible activities must relate directly to the project and may include:

- new research
- proof of concept activities
- pre-commercialisation of research outcomes
- industry-focused education and training
- conferences, workshops and communications
- collaboration with international organisations providing national benefits to Australia

Grant funding can only be spent on expenses outlined in the grant agreement.

Applications can only be accepted where the applicant can provide a declaration from each partner on the [template provided](#) and where it can be demonstrated that the applicant has the ability to at least match (in cash or in-kind) the grant funds requested.

Applications are assessed against the eligibility criteria and then against the assessment criteria. Only eligible applications will proceed to the assessment stage.

The CRC Advisory Committee will assess all eligible Stage 1 applications and make recommendations to the Minister on which applications are suitable for progression to Stage 2. The Minister will invite the most meritorious Stage 1 applicants to submit a Stage 2 application and attend an interview with the CRC Advisory Committee.

The Minister decides which applications to approve, considering the:

- recommendations of the CRC Advisory Committee
- availability of grant funds.

If a Stage 1 application is successful, the applicant will be invited to submit a Stage 2 application and attend an interview with the CRC Advisory Committee.

If the application is unsuccessful at either stage, the applicant will be notified in writing and given an opportunity to discuss the outcome with the CRC Advisory Committee.

All funded CRCs must be established and governed as an incorporated company, limited by guarantee (the CRC Entity). Successful applicants must enter into a grant agreement with the Commonwealth. The grant agreement will specify the reporting requirements, payment schedule and milestones necessary to receive payments.

Payments will be made according to an agreed schedule set out in the grant agreement and are subject to satisfactory progress on the project. An initial payment will be made on execution of the grant agreement if significant progress has been made in finalising the partners' agreement.

Grant funding	Funding agency	Upper Limit	Due Date	Suitability
National Environmental Science Program (NESP)	DCCEEW			<p>SGS understands that it is currently not possible for NESP hubs to seek additional funding from sources outside the NESP. This matter was examined by Dr Greg Terrill as part of his independent review of the NESP in 2023, in which he recommended that processes for Hubs to receive additional funding from outside the NESP be enabled and documented, and that the period during which the Hubs may undertake projects be extended to mid-2027.² In its response to the Review's Recommendations, DCEEW stated that it accepted the first recommendation in principle and the second recommendation in full.³</p> <p>SGS believes there are several reasons why the Resilient Landscapes and Marine Hubs</p>

² Terrill, G. (2023) *Review of the National Environmental Science Program. Program performance of phase 1. Program implementation of phase 2. Public summary.* <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/nesp-independent-review-summary.pdf>

³ Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) (2023) *Response to Dr Terrill's review of the National Environmental Science Program.* November. <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/dept-response-to-nesp-review.pdf>

should approach DCCEW and have a frank conversation about the need to provide seed funding for the formation and establishment phases of NIERN from either the NESP and/or the CRC buckets of funding. There is also a conversation that needs to be had with the other two NESP Hubs to secure a united approach from the four Hubs, followed by a frank conversation with DCCEW about following through on its commitments to a partnership approach to Indigenous environmental research.

NESP is the Commonwealth's flagship environmental science research program. The current NESP 2 phase spans the period from 2020-21 to 2026-27, with a \$149 million investment. NESP invests in Indigenous research capability and early to mid-career researchers, supports collaboration, and brings together researchers, Indigenous Australians, policy makers and local communities to solve environmental problems.

The current NESP 2 builds on over 20 years of earlier environmental science programs:

- National Environmental Research Program (NERP).
- Commonwealth Environment Research Facilities (CERF)
- Australian Climate Change Science Programme (ACCSP)
- National Environmental Science Program Phase 1 (NESP 1).

According to DCCEW's website, NESP 2 is a long-term investment in Australia's environmental research capacity enabling evidence-based policy and better management decisions for the future.

In early 2020 the Minister for the Environment, the Hon. Sussan Ley MP, announced a further \$149 million investment for the NESP program over the next 7 years (2020–21 to 2026–27). The funding facilitates targeted research through four new hubs:

- Climate Systems Hub
- Marine and Coastal Hub
- Resilient Landscapes Hub
- Sustainable Communities and Waste Hub.

The four Hubs have national capability, but deliver through regional nodes, where appropriate. Each hub also conducts research to support cross-cutting initiatives that focus on management options for climate adaptation; protected places; threatened and migratory species and ecological communities; and waste.

DCCEW's website for NESP 2 shows that the Department has committed to recognising and supporting the values important to Indigenous Australians to protect and care for Country, and that Indigenous research partnerships have become a key part of NESP research (<https://www.dcceew.gov.au/science-research/nesp/program-guidelines>) through:

- the adoption of a set of NESP Indigenous partnership principles (<https://www.dcceew.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/nesp-indigenous-partnerships-principles.pdf>)
- applying the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent from Indigenous people

- understanding and protecting Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property and the adoption of the FIAIR and CARE Principles (<https://www.dcceew.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/nesp-data-and-information-guidelines.pdf>)
- following the Three Category Approach (which has recently been revised <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/nesp-three-category-approach-researcher-workbook.pdf>).

Each of the 4 NESP research hubs have an Indigenous partnerships strategy and the hubs employ Indigenous Facilitators to drive inclusion and collaboration in their projects. Each facilitator is part of the Indigenous Facilitation Network (IFN).

NESP invests in Indigenous research capability and early to mid-career researchers, supports collaboration, and brings together researchers, Indigenous Australians, policy makers and local communities to solve environmental problems.

Grant funding	Funding agency	Upper Limit	Due Date	Suitability
National Research Infrastructure, the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS)	Department of Education			<p>National Research Infrastructure (NRI) refers to the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities, tools, equipment and other resources that are needed to perform research, and • Experts needed to run the infrastructure. <p>The infrastructure can be physical, like a supercomputer or microscope, or intangible, like a data collection or software platform.</p> <p>Investment in the NRI is guided by 5-yearly Roadmaps, investment plans and enacted through the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS).</p> <p>The NCRIS is a highly collaborative and distinctively Australian program aimed at maximising Australia's NRI investments by coordinating open access, targeted specialities, and co-funding across the country.</p> <p>Funding rounds are held every 1-2 years. The current 2025 funding round is a closed process for eligible organisations only that are in receipt of earlier NCRIS funding.</p> <p>Future grant opportunities may arise through the Government's implementation of Investment Plans expected in 2026.</p>

The NCRIS program aims to maximise Australia's investments by coordinating open access, targeted specialities across the country. It also helps coordinate co-funding by governments, universities, publicly funded research agencies (PFRAs) and industry across the research sector.

The Australian Government has invested \$4 billion over 12 years (from 2018 to 2029) in the NCRIS to support important pieces of national research infrastructure and make sure Australian researchers can access them. The investments in NRI are:

- guided by Roadmaps,
- funded through investment plans, and
- enacted through the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS) program.

This long-term, strategic approach to NRI provides strong foundations for Australia's research sector, and a national network of facilities that respond to Australia's research infrastructure needs. While investment is focussed on infrastructure needs identified in the five-yearly Roadmaps sometimes new needs arise in between Roadmaps, and these can also receive funding.

A Roadmap is prepared every five years by an expert working group in consultation with the research community. The 2021 NRI Roadmap is still current and can be accessed here: [2021 National Research Infrastructure Roadmap](#). The 2021 Roadmap recommended government provide continuity and long-term funding to NRI. It found that Australia's current network of national research infrastructure has been extremely successful in supporting national priorities and international collaboration.

Funding rounds are held every 1-2 years and are targeted towards specific NRI needs identified in the 2021 National Research Infrastructure Roadmap. In 2025 the identified NRI needs include National Digital Research Infrastructure (NDRI), Research Translation Infrastructure, Environment and Climate Infrastructure, and National Research Infrastructure Workforce.

The NCRIS 2025 Grant Guidelines were released on 6 February 2025. However, this grant opportunity is a closed, non-competitive selection process as only eligible organisations that have previously received funding through either the NCRIS 2018 Guidelines, the NCRIS 2021 Guidelines, the NCRIS 2022 Guidelines and/or the NCRIS 2023 Guidelines to implement NRI facilities can apply. Or only organisations identified through the investment plan process who are positioned to meet needs not covered by existing projects.

Unfortunately, the current round does not include any opportunities for funding something like NIERN. However, an Advisory Committee has been appointed to oversight the development of the next Roadmap for 2026.

Nevertheless, there are some useful hooks in the [2021 National Research Infrastructure Roadmap](#). Which may be worth building on for the 2026 Roadmap. In particular, on pages 18, 24, and 67.

- On page 18: *Indigenous knowledges – there is increasing awareness and recognition of the potential for Indigenous knowledges to help solve some of our biggest research challenges. Indigenous cultures and practices can guide development and sustainable use of Australian lands and waters.*
- On page 24. *The 2016 Roadmap identified specific research areas requiring further scoping work to better understand emerging research infrastructure needs. Eight scoping studies were supported in the 2018 Investment Plan. The outcome of three scoping studies provided valuable input to the 2020 Investment Plan and resulted in three pilot projects:*
 - *expansion and upgrade of the Australian Community Climate and Earth Systems Simulator (ACCESS-NRI)*
 - *developing targeted HASS and Indigenous data tools and platforms*

- *synthetic biology (biofoundry), a new infrastructure that will help researchers create new biological parts and systems more efficiently.*
- And page 67 a whole page is devoted to discussing Indigenous knowledges and NRI.

In addition, as part of the 2018 Research Infrastructure Investment Plan, funding was committed for eight scoping studies to be undertaken on potential research infrastructure. The studies were undertaken in collaboration with key stakeholders to explore implementation approaches, technical requirements, leveraging existing activity, and co-investment opportunities for potential new research infrastructure capabilities.

One of the Scoping Studies was on Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (HASS) and Indigenous platforms: The report of the Scoping Study proposed a suite of activities to form the core of a HASS Research Data Commons. It proposed infrastructure that would enable skilled digital researchers, working in multidisciplinary teams, to use and contribute to the development of the best digital methods to generate new insights into society and culture while providing reliable and effective forecasting on key future social issues. The investment in a HASS Research Data Commons included improving access to and management of data from and about Indigenous communities.

There are good reasons why the next NCRIS Roadmap should include the need for a First Nations environmental information and research facility. These matters should be taken up with DCCEEW, DoE and NIAA.

5.4 Private Philanthropic Funding and Philanthropic Grant Search Organisations or Platforms

There are a range of organisations that can assist with finding other grant funding, philanthropic or ancillary funding sources. Some offer free access, while others are subscription based. These include the following:

- **PafGUIDE®** is an online database of every private ancillary fund (PAF) and public ancillary fund (PuAF) in Australia. It provides comprehensive and up-to-date information on all PAFs and PuAFs. Subscriptions are available to Australian not-for-profit organisations. Visit [PafGUIDE](#).
- **GrantConnect** is a free Australian Government service. It is a centralised publication of forecast and current Australian Government grant opportunities and grants awarded. Visit [Grant Connect](#).
- **GEM Local** is an online grants calendar database designed to help small Australian charitable and community organisations find the right grants. A grants calendar can be customised with access to Australian grant and funder records, and the progress of your application can be tracked. The site offers tips and advice, however, it is a subscription-based service. Visit [Gem Local](#).
- **Funding Centre** provides tools and resources to learn about fundraising and provides guidance on improving fundraising activities. It is a subscription-based service. Visit [Funding Centre](#).
- **Community Council for Australia** is an independent non-political member-based organisation. It provides a national voice and facilitation for sector leaders to act on common and shared issues affecting the contribution, performance and viability of not-for-profit organisations in Australia. Visit [Community Council for Australia](#).
- **The Grants Hub** is an online database of more than 1,500 grant opportunities in Australia. It offers a subscription service. Visit [The Grants Hub](#).

SGS has found through other work, that there are philanthropic organisations and individuals who prefer to keep a low public profile, for whatever reasons, and are willing to make contributions toward initiatives which will benefit First Nations peoples. The key consideration is whether the funding source is willing to make a long-term investment to support NIERN's early formative years and which will enable NIERN to develop its own-source revenue streams.

A partial example of this is the way Watertrust Australia is funded. Watertrust Australia is funded by a coalition of philanthropies working together to provide financial support for an initial 10-year period.

In 2017, two of Australia's leading philanthropic organisations – The Myer Foundation and The Ian Potter Foundation – funded a major study to better understand how Australia could improve the sustainable management of its inland waters and catchments. The study identified the need for an independent organisation to be an honest broker between stakeholders, working with them to overcome the many policy challenges and improve water policy decision-making. Watertrust Australia commenced operations on 1 July 2021.

Watertrust Australia is funded by a coalition of philanthropic organisations working together to provide the financial support we need to operate at scale for at least 10 years with a five-year review point.

The funders include the Ian Potter Foundation, the Myer Foundation, Colonial Foundation, The Margaret Read "Kingston" Bequest, Bensen Family Foundation, Wright Burt Foundation, The Ross Trust, The William Buckland Foundation, The Yulgilbar Foundation, the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, The Quercus Foundation, The Letcome Foundation, Pixel Seed and the Doc Ross Foundation.

The funders continue to actively support ongoing fundraising efforts for the mission of supporting Australians to create enduring water and catchment policy change for the common good.

It is worth noting that Watertrust Australia's charter is it maintains its independence and impartiality by not taking sides, it doesn't get paid by anyone it works with, it does not push any particular policy agenda, and it does not cherry pick.

5.5 Summary

Ideally, funding needs to be guaranteed for a minimum of five years such that the early establishment steps can be taken without the threat of ongoing funding for early maturation being cut off.

A range of were reviewed. Only a small number government funding programs were identified as possible funding sources, including the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA), the Department of Education (DoE) and the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW). The primary difficulty with these sources of government grant funding is that they are targeted at very specific outcomes, have limited funding caps, have a short-term focus, and do not offer a great deal of flexibility. There is still merit in having discussions with NIAA, DCCEEW and DoE about a joint funding arrangement with funds coming from different program sources to provide the initial seed funding for NIERN's establishment phases.

Similarly, research funding opportunities are restricted in their scope, are not particularly oriented toward funding the development of research infrastructure, have a very narrow focus, and lack the flexibility required to foster the formation and growth of an entity as envisaged for NIERN.

A range of private philanthropic funding sources were identified. There may also be some lesser-known philanthropic organisations that are willing to make investments in support of First Nations' interests. The challenge will be in finding a source or sources that are willing to make a long-term investment to support NIERN's early formation and establishment phases and enable NIERN to develop its own-source revenue streams in order to make the intended transition to being fully self-funded.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

This section provides a summary of conclusions and recommendations for action.

6.1 Conclusion

The institutional landscape mapping of 49 organisations shows that there is an absence of organisations within NIERN's intended field of influence. NIERN would not be duplicating efforts of any existing entities.

The most suitable governance options involve pursuing an alliance arrangement with a like-minded organisation in the short term for the early formative stages, and becoming a public company limited by guarantee (CLG) under the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth) in the medium to longer term.

A two-class membership structure would best support NIERN's early adoption and establishment. Firstly, endorsing organisations for those who are willing and able to provide letters of support for the formation of NIERN and to lend their powers of moral suasion for the creation and establishment of NIERN as a functional entity for the purposes of advancing Indigenous environmental information and research interests. Secondly, partner organisations for those willing and able to make a financial contribution toward the establishment of NIERN and/or to pay a fee for services provided by NIERN when required, including for place-based or research approach and ethical engagement advice.

Funding should explore government grant programs, research funding for research infrastructure, and philanthropic sources.

6.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations are proposed to maintain momentum in seeking the establishment of NIERN as a formal entity:

- That the NIERN Reference Group considers seeking an alliance with a like-minded Indigenous organisation (for example, the National Native Title Council) in the short term to enable the foundations for NIERN to be laid.
- That the NIERN Reference Group gives consideration to incorporating NIERN as a public company limited by guarantee (CLG) under the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth) when the circumstances require the organisation to become a separate entity.
- That the NIERN Reference Group gives consideration to having a two-tier form of membership from the outset, comprising Endorsing organisations and Partner organisations, along the lines discussed in Part 4.2 of this report.
- That the NIERN Reference Group gives consideration to seeking meetings with the relevant federal government agencies and departments (NIAA, DCCEEW, DoE) either separately or jointly to explore

the possibility of drawing funding from their relevant programs to enable NIERN to be established. The Business Case that SGS Economics and Planning has also prepared will assist with arguing the case for dedicated funding for a minimum five-year period.

- That the NIERN Reference Group explore the possibilities of philanthropic funding as a clear alternative to seeking government funding.

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Appendix A: Summary of Institutional Landscape Mapping

1. National Native Title Council (NNTC)

What is it? The National Native Title Council (NNTC) is a not-for-profit, peak body for Australia's Native Title organisations. NNTC was formed in 2006 after the federal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) was abolished. Members include regional Native Title Representative Bodies (NTRBs), Native Title Service Providers (NTSPs), local Prescribed Bodies Corporate (PBCs) and Traditional Owner Corporations (TOCs) from across Australia.

What does it do? The NNTC's purpose is to strengthen the native title system to improve the economic, social and cultural well-being of Indigenous people. Through this it aims to improve the decision-making power of Indigenous people over their own Country, community, lands, waters and resources. The NNTC (i) provides resources and support for First Nations' development, (ii) works with all levels of government to improve native title laws and policies and (iii) works with partners and industry to advance the rights and interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

How does it function? The NNTC is a public company limited by guarantee under the *Corporations Act 2001 (Cth)*. The board comprises between three and ten Directors (85% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples) selected using processes to ensure representation of the interests of all members. NNTC derives income from a combinations of membership fees and grants.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research and ethics? The NNTC has a particular role in supporting native title bodies and traditional owner organisations in relation to native title and land rights law. It does not play a direct role in Indigenous environmental research and ethics.

However, it is important to note that the NNTC and the Coalition of Peaks negotiated a draft inland waters target for the Closing the Gap agreement with the Commonwealth state and territory governments. This draft target was agreed by Joint Council in August 2022.

<https://nntc.com.au/>

2. North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA)

What is it? The North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA) is an Indigenous-led not-for-profit company operating across north Australia that has been in existence since the 1990s. The initial founding members of NAILSMA were the Northern Land Council, Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation Pty Ltd and Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation. The Kimberley Land Council has also been admitted as a member.

In 2013, NAILSMA was the first Indigenous-led Australian organisation to be admitted as a Member of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

What does it do? Combining Indigenous knowledge with science and research, NAILSMA implements projects to assist Indigenous people manage their country sustainably for future generations. It delivers projects across four program areas: (i) Land and Sea Management; (ii) Education, Training and Professional Development; (iii) Economic Development and Employment, and (iv) Collaborative Research Partnerships.

Over the past decade it has delivered projects valued at more than \$30million across northern Australia. NAILSMA contribute actively to policy formulation across the north and nationally.

How does it function? NAILSMA operates under a formal constitution with a governing board of Directors. The Members may appoint four independent directors to the Board who are able to contribute relevant skills and experience to the Board, including one director who shall be appointed as the independent chairman of the company.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research and ethics? NAILSMA does not have a core role in Indigenous environmental research, but does have an involvement in research projects in its geographic area of interest. NAILSMA will also work with other stakeholders to realise its philosophy of Looking after Country and empowering Indigenous people to take control of their land and sea rights and interests.

<https://nailsma.org.au/>

3. Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations (CAPO)

What is it? The Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations (also known as the Coalition of Peaks or CAPO) was formed in 2018 to represent Indigenous interests in a refresh of Closing the Gap. Initially fourteen peak organisations, it has grown to be a representative body of around eighty Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled peak and member organisations which in turn represent about 800 organisations Australia-wide. CAPO's membership does not include any Indigenous organisations with a core function of Indigenous environmental research and ethics. The following organisations with a limited interest in Indigenous environmental research and ethics are members of CAPO: the National Native Title Council (NNTT), the four NT Land Councils, the NSW Aboriginal Land Council, the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations (FVTOC), and First Nations of South Australia Aboriginal Corporation (the Native Title Service Provider for SA).

What does it do? The Coalition of Peaks signed a partnership agreement with the Council of Australian Governments (CoAG; now National Cabinet) in 2019 that led to the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap* signed in July 2020. That agreement sets out a strategy and specific targets to close the gap through four priority reforms for transforming the way governments work with and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and seventeen socio-economic targets. Through its role on the Joint Council on Closing the Gap, the Coalition of Peaks monitors progress against the seventeen socio-economic targets in the agreement and advocates for change in the way governments work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

How does it function? The Coalition of Peaks is not an incorporated organisation but operates on the basis of a formal Terms of Reference. It has a lead convener elected by the members and a small secretariat focused on policy advice and communications hosted by the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO). The Coalition regularly convenes its members to discuss and agree on positions that the Coalition can take to governments. It obtains funding support from the Commonwealth.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research and ethics? CAPO does have a direct role in Indigenous environmental research and ethics.

However, the importance of land and water rights is reflected in Socio-Economic Outcome 15 of the Closing the Gap NSW Implementation Plan, which recognises the deep relationships Aboriginal people have with their land and waters and commits to streamlining support for Aboriginal people to realise their legal rights and interests over land, sea and inland water. CAPO plays a key role in monitoring the implementation of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, and therefore in monitoring the implementation of targets in relation to Outcome 15.

For example, the NNTC and other Coalition members negotiated with the Commonwealth State and Territory governments on a draft inland waters target for the *Closing the Gap* agreement which was agreed by Joint Council in August 2022. Once the target is finalised, the Coalition of Peaks will have a role in monitoring progress on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interests in inland water bodies under state and territory water rights regimes.

<https://www.naccho.org.au/coalition-of-peaks/#:~:text=The%20Coalition%20of%20Peaks%20have,in%20Closing%20the%20Gap%20at>

4. Lowitja Institute

What is it? The Lowitja Institute is Australia's only independent and community-controlled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research institute, working across Australia to prioritise Indigenous health research that benefits Indigenous peoples.

What does it do? The Lowitja Institute's principal activities are an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation working for the health and wellbeing of Australia's First Peoples through high impact quality research, knowledge translation, and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health researchers. As a community-controlled organisation, the Lowitja Institute focuses on supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health organisations and researchers. The Institute supports knowledge translation of Indigenous health research into policy and practice; develops Indigenous health research capabilities; and advocates on behalf of Indigenous health researchers.

How does it Function? As an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisation, the Lowitja Institute has an all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Board, comprising the Chairperson and seven Directors. The Constitution requires that the Board will be composed of four persons appointed by the Class A Members and five persons appointed by the Directors, and they must be comprised of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons, with at least one Torres Strait Islander person.

The Institute works with industry partners, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the general community to drive health research outcomes for Indigenous peoples.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research and ethics ? The Lowitja Institute does not have a direct role in Indigenous environmental research, however, it does play a very significant role in Indigenous health research.

It should be noted that the Lowitja Institute does not play a role in research ethics. The Lowitja Institute has tried on several occasions to play a role in this space, but continues to be actively excluded from taking on any role in this space.

<https://www.lowitja.org.au/>

5. ARC Training Centre for Healing Country

What is it? The ARC Training Centre for Healing Country ('Healing Country') builds a robust science-business interface that links Indigenous Australians to vibrant and resilient businesses in revegetation of damaged lands that reconnects communities to healthy landscapes to create ongoing financial independence through the carbon economy, honey production, seed supply, cultural species development and restoration services. The Centre has adopted a layered training framework to ensure future Indigenous practitioners and emerging leaders can continue to deliver cost-effective restoration business solutions at the scale and diversity required to service future demand.

What does it do? Through Research and Training:

- Heal Country through business-centred ecological restoration led and delivered by Indigenous Australians with support from restoration scientists and business practitioners in a culturally appropriate way.
- Improve 'Closing the Gap' outcomes of social and community wellbeing through culture-centric training and employment of Indigenous Australians that links to land, culture, and well-being.
- Provide the foundation of research and training required for the restoration industry to transform business opportunities of Indigenous Australians to deliver cost-effective restoration solutions that buttress customary activities, traditional practices, and Indigenous commercial enterprises.
- Generate restoration-industry-ready professionals to grow and sustain an Indigenous-led Restoration Economy.
- Implement training pathways and opportunities for Indigenous Australians through a layered, culturally safe training network (on-Country, vocational, tertiary) to pursue careers in restoration industries and businesses.
- Conduct innovative research on the immediate needs of markets to foster a diversified Indigenous-led Restoration Economy including seed and honey production areas, carbon sequestration, industries centred around culturally significant species.
- Innovate the business framework to activate an Indigenous-led Restoration Economy, to elevate the health and socioeconomic standing of Indigenous Australians.

How does it function? *The ARC Training Centre for Healing Country* is an Indigenous-led Centre designed with full Indigenous control: from leadership to governance to co-designed research programs. A 100% Indigenous *Healing Country* Board, guided by a Cultural Advice Council will oversee, and advise on *Healing Country*. The Centre Executive is supported by Centre Management, and a highly complementary, multidisciplinary team of world-leading Chief Investigators and relevant Industry Partner Investigators with the range of skills and experience required to effectively deliver on the aims of *Healing Country*.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research and ethics? The ARC Training Centre for Healing Country will undertake research in three key areas: Restoration with a focus on the development of restoration technologies; Socioeconomics with a focus on the quantification of the cumulative economic and commercial benefits derived from an Indigenous Restoration Economy (i.e. labour, wages growth, employment statistics, productivity, savings in welfare payments and investment in local and regional enterprises); and Ecohealth with a focus on the quantification of individual health and wellbeing benefits resulting from directly participating in restorative activities on-Country and reconnecting with Country.

<https://archealingcountry.com.au/>

6. ARC Centre of Excellence for Indigenous Futures

What is it? ARC Centre of Excellence for Indigenous Futures aims to transform and improve the life chances of Indigenous Australians by utilising Indigenous knowledges in unique trans-disciplinary cross-sector designed research to enhance Australia's understanding about the complex nature of Indigenous intergenerational inequity and to produce self-determined, evidence-based and impactful outcomes to fundamentally change the development and implementation of Indigenous policies and programs.

What does it do? The Centre expects to generate new knowledge to enable evidence-based policy formulation and implementation, including best practice models. The Centre's Strategic Objectives 2024-2030 include:

- Designing and delivering exceptional and internationally renowned program of Indigenous relational transdisciplinary research to reveal the complexities, processes and conditions that perpetuate Indigenous intergenerational inequity.
- Working collaboratively with community organisations, government, relevant industry stakeholders, community end-users and researchers in other sectors to deliver ground-breaking cross-sectoral policy reform and models of best-practice directly related to the four Priority Reform areas in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap 2020.
- Providing unprecedented relational transdisciplinary cross-sectoral research focusing on the interconnections between legal, education and health contexts and build new networks with relevant international research programs.
- Establishing a national (and international) Indigenous Knowledge Infrastructure (NIKI) for Indigenous futures, including cross-sectoral measures, models, data systems and adaptive structures.
- Supporting Indigenous researchers at all career stages by providing training, mentoring and career opportunities and fostering future generations of Indigenous Australian researchers trained through the Centre's comprehensive Indigenous leadership, mentoring and capacity building program.

How does it function? The administering organisation is the University of Queensland under the direction of Prof Brendan Hokowhitu. There are 28 participating organisations (<https://www.arc.gov.au/funding-research/discovery-linkage/linkage-program/arc-centres-excellence/arc-centre-excellence-indigenous-futures>) and partners (<https://indigenous-futures.org/about/partners>). The Centre has been funded to the tune of \$35M over 7 years from 2023 to 2030. The Centre operates on the basis of several Indigenous values, including Indigenous vitality, relationality, survivance, responsibility, self-determination, Indigenous leadership, community driven, and Indigenous growth. Critical to the Centre's legacy is building the next generation of Indigenous researchers. The Indigenous Futures Centre presents a longer-term commitment to Indigenous research capacity building upon the National Indigenous Research and Knowledges Network (NIRAKN) led by Distinguished Professor Aileen Moreton-Robinson.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research and ethics? To tackle the challenges of Indigenous intergenerational inequity, the Centre's transdisciplinary research is focussed on three key themes: Law and Justice; Education and Economies; and Health and Wellbeing. The Centre has only very recently been established. At this stage it is not clear to what extent the Centre will be directly involved in Indigenous environmental research. <https://indigenous-futures.org/>

7. ARC Centre of Excellence for Indigenous and Environmental Histories and Futures (CIEHF)

What is it? ARC Centre of Excellence for Indigenous and Environmental Histories and Futures (CIEHF), hosted by James Cook University, aims to generate a new direction in knowledge creation based on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led approaches to managing Land and Sea Country. CIEHF is a collaboration between 29 organisations, bringing together Australia's leading researchers and research organisations across diverse fields to pursue better outcomes for Land and Sea Country by bringing Indigenous and Western knowledges together to understand the long-term histories and near-term futures of Australia.

What does it do? CIEHF's mission is to set new standards for research and management on Country across Australia. It will be reciprocal, not extractive, and will have the wellbeing of Country and community at its heart. It will recruit, empower, and inspire the next generation of Indigenous researchers as well as training non-Indigenous researchers to collaborate in culturally appropriate ways. Driven by respectful, authentic co-design, and drawing from diverse cultural, environmental, and historical records, the Centre will work to enhance Land and Sea Country management, reframed by Indigenous knowledges and science. A significant aim of the Centre is to support the growth of Indigenous research capacity through training and mentoring programs. There will be 90 fully funded PhD and Masters scholarships available, with the majority identified for Indigenous candidates. The Centre will also deliver a comprehensive Education & Engagement program ranging from school outreach and curriculum development, to major exhibitions with museum partner to support students and teachers across the full education spectrum and contribute to national evidence-based curriculum development. The Centre expects to make a legacy contribution by developing complementary Indigenous and Western knowledge frameworks for modelling environmental, cultural, and historical change in Australia over the last millennium and into the near future.

How does it function? CIEHF is funded by a \$35 million grant from the ARC, and \$54 million from participating Indigenous Partner Organisations, universities, museums and other organisations. The funds will support at least 40 new research positions and more than 90 new research students over the life of the Centre. The Centre is a collaboration between 30 organisations, bringing together Australia's leading researchers and research organisations across diverse fields, including seven Australian universities – the James Cook University, Monash University, the University of Melbourne, Flinders University, Australian National University, the University of New South Wales, and the University of Western Australia – and a range of partners, including eight Indigenous Partner Organisations, leading museums and herbaria, and government research agencies. The Centre includes world-leading researchers from across the globe with deep expertise encompassing Indigenous knowledges, Indigenous science, archaeology, history, ecology, palaeoecology, mathematics, modelling, remote sensing, and genomics.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research and ethics? CIEHF has a direct role in Indigenous environmental research. CIEHF's research will support healthy Land and Sea Country management planning now and into the future, centred in Aboriginal- and Torres Strait Islander-led approaches.

<https://ciehf.au/>

8. National Indigenous Research and Knowledges Network (NIRAKN)

What is it? The National Indigenous Research and Knowledges Network (NIRAKN) was established in 2012 under the Special Research Initiative (SRI) for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Researchers' Network (ATSIRN).

NIRAKN came to a close in 2020, and is no longer active. There is a legacy website with copies of its Annual Reports providing insights into the workings and findings of the NIRAKN initiative.

What does it do? NIRAKN mentored, supported and engaged Indigenous researchers across disciplines and institutions through an extensive research capacity building program that was designed to develop foundational and high-level skills, as well as inform and transfer knowledge. The research capacity building program involved introductory-level research workshops delivered locally at participating institutions, an annual series of more advanced research workshops, Indigenous research methodologies masterclasses, critical reading groups, research residencies, and access to networking, mentoring, and other professional resources.

NIRAKN's Collaborative Research Program provided a platform for cross-institutional and multidisciplinary Indigenous research. The research efforts of NIRAKN's National and State Hubs are geared towards producing measurable high-quality research. In addition to high-quality original research and publications, NIRAKN also fostered engagement with Indigenous research and knowledges across the sector through international collaborations, symposiums, and seminars.

How does it function? NIRAKN was established in 2012 under the Special Research Initiative (SRI) for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Researchers' Network (ATSIRN) and was awarded \$3.2 million over four years. Throughout the years, the ARC has approved extension requests to NIRAKN. In 2018, NIRAKN's continuing success was recognised by the ARC through the granting of additional funds of \$899,333. This additional contribution brought the total funding to \$4.1 million which was utilised over a decade. The Australia Research Council (ARC) approved the last extension request of NIRAKN until 31 December 2022.

NIRAKN's vision was to develop a critical mass of skilled, informed and qualified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers who can address the urgent needs of our communities through the delivery of culturally appropriate research. NIRAKN endeavoured to facilitate a national Indigenous research agenda for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the nation.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research (and ethics)? In 2022-23, NIRAKN was in its final year of operations and the State Hubs were in the process of completing work on their research projects.

The website for NIRAKN has been revamped to share online offerings of the capacity building programs.

<https://www.nirakn.edu.au/>

9. Native Title Representative Bodies (NTRBs) & Native Title Service Providers (NTSPs)

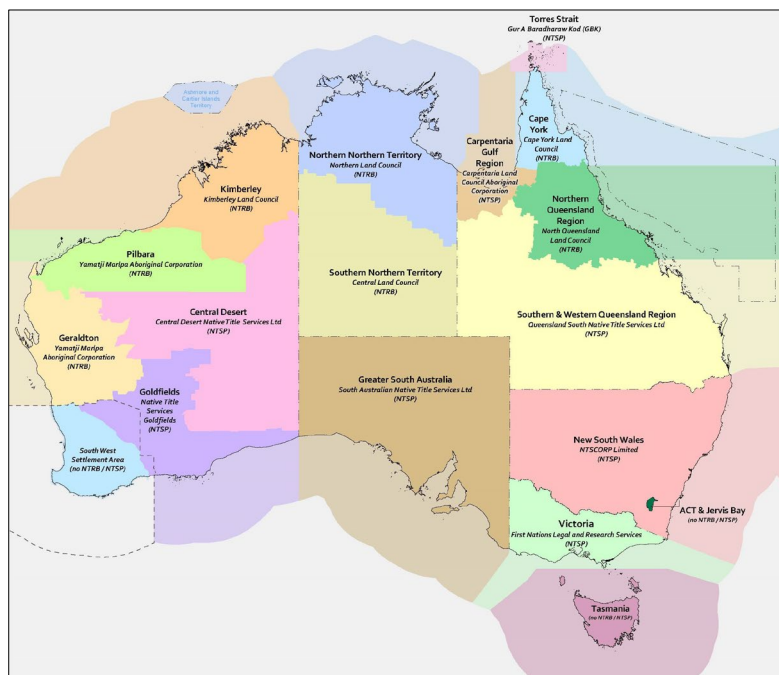
What are they? A Native Title Representative Body (NTRB) is a body recognised under the Native Title Act 1993 (Cth) (NTA) to provide legal and research services to native title claimants and holders, including to establish and support PBCs. A Native Title Service Provider (NTSP) provides the same services as an NTRB in areas where there is no NTRB, but NTSPs are not recognised under the NTA (**Figure 6**).

What do they do? NTRBs/NTSPs facilitate and assist native title and Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) matters including identifying native title holders, consultation processes, applications, notifications, future-act representation, dispute resolution and decision review processes. Native title holders or claimants are not required to act only through an appointed NTRB/NTSP.

How do they function? All NTRBs/NTSPs are established independently under other Commonwealth statutes with responsibilities they must perform alongside their responsibilities under the NTA. The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) funds all 14 NTRBs/NTSPs across most of Australia (see Fig 2). NTRBs and NTSPs are appointed for a fixed period by the Attorney-General under Part 11 of the NTA.

What is their role in Indigenous environmental research? NTRBs and NTSPs do not have a direct role in Indigenous environmental research. Native title determinations often include a range of rights and interests in Country. Where native title rights and interests are recognised, they are communal or group rights, and the right is vested in the Prescribed Body Corporate (PBC). NTRBs/NTSPs play a vital role as first point of contact for third parties wanting to engage with native title holders in research activities.

Figure 6: NTRB and NTSP areas



Source: National Native Title Tribunal (2023). <https://www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/environment-and-land/native-title-representative-bodies-and-service-providers>

10. Prescribed Bodies Corporate (PBC) and Registered Native Title Bodies Corporate (RNTBC)

What are they? The *Native Title Act 1993 (Cth)* (NTA) states that when a native title determination is made, native title holders must establish a corporation called a Prescribed Body Corporate (PBC) to manage and protect their native title rights and interests. All PBCs must be incorporated as an Aboriginal Corporation under the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act) 2006* (CATSI ACT) and must be registered with the National Native Title Tribunal (NNTT). When a PBC is officially registered, it becomes a Registered Native Title Body Corporate (RNTBC). While RNTBC is the accurate name for these corporations, most people still call them PBCs.

What do they do? The main purpose of a PBC is to hold and manage native title rights and interests and look after country and culture according to the wishes of the members and native title group. This includes managing future acts (proposals for work that will affect native title), Indigenous Land Usage Agreements (ILUAs – negotiations between governments, companies and the PBC about future developments on the land), considering compensation matters and a range of activities associated with exercising, negotiating, implementing and monitoring native title agreements.

How do they function? The corporate design of a PBC is influenced by a range of considerations including the traditional laws and customs of the native title group, whether it is located in a remote, regional or urban area, as well as its size and future aspirations. Membership options include a participatory model (all adult native title holders can be members) or a representative model (a smaller number of native title holders are appointed to represent all native title holders). PBCs may also become involved in land and water management, tenure issues, cultural heritage biodiversity and environmental protection, and land use planning. NIAA supports PBCs through basic support funding or through a capacity building program.

What are their roles in Indigenous environmental research? PBCs/RNTBCs do play an active role in Indigenous environmental research on their Country. Where native title rights and interests are recognised, they are communal or group rights, and the right is vested in the Prescribed Body Corporate (PBC). PBCs or RNTBCs are potentially important partners in Indigenous led environmental research, and more especially for granting access to Country and for permission to access their ecological and environmental and cultural knowledge systems.

<https://nativetitle.org.au/learn/role-and-function-pbc/about-pbcs>

<https://www.oric.gov.au/registered-native-title-bodies-corporate>

11. Northern Territory Land Councils:

Central Land Council (CLC)

What is it? The Central Land Council (CLC) was formed in response to the Woodward Royal Commission recommendation that Aboriginal Land Councils be established in the Northern Territory (NT). It is established under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* (Cth) (ALRA). The CLC is also a corporate Commonwealth entity and an appointed Native Title Representative Body under the *Native Title Act 1993* (NTA). Its jurisdiction covers 777,000 km².

What does it do? The CLC performs a range of functions under both the ALRA and the NTA to ascertain and represent the interests of Aboriginal people in the southern half of the NT. These include supporting Traditional Owners and native title holders to negotiate agreements with third parties; assisting with land claims and the protection of sacred sites; consulting with Aboriginal people about the management of their land, assisting them with carrying out commercial activities on their land, supervising and providing administrative or other assistance for their Land Trusts, and the assessing permits to third parties for activities on Aboriginal land. The CLC also administers a wide range of programs for the benefit of our constituents including environmental management, community development, governance, cultural heritage, and customary practices.

How does it function? The CLC is a representative body of 90 Aboriginal people elected from communities in the southern half of the Northern Territory to represent their interests and set policy and direction of the CLC. The elected members represent 75 remote communities and outstations across nine regions. The CLC has 8 offices across these regions.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research and ethics? The CLC has a legal responsibility to represent its constituents' land rights and interests, of which environmental research may be an integral part. The CLC plays a very active role advocating on behalf of constituents to protect their land and water rights and influence environmental policy and regulation in the NT and in national environmental reforms.

<https://www.clc.org.au/>

Northern Land Council (NLC)

What is it? The Northern Land Council (NLC) was formed in response to the Woodward Royal Commission recommendation that Aboriginal Land Councils be established in the Northern Territory (NT). It is established under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 (Cth)* (ALRA). The NLC is also a corporate Commonwealth entity and an appointed Native Title Representative Body (NTRB) under the *Native Title Act 1993* (NTA). It is also the NTRB for the Tiwi Islands and Groote Eylandt. Its jurisdiction covers 605,800 km².

What does it do? The NLC performs a range of functions under both the ALRA and the NTA to represent the interests of Aboriginal people of the northern region of the NT. These include helping Traditional Owners negotiate agreements with third parties; assisting with land claims and the protection of sacred sites; consulting with Aboriginal people about the management of their land, assisting them with carrying out commercial activities on their land, supervising and providing administrative or other assistance for their Land Trusts, and the issue of permits to third parties for activities on Aboriginal land. The NLC also administers programs in relation to environmental management, community development, governance, cultural heritage, and customary practices.

How does it function? The NLC's Full Council, with 83 members, is the major decision-making body of the organisation. Councillors determine policies and directions, approve land use agreements and mining and exploration tenements for which Traditional Owners have given their consent. The NLC also has an Executive Council comprised of 14 members. The NLC has 12 offices across 7 regions.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research and ethics? The NLC has a legal responsibility to represent its constituents' land rights and interests, of which environmental research may be an integral part. The NLC plays a very active role advocating on behalf of constituents to protect their land and water rights and influence environmental policy and regulation in the NT and in national environmental reforms.

<https://www.nlc.org.au/>

Tiwi Land Council (TLC)

What is it? The Tiwi Land Council (TLC) was formed in 1978 to represent the Aboriginal people of the Tiwi Islands, which includes Melville and Bathurst Islands. It was established following representations to the Federal Government by the Tiwi people for recognition of their distinct geographic and cultural identity. It was subsequently formally established under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 (Cth)* (ALRA). The TLC is also a corporate Commonwealth entity.

What does it do? The TLC performs a range of functions under the ALRA, and other Commonwealth and NT legislation, to represent the interests of Tiwi people. These include helping Traditional Owners negotiate agreements with third parties; assisting with land claims and the protection of sacred sites; consulting with Aboriginal people about the management of their land, assisting them with carrying out commercial activities on their land, supervising and providing administrative or other assistance for their Land Trusts, and the issue of permits to third parties for activities on Aboriginal land. The TLC also administers programs in relation to environmental management, community development, governance, cultural heritage, and customary practices.

How does it function? The TLC's Council has 32 members comprised of four representatives from each of the eight clans or 'Country' groups of the Tiwi Islands. The TLC has 2 offices: one on Melville Island and the other in Darwin.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research and ethics? The TLC has a legal responsibility to represent its constituents' land rights and interests, of which environmental research may be an integral part. The TLC plays a very active role advocating on behalf of constituents to protect their land and water rights and influence environmental policy and regulation in the NT and in national environmental reforms.

<https://www.tiwilandcouncil.com/>

Anindilyakwa Land Council (ALC)

What is it? The Anindilyakwa Land Council (ALC) is the peak representative body for the Traditional Owners of the Groote Archipelago. It was established in 1991 under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 (Cth)* (ALRA). The ALC is also a corporate Commonwealth entity.

What does it do? The ALC performs a range of functions under the ALRA, and other Commonwealth and NT legislation, to represent the interests of its people. These include helping Traditional Owners negotiate agreements with third parties; assisting with land claims and the protection of sacred sites; consulting with Aboriginal people about the management of their land, assisting them with carrying out commercial activities on their land, supervising and providing administrative or other assistance for their Land Trusts, and the issue of permits to third parties for activities on Aboriginal land. The ALC also administers programs in relation to environmental management, community development, governance, cultural heritage, and customary practices.

How does it function? The ALC board comprises representatives from the 14 clans of the Groote Archipelago, and one community representative from each of the townships of Angurugu, Milyakburra and Umbakumba. The elected members serve a term of three years. The board provides the strategic vision and oversight of the ALC. The ALC Head Office is on Groote Eylandt with three other offices in the Archipelago.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research and ethics? The ALC has a legal responsibility to represent its constituents' land rights and interests, of which environmental research may be an integral part. The ALC plays a very active role advocating on behalf of constituents to protect their land and water rights and influence environmental policy and regulation in the NT and in national environmental reforms.

<https://anindilyakwa.com.au/>

12. New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council (NSWALC)

What is it? The NSW Aboriginal Land Council, established in 1977, is the peak advocacy body for Aboriginal Land Rights in NSW. It represents 121 Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs) across the state and, as such, is the largest member based Aboriginal organisation in NSW.

What does it do? NSWALC's functions include land acquisition, overseeing the administration of LALCs, policy and advice, administration of statutory accounts, Aboriginal culture and heritage, and financial stewardship of the network. The LALCs manage and deliver a range of support services to their communities at the local level including housing, employment, training, culture and heritage, property acquisition and management. The aim of the LALC structure is to achieve a high degree of participation by every Aboriginal person in the affairs of their local community. NSWALC also acts as an advisor to, and negotiates with, Governments and other stakeholders to ensure the preservation of Aboriginal land rights.

How does it function? NSWALC was formally constituted in 1983 as a statutory corporation under the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 (NSW)* (ALRA). Nine Councillors, representing each of the nine regions in NSW, are elected by registered voting members of each LALC for a four-year term. The elected Council then appoints a Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson for a two-year term, after which, they are eligible for re-election.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research? As the peak organisation for Aboriginal land rights in NSW, NSWALC plays an active role in environmental research. For many years, NSWALC has been and remains a strong advocate for Aboriginal peoples' land and water rights in NSW. This includes attending commonwealth, state and regional forums advocating for land and water access/ownership and preparing submissions to commonwealth and state government agencies on a range of legislation and policy matters. Supporting LALCs to maximise the ownership, control and management of land and water for cultural, social, economic and environmental purposes is a key focus for NSWALC under the ALRA.

The importance of land and water rights is reflected in Socio-Economic Outcome 15 of the Closing the Gap NSW Implementation Plan, which recognises the deep relationships Aboriginal people have with their land and waters and commits to streamlining support for Aboriginal people to realise their legal rights and interests over land, sea and inland water.

NSWALC is a member of the NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations (NSW CAPO), which works in partnership with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations (ACCOs) and the NSW Government to address Outcome 15 in the *Closing the Gap NSW Implementation Plan*.

<https://alc.org.au/>

13. Desert Knowledge Australia

What is it? Desert Knowledge Australia (DKA) is a Statutory corporation of the Northern Territory, established in 2003 to manage the Desert Knowledge Precinct in partnership with the Desert People's Centre, and under an Indigenous Land Use Agreement with native title holders, Lhere Artepe Aboriginal Corporation.

What does it do? The *Desert Knowledge Australia Act 2003* (NT) outlines the objectives of the organisation:

- a). to encourage and facilitate education and training, research, commerce and technology that is relevant to the health, well-being, sustainable economic and social development and improved livelihoods of all communities in deserts and arid lands;
- b). to develop wealth creation activities in deserts and arid lands in a manner that promotes harmony in and between communities in deserts and arid lands while maintaining the economy and environment of deserts and arid lands in an ecologically sustainable manner and the culture and identity of those communities;
- c). to encourage and facilitate the formation of partnerships, joint ventures, alliances, networks and other cooperative arrangements for the purpose of achieving the objects specified in paragraphs (a) and (b);

DKA facilitates the development of educational, employment and enterprise pathways, arid zone focused research and technological progress relevant to the well-being, resilience and sustainability of desert communities, both with-in Australia and around the World. DKA acts as Manager of the Desert Knowledge Precinct and its primary operations, and fulfils the responsibility of achieving the aspirations of the DKA Board via its Strategic Plans, including fostering flagship projects, such as Codes 4 Life, Alice Springs Future Grid, and Intyalheme Centre for Future Energy. DKA works with the people, communities and organisations of central Australia who share our vision for strong resilient remote communities, to form partnerships, opportunities, and delivery of projects that bring tangible value to the desert region. DKA facilitates innovative projects that: Promote social well-being and positive change for our region; Aim to achieve climate adaptive, resilient remote communities; Explore and deliver technology relevant to sustainable desert living; Create research opportunities that support economic growth.

How does it function? DKA is governed by a Board and collaborates with several like-minded organisations through partnership arrangements to maximise DKA's impact. DKA has waxed and waned over the years as governments, budgets and policy priorities have changed. DKA is subject to Ministerial Direction, administered under the NT Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade, has its financial statements audited by the NT Auditor-General and requires the approval of the Treasurer to enter business partnerships and joint ventures. DKA holds the Crown Land Lease for the 73-hectare, Desert Knowledge Precinct.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research and ethics? The Desert Knowledge Research Institute's (DKRI) is part of DKA. DKRI's mission is to recognise and grow the value of remote and regional Australia through high-quality applied research that capitalises on the unique characteristics and strengths of the scientific and cultural knowledge of remote, arid, and desert regions. DKRI's strategic focus areas for 2019–2022: Targeted research programs in areas of people, place and knowledge; Generating tangible research outputs that are of practicable value; Promoting community-driven research; Being self-sustaining.

<https://www.dka.com.au/>

14. Kimberley Land Council (KLC)

What is it? The Kimberley Land Council (KLC) is a registered Aboriginal Corporation under the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006 (Cth)* (CATSI Act). It is also a corporate Commonwealth entity and an appointed Native Title Representative Body (NTRB) under the Native Title Act 1993 (NTA). It was established in 1978 working or and with Traditional Owners to 'get back country, look after country and get control of the future'. KLC has grown to become the peak Indigenous body in the Kimberley region.

What does it do? The KLC works with Aboriginal people to secure native title, protect and enhance the high biodiversity values of the region, pursue cultural enterprise development and work to improve socioeconomic circumstances. As the native title representative body for the region, the KLC has achieved native title determinations across 97% of the Kimberley, and at the end of the reporting period there were 28 PBCs in the Kimberley managing native title rights and interests. The KLC works with PBCs to expand capacity and capability, as well as economic development opportunities and activities. The KLC is one of the biggest employers in the Kimberley, with about 130 staff across the divisions of native title, legal, land and sea management, corporate services and finance.

How does it function? The KLC is governed by an Executive Board comprising four Directors who are Cultural Advisors Directors and seven Directors who are Representative Council Directors. The Corporation must have a minimum of three Directors and a maximum of twelve Directors. It has offices in Broome, Kununurra and Derby as well as smaller satellite stations in remote communities.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research and ethics? The KLC plays an active role in representing the land and water rights of Aboriginal people in the Kimberley, at both state and national levels. The KLC has a Research Ethics and Access Committee (REAC), comprised of Kimberley Land Council (KLC) Board members, which oversees and regulates researchers wishing to conduct research on traditional Aboriginal lands or waters in the Kimberley, with Kimberley Aboriginal communities, and/or with the KLC.

The REAC Assessment Team is comprised of KLC Management and specialised staff who meet on a monthly basis to review External Research/Project Proposals and External Access Requests against KLC Policies and Protocols.

The KLC intellectual Property and Traditional Knowledge Policy has been developed and endorsed by the KLC Board and is overseen by the KLC REAC Assessment Team. It is designed to set standards for how research is conducted involving Aboriginal people in the Kimberley region.

External parties interested in doing research with Kimberley saltwater groups (groups whose Native Title claims or determinations include Kimberley coastal areas) are required to follow the Kimberley saltwater country research protocol. For anyone wishing to conduct activities with Kimberley Aboriginal people, or on their lands/waters, other than saltwater Country, they must comply with the **KLC Research Protocol** and complete the **Researchers Questionnaire** that has been developed to encompass key aspects of the Intellectual Property & Traditional Knowledge Policy

<https://www.klc.org.au/>

15. Cape York Land Council (CYLC)

What is it? The Cape York Land Council (CYLC) was established in 1990 to represent the Cape York Aboriginal peoples' land and sea rights and interests. The CYLC is incorporated under the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006 (Cth)*. The CYLC is also the Native Title Representative Body (NTRB) for the Cape York region. The CYLC's role is to ensure that connection to Country remains strong, and that Aboriginal people on Cape York are able to manage and use land for cultural, economic and social purposes.

What does it do? The CYLC's key priority is enhancing Cape York Aboriginal peoples' rights and interests in land and sea by advocating and achieving changes to laws, policies, processes and services. Under its role as the NTRB for the region, the CYLC has established a Prescribed Body Corporate (PBC) Support Unit to provide support services to PBCs and Registered Native Title Bodies Corporate (RNTBCs) so that native title claimants and holders have legally compliant and capable organisations to represent their interests and achieve benefits from native title. Since 1990, the CYLC has secured native title rights on behalf of the Traditional Owners, covering 45% of the Cape, through 38 completed determinations. There is one active claim (Cape York United #1) which covers the remaining 55%.

How does it function? The CYLC is governed by a Board of Directors comprising a representative from each of the 17 communities in the Cape York region. The Board of Directors is responsible for setting strategic direction, representing Council at political forums, seminars and meetings and the overall monitoring of operations. The CEO is appointed by the Board to manage the day-to-day business of the CYLC and executes directions from the Board through the daily operations of the CYLC.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research and ethics? The CYLC as a NTRB does not play a direct role in Indigenous environmental research. However, similar to the Land Councils in other jurisdictions it does play a role in overseeing research activities with native title holders and PBCs on the Cape.

<https://www.cylc.org.au/>

16. Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC)

What is it? Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC) is recognised as a Native Title Representative Body (NTRB) under the *Native Title Act 1993 (Cth)* (NTA). In this role it preserves, protects and promotes the recognition of native title in the Yamatji (Geraldton) and Marlpa (Pilbara) regions of Western Australia. As an Aboriginal corporation, YMAC is governed by the Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006 (Cth) (CATSI Act). The YMAC represents over 20 Traditional Owner groups, all with their own language, culture and traditions, over one-third of Western Australia.

What does it do? The YMAC provides legal advice and representation for Traditional Owners, anthropological and cultural heritage services, governance and administrative support to Prescribed Bodies Corporate (PBCs) and Aboriginal corporations, natural resource management support (including ranger and land and sea management programs), and land administration. The YMAC provides a range of other services to its members including heritage protection services and programs in community and economic development and natural resource management.

How does it function? The strategic and policy direction of the YMAC is set by its Board of Directors who meet at least every four months. The Board also acts as an advocacy group for traditional Owners in the Yamatji (Gascoyne-Geraldton) and Marlpa (Pilbara) regions, particularly in relation to government policies and development activities affecting Country. The Board is accountable to the corporation's members and ultimately responsible for the performance of YMAC's statutory functions. The Board is comprised of members from YMAC's two committees – the Yamatji Regional Committee and the Pilbara Regional Committee – elected to represent their respective region at annual regional meetings. Six members from each committee join to form the twelve-member Board of Directors, providing equal representation for both regions.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research and ethics? YMAC provides operational and administrative support to deliver several Aboriginal Land Sea Management projects at different stages of development, including research and development for new ranger projects and Indigenous Protected Areas (IPA).

<https://www.ymac.org.au/>

17. Gur A Baradharaw Kod Sea and Land Council Torres Strait Islander Corporation (GBK)

What is it? Gur A Baradharaw Kod Sea and Land Council Torres Strait Islander Corporation (GBK) is a not-for-profit organisation incorporated under the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act) 2006 (Cth)* (CATSI) Act. The Torres Strait is the only part of Australia that shares an international border and is directly impacted by rights protected under the Torres Strait Treaty.

What does it do? The GBK is the peak body of 22 Registered Native Title Bodies Corporate (RNTBC) across 18 inhabited islands in the Torres Strait. In that role it provides support to the native title holders and builds RNTBC capacity to fulfil their responsibilities to hold and manage their land and seas in accordance with traditional laws and customs. The GBK is also the Native Title Service Provider (NTSP) for the region, assisting Torres Strait Islander people with all aspects of native title under the *Native Title Act 1993 (Cth)*. In addition, the GBK delivers projects and programs focused on improving inequality and building sustainable communities.

How does it function? The GBK is managed by a council of 22 Torres Strait Islander directors representing each RNTBC.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research and ethics? GBK does not play a direct role in Indigenous environmental research, but it does represent the interests of traditional owners and native title holders throughout the region, including their land and sea management research interests and priorities.

<https://www.gbk.org.au/>

18. Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN)

What is it? Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN) is a not-for-profit company that was established in 1998 to secure water holdings for Traditional Owners and act as an advocacy body for Indigenous water rights in the Murray Darling Basin. It is a confederation of over 20 Indigenous Nations or Traditional Owners in the southern part of the Murray Darling Basin.

What does it do? MLDRIN facilitates and advocates with different levels of government to ensure participation of First Nations in decision making on the management of the Murray and Lower Darling River systems. MLDRIN has a role in assessing Water Resource Plans developed under the Murray Darling Basin Plan. MLDRIN also advances the water interests of First Nations people through research and implementation projects including the *Cultural Water for Cultural Economies* project in the state of Victoria, the *Cultural Flows* program which has worked with Nations to outline their water aspirations and the *Aboriginal Waterway Assessments* to assess cultural and environmental health of Country.

How does it function? MLDRIN is an Australian Public Company, limited by guarantee, under the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth). Membership of MLDRIN Confederation is for Traditional Owner groups or Nations whose Country is within the Southern Murray-Darling Basin. MLDRIN currently represents 19 Nations.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research and ethics? MLDRIN is involved in Indigenous water research. MLDRIN continues to play an active role in shaping water policy in the context of the Murray Darling Basin and nationally. In 2007 MLDRIN led the development of the Echuca Declaration that asserts the inherent rights of Rivers and the Traditional Owners as custodians and formalized the concept of Cultural Flows: water entitlements that are owned and managed by First Nations for a range of cultural, social, environmental and economic purposes. The ideas contained in the Echuca Declaration have contributed to ongoing reform of water policy and management in Australia.

<https://mldrin.org/>

19. Northern Basin Aboriginal Nations (NBAN)

What is it? The Northern Basin Aboriginal Nations (NBAN) is a Traditional Owner based not-for-profit company and peak body with a primary focus on cultural and natural resource management. It represents, advocates for and empowers First Nations in water management and ownership, in the northern Murray Darling Basin. NBAN was formed in April 2010.

What does it do? NBAN was formed to bring together Aboriginal interests in the northern part of the Murray-Darling Basin, matching MLDRIN in the southern part of the Basin. NBAN provides strategic advice on First Nations' water rights, interests and ownership with a focus on improving its Nations' spiritual, cultural, environmental, social and economic conditions which are the main components of the Echuca Declaration.

How does it function? NBAN is an Australian Public Company, limited by guarantee, under the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth). Membership comprises 22 Aboriginal Nation representatives from the northern part of the Murray Darling Basin plus representatives of the NSW Aboriginal Land Council, and the Southern Queensland Landscapes (formerly the Queensland Murray-Darling Committee, the Condamine Alliance and South West Queensland Natural Resources Management).

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research? From 2009, NBAN worked in parallel to MLDRIN shaping water policy in the Murray Darling Basin and nationally. In December 2022, collaboration between NBAN and the Murray Darling Basin Authority ended.

<https://www.facebook.com/northernbasinaboriginalnations/>

20. Martuwarra Fitzroy River Council (MFRC)

What is it? The Martuwarra Fitzroy River Council was established by Traditional Owners and their registered native title body corporates within the Fitzroy River Watershed in May 2018. The Council is a bottom-up governance model led by diverse senior elders as one society under First Law united as ‘one mind and one voice’. Council was formed in response to the Fitzroy River Declaration (2016) key principles set out in the Declaration to promote and protect Martuwarra, Fitzroy River. During 2018-2020 the WA State Government conducted a series of key planning water forums resulting in a proposal to develop a management plan, water allocation plans and national parks along the Fitzroy River. The Council believes the Fitzroy River is a living ancestral serpent being, with a right to live and flow, an ‘asset in the commons’ for the benefit of all present and future generations.

What does it do? The Council has extensive national and global network of industry, legal scholars, multi-disciplinary university partners engaged in research and evidence-based practice to support consultative process with governments and other stakeholders. The Council promotes procedural and distributive justice to ensure co-decision making on water planning and adaptive management of Martuwarra Watershed. It focuses on community-led initiatives to develop sustainable lifeways and livelihoods. It acts as a knowledge broker to influence research, policy, law, and investment to transform climate, land and water justice in the pursuit of Indigenous rights.

How does it function? The Council is an incorporated association under the *Associations Incorporation Act 2015* (WA). The Council Directors are guided by senior elders with cultural authority.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research? The Martuwarra Fitzroy River Council is involved in First Nations water research in the Fitzroy River catchment. The Council plays a significant role in influencing water policy for Martuwarra in Western Australia. Building from its focus on Martuwarra, the Council also engages in broader First Nations water reform issues at State and national levels.

<https://www.martuwarra.org/>

21. Great Barrier Reef Foundation (GBRF) Traditional Owner Partnerships

What is it?

The Great Barrier Reef Foundation is an independent entity governed by a Board of Directors and is registered and regulated by the Australian Charities and Not-for-profit-Commission. The Board comprises representatives of Australian business, science and philanthropy, reflecting the charter to bring all sectors together for the benefit of the Great Barrier Reef.

The Reef Trust – Great Barrier Reef Foundation Partnership (Partnership) is a \$443.3 million six-year grant between the (former) Department of the Environment and Energy, which manages the Reef Trust, and the Foundation. It has been established to build on and support delivery of the joint Australian and Queensland Government Reef 2050 Long-term Sustainability Plan (Reef 2050 Plan).

The objective of the Reef Trust Partnership is to achieve significant measurable improvement in the health of the Great Barrier Reef consistent with the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan. There are six (6) partnership components: water quality, the crown of thorns starfish control, reef restoration adaptation science, traditional owner reef protection, community reef protection and integrated monitoring and reporting.

What does it do? Through the Partnership's **Investment Strategy**, the Foundation secured the largest single investment in Traditional Owner Reef Protection to date. On top of the \$12 million initially earmarked for Indigenous Reef Protection in the **Grant Agreement**, the Foundation allocated additional funding from across the Partnership components to deliver \$51.8 million in total towards co-designed, Traditional Owner-led Reef protection. This is intended to build on and scale up the work already being done by Traditional Owners along the Reef and its Catchment, including more than 200 Rangers and 70 Land and Sea Country groups.

The Traditional Owner Partnerships program includes several components, including Traditional Owner participation in Reef Governance; Traditional Owner Leadership and Innovation Projects; Traditional Owner-led Grants; and Traditional Owner Engagement and Communication.

How does it Function?

The Great Barrier Reef Foundation receives funding from the Australian government and philanthropic sources. The Board of Directors of the Foundation oversee the role of the Managing Director and has the job of ensuring all activities are directed towards securing the funds needed to support research to protect and restore the Great Barrier Reef. And importantly, these research outcomes must help and inform the Reef managers.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research? The process of selecting the priority research projects for funding is overseen by the Foundation's International Scientific Advisory Committee. Members of the International Scientific Advisory Committee (ISAC) are leaders in Reef research and management. ISAC ensures all investments are independent and focused on strategic and high-priority knowledge to benefit the Reef.

<https://www.barrierreef.org/what-we-do/reef-trust-partnership/traditional-owner-reef-protection/traditional-owner-advisory-group>

22. Reef Traditional Owner Task Force (REEFTO)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Great Barrier Reef and its Catchment and as First Nations peoples hold inherent rights, interests, and obligations to protect and care for their Country. There are over 70 Traditional Owner groups along the Queensland coastline whose traditional estates extend over the Great Barrier Reef and many more groups whose customary estates form part of the Reef's Catchment.

What is it? The Reef 2050 Plan is Australia's overarching long-term strategy for protecting and managing the Great Barrier Reef. The first Reef 2050 Plan was released in 2015. It was led by the Australian and Queensland governments in response to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee's recommendation to develop a long-term plan for sustainable development to protect the Reef's Outstanding Universal Value. The Plan was developed with input from Traditional Owners, industry, researchers and the broader community. There was a mid-term review and update of the first Reef 2050 Plan in 2018. The second, or 'current' Reef 2050 Plan covers the period 2021-2025 and was released in December 2021. This Traditional Owner Implementation Plan outlines actions to achieve Traditional Owners aspirations for the Great Barrier Reef as part of the second Reef 2050 Plan. The Reef 2050 Traditional Owner Implementation Plan outlines actions to achieve Traditional Owners' aspirations for the Great Barrier Reef as part of the Reef 2050 Plan.

What does it do? The REEF Traditional Owner Task Force brings Traditional Owner actions together from across the Reef 2050 Plan into a cohesive framework for implementation. The Reef 2050 Traditional Owner Implementation Plan is about delivering on Traditional Owner priorities; Honouring the past and looking into the future by ensuring the work of Elders is respected and their voices are not lost; Recognising the inherent rights, interests, obligations and aspirations as Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Great Barrier Reef and that Country and People are one; and Accountability by ensuring actions are appropriately resourced, their progress tracked and implementation is reported on as part of the Australian and Queensland government's obligations to protect the Reef.

The Implementation Plan is about getting on with the job of doing. Bringing Traditional Owner actions together in one place and providing a platform to coordinate and drive their implementation. The Plan is a way for Traditional Owners to work with each other and Reef 2050 stakeholders to improve the approach; build more effective partnerships and grow capacity to lead, co-design and co-deliver management programs; better coordinate programs across the Reef and Catchment; drive investment; and elevate the voice of Traditional Owners through the implementation of Indigenous-led approaches to reporting and their incorporation into integrated monitoring and reporting frameworks at local, national and international levels.

How does it function? The Traditional Owner Taskforce forms part of the overarching Reef 2050 Plan. Implementation of the Reef 2050 Plan which is overseen by the Australian and Queensland governments. Governance arrangements for the Plan's implementation are outlined below. A key action within this Plan is to increase Traditional Owner participation, voice and capacity in Reef governance. The Reef 2050 Plan is a schedule to the Great Barrier Reef Intergovernmental Agreement between the Australian and Queensland governments. Its implementation is overseen by the minister with responsibility for Reef matters from each of the Australian and Queensland governments.

Decision making and delivery of actions under the Plan are guided by advice from the Reef 2050 Plan Independent Expert Panel, the Reef 2050 Advisory Committee and relevant government departments and agencies. The Reef 2050 Plan Independent Expert Panel includes members with scientific (biophysical, heritage, social and economic) expertise. The Panel currently has one Indigenous member, Adjunct Associate Professor Stephan Schnierer. The Reef 2050 Advisory Committee includes Traditional Owners

and individuals from a range of industry bodies and non-government organisations, local government and community representatives. Reef Traditional Owners hold two positions (one female and one male) on the Committee. There are also male and female Traditional Owner proxies. Day-to-day management of the Plan is coordinated by a joint team of officials from the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment; the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority; and the Queensland Government Department of Environment and Science. This includes senior executive oversight by a Reef 2050 Executive Steering Committee with a member from all three agencies.

The Reef 2050 Traditional Owner Steering Group proposed the creation of a Traditional Owner Taskforce to oversee the delivery of the Implementation Plan. If successful, this will be the first time resources will be dedicated to an independent Traditional Owner-led body to drive implementation of actions under the Reef 2050 Plan. The Taskforce would have three key priorities:

1. Engaging with Traditional Owners on options for a Sea Country Alliance (Reef-wide and regionally) and implementing the preferred option.
2. Overseeing the delivery of strategic policy and capacity building actions in the Implementation Plan while a Sea Country Alliance is being established.
3. Monitoring and reporting on the delivery of Traditional Owner actions in this Plan as part of the broader Reef 2050 integrated monitoring and reporting.

The Taskforce's key priority will be to progress options around the establishment of a Reef-wide Sea Country Alliance (see Partnerships and Capacity Action PC-5, pp 43). This action, together with the establishment of a Futures Fund (See Investment Action I-4, pp 54) will be central to providing Traditional Owners a strong and representative voice and independent source of funding for achieving our long-term aspirations for the Reef. The Implementation Plan will be formally reviewed every five years as part of the review and updating of the Reef 2050 Plan.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research and ethics? The Traditional Owner Implementation Plan includes several actions relating to Indigenous environmental research. For example:

- Increase Traditional Owner involvement and leadership opportunities in the research, surveillance and management of biosecurity risks and delivery of community education to programs to increase awareness of threats and enable early detection.
- Increase Traditional Owner involvement and leadership opportunities in the research, surveillance and management of marine biosecurity risks and the delivery of community education to programs to increase awareness of threats and enable early detection.
- Commission research into regional governance models in Australia to inform a Reef-wide Traditional Owner discussion on the proposed establishment of a GBR Traditional Owner Sea Country Alliance.

<https://reefto.au/>

https://reefto.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/DES_GBR_TO-Report_WEB.pdf

23. Indigenous Desert Alliance (IDA)

What is it? The Indigenous Desert Alliance (IDA) is an Indigenous controlled, member-based organisation that plays a vital role in 'Keeping the Desert Connected' and building resilience for desert ranger programs. Members of IDA are Indigenous land management groups working within the desert regions, including 60 Indigenous ranger groups.

What does it do? The IDA network promotes peer-to-peer connection and best practice across the desert through a regular calendar of events and access to organisational resources for its members. IDA is focused on working with its members and partners to ensure that Indigenous people are enabled to collaboratively manage Australia's desert country and through this, to realise their social, cultural, environmental and economic aspirations.

IDA does this through:

- facilitating opportunities for Indigenous land managers across the desert to come together to speak with one voice for desert country
- strengthening connections between desert groups through maintaining a vibrant information sharing and ranger team exchange network
- providing capacity strengthening support for rangers and their organisations to enhance the outcomes for the Indigenous land management sector in the desert
- managing critical landscape scale collaborative projects with our members across the desert

How does it Function? The IDA has a representative board of Indigenous directors from across the deserts and two independent board members.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research? IDA does not have a direct role in environmental research, but it does play an important role in facilitating collaboration among desert groups that are working to care for Country, thereby enabling them to share their knowledge, advocate for better land management, and build their capacity.

<https://www.indigenoussdesertalliance.com/>

24. Indigenous Salt Water Advisory Group (SWAG) (Kimberley)

What is it? The Indigenous Salt Water Advisory Group (ISWAG) is a group of Indigenous saltwater managers committed to improving best practice marine monitoring, research and management across the Kimberley.

What does it do? Kimberley Indigenous Saltwater Advisory Group (ISWAG) purpose is to share our experiences, knowledge and learnings between ourselves and to provide Government, researchers and corporate organisations with ‘one door to knock on’ first when engaging in regional saltwater Country science and management in the Kimberley. And to provide a regional network to empower Kimberley saltwater managers to implement their Healthy Country Plans through collaborative research, policy and management. This group operates on a regional scale across Kimberley saltwater country and the issues relevant to Healthy Country science and management therein.

How does it function? Membership of ISWAG comprises two representatives (a coordinator and a TO) from Indigenous saltwater groups within the Kimberley. The foundational members are Balangarra, Bardi Jawi, Dambimangari, Karajarri, Nyul Nyul, Wunambal Gaambera and Yawuru. The group shall elect 2 Co-Chairs at the annual Forum to support the Secretariat. This foundational group can invite other Kimberley saltwater groups to become involved on a project basis or to have ongoing representation. External parties can be invited, or may seek approval, to participate in a time-limited capacity and/or contribute to projects at the discretion of the group. Basic Governance similar to PBCs, with meetings, minutes, membership, etc. Phone meetings 12 times per year; workshops 1 or 2 times per year; serviced by a Secretariat. A quorum of 50% of the representatives is required for phone meetings.

Guiding principles:

1. The group operates on the principles of good faith and mutual respect.
2. Each member brings unique qualities and opportunities to the table, making the whole stronger than the individuals participating.
3. Members commit to a regular platform to share learnings, opportunities, achievements, and knowledge.
4. All knowledges are considered equally and each knowledge system speaks for itself.
5. A regional approach is essential for management of shared marine and terrestrial resources.
6. Lasting beneficial change comes from community involvement and a ground up approach.
7. A secretariat function is critical to success.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research and ethics??

ISWAG plays a crucial role in relation to research ethics, as research on saltwater country in the Kimberley cannot be validly undertaken without ISWAG’s involvement. Parent Aboriginal Corporations remain the overarching authority for approval of research partnerships, policies, Future Acts, etc. The extent of the group’s authority is restricted to the existing authority of group representatives to implement Healthy Country Plans and related initiatives. The group will seek to implement its Strategic Plan, as endorsed by the parent Corporations. Where projects or initiatives undertaken by the group require additional authority for practical purposes, this will be clearly negotiated with each parent Aboriginal Corporation.

<https://www.klc.org.au/newsroomblog/2023/11/27/saltwater-country-management-forum-2023>

25. Sea Country Alliance (SCA)

What is it? The Sea Country Alliance (SCA) is an unincorporated association whose members agree to operate collectively in accordance with the terms of the Governance Charter to achieve the purpose set out in the Governance Charter.

The Sea Country Alliance was formed following a national meeting of Traditional Owners with offshore rights in November 2023 to enable Australia's Traditional Owners with responsibility for Sea Country to come together to speak with one voice.

What does it do? SCA's purpose is to enhance the capacity of First Nations in Australia and elsewhere in the world to achieve self-determination through the collective actions of its members and to wholly control all aspects of their rights and interests, both economic and cultural, in Sea Country.

The SCA Governance Charter underpins the ongoing relationship between the member organisations and is based on recognition of several principles set out in the Governance Charter, including mutual respect and trust; transparency; sustained outcomes; equality and social inclusion; diversity; sharing; direction; decision making; and integrity.

How does it function? As an unincorporated association, the SCA has a limited legal personality and contractual ability. The member organisation auspicing the SCA and the Secretariat acts as agent for the SCA in matters that require a legal personality or contractual ability. To facilitate the purpose of the SCA, the National Native Title Council Ltd (NNTC) has agreed to act as agent for the SCA in matters that require a legal personality or contractual ability. The NNTC is also a member organisation of the SCA.

Members of SCA comprises of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander organisations that are:

1. formed for the purpose of acting on behalf of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander People and Traditional Owners;
2. incorporated under relevant legislation and are not for profit;
3. controlled and operated by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander People;
4. governed by a majority Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander governing body; and,
5. has some responsibility recognised under either Commonwealth or state or territory legislation in respect of land and waters in or immediately adjacent to the Territorial Sea of Australia, including recognition as a Native Title Representative Body or a Native Title Service Provider under ss 203A or 203FE of the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth).

There is also scope for Associate Members who must also be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research and ethics? SCA does not have a direct role in Indigenous environmental research and ethics, but does have a strong interest in ensuring Indigenous Sea Country rights and interests are appropriately recognise and protected.

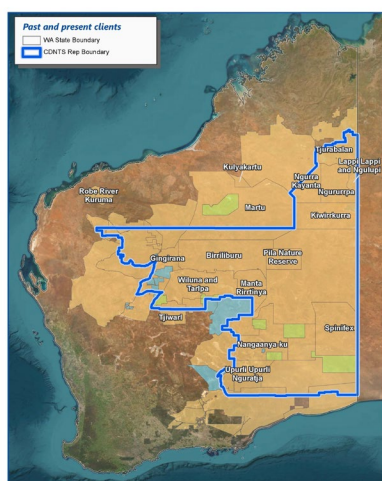
<https://nntc.com.au/sca/>

26. Desert Support Services

What is it? Desert Support Services Pty Ltd (DSS) is a stand-alone, not-for-profit company set up to help Desert communities start up and run ranger teams on their Country and develop business opportunities around land and culture. DSS works alongside Traditional Owners to maintain the health of their culture, Country and people. Much of this work is funded through project-specific grants. For more than 10 years, DSS's collaborative approach has achieved Traditional Owner led outcomes throughout the Central Desert region of Western Australia and beyond. DSS is linked to Central Desert Services, the NTSP for the Central Desert region of WA.

What does it do? Desert Support Services was formed in 2011 from Central Desert’s Land and Community team, our focus is to support Native Title bodies and communities with – land management program development, including Indigenous ranger employment and training programs; and promoting partnerships between Native Title communities and other organisations for mutual benefit.

As part of the **Central Desert Group** we can draw upon the skills and resources of the Group's entities on certain projects, while having the ability to operate independently throughout Australia.



Source: Desert Support Services. <https://www.desertsupportservices.com/>

How does it function? DSS source funding for PBCs and other Traditional Owner (TO) corporations to help desert focused Indigenous corporations and communities run projects. These corporations/communities may hire back DSS to provide services. DSS provides services in such a way as to build the capacity of TOs to hold and manage their own programs and projects. In recent years DSS has successfully transitioned programs and contracts from DSS to TO corporations worth several millions dollars. Services delivered by DSS include: Writing and submitting funding applications to get money for rangers; Helping you run TO ranger teams; Provision and updating of specialist safety equipment; Budgets and reporting; Running planning workshops; Strategic planning; Developing business opportunities, Managing information.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research and ethics? DSS does not have a direct role in Indigenous environmental research but plays an important strategic facilitation role with Traditional Owners.

<https://www.desertsupportservices.com/>

27. Noongar Land Enterprises (NLE)

What is it? The Noongar Land Enterprise (NLE) Group is a not-for-profit, Aboriginal led grower group. Based in Western Australia's South West region (traditionally known as Noongar Boodja). In 2014, a group of Noongar landholders formed a grower group called the Noongar Land Enterprise group (NLE group). The purpose of becoming a group was to benefit from a collective approach on the pathway from passive to active land management involving business enterprise development on Noongar Land. The group became incorporated in 2017, and currently represents six Noongar landholding groups located on country with high rainfall, and a high production potential. In time, it is expected that the membership of the group will grow with the addition of 24 Noongar properties located within Noongar Boodja.

What does it do? NLE's purpose is to promote collective strength, to achieve optimum economic rewards from Noongar land-based enterprises, to benefit Noongar people. NLE's vision is to be the leading Aboriginal organisation that develops commercially viable Noongar land-based businesses.

NLE is a land based collective, to strategically collaborate and is commercially focused. NLE aspires to Create pathways for investment; Be a strong voice for policy change; Focus on achievable actions and programs; and Ensure individual enterprises are fully responsible entities.

Membership of NLE is restricted to land owning or managing Noongar Entities in SW WA.

How does it function? Noongar people have formed the NLE to drive the process of capitalising on its collective power through information exchange, representation and business development pathways. By creating and successfully managing business enterprises, NLE will provide employment opportunities for Aboriginal people, and funds to re-invest in the Noongar estate. Economic opportunities on Noongar land have been identified alongside the clear benefits in terms of social and cultural growth. Key aspirations NLE has identified include providing respite and healing on country, and, cultural rejuvenation and connection for Aboriginal people. Opportunities like NLE facilitated training will further enhance the capabilities for Noongar people. A successful NLE will attract more Noongar landholder members and provide a framework and support for these landholders to produce socioeconomic benefits for our people.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research and ethics? NLE does not have a direct role in Indigenous environmental research but may play a facilitative role as it continues to evolve and grow, particularly in respect to access to Country to undertake research and address knowledge gaps in the management and restoration of Noongar Boodja.

<https://www.noongarlandenterprise.com.au/>

28. Australian Research Council (ARC) Indigenous Forum

What is it? The Australian Research Council (ARC) Indigenous Forum is an advisory body to the ARC. The is an inaugural forum for the ARC.

What does it do? At the time of writing, the terms of reference for the Forum have not been released. The ARC's media release announcing the formation of the Forum stated that "The Forum will work closely with the ARC Board, bringing a unique and strategic focus to initiatives that will strengthen Indigenous leadership in the research sector, build opportunities for Indigenous-led and focused research, and support career pathways for emerging Indigenous researchers."

How does it function? The Indigenous Forum comprises 13 members who will hold office for up to 3 years, with the possibility of extension for up to 3 more years. The 13 inaugural members of the Forum will be co-chaired by Professor Bronwyn Fredericks, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous Engagement) at The University of Queensland and Professor Barry Judd, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Indigenous) and Professor Indigenous Studies, School of Culture and Communication, University of Melbourne.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research and ethics? The Indigenous Forum will not have a direct role in Indigenous environmental research, but it will play an influential role in advising the ARC on a wide range of Indigenous research priorities, including in environmental research.

<https://www.arc.gov.au/news-publications/media/media-releases/arc-indigenous-forum-bring-collaboration-and-knowledge-exchange>

29. CSIRO – Indigenous Science and Engagement Program (ISEP)

What is it? CSIRO is Australia's national science agency. The Indigenous Science and Engagement Program (ISEP) is intended to be a disruptive and sustainable organisational change enabling CSIRO to lead Australia's science through an Indigenous knowledge and science lens. The ISEP enables CSIRO to expand existing collaborations and develop new best practice models across the organisation, equipping CSIRO to undertake large scale multi-disciplinary science for the priorities identified by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations.

What does it do? By engaging through scientific knowledge sharing, education, employment opportunities and partnerships, CSIRO aims to invigorate Australia's scientific literacy and increase the innovative capacity and productivity of Australian industry. CSIRO also recognises and respond to contemporary changes in the national and international science policy environments. Including the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; the Nagoya Protocol; Native Title; Treaty developments; the Uluru Statement; the 2020 Close the Gap Agreement; the AIATSIS Code of Ethics; and developing Indigenous cultural knowledge and intellectual property legislation.

How does it function? CSIRO's latest Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) 2021-23 outlines the actions CSIRO will take to build stronger relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through scientific knowledge sharing, education, employment opportunities and mutually beneficial partnerships that can deliver a positive impact for the benefit of all Australians. CSIRO's third Innovate RAP identifies the following priority areas across CSIRO:

- Partnering with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to support Indigenous-led science solutions.
- Developing a new Indigenous Engagement Strategy to ensure appropriate engagement and collaboration aligns to the rights and interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across all lines of our business.
- Developing key foundational Indigenous strategies across all of CSIRO that can support us to achieve our vision towards reconciliation. This includes protecting Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property and respectfully managing the collection, interpretation and use of Indigenous data.
- Building capability to develop, cultivate and sustain respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples.
- Positioning CSIRO as an employer of choice to attract and retain highly skilled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across our scientific, research, technical, fieldwork and support services.
- Strengthening governance arrangements, including tracking and reporting mechanisms.

CSIRO's RAP is championed by the CSIRO's Indigenous Engagement Implementation Committee, the Office of Indigenous Engagement, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff forum and the external Indigenous Advisory Group. It has also been endorsed by Reconciliation Australia, CSIRO's Executive Team and the CSIRO Board.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research and ethics? CSIRO undertakes research and engages with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in many different ways across CSIRO's research activities. For example, CSIRO played a role in the production of the resource *Our Knowledge Our Way in Caring for Country: Indigenous-led approaches to strengthening and sharing Indigenous knowledge for land and sea management*.

<https://www.csiro.au/en/about/indigenous-science-and-engagement-program>

<https://www.csiro.au/en/research/indigenous-science> (Our Knowledge Our Way resource)

30. Atlas of Living Australia (ALA)

What is it? The Atlas of Living Australia (the Atlas) is a collaborative, digital, open infrastructure *database* which harmonises Australian biodiversity data from multiple sources, making it accessible and reusable. The Atlas of Living Australia (ALA) as an organisation has a vision to ‘deliver trusted biodiversity data services for Australia supporting world-class research and decision-making’.

What does it do? The ALA provides big-data infrastructure that mediates access to datasets from multiple sources, which together provide a detailed picture of Australia’s biodiversity for scientists, policy makers, environmental planners, land managers, industry and the general public, enabling them to work more efficiently.

ALA recognises the coequality of Indigenous Knowledge alongside Western scientific traditions and is committed to extending its engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to improve two-way knowledge exchange and support its users to work more effectively and collaboratively.

How does it function? The ALA has developed respectful and productive working relationships with those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations involved in its Indigenous Ecological Knowledge (IEK) program. This program has focused on collaborating with Language Centres, connecting Western scientific understandings of biodiversity with Traditional Knowledge, so as to enrich one another. The IEK process is governed by a three-part Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) framework ahead of information being published on the Atlas portal.

The ALA is seeking to expand its intentional engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities to complement the work of the IEK program.

In 2022, the ALA engaged SGS Economics and Planning (SGS) through a consultative engagement process to provide the ALA with advice on where and how to best focus its efforts in support of an Indigenous-Led appreciation for how the Atlas can most effectively and meaningfully engage in a way that provides collective benefit with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. SGS developed a framework to guide the Atlas on how to deepen its engagement and to build trust with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people about the work the Atlas does.

ALA has an Advisory Board that includes two independent Indigenous members.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research and ethics? While the Atlas does not have a direct role in Indigenous environmental research, it does have a significant role to play in becoming a trusted repository for Indigenous’ ecological and biodiversity knowledge.

<https://www.ala.org.au/>

31. Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Water Interests (CAWI)

What is it? The Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Water Interests (CAWI) is a non-statutory, independent committee established in 2020 to advise the National Water Reform Committee (NWRC) on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander water interests and reform. CAWI aims to elevate the cultural, spiritual, social, economic, and environmental interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within Australia's water policies, programs, and legislation, to ultimately ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have enduring access to, ownership and management of water.

What does it do? CAWI advises Commonwealth, state and territory governments on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander water interests. It identifies national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander water policy principles to (i) support the development of a national policy framework that accommodates diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples rights and interests, (ii) strengthen existing approaches that jurisdictions are taking regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander water interests and (iii) inform the development of the new National Water Initiative (NWI).

How does it function? CAWI is led by a membership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples with extensive expertise across western and cultural water rights and interests, water science and management, and water planning. It is guided by a Terms of Reference and consists of up to 14 members (with 50:50 gender balance where possible) who are appointed based on their water expertise not their affiliation. It meets at least 4 times per year (the meeting in August 2023 was its 21st). CAWI's current term of appointment ends in December 2024 but the government has committed a further \$700,000 to support CAWI to December 2026. CAWI is supported by an Executive Officer and secretariat within the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW).

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research? CAWI is integral to advocating for and influencing water policy reform to progress Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander water interests. Specifically, it: (i) identifies national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander water policy principles to support the development of a national policy framework that accommodates diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interests and (ii) strengthens existing approaches that jurisdictions are taking regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Water Interests, including advising on the development of national reforms to the NWI.

<https://www.dcceew.gov.au/water/policy/first-nations/cawi>

32. Northern Australia Indigenous Reference Group (NAIRG)

What is it? The Northern Australia Indigenous Reference Group (IRG) was established by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet in 2017. This was in response to concerns raised by Northern Australian First Nations leadership that limited consideration had been given in the Commonwealth Government's Developing Northern Australia White Paper to the challenges and opportunities for First Nations peoples to participate in economic development of the North. The IRG is now convened by the Office of Northern Australia in the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts.

What does it do? The IRG functions as a standing advisory group to the Ministerial Forum on Northern Development (the 'Ministerial Forum') and is charged with engaging directly with, and providing policy advice to, the Ministerial Forum to ensure that First Nations perspectives are included in all its deliberations. Advice provided by the IRG to the Ministerial Forum has included a set of 36 specific policy recommendations (16 of which were endorsed by the Ministerial Forum for implementation). A significant achievement of the IRG was the execution of the Northern Australia Indigenous Development Accord; a non-legally binding, intergovernmental agreement signed by the Prime Minister, Chief Minister of the Northern Territory and Premiers of Western Australia and Queensland to work together to implement IRG policy recommendations as they are endorsed by the Ministerial Forum and in accordance with a prescribed workplan.

How does it function? The IRG is comprised of up to eight eminent First Nations business and community leaders from across Northern Australia and supported by a secretariat that was initially provided by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and subsequently by the National Indigenous Australians Agency. It is also provided with resources to commission studies and other external advice to complement the expertise of the IRG and inform their deliberations.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research? The NAIRG does not play a direct role in Indigenous environmental research.

However, given how essential water is to unlocking the economic potential of the sizeable Indigenous land estate in northern Australia, water reform was a significant focus of the IRG's earlier work and recommendations. Activating First Nations water interests in the North was the focus of specific research commissioned by the IRG, a key subject in its policy recommendations and a subject of the implementation plan for the Northern Australian Indigenous Development Accord.

<https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/territories-regions-cities/regional-australia/office-northern-australia/northern-australia-indigenous-reference-group>

33. Indigenous Advisory Committee operating under the *EPBC Act 1999* (IAC)

What is it? The Indigenous Advisory Committee (IAC) is a statutory committee established in 2000, under the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). It sits within the Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water (DCCEEW).

What does it do? The Committee advises the Minister on the operation of the EPBC Act, taking into account the significance of Indigenous peoples' knowledge of the management of land and sea and the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

How does it function? The IAC meets twice a year. The eight committee members are First Australians and are not appointed to represent particular regions or organisations. Members are ministerially appointed based on expertise in land and sea management, conservation, sustainable use of biodiversity, and cultural heritage management.

The IAC is an advisory (not decision-making) body and is not generally used as a consultative mechanism to seek the view of stakeholders.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research? The IAC does not play a key role in environmental research. Its Terms of Reference specify, however, that the IAC may provide advice to the Minister on environmental research matters if requested by the Minister to do so.

https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/epbc/our-role/advisory-committees/iac#members_2

34. Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) Indigenous Reference Group (IRG)

What is it? The Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) takes a leading role in planning and investing in fisheries research, development and extension (RD&E) to support the ongoing sustainability of Australia's aquatic sectors and aquatic ecosystems. The Corporation is a co-funded partnership between the Australian Government and fisheries and aquaculture. It is a statutory corporation under the *Primary Industries Research and Development Act 1989* (Cth) (the PIRD Act) and is responsible to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

The FRDC Indigenous Reference Group (IRG) is a committee comprising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from diverse backgrounds and with expertise across Australian fishing and aquaculture.

What does it do? FRDC plans, invests in and manages RD&E for fishing and aquaculture and the wider community, and we encourage adoption of the resulting knowledge and innovation for impact. The IRG coordinates government and industry investment and works with stakeholders to establish and address their fisheries R&D priorities.

On behalf of the Australian Government, the FRDC has a significant responsibility to ensure research is undertaken to assist in the management of fisheries and aquaculture resources for their ongoing sustainability. This means a significant proportion of funding is directed to research that has a benefit for the four sectors of the fishing industry: Indigenous, commercial and recreational fishing and aquaculture while also delivering a public good benefit to the Australian community.

Established in 2010, the IRG plays a crucial role in weaving Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and perspectives into Australia's fisheries and aquaculture sectors. Broadly, the IRG is charged with providing to the FRDC strategic- and programme-level advice on the fisheries and aquaculture research, development and extension ('RD&E') needs of First Nations and First Peoples across Australia. Under this core remit sit a number of complementary functions, including commissioning research, providing advice to the FRDC executive and Board on First Nations RD&E-related matters, networking, capacity building and profile raising, and other such operational and procedural matters.

How does it Function? Members of the IRG are appointed through a competitive expression of interest process for their skills, experience and expertise. The IRG acts as an advisory body to the FDRC and is dedicated to addressing FDRC priorities.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research? The IRG oversees project progress and offers technical guidance to the FRDC on broader issues and initiatives. Beyond direct funding, the IRG also collaborates with organisations such as the Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation, CSIRO, the Department of Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water, and state and territory governments to support Indigenous-focused research, development, and extension efforts.

<https://www.frdc.com.au/indigenous-reference-group-irg-strengthening-indigenous-research-fisheries>

35. Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS)

What is it? The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) is Australia's only national institution focused exclusively on the diverse history, cultures and heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia. The AIATSIS Act (1989) (Cth) mandates AIATSIS to provide leadership in the field of ethics and protocols for research related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and collections.

What does it do?

In October 2020 AIATSIS published the *Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research*. This document supersedes and replaces the *Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies* (GERAIS). All references to GERAIS in Australian research codes and guidance should be taken to refer to this Code.

The AIATSIS research ethics framework is structured around four principles of Indigenous self-determination; Indigenous leadership; Impact and value; and Sustainability and accountability. At the centre of these principles is the core ethical value of integrity and acting in the right spirit.

AIATSIS convenes a Research Ethics Committee (REC). The REC has the responsibility to review research projects for a broad range of stakeholders (government, external organisations, universities and industry) involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and/or communities. The REC:

- Provides independent, competent and timely review and monitors all research projects referred by AIATSIS for ethical review.
- Reviews projects involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research to ensure ethical standards have been met in accordance with the **AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research** and the **National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research**.
- Safeguards and promotes the standards set out in the AIATSIS Code by: promoting ethical and responsible practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research in Australia; increasing the contribution of Indigenous knowledge to Australian research; and ensuring research has a positive impact.

How does it Function? All research projects that involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people require ethics review and approval before projects can begin. This requirement provides Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, who are involved in the research, with assurance that their rights, culture and heritage are respected, that they understand the aims and methods of the research, and that they will share in the results of this work. The AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research embodies the best standards of ethical research and human rights, and it is a requirement of the Code that researchers share the results of their research with the people that may have been involved..

AIATSIS does not play a direct role in Indigenous environmental research. However, research institutions are often required to refer projects to AIATSIS's REC to approve the necessary research ethics for their research. Sometimes such referrals include projects with a focus on environmental research.

<https://aiatsis.gov.au/research>

36. National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA)

What is it? The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) is an Executive Agency, established in 2019, within the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) portfolio with both a service delivery and policy development role in Indigenous affairs.

What does it do? The NIAA leads and influences change across government to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have a say in the decisions that affect them. This includes (i) coordinating Commonwealth policy development, program design and implementation and service delivery for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, (ii) providing advice to the Prime Minister and the Minister for Indigenous Australians on whole-of-government priorities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, (iii) leading and coordinating the development and implementation of Australia's *Closing the Gap* targets and (iv) leading and coordinating Commonwealth activities to promote reconciliation, such as the Indigenous Protected Areas and Remote Jobs programs. The NIAA also funds a network of 14 native title representative bodies (NTRBs) and native title service providers (NTSPs) across most of Australia to assist native title claimants and holders.

How does it function? As an Executive Agency, the NIAA is separate from PM&C for staffing, accountability and reporting purposes. It is led by a CEO who reports directly to the Minister for Indigenous Australians. The NIAA's head office is in Canberra with 37 regional offices across Australia.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research? While the NIAA does not have a direct role in Indigenous environmental research, it does work in partnership with Indigenous land and water holding groups to strengthen their role as representative bodies.

For example, NIAA worked with First Nations representative bodies from 2018-2022 to develop the Aboriginal Water Entitlements Program (AWEP) and continues to support Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) in its delivery of AWEP and to establish a First Nations Water Holder.

<https://www.niaa.gov.au/about-niaa/who-we-are#:~:text=The%20National%20Indigenous%20Australians%20Agency,the%20decisions%20that%20affect%20them.>

37. Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation (ILSC)

What is it? The Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation (ILSC) is a corporate Commonwealth entity that was established by the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act 2005 (Cth)* (ATSI Act) in response to the High Court of Australia's judgement in *Mabo (No. 2)* (1992). It started out as the Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC) in 1995.

What does it do? The ILSC assists Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to acquire land and water-related rights and to manage Indigenous-held land and waters so as to provide economic, environmental, social or cultural benefits for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The ILSC's acquisition and management functions assist Indigenous Australians to maintain and grow the value and productivity of country; own and manage country sustainably; influence policy and opportunity for country and strengthen culture through reconnection to country. To date, the ILSC has supported the return of over 6.3 million hectares of Country to Indigenous people - 280 properties and 4 water-based interests.

How does it function? Sitting within the portfolio of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (PMC), the ILSC contributes to the achievement of the Australian Government's priorities in Indigenous Affairs and is accountable to the Parliament through the Minister for Indigenous Australians. It has a Board consisting of seven directors; five, including the Chairperson, must be Indigenous people.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research? The ILSC's legislative remit was extended in 2019 to include salt and fresh water-related interests. Only since that time have water acquisitions become a focus of the ILSC's work. The extended remit has given the ILSC much greater scope to acquire water interests, particularly for Indigenous people who are unlikely to benefit from the Native Title or Land Rights systems.

While the ILSC does not have a direct role in Indigenous environmental research, it does play a key role in facilitating research and supporting the research efforts by others.

<https://www.ilsc.gov.au/>

38. Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW)

What is it? The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) is the Commonwealth department responsible for protecting Australia's natural environment and heritage sites, for helping Australia respond to climate change and for managing water and energy resources. In the water component of its portfolio, DCCEEW aims to improve the health of Australia's rivers and wetlands and deliver more sustainable, efficient and productive use and management of water resources for the environment, communities and agriculture.

What does it do? DCCEEW administers 78 different statutes (including the *Water Act 2007* (Cth)), delivers programs under its mandate, and has a range of independent statutory agencies and advisory bodies in its portfolio. Among these are bodies with water-related responsibilities including the Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA), the Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Water Interests (CAWI) and the National Water Grid Authority (NWGA).

DCCEEW also administers the National Environmental Science Program (NESP), the Commonwealth's flagship environmental research program. <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/science-research/nesp>

How does it function? As an Australian government department, DCCEEW is subject to all the governance, procurement and accountability requirements that apply across public service agencies under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (Cth) and other statutes. DCCEEW provides advice to the Government in its areas of responsibility through the Minister for Climate Change and Energy and the Minister for the Environment and Water.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research? DCCEEW funds and administers the National Environmental Research Program (NESP). The National Environmental Science Program (NESP) combines science and Traditional knowledge to help care for Australia's environment. NESP is a long-term investment in Australia's environmental research capacity. It enables evidence-based policy and better management decisions for the future. The current phase of NESP spans 2020-21 to 2026-27 with a \$149 million investment and builds on 20 years of earlier environmental research programs.

The current iteration of NESP has a deep respect for Traditional knowledge, encourages Indigenous partnerships are central to the program.

NESP invests in Indigenous research capability and early to mid-career researchers. It also supports collaboration. It brings together researchers, Indigenous Australians, policy makers and local communities to solve environmental problems.

DCCEEW also provides both policy advice and administers several other programs relating to Indigenous' environmental land and water rights and interests.

<https://www.dcceew.gov.au/>

39. Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA)

What is it? The Murray–Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) is an independent Commonwealth statutory agency established under the Water Act 2007 (Cth). The MDBA is part of the portfolio of Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW). The Authority oversees the implementation of the Basin plan, legislated in 2012, in coordination with Basin governments (New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory) and other stakeholders (including First Nations, industries, environmental groups and Basin communities). The Plan aims to find a balance between the water needs of all users to make sure communities, industries and environments continue to thrive.

What does it do? In addition to overseeing the implementation of the Basin Plan, the MDBA (i) operates the River Murray system on behalf of the partner Governments to deliver water to users, (ii) monitors the quality and quantity of the Basin’s water, (iii) conducts research on the Basin’s water resources and dependent ecosystems, (iv) provides water rights information to facilitate water trading and (v) communicates about all aspects of the Basin’s water resources and management. The MDBA has 270+ staff (June 2022).

How does it function? The MDBA reports to the Minister for the Environment and Water and is part of the portfolio of DCCEEW. The seven member Authority takes advice from advisory committees established under the Water Act, including the Advisory Committee on Social, Economic and Environmental Science (ACSEES) and the Basin Community Committee (BCC). The Authority collaborates with, and takes advice from the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) and Basin jurisdictions. As an Australian government agency, the MDBA is subject to all the governance and accountability requirements that apply under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (Cth) and other statutes.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research? In overseeing the implementation of the Basin Plan, the MDBA works directly with more than 50 First Nations in the Basin through the Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN), the Northern Basin Aboriginal Nations (NBAN; until December 2022) and other forums. The MDBA, First Nations and Basin governments are collaborating in research and planning to explore ways to integrate cultural flows into water management in the Basin.

The Basin Plan is set for review in 2026. The review will focus on four themes: Climate Change, Sustainable Water Limits, First Nations interests, and Regulatory Design. For First Nations interests, the key review question is “how can the Basin Plan be improved to recognise First Nations’ values in water management and enhance their involvement?”.

<https://www.mdba.gov.au/>

40. National Centre for Indigenous Genomics (NCIG) (ANU)

What is it? The role of the National Centre for Indigenous Genomics (NCIG) is to ensure Indigenous Australians are at the forefront of health benefits that will flow into the national health system from the integration of genomic knowledge and technology.

What does it do? The NCIG's vision is to create a National Centre of Excellence – at the interface of Indigenous culture, knowledges, genomics and data science – to transform the health, wellbeing and prosperity of Indigenous Australians.

The National Centre for Indigenous Genomics (NCIG) was created in 2013 to manage and expand a collection of 7,000 historical Indigenous blood samples – now known as the NCIG Collection – held at the John Curtin School of Medical Research, and to develop a research reference resource from the DNA in the samples for genomic health and medical research.

How does it function? The National Centre for Indigenous Genomics at the Australian National University (ANU), established by a federal statute is creating Australia's national Indigenous genomic data resource under a unique governance and research model, placing Indigenous Australians in charge of their genomic data and its use

The NCIG Collection comprises biospecimens, historical documents archive, genomics data, social science artefacts and audio-visual stories of Indigenous peoples securely located within the John Curtin School of Medical Research (JCSMR) at the ANU under the custodianship of the Indigenous-majority NCIG governance board.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research and ethics? NCIG plays a direct role in Indigenous Genomic research.

<https://ncig.anu.edu.au/>

41. Australian Land Conservation Alliance (ALCA)

What is it? The Australian Land Conservation Alliance (ALCA) is the peak national body representing organisations that work to conserve, manage and restore nature on privately managed land. The ALCA is a public company limited by guarantee under the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth). Its vision is a future where nature thrives Australia-wide, cared for by resilient communities. ALCA members include: Australian Wildlife Conservancy, Bush Heritage Australia, NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust, Greencollar, Greening Australia, Landcare Australia, The Nature Conservancy, Nature Foundation, Odonata Foundation, Queensland Trust for Nature, South Endeavour Trust, Tasmanian Land Conservancy, Trust for Nature, World Wildlife Fund, and Arid Recovery.

What does it do? As the peak national body representing organisations that work to conserve, manage and restore nature on privately managed land, the ALCA is active in policy advocacy. Through their land management programs, the ALCA's member organisations engage directly with regional communities and economies, providing jobs, securing significant regional investment, and safeguarding remaining native habitat. In 2021-22 ALCA members employed 600 staff and engaged with >4,000 landholders.

How does it function? The ALCA recognises that for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, nature and culture are inextricably connected, and values the role Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to play in managing Country today and their right to self-determination.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research? While the ALCA does not play a direct role in Indigenous environmental research, ALCA members are engaged to varying degrees in enabling Indigenous environmental research.

<https://alca.org.au/>

42. Country Needs People (CNP)

What is it? Country Needs People (CNP) is an independent not-for-profit organisation dedicated to future-proofing Indigenous land and sea management. Led by a majority Indigenous board, CNP supports Indigenous communities protecting, maintaining, and restoring biodiversity and sustaining, strengthening, and transmitting culture on Country.

What does it do?

CNP advocates for strong Indigenous land and sea management programs, and provide practical assistance to Indigenous peoples managing or aspiring to manage their Country.

CNP's goals for 2023-26 are to:

- Continue delivering the highly successful Country Needs People model, combining strategic advocacy and communications with practical support for Indigenous organisations and communities.
- Consolidate its efforts in remote Australia, while extending its reach into new regions.
- Build long term sustainability including more secure funding and a diverse, highly skilled team.

How does it function?

CNP champions Indigenous land and sea management across Australia by working alongside 46 frontline Indigenous partners we grow, support and advocate for Indigenous Rangers and Indigenous Protected Areas Australia-wide.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research? While CNP does not have a direct role in Indigenous environmental research, but its activities support traditional owners in the land and sea management activities.

<https://www.countryneedspeople.org.au/>

43. Ecological Society of Australia (ESA) Indigenous Engagement Working Group

What is it? The Ecological Society of Australia (ESA) is the peak group of ecologists in Australia, with over 1,000 members from all states and territories. The ESA has an impressive 60-year history supporting ecologists, promoting ecology and ecological research. The Society, supports the professional development of ecologists, promotes the role of ecologists in society and the importance of ecological issues, and promotes and coordinates ecological research.

What does it do? One of ESA's strategic goals is to better link Indigenous people working in ecology and land management. The overall Indigenous Engagement (IE) Working Group objectives are:

- Develop a broad strategy for support and development of Indigenous Ecological Knowledge structures for implementation under the umbrella of the Society;
- Advise the ESA Board on Indigenous Engagement opportunities and priorities;
- Advise the Board of potential funding or sponsorship partnerships to progress IE initiatives.;
- Establish an active indigenous scientists network and/or Research Chapter;
- Co-ordinate the annual Indigenous Symposium & Indigenous Plenary in collaboration with the Conference Committee.

How does it function? The Indigenous Engagement Working Group aligns to ESA's AIM 4: Improve and promote external communication and outreach Initiatives: Strategy e) Provide opportunities for supporting and increasing participation of Indigenous people in the society' within the ESA Strategic Plan 15/16 – 19/20. The working group's purpose and responsibilities are consistent with the Society's objectives (Objective VII. facilitating the dissemination and exchange of ideas and information about ecology and the information among the Company's Members, ecologists, other professional disciplines and the general public) under the ESA constitution.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research (and ethics)? The ESA does not have a direct role in Indigenous environmental research. The ESA undertakes several actions in support of Indigenous engagement, including:

- An annual Indigenous Symposium to showcase Indigenous peoples' biocultural knowledge research and projects. This initiative is part of the ESAs ongoing commitment to increase Indigenous participation in ESA activities.
- A limited number of Travel Grants of up to \$1500 are available to assist with travel and accommodation for Indigenous presenters in the IEK Symposium.
- 'Right-way' science is recognised at the ESA Conference each year, with presenters speaking on 'right-way' science eligible for a \$5,000 prize, supported by Bush Heritage Australia.
- Identifying and Acknowledging Indigenous Country and People in articles submitted for Ecological Management & Restoration and Austral Ecology are strongly encouraged.

The ESA is also working on several initiatives to support Indigenous ecologists, including the development of a Reconciliation Action Plan, an Indigenous Ecologist Network, Indigenous Research Engagement Principles and Best Practice and Indigenous Intellectual Property Protocol.

<https://www.ecolsoc.org.au/engagement/indigenous-engagement/>

44. Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand (EIANZ) Indigenous Engagement Working Group (IEWG)

What is it? The Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand (EIANZ) is a professional association for environmental practitioners. EIANZ supports environmental practitioners and promotes independent and interdisciplinary discussion on environmental issues. EIANZ also advocates environmental knowledge and awareness, advancing ethical and competent environmental practice, and adopts a Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct which is binding on members and Certified Environmental Practitioners in their professional practice. In recognition of the close association between the natural environment, cultural values and Indigenous communities, EIANZ established the Indigenous Engagement Working Group (IEWG) in early 2020 to engage more meaningfully with the traditional custodians of the land in Australia and New Zealand. The environment profession shares an affinity with the Indigenous concepts of 'Caring for Country' and Kaitiakitanga (resource guardianship and stewardship).

What does it do? Accordingly, the IEWG strives to Improve environmental management practice through collaboration, mutual learning and partnerships with Indigenous people and groups; Encourage practitioners to value and integrate Indigenous knowledge and practice into environmental management; Enhance career and networking opportunities for Indigenous people in the environment profession; and Foster cultural awareness and reconciliation with Indigenous people, consistent with international best practice and the UN *Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

How does it function? EIANZ is a single business entity comprising an Australian Chapter and New Zealand Chapter. The Australian Chapter has divisions in each state and territory, with Queensland divided into South East Queensland and Far North Queensland. EIANZ is governed by an elected Board and an Advisory Council. Each Australian division and the New Zealand chapter have their own elected committees responsible for the day to day running of operations. EIANZ has one office location in Balwyn, Victoria, on the lands of the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation. Much of the activity of the Australian EIANZ Chapter is undertaken by volunteers. IEWG has arranged EIANZ webinars on Indigenous culture and environmental management and facilitated two meetings of an Indigenous Practitioners Network. Over the past three years in Australia, EIANZ's focus has been directed towards development and implementation of the EIANZ 'Reflect' RAP, EIANZ's reconciliation journey to date has included establishing an Indigenous Engagement Working Group (IEWG) (which includes EIANZ members and Indigenous practitioners) to develop and oversee implementation of the Indigenous Engagement Plan.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research (and ethics)? While EIANZ does not have a direct role in Indigenous environmental research, it does play an important supportive role. In 2021 EIANZ changed the Institute's Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct (Code) to recognise Indigenous knowledge, values and rights. The changes reflect an ethical obligation and professional practice requirement to recognise and value the rights and interests of Indigenous Peoples in the management of environmental values, and for environmental practitioners to acknowledge and where appropriate incorporate these in the work they undertake. The changes were intended to lay the foundation for long-term engagement with Indigenous Peoples within the environmental profession and demonstrate the Institute's belief that the rights, values, knowledge and interests of Indigenous Peoples are inseparable from good practice environmental management.

<https://www.eianz.org/resources/IEWG>

45. Science & Technology Australia

What is it? Science & Technology Australia (STA) is Australia's peak body in science and technology. As a not-for-profit body, STA represents more than 235,000 scientists, engineers and technologists working across all scientific disciplines and sectors through our 144 member organisations. This includes three Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander member organisations: the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mathematics Alliance (ATSIMA), DeadlyScience and the Indigenous Climate Change (ICC). Science and Technology Australia Limited (STA) is a company limited by guarantee. STA was formerly known as Federation of Australian Scientific and Technological Societies Inc and was authorised under section 82 of the *Associations Incorporation Act 1991* (ACT) to transfer its registration under the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth) to its new company structure on 3 January 2023.

What does it do? STA's mission is to advance the public good and strengthen society through advocacy, education, outreach, and programs to advance the role of science and technology to help solve some of humanity's greatest challenges. This includes our flagship programs Science Meets Parliament, Superstars of STEM, STEM Ambassadors Program, and policy advice on issues affecting the STEM sector. We amplify the public contribution of science and bring together scientists, governments, industry and the broader community. Since STA was established in 2011, it has been a key player in Australian STEM. STA was instrumental in the establishment of the role of **Australia's Chief Scientist**; played a major role in the formation of the Prime Minister's Science and Engineering Council which was the pre-cursor to the **Prime Minister's Science, Engineering and Innovation Council** (PMSEIC) and the **Commonwealth Science Council**; and was a catalyst for the hands-on primary school science education program, **Primary Connections**, an idea born from STA's national forum on mathematics and science education. STA has an Innovate RAP.

How does it function? STA is a company limited by guarantee with charitable status and operates under the direction of a Board, which has 8-11 Directors at any given time. Six Directors and our President-Elect are elected by STA's membership every second year. The remaining Board Members are the President, the CEO, and up to two Board-Appointed Directors. The Board appoints Office Bearers, including the Vice-President, Governance Chair, Financial Audit and Risk (FAR) Committee Chair, Policy Committee Chair, and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee Chair. Four sub-committees support the work of STA. STA has a deep commitment to partnership and support for First Nations leadership. In 2022 STA adopted an Indigenous Partnership Policy to guide STA's relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations in STEM. Over the past two years, STA has adopted two powerful new policies: one reflecting STA's custom and practice of sharing responsibilities to research, and teach insights about First Nations STEM knowledge, history and place in our [Acknowledgements of Country](#).

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research (and ethics)? STA brings a strong ethical framework to the work of the science, technology, engineering and maths sector on intellectual property and research ownership, community control and consent in research. STA also enhances ethical practices in STEM sector engagement and research in First Nations knowledge systems. STA's 2023 Innovate RAP commitments STA to deepen its relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and STEM professionals. STA is looking to elevate the profile of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and STEM professionals. STA wants to help to enable the aspirations of the National Indigenous STEM Professionals Network and ensure Indigenous voices contribute to its leadership.

<https://scienceandtechnologyaustralia.org.au/>

46. Centre for Rock Art Research and Management, University of Western Australia

What is it? The Centre for Rock Art Research + Management (CRAR+M) is a research centre in the University of Western Australia. CRAR+M is a leader in rock art conservation and management by research-driven advocacy for its priceless heritage values. While the focus is on Australian rock art, the Centre produces research outcomes of international significance.

What does it do? CRAR+M researchers have excavated some of Australia's oldest archaeological sites in Australia, undertaken programmes to directly date paintings, analysed the role of symbolic behaviour in human evolution, explored the nature of contact era rock art, investigated rock art as a social information in arid and coastal Australia, collected baseline data on rock art and Tjukurrpa from the Canning Stock Route, prepared of management plans for rock art regions (e.g. Sydney, Port Hedland) and specific sites (Whale Cave), and undertaken the scientific assessments for National Heritage Listing and World Heritage nominations.

The Centre is currently undertaking several ARC Linkage projects, one of which is the **Desert to the Sea: Managing Rock Art, Country and Culture 2022-27**. This ARC Funded Linkage Project (LP200300886) is administered at The University of Western Australia, with chief investigators at Curtin University, The University of Melbourne, The University of New South Wales, The Pennsylvania State University, Utah State University, in collaboration with partner organisations Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation (MAC), Mungarlu Ngurrarankatja Rirraunkaja Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC (MNR), and Jamukurnu Yapalikurnu Aboriginal Corporation (JYAC), with funding from Woodside, BHP, Newcrest Mining, and with partner investigators from the Western Australian Museum, Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, and Desert Support Services.

How does it function? CRAR+M relies on cyclical research funding from the ARC and other public funding sources as well as from private philanthropic sources.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research (and ethics)? CRAR+M works closely with Indigenous groups in rock art research, conservation and management and is a leader in the field.

<https://www.crarm.uwa.edu.au/>

47. Terrestrial Ecosystem Research Infrastructure (TERN)

What is it? The Terrestrial Ecosystem Research Infrastructure (TERN) is the national research infrastructure project for Australia's ecosystem observatory. TERN operates as a multi-institutional collaboration to ensure the widest possible participation of Australian researchers. TERN is supported by the Australian Government through the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy, [NCRIS](#).

What does it do? TERN provides world-class research infrastructure to monitor and understand changes to our environment and climate and enable predictions of future risks. TERN measures key terrestrial ecosystem attributes over time from continental scale to field sites at hundreds of representative locations and openly provides model-ready data that enable researchers to detect and interpret changes in ecosystems. TERN delivers quality environmental monitoring data, tools and expertise to researchers who are working to understand Australia's environment and so enable its management for sustainable social and economic benefit.

How does it function?

The University of Queensland (UQ) is the recipient of TERN's Australian Government NCRIS grant and has legal responsibility for delivering the TERN project. The head office and data services components of TERN are operated from UQ while operation of the observatory components of the project are contracted to CSIRO, University of Adelaide and James Cook University. These three Operational Partners then contract other institutions to assist with operation of specific sites or development of products.

TERN has an Advisory Board comprising independent members and representatives of the Lead Agent and collaborating institutions and Operational Partners. The Advisory Board provide advice on the overall strategic direction, management and performance of TERN and establishment of longer-term national strategic goals. The Advisory Board receives advice from TERN's independent Science Advisory Committee.

The Science Advisory Committee provides independent advice to the Advisory Board relating to the role of national research infrastructure in meeting national and regional science priorities. And it supports the Director of TERN and the Lead Agent, the University of Queensland, in the governance of nationwide TERN.

TERN's Director and the Platform Lead personnel specified in contracts between the University of Queensland and partner institutions, along with invited operational staff from the central office and each Platform, comprise the TERN Executive Group. This group works with the Science Advisory Committee and TERN Advisory Board to ensure the strategic intent of TERN is put into operation.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research (and ethics)? TERN does not play a direct role in Indigenous environmental Research. However, it does provide research infrastructure which researchers can use to access ecosystem data. TERN has an important supporting role to play in becoming a trusted repository for Indigenous environmental research and monitoring.

<https://www.tern.org.au/>

48. Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS)

What is it? The Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) is a corporate Commonwealth entity established 50 years ago under the *Australian Institute of Marine Science Act 1972* (Cth) (AIMS Act) and is a corporate Commonwealth entity under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (Cth) (PGPA Act). AIMS's mission to provide the research and knowledge of Australia's tropical marine estate required to support growth in its sustainable use, effective environmental management and protection of its unique ecosystems.

AIMS has its headquarters on Cape Ferguson near Townsville in recognition of the importance of the GBR to Australia. AIMS also operates from bases in Perth and Darwin which enables it to conduct research across northern Australia, spanning two oceans and three regional seas.

What does it do? AIMS's functions and powers are set out in the AIMS Act. AIMS has two main roles under its governing legislation: Firstly, carry out research and development in relation to marine science and marine technology and the application and use of marine science and marine technology. Secondly, encourage and facilitate the non-commercial and commercial application of the results arising from such activities. The PGPA Act sets out reporting, accountability and other requirements relating to our operations, management and governance. To accomplish its mission, AIMS delivers independent science to help realise three key long-term impacts for the nation to: improve the health and resilience of marine and coastal ecosystems across northern Australia; create economic, social and environmental net benefits for marine industries and coastal communities; and protect coral reefs and other tropical marine environments from the effects of climate change.

AIMS is a world leader in tropical marine research, expanding Australia's knowledge hidden below the surface of our Marine waters. AIMS provides unique insight into Australia's tropical waters and knowledge to develop globally relevant and innovative research solutions. AIMS looks to Australia's future needs and builds upon existing capabilities and knowledge to improve ocean health, and protect coral reefs from climate change. AIMS' Strategy 2030 provides a concise, clear and compact description of AIMS' key research and development priorities for the next seven years.

How does it function? AIMS is governed by a Council that reports to the relevant Minister. The CEO is responsible for the day-to-day affairs of the Institute. AIMS recognises the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia are the Traditional Owners of the places where AIMS works both on land and sea. AIMS also recognises their inherent rights, responsibilities and spiritual and cultural connection with their land and Sea Country. AIMS continues to establish greater Indigenous engagement across the research portfolio to seek genuine partnerships with Traditional Owners in support of AIMS Strategy 2030, by implementing the principles within the Indigenous Partnerships Policy. In particular, AIMS has worked to create and socialise internal procedures to seek and document free, prior and Informed consent for new projects and free, informed consent for long-term ongoing projects, with the goal of achieving full compliance with the Indigenous Partnerships Policy by 2024-25.

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research (and ethics)? Through [AIMS Strategy 2025](#), [AIMS Indigenous Partnerships Plan](#), and [AIMS Indigenous Partnerships Policy](#), AIMS works with Traditional Owners to create new shared research that weaves Indigenous Knowledge of sea country with other sciences. AIMS' approach to Indigenous Partnerships continues to grow in reputation and influence other organisations. AIMS plays a significant and direct role in Indigenous environmental research in the marine waters off the northern coast of Australia from east to west.

<https://www.aims.gov.au/>

49. National Committee for Ecology, Evolution and Conservation (NCEEC), Australian Academy of Science

What is it? The Australian Academy of Science has 19 National Committees for Science that are widely representative of its disciplines. The broad aims of the committees are to foster a designated branch or theme of natural science in Australia and to serve as links between Australian and overseas scientists in the same field. National Committees advise the Academy's Council on Australia's representation for the unions and multidisciplinary bodies of the **International Science Council** (ISC) and other international bodies. The NC Ecology Evolution and Conservation (NCEEC) is a committee of the Council of the Australian Academy of Science. Membership of the NCEEC comprises Non-Indigenous and Indigenous scientists with expertise in the fields of ecology and environmental sciences.

What does it do? The broad aims of the NCEEC are to foster ecology, evolution and conservation sciences in Australia and to serve as a link between Australian and overseas scientists.

The NCEEC's purpose is to:

- Connect the Academy to ecology evolution and conservation research bodies and scientists in Australia to promote the development of these disciplines;
- Link Australian ecology evolution and conservation science to world science, in particular through membership of appropriate international organisations, to ensure that Australia has a voice in global development of the disciplines;
- Provide strategic ecology evolution and conservation policy advice. This advice may be to the Academy, as input to Academy science policy statements, and (with approval of Executive Committee of Council) to Australian governments and other organisations.

How does it function? NCEEC key outcomes include:

- Contribute to research policy development in ecology, evolution and conservation. Specifically during 2015-18: lead the development of a Decadal Plan for Evolutionary Biology; liaise with other Academies in the development of Future Earth Australia; maintain links with the Ecosystems Science Council of the Ecosystems Sciences plan;
- Engage with relevant Australian societies and with other national committees on issues of common interest;
- Assisting the Academy with identifying nominees for awards and travel scholarships when requested;
- Approved committee structure and membership (annual);
- Approved annual report (annual).

What is its role in Indigenous environmental research (and ethics)? The NCEEC does not have a direct Indigenous environmental research role, but it does play a crucial national and international role in fostering research in the fields of ecology evolution and conservation sciences in Australia and serves as a link between Australian and overseas scientists.

<https://www.science.org.au/supporting-science/national-committees-for-science/national-committee-for-ecology-evolution-and-conservation>

Appendix B: Lowitja Institute – Case Study Summary

Key Documents

The following documents were obtained from publicly available sources:

- The Constitution of the National Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research Limited [updated to include amendments approved by Members on 1 December 2022] (trading as The Lowitja Institute)
- Annual Reports from 2015 to 2023
- NIATSIHR Ltd and Lowitja Institute ASIC Summaries
- Lowitja Institute Our History webpage
- Deloitte_Lowitja-Institute-social-impact-assessment-Final-Report-issued-August 2020
- Various research reports available from the Lowitja Institute’s website.

Lowitja Institute’s Purpose, Objectives and Strategies

The Lowitja Institute is the trading name for the National Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research Limited.

The Lowitja Institute is Australia’s only independent and community controlled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research institute, working across Australia to prioritise Indigenous health research that benefits Indigenous peoples.

The Lowitja Institute’s Vision is that:

The Lowitja Institute will be an authoritative and collective voice for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ health and wellbeing.

The Lowitja Institute’s principal activities are an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation working for the health and wellbeing of Australia’s First Peoples through high impact quality research, knowledge translation, and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health researchers. As a community-controlled organisation, the Lowitja Institute focuses on supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations and researchers. The Institute supports knowledge translation of Indigenous research into policy and practice; develops Indigenous research capabilities; and advocates on behalf of Indigenous [health] researchers.

The National Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research Limited’s Constitution shows the Company’s primary objectives are:

- a) to promote and facilitate the formation of collaborative alliances to pursue world class research and research training in the detection, prevention, treatment and control of diseases and injury and the promotion of health and well-being particularly affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons or communities (Alliances);

- b) to undertake strategic research on health systems, health determinants and health conditions with the aim of identifying methods of detecting, preventing, controlling or treating diseases and injury to which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons and communities are susceptible and the promotion of their health and well-being;
- c) to promote knowledge exchange to improve the detection, prevention, treatment and control of disease and injury amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and to promote their health and well-being;
- d) to attract, retain and develop the capacity of the research workforce in the field of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health; and
- e) to disseminate the intellectual property of the Company and the Alliances amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities, health professionals, health carers and the public in such a manner as to facilitate the detection, prevention, treatment or control of diseases or injury and to promote health and well-being amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.

The Lowitja Institute undertakes a range of ancillary activities to achieve its objects, including:

- a) building on the legacy of the work undertaken by the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health,
- c) ensuring that Alliances with the Lowitja Institute add value so that the performance of the Alliances will be greater than that of each participant performing independently,
- d) strengthening the capacity of, and developing career pathways for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in health research and related fields,
- e) ensuring highest quality research is carried out with greatest impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health outcomes through research partnerships, greater Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation and control, and better ethical practices,
- f) promoting and protecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and rights, and the potential benefits to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities, in the dissemination of any intellectual property identified through or arising out of the work of the Company and the Alliances,
- g) collecting authoritative information about relevant matters and disseminating information to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities and to other health consumers, to service providers, to government, to the media and to the wider community,
- h) cooperating with other agencies which have similar objectives, and
- i) promoting the health interests of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.

Lowitja Institute has a long track record of supporting Indigenous-led research that reflects the priority needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities. It provides grant funding to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations across Australia to lead research projects that address community priorities and contributes to improved health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Lowitja Institute engages in policy and advocacy work that contributes to a range of key policy outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing. The Institute regularly engages with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak bodies and professional associations and the Australian Government, as well as mainstream health peak bodies and professional associates, non-government organisations and philanthropic organisations.

Over the years, the Lowitja Institute research projects have developed tools to facilitate learning and to support research, workforce development, and service delivery work. The Institute keeps Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing at the heart of what the Institute does and offers support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers and organisations through tools, resources and online courses. Through Lowitja Learning, the Institute offers online courses, learning circles, webinars, workshops, tools, and resources to support your learning journey.

Lowitja Institute offers a range of benefits to its members, including access to:

- tools and resources on the Lowitja Institute Learning and Development Hub;
- special member rates on our Cultural Safety Tools and online courses; and
- opportunities for networking both online and face-to-face.

Lowitja Institute is a national institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research. Its work encompasses all areas that contribute to the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including the social and cultural determinants of health and wellbeing.

The value and priorities of the Institute are best summarised from their 2015-18 strategic plan:

A significant responsibility rests with Lowitja Institute to provide leadership on work that will result in improvements to the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. To achieve this, Lowitja Institute will embrace those who likewise share a firm commitment in valuing the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. (...) The work of Lowitja Institute will be ambitious, rigorous and culturally safe. We will directly contribute towards our people achieving their greatest potential.

In alignment with the Institute's strategic plan, the Institute attracts the next generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, and coaches them to become the next leaders in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing. As the national leader in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research, and with its extensive history of valuing the lives of their peoples, the Institute establishes itself as a research organisation following the best practice approaches in research, tailored to the needs of their communities.

The Institute's vision is to be a "trusted research institute that values Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's health and wellbeing" began long before the first CRC was established in 1997.

(Source: Deloitte's review of the Lowitja Institute. https://www.lowitja.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/DAE_Lowitja-Institute-social-impact-assessment-Final-Report-correction-issued-20200928.pdf)

Lowitja Institute's Business Structure and Governance

The following information is drawn from the Lowitja Institute's website on its history and from its Constitution.

The Company is established under the *Corporations Act 2000* (Cth) as a not-for-profit organisation and is a registered as a charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission (ACNC).

The National Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research Limited (NIATSIHR Ltd) is a limited liability company trading as Lowitja Institute.

The NIATSIHR is registered as a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee and is structured as a public benevolent institution. Lowitja Institute is independent of government and other centres of health and policy administration. It has an independent Board of which all members are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people.

At a Special General Meeting on 16 June 2020, Lowitja Institute's constitution was changed to significantly expand its membership to include:

- **Full Member Organisations** – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations committed to the purpose and values of Lowitja Institute, with voting rights
- **Associate Organisations** – non-Indigenous organisations committed to the purpose and values of Lowitja Institute, no voting rights
- **Lowitja Institute Scholars (Alumni)** – Lowitja Institute Scholarship recipients, past and present alumni, no voting rights. This was further expanded in September 2021 to include chief investigators and/or team members of research funded by a Lowitja Institute grant.

This change in the constitution also resulted in the establishment of the **Lowitja Institute Members Community**, which offers members access to the Institute's resources and research outputs as well as networking opportunities.

On 22 June 2022, the Board resolved to create a new category of membership comprising Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander individuals who demonstrate support for, and contribute to, the purpose and values of the Institute and who do not satisfy the eligibility criteria for admission as Lowitja Institute scholars (Alumni) members, and no voting rights.

The following information is drawn from the Institute's Constitution.

The Company's Constitution sets the rules for admission and eligibility for membership, which includes four categories of members, (Classes A, B, C, D).

Class A members include all Members on the Register at 30 June 2019 and they held Class A membership until 30 June 2020. They included the following organisations: AIATSIS; Central Australian Aboriginal Congress; Danila Dilba; AIDA; CATSINaM; Healing Foundation; IAHA; and NATSIWHA.

From 1 July 2020, the following organisations ceased to hold Class A membership: Flinders University; Menzies; QIMR; and The University of Melbourne. However, under the Company's Constitution, they are able to apply to become Class B Members.

To be eligible for admission as a Class A Member, the applicant must satisfy the following criteria:

- (a) be one of the organisations named above; or
- (b) satisfy the following criteria:
 - (i) be an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Organisation
 - (ii) support the purposes and objectives of the Institute; and
 - (iii) meet any other criteria established by the Directors in their absolute discretion.

To be eligible for admission as a Class B Member, the applicant must satisfy the following criteria:

- (a) be either:
 - (i) an organisation that was a participant in the Lowitja Institute Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health CRC; or
 - (ii) an organisation that supports the purposes and objectives of the Institute; and
- (b) meet any other criteria established by the Directors in their absolute discretion.

To be eligible for admission as a Class C Member, the applicant must be an individual who is a Lowitja Institute Alumnus.

To be eligible for admission as a Class D Member, the applicant must be an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander individual who demonstrates support for, and contributes to, the purpose and values of the Institute and does not satisfy the eligibility criteria for admission as a Class C Member.

The Directors will consider each application for Membership at the next meeting of Directors after the application is received. In considering an application for Membership, the Directors will appoint Members to fulfil the objectives of the Constitution, and may at their absolute discretion either (a) accept or reject the application; or (b) ask the applicant to give more evidence of eligibility for Membership. If the application for membership is rejected, the Directors must provide written reasons for their rejection.

The Company's Constitution also includes several other conditions regarding the creation of additional classes of membership, how membership subscriptions are set, the power to vary the rights, restrictions or obligations of Members or any class of Members, keeping and maintaining a register of members, access to the register of members, and ceasing to be a member.

In terms of governance, the Constitution requires the Company to have a minimum of five Directors and a maximum of nine Directors, to be appointed in compliance with the procedures in the Constitution. The Company may by resolution passed in general meeting: appoint a person to be a Director; remove a Director from office; appoint another person in a Director's place; increase or reduce the maximum number of Directors; and determine any rotation and retirement system for Directors.

Directors appointed by the Members expire at the close of the third annual general meeting following their appointment. Directors appointed by the Board expire three (3) years following their appointment. Retiring Directors are eligible for reappointment.

The Directors will be composed of four persons appointed by the Class A Members and five persons appointed by the Directors, and they must be comprised of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons, with at least one Torres Strait Islander person. The manner of Director's appointment is also set in the Constitution, as is their powers and duties.

For the purposes of clarity, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Organisation means an incorporated organisation:

- (a) which has at least 51% of its members being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- (b) which has at least 51% of its governing board being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- (c) whose principal purpose and activities are related specifically to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

How the Lowitja Institute Functions

As an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisation, the Lowitja Institute has an all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Board, comprising the Chairperson and seven Directors.

The Institute works with industry partners, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the general community to drive outcomes for Indigenous peoples. The Lowitja Institute has its origins in the establishment in Darwin of the Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for Aboriginal and Tropical Health (1997-2003), leading to the CRC for Aboriginal Health (2003-2009), CRC for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (2010-2014) and The Lowitja Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research CRC (2014-2019).

In June 2020, Lowitja Institute fulfilled its long-held vision to become an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisation. The independent review employed a multi-method approach to capture the breadth and scale of the impacts, and to develop an in-depth understanding of how the impacts are achieved. This included a targeted literature review, a review of Lowitja Institute's online

documentations, and in-depth case studies supplemented with informal discussions with nominated researchers.

The resulting framework organised impacts over the past ten years under the following categories:

- Advancing knowledge about health topics related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Building capability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health researchers
- Informing decision-making at a policy-, organisational-, and community-level through empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities' voice and through developing new frameworks, guidelines and programs
- Contributing to better health outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through better prevention and health service provision
- Contributing to better economic, social and environmental outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through increased awareness about the social determinants of health, culturally safe spaces and preservation of the environment.

Lowitja Institute's Sources of Revenue and Long-term Funding

The Lowitja Institute's Annual Report for 2022-23 shows the primary revenue sources for 2022 and 2023 financial years include:

- Federal Government funding,
- Philanthropic income, and
- External organisations.

Table 5 shows the details of the Lowitja Institute's longer term funding sources over the period from 2012 to 2023. The data was obtained from the Annual Financial Statements that the Lowitja Institute lodges with the ACNC. The Lowitja Institute's annual financial statements show a wider range of revenue sources than the Institute's most recently available Annual Report, including donations, fundraising, earned revenue, and other income.

Figure 7 shows the primary sources of revenue from 2012 to 2023 in nominal terms. The Lowitja Institute's primary source of revenue over the period from 2012 to 2013 has been from government grants and general operating activities.

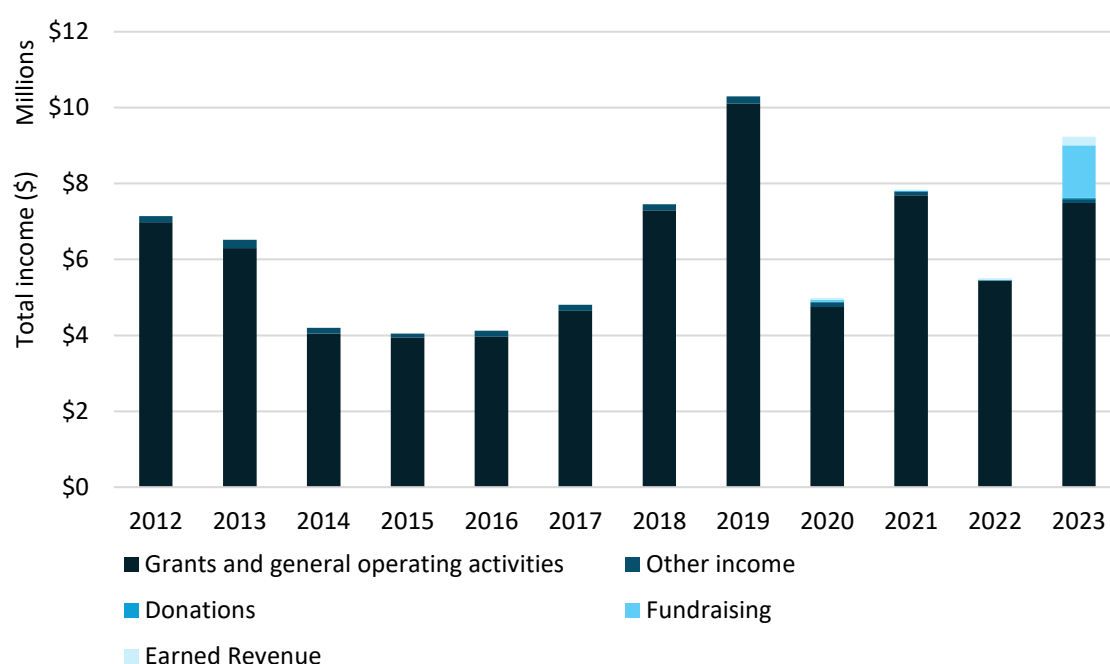
Figure 8 shows the same data, but in percentage terms. The data shows that government grants have comprised over 90 per cent of the Institute's primary source of income over many years.

Table 5: The Lowitja Institute's Revenue Sources and Quantum 2012 to 2023 Financial Years

Lowitja Institute Income 2012-2023												
Sources	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019 (a)	2020 (b)	2021	2022	2023
Grants and general operating activities	\$6,983,291	\$6,302,511	\$4,046,570	\$3,948,446	\$3,959,885	\$4,641,983	\$7,297,947	\$10,111,506	\$4,750,695	\$7,691,334	\$5,435,288	\$7,488,363
Interest	\$159,283	\$212,570	\$151,581	\$102,282	\$167,160	\$163,891	\$153,660	\$184,584				
Donations									\$9,863	\$18,422	\$16,742	\$29,299
Fundraising									\$54,617			\$1,383,663
Earned Revenue									\$43,446	\$39,646	\$40,446	\$232,710
Other Income									\$121,873	\$96,714	\$14,513	\$104,757
TOTAL	\$7,142,574	\$6,515,081	\$4,198,151	\$4,050,728	\$4,127,045	\$4,805,874	\$7,451,607	\$10,296,090	\$4,980,494	\$7,846,116	\$5,506,989	\$9,238,792
(a) In 2018-19 the Institute reported a surplus of \$142,576 which compares favourably to the total Comprehensive income for the same time last year of \$120,328. This is due to the additional donation of \$100,000 from the Rado Family Foundation. Total income of \$7.5m includes Commonwealth Government grant funding of \$6.9m, external consultancies of \$60,455 and CRC Participant contributions of \$223,333, received for the purpose of conducting the activities of the Lowitja Institute CRC.												
(b) Prior to 2019/20, the Institute recognised grant and contracted income when received. The introduction of AASB15 resulted in an adjustment to retained earnings of \$2.75m on the 1 st July, 2019 to correctly reflect these changes. AASB15 requires that revenue that carries with it specific obligations is deferred and only recognised once it has been earned. Grant and contracted funding received up to and including 30 th June 2020 but not yet earned and to be carried forward on the balance sheet totals \$4.12m and will be expended in future reporting periods in line with relevant contracted schedules and milestones.												

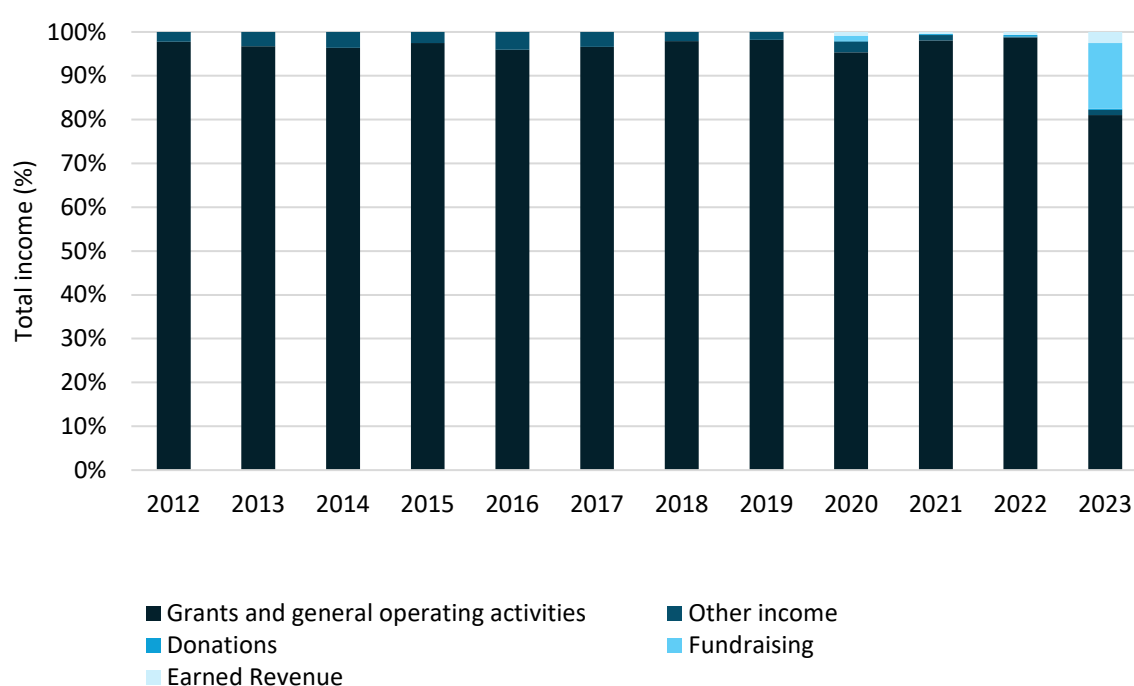
Sources: Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC), register of National Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research Limited.

Figure 7: Lowitja Institute's Revenue Sources 2012-2023 in nominal terms



Sources: Annual Financial Statements from ACNC Register.

Figure 8: Lowitja Institute's Revenue Sources 2012-2023 in percentage terms



Sources: Annual Financial Statements from ACNC Register.

It is noted from the Lowitja Institute's financial statement for 2022–23 that the Institute had a \$474,419 surplus compared to \$32,511 for the previous year. 41 per cent of the surplus was in connection with the 2023 Lowitja Conference, the balance related to untied income earned on donations, interest on

investments, and consulting fees. All other income reported was contracted and matched against expenditure in line with applicable revenue recognition standards.

Organisational Establishment Stages / Phase and Long-term Projection

The Institute was established in January 2010 and operates on key principles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, a broader understanding of health that incorporates wellbeing, and the need for the work to have a clear and positive impact.

The history of Lowitja Institute dates back to 1997 when the first Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for Aboriginal and Tropical Health was established. Since then, the Lowitja Institute and the CRC organisations have led a substantial reform agenda in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research by working with communities, researchers and policymakers, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people setting the agenda and driving the outcomes.

The evolution of the Institute is built upon the work and key priority areas from the:

- CRC for Aboriginal and Tropical health (CRCATH, 1997-2003)
- CRC for Aboriginal Health (CRAH, 2003-09)
- CRC for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (CRCATSIH, 2010-14)
- The Lowitja Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research CRC (the LICRC, 2014-19).

Since the completion of the LICRC, the Institute has not hosted or managed a CRC.

Funding from the Australian Government's CRC Program supported these 'public good' CRCs, which aimed to apply research results in policies and programs to produce social benefits.

The success of the CRCs enabled the Institute to develop long-term partnerships between researchers and organisations and contributed to the growing body of evidence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and medicine. Such contributions have led to translating research findings into practice, by improving the quality of and access to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health care.

In 2020, Lowitja Institute became a community-controlled organisation and established a membership base, led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives.

The Lowitja Institute also has several subscribing members who subscribed to the National Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research Limited's original Constitution. They include the following organisations:

- Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Inc
- Danila Dilba Health Service
- The University of Melbourne
- Flinders University
- Menzies School of Health Research
- Charles Darwin University
- The Council of the Queensland Institute of Medical Research
- Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.

Timeline of Establishment and Incorporation

(The following information is from the Lowitja Institute's 'Our History' website:
<https://www.lowitja.org.au/members/>)

The Lowitja Institute's journey is depicted in **Figure 9** below. A more detailed timeline can be found in the 'Changing the Narrative' report on the history of the Institute.

<https://www.lowitja.org.au/resource/changing-the-narrative/>

Lowitja Institute traces its roots back more than two decades. It includes the pioneering work of three Cooperative Research Centres (CRC), the CRC for Aboriginal and Tropical Health, the CRC for Aboriginal Health, and the CRC for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health. In August 2017, the Lowitja Institute published a brief history of the work and achievements since 1997 called '*Changing the Narrative in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research: Four Cooperative Research Centres and the Lowitja Institute: The story so far*'.

The CRC for Aboriginal and Tropical Health (CRCATH, 1997–2003) opened in Darwin in 1997 with six core partners, including two Aboriginal health services. The chair was Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue, our current patron. The CRCATH brought together researchers and Aboriginal community organisations for research focused on five priority areas: Indigenous education; health resources and service delivery; public health; communication and information; and biomedical. (<https://www.lowitja.org.au/about-us/our-history/crc-for-aboriginal-and-tropical-health/>)

The CRC for Aboriginal Health (CRAH, 2003–09) was also based in Darwin. Under the leadership of its Chair Ms Pat Anderson, the CRAH brought together 12 core partners and six associate partners from research institutions, government agencies and Aboriginal Health Services around Australia. The CRAH made the decision to integrate its research with capacity development and research transfer activities to ensure that outcomes had a practical impact in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It developed five research programs: chronic conditions; comprehensive primary health care, health systems and workforce; healthy skin; social and emotional wellbeing; and social determinants of health. (<https://www.lowitja.org.au/about-us/our-history/the-crc-for-aboriginal-health-2003-2009/>)

The successful track record of the two previous CRCs saw the Commonwealth approve the 2009 rebid for a third CRC. The CRC for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (CRCATSIH, 2010–14) was hosted by Lowitja Institute, which had Dr O'Donoghue as its patron and Ms Pat Anderson AO as chair of its Board. Operating out of the Institute's Melbourne head office, the CRCATSIH's focus was on applying the research that was developed in the previous CRCs, through an emphasis on knowledge exchange and translation into practice. Three programs were developed: Healthy Start, Healthy Life; Healthy Communities and Settings; and Enabling Policy and Systems. (<https://www.lowitja.org.au/about-us/our-history/crc-for-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-health/>)

The Lowitja Institute Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health CRC (Lowitja Institute CRC, 2014–19) commenced operations on 1 July 2014, hosted by Lowitja Institute. Our vision is to achieve equity in health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and we will work towards this vision through the development of robust research programs in three areas: Community capability and the social determinants of health Needs and opportunities for a workforce to address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health policy and systems. (<https://www.lowitja.org.au/about-us/our-history/the-lowitja-institute-crc/>)

Figure 9: The Lowitja Institute’s timeline from 1997 to 2023.



Source: Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies & The Lowitja Institute (2017) *Changing the Narrative in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research: Four Cooperative Research Centres and the Lowitja Institute: The story so far*, The Lowitja Institute, Melbourne.

Driving Forces/People

There is no doubt that Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG was a driving force behind the establishment of the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal and Tropical Health as its inaugural Chairperson.

As Dr O'Donoghue states in the Foreword to the Lowitja Institute's *'Changing the Narrative in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research'*:

"One of my fundamental objectives as a Chairperson was to work towards reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Western perspectives of health and wellbeing and encourage a different way of doing research.

That meant bringing the academics and the researchers together with those who are qualified to know what's needed on the ground. I wanted practical people to investigate the changes that need to be made in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to bring about the change we all want to see for our peoples.

We also needed to train our people sufficiently for the communities to manage their own programs, for the non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to hand over and the communities to act on their own behalf.

That was the line of sight, if you like, that I saw as the Chairperson.

As a Patron, when I agreed in 2010 to have the Lowitja Institute named after me, I entrusted in the Institute my spirit and energy, my values and priorities.

I told them that I wanted them to be a courageous organisation committed to social justice and equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, to match words to action, to achieve real, tangible outcomes.

Also, to be known throughout Australia as a strong and sustainable organisation."

Several other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have also played a key role in making sure that the Institute developed and thrived over time. They are named in the *'Changing the Narrative'* Report (p.vii).

In May 2014, the Lowitja Institute commissioned the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) to write a history of the Institute, including an oral history component highlighting the vision of influential individuals. While the Lowitja Institute is a separate organisation, four Cooperative Research Centres are central to this publication, particularly their contribution since 1997 to changing how research is conducted in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing.

'Changing the Narrative' outlines the journey and the successes of the Lowitja Institute and the four associated Cooperative Research Centres (CRCs) over our 20-year history. The publication showcases how the cumulative efforts of the CRCs and the Institute have pioneered a new way of conducting health research in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It's an approach driven by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander priorities – an approach developed by the CRCs and embodied in the Institute.

The history of the Lowitja Institute includes a hard copy report and audiovisual recordings that highlight the vision of influential individuals. <https://www.lowitja.org.au/resource/changing-the-narrative/>

Examples of key resources include:

Researching Indigenous health: a practical guide for researchers (2011) Alison Laycock with Diane Walker, Nea Harrison and Jenny Brands.

Researching the Right Way: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research Ethics: A Domestic and International Review (2013) The Lowitja Institute.

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Lowitja Institute – Social Impact Assessment Final Report (2020) Deloitte Access Economics

Appendix C: Supply Nation – Case Study

Key Documents

The following documents were obtained from publicly available sources:

- Australian Indigenous Minority Supplier Office Limited Constitution (dated 28 Jan 2020) (Trading as Supply Nation)
- Annual Report 2023
- Annual Financial Statement 2023 (and earlier years available on the ACNC Register).

A Strategic Plan, a Business Plan, Reconciliation Action Plan and earlier Annual Reports are not available on the organisation's website.

Supply Nation's Purpose

Supply Nation is the trading name for the Australian Indigenous Minority Supplier Office Limited.

According to the Company's Constitution, the Company's principal purposes are to provide relief of poverty, distress or disadvantage suffered by persons who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander by, without limitation:

- (a) facilitating the integration of Indigenous Businesses into the supply chain of private sector corporations and Government institutions;
- (b) advocating on behalf of the Indigenous business community in the context of its relationship with private sector corporations and Government institutions;
- (c) fostering partnerships between Indigenous Businesses, and private sector corporations and Government institutions;
- (d) facilitating the exchanging of information between Indigenous Businesses, and private sector corporations and Government institutions;
- (e) conducting research into, and leading the integration of, Indigenous business in the Australian economy; and
- (f) establishing and maintaining a gift fund to be known as the "Australian Indigenous Minority Supplier Office Gift Fund" in order to raise funds for the day to day operation of the company and in order to invite and solicit donations from the public, private sector corporations and Government so that the company may fulfil its purposes.

Indigenous businesses are the 'for profit' businesses either wholly or majority owned (at least 51 per cent equity) and operated by any Australian Indigenous person persons.

Supply Nation's Objectives and Strategies

The Company is primarily involved in facilitating the integration of Indigenous businesses into the supply chain of private sector corporations and government institutions to promote income, wealth, self-sustainability and economic independence for Australia's Indigenous people.

Short-term objectives and strategies include:

- Raising awareness of supplier diversity in Australia and in particular the opportunities that exist to do business with Indigenous suppliers.
- Recruiting members (i.e., buying institutions) to implement and practice supplier diversity within their companies.
- Building and maintaining a database of Indigenous businesses that have been registered in accordance with the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) definition of an Indigenous business or certified by Supply Nation as majority owned, controlled and managed.
- Connecting registered and certified Indigenous businesses to Supply Nation members procurement opportunities.
- Educating members and suppliers around strategies and initiatives that promote successful relationships in the supplier diversity context.
- Providing capability building initiatives (to suppliers) that support the growth and sustainability of the Indigenous business sector.
- Connecting registered and certified Indigenous businesses to Supply Nation members procurement opportunities.

Long-term objectives and strategies:

- Contribute to the growth of a prosperous, vibrant and sustainable Indigenous enterprise sector.
- Integrating Indigenous businesses into the supply chains of Australia's corporate and government agencies.
- Grow and deepen connections between members and Indigenous businesses and help members build strong commercial relationships with Supply Nation registered suppliers.

There were no significant changes in the nature of the Company's activities during the 2022-23 financial year.

Supply Nation's Business Structure and Governance

The Australian Indigenous Minority Supplier Office Limited (ABN 50 134 720 362) is a company limited by guarantee under the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth) and is a registered charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission (ACNC).

The minimum number of directors is three (3). The maximum number of directors is to be fixed by the directors but may not be more than nine (9), unless the company in general meeting resolves otherwise. The directors must not fix a maximum which is less than the number of directors in office at the time. The directors may appoint any individual as a director, provided the number of directors does not exceed the maximum number fixed under rules in the Company's Constitution, and before appointing the director, that individual signs a consent to act as a director. The person is not disqualified from managing a corporation under the Corporations Act nor disqualified from being a responsible entity under the ACNC Act. A director holds office for a maximum of 9 years from the date of appointment, unless the directors otherwise decide for any particular director.

The company must be accountable to the members within the terms of the law, including, as applicable, the Corporations Act, the ACNC Act and company's constitution. The directors may decide the manner in which the company will be accountable to the members. As the members are the directors, they have the

opportunity to raise any concerns about the governance, activities and finances of the company at any time. Membership of the company is limited to its Directors.

Supply Nation has developed cooperative and collaborative arrangements with governments and the corporate sector to advance Supply Nation's interests and reach into procurement and business development. However, there is very little publicly available information on these arrangements.

Verifying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Businesses

Supply Nation has developed a registration and verification processes to ensure that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses on Supply Nation's Indigenous Business Direct are not only Indigenous owned but are also audited annually to ensure continuing compliance.

Supply Nation receives daily updates from ASIC regarding any changes to business ownership which allows Supply Nation to conduct real-time audits, reinforcing the integrity and accuracy of Indigenous businesses listed on Indigenous Business Direct.

All applications for registration of a business on Indigenous Business Direct are thoroughly checked for compliance against a set of criteria and annual spot checks are conducted to ensure ongoing compliance. Once a business is registered on Indigenous Business Direct and if the business is majority owned, controlled and managed by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, the business may be eligible to become a Supply Nation Certified Supplier.

Most businesses listed on Indigenous Business Direct are audited annually or through spot check audits to ensure that they still meet all criteria. The veracity and integrity of the businesses on Indigenous Business Direct is essential to Supply Nation. Supply Nation only accepts and showcases businesses that have provided proof of their Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander ownership.

Supply Nation's 5-step verification process is regarded as world-leading.

Supply Nation's Sources of Revenue and Longer-term Funding

Supply Nation's Annual Report for 2022-23 shows the primary revenue sources for 2022 and 2023 financial years include:

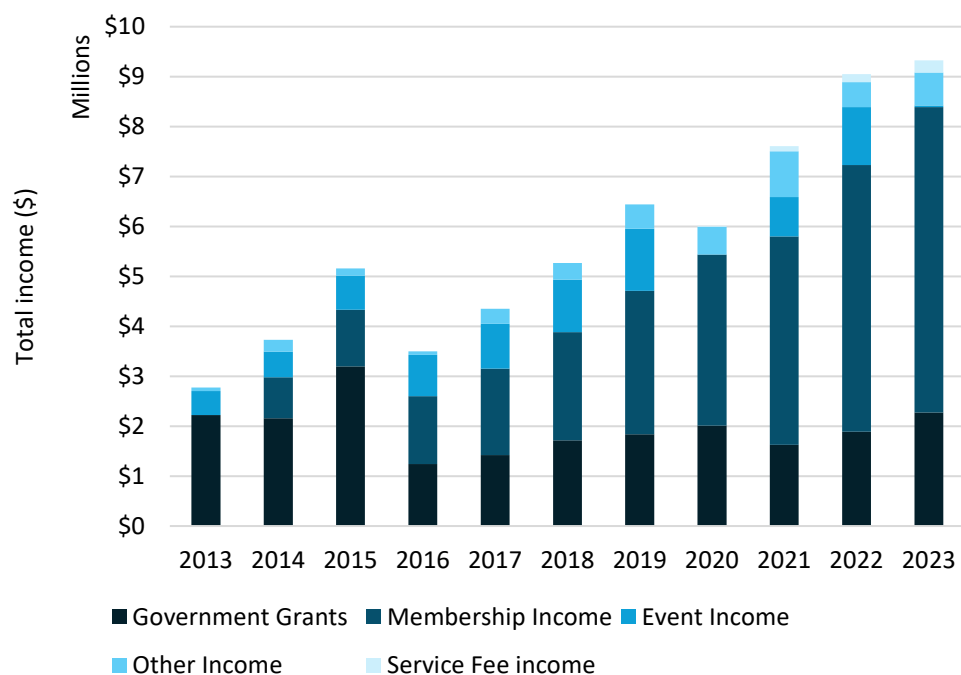
- Government grants,
- Event income
- Membership services,
- Other income (which includes: several sources, including Program delivery income, Tide foundation grant, In-kind donations, Government Jobkeeper subsidies, Government cashflow boost subsidies, and COVID rent relief, and
- Service fees.

Table 6 shows the details of Supply Nation's longer term funding sources over the period from 2013 to 2023. The data was obtained from the Annual Financial Statements that Supply Nation lodges with the ACNC.

Figure 10 shows the primary sources of revenue from 2013 to 2023 in nominal terms. The data shows that Government funding was Supply Nation's most significant source of income for many years, and that it took a few years before Membership Services to become its primary source of revenue.

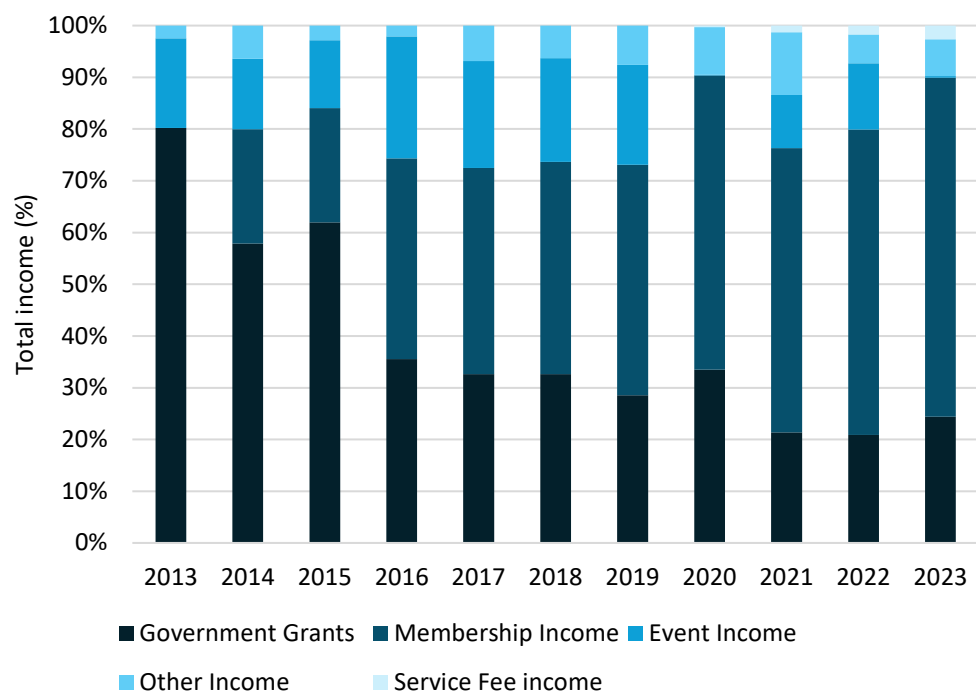
Figure 11 shows the same data, but in percentage terms. The data shows that membership services has grown from about 12 per cent of revenue in 2014 to about 65-70 per cent of revenue in 2023.

Figure 10: Supply Nation's Revenue Sources 2013-2023 in nominal terms



Sources: Annual Financial Statements from ACNC Register.

Figure 11: Supply Nation's Revenue Sources 2013-2023 in percentage terms



Sources: Annual Financial Statements from ACNC Register.

Table 6: Supply Nation's Revenue Sources and Quantum 2013 to 2023 Financial Years

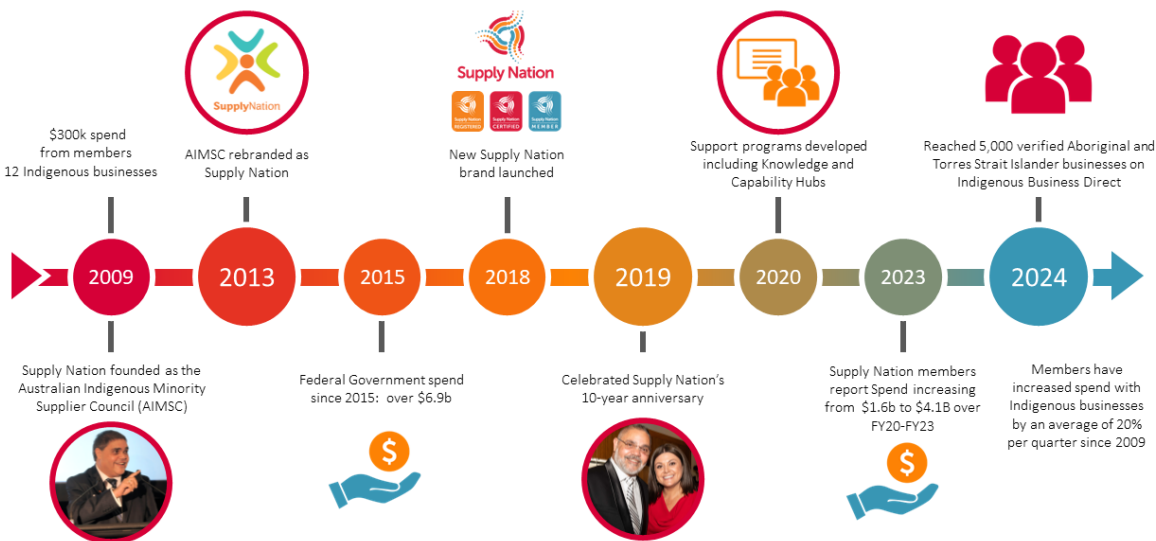
Supply Nation Income 2013-2023											
Sources	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Government Grants	\$2,224,433	\$2,157,401	\$3,196,061	\$1,243,912	\$1,420,068	\$1,718,254	\$1,840,053	\$2,012,939	\$1,625,781	\$1,890,000	\$2,273,625
Event Income	\$479,364	\$508,658	\$678,753	\$824,590	\$898,671	\$1,053,467	\$1,243,387	\$6,872	\$783,351	\$1,160,657	\$32,853
Membership Services		\$823,344	\$1,138,666	\$1,358,153	\$1,731,952	\$2,162,504	\$2,868,578	\$3,418,857	\$4,176,955	\$5,340,276	\$6,113,848
Other Income	\$68,285	\$238,947	\$144,994	\$73,037	\$299,069	\$332,398	\$490,417	\$554,176	\$919,838	\$501,223	\$662,175
Service Fee income								\$17,917	\$99,670	\$155,720	\$246,324
TOTAL	\$2,772,082	\$3,728,350	\$5,158,474	\$3,499,692	\$4,349,760	\$5,266,622	\$6,442,435	\$6,010,761	\$7,605,595	\$9,047,876	\$9,328,825

Sources: Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC), register of Australian Indigenous Minority Supplier Limited.

Supply Nation’s Growth Trajectory

The following Figures show Supply Nation’s growth trajectory.

Figure 12: Supply Nation’s historical timeline

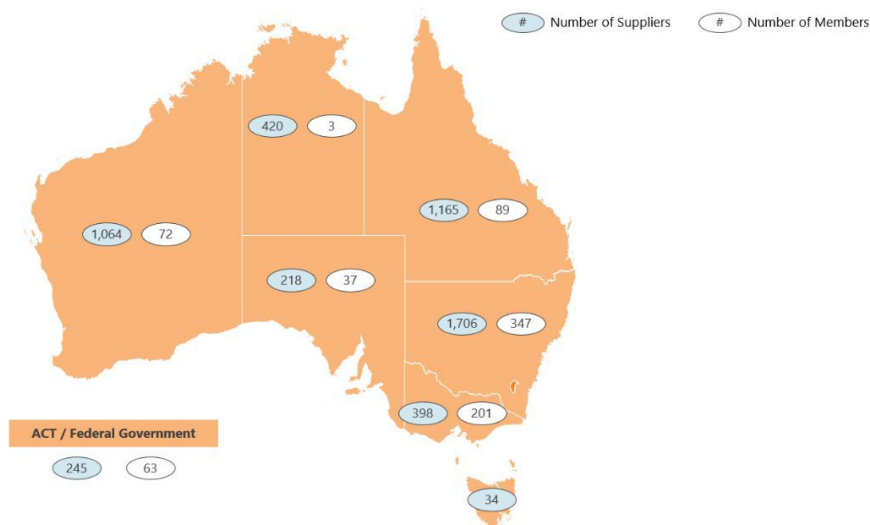


Source: Supply Nations 2024b:7.

Figure 13: Supply Nation’s growth of suppliers from 2009 to 2024

Spread of suppliers and members across Australia

As of 30th June 2024

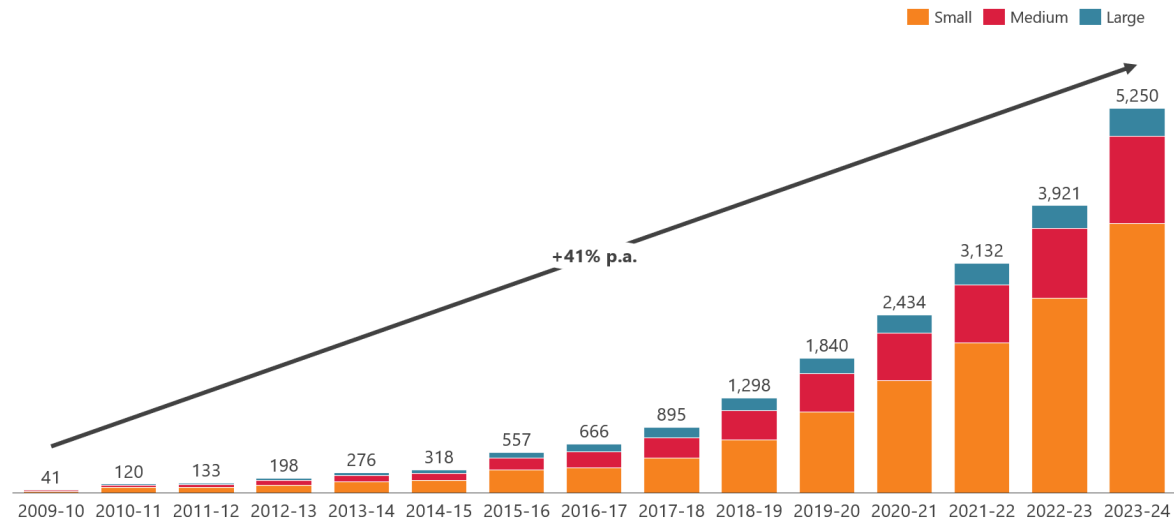


Source: Supply Nations 2024b:9.

Figure 14: Growth of Supply Nation members from 2009 to 2024

Growth of Supply Nation suppliers

Suppliers broken down by size by year between 2009-2024 (as of 30 June 2024)



Source: Supply Nation 2024b:13.

Supply Nation's Research and Advocacy Role

Supply Nation is the peak body for Indigenous supplier diversity in Australia. That means we have a role to play in advocacy for Indigenous businesses. Our research positions us as a thought-leader and advocate for the sector.

The philosophy and goals of our research are directly informed by 'who' (the intended audience of each specific research project) and 'why' (the intended use of each specific research project). This approach allows our research to make critical and groundbreaking contributions to the Indigenous business sector.

In the last 15 years, Supply Nation has published fifteen research reports and policy briefs, including making recommendations on government policy and white papers. (Supply Nation, 2024b:22)

A full list of Research Report and Policy Briefings is shown in Figure 15.

Figure 15: Supply Nation’s Research Reports and Policy Briefings

Research reports	The geographies of Indigenous business in Australia: An analysis of scale, industry and remoteness
	An analysis of procurement spending patterns with Indigenous business 2021-2022
	Supply Nation’s ‘story of change’: Developing a framework to measure the holistic impacts of investing in Indigenous businesses
	An analysis of procurement spending patterns with Indigenous businesses 2019-2021
	What makes Indigenous business unique? How understanding Indigenous cultural values can improve Indigenous procurement
	The impact of COVID-19 on the Indigenous business sector: the view from the frontline
	State of Indigenous Business: a quantitative analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on the Indigenous business sector
	State of Indigenous Business: driving growth across the Indigenous business sector
	First Nations businesses succeeding internationally
	Sleeping Giant Report: A Social Return on Investment Report on Supply Nation Certified Suppliers
	Indigenous Business Growth Report: Working together to realise potential
Policy briefs	Supply Nation Research and Policy Brief No. 1 – Implications of COVID-19 for the Indigenous labour market
	Supply Nation Research and Policy Brief No. 2 – Principles for designing post COVID-19 support programs for Indigenous business
	Supply Nation Research and Policy Brief No. 3 – Indigenous employment in the Indigenous business sector
	Supply Nation Research and Policy Brief No. 4 – Measuring the holistic impacts of investing in Indigenous businesses: a knowledge review

Source: Supply Nation 2024b:22.

We were unable to obtain answers from Supply Nation to the following questions about membership income:

- What does their income comprise?
- And what do members get in terms of services?
- Are those services charged on the basis of a unit price or are they dependent upon the size of the business?

Appendix D: Indigenous organisations examined for Governance Modelling

First Nations Heritage Protection Alliance (FNHPA)

What is it? The First Nations Heritage Protection Alliance (FNHPA) is a coalition of member organisations representing First Nations Peoples from across Australia, including major Native Title, Land Rights, Traditional Owner, and community-controlled organisations nationally. It was formed after the destruction of Juukan Gorge Caves in the Pilbara Western Australia.

What does it do? The FNHPA's mandate is to strengthen and modernise cultural heritage laws and to create industry reforms that ensure Indigenous Cultural Heritage is valued and protected for the future. It aims to enhance the capacity of First Nations in Australia and elsewhere in the world to wholly control all aspects of their tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

How does it function? The FNHPA is an unincorporated association without legal status or contractual ability. The National Native Title Council (NNTC) acts as an agent for the FNHPA in matters that require legal and contractual status and capability. NNTC also hosts the Alliance Secretariat. Member organisations come from every state and territory, consisting of national peak organisation members, regional representative members, local members and associate members.

A seventeen-person Leadership Working Group (LWG) manages the business of the Alliance between General Meetings and in accordance with decisions made by the full Alliance. Members agree to operate collectively in accordance with the FNHPA's formal Governance Charter. Through a Partnership Agreement, the FNHPA and the Commonwealth have established a Joint Working Group (JWG) to develop advice for the Minister for the Environment on options for modernising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage protections. Under this agreement, the LWG advises Alliance members about JWG actions and endorses the cultural heritage protection options presented to the federal Minister. The Partnership Agreement expires in November 24.

National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO)

What is it? The National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) is the national peak body representing 145 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) across the country on Aboriginal health and well-being issues.

What does it do? NACCHO provides advice and guidance to the Australian Government on policy and budget matters while advocating for community-developed health solutions that contribute to the quality of life and improved health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The 145 ACCHOs are initiated and operated by local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The sector is the largest employer of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia, with well over half of its 6,000 staff being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. NACCHO achieves its goals through policy development and advocacy, representation, raising awareness through focussed programs and projects, building partnerships, and information dissemination to the sector/community. NACCHO hosts the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations (CAPO) which monitors progress against the seventeen targets in the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*.

How does it function? NACCHO is a company limited by guarantee under the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth). It operates under a formal constitution with a board including a Chair and Deputy Chair (who are elected by the members directly serving three-year terms), with the remaining 14 directors appointed annually by the eight state/territory jurisdictions. The governance structure was designed to fulfil NACCHO's commitment to the principle of community control. The NACCHO Board sets organisational priorities and develops NACCHO's strategic directions, a formal five-year plan that is regularly reviewed, updated and published under the leadership of the Chair and with active support from the CEO.

First Nations Clean Energy Network (FNCEN)

What is it? The First Nations Clean Energy Network (FNCEN) is an independent network of First Nations groups, community organisations and land councils that collaborates with unions, academics, industry groups, investors technical advisors, legal experts, renewables companies and others to ensure that First Nations share in the benefits and opportunities of Australia's clean energy transition as well as managing the risks.

What does it do? Australia is rapidly transitioning to renewable energy which will require access to vast areas of land and waters, including for thousands of kilometres of new transmission infrastructure and for access to critical mineral reserves. FNCEN works to ensure that First Nations play a central role in this energy transition to share the economic benefits, job opportunities and ready access to lower-cost and reliable so First Nations peoples have the choice to continue to live and work on Country. FNCEN achieves this by (i) supporting communities to drive the development of clean energy projects, (ii) acting as an innovation hub promoting the implementation of best practice principles for companies when working with First Nations people in the renewable energy sector and (iii) advocacy for policy reform.

In addition, the FNCEN along with the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) and the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) are developing the First Nations Clean Energy Strategy as part of the Commonwealth's National Energy Transformation Partnership.

How does it function? The FNCEN is a member-based national coalition led by a Steering Group of First Nations specialists in the energy sector. It was established in 2021 by Original Power (an Aboriginal community organisation and registered charity) along with 16 "launch partners". FNCEN was modelled on a similar enterprise in Canada: the Indigenous Clean Energy Social Enterprise (ICE). FNCEN receives charitable donations and project funding.

Indigenous Carbon Industry Network (ICIN)

What is it? The Indigenous Carbon Industry Network (ICIN), established in 2018, is a network of Indigenous-owned organisations that operate across Australia, particularly north Australia, to develop and deliver carbon projects, mainly through savanna fire management. ICIN is therefore the national peak body supporting First Nations engagement in the carbon industry. The ICIN is incorporated as a not-for-profit public company under the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth).

What does it do? The ICIN promotes and facilitates an innovative and Indigenous-led carbon industry supporting healthy country and better livelihoods for Indigenous people. Specifically, the ICIN seeks to enable and empower Indigenous people to benefit from carbon markets through their land and sea management practices by supporting an active network of Indigenous organisations working towards an Indigenous-led carbon industry supporting the advancements and aspirations of Indigenous people across Australia. The ICIN hosts two major annual Indigenous-led events: the annual North Australian Savanna Fire Forum (February) and the National Indigenous Carbon Forum (May). Full members include Australia's largest land councils: the Kimberley Land Council, Northern Land Council, Central Land Council as well as Balkanu Development Corporation (Cape York Land Council), Tiwi Resources (Tiwi Islands), along with the North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA).

How does it function? The ICIN is an Indigenous-led company owned by its Full Members - 25 Indigenous organisations that either own carbon projects or directly deliver carbon credits. ICIN has a Board including seven Aboriginal leaders with experience in the carbon industry who are elected by members.

Supply Nation (SN)

What is it? Supply Nation is the trading name for the Australian Indigenous Minority Supplier Office Limited (ABN 50 134 720 362), a company limited by guarantee under the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth) and a registered charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission (ACNC).

Supply Nation is primarily involved in facilitating the integration of Indigenous businesses into the supply chain of private sector corporations and government institutions to promote income, wealth, self-sustainability and economic independence for Australia's Indigenous people.

What does it do? Supply Nation's principal purposes are to facilitate the integration of Indigenous Businesses into the supply chain of private sector corporations and Government institutions and to advocate for the Indigenous business community in the context of its relationship with private sector corporations and Government institutions through partnerships, exchanging information and conducting research.

Supply Nation is the custodian of Australia's largest and most respected database of Indigenous businesses, Indigenous Businesses Direct. All businesses listed on Indigenous Business Direct are not only Indigenous owned but are also regularly audited for changes in company structure and ownership to ensure the integrity of the data base as comprising genuinely Indigenous owned and operated businesses. The 5-step verification process that Supply Nation has developed to maintain the directory is regarded as world-leading.

More recently, Supply Nation has established an internal research capacity to undertake research on topics of relevance to Supply Nation's mission and Indigenous Business. The purpose of this research is to develop a better understanding of the contours, trends and contributions the Indigenous Business sector makes to the broader national economy, as well as its contribution to Indigenous well-being and self-determination.

How does it Function? Supply Nation is governed by a Board comprising a minimum number of three directors and a maximum of nine directors.

Supply Nation partners with its members from government, corporate and not-for-profit sectors to include supplier diversity in procurement policies, and to develop and support supplier diversity practices, based on world's best practice that enable the greater participation of the Indigenous business sector in the mainstream economy.

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