
Hub

Northern Australia Environmental Resources Hub

Story title

Caring for Country and improving Indigenous lives through Indigenous land and sea management programs, and Hub research

Project title or Hub activity

5.3 Multiple benefits of Indigenous land and sea management programs

Short version

This research has demonstrated that Indigenous land and sea management programs (ILSMPs) deliver socio-economic and wellbeing outcomes in addition to their extensive environmental outcomes. Moreover, just being involved in this research has had many positive impacts for communities in WA's Fitzroy River valley and north Queensland, including positive impacts for land management.

Narrative



Natalie Stoeckl, Diane Jarvis, Celia Boxer, Jane Addison, Sharon Prior, David Hudson and Emile Boxer at the Department of the Environment and Energy in Canberra during 2018 Reconciliation Week, photo Patch Clapp.

“It was deadly.”

– Celia Boxer, Walmajarri (WA) Traditional Owner and co-researcher, describing her experience of being involved this project.

Indigenous land and sea management programs (ILSMPs) – which include Indigenous ranger, Caring for Country and Indigenous Protected Area programs – have well-documented environmental and ecological benefits. This research showed that in addition, these programs deliver co-benefits such as socio-economic and wellbeing benefits, which are less well known and more difficult to quantify.

But for Indigenous people from WA's Fitzroy River valley and north Queensland, simply *participating in the research* – for example, through undertaking interviews, being interviewed and follow-on conversations catalysed by interviews – has also had significant positive impacts.

The project employed Traditional Owners as co-researchers – Celia and Emile Boxer in the Kimberley, and David Hudson and Sharon Prior in north Queensland – and more specifically as 'cultural brokers' who undertook interview survey work with community members.

At an individual level this had positive benefits for those involved, including learning new skills, personal growth, re-connection with extended family, and knowledge about Country:

"Doing this [research] ... I was meeting my family that I hadn't seen in ages and getting introduced to some of the elders that I probably hadn't seen in 10 years. I felt good doing it."
– Celia Boxer.

"...[It] has been quite empowering and quite important for myself and my development just as a person"

"... to go back [to remote communities] as an adult, I could see it from a different perspective"

– Emile Boxer, Walmajarri Traditional Owner and co-researcher.

The research interviews have also helped Ewamian Traditional Owners in Queensland plan for the future development of the newly acquired Talaroo Station near Georgetown, by choosing options that maintain cultural and ecological values, and maximise the benefits and wellbeing for all involved.

"[This project has] been of great importance to us. Because it opened our eyes up and made us open our views on what we want to do on country. The project team interviewed a lot of our Ewamian people, and they've all expressed they want to keep it [development] as cultural as possible."

– Dr David Hudson, Ewamian Traditional Owner and Chairperson of Ewamian Aboriginal Corporation.

"We found out a lot of information from the Ewamian people about what was important to them and what their priorities were and what their aspirations were for their traditional country ... that was one of the benefits of doing this project, finding out what was on everybody's minds and what they wanted for the future."

– Sharon Prior, Ewamian Traditional Owner.

Interviews also showed how land management programs are having an impact beyond their direct environmental impacts:

"We asked... how was it five years ago and how is it now? [There was a] huge difference. The land management program[s], I think they are doing such a good job. The elders that we spoke to, they were really proud that they had young people doing it. Going to the schools and taking some of the kids out onto country and showing them what bush tucker is ... It was just really awesome."

– Celia Boxer.

The research has given a voice to community members and deepened understandings on all sides about what's important to communities.

“The response from a lot of the people there [in communities] was ... that they felt like their opinions about these sorts of things, including wellbeing, were valued ... that was probably one of the most beneficial things that I feel like they came away with from the research.”
– Emile Boxer.

Travelling to co-present research results to staff at the Department of the Environment and Energy and Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet also had impacts.

“... I got a better understanding of how people’s opinions can be incorporated into policy.”
– Emile Boxer.

“[meeting policy-makers in Canberra] is very important to us ... To come down here and actually speak to the main officers and the staff, it’s been of great relevance and it’s important”
– Dr David Hudson.

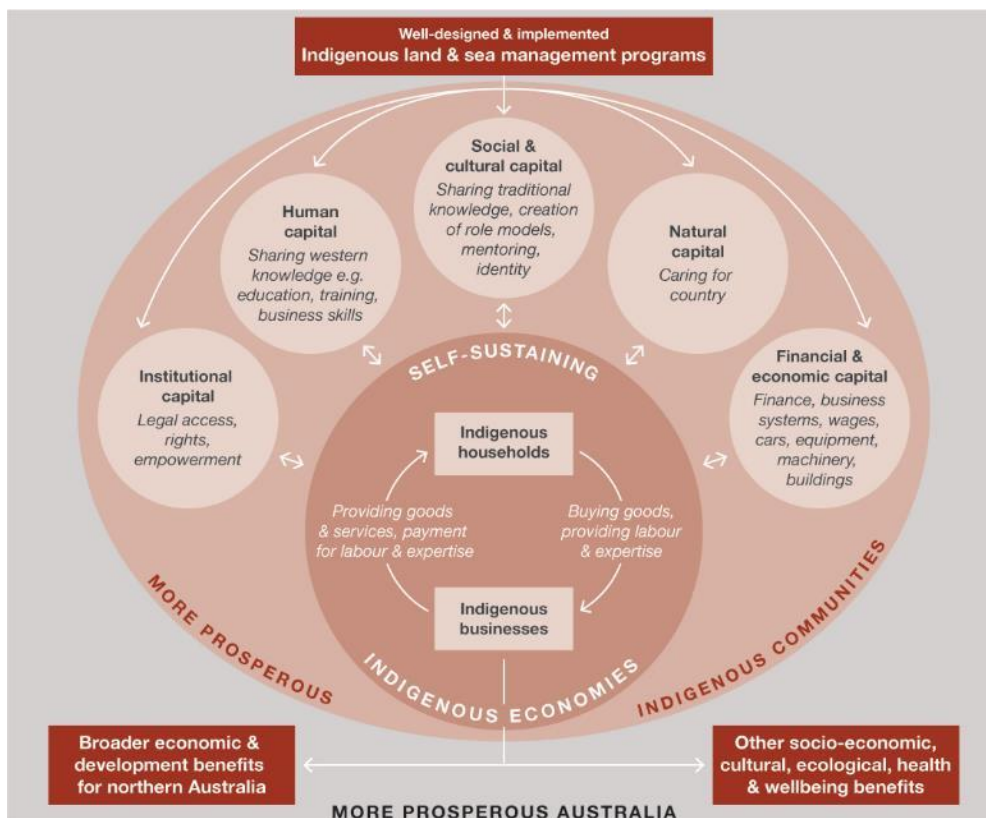
Likewise, government staff here are using the research to inform policy and program planning, for example:

“Thanks to all of you for a great presentation and workshop... you really made an impression”

“I enjoyed your presentation and ... the opportunity to see such a skilled communicator ‘in action’.... I see it as extremely important that we take advantage of the work being done by researchers who are passionate and committed to change”.

“...what we learn from you changes the way we communicate about the programs... Thank you for continuously reaching out. Your work is exemplary, innovative, important!”

More impacts are expected as project findings are promoted over the next few months.



Please check out [this](#) video to hear direct from Celia, Emile, Sharon and David about the benefits of being involved in the research!

Some of the multiple benefits of Indigenous Land and Sea Management Programs.

Research outputs

Journal articles

- [The ability of community based natural resource management to contribute to development as freedom and the role of access \(Aug 2019\)](#)
- [Indigenous land and sea management programs: Can they promote regional development and help 'close the \(income\) gap'? \(Dec 2018\)](#)
- [Are Indigenous land and sea management programs a pathway to Indigenous economic independence? \(Aug 2018\)](#)
- [Using measures of wellbeing for impact evaluation: Proof of concept developed with an Indigenous community undertaking land management programs in northern Australia \(May 2018\)](#)
- [The crowding out of complex social goods \(Feb 2018\)](#)

Factsheets

- [Multiple benefits of Indigenous land and sea management programs \(wrap-up factsheet, Feb 2019\)](#)
- [Multiple benefits of Indigenous land and sea management programs \(start-up factsheet, Jun 2017\)](#)
- [Multiple benefits of Indigenous land and sea management programs \(project update Jun 2018\)](#)
- [Multiple benefits of Indigenous land and sea management programs \(project update Dec 2017\)](#)
- [Multiple benefits and of Indigenous land and sea management programs \(project update Jun 2017\)](#)

Policy notes

- [Can Indigenous land and sea management programs contribute to 'development' as it is perceived by Indigenous communities? \(Nov 2018\)](#)
- [Using measures of wellbeing for evaluating the impact of Indigenous land and sea management programs \(Jun 2018\)](#)
- [Are Indigenous land and sea management programs a pathway to Indigenous economic independence? \(May 2018\)](#)
- [Can Indigenous land and sea management programs help 'close the gap'? \(Dec 2017\)](#)

Science summary

- [Improving our understanding of the multiple benefits of Indigenous land & sea management programs \(May 2018\)](#)

Videos & presentations

- [Multiple benefits & knowledge systems of Indigenous land & sea management programs – economic perspectives \(presentation, Feb 2019\)](#)
 - [Multiple benefits & knowledge systems of Indigenous land & sea management programs – economic perspectives \(presentation, Nov 2018\)](#)
-

Project webpage

- [Multiple benefits of Indigenous land and sea management programs](#)

Attributions

- Project leader: Natalie Stoeckl (James Cook University [JCU])
 - Diane Jarvis (JCU/CSIRO)
 - Silva Larson (JCU)
 - Daniel Grainger (JCU)
 - Jane Addison (JCU/CSIRO)
 - Michelle Esparon (JCU)
 - Bidan Aboriginal Corporation
 - Bunuba Dawangarri Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC
 - Ewamian Aboriginal Corporation
 - Gooniyandi Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC
 - Ro Hill (CSIRO)
 - Petina Pert (CSIRO)
 - Anne Poelina (Nyikina-Warwa, Madjulla Inc.)
 - Joe Ross (Bunuba Dawangarri Aboriginal Corporation)
 - Walalakoo Aboriginal Corporation
 - Felecia Watkin-Lui (JCU)
 - Mark Thomas (JCU)
 - Yanunijarra Ngurrara Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC
 - Sharon Prior (Ewamian Aboriginal Corporation)
 - David Hudson (Ewamian Aboriginal Corporation)
 - Emile Boxer, Celia Boxer, Hansen Boxer (Walmajarri TOs)
 - Laurel Sutcliffe (Broome)
 - Tanya Casey, Megan Mosquito, Jenny Lacey, Lyn Baily, Brian Bing, Ken Georgetown and Barry Fisher (Ewamian)
 - Peter Murray, Annette Kogolo (Walmajarri)
 - Andrea Myers, Mary Aiken (Bunuba)
 - Helen Malo, John Quilty (Gooniyandi)
 - Tania Smith (CEO, GAC)
 - Ian Perdrisat, Damien Parriman (Nyikina-Mangala)
 - Christine Boddington (Derby)
 - Scott Channing, Erika Schwartz, Tharman Saverimuttu, Deborah Hawke (PM&C)
 - Anthea Brecknell, Laura Perrott (DoEE)
 - Karen Dayman, Clare Taylor, Jane Thomas (NESP Northern Hub)
-