



**Earth Systems and  
Climate Change  
Hub**

National Environmental Science Programme



# Indigenous Engagement and Collaboration Strategy

VERSION 3  
February 2017



**Australian Government**



National  
**Environmental  
Science  
Programme**

## Earth Systems and Climate Change Indigenous Engagement Strategy – V3

VERSION CONTROL REVISION HISTORY			
Version	Date revised	Reviewed by (Name, Position)	Comment (review/amendment type)
V0.1	April 28, 2015	Mandy Hopkins, Indigenous Engagement Officer	Original draft
V0.2	April 29, 2015	Helen Cleugh, Hub Leader	Additional comments
V0.3	April 30, 2015	Scott, Deputy Hub Leader	Further comments
V0.4	May 1, 2015	Mandy Hopkins, Indigenous Engagement Officer	Revised document based on comments above.
V1	May 2, 2015	Helen Cleugh, Hub Leader	Final changes to current draft based on feedback from Anthea Brecknell
V2.0	October 14, 2015	Mandy Hopkins Knowledge Broker and Indigenous Engagement Officer	First draft of IES V2
V2.1	November 8, 2015	Mandy Hopkins Knowledge Broker and Indigenous Engagement Officer	
V2.2	November 10, 2015	Scott, Deputy Hub Leader Helen, Hub Leader	Final edits to develop a version for circulation to the Department to accompany their review of Research Plan V2.  Note that the IES V2.2 will be updated after approval of Research Plan V2.
V2.3	November 16, 2015	Mandy Hopkins Knowledge Broker and Indigenous Engagement Officer	Note regarding the NESP CoP
V3.0	December 8, 2016	Mandy Hopkins Knowledge Broker and Indigenous Engagement Officer	Began updating ready for RPV3
V3.1	February 20, 2017	Mandy Hopkins Knowledge Broker and Indigenous Engagement Officer	Final updates

Important note: This Indigenous Engagement and Collaboration Strategy complements the Hub's Research Plan, and is updated annually with each annual Research plan approval. The strategy should also be considered in conjunction with the Hub's Communication and Knowledge Brokering Strategy.

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# 1. Principles and overarching aims

Climate change presents a risk to the livelihoods of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. As coastal and island communities confront rising sea levels, rainfall and heat extremes, and many inland regions become hotter and drier, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people face the potential loss and degradation of the lands, waters and natural resources that they have relied upon for generations.

Climate change also poses a major threat to the physical health of Indigenous communities (e.g. as described in the Australian Academy of Science's report *Climate Change Challenges to Health: Risks and Opportunities*<sup>1</sup>) and their ability to sustain their traditional life, languages, knowledge and cultural heritage.

## Role of the Earth Systems and Climate Change Hub

The National Environmental Science Programme (NESP) Earth Systems and Climate Change (ESCC) Hub is a national partnership with world-leading capability in multi-disciplinary Earth system and climate change science. The Hub provides Earth system and climate knowledge and information in support of a productive and resilient Australia.

The vulnerability of some Indigenous communities to climate-related risks, and the potential for adaptation, is well-understood by the ESCC Hub. The Hub also understands that Indigenous communities are custodians of a wealth of knowledge about Australia's weather and climate – knowledge that can complement and benefit the Hub's research and impact. In turn the ESCC Hub, through its Bureau of Meteorology, CSIRO and university partners, can build upon earlier work with Pacific Island nations and communities, and the Bureau's Indigenous Weather Knowledge (<http://www.bom.gov.au/iwkl/>) to ensure effective Indigenous engagement that benefits Australia and Indigenous communities.

## Indigenous engagement and collaboration

The primary goal of the ESCC Hub's Indigenous Engagement and Collaboration Strategy is to provide targeted climate information that is relevant and useful to Indigenous Australian communities. The ESCC Hub continues the actions undertaken in 2015 to build strong, trusted partnerships with our Indigenous stakeholders and explore ways that Traditional Knowledge can play in informing the Hub's research. These partnerships will form the foundation for ongoing collaboration and mutual benefit.

The ESCC Hub will do this through participatory approaches, primarily in collaboration with existing Hubs and other programs/initiatives, to address key climate information gaps and needs of Indigenous Australian communities. Our focus will be on:

- information needed for assessing climate impacts on natural resources, ecosystems and communities
- provision of customised communication products and tools to support decision-making and enhanced adaptation planning.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.science.org.au/climate-change-challenges-to-health-think-tank-recommendations>

The Hub will focus on developing targeted partnerships, expertise and products to meet the needs of Indigenous stakeholders through case studies and engagement with key groups such as the Traditional Owners of the Great Barrier Reef. Our aim is to provide instructive examples of success that provide the building blocks for future engagement and delivery.

The Department of the Environment and Energy (the Department) recognises and respects the deep knowledge that Indigenous peoples have in terms of managing Australia's land, fresh water and sea country, and in conserving biodiversity and cultural heritage, and has prepared the *NESP Indigenous Engagement Strategy Guidelines* to ensure effective integration of Indigenous aspirations and outcomes in the National Environmental Science Programme (NESP). The Hub strategy addresses these guidelines.

The guidelines identify five pillars critical to successful Indigenous partnerships:

- Pillar 1: Building trust
- Pillar 2: Respectful interactions
- Pillar 3: Upholding rights
- Pillar 4: Mutual understanding
- Pillar 5: Enduring partnerships

All research that is undertaken, irrespective of its nature, will have an impact on Indigenous Australians, and therefore Indigenous engagement and participation is identified as a cross-cutting theme for all NESP Hubs in the development of research priorities.

Meaningful, thoughtful and appropriately resourced engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will result in benefits to Indigenous Australians and to Australian society. Genuine engagement, participation and communication strategies that are relevant to the culture and views of Indigenous Australians are essential to build strong, effective and mutually respectful relationships.

## Key performance indicators

Our Indigenous Engagement and Collaboration Strategy aims to continue to build relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups and communities. These relationships will be the foundation for our ongoing engagement by:

- facilitating the Hub's long-term goal of providing targeted climate information that is relevant and useful to Indigenous Australian communities
- ensuring that the Hub's research is informed by relevant Indigenous weather and climate knowledge.

Informed by sound understanding of user needs, our emphasis will be on development and provision of customised communication products, tools and research services to support decision-making and enhanced adaptation planning.

Our key performance indicators are to:

1. Continue building relationships with relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups to the extent that resources allow.
2. Engage with the other NESP Hubs and partner agencies on (1).

3. Increase cultural awareness within the Hub through participation in training programs for the NESP Hub Leadership team and for researchers in projects involving engagement with Indigenous groups and communities.
4. Develop an approach to facilitate effective Indigenous participation in the Hub's governance. This includes Indigenous community representation on the Hub's Stakeholder Engagement Group (HSAG).
5. Develop and deliver case studies that address our engagement and collaboration goals.
6. Ensure that the Hub's engagement is conducted according to the highest ethical standards across all activities.
7. Embed relevant and targeted elements from CSIRO and the Bureau of Meteorology's Indigenous strategies in the Hub's activities.

To ensure the success and delivery of our key performance indicators are monitored and evaluated we intend to continue to:

- identify the key Indigenous groups with whom the Hub will engage and determine what their climate-related needs are
- determine what work, products, tools and services are needed to meet those needs, and when they are needed
- assess the degree to which the Indigenous groups subsequently consider their needs to be met.

Our KPIs are captured in the NESP-level monitoring and evaluation plan through the following overarching KPIs:

1. Indigenous engagement contributes positively to NESP research activity.
2. Supports Indigenous communities to work on, and care for, Country.
3. Delivers outcomes that support Indigenous land and sea managers/owners to care for Country.

We will address these objectives via the generic activities listed below. Specific actions for each year are contained in the Hub's annual Research Plan and the action plan that accompanies this strategy.

## 2. Engagement activities

### Relationship building

To **build relationships with relevant Indigenous communities** [KPI 1] we will continue to forge strong and trusted partnerships with Indigenous communities and through these partnerships:

- i. ascertain the level of interest in working with the ESCC Hub
- ii. determine their climate information needs
- iii. better understand the role that Traditional Knowledge can play in informing the Hub's research.

The Hub will use existing relationships built by other NESP Hubs to identify Indigenous community groups and agencies that might be interested in being part of our Indigenous network. Discussions are already under way with colleagues in the Northern Australia Hub and the Tropical Water Quality Hub regarding initial consultation with the Central Land Council. We will continue to explore a pilot project in collaboration with one of the NESP Hubs, CSIRO or Bureau groups already working in this area to enable us to learn more about working with Indigenous communities.

## Coordination and collaboration

**To engage with other NESP Hubs and partner agencies on relationship building [KPI 2]** we will develop a coordinated approach (with other NESP Hubs and the Department) to Indigenous engagement, particularly where we have overlapping research regions or interests.

Through the NESP Indigenous Engagement and Participation Community of Practice, and partner agencies, we will align with and build on the successful relationships that have already been developed with Indigenous communities. Not only is this an effective and efficient way for the ESCC Hub to build its Indigenous engagement by sharing knowledge and resources, but it also is more likely to lead to more integrated outcomes and will mitigate the risk of 'engagement fatigue' that might result amongst our key Indigenous stakeholders.

We will also embed relevant and targeted elements from CSIRO and the Bureau of Meteorology's Indigenous strategies into the Hub's Indigenous engagement activities.

### *CSIRO Indigenous Engagement Strategy*

The CSIRO Indigenous Engagement Strategy aims to increase Indigenous participation in CSIRO's research and development agenda and other activities to:

- i. ensure that CSIRO benefits from the insights that Indigenous people can bring to our national challenges
- ii. provide a means of ensuring that CSIRO's activities are as effective as possible in contributing to addressing the challenges and aspirations of Indigenous communities.

The strategy has four foci:

- i. scientific opportunities
- ii. employment
- iii. education outreach
- iv. cultural learning and development.

### *Bureau of Meteorology Reconciliation Action Plan 2012–2015*

The purpose of the Bureau of Meteorology's Reconciliation Action Plan 2012–2015 is to enable meaningful engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, whether they are end-users of Bureau products and services, or contributing to and sharing knowledge in the development of Bureau services.

The Bureau's Indigenous Weather Knowledge project, an online platform providing education about, and preservation of, Indigenous people's relationships with the

environment, weather and climate, is an example of relevant initiative from this plan that supports the Hub's goals.

## Opportunities for Indigenous researchers

The Hub will develop and identify opportunities for Indigenous researchers to further their study and/or experience.

We will draw on existing initiatives developed by Hub partners such as the Bureau's Indigenous Careers Program, which aims to increase employment opportunities through the recruitment of cadets and graduates, and CSIRO's Indigenous Internship Programme, through which the Hub hopes to employ Indigenous researchers into relevant Hub research projects.

Through the Bureau of Meteorology, and expertise from our university partners, we will focus on capacity building and exchange of weather and climate information, and develop effective ways to engage with the Indigenous community to facilitate these aims.

## Training for Hub staff

**To increase cultural awareness within the Hub [KPI 3]** will continue to create and provide opportunities for the leadership team to increase their Indigenous cultural awareness and competence (e.g. via formal cultural awareness training courses)

The ESCC Hub will train all available members of the research projects in the Hub in a CSIRO Indigenous cultural training workshop. This first workshop took place in 2015, and will be repeated in later years as required. The workshop builds cultural competency among researchers through the delivery of cultural awareness, cultural induction and cultural exchange processes. The Hub will also implement related protocols for researchers including:

- i. ensuring they participate in cultural awareness courses before commencing a research project that involves Indigenous communities
- ii. supporting participation in any Hub activities that are designed to enable Indigenous collaborators to interact with researchers and build awareness of our research agencies.

## Awareness raising

To increase scientific awareness among Indigenous partners (i.e. to increase their understanding of research goals and scientific methods of researchers), we will use the experience and resources already available within the Bureau, CSIRO and university partners to both ensure that awareness-building adds value to the Hub's research goals, and is cost-effective and relevant.

## Governance

To ensure **effective Indigenous participation in the Hub's governance [KPI 4]** there will be Indigenous representation in the Hub's Stakeholder Advisory Group (the Chair of this group will be an observer on the Hub Steering Committee). Indigenous collaboration is also

an element of the Hub's Communication and Knowledge Strategy, of which the Indigenous Engagement Strategy is a component.

As the Hub matures and has further advice on knowledge and information needs, we will look to existing Indigenous governance structures, such as community steering groups or committees, to provide guidance and facilitate deeper and more targeted engagement.

## Respect and regard

To ensure that ESCC Hub research is conducted according to the highest ethical standards [KPI 6] the Hub will follow the *Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies* published by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) in 2000 and revised in 2011.

This document outlines the best standards of ethical research and principles regarding respect for the rights of Indigenous Australians, including their right to full and fair participation in any processes, projects and activities that affect them. The guidelines are clear that it is essential that Indigenous people are full participants in research projects that concern them, share an understanding of the aims and methods of the research, and share the results of this work. At all stages, research with Indigenous peoples must be founded on a process of meaningful engagement and exchange between the researcher and Indigenous people. The guidelines also recognise there is no distinction between researchers and Indigenous people – Indigenous people are also researchers.

Principles from the 2011 AIATSIS guidelines<sup>2</sup> provide a coherent and clear national standard and have been adopted to assist Hub researchers achieve the highest standards of ethical research.

Researchers must ascertain whether their project requires ethical approval from a recognised human research ethics committee following processes consistent with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007)<sup>3</sup>. Approval must be obtained prior to the commencement of research, including free, informed and prior consent. This will be a contractual requirement for all Hub researchers and sub-contractors.

## Project-based Indigenous engagement activities

To identify and deliver **case studies that address the Hub's collaboration and engagement goals** [KPI 5] we will establish a clear link between this Indigenous Engagement and Collaboration Strategy and the Hub's research by identifying those research projects that have the most immediate relevance. We will also work with the Chief Investigators and project teams to scope relevant and appropriate activities within their research work plan.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://aiatsis.gov.au/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/health-ethics/human-research-ethics-committees-hrecs>