

Waanyi Garawa case study

Survey of 'Walks in Country'

Aboriginal people have conducted a number of 'Walking in Country' events of various size and duration across central and northern Australia over the past 25 years. For the first part of this case study, the North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Alliance (NAILSMA) surveyed 'walks in country' across northern and central Australia over the past 25 years. The research reveals a range of motivations for these events, including fostering connection to country, land management, health promotion, juvenile corrections, intergenerational teaching and other cultural reasons. The research found that a range of qualities inherent to the immersive experience of walking in country are strong motivators for Aboriginal people's involvement. Furthermore, there is evidence of positive cross-sectoral outcomes associated with walking events which point to Walking in Country as a potentially powerful vehicle by which many pressing social issues in remote Aboriginal communities can be effectively addressed.

Research to explore the potential of Walking in Country

Through 2018 and 2019, as the second part of the case study, NAILSMA will undertake

a collaborative action-research project in partnership with Waanyi and Garawa people to explore the potential of walking in country for land management. This research will:

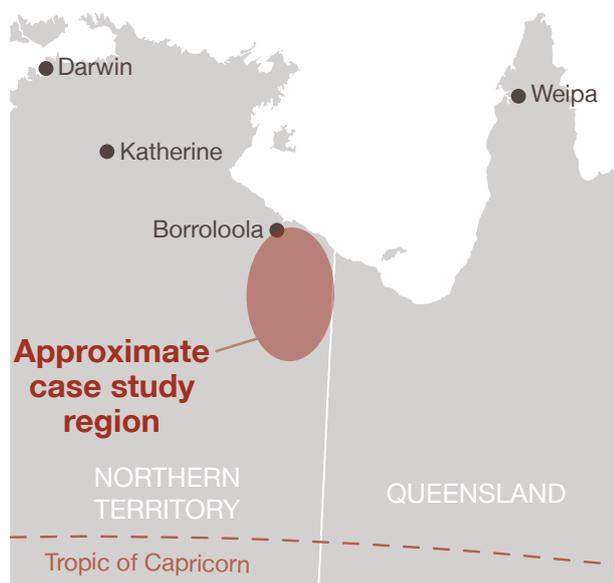
- assist people to address their concerns and responsibilities re 'orphan country'
- explore modes of being in country (extended walks/base camp with day walks/walks with specific objectives e.g. fire or site visits/men's, women's walks, etc)
- seek ways to effectively involve women, the elderly and infirm, as well as children
- stress traditional values such as using language, correct relationships to people/country, sustenance from the bush.

Quantifying cross-sectoral benefits

Preliminary research indicates that a diverse range of objectives can be met through walks in country. Outcomes also appear to extend far beyond the targeted area, and the research will attempt to define and quantify these cross-sectoral benefits. Where health benefits are suspected (e.g. exercise, diet and lower stress), efforts will be made to engage Aboriginal participants in measuring and monitoring the impacts of walks.

Walking for land management

NAILSMA has been working with Waanyi Garawa Rangers to explore the value of Walking in Country as an effective platform for land observation and



Approximate location of the case study region near the Robinson River in the Northern Territory.



Walking in the Northern Territory, photo NAILSMA.

management. Walking and working on foot can offer a richly nuanced approach to moving through and caring for land. Walkers see more, hear and smell more. Fine details such as tracks and scat are more likely to be found. Endangered skillsets can be re-energised. Walking ensures that Traditional Owners' expertise and primary aspirations are at the fore of land management decisions.

Walks will seek to:

- identify and develop future Rangers and leadership
- teach 'two toolbox' knowledge sets in country
- collaborate with ecologists to describe the specific qualities of land management works (especially burning) that are conducted on foot
- use I-tracker technology to improve natural resource map resolution and thus enable better land management planning and actions
- create a sense of the 'rightness' of walking in country – that this is a good, natural and desirable thing to do.

Project summary

Indigenous land management (ILM) occurs over significant proportions of northern Australia that contain many high-value environmental assets. Effective land management is vital to northern Australian development and Indigenous land managers have a strong desire to engage in the increasing level of development planning. Traditional Owners hold substantial knowledge about using, managing and safeguarding northern Australia's natural and cultural resources, and a significant body of scientific research is also available. However, these knowledge resources have not yet fully empowered Traditional Owners' land management and development capability.

Effective knowledge brokering can help overcome barriers and the project's co-research approach places Indigenous people as central to driving the

design, testing and knowledge brokering tools. Two case studies will support Indigenous land managers to a) explore stakeholder influence mapping and build a 3-D model of country to assess risks and opportunities in the Fitzroy River catchment of Western Australia, and b) evaluate the potential of walking in country for land management with the Waanyi and Garawa people in the Nicholson region of the Northern Territory, and use the results for more holistic planning. The project will deliver:

- tailored knowledge brokering tools and guidelines for their use
- knowledge-sharing among Indigenous land managers across northern Australia through workshops and digital networking activities
- a diagnosis of the conditions under which knowledge brokering can improve Indigenous adaptive management of environmental assets.

Further information

Contact project leaders Ro Hill at ro.hill@csiro.au or Ricky Archer at ricky.archer@nailsma.org.au or case study leader Peter Yates at peter.yates@nailsma.org.au

The project page can be found [on the Hub website](#), along with the [start-up factsheet](#).



**Northern Australia
Environmental
Resources
Hub**

National Environmental Science Programme

nespnorthern.edu.au

nesp.northern@cdu.edu.au



This project is supported through funding from the Australian Government's National Environmental Science Program.

April 2018