



Ancestral wisdom ©iStock.com/sebastianbruges



**Northern Australia
Environmental
Resources
Hub**

National Environmental Science Programme

Economic values & Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs) across northern Australia

Wrap-up factsheet

What did this study set out to find about IPAs?

This study was part of a larger project which aimed to work with Indigenous people to help prioritise research needs for IPAs across northern Australia. This component of the project focused on the social, economic and cultural benefits of IPAs. The researchers set out to identify the:

1. Broad types of social, economic and cultural benefits of IPAs.
2. Appropriate ways of estimating the value of those IPA benefits.
3. Ways in which stakeholders can use estimates of IPA value in decision making contexts.

They achieved these goals by undertaking a literature review of national and international research, and by consulting with representatives from Indigenous organisations, federal government and non-government organisations across northern Australia.

Background of IPAs

Key points include:

- There are more than 60 IPAs across 48 million hectares nationally.
- IPAs are Indigenous-owned or managed land or sea country where Traditional Owners have voluntarily

entered into an agreement with the Australian Government to maintain culture and the environment.

- Numerous land use and land tenure arrangements relevant to IPAs exist, including for example, Native Title and Indigenous Land use Agreements.
- IPAs in northern Australia are highly diverse, ranging from extremely large remote desert areas on Indigenous-owned lands to relatively small, multi-tenured, rainforest sites where IPAs co-exists with national parks, lease-hold and privately owned lands.
- IPAs contribute towards protecting areas of environmental and cultural significance.



Northern Australian IPAs cover unique landscapes, photo ©iStock.com/Aurelie1

The numerous benefits of IPAs

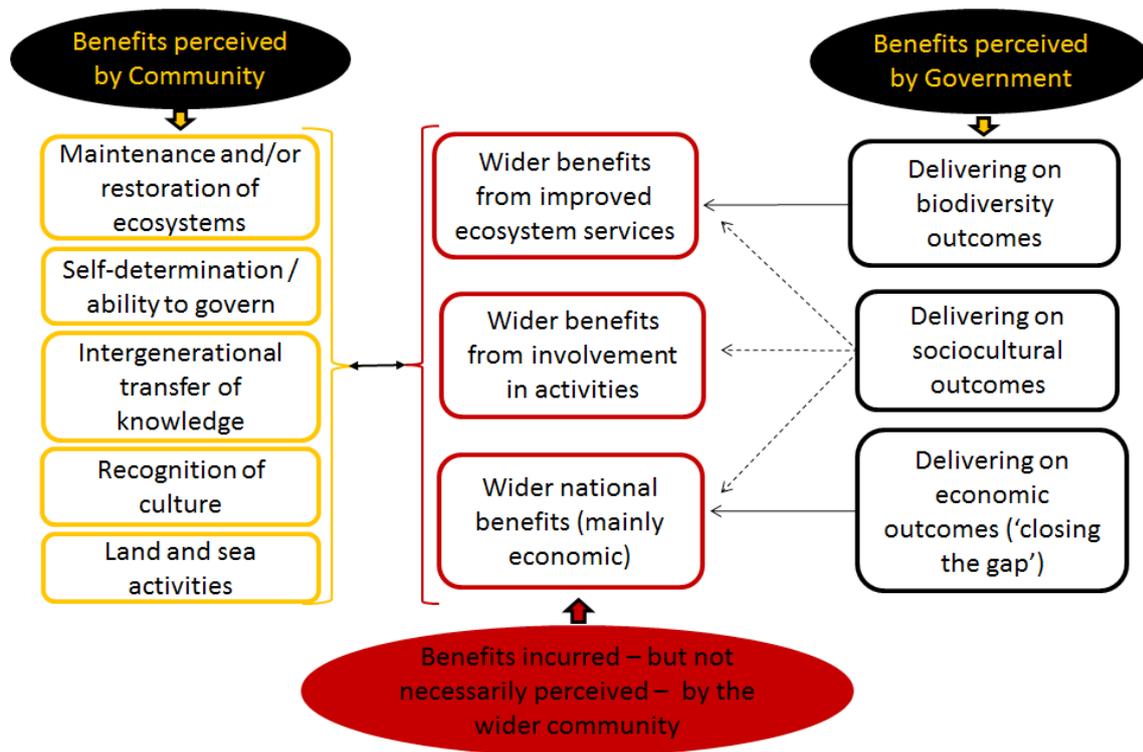


Figure 1: Broad groups of benefits and beneficiaries associated with IPAs

Many of the benefits associated with IPAs are inter-related, and different types of benefits are valuable to different groups of people (Figure1).

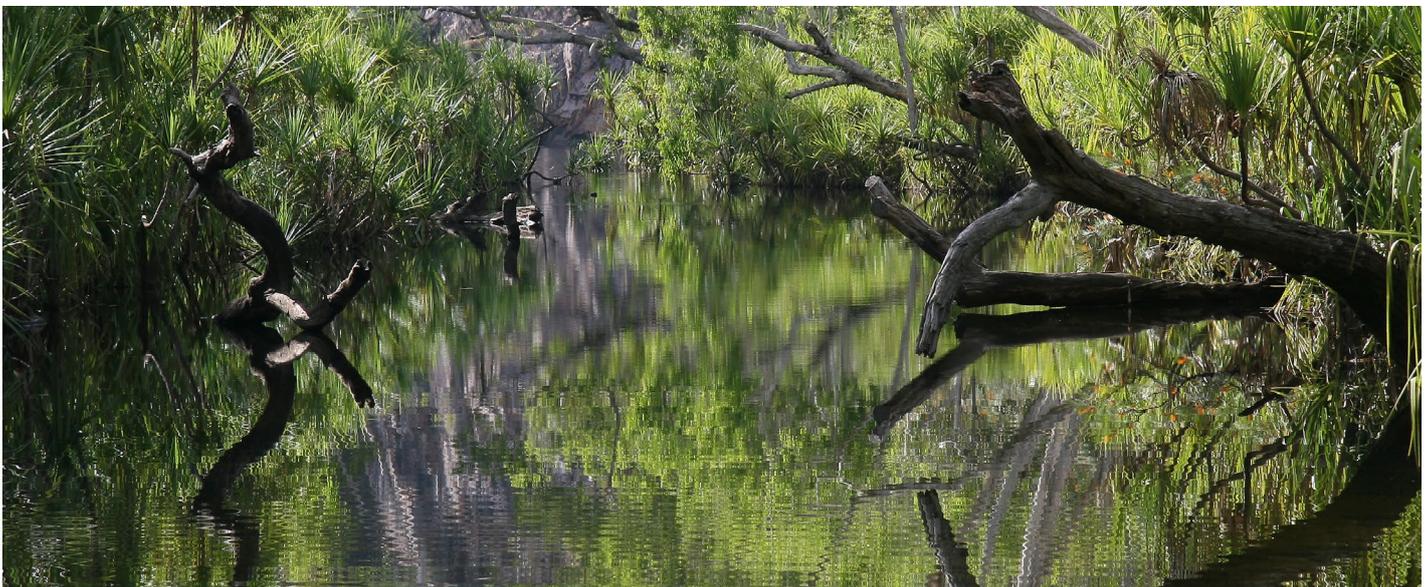
There are also costs associated with IPAs. For example:

- In 2010/11, total IPA grant payments were in order of \$11 million.
- IPAs cost approximately 15-30 cents per hectare once established.

But IPA costs are small when compared to the estimated \$2 per hectare cost of on-farm conservation.

The complexity of benefits associated with IPAs means that:

1. Frameworks which only focus on the environment and ecosystems are likely to be too simplistic when thinking about the benefits (or value) of IPAs in an Indigenous context. It is also important to consider the institutional context in which people and the environment are framed.
2. It may be inappropriate to use some types of valuation methods to assess some IPA benefits, particularly within Indigenous communities.



Northern Australian IPAs often encompass unique waterways, photo Michael Douglas

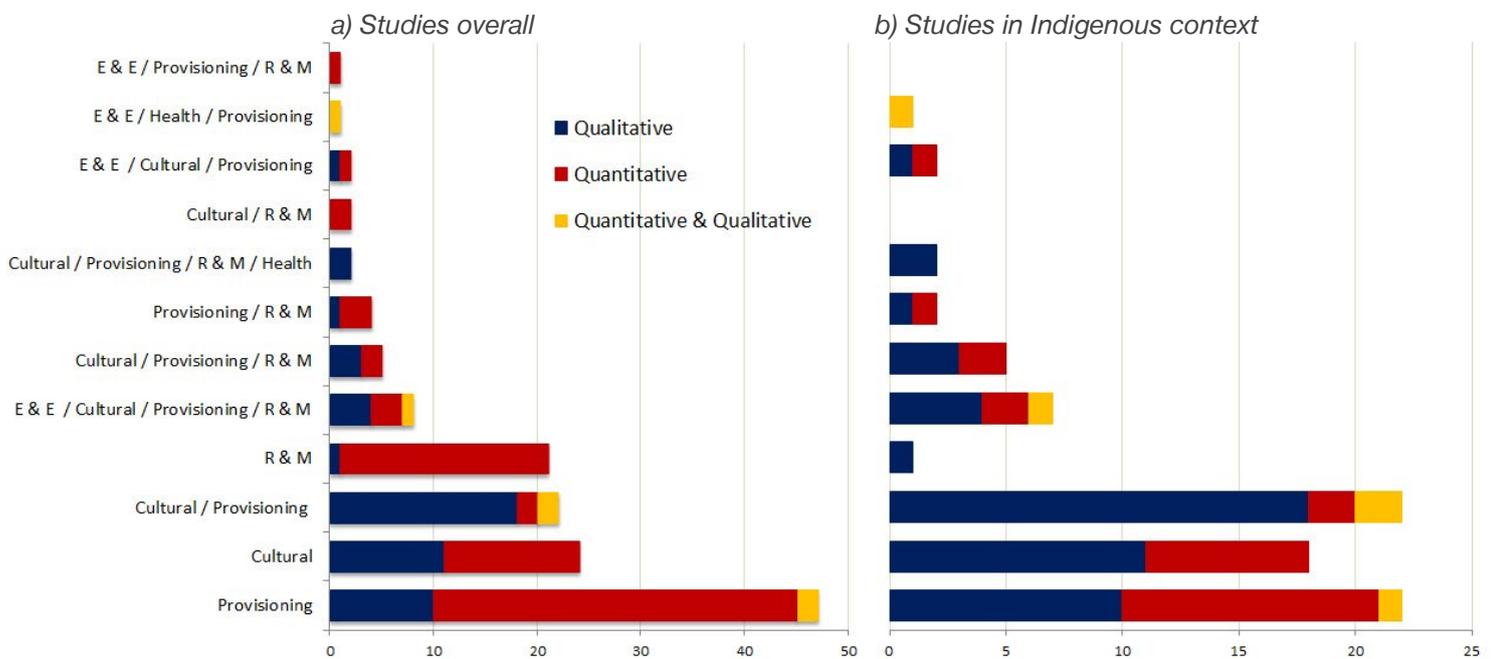


Figure 2: Classification of studies referring to the 'value' of different types of IPA benefit. The team classified 137 studies where they sought to monetise benefits associated with protected areas according to the type of benefit considered. These services include: provisioning; regulation and maintenance (R&M); and cultural benefits. They also added two additional categories, 'Health' and 'Employment & Enabling' (E&E), to capture changes in anthropogenic assets, institutions, governance and other factors associated with the protected areas but not necessarily mediated through the environment. When studies considered more than one type of benefit, they listed all. The team also narrowed the search to focus only on 82 valuation studies undertaken in an Indigenous context.

Gaps in the literature

The project team searched for empirical studies in Australia and internationally which had explored the various benefits that have been associated with IPAs. They classified studies according to the type of benefit assessed, and the method used to describe, quantify or monetise the benefit. This helped to highlight knowledge gaps.

Some key points include:

- Numerous studies consider more than one type of benefit but do not always differentiate between them. This is often a good thing since many benefits are interconnected or 'inseparable'.
- Some types of benefits are assessed using quantitative approaches much more frequently than other benefits. This doesn't mean they are more 'valuable,' but simply that they are easier to quantify.
- Research focusing on cultural values (e.g. aesthetics, cultural identity) is dominated by qualitative methods, reflecting the difficulty of monetising these important values.
- Very few studies considered 'marginal' values, i.e. looked at the way in which changes to one part of the system might generate a change in the 'value' of another part of the system.

Aligning information needs with valuation methods

There are various valuation methods that generate information about IPA benefits. Different stakeholders will likely prioritise, and require information about, different benefits so researchers will almost certainly need to use a variety of methods to improve our understanding of the multiple and complex IPA benefits.



Bush tucker, photo Glenn Campbell

What's next?

Project outcomes helped inform the development of a new project *Multiple benefits and knowledge systems of ILMPs – economic perspectives*. The new project will trial several different ways of valuing some of the diverse benefits associated with Indigenous Land Management Programs – of which IPAs are one – for government, the wider community, and Indigenous communities. See www.nespnorthern.edu.au for more information.



Hand painted boomerang, photo ©iStock.com/Wyshe



National Environmental Science Programme

Further information

This fact sheet is a summary of the full technical report, *Economic values and Indigenous Protected Areas across Northern Australia*, which can be found at: www.nespnorthern.edu.au.

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