Indigenous Protected Areas (IPA) Program Evaluation

Final Evaluation Report

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The Indigenous Protected Areas Program Evaluation was commissioned by NIAA. This report was written and researched for Ninti One Limited by Rod Little, Tammy Abbott, Keryn Maloney, Andy Bubb, Rod Reeve (Ninti One Limited); Emma Woodward, Pethie Lyons, Peta Braedon, Petina Pert, Rosemary Hill (Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation [CSIRO]; and Diane Jarvis (James Cook University). Ninti One gratefully acknowledges the assistance and support provided by NIAA and the Interagency Project Evaluation Team (PET).

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The Ninti logo story

Our logo is based on the painting ‘Two Women Learning’, created by Aboriginal artist Kathleen Wallace. Kathleen was born and raised at Uyetye, on the Todd River – her father’s homeland. Her mother is from Therirrerte. Her grandfather taught her stories of her culture and land from an early age. ‘Two Women Learning’ illustrates how different people hold different knowledge, different parts of the story and how they are responsible for keeping that story safe and passing on the knowledge.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

Acronym or phrase	Meaning
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AIATSIS	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
BJNACRNTBC	Bardi Jawi Niimidiman Aboriginal Corporation Registered Native Title Body Corporate
CLC	Central Land Council
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
DBCA	Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions
DCCEEW	Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
DSS	Desert Support Services
GMTOAC	Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation
HCAS	Habitat Condition Assessment System
IAC	Indigenous Advisory Committee
IAS	Indigenous Advancement Strategy
IBRA	Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation of Australia
IDA	Indigenous Desert Alliance
IEC	Indigenous Evaluation Committee
IEO	Index of Education and Occupation
IER	Index of Economic Resources
ILSMP	Indigenous Land and Sea Management Programs
IPA	Indigenous Protected Area
IRSAD	Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage
IRSD	Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
KLC	Kimberley Land Council
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
NAILSMA	North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance
NCI	National Connectivity Index
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NIAA	National Indigenous Australians Agency
NLC	Northern Land Council
NNTAC	Ngadju Native Title Aboriginal Corporation
NPS	Net Promoter Score
NRS	National Reserve System
ORIC	Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations
PBC	Prescribed Body Corporate
PET	Project Evaluation Team
PEW	The Pew Charitable Trusts
PoM	Plan of Management
SEDCS	Stakeholder Engagement and Data Collection Strategy
SEIFA	Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
ToC	Theory of Change
UKTNP	Uluṟu-Kata Tjuṯa National Park

Conventions

1. The terms ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander’, ‘Aboriginal’, ‘Indigenous’, ‘First Nations’ and ‘First Peoples’ may be used interchangeably throughout this document. Through using these terminologies, we seek to acknowledge and honour diversity, shared knowledge, and experiences as well as the right of stakeholders to define their own identities.
2. The terms ‘Traditional Owner’ and ‘Traditional Custodian’ begin with capitals throughout.
3. The term ‘Elders’ begins with a capital where it refers to senior members of Traditional Owner groups.
4. The written form of palawa kani (including the place name ‘putalina’) does not use capital letters.
5. The term ‘Country’ begins with a capital in recognition that it refers to the traditional territories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
6. The term ‘IPA partners’ may include Indigenous Protected Area or Ranger funders, goods and service providers and land and waters Cultural governance authorities.
7. Direct quotes are attributed to an ‘organisation type’, not a specific organisation or IPA case study site, in order to comply with AIATSIS ethics requirements and informed participant consent processes.

Executive summary

The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) contracted an Indigenous-led consortium to conduct an evaluation of the Indigenous Protected Areas (IPA) Program, which has operated for over 25 years with strong bipartisan government support. The IPA Program, developed by the Australian Government in collaboration with Traditional Owner groups, supports Indigenous communities to voluntarily dedicate their land or sea Country as IPAs (NIAA 2021). Multi-year funding agreements between the organisations supporting Traditional Owners and the Australian Government support a consultation stage regarding the establishment of the IPA, and then a dedication stage once the IPA has been established. Here we use the term 'IPA project' to refer to an Australian Government-funded, dedicated IPA project. These IPA projects, and the IPA Program more broadly, are the focus of this evaluation.

The IPA Program has the following objectives:

- to protect and conserve Australia's biodiversity
- to assist Indigenous Australians to deliver sustainable environmental, cultural, social and economic outcomes through the effective and sustainable management of their land and sea
- to build the extent and condition of the National Reserve System (NRS) (NIAA 2021).

The evaluation asks 4 questions:

1. To what extent has the IPA Program achieved biodiversity conservation outcomes, including those at a landscape scale?
2. To what extent has the IPA Program worked to strengthen Indigenous peoples' connections to Country and culture and create social and economic benefits?
3. What are the key contexts/factors that affect the achievement of IPA Program objectives, and how can they be used to strengthen impacts through future program design?
4. To what extent are IPA Program objectives still relevant and appropriate to meet the needs of IPA providers and the Australian Government?

The evaluation was undertaken in 2 phases, from October 2021 to July 2023. Phase One involved an analysis of existing data, via a literature review and desktop analysis, to identify knowledge gaps. This research and synthesis was documented in the Phase One report. A detailed Evaluation Plan was developed in consultation with NIAA and the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW). Phase Two engaged directly with representatives of IPA provider organisations and Traditional Owners to collect data through culturally appropriate participatory processes using a Yarning approach.

Underpinning the key recommendations of the IPA evaluation are the site-based yarns (and voices) from Indigenous peoples delivering IPA projects in 10 case study sites across the nation.

The views and perspectives provided through the 10 site-visit yarns on the strengths, challenges and enablers of the IPA Program have been collated and categorised into key themes, then further populated with data collected through:

1. key stakeholder interviews: 10 online key stakeholder interviews were completed over the period from December 2022 to February 2023. They included IPA provider representatives associated with Commonwealth-funded dedicated IPA projects and other organisations that provide support and advocacy to IPAs and Traditional Owners across the country
2. national roundtable: 11 participants attended from the North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA), Aboriginal Carbon Foundation, Gur A Baradharaw Kod Sea and Land Council Torres Strait Islander Corporation, Kimberley Land Council (KLC), Central Land

Council (CLC), Federation of Victorian Traditional Owners Corporations, Aboriginal Lands Trust of South Australia and Bush Heritage

3. site satisfaction surveys: 50 site satisfaction surveys were successfully collected from 6 IPA case study sites. Survey questions highlighted the contribution of the mechanisms within the IPA project to economic outcomes such as business development, incomes, employment and targeting socio-economic disadvantage
4. national online surveys: the aim of the online national stakeholder survey was to seek broader stakeholder and community views and feedback on the IPA Program.

The evaluation revealed 5 synthesis factors for consideration in the ongoing development and success of the IPA Program:

1. The importance of understanding and resourcing the mechanisms that link social, cultural, economic and environmental outcomes of the IPA Program
2. The criticality of Indigenous leadership and genuine partnerships with government based on inclusive and pluralistic decision-making
3. The need to integrate measurable social, cultural, economic and environmental goals and performance indicators for reporting and adaptive decision-making at multiple scales
4. Resourcing of IPAs to promote equity, and mechanisms that build funding transparency
5. Synergising of goals across the IPA Program, the NRS and Closing the Gap to ensure actors across the program can identify their contributions at multiple scales and elevate the role of IPAs in delivering on Australia's biodiversity and international obligations.

The detailed key findings and recommendations of the IPA Program Evaluation, aligned with the 4 evaluation questions, are as follows:

To what extent has the IPA Program achieved biodiversity conservation outcomes, including those at a landscape scale?

IPAs enhance the comprehensiveness, adequacy and representativeness of Australia's NRS and contribute to achieving Australia's international obligations for biodiversity conservation by:

- providing 50% of the overall area and contributing to conservation outcomes in at least 51 (57%) of Australia's 89 terrestrial bioregions and ≥ 104 (25%) of Australia's 419 terrestrial sub-bioregions (DAWE 2021c).
- providing various amounts of habitat representation for ≥ 66% (~441) of Australia's threatened species and 100% (~26) of Australia's listed threatened ecological communities (Taylor 2021)
- providing a globally significant connected corridor of protected habitat in central Australia, enhancing resilience and improving the connectivity of the NRS overall.

IPAs were found to generally address all components of management effectiveness for conservation, taking actions to (i) assess values and threats, (ii) develop Plans of Management (PoMs), (iii) ensure resource availability, (iv) undertake appropriate management activities, (v) deliver and measure outputs, and (vi) evaluate outcomes through monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement plans. However:

- The level of resources at approximately $0.21 per ha per year as derived from the report of the Queensland Treasury Corporation in 2018 (which represents < 2% of the funding compared to the remainder of the NRS on a per ha per year basis) is insufficient to meet the management requirements.
- There was found to be a statistically significant relationship between total funding and reported agreement that IPAs provide benefits to the health of Country, suggesting increased and sustained funding is key to further improving biodiversity outcomes provided by IPA projects.

- The ability of each project to demonstrate measured biodiversity conservation outcomes is a direct result of their ability to access sufficient support to develop programs of management that collect rigorous data, and which include a monitoring and evaluation component – including sufficient analysis of data to enable adaptive management.
- A lack of resources and support was identified as a key barrier to building monitoring programs that effectively accounted for both biodiversity and cultural management outcomes.

Recommendations:

1. Review effectiveness of current monitoring programs across the IPA Program, including data collection and management processes, to determine barriers to adaptive management. Review current support and capability across the IPA Program, as this is shown to be influenced by partnerships.
2. Support Indigenous-led dialogue about current IPA-driven data collection, management and analysis in support of enhanced and adaptive management of IPAs with attention to Indigenous data sovereignty. Support 360-degree feedback on monitoring data and revision of monitoring programs.
3. With Indigenous partnership, establish regional IPA and land and sea management data networks to share learnings on data agreements and management systems to facilitate meaningful change in Indigenous data sovereignty and governance.
4. Review pathways for the effective monitoring of cultural management actions, to illustrate how they contribute to biodiversity outcomes.
5. Determine a process to enable Indigenous-led prioritisation of research, and allocate specific research funds to support delivery of IPA management priorities. Enable separate funding to support discrete cultural outcomes (including sacred sites, discrete language or culture programs, on-Country learning).
6. Develop analytical and reporting processes to capture the role of IPAs, and potentially the full Indigenous land and sea management sector, in delivering outcomes for the recovery of Australia's ecosystems and threatened species to inform Australia's climate resilience collaborations and strategy.
7. Undertake a review of cross-cutting capabilities in the land and sea management sector and the NRS, and identify options for staff development across the NRS (Indigenous and non-Indigenous).

To what extent has the IPA Program worked to strengthen Indigenous peoples' connections to Country and culture and create social and economic benefits?

IPAs deliver social, economic and other wellbeing benefits, but this must be tempered by the perception of ongoing inadequate funding and support for many IPAs, which results in people choosing to work without pay for the love of Country.

- Ranger roles on IPAs provide avenues for employment, skills development and pathways to employment in other sectors within the natural resource management and resource development industries, such as mining, and government jobs.
- Few enterprises were reported across the visited IPAs; however, IPA providers expressed aspirations and potential opportunities for local enterprises.
- The social and wellbeing benefits and outcomes of IPAs include intergenerational teaching, community relations, employment, skills development for disaster response and enabling mob to be on Country, which allows separation from the stresses and pressures of everyday life. Significant pride is expressed by those working for IPAs: for Country and culture.

- IPAs can provide culturally safe workplaces and preferred terms of employment. Networks created and/or supported through the IPA Program can be leveraged in times of disaster recovery.

A key finding of the quantitative analysis is confirmation of findings from previous research, indicating that the IPA Program promotes multiple benefits across multiple domains – environmental, social, cultural and economic. Furthermore, the analysis indicates that:

- the benefits increase over time (relatively low benefits from the most recent IPA compared to those awarded IPA status longer ago; increasing relationship over time between the IPAs and the growth of Indigenous-owned businesses)
- the perceived benefits increase in response to increased funding levels (as shown by significant correlation between many benefits and funding provided).

However, the quantitative analysis also reveals that while the direct economic benefits vary significantly across the case study IPAs, both in terms of objective data (actual jobs created, actual hours worked) and in terms of subjective data (level of agreement that IPAs provide various economic benefits), in all cases the benefits provided are, and are perceived to be, relatively small. Economic benefits are perceived to be less than benefits provided by IPAs across other domains of life.

Recommendations

8. Increase opportunities for Indigenous leadership at all levels of the IPA Program, including program and policy decision-making, and in partnership with IPA providers, identify and enable career progression pathways (including consideration of an Award).
9. Support an Indigenous-led process for determining a suite of new metrics to measure IPA outcomes including social and wellbeing determinants of success.
10. Develop pathways for Indigenous-led monitoring of social and cultural wellbeing benefits of IPAs (benefits to be Indigenous-determined with input from IPA providers).
11. Review pathways for the effective monitoring of cultural management actions, to illustrate how they contribute to biodiversity outcomes.
12. Increase support for 2-way learning opportunities in the development of Plans of Management (PoMs) and to strengthen community capacity for delivering on the goals of the IPA, including strengthening language, culture and knowledge.

What are the key contexts/factors that affect the achievement of IPA Program objectives, and how can they be used to strengthen impacts through future program design?

The key enablers of achievement of IPA Program objectives are:

- Indigenous culture and connection to Country
- cultural leadership and authority and the role of Elders in ensuring good governance and appropriate decision-making
- community support, partnerships and collaborations
- resources and authority to support management/connection to Country
- recognition and support for both cultural and biodiversity outcomes
- strong organisational and administrative capacity, as well as experience gained over time (longevity).

Recommendations

13. Strengthen sector development pathways: formalise training and accreditation, enhance skills and capacity development across the IPA sector.

14. Build support for career progression: identify career pathways and implement an award system for rangers.
15. Pursue equitable allocation of resources within the NRS: develop a set of funding benchmarks to secure parity across the NRS.
16. Review and address program silos: review the separation of IPAs and the ranger program.
17. Build greater transparency into the IPA funding and investment model, including metrics and prioritisation for resourcing of different IPA types: respond to diverse IPA organisational capacities, socio-economic contexts, including access to housing and capital, to deliver biodiversity and cultural outcomes.
18. IPA partners to identify a baseline of resourcing required to deliver on agreed management outcomes set out in PoMs, recognising the diversity of IPAs (culturally, geospatially and politically) and the diversity of IPA management goals and capabilities.
19. Support appropriate governance, which may require additional resourcing.
20. Remove barriers and hurdles that exist in program management: review and streamline reporting requirements and strengthen government capacity to engage with IPA providers (inclusion of training and mentoring programs to build capability of government staff to deliver assistance to Indigenous providers).
21. Explore options for realising consistency in legislative arrangements for IPAs: pursue avenues that deliver greater control to IPA providers in the protection of Country (similar to National Park rangers).

To what extent are IPA Program objectives still relevant and appropriate to meet the needs of IPA providers and the Australian Government?

The Australian Government is committed to expanding the IPA Program through funding the establishment of new IPA projects. This aligns with the aspirations of IPA providers, which are to expand existing IPA projects to protect different parts of Country, as well as having new IPA projects that involve different groups, regional approaches that align with customary responsibilities and an over-arching goal of cultural protection and re-assertion. Equity in the IPA Program is an underlying theme in the expressed IPA provider objectives. Equity brings to focus the diverse values and aspirations Traditional Owners want discussed for resourcing, protection and nurturing. The vision for a decision-making partnership with government about the IPA Program policies relies on regional representation and forums as an equitable and grounded approach to work with diverse voices and interests. There is consistency between government and IPA providers that a regional model will require engagement with state and territory authorities.

In addition to other environmental policies that advise increased approaches to work with Indigenous peoples, the new government policies in the Nature Repair Market Bill 2023 and National Net Zero Authority clearly identify engagement with First Peoples' knowledge, cultures and communities and have alignments with some of the new objectives of IPA providers.

Recommendations

22. Review IPA Program objectives as there is a need for a holistic approach centred on people, culture and Country.
23. Identify options for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community–controlled peak organisations and/or networks to undertake the role of partnering with governments (including in scoping national IPA representation to government)
24. Review opportunities for state and territory governments to engage more closely in the development and management of IPAs; enable expanded opportunities for IPAs to contribute to bioregional representation in the NRS; and offer more flexible arrangements for IPA designation

and support (e.g. options for tripartite arrangements between Traditional Owners, state governments and the Australian Government).

25. Support IPA providers and Traditional Owners to embed climate change risk, disaster response and nature-based solutions for climate into IPA PoMs; develop strategies that align IPA provider and government objectives; and build exposure by linking to national frameworks and reporting.
26. Align IPA reporting with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap targets such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and languages are strong, supported and flourishing and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enjoy high levels of social and emotional wellbeing.

This evaluation revealed that while there is a clear shared interest in the outcomes of the IPA Program, partners come to the program with different goals and seek diverse outcomes.

While the IPA Program has evolved to recognise the importance of delivering to multiple goals (including biodiversity, social and economic), this evaluation has identified the need for further discussion between partners to ensure a shared vision and objectives that reflect the priorities of both partners. Discussing these evaluation findings and recommendations with all IPA providers will ensure a fuller picture of the IPA program given the complexity, remoteness, size and operating environment of all IPAs.

The IPA Program, due to the commitment and dedication of IPA partners, holds significant potential to deliver biodiversity, economic, social and wellbeing outcomes at scale. The Closing the Gap strategy provides a conduit to realise greater agency of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in determining how those outcomes might best be realised. Stronger Indigenous leadership of the IPA Program will be critical to realising the overarching vision of delivering better life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, simultaneously delivering impact in support of government's policy goals in Indigenous affairs.

It is important to note that this was one of the first major evaluations to be led by Indigenous evaluators/consultants and an Indigenous company since the release of the Productivity Commission's Indigenous Evaluation Strategy in October 2020. The Yarning approach yielded meaningful and valuable engagements between the evaluators and the IPA Traditional Owners and stakeholders. These engagements strongly respected place-based culture, which in turn generated rich information. This Indigenous-led evaluation was aligned with the Indigenous Advancement Strategy and Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) ethics approval guidelines.

1. Introduction

1.1. Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs)

The Australian Government currently funds the Indigenous Protected Areas (IPA) Program, described as 'an essential component of Australia's National Reserve System (NRS), which is the network of formally recognised parks, reserves and protected areas across Australia" (DCCEEW 2022). The program has operated for over 25 years with strong bipartisan government support. It is built on a community-led approach to 'caring for Country' and 'keeping culture strong' (NIAA 2021).

IPAs are voluntary, non-legal agreements between the Australian Government and Traditional Owners, supported by an international protected area management framework that allows for IPAs to be dedicated over Indigenous-owned lands and other tenures, including sea Country. Dedicated IPAs currently account for over 50% of Australia's NRS and cover more than 87 million ha and 5 million ha of sea Country (DCCEEW 2021). The continued growth of area and profile of the IPA Program has provided a point of focus for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in planning land and sea management for their Country (Social Ventures Australia 2016).

The objectives of the IPA Program are:

- to protect and conserve Australia's biodiversity
- to assist Indigenous Australians to deliver sustainable environmental, cultural, social and economic outcomes through the effective and sustainable management of their land and sea
- to build the extent and condition of the NRS (NIAA 2021).

IPAs deliver more than environmental benefits. Managing IPAs helps Indigenous communities protect the cultural values of their Country for future generations and results in significant health, education, economic and social benefits (Putnis et al. 2021). These benefits are delivered through the development and implementation of an IPA Plan of Management (PoM), developed by Traditional Owners to guide the management of each IPA. The PoM also identifies an International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) management category, ensuring that the management of the IPA is in line with international standards.

The IPA Program aligns strongly with the objectives of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) Jobs, Land and Economy Program (JLEP) IPAs create jobs for Indigenous men and women – working and looking after their land. The employment of IPA rangers helps provide financial stability in the community, and they are a positive role model for youth (Social Ventures Australia 2016).

Day-to-day activities of Indigenous rangers on IPAs may include interpretive activities for visitors, protection of rock art, and cultural history and language projects. Traditional bush tucker and medicine knowledge is taught on Country to younger generations.

The IPA Program is administered by the NIAA in partnership with the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW). The Australian Government has committed $231.5 million to the next phase of the IPA Program over 5 years, from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2028 from the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT).

The NIAA manages funding agreements for all IPA projects, including IPA projects funded by DCCEEW (NIAA 2021).

1.2. Evaluation of the IPA Program

The evaluation purpose was to examine the extent to which the IPA Program objectives and associated outcomes are being achieved across a range of contexts and spatial scales. By highlighting key factors that influence the achievement of these objectives and outcomes, the evaluation will also help the Australian Government improve future program design and will inform consideration of future program funding (NIAA 2021).

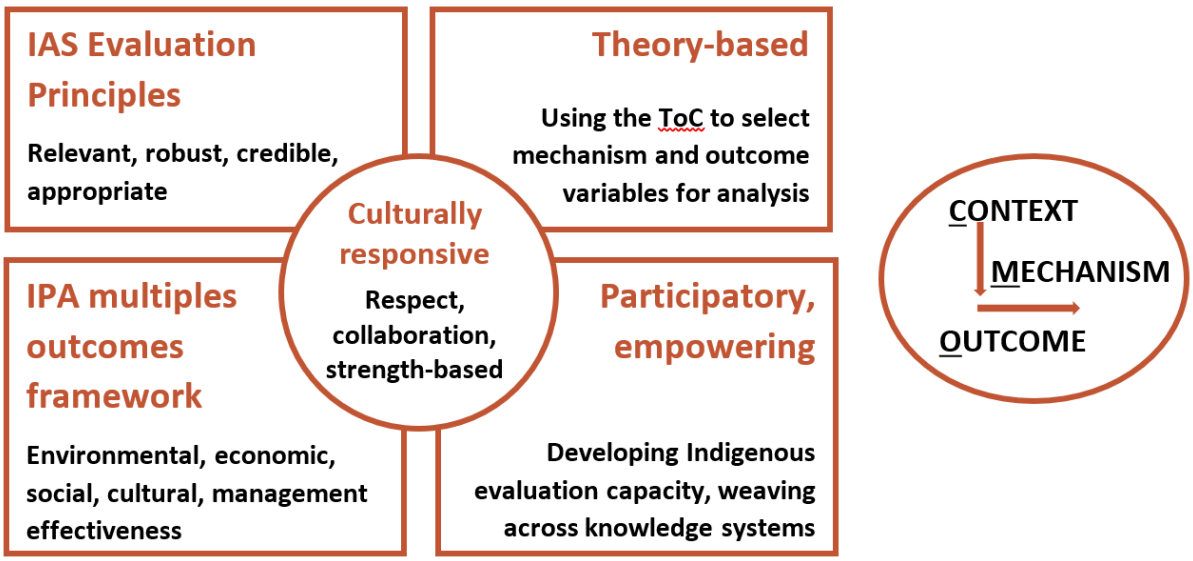
The evaluation occurred in 2 phases. The first phase comprised an analysis and synthesis of existing data, from a review of research literature and IPA Program data, and incorporated results from the environmental modelling report provided by DCCEEW. This information was complemented in the second phase by collecting broader data, including onsite visits to 10 sample IPAs.

1.2.1. Important considerations

As the IPA Program is specifically targeted to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, there are substantial cultural and ethical considerations when designing and undertaking an evaluation. In addressing these considerations our approach closely aligns with the Indigenous Evaluation Strategy framework, which critically puts Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at its centre (Figure 1.1) (Productivity Commission 2020). The framework, like this evaluation, recognises the need to draw on the perspectives, priorities and knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples if outcomes are to be improved. Our approach:

- is culturally responsive through Indigenous leadership, encompassing respect, collaboration and a strength-based approach
- seeks to be credible, useful, ethical and transparent (the guiding principles of the best practice principles of the Indigenous Evaluation Strategy) by including Indigenous people as leaders, evaluators and community researchers
- is culturally appropriate, as it prioritises and centres Indigenist research methods and approaches
- is theory-based, using the Theory of Change (ToC) (NIAA 2021) and learnings from Phase One of the evaluation to drive the selection of context, mechanism and outcome variables for data collection and cross-case analysis (Figure 1.1)
- recognises the IPA multiple outcomes framework that ensures our evaluation is targeted to understand environmental conservation and cultural, economic and social benefits and risks
- ensures participatory and empowering engagement with IPA provider organisations and other Indigenous stakeholders in ways that develop their ongoing evaluation thinking, knowledge and capability, including review of the relevance IPA PoMs.

Figure 1.1 (a) Overarching evaluation methodology, (b) Context affects how the mechanism (i.e. aspects of the IPA Program intervention) delivers outcomes



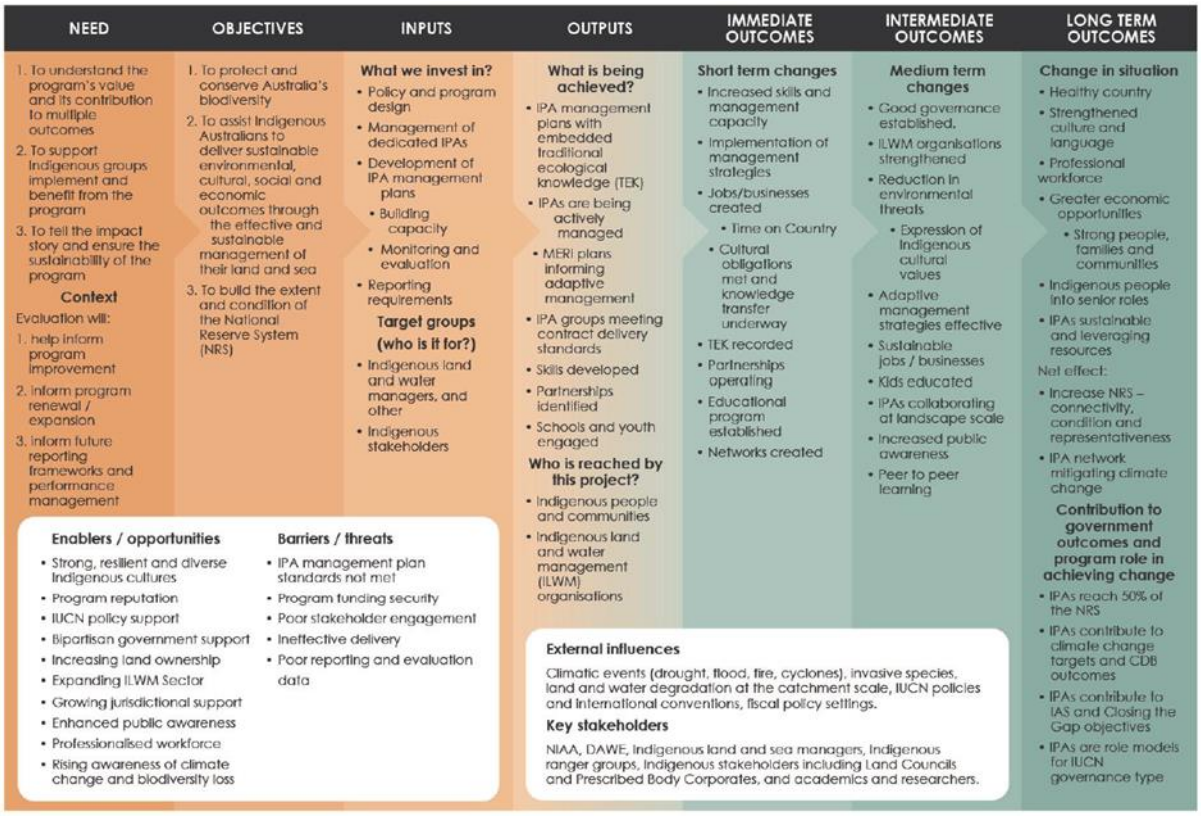
Previous research has identified several factors and contexts affecting the delivery of benefits from IPAs and some of the mechanisms underlying this delivery. For example, recognition of native title, increased internet connectivity, a larger overall population and a larger proportion of the population who are Indigenous have been identified as having a positive impact on the delivery of business development benefits from IPAs (Jarvis et al. 2018a). Cultural governance, cultural institutions and alignment with Indigenous strategies for cultural renewal are key factors leading to positive responses to threats posed by climate change (Lyons et al. 2020). Indigenous cultural governance systems have been identified as key mechanisms for delivery of environmental benefits among Indigenous peoples in the Kimberley region (Poelina et al. 2019; Poelina 2020).

1.2.2. The program logic and Theory of Change

The Theory of Change (ToC) for the IPA Program forms a vital starting point for the evaluation. A ToC sets out the underlying assumptions about how, why and through what mechanisms a program will deliver the intended outcomes. The questions that the evaluation sets out to answer (see section 1.2.3) are based on the IPA Program logic (Figure 1.2) and ToC (Figure 1.3).

The program logic connects the objectives along a linear trajectory, from inputs and activities through to outputs, immediate and intermediate outcomes and finally to the impact (long-term outcomes) (Figure 1.2). Multiple pathways are evident in the program logic, reflecting the multiple environmental, economic, social, cultural and management effectiveness benefits associated with IPAs.

Figure 1.2 IPA Program logic (provided to Ninti One by the NIAA)

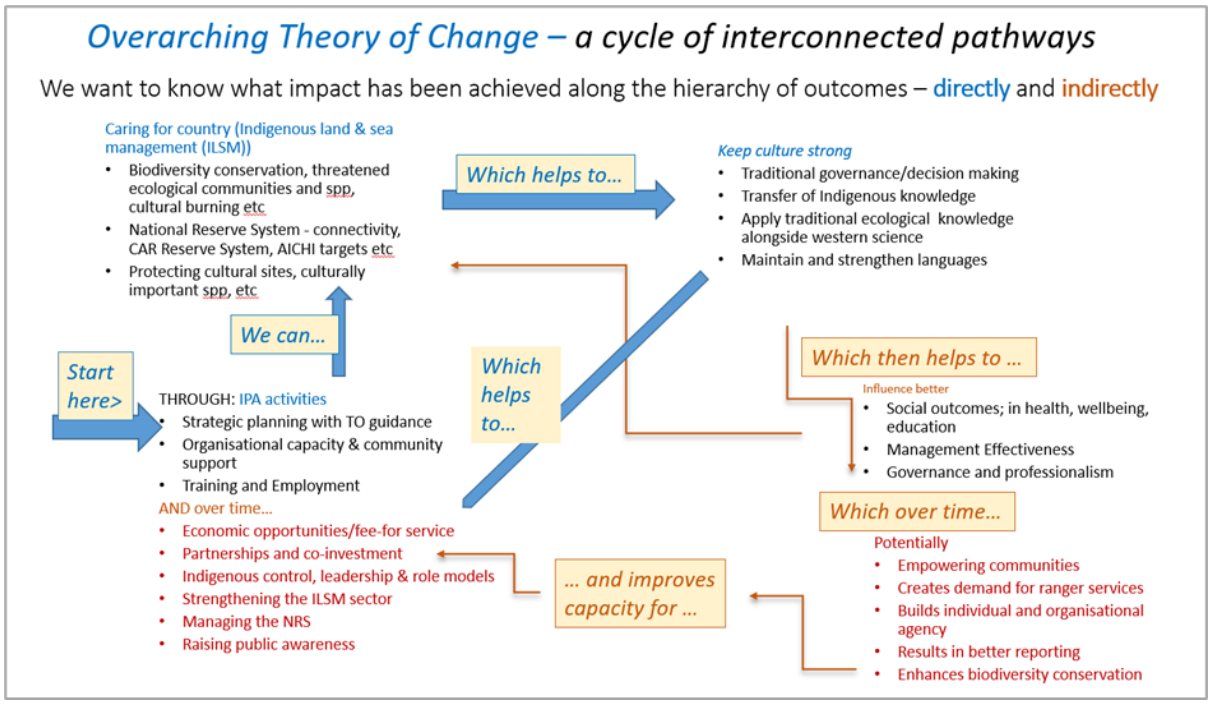


The program logic, developed by the NIAA (2021), progresses through a series of short-term, medium-term and longer term outcomes before identifying an ultimate program goal at the top of the logic model. Each level in the hierarchy is a condition considered to be necessary to move towards the next level of outcomes. In combination, the conditions are thought to be sufficient (with certain assumptions and notwithstanding external factors) to ensure that progression through the levels occurs. Phase Two of the evaluation collected data, variables and indicators for each of the immediate, intermediate and long-term outcomes as identified within the IPA Program logic to address questions of management effectiveness; good governance; social, cultural, economic and environmental outcomes; and the enablers and barriers within the IPA Program (see Table 2.4 for the variables and data sources for each sub-question).

The evaluation interrogated contexts/factors that influence achievement of the IPA Program objectives through key variables – including remoteness, population demographics and IPA lifetime (see **Error! Reference source not found.**) – and identified how contexts can be mobilised to s trengthen impact through future program design. The data collection and analysis probe the causal mechanisms underlying the variables identified in the ToC. They identify how mechanisms such as Indigenous-led planning, actions to care for Country and capacity building influence the achievement of IPA Program objectives.

Phase Two of the evaluation took a holistic approach, by accepting and working with the interconnectedness of contexts, mechanisms and outcomes, while distinguishing factors that are most important in different contexts and centring of the evaluation process on Indigenous perspectives, lived experiences and knowledges.

Figure 1.3 IPA draft Theory of Change (provided to Ninti One by the NIAA)



The draft ToC highlights those key mechanisms for delivering the desired outcomes in relation to:

1. Traditional Owner–led planning as the foundation of empowerment of their caring for Country approaches
2. the environmental and cultural benefits that arise from acts of caring for Country (in economic terminology, building natural and social capital)
3. helping to keep culture strong (by building social relations, increasing participants' knowledge and practice of culture and languages, recognising and respecting Indigenous cultural governance and institutions and facilitating 2-way knowledge exchange)
4. over time, empowering communities and creating agency, stimulating market supply and demand for goods and services Indigenous people and communities can provide, and further enhancing natural capital
5. improving capacity for further advancement.

These mechanisms identified in the draft ToC were reinforced by the findings of the literature review and other data analysis in Phase One, including that IPA projects are:

- contributing to the development of a diverse range of capitals, including the development of human capital, social and cultural capital, natural capital, institutional capital, and financial and economic capital (Stoeckl et al. 2019)
- providing health and wellbeing benefits (Schultz et al. 2018, 2019; Dinku et al. 2019; Dockery 2020; Wright et al. 2021)
- facilitating learning and knowledge exchange, provided the sharing of knowledge occurs in a respectful and culturally appropriate manner (Woodward et al. 2020; Hill et al. 2021; Jarvis et al. 2021).
- leveraging direct investment in communities to create wider impacts, using the multiplier effect. The investment in IPA projects and Indigenous ranger groups creates direct benefits (e.g. improving jobs, incomes, environment), with these direct outcomes themselves further

generating indirect benefit flows that impact the community and region more widely and increase the range and type of benefits generated (Jarvis et al. 2018b; Pert et al. 2020).

- partnering to generate greater levels of investment into IPA projects and overcome the limitations of available resources
- experiencing disruptions from many factors, including funding insufficiency and uncertainty and extreme environmental and social events.

For our Phase Two work, we seek to understand the relative importance of the various mechanisms, modified by context, in generating the desired outcomes. This will support an informed ToC and identification of the most important factors to consider in future design of the IPA Program in order to support successful outcomes.

1.2.3. Key questions

The IPA Program evaluation aimed to:

- examine the extent to which IPA Program objectives and associated outcomes are being achieved across a range of contexts and spatial scales
- inform future decision-making regarding IPA Program design and funding and IPA Program design by highlighting key factors that influence the achievement of these objectives and outcomes.

These influential key factors include the contexts in which the IPAs operate and the diversity and dynamics of partnerships, as well as traditional and contemporary knowledge outputs.

The IPA Program evaluation addressed the following questions:

1. To what extent has the IPA Program achieved biodiversity conservation outcomes, including those at a landscape scale?
2. To what extent has the IPA Program worked to strengthen Indigenous peoples' connections to Country and culture and create social and economic benefits?
3. What are the key contexts/factors that affect the achievement of IPA Program objectives, and how can they be used to strengthen impacts through future program design?
4. To what extent are IPA Program objectives still relevant and appropriate to meet the needs of IPA providers and the Australian Government?

Each evaluation question has a series of sub-questions that have been agreed between the NIAA, DCCEEW and Ninti One in the Evaluation Plan and the AIATSIS Research Ethics Application (E0330-20220419) (Table 2.1).

Phase One of the evaluation identified the contextual setting for the IPA Program and the knowledge gaps for exploration in Phase Two. Six key knowledge gaps were identified.

1.2.4. Overarching knowledge gaps

Two knowledge gaps are identified as being 'overarching', as many of the other knowledge gaps require this partnership approach to appropriately fill the gaps:

- approaches that can support better alignment with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap commitment to full and genuine partnership for policymaking about IPAs
- options for IPA provider organisations and other key IPA stakeholders to undertake the role of partner with governments, international governments, non-government organisations, corporates, philanthropists and other unspecified affiliates.

1.2.5. Knowledge gaps related to biodiversity and cultural conservation outcomes

Phase One of the research determined that greater investigation is warranted towards:

- an Indigenous lens – which relates to lived experiences, ways of being and knowing, and aspirations – on the IUCN Green List Protected and Conserved Areas Standard, of good governance, sound design and planning and effective management to better ensure Indigenous knowledge, world views and understandings about achieving biodiversity and cultural conservation outcomes are included in the management of protected areas
- options for enabling greater representation of more at-risk vegetation ecosystem types within IPAs and identifying how IPAs might best complement other forms of protected area types to maximise the representation of at-risk vegetation types across all forms of protection (including via state/territory governments).
- options for IPA providers' assessments of the sustainability of commercial harvests to be more widely available
- how and whether extended environmental and biodiversity modelling would contribute to better design and planning for the contributions of IPAs to the NRS strategy, and international bodies such as the Convention on Biological Diversity; Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation; World Heritage; and the United Nations Development Programme
- the relevance, and potential means of development, of a set of funding benchmarks for IPAs that link IPAs to the cultural and conservation outcomes sought and the governance, management requirements and objectives of the IPA Program, drawing on comparison with funding levels in the other parts of the NRS
- whether and how opportunities for learning together, among IPA providers, could lead to improved standards of IPA PoMs
- how and whether climate change risk and response could be better integrated into IPA management and across all the IPA PoMs.

1.2.6. Knowledge gaps related to multiple benefits

These knowledge gaps relate to the need for better understanding of:

- the Indigenous ecological knowledge about how the benefits are synergistic and inseparable (this could be monetary or non-monetary benefits)
- the apparent cost-effectiveness of IPA jobs and level of satisfaction of IPA workers with the employment conditions
- how the IPA Program creates the pathways to employment outside IPAs
- the types, extent and impact of the partnerships created by IPAs
- how funding time frames (e.g. short vs long) affect the delivery of all the multiple benefits
- how enhanced employment advancement and opportunities in IPAs can impact the delivery of benefits and outcomes
- options for enhancing the provision of direct funding for activities that support the distinctive cultural connections of Indigenous peoples to IPAs.

1.2.7. Knowledge gaps related to factors affecting IPA outcomes

Many factors affect the delivery of the multiple benefits and outcomes from IPAs. The key knowledge gap concerns the ways these factors are connected in diverse contexts to deliver the desired outcomes. There is a requirement for a better understanding of:

- Indigenous lens into factors affecting IPA outcomes
- a systems lens or holistic approach that identifies cause and effect, interdependent and reinforcing relationships between the various interacting factors (e.g. between transfer of knowledge and Indigenous role models) to determine what enables positive change in or limits the various factors affecting IPA outcomes
- IPA providers' views about the factors supporting and disrupting their capacity to deliver benefits and outcomes.

1.2.8. Knowledge gaps about the relevance of IPA Program objectives

Knowledge gaps include:

- options for data collection about IPAs that is developed in collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- how current Australian Government policy informs the consideration of new and/or revised IPA Program objectives
- options for a full and genuine partnership in considering new and/or revised objectives for the IPA Program
- the relevance of new objectives to IPA providers.

1.2.9. Data gaps

It was also determined in Phase One that further data would improve the quality of analysis in Phase Two, including a more complete set of IPA PoMs, 2021 Census data, reports from the previously held IPA Roundtables, DCCEEW's Habitat Condition Assessment and new published literature.

1.3. Findings from Phase One review

1.3.1. Findings about cultural and conservation outcomes

This Indigenous-led evaluation identified that conservation of biodiversity and protection of First Peoples' cultures are viewed as inseparable. We present findings on these 2 topics together.

1. IPA projects empower Indigenous people to fulfil cultural obligations to Country, resulting in profound benefits including:
    - happiness undertaking responsibilities as the right people, looking after the right Country, working with the Elders and being watched over by the spirits of the ancestors
    - being together with family on Country, learning together, bouncing off each other
    - speaking language
    - healing spiritually as well as mentally
    - restoring damage to culture and cultural ways
    - a sense of wellbeing from prioritising First Peoples' culture, Country, identity, spirituality (see section 5.2 for supporting material).

    This empowerment is based on an *invitation* to fulfil cultural obligations, supported with resources under a *voluntary agreement* with the Australian Government and with the principle

of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) of Traditional Owners protected by international human rights standards.

2. IPAs provide opportunities to contribute to the maintenance – including use, revitalisation and restoration – of languages (and thereby cultures) in 63 (7.5%) of Australia's recognised 835 Indigenous language varieties that are within IPAs and 224 within the neighbourhood of IPAs (26.8%).
3. IPAs generally demonstrate good governance for conservation, bringing together cultural governance, based on traditional law and custom, and mainstream governance, based on western democratic and corporate approaches and standards, to deliver 2-way legitimacy and voice, transparency and accountability, and flexible adaptations in response to change and extreme environmental and social disruptions.

   Two-way governance for both cultural obligation and mainstream western approaches and standards is complex and resource-intensive; it requires extensive community engagement and, at times, presence on Country. Longer time frames for engagement appear to support stronger governance and mutual understanding between traditional and western knowledge bases.
4. IPAs enhance the comprehensiveness, adequacy and representativeness of Australia's NRS by:
   - providing 50% of the overall area and contributing to conservation outcomes in at least 51 (57%) of Australia's 89 terrestrial bioregions and ≥ 104 (25%) of Australia's 419 terrestrial sub-bioregions
   - providing various amounts of habitat representation for ≥ 66% (~441) of Australia's threatened species and 100% (~26) of Australia's listed threatened ecological communities
   - providing a globally significant connected corridor of protected habitat in central Australia, enhancing resilience and improving the connectivity of the NRS overall
   - contributing to conservation of marine biodiversity in 4 of the 41 (9.7%) marine provincial bioregions, and 8 of the 62 (12.9%) mesoscale bioregions
   - using traditional methods of land and sea management, knowledge and practices based on millennia of occupation.
5. IPAs generally address all components of management effectiveness for conservation, taking actions to (i) assess values and threats, (ii) develop PoMs, (iii) ensure resource availability, (iv) undertake appropriate management activities, (v) deliver and measure outputs, and (vi) evaluate outcomes through monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement plans. Three areas stand out for further attention:
   - Traditional Owners have unique knowledge-based frameworks for management effectiveness that strengthen outcomes when combined with international standards through a 2-way approach.
   - The threat posed by climate change is given insufficient attention in the PoMs.
   - The level of resourcing of IPA projects, averaging approximately $0.21 per ha per year in 2020–21 (as reported by the Queensland Treasury Corporation in 2018), is often insufficient to meet the management requirements as detailed in the PoMs and is noticeably low when considered through a high-level comparative analysis of funding for other protected areas in the NRS (see Chapter 3 for supporting material).
6. There is a significant opportunity for IPAs to contribute more strongly to biodiversity conservation outcomes:
   - Achievement of biodiversity outcomes is currently limited by levels of resourcing that are often insufficient to meet the management requirements detailed in the PoMs. Investing adequate and equitable funding to ensure sufficient infrastructure, staff, planning and other resources commensurate with the task of managing the IPAs is likely to increase achievements of biodiversity outcomes (see Chapter 3 for supporting material).

- There are areas of under-represented terrestrial bioregions (where current protection is <10%) that overlap with the Indigenous estate (at least 57% of Australia) which could benefit from active management which may be facilitated through the IPA Program.
- There are areas in six (14%) of Australia's marine bioregions that are still considered under-represented, and where no IPAs currently exist, which could benefit from active management which may be facilitated through the IPA Program.

1.3.2. Findings about multiple benefits

1. Funds invested in IPA projects and Indigenous rangers have been clearly demonstrated to show a social return on investment and to provide a range of health and wellbeing, social, cultural and knowledge-sharing benefits for individuals and communities. Further, funds invested in an Indigenous ranger group or IPA project have been demonstrated to show a direct economic return on investment, resulting in growth in the number of Indigenous-owned businesses over time. IPA projects that are supported by funded Indigenous ranger workforces have a significantly greater positive impact on the growth in the number of Indigenous-owned businesses than if an Indigenous ranger group or IPA project exists in isolation (see Chapter 4 for supporting material).
2. IPA expenditure by the Australian Government on dedicated IPA projects (based on the 2019–20 level of $16m) could stimulate between $13m and $23m of increased economic activity in the regions around where the IPA projects are located, over and above the direct impact of the spend. IPA spend could boost incomes of Indigenous households (directly due to wages paid by the IPA project and indirectly via the additional jobs and wages created by the multiplier effect) by between $5m and $7m per year, while also stimulating incomes of non-Indigenous households by a similar sum (by the same mechanisms, i.e., directly due to wages paid by the IPA project and indirectly via the additional jobs and wages created by the multiplier effect; see Chapter 4 for supporting material).
3. The IPA Program increases employment, household incomes and economic activity in the regions where the IPA projects are located though direct and indirect (flow-on) impacts (see Chapter 4 for supporting material).
4. IPA projects contribute positively to the development of career pathways for Indigenous staff, including after they have left employment with the IPA projects, with evidence for a contribution to this from the training and education they receive (see Chapter 4 for supporting material).
5. Delivery of these business development benefits is positively associated with several factors, including:
    - rights-recognition and improved access through native title
    - connection to the internet
    - overall population of the region where the IPA project is located (there is a positive association between the population size and business development opportunities; i.e. opportunities are likely greater in more populous regions, assuming other factors held constant)
    - remoteness of the region where the IPA project is located (there is a positive association between the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA+) remoteness indices and business development benefits; i.e. benefits are greater in more remote regions assuming other factors held constant, Appendix 3). These findings are supported by materials in Chapter 4.
6. Benefits take time to accrue, requiring certainty of funding support over the long term. While some benefits arise in the short term (e.g. income flow to someone employed by an IPA project), many of the benefits build over a much longer time period (e.g. 2 years for average incomes of

Indigenous-owned businesses to rise; many years for the full benefits to accrue from IPA employees providing role models to young people within communities). Certainty over funding flows is required for a significant period into the future (beyond 5–7-year time frames), to ensure individuals and organisations can confidently commit to businesses and other community activities that require continuing investment over years before the full suite of social, economic, health and wellbeing benefits are fully realised (see Chapter 4 for supporting material).

7. The IPA Program may contribute to the overall level of education, training and occupational skills in a region over time, helping regions with IPA projects become less disadvantaged relative to those regions without IPA projects (see Chapter 4 for supporting material).
8. IPAs are delivering social and cultural benefits through:
    - knowledge sharing and the renewal and sustained use of languages and cultural practices in cultural and school camps, land and water management activities, family visits and IPA decision-making processes on and for Country
    - renewal and maintenance of knowledge through Indigenous-designed and Indigenous-approved knowledge-sharing events
    - increasing access to and protection of cultural sites and intergenerational knowledge-sharing events e.g. Elders workshops.
9. IPAs are generating place-based innovations through integration of on-Country activities in education curriculum, youth cadetship programs, adaptive governance and decision-making in contemporary economies, the use of multiple knowledge systems for land and water management (e.g. fire) and agreements that establish and protect cultural intellectual property and ensure data ownership.
10. More mature IPAs have developed higher levels of governance capability and a diverse set of partnerships, and they have evolved goals that build and leverage on their resource capabilities relative to new IPA providers.
11. IPAs are part of empowerment for participating Indigenous groups; they are a central place for the assertion and practice of Indigenous lore and the strengthening of Indigenous customary governance.
12. IPAs contribute to strengthening connection to Country by supporting Traditional Owners to fulfil their customary responsibilities in caring for Country, improving access to sites across wide terrains and across generations and supporting Traditional Owners to make decisions on Country.
13. IPAs contribute to the practice of Indigenous knowledge and cultural protocols in various ways:
    - Indigenous-led decision-making on Country
    - supporting Indigenous-led decision-making systems that involve different authorities at different decision and activity scales
    - a place for knowledge sharing that draws on knowledge and cultural authorities in sharing across groups and knowledge systems.
14. IPAs are delivering environmental benefits through:
    - monitoring and management programs for feral animals and invasive weeds
    - investment in monitoring, conservation and rehabilitation of habitat supporting threatened plant and animal species
    - inclusion of cultural activities in monitoring programs
    - use of state government–provided environmental water allocations to support important IPA wetlands that provide habitat for diverse water-dependent species

- fire management practices that reduce fuel load and carbon emissions to help mitigate climate change as well as reduce risks to infrastructure that is required for environmental management activities on IPAs (see Section 5.5 for supporting material).

1.3.3. Findings about factors affecting IPA outcomes

1. IPA projects provide both demand-side and supply-side stimulus to the economy (see Chapter 4 for supporting material):
   - The economic impact on regional economies from investment in IPA projects and Indigenous ranger groups exceeds the impact of investment in other sectors important to rural areas such as agriculture and mining (unfortunately, no existing research has evaluated this aspect of the many benefits provided by IPA projects separately from the impact of Indigenous ranger groups, instead evaluating the collective impact of both types of project).
   - While benefits from IPA projects and Indigenous ranger groups are shared between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, the benefits to incomes of Indigenous people on a per capita basis exceed the benefits to incomes of non-Indigenous people.
2. Many factors are identified as supporting IPAs to deliver multiple benefits, including:
   - cultural leadership and authority, and the role of Elders, including men and women
   - community support
   - the involvement of youth and more equitable involvement of women
   - Indigenous networks: industry or sector at regional, national and international level
   - effective Indigenous organisations to work as providers of IPAs
   - planning led by Traditional Owners
   - the ability to acquire and maintain vital infrastructure such as vehicles, boats, sheds, tools and equipment
   - multiple partnerships with the corporate, government, non-government, research and Indigenous sectors
   - learning together across Indigenous and western scientific knowledge systems, among different Traditional Owner groups and between Elders and youth.
3. IPAs also experience disruptions from many factors, including:
   - funding uncertainty and insufficiency
   - extreme environmental events, such as droughts, bushfires and flooding
   - COVID-19 disease and associated public health measures
   - extreme social and cultural impacts, such as cultural business, ‘sorry business’ and community conflict
   - difficulty in attracting and retaining key skilled staff
   - changes to governance and management arrangements.
4. Rather than a linear flow from the intervention to the desired outcomes, IPA projects achieve change through a series of interconnecting and circular pathways. For example, the IPA Program intervenes in a community through funding participatory planning processes, which trigger requirements for traditional decision-making and trips with Elders onto Country, whereby economic assets (e.g. vehicles, food, navigation equipment) come together with social assets (e.g. traditional knowledge of biodiversity, languages) and technical assets (e.g. scientific knowledge of threatened species) to co-produce a PoM and concurrently deliver cultural (governance, language) and environmental (threatened species management) benefits. In this situation, the difference between mechanisms to achieve desired outcomes and the desired outcomes themselves becomes blurred. Some key points can be made:

- Partnerships are a key strategy for overcoming resource insufficiency, rather than an outcome.
- Planning led by Traditional Owners creates buy-in to enable empowerment of the cultural obligation to Country, and diversity exists across the IPAs in efficacy of planning practices, with some outstanding examples.
- Purchase of vital infrastructure, such as boats and vehicles, provides the practical mechanism to empower cultural obligation to Country and stimulates economic demand in the region.
- Training, education and career pathways provided through IPAs develop human capability, stimulating supply-side effects on the economy.
- Learning together, between Elders and Indigenous youth, through partnerships and through Indigenous networks, also develops human capability and stimulates supply-side effects on the economy.

1.3.4. Findings about the relevance of IPA Program objectives

1. The current objectives of the IPA Program remain relevant to both IPA providers and the Australian Government. However, new objectives are also needed to ensure consistency with new policies and priorities of the Australian Government and Traditional Owners (see Chapter 6 for supporting material)
2. Some Indigenous IPA provider organisations and Traditional Owner participants in IPA projects, as expressed in their current PoMs, seek objectives that give priority to reassertion of their culture and authority over their lands and waters and that prioritise the role of youth and the need to prepare them to take up their obligations to culture and Country in the future (see Chapters 5 and 6 for supporting material).
3. Some Traditional Owners currently involved in IPAs are expressing aspirations for IPAs to be more equitably available for different First Peoples groups and for Country. Some IPA providers express an aspiration to expand both IPAs and their presence on Country and to have better-resourced IPAs (see Chapter 6 for supporting material).
4. For the Australian Government, the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements Report (RCNNDA 2020), the National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy 2021–2025 (DAWE 2021e), and the Threatened Species Strategy 2021–2031 (DAWE 2021f) have highlighted:
   - resilience as a policy goal
   - the role of Indigenous land and sea management in supporting recovery of environments, communities and threatened species
   - bringing both Indigenous knowledge and science to inform resilience.
5. While IPA projects are managed according to the aspirations of Traditional Owners, IPA Program policy decisions have been made by the Australian Government without a consistent national approach to engaging relevant Indigenous stakeholders in decision-making. Introducing a national partnership approach when considering changes to IPA Program policy will support better alignment with the new National Agreement on Closing the Gap, which commits governments to a new approach, where policy making that impacts on the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is done in full and genuine partnership. Greater priority is given in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap for Indigenous Country, culture and languages. New socio-economic outcomes relevant to IPAs include:
   - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enjoy high levels of social and emotional wellbeing (Socio-economic Outcome 14)

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people maintain a distinctive cultural, spiritual, physical and economic relationship with their land and waters (Socio-economic Outcome 15)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and languages are strong, supported and flourishing (Socio-economic Outcome 16).

2. Method

This chapter describes the methods adopted for the evaluation of the IPA Program, in Phase One and Phase Two of the evaluation. It summarises the data collection and analysis of Phase One and provides greater detail of the methodological approach and execution of Phase Two that included collection of new data. We present our analytical approach, including the identification of indicators across different methods of data collection and analysis. The evaluation method centres on the Yarning method[1] adopted across 10 IPA case study sites. Multiple qualitative and quantitative methods were adopted in the evaluation, including stakeholder interviews and online surveys. Findings from multiple sources of data collection and analysis provide a holistic perspective in the evaluation to support triangulation for confirmation, complementarity and disconfirming of evidence relative to the shared experiences of IPA providers.

2.1. Scope and focus

The evaluation was conducted in 2 phases. As described in Section 1.2 above, the first phase provided a synthesis and analysis of existing data from the review of scientific literature, IPA program data and national statistics data sets, and incorporates key results from the environmental modelling report (provided by DCCEEW) (NIAA 2021). This information was complemented in the second phase by collecting broader data, including onsite visits to 10 sample IPAs.

The second phase of the evaluation focused on the collection of new data, as described in section 2.2. The evaluation statement of requirement detailed what was needed: 'A purposive sampling technique will be employed to identify a subset of 10 dedicated IPA projects that capture the range of contexts/settings that may influence program outcomes. These projects were the focus of site visits in Phase Two, which gathered detailed information in collaboration with the IPA provider organisations, local communities and key IPA stakeholders' (NIAA 2021).

This evaluation report highlights key factors that influence the achievement of program objectives and associated outcomes and address the evaluation questions. An overarching Community Report, which includes data and findings in an easy-to-read format, will also be distributed to IPA provider organisations and Indigenous evaluation participants and communities (NIAA 2021).

This evaluation was guided by the NIAA's IAS Evaluation Framework (Productivity Commission 2020), which is a principles-based framework. The evaluation methodology described accounts for and is cognisant of the 7 key principles of the IAS Evaluation Framework (NIAA 2021).

The ToC and program logic guide the data analysis, selection of variables (context, mechanism and outcomes) and indicators for analysis, and synthesis of the analyses into a contribution analysis (Mayne 2012) that identifies key factors and processes underpinning delivery of desired outcomes. This analysis in turn provides the foundation for future evidence-based planning for the success of the IPA Program.

The multiple pathways to outputs and immediate and intermediate outcomes evident in the program logic (Figure 1.2) reflect the multiple environmental, economic, social, cultural and management effectiveness benefits associated with IPAs.

Phase Two of the evaluation collected data, variables and indicators for each of the immediate, intermediate and long-term outcomes as identified within the IPA Program logic to address questions of management effectiveness; good governance; social, cultural, economic and environmental outcomes; and the enablers of and barriers to achieving these outcomes within the

1 Yarns and Yarning begins with upper case where it refers to a specific type of communication, a relational practice following Indigenous protocols for knowledge sharing (Murrup-Stewart et al. 2021)

IPA Program (see Appendices 1 and 3; **Error! Reference source not found.**for the variables and data s ources for each sub-question).

The draft ToC for the IPA Program begins to unpack the mechanisms involved in this apparently linear trajectory and show a more complex system with a cycle of interconnected and synergistic pathways (Figure 1.3).

2.1.1. Overview of data analysis approach

Outcomes from the IPA Program result from a combination of the context and the mechanisms embedded in cyclic interconnected pathways. This poses 2 challenges for the evaluation:

- identifying the separate and systemic effects of the cyclic and interconnected pathways
- knowing whether the outcomes emerge from the context, or whether they emerge from the interventions.

Our approach to the data collection and analysis addresses these challenges by:

- using a holistic wellbeing impact approach
- separating out context, mechanism and outcome variables.

The draft IPA Program ToC points to a number of the interconnected pathways that are some of the mechanisms, several of which have been separately identified in other research. These include:

- investment of financial resources leading to growth in Indigenous businesses and incomes (Jarvis et al. 2018a, 2018b)
- planning led by Traditional Owners within an effective adaptive management approach (Godden and Cowell 2016)
- training, employment, work satisfaction, role model
- organisations and individuals gaining agency: power with others, as well as power to influence others (Hill et al. 2021)
- practising culture, language and other activities on Country
- learning and sharing of knowledge in social networks.

2.1.2. Questions and approaches for the analyses

The data analysis begins by focusing on the questions we need answers to and considers the variables, indicators, datasets and analytical approaches used to address those specific questions.

However, the indicators – and data sources from which they are drawn – will be used for multiple purposes. Following presentation of the questions and sub-questions, we present the methods for thematic analysis (qualitative with descriptive statistics) and quantitative analysis.

The evaluation questions were given earlier; in Table 2.1, the sub-questions for each are also given. These were agreed between the NIAA, DCCEEW and Ninti One in Phase One. The variables, indicators, datasets and analytical approaches for each set of sub-questions are given in detail in the appendix referenced in each of the relevant table cells.

Table 2.1 Evaluation questions and sub-questions

Evaluation question	Sub-questions
1. To what extent has the IPA Program achieved biodiversity conservation outcomes, including those at a landscape scale?	To what extent has the IPA Program contributed to the NRS being comprehensive, adequate (including through connectivity), and representative of biodiversity and cultural diversity? To what extent does the IPA Program contribute to achieving Australia's international obligations for biodiversity conservation under multi-lateral environmental treaties? To what extent is the IPA Program achieving 'management effectiveness' (as a proxy for biodiversity conservation)? To what extent is the IPA Program achieving 'governance effectiveness'? **Relevant variables (properties relevant to the sub-question), indicators (ways to measure the variables), datasets and analyses are given in Appendix 2 with examples in Table A.3 and Table A.4.**
2. To what extent has the IPA Program worked to strengthen Indigenous peoples' connections to Country and culture and create social and economic benefits?	To what extent is the IPA Program working for economic and social benefits through: 1. Indigenous business development 2. household incomes 3. Indigenous gender equity employment 4. targeting socio-economic disadvantage? How is the IPA Program working to strengthen Indigenous: 5. languages 6. cultural practices 7. connections with Country 8. cultural institutions (both formal and informal) 9. social and health outcomes 10. overall wellbeing? To what degree does the IPA Program support a holistic approach to the creation of benefits? How are Australia's diverse Indigenous cultures contributing to IPAs? **Relevant variables (properties relevant to the sub-question), indicators (ways to measure the variables), datasets and analyses are given in Appendix 2, with examples in Table A.5.**
3. What are the key contexts/factors that affect the achievement of IPA Program objectives, and how can they be used to strengthen impacts through future program design?	How do context and mechanism variables affect the delivery of the economic benefit and outcomes? How does the social context affect the delivery of the social and cultural benefits from IPAs? How do the mechanisms being used to deliver the IPAs affect the achievement of the objectives? How do the social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits interact to affect achievement of objectives? How can the effective mechanisms for delivery of benefits be strengthened? **Relevant variables (properties relevant to the sub-question), indicators (ways to measure the variables), datasets and analyses are given in Appendix 2 with examples in** Table A.6**.**
4. To what extent are IPA Program objectives still relevant and appropriate to meet the needs of IPA providers and the Australian Government?	To what extent does the holistic approach of Indigenous societies (interlinked Country–culture–social–environment–economic) fit with IPA objectives? To what extent do IPA providers support the IPA objectives? What other objectives are important to IPA providers? To what extent does the Australian Government support the objectives? What other objectives are important to the Australian Government? **Relevant variables (properties relevant to the sub-question), indicators (ways to measure the variables), datasets and analyses are given in Appendix 2 with examples in** Table A.7**.**

2.2. Overview of datasets and thematic data analyses Phase One

The thematic analysis in Phase One was conducted by coding each of the relevant datasets across the categories relevant to all 4 questions (see Table 2.2). We used Dedoose, a qualitative data analysis package, which can also produce descriptive statistics to visually display trends. The initial coding tree was based on the categories in Table 2.2 with new categories added as they emerged through the analysis.

The literature review was similarly undertaken using thematic analysis, coding to the categories in Table 2.2, and new codes that emerged from the literature. Priority was given to Indigenous authored and co-authored papers and to privileging the Indigenous voice according to leading Indigenous evaluation methods. The literature was entered into a shared Mendeley database for the thematic analysis.

Table 2.2 Datasets and categories for the thematic analysis for each question

Dataset	Categories for Question 1	Categories for Question 2	Categories for Question 3	Categories for Question 4
Success stories, annual activity reports, PoMs, IPA roundtables, literature	IUCN 6 elements of assessing management effectiveness 1. Processes to identify values, threats, stakeholders 2. Existence and quality of management plans (incl. updates) 3. Resources for IPAs 4. Type and quality of management processes directed towards biodiversity, threat reduction (e.g. weeds, ferals, fire), cultural management, knowledge practices, climate response 5. Outputs from management processes (e.g. areas of weed control successfully achieved) 6. Outcomes (a) and the extent (b) of the condition of areas inside IPAs Key factors in the IUCN governance framework: • Governance quality • Effective participation of stakeholders • Fair sharing of benefits • Accountability • Effective enforcement • Governance vitality • Effective coordination • Long-term • Empowered • Adaptive • Innovative	• Use of Indigenous language • Application of cultural knowledge and practices • Being on Country and acquiring knowledge of Country • Use of cultural institutions in decision-making about IPAs • Comprehensive social variables in the social return on investment (SROI) reports, including education and training • Social and cultural determinants of health • Clinical indicators of health • Extent of Indigenous cultures that have IPAs • Extent of holistic, systems thinking about multiple benefits	• Evidence about holistic, interlinked, systemic impacts of the IPA intervention Context variables: • Language and culture • Social networks and wellbeing • Employment • Health and risk factors • Safety law and justice • housing Mechanism variables: • IPA case-management practices • Improved access to knowledge • Social learning through interactions in social networks to broaden understanding • Empowerment that arises from Indigenous individuals and organisations gaining agency to influence the choices and actions of others • Indigenous control and leadership • Review SROI reports ToC to check for other mechanisms • Identify other mechanisms through literature review • Options for strengthening mechanisms proposed by IPA providers, stakeholders and funders	• The fit between holistic Indigenous approach and IPA multiple benefit approach Key goals of the IPA providers in relation to: • protection of biodiversity • delivery of multiple benefits and sustainable management of land/sea • building the NRS

Dataset	Categories for Question 1	Categories for Question 2	Categories for Question 3	Categories for Question 4
Australian Government environment and policy documents, e.g. Closing the Gap Agreement	Key goals of the Australian Government in relation to: • the Indigenous Advancement Strategy • Closing the Gap.	Key goals of the Australian Government in relation to: • the Indigenous Advancement Strategy • Closing the Gap.	Key goals of the Australian Government in relation to: • the Indigenous Advancement Strategy • Closing the Gap.	Key goals of the Australian Government in relation to: • protection of biodiversity • delivery of multiple benefits and sustainable management of land/sea • building the NRS.

2.2.1. Mixed methods evaluation

Synthesis for the Phase One report used a mixed methods approach to bring together the multiple lines of evidence obtained from the data analyses presented above. While the data collection and analyses provide opportunities for privileging the Indigenous voice, the synthesis involved steps to ensure cultural responsiveness, through review and input from the Indigenous co-leader and other Indigenous staff in the project, leading to synthesis that is credible and relevant. The mixed methods approach allowed us to bring diverse data and analyses together, testing for convergent validity, thereby ensuring robust and credible evidence in accordance with the IAS evaluation principles.

The synthesis of the data analyses for Phase One took us through a preliminary contribution analysis to refine the ToC and helped design the evidence collection in Phase Two. The findings and knowledge gaps identified in Phase One guided the interviews and yarns conducted in Phase Two of the evaluation.

2.3. Stakeholder Engagement and Data Collection Strategy (SEDCS)

This section outlines the principles and design of the Stakeholder Engagement and Data Collection Strategy (SEDCS). The strategy guides an approach to working with Indigenous stakeholders and collecting data in a culturally credible and safe manner (see section 2.5). First, key stakeholders were classified into 3 groups, depending on their role in the IPA Program; this was followed by a description of the different levels of engagement with them. The 3 groups of stakeholders were mapped using this framework (see Appendix 3, Table A.8). Like each part of the IPA Program evaluation, the strategy addresses cultural and ethical considerations, specifically through the design of cultural safety principles which align with the Australian Evaluation Society First Nations Cultural Safety Framework (see Appendix 6, Table A.12). The strategy supports a participatory and empowered approach to the evaluation.

2.3.1. Stakeholders and stakeholder mapping

Key stakeholders were defined in the IPA Program Evaluation Statement of Requirement. The 3 groups of stakeholders identified and engaged were the commissioning, funding and authorising context of the evaluand (governance) as well as 3 separate groups of partners, contributors and beneficiaries of the IPA Program. These are defined in the context of the evaluation requirements as ‘key evaluation partners’ (selected IPA study sites) and ‘other evaluation partners’.

The governance stakeholders have been identified as:

- the interagency PET
- The NIAA’s national and regional offices
- DCCEEW’s Biodiversity Policy and Water Science Branch
- The NIAA’s Indigenous Evaluation Committee (IEC) and DCCEEW’s Indigenous Advisory Committee (IAC) (NIAA 2021).

The key evaluation partners have been identified as:

- IPA provider representatives, Traditional Owners and other key stakeholders associated with the 10 selected case study sites.

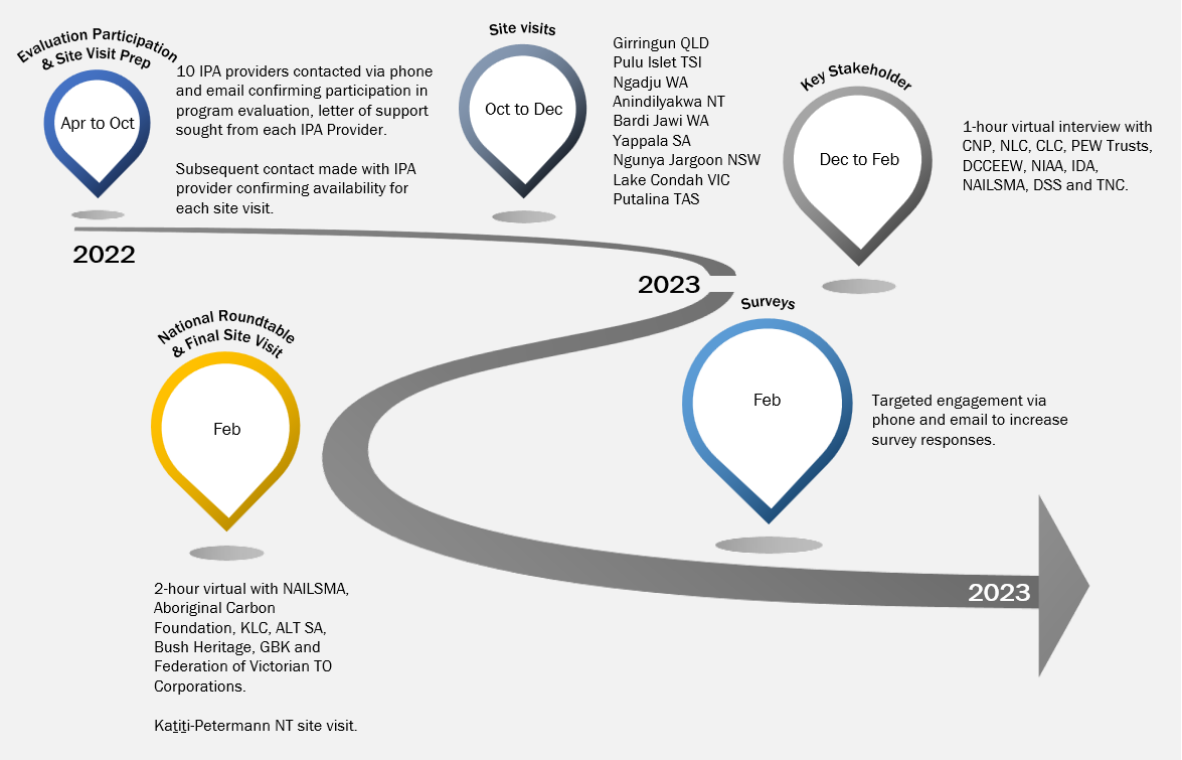
The other evaluation partners have been identified as:

- Remaining IPA provider representatives and Traditional Owners associated with Commonwealth-funded dedicated IPA projects

- other relevant external stakeholders, including Country Needs People, CLC, Kimberley Land Council (KLC), Northern Land Council (NLC), Cape York Land Council, Indigenous Desert Alliance (IDA), NAILSMA, Australian Land Conservation Alliance, The Nature Conservancy (Australia) (TNC), The Pew Charitable Trusts (PEW), Bush Heritage Australia and BHP Foundation.

A pictorial timeline further illustrates the stakeholder engagement and data collection process in Figure 2.1 and Appendix 3.

Figure 2.1 Stakeholder engagement and data collection process



2.4. Cultural credibility and protocols

A culturally responsive approach to the IPA Program evaluation requires demonstrated cultural credibility in our conduct and the observance of appropriate protocols. The Ninti One Aboriginal Knowledge and Intellectual Property Protocol guides the planning, consultation, implementation and reporting back phases in partnership with critical stakeholders. The protocol outlines the rules for how the evaluation team conducts the evaluation and is premised on:

- respecting and valuing the voices and experiences of First Nations people, especially Traditional Owners
- acknowledging and respecting the diversity of language and striving to ensure mutual understanding
- ensuring that everyone has the right information and that processes are transparent, fair and just, recognising that Aboriginal people own their knowledge and maintain their Indigenous cultural and intellectual property.

This was realised through attention to ethics; confidentiality; free, prior and informed consent; benefit sharing; and full agreement and understanding of recording, reporting and use of Indigenous knowledge according to Indigenous cultural and Australian privacy laws.

During each stakeholder engagement and/or data collection session, to create a dynamic that is inclusive and enables everyone to contribute, participants were asked to endorse and commit to the following principles:

- to collectively build and maintain trust and respect
- to respect and value the voices of all participants
- to concentrate on finding win–win outcomes that represent success for everyone
- to acknowledge and celebrate progress
- to maintain a focus on the future
- to recognise that parties might not agree on everything discussed during the sessions.

2.4.1. Cultural safety

A participatory and empowering evaluation approach must be founded on cultural safety. In evaluation, this means providing Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people with an environment in which evaluation approaches, practices and roles – as well as evaluators themselves – challenge dominant culture benchmarks so that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are not constantly negotiating for Indigenous ways of knowing, ways of doing and ways of being (Gollan and Stacey 2021). Cultural safety is what is perceived by Indigenous peoples, when those engaging with them (including for professional activities) are culturally responsive and competent.

The IPA Program evaluation has been designed in keeping with the 10 principles recently produced by the Australian Evaluation Society (AES) First Nations Cultural Safety Framework (see Appendix 6, **Error! Reference source not found.**; Gollan and Stacey 2021).

Ethics approval was acquired through the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) Research Ethics Committee.

2.4.2. Yarning in practice

> For me, the Yarning approach used in this evaluation affirms the legitimacy of First Nations peoples' identity, voice, cultural intelligence and authority over their lands and waters. It reaffirms the deep obligations and responsibilities to our ancestors to care for country and people. (Rod Little, Indigenous IPA Evaluation Team Leader)

Yarning was described in the evaluation design as one of the key cultural methods to be used.

> We are the oldest continuous living cultures in the word and have been sharing our knowledge orally and demonstrably for over 60,000 years. The process of yarning is one that is very much embedded into our cultures. Yarning is derived from thousands of generations of First Nations ways of sharing knowledge, learning, belonging and being and doing. (Indigenous IPA Evaluation Team)

It is therefore used exclusively with cultural recognition and respect where both participants and evaluators are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

> Yarning is often an informal conversation about a subject that people might enjoy when catching up with old friends, meeting with family or learning and sharing knowledge with new people. It is also important to note that yarns can also be formal in nature, where we are trying to achieve an outcome on a topic that relates to our lore and culture. These are very important conversations and often involve senior Elders or members of a group. (Indigenous IPA Evaluation Team)

Yarning is often mistakenly considered by non-Indigenous evaluators as a type of focus group. It is important to recognise 2 key differences. First, a focus group discussion tends to be structured around key questions and facilitated by one of the evaluation team. Second, participants in a focus group do not expect to spend time building rapport or trust with the evaluators. By contrast, yarning requires a conscious effort by participants to get to know and trust the evaluators and to feel respected by them. For example, cultural introductions are central to respectful engagement and are critically important to the Indigenous IPA Evaluation team's approach to truthfully seeking an in-depth understanding of community perspectives.

> When we, as Aboriginal people, engage with other Aboriginal people the first topic is who is your mob, where is your Country, family and community? It is a process of establishing how we connect to each other through Country, family and community relationships. Attending to our cultural obligations in acknowledging the above we are no longer representing our workplace; we represent all of the above. Non-Indigenous evaluators do not have this additional layer of responsibility, a point that is not recognised enough. We, as Aboriginal people, risk our cultural, personal and professional reputation in this engagement. (Indigenous IPA Evaluation Team)

Respect is the core value that underpins yarning. In practice, this means that the Indigenous evaluation team did not push for information or touch on potentially sensitive topics without checking the readiness of participants. For example, in some cases the Ninti One evaluation team did not talk about financial management within the IPA if the community did not want to do so. Sometimes financial aspects are not known to more than the relevant specialist in the local management team, and it can be inappropriate to ask other people about them. However, limited resources was commonly highlighted as a matter that prevented the IPA personnel and Traditional Owners to achieve their cultural, economic and biodiversity aspirations.

Yarning reflection by IPA Indigenous Evaluation Team – being respectful and mindful of the time people gave us and their other commitments

[IPA site name withheld] is a large IPA encompassing land and sea. On the first day of our visit, we met in the boardroom. At the beginning we were shown a map on the large conferencing screen of the geographical boundaries of the IPA and the Traditional Owner groups that the corporation represents.

Their commitment to Indigenous employment, leadership development, mentoring and succession planning was clearly demonstrated on the day, with the 100% Indigenous-led management team present. The way that the yarning flowed with each participant complementing and adding to the richness of the qualitative data that their colleagues had just shared was a demonstration of the mutual trust and respect that they share for each other.

One of the staff members had been with the ranger program for many years. His career has progressed through 3 promotions. An IPA Coordinator has also been with the organisation for many years and drives some distance to work, but she considers that travel isn't an issue when you love your job.

At the time of our visit the IPA provider organisation was hosting a ranger team as part of a ranger exchange program, among other business-as-usual activities. While we spent a number of hours yarning about the IPA Program, we were mindful that the leadership needed to spend some time with the visiting ranger group as well.

While yarning is not appropriate for every group setting, in the context of an evaluation like this one, having a yarn with an individual who was showing the team the local area was often equally as

valuable as a conversation with a group. The nature of yarning is that a conversation can just roll naturally in a relaxed way, especially if a participant is comfortable with the location. Often, talking while standing side-by-side with someone and looking at sites on Country is much more effective than a face-to-face conversation across a table, which some participants can find uncomfortable and even intimidating. Having a yarn on Country also reduces the chances of non-Indigenous people speaking on behalf of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, a common problem in an office environment where most managers are non-Indigenous. Yarning elevates the voices of First Nations people.

The evaluation team always informed people we met that we were available and approachable at the convenience of the community. At one site, the community had a week-long commitment to community business, ranging from governance and future planning to culture and language restoration and strengthening. They were also hosting an IPA ranger team from the Northern Territory and each prided themselves on the value of mutual cultural knowledge exchange. The community leadership was well aware of the presence of the visiting team in their community and why we were there. They invited us to their organisation deliberations and workshops as observers and to their community evening meal, where we were accessible to other community members and learned more about the strengths of their leadership, their cultural commitments and visions for the future.

Evaluation fatigue is also common in First Nations communities, and people can often be unavailable to participate in formal surveys and questionnaire-based evaluation, especially where IPAs are under-resourced and local people are busy. Under these circumstances, participants are more likely to say, 'Come and have a yarn with us about the IPA while we get on with something else we need to do'. It makes good sense for an evaluator to accompany that person while they walk (or drive) and talk about their experience of the IPA. Where it was possible, the Indigenous evaluation team deliberately split up and rode with IPA personnel to enable them to share in greater detail their personal stories and what they were getting out of working at the IPA and how proud they and their families were of their work and how it was putting food on the table. It was also apparent that some people did not say a word in office meetings, but as soon as we went out on Country they had much more to say and were able to show their passion for their country, for the IPA and what is important for them and their families. Then the Indigenous evaluation team could weave in any relevant survey data to add value to the insights.

An important principle for the Indigenous evaluation team was a belief in the honesty and openness of the people we met. As a method, yarning encouraged people to talk voluntarily about topics they wished to share, rather than setting out a predetermined list of questions that could be considered intrusive and could make participants defensive about aspects of the IPA. Sometimes, participants took us to one side to share an insight or an experience they considered important; this almost certainly would not have happened if we had directed the discussions. Preconceived ideas about the pace of the process, who should participate, where discussions should take place and what specifically should be covered were set aside, enabling the community to take more of a lead. In yarning, people have greater control compared with other methods, especially if the evaluators are willing to let go of any need to direct the conversation and instead let it flow according to the interests and priorities of the community. People like to pass on factual information through storytelling. They like to share their knowledge through a conversation. Sometimes the conversation might be wide ranging, and subjects can be random, but, as we say, that's the nature of the yarn.

The approach described above does not imply that the evaluation team dilutes its responsibility for the data to be collected. We often suggested a new theme for discussion or that the conversation return to a previous topic if we felt the evaluation required more information. This provided a level of in-depth knowledge of people's lived experiences that we imagine could not be achieved through other methods. The Indigenous evaluation team found that yarning was the key method that produced the most data. Within the ethics application it states 'we prioritise yarning, facilitated by

our Indigenous team members, with Indigenous community case study participants. Yarning centralises importance of relationships in the data collection setting and emphasises respect for cultural protocols, equity and power-sharing' (Bessarab and Ng'andu 2010).

Often, governments set priorities and so the arrival of an evaluation team with a fixed agenda can reinforce the view of local people that they have little power or influence. This compromises the engagement and information. Given that each IPA is different, we took the view that it is better to let people do the talking. Let them explain their journey. In this way, we gained deeper insights that may not have been the case without adopting the principles of yarning.

Finally, we found that our approach enabled greater exploration of the initial responses of participants to questions. For example, a reply to a question about benefits and a person's experience of an IPA might be 'It's been good'. Many First Nations languages use words with more than one meaning; 'good' can be seen in an individual's visible positive demeanour, body language and looking healthy. Holding the space and allowing the time for respondents to expand on that response or, better still, empower them to go to see something that they can explain to us, makes a huge difference in the interpretation of benefits. It is respectful and demonstrates value in people's experience and knowledge, and power to share (or not). Analysis of the data therefore involved discussion about the context of the yarns such as events happening in the community at the time, observations about the places the team visited, who participated in terms of their roles in the IPA and reflections on yarning at each place for the team to maintain the connection of the information to the relationships that facilitated its collection.

People like to tell stories about the impacts of the IPA on their lives and communities. They just need to be given the opportunity to do that. Talking to them on Country and seeing their pride first-hand is another benefit of the Yarning approach to the IPA evaluation.

Yarning reflection by IPA Indigenous Evaluation Team – Strength of yarning on country

During some great conversations, personnel in senior or experienced roles were generally the first respondents to questions meant for First Nations personnel, such as rangers, who sometimes withdraw and won't respond or are shy or 'shame' around strangers. In contrast, when First Nations Traditional Owners are on their own Country explaining the cultural significance of sites and the spiritual connections to their ancestral lands, the pride and confidence increases significantly. Yarning becomes increasingly valuable at this point, demonstrating the strengths of individuals when afforded the opportunity to speak with cultural authority about their responsibilities and obligation and matters that are so important to them.

The ethics application for the evaluation set out that the key principles of Ninti One's Evaluation Plan are that it:

- is culturally responsive through Indigenous leadership, cultural credibility and cultural safety
- values cultural and language diversity, innovation, integrity and empathy and respects the cultural authority of First Nations peoples
- prioritises ethics; confidentiality; free, prior and informed consent; benefit-sharing; full agreement and understanding about processes for recording information
- is founded on cultural respect and recognition and applies a mixed methods evaluation design framed within an Indigenous strengths-based approach. Mixed Indigenous, qualitative, quantitative, spatial and economic methods will be used for data collection, analysis and synthesis. (AIATSIS ethics approval number EO330-20220419, 2021 p. 5)

The application goes on to state that 'Trust is foundational when **engaging and collaborating** meaningfully with First Nations peoples. Ninti One's **cultural capability** and cultural safety approach ensures trust is established before undertaking research. For example, First Nations peoples self-represent their knowledge, experiences and worldviews through yarning and this method will be

used when working with participants in communities and during the roundtable' (emphasis in original; AIATSIS ethics approval number EO330-20220419).

In summary, as a research or evaluative method, yarning is characterised by:

- evaluators taking the time to get to know something about the participants beyond the subject matter itself and sharing information about themselves
- using open-ended questions to guide the conversation in a supportive rather than directive way
- minimal paper-based question guides and forms to be completed, beyond the necessary ones to confirm informed consent from the participants
- willingness by the evaluators to be flexible about the location for the conversation, who might be invited to join, and the pace of the process, enabling local people to determine the best way for them to participate fully.

In applying the method, evaluators maintain responsibility for ensuring that the yarn yields the data required to inform the evaluation. Their cultural and lived experience and skills enabled their role as one of listening, prompting and encouraging, rather than being directive about the questions to which they are seeking responses.

Yarning reflection by IPA Indigenous Evaluation Team – Introductions at Katiti-Petermann (KP) Indigenous Protected Area

The KP IPA surrounds the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park (UKTNP). That land was handed back to Traditional Owners in 1985 and immediately leased to Parks Australia. Now it is jointly managed by Parks Australia and Traditional Owners, one of only 3 parks in Australia with that arrangement. We had a look at the map hanging in the office and the vast land covered by the IPA.

Several of the key people who speak for that land are in aged care, and protocols had to be really strict due to COVID-19. This posed major challenges for Country visits and other events/gatherings over the past few years.

The evaluation team began by speaking with an IPA staff member, who introduced us to some of the Mutitjulu Rangers. Much of the conversation was in Pitjantjatjara and an interpreter was engaged. This ranger group was set up only a few years ago when local people approached the CLC and said they would like a ranger program. Prior to the formation of the Mutitjulu Rangers, there were already the Docker River Rangers. Both groups support the work of the IPA.

We all looked at some pictures in the office, historical photos from the 1930s, when some of the earliest tourists came to the region. There's a picture of a European boy sitting with 3 Aboriginal children in a traditional sort of windbreak/shelter. The land and culture at that point had experienced very little interaction with outsiders.

Senior Anangu people relayed stories about their connection to Country. Some were healers, some work with the health service using traditional medicine, some were youths and some spoke in language and in English.

2.5. Overview of data collection for Phase Two

Our approach to data collection and working with stakeholders is culturally credible and safe, based on the principles and methods discussed in Chapter 2.4. Before data was collected, a Participant Information Sheet was distributed, letting participants know what data would be shared; how it would be used, managed and stored; and what were the considered benefits that the community would want. Participants were also informed that their responses would contribute to answering the key evaluation questions (see Table 2.1).

Data collection in Phase Two focused on 10 case study sites. In addition, some national data collection and analysis and updating of the desktop data analysis was conducted in Phase One. The following data collection activities occurred:

Case study sites

1. IPA project providers and community yarns with a quantitative survey
2. Annual and 6-monthly key performance indicator (KPI) and activity data reported by IPA sites to NIAA (building on the national data reported to NIAA and shared for Phase One analysis).

National

1. Stakeholder online survey
2. Key stakeholder interview
3. National roundtable.

Six overarching questions were explored through these diverse data collection activities:

1. How much is/are the IPA project/s working for Country and culture?
2. How much is/are the IPA project/s working for social, economic and wellbeing benefits?
3. Could you tell us about the strengths of the IPA project/s that makes it/them work well?
4. Could you tell us about barriers to reaching the goals for the IPA project/s?
5. Could you tell us about the goals for the future of the IPA project/s?
6. How could the IPA help make more powerful changes for you and other Traditional Owners? Are there any powerful changes for your people and Country from the IPA so far?

The 6 overarching questions formed the basis of the Yarns, the semi-structured key stakeholder interviews and online surveys. The questions align with the IPA evaluation questions. Particular attention was focused on the key knowledge gaps identified in Phase One. In the following sections we detail the site selection and data collection methods in the case studies, then follow that with the national-level data collection strategies and integration of the desktop-based national data collection and analysis from Phase One.

2.5.1. Case study site selection and data collection

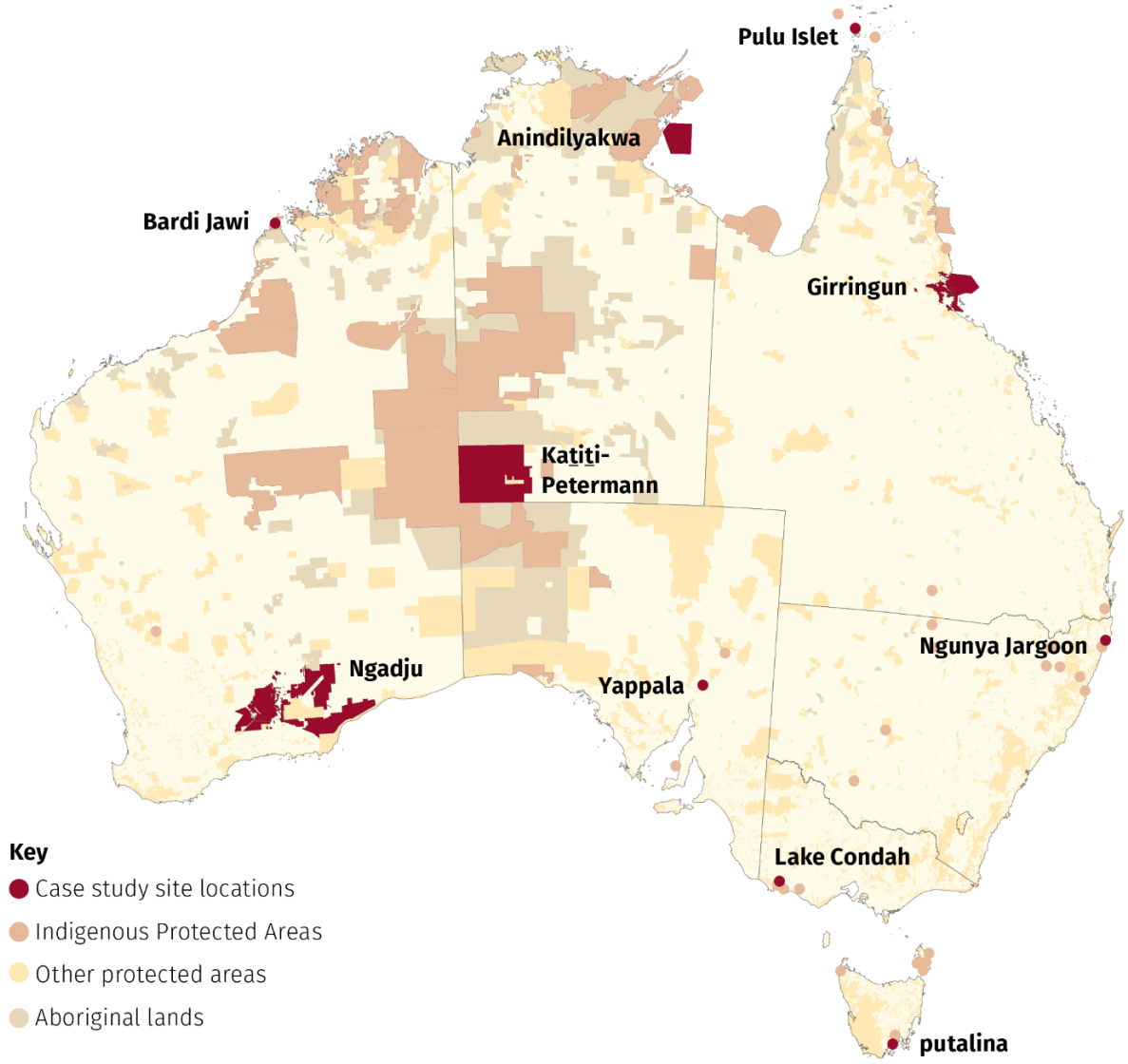
In this evaluation, 10 case study sites have been identified across diverse contexts to inform the evaluation of the IPA Program (Table 2.3). The multiple case study design enables a holistic and in-depth evaluation and understanding of the IPA Program achievements and outcomes on the ground.

Table 2.3 Selected IPA case study sites

State or territory	Region (NIAA)	IPA no.	Proposed IPA	Attributes leading to proposal
NSW	Eastern New South Wales	53	Ngunya Jargoon	Medium-sized area for NSW IPAs. Close proximity to large populations and considerations for this within land management activities. IPA is providing a focal point for some community members to reconnect with culture.
NT	Arnhem Land & Groote Eylandt	20	Anindilyakwa	Long established and operational large sea Country IPA with Indigenous ranger projects.
NT	Central Australia	51	Katiti-Petermann	Extensive, landscape-scale IPA with close proximity to other IPAs. Connected to Alice Springs and CLC; involved with the management and coordination of other IPAs and ranger programs.
QLD	North Queensland	57	Girringun	Large IPA with sea Country using established co-management model. Previous participant in the 2016 evaluation.
QLD	North Queensland	29	Pulu Islet	Small-scale Torres Strait Islander IPA with more than 10 years of operation.
SA	South Australia	62	Yappala	No established ranger program and with different characteristics and influences to Central Australian IPAs.
TAS	Victoria and Tasmania	4	putalina	Small-scale IPA that has been dedicated for more than 20 years. Close proximity to large populations, NRS, agriculture and aquaculture enterprises.*
VIC	Victoria and Tasmania	39	Lake Condah	Small area IPA that includes heritage-listed ruins. Established plans for acquiring additional sites within the surrounding landscape including within farmland.
WA	Central Western Australia	78	Ngadju	Large, landscape-scale, newly dedicated IPA with ranger program. Contemporary experience of pre- and post-IPA dedication.
WA	Kimberley	56	Bardi Jawi	Large, remote IPA with marine activities. Rangers active in managing impacts of fire, tourism and industry.

* We acknowledge the continuing debate about the definition of Indigenous business and enterprise, as articulated by Foley (2013).

Figure 2.2 Map of case study sites



2.5.2. IPA project providers and community yarns, with a quantitative survey

Our Indigenous-led evaluation strategy prioritises using appropriate Indigenous methodologies for data collection with Indigenous people in the case study sites. Data collection with the IPA project providers and community was led by an Indigenous team, using Yarning as the method. Yarning is a practice that assigns central importance to the relationship between the people involved in the data collection setting and builds on the Indigenous traditions of storytelling (Bessarab and Ng'andu 2010). Yarning emphasises respect for cultural protocols, for equity and power-sharing between the researcher and participants, and the importance of relationships between people (Atkinson et al. 2021; Murrup-Stewart et al. 2021).

The first set of participants targeted for the case study data collection were Indigenous community members including Traditional Owners, rangers, organisations and others in the community directly involved with the IPA project (see Appendix 4). A purposive sampling method was adopted, seeking to yarn with those who are knowledgeable about and interested in the IPA project and the

evaluation of the IPA Program. Relevant participants were identified through discussions with the IPA providers and those involved in the yarns: 164 individuals participated in yarns across the 10 selected case study sites. Refer to Table A.10 (Appendix 5) for a demographic breakdown of yarning participants.

Yarning methods require a flexible format that focuses the discussion around the research topic and enables the participant to respond as they see fit (Walker et al. 2014). The draft data collection proforma for the yarns therefore included only the 6 high-level questions. However, the researchers/evaluators made a list of important topics to check whether the yarns had covered all the information needed and check back in with participants as appropriate to cover additional topics. These topics were designed to ensure that key knowledge gaps identified in Phase One (see Chapter 1) were addressed.

Information was recorded through written notes and as conversations. A quantitative survey (referred to as a Satisfaction Survey) was conducted where time permitted and the evaluation team deemed it appropriate. The survey required respondents to use a scale from 1 to 10. These quantitative data underpin the testing of the strength of links between variables, highlighting the contribution of the mechanisms within the IPA project to the economic outcomes (business development, incomes, employment, targeting socio-economic disadvantage) of the IPA project. There were Fifty satisfaction surveys collected across 6 case study sites (refer to Table A.11 of Appendix 5 for demographic breakdown of survey participants). Insufficient survey numbers were collected to undertake a multi-factorial analysis.

2.5.3. National data collection – overview

The SEDCS describes a wide array of people beyond the case study sites who provided invaluable information and perspectives in this evaluation. The aim of the national data collection was to provide a broad and targeted set of opportunities to collect these valuable data.

Stakeholder online survey

The stakeholder online survey was made available to all the critical Indigenous and non-Indigenous stakeholders identified in section 2.3 and classified across 3 main groups. Respondents were given different options to provide their contact details to allow for follow-up or clarification of their views.

The survey included both quantitative and qualitative questions and sought to identify connections between the respondent and the IPA Program and projects. The 6 overarching questions identified in section 2.5 formed the basis of the online survey. Questions that related to Indigenous wellbeing were asked only of Indigenous respondents. Efforts were made to engage with representatives of all IPA projects (not just the case study projects) to participate in this survey through phone and email promotion of the survey.

Key stakeholder interviews

Key stakeholder interviews were conducted with a subset of the critical Indigenous and non-Indigenous stakeholders and included interviews with the NIAA staff key stakeholders. The SEDCS in section 2.3 provides additional detail of the organisations that have been identified to participate in this process.

Emails were sent to key stakeholders, and these were followed by phone calls from the Indigenous Evaluation Team inviting people to participate. Interviews were conducted remotely, either over the phone or using video conferencing technology and took between 30 and 60 minutes. Recordings were taken with permission and for purposes of transcription only.

Questions addressed to key stakeholders were based on the 6 overarching questions in section 2.5 and followed a semi-structured interview guide. Ten online key stakeholder interviews were completed over the period December 2022 to February 2023. The one-hour online key stakeholder interviews were led by the Indigenous IPA evaluation team leader and senior Indigenous evaluation team member. Questions that related to Indigenous wellbeing were asked only of Indigenous respondents. Organisations included in the key stakeholder interviews were:

- Country Needs People
- Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
- North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance
- The Nature Conservancy
- Pew Charitable Trusts
- Northern Land Council
- Central Land Council
- Indigenous Desert Alliance
- National Indigenous Australians Agency.

Five other organisations were approached to participate in the interview but declined due to availability or responses were not provided.

National roundtable

The Phase One report identified a need to speak with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have a national perspective on the IPA Program to address several key knowledge gaps. A roundtable approach was adopted to explore questions around approaches that can bring about better compliance with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap commitment to full and genuine partnership for policy making about IPAs, and options for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled peak organisations and/or networks to undertake the role of partnering with governments.

The high-level national roundtable consultations used a Yarning approach. Indigenous evaluation team members facilitated the Yarn. Participants were agreed with the PET and were provided with an overview of the evaluation and the key questions and perspectives prior to the interview. Eleven participants attended from land and natural resource management agencies and Aboriginal corporations and agencies across Australia. Emphasis was placed on the role of IPAs within the national setting and understanding what policy making together can look like. Four key areas that guided the discussion were:

- the establishment of a national IPA representative group
- long-term funding to support this group into the future and enable it to be a part of the discussion on biodiversity and climate change, and for the growth and sustainability of IPAs, including through the relevance and potential ways to develop a set of funding benchmarks that link IPAs to cultural and conservation outcomes and objectives of the IPA Program, and drawing on comparison with funding in other parts of the NRS
- legislative matters at all levels to be considered for consistency, objectivity and feasibility and for their lack of adverse impact on the objectives of each IPA's contributions to biodiversity and climate change across Australia
- program and policy collaboration and co-design aligned to the national partnership agreement framework with governments and institutions to enable maximum change, synergies and minimisation of red tape difficulties and harm to First Nations lands, waters and cultures, and the health and wellbeing of families and communities.

2.6. Updating of national desktop data analysis

As part of the evaluation, the team sought to update data analysed as part of Phase One, including program-level data from the NIAA and other sources. The additional data sought included:

- a more complete set of IPA PoMs
- 2021 Census data.

This additional data has built on the initial findings of Phase One. Documentary analysis of PoMs further supplemented the data coming from the case study site data collection (see section 5.5).

Further, the Data and Analysis Branch of the DCCEEW undertook and provided spatial analyses of modelled habitat condition and connectivity across the IPA estate (DCCEEW 2023a). Modelling was undertaken using the Habitat Condition Assessment System, which is a remote-sensing based platform for producing nationally consistent, landscape-scale models predicting habitat condition across terrestrial Australia. 'Habitat condition' refers to the capacity of a habitat to support the wildlife expected at that location under natural conditions. The results of this analysis are discussed in section 3.2.

2.6.1. Funding benchmarks

The additional data allowed analysis of the relevance of a set of funding benchmarks, and potential means of development of such a set that links IPAs to cultural and conservation outcomes and objectives of the IPA Program, and allows comparison with funding in other parts of the NRS.

Specifically, gaps in relation to analyses of the economic benefits during Phase One, with implications for Phase Two, were identified by the PET review. These implications were addressed with the collection and analysis of new data during the Phase Two work.

2.6.2. ABS Census data used to analyse impact of IPAs on number of Indigenous-owned businesses

The Phase One econometric model used Place of Usual Residence (PUR) census data. It was suggested that census data based on Estimated Resident Population (ERP) rather than PUR or other types could be used (PET reviewers' comments). As census data is known to undercount Indigenous Australians, this undercount can be reduced by using ERP. Further, despite 2021 Census data having been collected at the time of Phase One analysis, this data was not available until mid-2022. For the Phase Two analysis, the 2021 Census data was incorporated into the model. Further, the relevance and availability of ERP data was investigated. Unfortunately, ERP data is not generally available, and so this could not be incorporated within the updated analysis.

2.6.3. Presentation of IPA expenditure as a separate variable in the expanded economic analysis in Phase Two

Phase One analysis combined IPA and other Indigenous Land and Sea Management Programs (ILSMP) funding. For Phase Two, the historic expenditure on ILSMPs was reanalysed into 2 categories – IPA funding and all other ILSMP funding – and the analysis was reworked with these variables included separately. This allowed the final models presented in Phase Two to better isolate the impacts of the IPA Program funding from the impact of the Indigenous ranger groups funding.

The Phase One analysis revealed a statistically significant association between the presence of Indigenous ranger groups and IPA projects together for Indigenous businesses as a whole, and for non-land management Indigenous businesses, but not for land management businesses. Mechanisms underpinning these relationships were hoped to have been explored in Phase Two;

however, the additional analysis did not shed further light on why and how IPA projects and Indigenous rangers' impact on business growth in these different contexts.

2.6.4. Lack of relationship between changing Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas advantage and disadvantage indices over time

Reviewers agreed that given the many different factors that can affect relative advantage and disadvantage, and the fairly small size of the IPA Programs in dollar terms, the lack of relationship between IPA funding and changing Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) scores over time is unsurprising. The revised SEIFA data from the 2021 Census was not released in time for inclusion in this analysis, and additional data was not available to enable a finer scale analysis to determine impact of IPA funding on these variables during Phase Two.

2.6.5. Complexity of econometric analysis and discussion relating to the factors affecting IPA delivery of benefits and outcomes

Reviewers of the Phase One report noted that this section was quite complex and technical. In Phase Two, the model and its presentation was simplified to clarify the key messages from the findings.

2.7. Overview of analysis approach Phase Two

The approach to data analysis aims to provide answers to the 4 evaluation questions, while testing the draft ToC and elucidating the key factors that determine outcomes from IPA projects in different contexts. Our mixed-methods approach enables us to bring together data from interviews, surveys, documentary analysis and roundtable discussion and to consider how these datasets add confirming or disconfirming evidence to the draft ToC.

Each of the 4 evaluation questions have several sub-questions (Table 2.4). These sub-questions are identical to the Phase One sub-questions except for one additional sub-question added to evaluation question 4 to address a key knowledge gap identified in Phase One. This additional sub-question is:

- What new approaches with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders can enable full and genuine partnership in the IPA Program?

Table 2.4 identifies the relevant variables and data collection and analysis approaches to further probe each of the sub-questions. These variables reflect diverse contexts, mechanisms and outcomes. The number of variables we are considering is large and includes some additional variables beyond those currently recognised in the draft ToC. These variables were identified as potentially important in Phase One. Collection and analysis of data in Phase Two allowed us to explore the causal mechanisms underlying this large set of variables.

Table 2.4 IPA Program evaluation data matrix

Evaluation questions	Sub-questions	Relevant variables	Data sources/collection	How analysed
To what extent has the IPA Program achieved biodiversity conservation outcomes, including those at a landscape scale?	To what extent has the IPA Program contributed to the NRS being comprehensive, adequate (including through connectivity), and representative of biodiversity and cultural diversity? To what extent does the IPA Program contribute to achieving Australia's international obligations for biodiversity conservation under multi-lateral environmental treaties?	Spatial modelling by DCCEEW using biodiversity variables was used in Phase One to demonstrate how the IPA is contributing to these outcomes. What evidence is there that biodiversity outcomes are being achieved? Are there specific examples that would showcase biodiversity achievements?	Publicly available new research that informs this question. DCCEEW's habitat condition assessment report. The yarns in the community with those directly involved in the IPA project, and with those more peripheral through the surveys, collected data relevant to this evaluation question. The survey accompanying the yarn collected quantitative data on perceptions/satisfaction for analysis. The Stakeholder online survey and the key stakeholder interviews also collected relevant data.	Data was analysed by the research providers and included in this final evaluation report.
	To what extent is the IPA Program achieving 'management effectiveness'? (Note that the evaluation ToR identifies management effectiveness as a surrogate for biodiversity conservation outcomes)	Key variables to evaluate management effectiveness include: 1. understanding the values, threats and overall status of the protected area 2. developing management and other plans 3. resourcing the plans 4. taking management actions 5. achieving and measuring outputs 6. producing outcomes.	The yarns in the community with those directly involved in the IPA project, and with those more peripheral, collected data relevant to these topics. The survey accompanying the yarn enabled quantitative data collection.	Qualitative data analysed using thematic analysis; quantitative data analysed with descriptive statistics and testing for correlation.
	To what extent is the IPA Program achieving 'governance effectiveness'?	Key variables to evaluate governance include: 1. guarantee legitimacy and voice 2. achieve transparency and accountability 3. enable governance vitality and capacity to respond adaptively 4. funding benchmarks	The yarns in the community with those directly involved in the IPA project, and with those more peripheral, collected data relevant to these topics. The survey accompanying the yarn enabled quantitative data collection.	Qualitative data analysed using thematic analysis; quantitative data analysed with descriptive statistics and testing for correlation.

Evaluation questions	Sub-questions	Relevant variables	Data sources/collection	How analysed
To what extent has the IPA Program worked to strengthen Indigenous peoples' connections to Country and culture and create social and economic benefits?	To what extent is the IPA Program working for economic benefits?	Key variables to evaluate economic benefits include: 1. Indigenous business development 2. household incomes 3. training opportunities and uptake 4. employment 5. Indigenous gender equity employment 6. targeting socio-economic disadvantage?	The primary data sources were the survey accompanying the Yarn, data reported by IPA to NIAA as part of regular KPI and outcomes reporting, and national statistical datasets. The yarn collected accompanying relevant qualitative data.	Qualitative data analysed using thematic analysis; quantitative data analysed with descriptive statistics and testing for correlation.
	To what extent is the program working for environmental, social, wellbeing and cultural benefits?	A wide range of multiple benefit variables have been identified through an Indigenous lens, which prioritises First Peoples' culture, connections to Country, identity and spirituality 1. happiness from fulfilling our responsibilities as the right people, looking after the right Country, working with the Elders and being watched over by the spirits of the ancestors 2. being together with our families on Country, learning together, bouncing off each other 3. speaking our languages 4. healing spiritually as well as mentally 5. restoration of damage to culture and cultural ways. Environmental benefit variables identified include: 6. monitoring and management programs for feral animals and invasive weeds 7. conservation and rehabilitation of habitat supporting threatened plant and animal species 8. inclusion of cultural activities in monitoring programs 9. use of state government–provided environmental water allocations to support important habitats and species 10. fire management practices that reduce fuel load and carbon emissions.	The yarns in the community with those directly involved in the IPA project, and with those more peripheral, enabled validation and expansion of these themes. The survey accompanying the yarn enabled quantitative data collection.	Qualitative data analysed using thematic analysis; quantitative data analysed with descriptive statistics and testing for correlation.

	How is the IPA Program working to strengthen Indigenous: • languages • cultural practices • connections with Country • cultural institutions (both formal and informal) • social and health outcomes • overall wellbeing	Other multiple benefits variables found to be increasing through literature review and Phase One data analysis include: 1. empowerment of individuals with skills, pride, confidence, self-agency 2. levels of respect for and from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, existence of positive role models, respect for traditional knowledge in the community 3. (decreased) levels of violence and offending 4. strength of Indigenous identity 5. knowledge and education, skills and training 6. levels of health and wellbeing of individuals 7. connections to Country, time spent living on and accessing Country, ability to access Country 8. levels of language use 9. levels of cultural practices including knowledge sharing, conduct of ceremony, song and dance, of storytelling, of collection of bush foods and medicines 10. extent of protection of cultural sites and intangible cultural heritage 11. levels of noxious weeds and feral animals, burning using cultural practices and mitigation of carbon pollution 12. levels of partnerships, including connections and relationships 13. Indigenous organisational effectiveness 14. strength and application of collaborative decision-making in cultural institutions 15. development of place-based innovations including integration of on-Country activities in education curriculum, youth cadetship programs, the use of multiple knowledge systems for land and water management and agreements that establish and protect Indigenous cultural and intellectual property and ensure data ownership	The yarns in the community with those directly involved in the IPA project, and with those more peripheral, enabled validation and expansion of these themes. The survey accompanying the yarn enabled quantitative data collection. The stakeholder online survey and the key stakeholder interviews also collected relevant data. The surveys included a quantitative component.	Qualitative data analysed using thematic analysis; quantitative data analysed with descriptive statistics and testing for correlation

Evaluation questions	Sub-questions	Relevant variables	Data sources/collection	How analysed
	To what degree does the IPA Program support a holistic approach to the creation of benefits?	1. Fit between Indigenous holistic and IPA projects' holistic approaches 2. Fit between the IUCN management effectiveness framework and Indigenous approaches to management 3. Evidence of attention to holistic approaches in the IPA projects' data	The yarns in the community with those directly involved in the IPA project, and with those more peripheral, collected data relevant to these topics.	Qualitative data analysed using thematic analysis
	How are Australia's diverse Indigenous cultures contributing to IPAs?	In Phase One, spatial analysis was undertaken using the AusLan dataset as a proxy for cultural diversity.	No further extension of this work is intended.	The outcomes from the Phase One analysis are included in this Final Evaluation Report.
What are the key contexts/factors that affect the achievement of IPA Program objectives, and how can they be used to strengthen impacts through future program design?	How do context and mechanism variables affect the delivery of the economic benefits and outcomes?	1. presence or absence of Indigenous rangers on IPA project 2. Native Title Declaration 3. remoteness of location 4. the number of years IPA project has been in existence 5. overall population of the IPA project region 6. proportion of the population in the project region that is Indigenous 7. proportion of population that finished Year 12 8. type of broadscale environment (reef, cropland, desert, rangelands).	National statistics, such as the new census releases, DCCEEW spatial datasets accompanied by the satisfaction survey accompanying the yarns, and KPI and outcomes reporting. Supporting information was provided through the stakeholder interviews and yarns in the community.	A sophisticated econometric model was used to analyse the impact of the various factors (mechanism, context and outcome variables), following the processes used in the Phase One report.

Evaluation questions	Sub-questions	Relevant variables	Data sources/collection	How analysed
	How does the social context affect the delivery of the social and cultural benefits from IPAs? How do the mechanisms being used to deliver the IPAs affect the achievement of the objectives? How do the social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits interact to affect achievement of objectives? How can the effective mechanisms for delivery of benefits be strengthened?	1. cultural leadership and authority and the roles of the Elders 2. community support 3. the role of youth (identified both as a mechanism and as a key outcome) 4. Indigenous networks 5. gender equity 6. governance policies aimed at Indigenous peoples accessing and owning natural resources 7. effective Indigenous organisations to work as IPA providers 8. training and education of IPA staff (a key strategy in most IPA PoMs) 9. the ability to acquire and maintain vital infrastructure such as vehicles, boats, sheds, tools and equipment 10. the existence of multiple partnerships (identified both as a mechanism and as a key outcome) 11. learning together across Indigenous and western scientific knowledge systems, among different Traditional Owner groups and between Elders and youth 12. Traditional Owner–led planning 13. funding uncertainty and insufficiency 14. extreme environmental events, such as fires and drought 15. regular extreme social events, such as unexpected deaths, community unrest and conflict 16. changes to governance and management arrangements 17. remoteness	The yarns in the community with those directly involved in the IPA project, and with those more peripheral, were important. The other primary data collection proformas including the outcomes reporting, stakeholder interviews, and the survey accompanying the yarn collected relevant data.	Qualitative thematic analysis focused on identifying the impact of each of these variables.

Evaluation questions	Sub-questions	Relevant variables	Data sources/collection	How analysed
To what extent are IPA Program objectives still relevant and appropriate to meet the needs of IPA providers and the Australian Government?	To what extent does the holistic approach of Indigenous societies (interlinked Country–culture–social–environment–economic) fit with IPA objectives? To what extent do IPA providers support the IPA objectives? What other objectives are important to IPA providers?	1. current goals of IPA providers and Traditional Owners of the land (and sea) on which the IPA is located 2. other priorities of the IPA project providers and members of the community where the IPA project is located	The yarns in the community with those directly involved in the IPA project, and with those more peripheral, collected relevant data.	Qualitative data was analysed using a thematic approach.
	To what extent does the Australian Government support the objectives? What other objectives are important to the Australian Government?	1. current goals of the Australian Government relevant to IPAs as found in current policy documents 2. potential future goals relevant to IPA projects and the IPA Program	Stakeholder online survey, key stakeholder interviews and national roundtable all provided relevant data. New documents reflecting policy initiatives released since the Phase One report also provided data.	Qualitative data, including the documentary data, was analysed using thematic analysis. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics.
	What new approaches with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders can enable full and genuine partnership in the IPA Program?	1. establishment of a national IPA representative group 2. Long-term funding to support this group into the future 3. relevance and potential means of development of a set of funding benchmarks 4. legislative matters at all levels to be considered for consistency, objectivity and feasibility, and for their lack of adverse impact on the objectives of each IPA's contributions to biodiversity and climate change across Australia 5. program and policy collaboration and co-design aligned to the national partnership agreement framework	National roundtable Documentary data relevant to these variables.	Qualitative data, including the documentary data, was analysed using thematic analysis.

2.7.1. Social, cultural and environmental benefits: analysis methods

The questions addressed in this section cut across 3 evaluation themes and the overarching knowledge gap identified in Phase One of the evaluation. The sub-questions to be addressed in the interviews and participatory activities are set out in **Error! Reference source not found.**2.4.

Data was elicited from multiple sources, including the yarns, interviews, national stakeholder online survey and roundtable discussions. The information addresses all 4 evaluation questions, framed through the 6 overarching questions presented in section 2.5. Particular attention has been paid to key knowledge gaps identified in Phase One, including joint decision-making, the arrangements for IPA partnership/s between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and government, and options to generate new objectives for the IPA Program. Data was elicited using diverse data collection proformas with different participants, ensuring that multiple perspectives of Indigenous stakeholders, IPA providers and other stakeholders underpin a holistic evaluation. Key data was collected with IPA providers by using the Yarning methodology, which was approved through AIATSIS ethics. Satisfaction surveys were undertaken where the team deemed it appropriate to administer the tool, based on peoples' availability, commitment and readiness to engage on it.

In the analysis, respect was given to the on-ground yarns across the 10 case study sites, to inform the foundational themes for questions 2, 3 and 4 of the evaluation. Analysis of the stakeholder interviews and the online survey generated additional, contrasting or confirming themes or provided a scaled perspective on the themes that emerged from yarning.

Qualitative and quantitative data drawn from the various data collection instruments were thematically analysed as follows:

1. **Stakeholder online survey:** quantitative analysis of satisfaction with current joint decision-making and the partnership approach on IPA objectives and policy making; analysis of the data using descriptive statistics, with results providing an assessment overview of how the IPA Program is helping partnering for decision-making and providing benefits to Indigenous communities
2. **Yarns and the interview in the 10 case study sites**: thematic analysis of data provided by IPA providers including rangers, IPA administrators and Indigenous stakeholders, as appropriate, in relation to the 6 overarching questions; particular attention paid to identified knowledge gaps, for example the effectiveness of the governance of the IPA projects in securing legitimacy and voice, transparency and accountability, and diverse perspectives into factors affecting IPA outcomes (see Table 2.5 for detail about the datasets collected including from the 10 case study IPA sites, stakeholders surveys and the Indigenous-only national roundtable)
3. **Recording of yarning information**: the Indigenous-led on-ground team capturing and confirming the information and main interpretations though written format with each respective community, keeping the process true to the relational Yarning method (Atkinson et al. 2021); once the information was confirmed by communities, the team incorporated the initial key themes from the interpretations on the ground and thematically analysed the full dataset then reviewed the results at early, mid and later phases to validate emergent themes through an Indigenous-led evaluation process, strengthening relationality established in the Yarning method
4. **Key stakeholder interviews with state and territory government actors:** thematic analysis of the data provided by state and territory government actors identified key enablers and barriers to IPA Program delivery through questioning targeting the 4 evaluation questions and key objectives of the IPA Program
5. **National roundtable with Indigenous leaders and stakeholders:** thematic analysis of approaches to enabling full partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in

joint decision-making; new IPA objectives; funding priorities and relevance and potential means to establish a set of funding benchmarks that link IPAs to cultural and conservation outcomes.

The findings from the qualitative analysis of the different data sources were triangulated across the different scales of data inquiry, where the yarns were the primary thematic base. This approach provided a holistic evaluation. Particular attention was given to addressing knowledge gaps identified in Phase One.

Table 2.5 Data analysis table for the social, cultural and environmental data

Data source	Analysis scale	Quantitative or qualitative analysis	Specific technique	Purpose
Stakeholder online survey	National	Quantitative	Descriptive statistics	An overview of IPA providers' perspectives on the IPA partnership on policy making and strategic objective setting
Stakeholder online survey	National	Qualitative	Thematic analysis	IPA partners and providers' perspectives on the IPA partnership on policy making and strategic objective setting
Interviews at the 10 case study sites	Collective of all 10 IPA case study sites – IPA providers including administrators, managers, coordinators and Indigenous stakeholders	Qualitative	Thematic analysis	Increased understanding of (i) the quality, legitimacy and responsiveness of IPA governance; (ii) environmental, social and cultural outcomes of the IPA Program; (iii) diverse perspectives (e.g. Indigenous leaders, IPA providers, IPA stakeholders, Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants) into factors affecting IPA outcomes; (iv) options for climate risk; and (v) learning together to strengthen IPA PoMs
Interviews with state and territory agencies and IPA stakeholders	States and territories	Qualitative	Case-specific	Identify options for greater representation of more at-risk vegetation ecosystem types with IPAs; how IPAs can best complement representation of at-risk vegetation across all forms of protection (including options at state and territory levels)
Interviews with state and territory agencies and IPA stakeholders	Collective across the IPA stakeholders, states and territories	Qualitative	Thematic analysis	Increased understanding of the governance of the IPA Program in securing strong governance outcomes for IPA projects
National roundtable	Regional or national	Qualitative	Thematic analysis	Identify overarching approaches to supporting full and genuine partnerships for the IPA Program in funding priorities, approach to develop a peak body and future IPA Program objectives

2.7.2. Economic benefits: analysis of context and mechanism via an economics lens

Our planned approach to Phase Two data collection and analysis was to elicit data from multiple sources, seeking variables related to the wide range of potential mechanisms that may contribute to benefit flows from the IPA, as well as variables related to the specific context. We believe context is likely to have a significant moderating impact on the relative effectiveness of the mechanisms in different communities. Different mechanisms will make the greatest contribution to benefit flows in different IPAs as a result of the different contextual factors. Our analysis seeks a holistic approach to

this diversity, accepting the interconnectedness of contexts, mechanisms and outcomes, while seeking to distinguish factors that are most important in different contexts. The data was analysed using a mix of qualitative and quantitative techniques (Table 2.5). Key methods data analysis are described in the following sections.

2.7.3. Method for estimating how well the IPA Program is creating economic benefit through contributing to Indigenous business development

An econometric model was used to test the question of how well the IPA Program is creating economic benefit through contributing to Indigenous business development, following the approach used in previous research (Jarvis et al. 2018a, 2018b). Focusing on 13 years of data (from 2008–09 to 2020–21), we collated data from numerous sources to build a statistical panel data model (with data relevant to more than 2,000 postcodes from across the whole of Australia), to explore whether the number of Indigenous businesses in each postcode at the end of each year was related to the expenditure on ILSMPs in that same postcode during the same year and/or during the previous 3 years, thus specifically testing for current and lagged impacts of the expenditure while controlling for confounding factors. We also sought to determine the relative importance of rangers alone, IPA alone, and rangers and IPAs together in driving this impact, seeking a closer focus on the impact of the IPA Program itself by separating the IPA funding stream from other sources and types ILSMP funding. Our analysis is conducted at postcode level (e.g. the number of businesses within a postcode, and the amount of ILSMP expenditure flowing to a postcode) rather than working with business-level data due to limitations in data availability; however, our postcode analysis generates useful insights while also ensuring complete confidentiality of all information (in that it is not possible for anyone to identify corporation-specific data from our work).

Data selection and sources

We sourced data on expenditure and growth of Indigenous business, together with data relating to control variables highlighted by the literature discussed above as likely to be important for Indigenous business growth, particularly following the data selection and sourcing processes described in a previous study focusing on data for the 13 years up to and including 2020–21.

A detailed description of the data selection and sources is set out in Appendix 1. This section also describes the limitations of the data used within this analysis in detail. We acknowledge the imperfections of some of the proxies selected for our analysis and imperfections in the datasets themselves. These have arisen as a result of the scarcity of detailed and reliable data available relating to remote communities in general and Indigenous communities in particular. Consequently, our models are not perfect and some care needs to be taken when interpreting the results; however, the key findings with regard to the impact of ILSMP expenditure was found to be robust to model specification, with consistent findings resulting from a wide range of different model specifications tested; the direction and significance of impact of the key explanatory variables proved robust to inclusion or exclusion of a wide range and combination of control variables.

Method of development of our econometric model

Building on and updating previous work (Jarvis et al. 2018b) we set out to develop and estimate models to identify the impact of IPA funding on business development, separate from the impact of other investment in ILSMPs. Our first (and core) model sought to determine whether the number of businesses registered with the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC) in each postcode/year was related to ILSMP expenditure within that same postcode during the same year and/or during the previous 3 years (thus specifically testing for current and lagged impacts of the funding), while also seeking to understand the impact of ranger and/or IPA projects operating in the

postcode. Further, our sophisticated econometric model also incorporated a wider range of variables that may impact on the growth of Indigenous businesses as suggested from our review of the literature, acting as control variables, and providing important information regarding the context within which ILSMP program presence and funding levels can have an impact.

Our second model was based on the same principles, but instead focused purely on IPA project funding, excluding all other types and sources of funding provided.

Our third model included both IPA funding and other ILSMP funding as 2 separate variables. The second and third models included the same contextualising variables as the first model (see Appendix 1 for supplementary information).

2.7.4. Estimation of direct and indirect impact on incomes and economic activity generated by investment in the IPA Program

The wider indirect impact of an injection of funding into a region (through activities such as the IPA Program) on incomes and economic activity in general can be estimated using multiplier analysis based upon input–output tables. In simple terms, such analysis recognises that beyond the initial impact of spend on a program (including wages earned by those funded to undertake the land management activities on the IPAs), there is a further flow-on of benefits as the money received by local businesses from IPA spend (purchasing equipment, consumables, etc.) and the money received by local household in wages is re-spent in other local businesses. This generates additional regional economic benefits and resulting in additional household incomes being generated (as the local businesses employ more people to respond to the increased level of business activity generated).

While separate and region-specific input–output tables would ideally be used to estimate the impact of each IPA project on its surrounding region, the data is not available to complete such an exercise. However, data is available for a subset of regions the IPAs operate in, using previous research (Jarvis et al. 2018b). In this work, an estimate of the impact of the IPA Program was made based on specific input–output analysis of the impact of ISLMPs (including IPAs and Indigenous ranger groups) in 3 specific regions – the Kimberley, Northern Territory and Far North Queensland – and of the regional economic activity generated by the spend and the impact on household incomes from the IPA spend in each region. Input–output tables can be used to estimate different types of multipliers to be used in analysis. This report focuses on the total output multipliers. Referred to as Type II multipliers, these consider initial (direct) expenditure and intra-industrial knock-on benefits along the business supply chain (as measured by simple output Type I multipliers) as well as knock-on effects linked to the local expenditure of (household) wages and income (McLennan 1996; ABS 2011a; Gretton 2013).

Prior research found that the Type ll multiplier for ILSMP spend ranged from 1.80 in the Kimberley to 2.46 in Far North Queensland (Jarvis et al. 2018a). Differences in multiplier values related to the spending patterns of IPAs in the regions (how much was spent on wages and with local businesses of different types) and also on the economic characteristics of the region the IPA is located in (broadly, more populated regions with more developed local economies – more local businesses present, etc. – will have larger multipliers than less-populated and less-developed regions). Drawing on this previous research, we have estimated the impact of all IPA spend on the regional economies and on Indigenous and non-Indigenous household incomes using these previously estimated multipliers as a lower and upper bound for our estimates, thus estimates provide a range of possible outcomes rather than a single figure. While we accept the imperfections of this approach (both due to limitations of the input–output analysis methodology adopted and due to data limitations), the approach serves to highlight the important impact that funding programs such as IPAs can have on stimulating household incomes and regional economic activity in rural and remote, economically less-developed, regions.

2.7.5. National level data used for assessing how well IPA Program targets socio-economic disadvantage

In Australia, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) measures the level of advantage or disadvantage in different geographic regions using the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) (ABS 2016a). These measures are recalculated every 5 years using the census data, and for this analysis information was based on 2006, 2011 and 2016 census data (ABS 2006a, 2011a, 2016b). The SEIFA data from the 2021 Census was not released in time for inclusion within our work (released 27 April 2023), an acknowledged limitation of this analysis. SEIFA comprises 4 separate indexes: the Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD), the Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD), the Index of Education and Occupation (IEO) and the Index of Economic Resources (IER). While each index is a summary of a different subset of census variables and focuses on a different aspect of socio-economic advantage and disadvantage, each is presented by the ABS in a similar way, whereby scores are calculated for each geographic region, then the scores are ranked and grouped into percentiles, deciles and quintiles.

For our analysis we chose to focus on quintiles. In each case, being classified within a lower quintile indicates greater relative disadvantage compared to a region in a higher quintile. As the 4 indexes each measure a different subset of variables, they can be considered separately or together, depending on the question being asked. For our analysis we chose to focus on the IRSD, recognising that the majority of IPAs are located in regions that are relatively disadvantaged.

For our analysis we sought to test whether regions with IPAs showed improvements in their relative disadvantage compared to regions without IPAs over time.

2.7.6. Analysis of data collected within our 10 case study communities

Beyond use of the Yarning approach, a mix of quantitative and qualitative data was collected at the local scale, using the survey instruments targeted at people involved in the IPA and people in the local communities.

The satisfaction survey was designed to provide quantitative data to support the evaluation, facilitating statistical analysis across all the case study IPAs. The data was designed to underpin testing of the strength of links between measured outcomes and context variables, highlighting the contribution of the mechanisms within the IPA project to the economic outcomes (business development, incomes, employment, targeting socio-economic disadvantage) of the IPA project.

The survey instrument was designed for use within the case study sites. Indigenous people who are involved directly or indirectly with the IPA were invited to complete the anonymous and voluntary survey. The data was gathered in a respectful manner, following the agreed procedure for obtaining free, prior informed consent from the participants.

This data was supplemented by data provided by NIAA, based on regular 6-monthly and annual reporting to NIAA from IPA sites. IPAs report to NIAA on a 6-monthly basis for certain data elements, regarding the activities completed on the IPA project and the number of IPA Advisory Committee meetings held. Information was provided for 4 reporting periods dating from reporting period 7 (for the 6 months ending December 2018) to reporting period 10 (for the 6 months ending June 2020) for all IPAs nationally, and for 8 reporting periods for case study sites, dating from reporting period 7 to reporting period 14 (for the 6 months ending June 2022). This data was analysed graphically, using descriptive statistics, and correlation analysis was conducted between this data and (i) the satisfaction survey data, and (ii) the IPA funding data.

2.7.7. Summary of survey respondents

Fifty responses in total were collected from 6 case study sites (compared to the target of minimum 100 responses from across all 10 case study sites); the small response rate is a limitation to this quantitative work. Responses were received from 6 of the case study sites, as shown in Figure 2.3. Unfortunately, no survey responses were received from Indigenous people directly or indirectly involved in the Girringun, Lake Condah, Ngunya Jargoon or putalina IPA sites.

Just over half the respondents were male (46% of survey respondents overall were female), and more respondents indicated they were in their 40s compared to any other age group (Figure 2.4; not all respondents provided their age group). Of the respondents, 90% reported that they live on Country, and 82% reported that they considered themselves to be respected, someone people look up to or listen to in the community, a role model for others.

Figure 2.3 Percentage of responses from each case study location

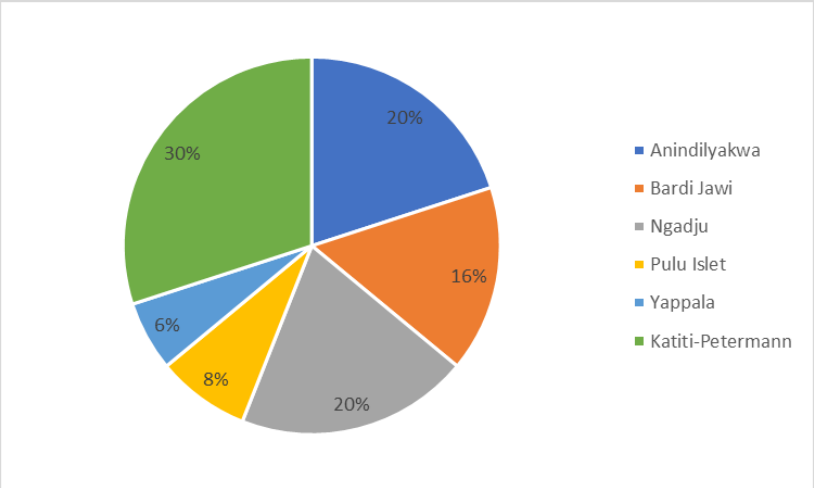
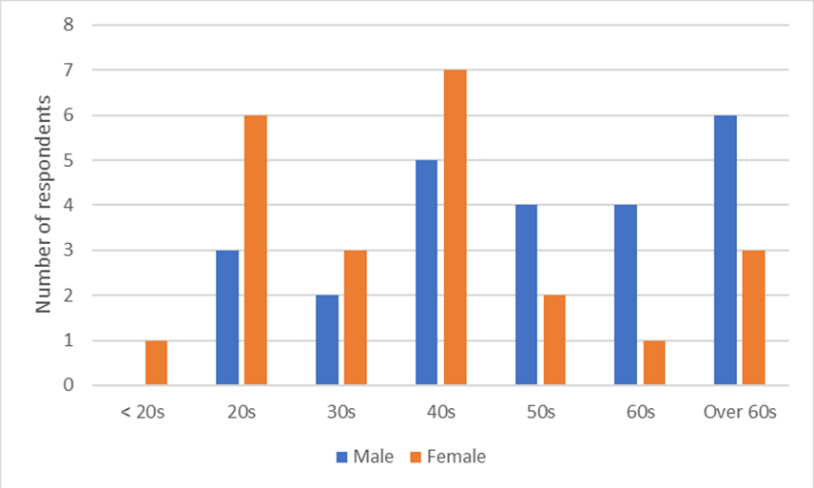


Figure 2.4 Age and gender of satisfaction survey respondents



Analysis methods for satisfaction survey data

Where possible, data was analysed within the context of the specific IPA, using techniques designed to develop an understanding of the mechanisms and outcomes resulting from the presence of the IPA in that community. The quantitative data was explored using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis, while thematic analysis was used with the qualitative data to illuminate reasons

explaining the correlations found in the quantitative analysis and to suggest causality underpinning those findings, seeking to understand the stories that add colour and context to the analysis of the numbers.

Having considered each IPA separately, the findings from the 10 case studies were collated and compared. Key contextual factors that differentiate the IPAs (including but not limited to factors such as IPA funding and the number of years IPA has been in existence) were introduced as additional variables within the correlation analysis.

Overall satisfaction with the IPA was explored using descriptive statistics, frequency tables and the Net Promoter Score (NPS) scale, which is common in marketing literature and industry/commercial practice (Reicheld 2003). To use the NPS, the 0–10 scale is compressed into 3 distinct groups: promoters who are very strong supporters (scoring 9 or 10), passives who score above neutral but who are not highly enthusiastic (scoring 7 or 8) and detractors who are those who provide a neutral or negative score, indicating they are not supporters (scoring 6 or below).

Relative satisfaction levels reported for different dimensions of benefits (economic, social, environmental, knowledge sharing, etc.) were compared to reveal the components of the IPA Program that were working well and those where respondents were indicating improvements could be made.

It is important to note that the statistical analysis that can be completed with the survey data is limited by the small sample size of 50 respondents in total, drawn from 6 IPA case study sites. The limited dataset prevented a deeper statistical exploration of how contextual factors within the different case study locations had influenced the scores provided.

2.7.8. Analysis of national online survey data

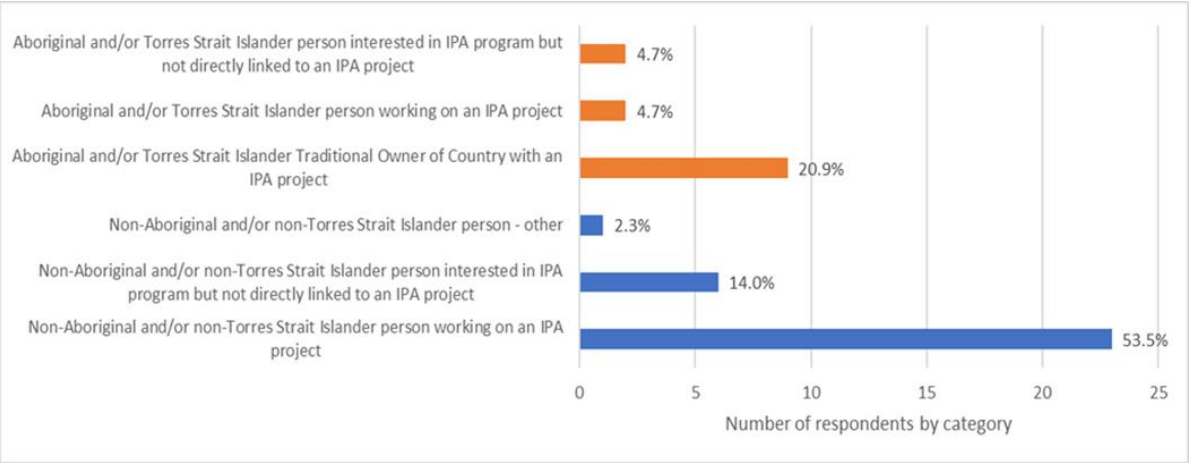
A mix of quantitative and qualitative data was collected at the national scale, using a national stakeholder online survey instrument. The quantitative data was designed to provide information on the various potential benefits of the IPA Program to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (for Country and culture, for promoting 2-way knowledge sharing, for social and economic benefits, and for wellbeing) and to facilitate statistical analysis to test the strength of links between the different measured outcomes. The quantitative data also explored how well Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous people think the Australian, state and territory governments are partnering with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to make decisions about IPAs.

The qualitative data provided the opportunity to respondents to provide more details and context to support their quantitative responses. The survey instrument was available online and completion was anonymous and voluntary. The data was gathered in a respectful manner, following the agreed procedure for obtaining free, prior informed consent from the participants.

Summary of survey respondents

The survey response rate was lower than had been anticipated, with 43 responses in total (13 from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and 30 from non-Indigenous people); the reduced response rate is a limitation to this quantitative work. On the respondents, 30% identified as being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The respondents reported a range of different connections to the IPA Program, as shown in Figure 2.5. Survey respondents were not requested to provide any socio-economic or demographic details of themselves.

Figure 2.5 Percentage and number of responses from each category of respondent to the national online survey



Analysis methods for satisfaction survey data

Data collected from the stakeholder online survey was analysed using quantitative and qualitative techniques, including statistical (descriptive statistics, frequency tables and NPS analysis), graphical and thematic analysis. The analysis techniques available were limited by the low response rate. Further, it is important to note that the analysis presented is extremely limited by the very small sample size – 13 respondents (the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who completed the survey) is not a statistically valid sample size, and thus we are unable to estimate confidence intervals or any other measures of reliability for these findings. Further, it is possible that the sample is affected by self-selection bias, as those who are unhappy with aspects of the IPA Program and seeking improvements may have been more likely to respond to the survey than those who are more satisfied with the program. Accordingly, the pattern of scores presented by the respondents cannot be reliably assumed to represent views of the wider population.

2.7.9. Bringing the economic analysis together

The findings from the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the different data sources were brought together and triangulated as part of a findings synthesis where we sought to use the multiple strands of evidence to build confidence in the robustness of our findings. Table 2.6 provides information about specific analysis techniques for each of the data sources.

Table 2.6 Summary of economic data analysis plan (table developed by Ninti One)

Data source	Analysis scale	Quantitative or qualitative analysis method	Specific technique	Purpose
Data collected within our 10 case study communities, and from businesses in surrounding regions, using survey instruments	For each case study IPA individually	Quantitative	Descriptive statistics; graphical analysis	Explore links between variables highlighting the contribution of the mechanisms within the IPA to the economic outcomes (business development, incomes, employment, targeting socio-economic disadvantage) of the IPA
		Qualitative	Thematic analysis	
	All 10 case study IPAs together	Quantitative	Cross-case study correlation and statistical analysis, graphical analysis. Analysis included additional variables for site-specific context variables	Increased understanding of role of context in moderating the impact of mechanisms – do different contexts impact on the contribution of different mechanisms, and does this result in different outcomes?
		Qualitative	Comparing themes across case study sites	
Data collected from national stakeholder online survey	National scale	Quantitative (including spatial analysis)	Correlation and statistical analysis, graphical analysis. Analysis included additional variables for site-specific context variables	Increased understanding of role of context in moderating the impact of mechanisms – do different contexts impact on the contribution of different mechanisms, and does this result in different outcomes?
		Qualitative	Thematic analysis	
National data used within Phase One for econometric analysis supplemented with more recently released ABS data	National scale	Quantitative	Econometric panel data regression analysis combined with Granger causality testing using Stata econometric package	Seeks to further explore the relationship between IPA Program funding and the establishment of Indigenous businesses, including the moderating impact of context variables

2.8. Synthesis

Synthesis of data for this evaluation report used a mixed methods approach (see Figure 2.6) to bring together the multiple lines of evidence obtained from the data analyses presented above in Chapter 2. The evaluation adopted a weaving methodology that intertwines data types while ensuring their structural integrity (Ryder et al. 2019).

The data analysis and interpretation using the mixed methods approach can be categorised as intramethod analytics and the interpretation integration as complementarity and expansion, respectively (Fetters and Molina-Azorin 2017). In adopting intramethod analytics, the team analysed the quantitative and qualitative data within their respective strands to then merge insights. This approach was deemed appropriate as the quantitative analysis can only be undertaken once the full dataset is collected. In contrast the qualitative analysis enables emergent theme development across the 10 case studies that includes place-based interpretations which are key to relationality in the Yarning method (Atkinson et al. 2021). Using the complementarity and expansion approaches for interpretation, the team explored how the quantitative and qualitative results offered a broader and multidimensional understanding of the key variables and mechanisms that influence the outcomes

of the IPA Program. This involved triangulation, a collective decision process that allowed the evaluation team to draw on the sets of findings to inform Indigenous-led interpretation.

While the data collection and analyses provided opportunities to privilege the Indigenous voice, analysis and reporting of the results required continual review of findings against the 4 evaluation questions and the knowledge gaps identified in Phase One. The team invested significant time to ensure the analysis and reporting remained consistent with the Indigenous-led approach and prioritised the Indigenous voices of IPA providers and IPA stakeholders. Analysis started with a conversation about the contexts within which the yarns were held by the evaluation team. Synthesis of the data involved steps to ensure cultural responsiveness through review and input from the Indigenous co-lead and other Indigenous staff in the project, enabling synthesis that is credible and relevant. This involved a cyclical process at various stages of data analysis and thematic development, led by the Indigenous co-lead and with Indigenous and non-Indigenous team members to compare, contrast and interpret findings from the data for confirmation and complementarity or to disconfirm existing evidence for the impact of context, mechanisms and outcome factors in the IPA draft ToC. The cycle provides an emergent and weaving approach that bridges Indigenous and western knowledge systems and processes through multiple lines of evidence that privilege Indigenous perspectives. This cyclical process enabled the team to shift the synthesis of findings from the different methods to position yarning at the centre of the evaluation.

The foundational themes established through the data analysis and interpretation of the evaluation centred on the yarns across the 10 case study IPA providers and the national roundtable. Analysis, interpretation and synthesis was an emergent process that responded to the themes developed and the knowledge gained.

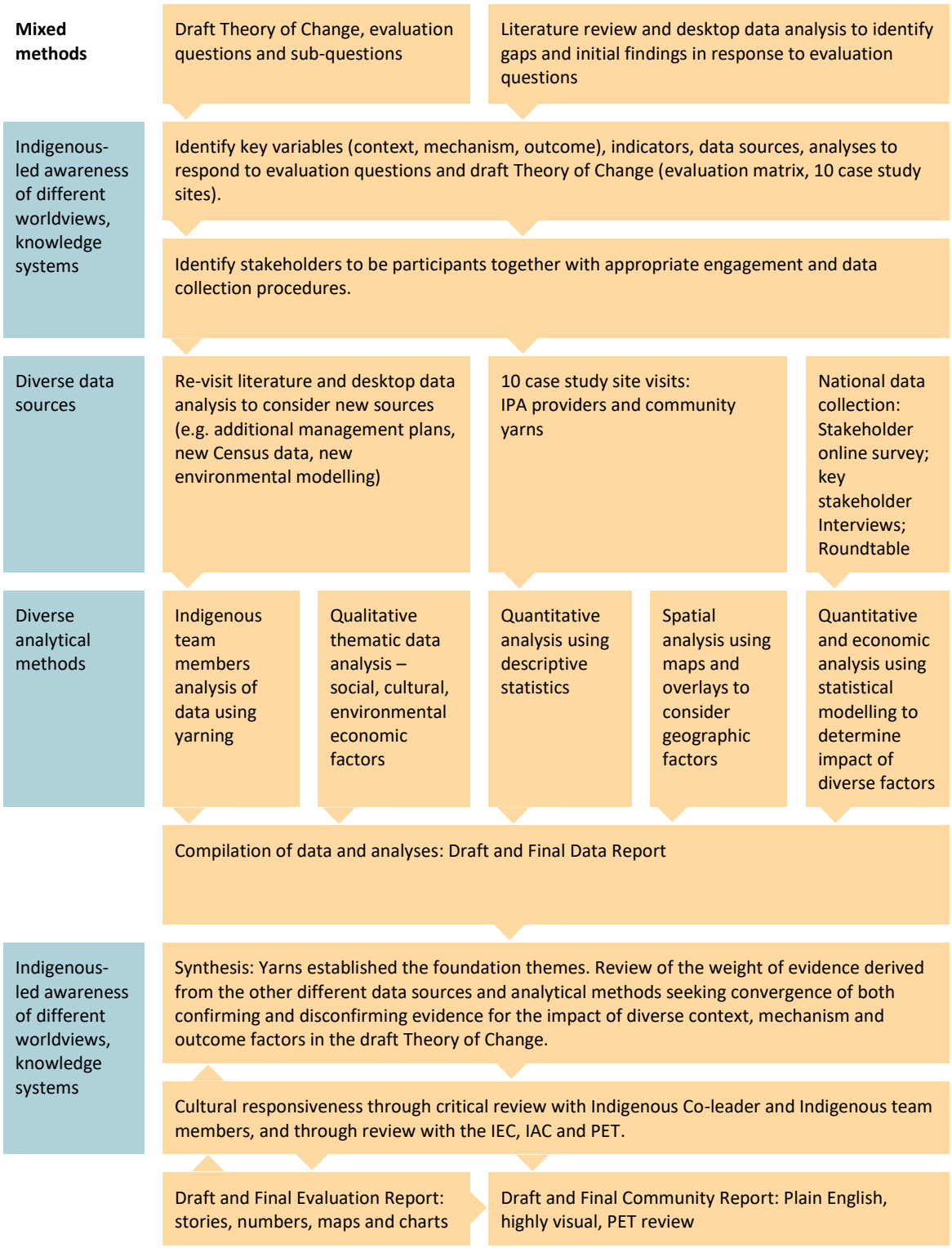
The mixed methods approach allowed the team to bring diverse data and analyses together, testing for convergent validity, thereby ensuring robust and credible evidence in accordance with the IAS evaluation principles (Productivity Commission 2020). The approach permitted the team to assess the strength of evidence from the different methods, which included the number of responses received, to examine their fit with the Yarning approach that prioritises relationality, cultural capability and cultural safety.

Our approach was consistent with the epistemological and ontological differences reflected in the multiple lines of evidence across different knowledge systems and took these into account in establishing variables, collecting and analysing data at different stages of the evaluation and in drawing conclusions.

The synthesis presents the overall results of testing the ToC. It summarises and confirms aspects of contribution verified by the evidence. This analysis allowed the team to determine which of the factors appear as critical mechanisms that contribute to delivering outcomes, narrowing the initial long lists of mechanism, context and outcome variables about which we collected and analysed data. The contribution thereby reduced uncertainty about the contribution the IPA Program is making to observed results through an increased understanding of why results did or did not occur and the effects of various influencing factors (Mayne 2012). This understanding in turn provides a firm foundation for future IPA Program design. Sections 4.11 and 5.6 present the key findings that relate to the change pathways associated with IPAs included in the ToC developed by NIAA.

A community report was distilled from this evaluation report, using plain English and visually strong design elements, to ensure the report is targeted to the community audiences.

Figure 2.6 Mixed methods: bringing together multiple lines of evidence from diverse data sources and analyses.



2.9. Key learnings from the methodology/approach to inform future evaluations

- Yarning was one of the key methods applied by the Indigenous evaluation team that enabled the team to collect a breadth of qualitative data throughout the data collection phase. This approach, led by the evaluation team leader, enabled local people to safely and confidently determine the best way for them to participate in the evaluation. The combined experience, knowledge and credibility of the Indigenous evaluation team is also noted. Their experiences and knowledge of Indigenous communities and cultural obligations and their ability to effectively engage was key in successfully drawing information from participants in a culturally safe method. The locations of the yarns were not restricted to an office-based setting; the team found that standing side-by-side with someone and looking at sites on Country while talking was much more effective than a face-to-face conversation across a table, which some participants can find uncomfortable and even intimidating.
- This strength of this evaluation is that the team adapted its approach to the diverse social, cultural and geographical setting of the IPA site. Sites in this evaluation ranged from larger to smaller IPAs, covering land and sea in rural and remote areas across a number of different tenures. There were rich learnings across these diverse sites, and it would be valuable for future evaluations to continue to work across the variety of IPA contexts and governance systems.
- A future evaluation of the IPA program would benefit greatly from broadening the national roundtable to include regional face-to-face and a national youth discussion to inject regional priorities and contextualise the IPAs within the wider social and environmental contexts of their operation.
- Respect is the core value that underpins yarning; therefore, a highly structured facilitated conversation or survey may be perceived as rushed, disrespectful, impersonal, intrusive or even controlling. The evaluation team found that separating the surveys from the yarning yielded more survey responses. Allowing for additional time on site to collect satisfaction surveys through multiple site visits or, ideally, by recruiting, employing and having a locally based Indigenous community researcher in each IPA location would be of benefit to future evaluation of the IPA program. Advantages of employing a local person(s) as a research assistant to collect surveys, rather than using external researchers, are threefold. Firstly, the number of satisfaction surveys collected is likely to increase due to survey respondents likely knowing and trusting the locally based research assistant, and due to that person being able to revisit people/locations at times that are convenient rather than being bound to restricted site visit times. Secondly, the person would also be able to approach businesses in the geographic vicinity of the IPA to ask them to complete business surveys. Thirdly, this process assists with building research capacity within the community, promoting potential longer term benefits for the individuals involved and for the community.
- The evaluation team found that people like to tell stories about the impacts of the IPA on their lives and communities. Taking opportunities to elevate the voices of Traditional Owners and Indigenous communication methodologies respects the greater importance on relationships and connections. The Yarning approach in this evaluation is one prominent example of this tenant of relationality supporting participating IPAs to present their perspectives (face to face) directly to the department. In addition to other evaluation methodologies, this would improve understanding beyond frameworks and theory to relational knowledge.
- Any future evaluation program would benefit from structured re-engagement to allow for multiple face-to-face visits; for example:
    - first visit: develop relationships and commence structured yarns

    - second visit: delve deeper into topics, undertake collection of information such as yarns with senior IPA staff, and collect surveys. Alternately, if local person(s) to be recruited, employed and trained as research assistant(s) to collect surveys, then training would be provided during this visit
    - last visit: give IPA provider the community report and provide overview and exchange of the key findings.
- Opportunities to strengthen and develop trusting relationships with IPA providers through structured re-engagement would enrich the information collected.
- The AIATSIS ethics approval process took longer than anticipated, contributing to a delay in commencement of the data collection phase of the evaluation. Any future evaluation program would benefit from affording greater time to ethics approval processes. This also applies to the evaluation timeframe overall and the time required to administer culturally safe Indigenous-led methodologies across diverse contexts. This Indigenous-led evaluation involved a partnership between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous western practitioners. It demonstrated that committed work across knowledge systems is critical to establish understanding across world views and to negotiate an inter-cultural approach that meets the principles of robust and reliable Indigenous-led research. In this evaluation the partnership navigated the tensions between the knowledge systems to responsibly situate western science methods within the Indigenous research paradigm. It is important that the time invested and expertise mobilised in bridging across knowledge systems is not under-estimated and therefore properly supported.

2.10. Conclusion

This chapter outlines the methodology adopted in the evaluation of the IPA Program in Phases One and Two. Phase Two focused on the knowledge gaps identified in Phase One and built greater evidence on the contribution analysis to determine which factors are critical mechanisms for delivering outcomes, narrowing the long lists of mechanism, context and outcome variables identified in Phase One of the evaluation. It presents the results of testing the ToC.

Primary data collection in Phase Two focused on 10 case study sites across the nation that were selected to maximise collection of information from diverse geographical, legislative and ecosystem contexts. In addition, some national data collection and analysis and updating of the desktop data analysis was conducted. A mixed methods approach was adopted, bringing together multiple lines of evidence including yarns with IPA providers and stakeholders, stakeholder interviews and online surveys as well as quantitative methods and econometric modelling based on national datasets. The mixed methods approach allowed the team to bring diverse data and analyses together, to test for convergent validity, thereby ensuring robust and credible evidence in accordance with the IAS evaluation principles.

Synthesis undertaken in the evaluation ensured cultural responsiveness through review and input from the Indigenous co-lead and other Indigenous staff in the project. Synthesis required significant investment of time and involved a cyclical process of review, interpretation and writing at various stages of data analysis and thematic development. The Indigenous co-lead and Indigenous and non-Indigenous team members were all involved in this process. The cycle provides an emergent and weaving approach that bridges Indigenous and western knowledge systems and processes through multiple lines of evidence and privileges Indigenous perspectives. The qualitative analysis of the social, cultural and wellbeing data prioritised the emergent themes from the yarns as the foundations on which other evidence from stakeholder interviews and the online surveys were contrasted for confirmation, complementarity or to disconfirm emergent themes.

The Indigenous-led Yarning method is central to this IPA evaluation in building direct evidence and linking the national perspective to the on-ground experiences of the IPA providers.

3. Biodiversity outcomes

This chapter of the report addresses the first of the 4 overarching evaluation questions: 'To what extent has the IPA Program achieved biodiversity conservation outcomes, including those at a landscape scale?' The sub-questions to guide investigation are:

- To what extent has the IPA Program contributed to the NRS being comprehensive, adequate (including through connectivity), and representative of biodiversity and cultural diversity?
- To what extent does the IPA Program contribute to achieving Australia's international obligations for biodiversity conservation under multi-lateral environmental treaties?
- To what extent is the IPA Program achieving 'management effectiveness'?
- To what extent is the IPA Program achieving 'governance effectiveness'?

3.1. Introduction to biodiversity outcomes

The international standard for successfully achieving biodiversity conservation outcomes through a protected area is provided by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas Standard (IUCN and World Commission on Protected Areas 2017). The Green List provides certification for protected and conserved areas – national parks, natural World Heritage sites, community-conserved areas, nature reserves and so on – that are effectively managed and fairly governed, based on meeting key criteria.

The IPA Program has aligned with the IUCN standards through ensuring that all IPAs are managed in perpetuity to maintain biological diversity according to one or more of the 6 protected area management categories defined by the IUCN Protected Area Management Categories (Dudley 2008; Day et al. 2012; DAWE 2021a). The IUCN 'management effectiveness' concept has been used in this evaluation as a proxy for conservation success, with management effectiveness realised through a combination of good governance, sound management planning and the effective implementation of PoMs.

The standards for evaluating management effectiveness and for governance (Borrini-Feyerabend et al. 2014) are therefore relevant. The standard for Indigenous and Local Communities (Borrini-Feyerabend et al. 2004) addresses the unique characteristics of Indigenous people's rights and interests, clearly relevant to IPAs. The IUCN Green List standard focuses on individual protected areas. The design of the Australian NRS (Commonwealth of Australia 2009) aligns with the standard for IUCN National System Planning for Protected Areas (Davey 1998).

3.2. IPA Program contribution to the National Reserve System

Australia's strategy for the NRS (Commonwealth of Australia 2009) provides for these characteristics through designing a NRS that is comprehensive, adequate and representative of the full range of regional ecosystems and environment values (Commonwealth of Australia 2009).

Representativeness and comprehensiveness are considered in broad terms using the Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation of Australia (IBRA) which identifies 89 distinct bioregions and 419 subregions nationally (DAWE 2020, 2021a). Each bioregion is a large, geographically distinct area of similar climate, geology, landform and vegetation communities, and the subregions are sub-divisions that show distinct characteristics at a finer scale. According to Australia's strategy for the NRS:

- Comprehensiveness refers to the aim of including samples of the full range of regional ecosystems recognisable at an appropriate scale within and across each IBRA bioregion.
- Adequacy refers to how much of each ecosystem should be sampled to provide ecological viability and integrity of populations, species and ecological communities at a bioregional scale. The concept of adequacy incorporates ecological viability and resiliency for ecosystems for individual protected areas and for the protected area system as a whole.

Representativeness is comprehensiveness considered at a finer scale (IBRA subregion) and recognises that the regional variability within ecosystems is sampled within the NRS. One way of achieving this is to aim to represent each regional ecosystem within each IBRA subregion (Commonwealth of Australia 2009). Ecological representation below the bioregional scale is a commitment of Australian, state and territory governments under Australia's Strategy for the National Reserve System 2009–2030, with a target to 'Include examples of at least 80% of the number of regional ecosystems in each IBRA region' by 2030. A minimally adequate 'example' was set at 15% of the original extent of each ecosystem (ANZECC/MCFFA National Forest Policy Statement Implementation Sub-Committee 1997, Murphy and van Leeuwen 2022).

Since 1997, IPAs have contributed 51 IBRA regions to the NRS. The representation within each IBRA bioregion varies between 0.01% and 81.32%, with the majority of IBRA bioregions having <10% representation (DAWE 2021b).

Within the 419 sub-regions, 370 are included in the NRS network and 104 are included within IPAs. The representativeness of the sub-regions in IPAs varies between <0.01% and 100%. Within IPAs, 30 IBRA sub-regions have >10% representation and 65 have <10% representation.

Based on area alone, 39 of Australia's 86 continental bioregions have at least 17% of their land included in the NRS (DAWE 2021c).

However, extent within bioregions is an incomplete measure of ecological protection levels. An assessment of the ecological representativeness of the NRS (Williams et al. 2016), for example, found that only 28 of 86 terrestrial bioregions had achieved 17% representativeness of their estimated vascular plant diversity at that time (Williams et al. 2022).

The State of the Environment report 2021 (Murphy and van Leeuwen 2022) found that while knowledge of the state and trend of biodiversity has significantly increased in the last 5 years:

> However, there are still very large gaps in our understanding of the state and trend of the vast majority of native Australian species, including those that are at most risk of extinction. The absence of reliable data on numerous threatened species severely limits our ability to allocate conservation resources in an informed and effective manner.

Further, 1,542 Australian ecosystems (26%) have no protection in the NRS.

In order to explore this question, modelling and assessment of environmental (spatial) datasets were undertaken by the Data and Analysis Branch of the DCCEEW and provided to the evaluation team. This information is synthesised in this section.

3.2.1. Modelled habitat condition and connectivity of the IPA estate

While there are recognised limitations in the use of the Habitat Condition Assessment System (HCAS) model to determine connectivity in the NRS (DCCEEW 2023a), results demonstrate that the IPA estate has high modelled habitat condition (0.88) relative to the whole continent (0.74), and these results are also higher than for the non-IPA component of the NRS (0.81) (DCCEEW 2023a).

An assessment of habitat connectivity of IPAs vs non-IPA areas in the NRS was also undertaken using the National Connectivity Index (NCI):

> The NCI is a measure of the amount of habitat connected to a location, weighted by the degree to which the habitat condition of the surrounding landscape facilitates or impedes the movement of organisms. It is calculated from both the value and configuration of HCAS pixels across a given landscape taking into account multiple scales of movement of different species and populations. Where a pixel is surrounded by large aggregations of high HCAS pixels, its NCI score will be higher than if it was surrounded by low HCAS pixels and far removed from any significant areas of high condition. (DCCEEW 2023a, p. 9)

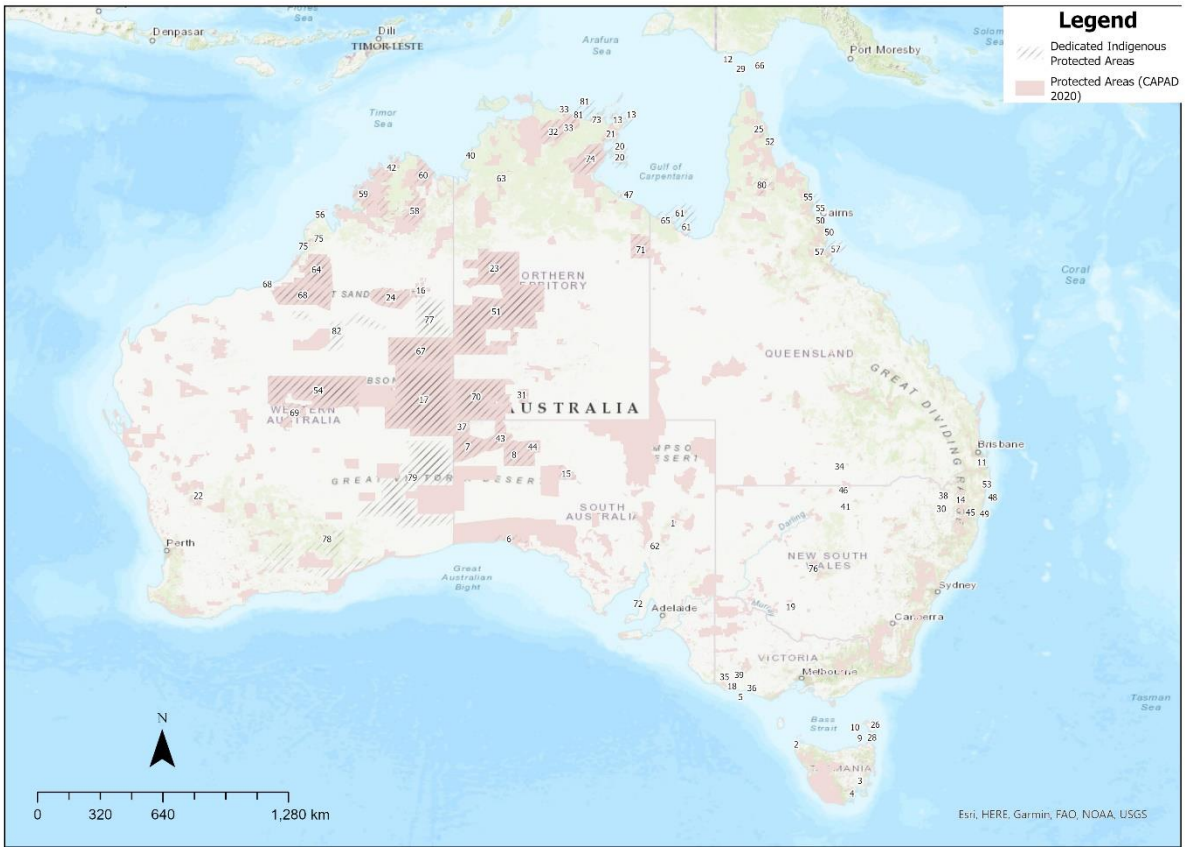
Similar to the HCAS, each pixel is scored for connectivity on scale between 0.0 (all habitat in the surrounding landscape completely removed) to 1.0 (all habitat in the surrounding landscape is in reference condition).

Modelling to determine connectivity of habitat in the IPAs, non-IPAs in the NRS and across the NRS revealed that the average landscape connectivity for IPAs (0.71) is greater than that of the NRS (0.63). There are several large adjoining IPAs in the central desert region and in the tropical savannas, which would support a high connectivity index in those places and, because of their relative size, would influence the overall NCI. In comparison to other protected areas in the NRS, there are significant fewer, larger and adjacent areas of land that make up the IPA estate.

While habitat connectivity is important in supporting ecosystems to function effectively, and acts to reduce the effects of fragmentation, there are also remnant ecosystems currently under-represented in the NRS – and their inclusion could be argued to be just as important, even if their connectivity to comparative habitats is low. For example, in Queensland, ecosystems of small size and woodland ecosystems have high rates of no protection (when the minimum level of protection for each ecosystem has been set at 15% under Australia's Strategy for the National Reserve System 2009–2030) (Murphy and van Leeuwen 2022).

Figure 3.1 provides a visualisation of the location and extent of dedicated IPAs, together with other components of the NRS.

Figure 3.1 Dedicated IPA and other protected areas



Collaborative Australian Protected Areas Database (CAPAD) 2020, DAWE 2021c.

3.2.2. IPAs delivering biodiversity outcomes

IPA projects undertake an array of on-Country actions in pursuit of their management goals. Each IPA project contracts with the Australian Government to deliver a range of activities as part of its service delivery requirements. NIAA tracks these management actions through the annual Project Plan and Activity reporting templates that each IPA project supplies to the NIAA. As reported in Phase One of the evaluation, the services undertaken by IPAs are diverse and substantial, including:

1. control of feral foxes, goats, camels, pigs, horses, rabbits and wild dogs
2. control of lantana, cat's claw, white glycine, giant devil's figs, coral berry, wandering jew and many other invasive plant species
3. restoring habitat, installing nesting boxes
4. undertaking cultural burns
5. monitoring threatened species
6. rewatering wetlands in partnership with the cultural flows program
7. conducting cultural camps and visits to Country
8. information services for visitors, researchers and others.

This section illustrates, with site-specific detail, a portion of the array of activities that are being delivered in support of biodiversity through the IPA Program.

Managing feral plants and animals; biosecurity

Feral plant and animal management to protect biodiversity constitutes a significant time commitment for many IPA projects. At Pulu Islet IPA, the threat of cane toad incursions is ever present, and the rangers are recognised as first responders to sightings, being remotely located and at sites where new incursions may occur.

Yarning reflection by IPA Indigenous Evaluation Team – surveying and monitoring of animal species

Recently there was a sighting of a single bird of unknown species by Bardi Jawi. The rangers should be commended for their action. They managed to capture it, notify the proper authorities, run through a process to identify it, and then send it off to a laboratory in Adelaide for further examination. It turned out the bird had arrived from Sri Lanka, and did not pose a threat (avian flu, etc.). This is an example of an episode where an isolated piece of coastline can be the frontline against foreign species.

The Anindilyakwa IPA plays a central role in feral animal detection and management, including in the control of feral cats and cane toads. The domestic and feral cat populations on Groote Eylandt are very low compared with other Top End communities. An integrated management strategy runs across the IPA which uses community engagement and education, monitoring and control. Innovative approaches for detection of cane toads are being used along with sniffer dogs to inspect incoming vessels. The IPA has fostered collaboration and research with external organisations to help reduce biosecurity threats to Groote Eylandt.

For example, on the Anindilyakwa IPA a canoe was found washed-up during a beach clean-up. The IPA provider contacted the Department of Primary Industry and Resources of the Northern Territory Fisheries Division, who assessed the craft for the presence of invasive Asian mussel species. Anindilyakwa IPA recognises community-scale buy-in as critical to biodiversity success and plays a key communication role in building community awareness of potential biosecurity threats.

At Lake Condah IPA, the management of feral pigs has been an important activity to preserve vegetation, the waterways and culturally important fish traps. Activities have included deploying traps, remote monitoring equipment and collecting genetic and biological samples from animals before destruction. These activities support broader biosecurity monitoring and control, protecting both native species and agricultural industries.

Weed management is also a key activity, and innovative technologies are being explored to tackle some of the more persistent species on IPA land and waters. For example, a quote from an IPA [name withheld]:

> Honey Bush has been tackled for years. It's a really persistent plant. Looking at drone application to get to stony parts … There are big areas in the stones.

Cross-scale management networks involving discrete IPA projects, ranger programs, partner organisations and other community interest groups were discussed as significant enablers of biodiversity management by IPA projects, supporting enhanced biodiversity outcomes. All IPAs work in collaboration with research and management entities to enhance management impacts on Country. The role of partnerships and collaborations in IPAs is looked at in more detail in section 5.2.5.

Cultural burning

A success story about cultural burning is presented for the period of 2021–22, describing the work GMTOAC has been doing in partnership with the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, Winda Mara Aboriginal Corporation (WMAC), Parks Victoria, the Country

Fire Authority and Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority (GHCMA). This process has evidenced the importance of undertaking different types of burns for different outcomes, as a way of caring for Country (2021–22 Success Story VIC_Kurtonitj & Lake Condah unpublished internal document).

Increasing capacity in cultural burning and wider use across the landscape was described by Lake Condah IPA stakeholders as a traditional practice helping to restore the landscape. Across the stone country, native grass species were returning in response to fire. Cool burns were also being used to reduce the vegetation growing in the shallow creeks and flows of the fish traps. This is restoring flows and promoting the transfer of traditional ecological knowledge.

As an example of the recognition of the capability of rangers, a Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation was recently gifted a fire tanker by its State Government. With partners, the group is exploring new approaches to managing fire to protect key cultural sites including stone traps, stone channels and stone house sites:

> Fire can crack stone, hence need to keep it out … Change is now to look at aircraft, sprinklers and keeping the fire out of the stones. Had working 737s(aircraft) and other fire tankers … Suppression techniques are important to consider. Now looking at putting more thinking and planning about fire in World Heritage Areas.

At [name withheld] IPA, yarning included discussion about land management activities that take place alongside the cultural activities during visits to Country, delivering to both biodiversity and cultural outcomes, while passing knowledge on to younger generations:

> It's amazing for the young people to go out and learn how to burn properly … We've set up a really nice [burning] mosaic. You can map the places where lightning has burnt and it runs into our mosaic and it's protected … And now we're really confident coming up into the hard season. It's held up over 2 lightning strikes already.
>
> For me the most important work is looking after the sacred places. There's really not any other program that provides that sort of work.

Bardi Jawi rangers also undertake regular cultural burning on their IPA and identified it as an important activity for cultural knowledge exchange and conservation. Protecting Country from wildfire is seen as critical to preserving habitat, and this is being achieved through cool season burns that move across the landscape slowly, allowing birds, animals and reptiles to move out of the way of the fire. To further reduce the impact of wildfire, often caused by lightning strikes, the Bardi Jawi IPA and rangers have built up their capacity and resources so they can quickly respond and backburn to protect sites.

A response from a stakeholder interviewee brings to light the interaction of biodiversity outcomes and facilitating access to Country, including through the IPA Program. The view of the IPA stakeholder is that sporadic visits to country driven by funding have some biodiversity outcomes, but these are not necessarily sustainable under the current program:

> I think on a landscape biodiversity scale, IPAs are doing a lot better than if there was no IPA because we can do fire burning. If you look at the way people lived in the desert, the best outcome you could have for country is to get people back and take people out there. If you were going to be more effective, the program should work more on access for the full community rather than specialised access through IPA resources. There is a big argument to look at the value of well-made tracks throughout remote areas to be able to drive a Commodore through Country as this is what everyone has got.

> I think we are having very good short-term biodiversity outcomes by being able to put fire burning practices in, but I don't know if we are being targeted enough, for example there is no research on digging for bush potato. If someone was out there digging for bush potato regularly and they're breaking up bush potato yams into small pieces and they are regenerating, is that what is regenerating them or is it fire? We don't know what that is doing in detail. We know that it changes the face of Country, but we don't know in what way. So, the IPA Program is getting people back on Country and it is doing that in short bursts to these areas. (Stakeholder interviewee)

Regeneration

At Yappala IPA, the fencing of springs and waterways to exclude goats, cattle and sheep is an important management activity, and the group has observed positive change to the amount of vegetation present and its composition. Improving fencing across the IPA is important in keeping neighbouring stock out of the IPA. As the condition of vegetation on the IPA improves, this was described as an increasing problem.

A major development on the Lake Condah IPA has been the construction of the weir to restore Tae Rak (Lake Condah) water levels. While not reaching the historic pre-colonisation levels, the permanent water has created habitat for birds, fish and eels. A recent bird survey in the weeks preceding the evaluation site visit counted over 300 black swans across the lake and wetlands.

[Name withheld] IPA has been a leader in revegetation-based management:

> Reveg involves picking seed, storing seed. Up to 18,000 trees and grasses in the big years. Greening Australia has been collaborating. International volunteering from the USA has happened. A local nursery is involved.

An overpopulation of koalas is threatening Manna gum woodlands in the Lake Condah IPA area, and the IPA is working with Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action and others to try and manage the issue.

The Lake Condah IPA continues to contribute to Manna gum monitoring, which involved assessing seedling recruitment and growth/health of trees, contributing to the future development of a broad baseline study.

Managing threatened species and species in decline

Management of threatened and at-risk species is an activity identified in many IPA PoMs, and many examples were provided through yarning of how IPAs are working, often in partnership arrangements, to support species survival.

> While small in area, the [name withheld] IPA provides habitat for threatened species including Tasmanian devils, eastern barred bandicoots and the long-nosed potoroo.

Yarning reflection by IPA Indigenous Evaluation Team – The last species of potoroo

The Ngunya Jargoon IPA is habitat for the long-nosed potoroo, which currently has a conservation classification of vulnerable under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth) (EPBC Act) effective from 16 July 2000. Rangers regularly deploy motion-activated cameras to monitor potoroo activity along with other mammal, bird and reptile species. Feral cats and foxes are a constant threat to native wildlife here.

Rangers from the Ngunya Jargoon IPA have been working closely with Friends of the Koala Inc. to monitor the koala population within the IPA, which has been in decline for several years. The rangers treat any detected illness and provide supplementary feed and water where necessary. Across the 1,114 ha IPA, 38 koalas were counted during the most recent survey.

At Lake Condah, IPA providers are working with the Arthur Rylah Institute to monitor kooyang (eel), while at Yappala IPA, looking after species including quandongs and bush bananas was described as an important activity. Activities include identifying where plants are located and then considering this when fencing, feral animal control and fire planning is undertaken.

Yarning Reflection by IPA Indigenous Evaluation Team – Reintroduction of the purple spotted gudgeon

Yappala IPA has collaborated with South Australian Government agencies and researchers to enable the reintroduction of the purple-spotted gudgeon, a critically endangered species. Providing the habitat and surrounding land management for this to occur was a proud achievement for the Yappala IPA stakeholders.

An online survey response from an Indigenous stakeholder stated:

> We have several threatened species and they are coming back, which would not have happened if land continued to be farmed.

Ghost net removal was also discussed as a management effort in support of species protection. The Anindilyakwa Rangers manage some of the highest densities of ghost nets in northern Australia.

3.2.3. IPAs, threatened species and recent investment: maps

Data is provided in this section to contribute to discussion about the current spatial distribution and extent of IPAs, the relative investment that regional organisations have received to support IPA projects and to give an indication of the density of threatened species across the landscape in relation to IPA project location and funding.

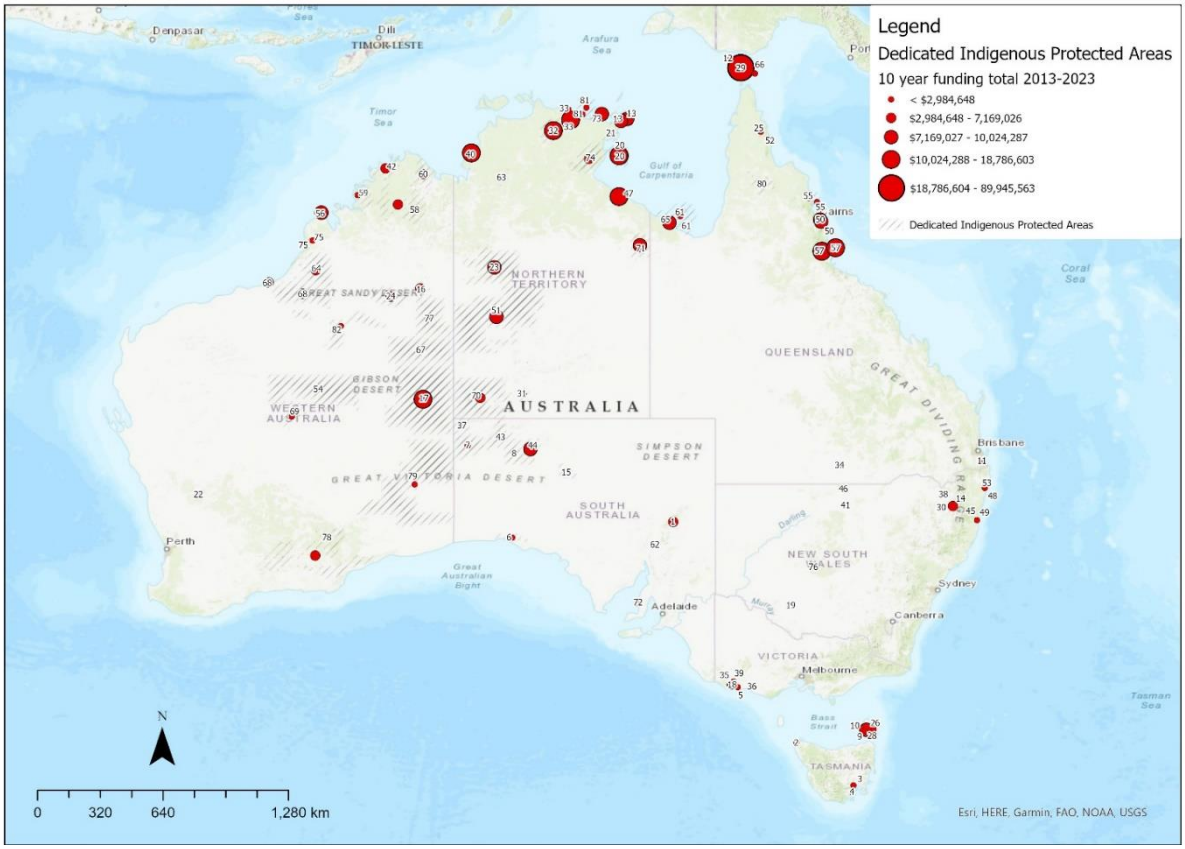
Note that the data provided for this data section was aggregated at a higher level (i.e. project or IPA level – rather than individual ranger group level as requested by the evaluation team) and therefore is not suitable for analysis at the ranger group level. Maps/figures derived from this data allow an estimation of where funding has gone to various Indigenous-funded projects/IPAs across Australia – associating data to IPAs where possible. The information presented may not accurately reflect specific details or nuances of individual cases, as data was provided already aggregated and generalised for the purposes of this analysis. As such, any insights or conclusions drawn from this data should be viewed with caution and should not be relied on without further investigation or analysis at either the individual ranger group or organisation level. We cannot guarantee the accuracy, completeness or reliability of this data, and we assume no responsibility for any errors or omissions in the information provided. Please use this data at your own risk and exercise your own judgement when interpreting and using it.

Figure 3.2 shows the total funding received for each IPA between 2013–14 and 2002–23 (i.e. a 10-year period). The data to support this map can be found at Appendix 6. It is noted that some IPAs may appear to have received less funding than others, but this may be explained in part by when the IPA was first established as a dedicated IPA (e.g. Kiwirrkurra, Minyumai, Ngadju were established in 2017–18 and Yawuru in 2019–20), or as a result of the IPA ceasing operations (e.g. Angas Downs ceased operations in 2018).

It is also noted that IPA consultation projects are not shown here (due to spatial locational data not being made available). The top-funded IPAs since 2013 that have received over $10m are Girringun, Anindilyakwa, Warddeken, Yanyuwa, Marri-Jabin (Thamurru – Stage 1), Ngaanyatjarra, Djelk and Torres Strait IPAs. Two additional IPA consultation projects, Arafura Swamp and Crocodile Island Maringa, have not been included (as no spatial data was received), but both have received over $10m in funding since 2013. The Torres Strait IPAs collectively have received the most funding (i.e $89,945,563) since 2013. Three IPAs that have received less than $1m in funding are Kaanju Ngaachi ($848,876 from 2013 to 2020), Toogimbie ($805,520 since 2021) and Werai ($805,263 since 2021). Funding by state and territory is shown in

Table 3.1.

Figure 3.2 Indicative funding received by organisations supporting IPA projects (2013–2023)



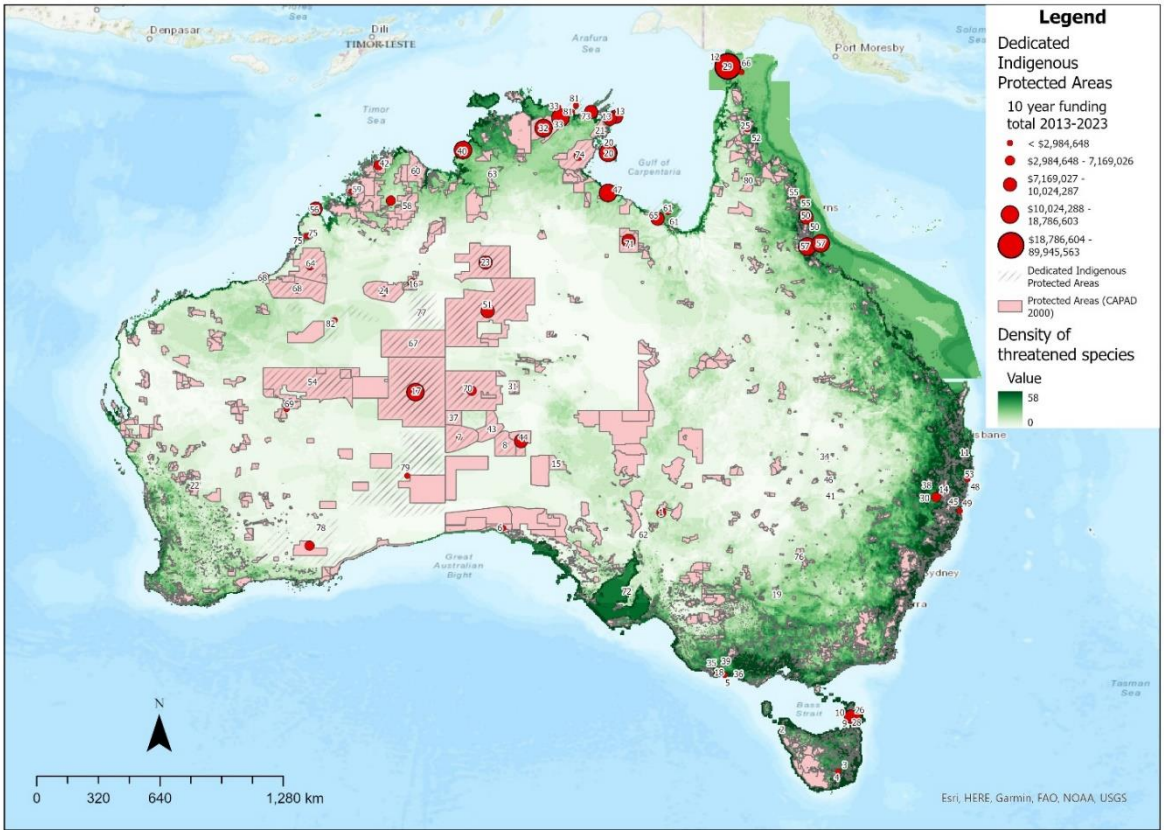
See Table 3.2 for IPA identification numbers. Collaborative Australian Protected Areas Database (CAPAD) 2020, DAWE 2021c.

Table 3.1 IPA funding by state and territory (2013–2023)

STATE	Total 10 year funding ($)	Number of IPAs	Area (ha)
NSW	9,237,699	11	37,939
NT	152,404,878	20	28,336,888
QLD	144,439,742	17	4,568,522
SA	18,754,366	10	6,192,797
TAS	7,769,547	8	11,167
VIC	6,643,306	5	3,888
WA	88,068,497	21	53,459,201

Figure 3.2 and Figure 3.3 combine the location and extent of current dedicated IPAs to give an indication of the level of IPA funding regions have received over the previous 10 years (2013–2023) and the density of known threatened species.

Figure 3.3 IPAs and other protected areas (non-IPA), 10-year funding total (2013–2023) and density of threatened species



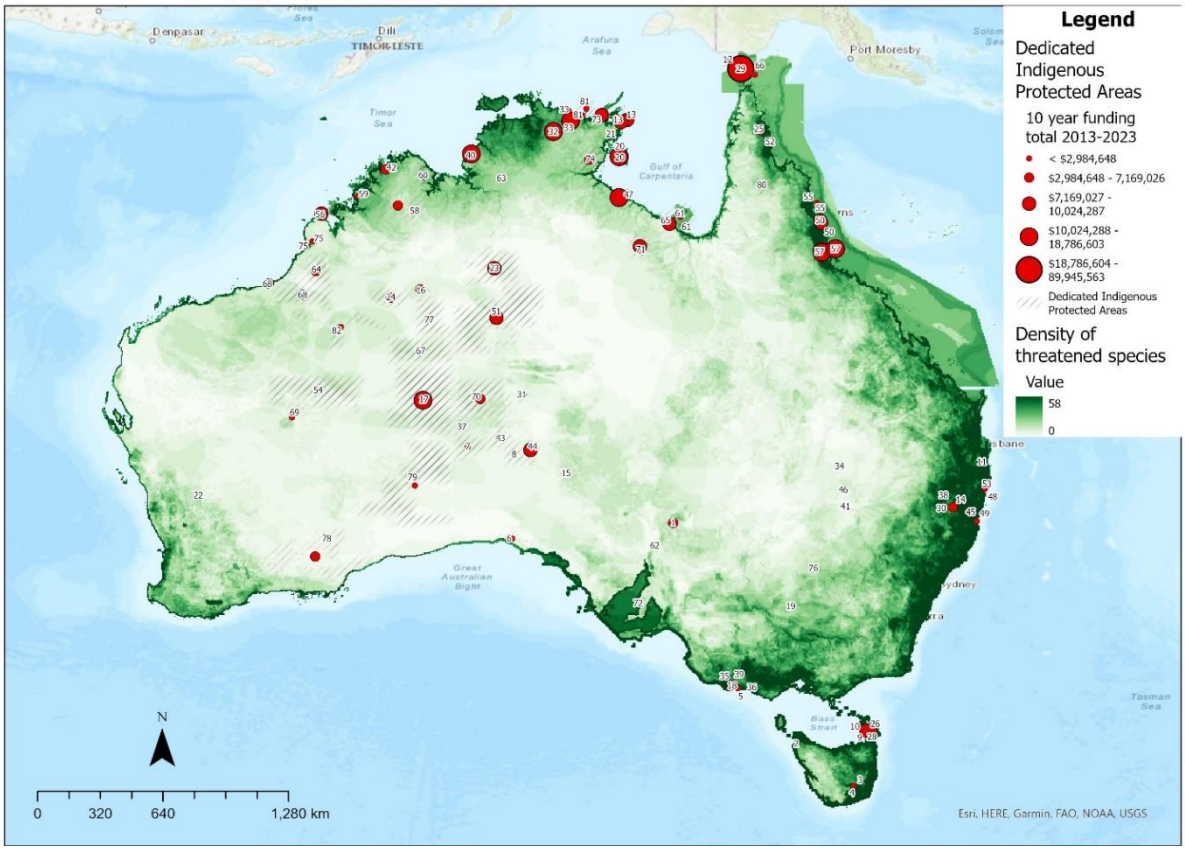
See Table 3.2 for IPA identification numbers. Species listed under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999*. DCCEEW 2023b, 2023c.

Figure 3.3 and Figure 3.4 show the number of Threatened Species Action Plan priority species occurring across Australia where they, or their habitat, are known or likely to occur in a 0.05 degree latitude/longitude grid cell containing land in Australia (derived from the Australia – Species of National Environmental Significance Distributions public grids) with 10-year funding total for IPAs.

The areas that are shaded a darker green contain more threatened species and primarily occur along the coastline, and east of the Great Dividing Range.

Larger amounts of funding over the last 10 years can be attributed to IPAs such as Girringun and Mandingalbay Yidinji in Far North Queensland and some of the Tasmanian IPAs that occur in the darker green areas. However, Torres Strait Island, Southern Tanami, Warddeken, Djelk and Ngaanyatjarra IPAs, which have received the most amount of total funding for the period 2013–23 (i.e. greater than $10m), do not have as dense a number of threatened species when compared to other IPAs along the coast. The generalised species maps represent the best available information received from a number of sources (including state agencies), and low species densities could be due to a number of factors including the type of habitat available (condition and extent remaining), number of surveys conducted (effort) and accessibility to areas to conduct on-ground surveys. The species map should be considered as indicative rather than a definitive assessment of presence or absence and as representing a starting point for further investigation rather than the outcome of a comprehensive scientific assessment.

Figure 3.4 Dedicated IPAs, 10-year funding total (2013–2023) and density of threatened species



See Table 3.2 for IPA identification numbers. Species listed under the EPBC Act 1999. DCCEEW 2023b, 2023c

Table 3.2 IPA identification numbers used in Figure 3.3 and Figure 3.4

1. Nantawarrina	28. Lungatalanana	54. Birriliburu
2. Preminghana	29. Pulu Islet	55. Eastern Kuku Yalanji
3. Risdon Cove	30. Tarriwa Kurrukun	56. Bardi Jawi
4. putalina	31. Angas Downs	57. Girringun
5. Deen Maar	32. Warddeken	58. Wilinggin
6. Yalata	33. Djelk; Djelk Stage 2	59. Dambimangari
7. Watarru	34. Jamba Dhandan Duringala	60. Balanggarra
8. Walalkara	35. Kurtonitj	61. Thuwathu/Bujimulla
9. Mount Chappell Island	36. Framlingham Forest	62. Yappala
10. Badger Island	37. Kalka - Pipalyatjara	63. Wardaman
11. Guanaba	38. Boorabee and The Willows	64. Karajarri
12. Warul Kawa Island	39. Lake Condah	65. Nijinda Durlga
13. Dhimurru	40. Marri-Jabin (Thamurrurr - Stage 1)	66. Warraberalgal and Porumalgal
14. Wattleridge		67. Kiwirrkurra
15. Mount Willoughby	41. Brewarrina Ngemba Billabong	68. Nyangumarta Warrarn
16. Paruku		69. Matuwa and Kurrara-Kurrara
17. Ngaanyatjarra	42. Uunguu	70. Katiti-Petermann
18. Tyrendarra	43. Apara - Makiri - Punti	71. Ganalanga-Mindibirrina
19. Toogimbie	44. Antara - Sandy Bore	72. Wardang Island
20. Anindilyakwa	45. Dorodong	73. Marthakal
21. Laynhapuy	46. Weilmoringle	74. South-East Arnhem Land
22. Ninghan	47. Yanyuwa (Barni - Wardimantha Awara)	75. Yawuru
23. Northern Tanami		76. Mawonga
24. Warlu Jilajaa Jumu	48. Minyumai	77. Ngururrpa
25. Kaanju Ngaachi Wenlock and Pascoe Rivers	49. Gumma	78. Ngadju
	50. Mandingalbay Yidinji	79. Anangu Tjutaku
26. Babel Island	51. Mandingalbay Yidinji	80. Olkola
27. Great Dog Island	52. Southern Tanami	81. Crocodile Islands Maringa
	53. Angkum	82. Martu

3.2.4. Greater resourcing and capability would deliver more significant biodiversity outcomes

IPAs are currently funded at an average of approximately $0.21/ha, as reported by the Queensland Treasury Corporation in 2018. While establishing an adequate baseline for resources to protected area systems is challenging, this figure is extremely low compared with comparative costs per hectare assembled by Queensland Treasury Corporation (2018) of other public protected area programs in Australia and other countries (Figure 3.5). The figures only included government funding (Queensland Treasury Corporation 2018). The comparative analysis should be considered with caution, due to:

1. the diversity of environmental, social and economic contexts of protected areas
2. the different costs of management in these diverse contexts
3. the number of visitors to the protected areas and the extent of visitor facilities required to manage their impacts
4. the goals of the protected area, for example in terms of visitor information and education (Australian Senate 2007).

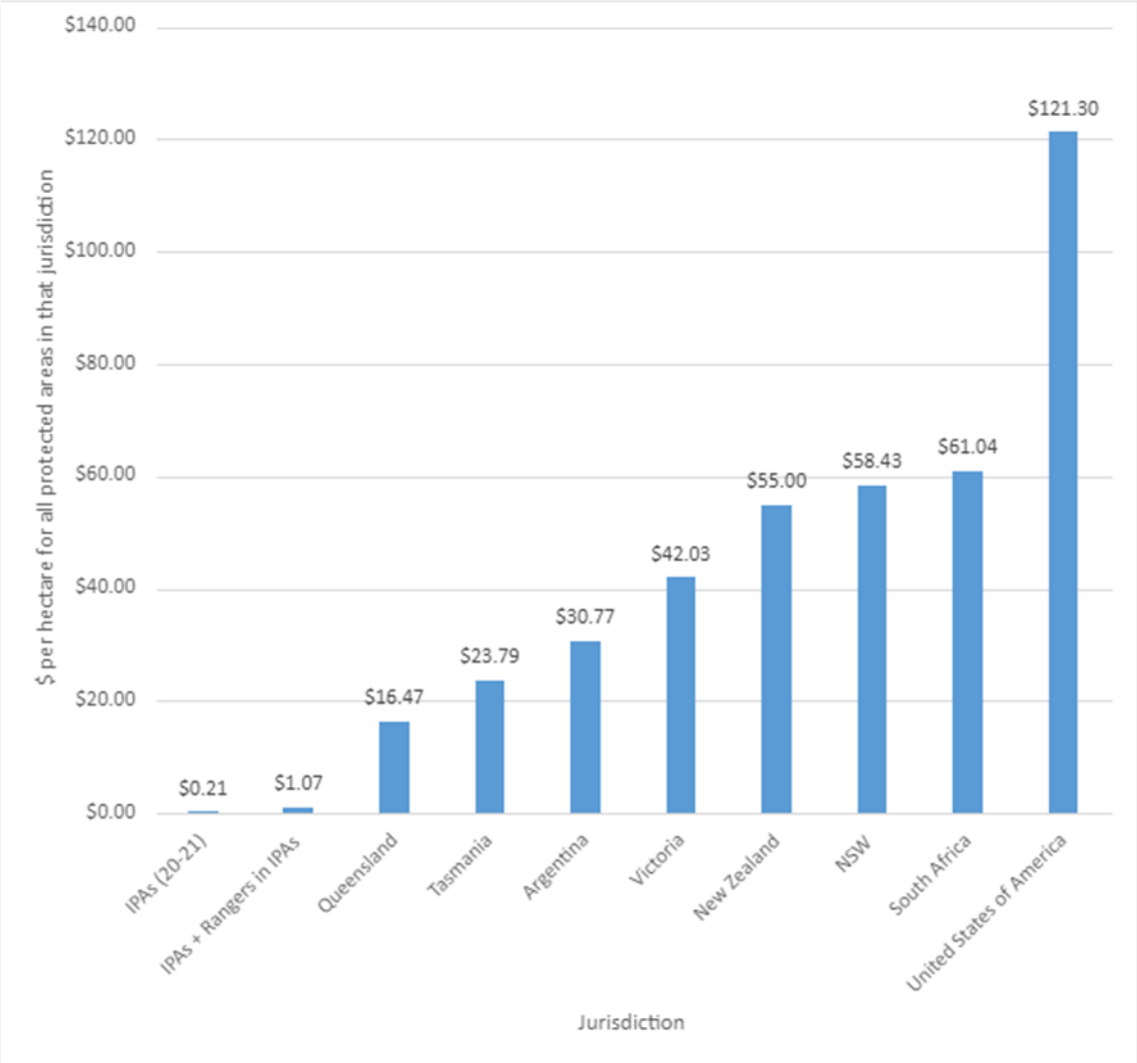
Nevertheless, the low level of IPA funding does constrain biodiversity conservation outcomes and the delivery of multiple benefits (Putnis et al. 2021). IPAs that have ranger programs are in a better position and bring the overall figure to $1.07/ha, as derived from the 2018 report of the Queensland Treasury Corporation.

While establishing an adequate baseline for resources to protected area systems is challenging, this amount of funding Indigenous Protected Areas receive on average per hectare is low compared with comparative costs per hectare figures assembled by Queensland Treasury Corporation (2018) of other public protected area programs in Australia and other countries (at June 30 2023 IPAs were funded at an average of $0.21/ha). The figures only included government funding. The comparative analysis should be considered with caution, due to:

- the diversity of environmental, social and economic contexts of protected areas
- the different costs of management in these diverse contexts
- the number of visitors to the protected areas and the extent of visitor facilities required to manage their impacts
- the goals of the protected area, for example in terms of visitor information and education (Australian Senate 2007).

Nevertheless, the low level of IPA funding does constrain biodiversity conservation outcomes and the delivery of multiple benefits (Putnis et al. 2021). IPAs that have rangers programs are in a better position and bring the overall figure to $1.07/ha.

Figure 3.5 Funding per hectare of IPAs (NIAA data, Appendix 1), compared with other protected area programs in 4 Australian state governments (excluding Australian Government or private funding) and 4 other national governments (government funding only) (Queensland Treasury Corporation 2018).



The very large IPAs in the desert area of Australia contribute to this low level of funding. However, there is no statistically significant simple relationship between the size of the IPA and the amount of funding to the host. If we group the IPAs according to size, it is clear that small IPAs get a lot of funding per hectare and large IPAs get little funding per hectare.

Opportunities for expansion of IPA Programs was frequently discussed by IPA providers during the site visits. Limitations to delivery of the IPA projects, as a result of constrained funding, are discussed in detail in section 5.3.

The view was expressed across the 10 IPA case study sites that the IPA Program could be delivering greater returns to Australian biodiversity with further resourcing and support:

> [The] IPA Program could be contributing further to the protection of Country and Australian biodiversity … Things need to be handed back. The State of the Environment report was bad … have a terrible record. (IPA name withheld)

At [name withheld] IPA there is a strong desire to see the IPA support greater engagement with the community to realise both cultural and environmental outcomes. This is currently constrained by resources including human capital:

> Community members raise an interest in participating. Rangers are always keen and engaged in schools. People are keen to get out and connect to culture. We need to expand resources. More money and dedicated people, especially for TEK [Traditional Ecological Knowledge].

It is recognised by Pulu Islet IPA that there are significant opportunities to support further employment of local people in a range of jobs that support the vision and goals of the IPA including in sea management.

At [name withheld] IPA, while significant management goals have been achieved, IPA stakeholders are looking to the future and considering how management can be amplified:

> I think from where I sit, it's by far exceeded the expectations we ever had. While working well, we want to keep improving.

A similar sentiment was shared by another [name withheld] IPA stakeholders as they spoke of their plans for the future:

> … will be doing new projects. It's all about postfire, with climate change, threat changes. The Great Western Woodlands trees are fire sensitive. Traditionally, kept fires out of the old growth. We've got some money but want to do more. We've got money from a range of sources, but the IPA gives us the space for a landscape-scale approach.

Key messages received through the site-based yarns about opportunities to deliver enhanced biodiversity outcomes with more resourcing were reinforced by comments made through the key stakeholder interviews:

> Where groups are struggling in terms of achieving biodiversity outcomes, the providers are not receiving the support that they need to work through those issues …

Resourcing of ranger programs was seen as one way of delivering enhanced biodiversity outcomes on IPAs:

> The ranger team wants to make sure that the core IPA funding is sufficient. (Stakeholder interviewee)

Adequate resourcing was also described as limiting biodiversity outcomes, but not the sole barrier, as described by an online survey respondent:

> Achieving meaningful biodiversity outcomes requires significant, ongoing and reliable resources [currently IPAs lack funding for on-ground work and positions, and grants only last for 4–5 years]; legal environmental protection of the land and sea (no legal exclusion zones or protections come with IPA status) and enforcement of protection (no powers to Traditional Owners with IPAs). Current IPA biodiversity work is often sporadic, ad hoc and inconsistent due to these limitations.

In the following quote, a stakeholder queries the relationship between biodiversity outcomes and improving road access for people to get on Country on their own and says that there is much yet to learn about the complexities of delivering biodiversity outcomes of IPA:

> I think that making roads more accessible has its risks, because you may start spreading weeds if you have people going everywhere. You also run the risk of over hunting, but you have to make a value judgement: is it better to have knowledge of country, tracking, hunting and song lines continually passed on? If you're doing a one- or two-week trip you can pass on sections of it, but people need to be able to go in their own time otherwise you are never going to pass on the knowledge. (Stakeholder interviewee)

Greater protection of cultural sites on IPAs

At [name withheld] IPA, 2 rangers are working part-time to manage the IPA. Their key activities including looking after the buildings, maintaining the tracks and undertaking weed management. Protecting a large oyster midden is also an important component of the management of the [name withheld] IPA, and yarns revealed the desire for more attention toward the management of culture:

> [name withheld] is a meeting place. It's the first bit of land to be reclaimed. For community it was a focal point. Everyone has a soft spot for oyster cove.
>
> Our families from [location de-identified] were taken there. People taken there in the 1840s. Main grave is probably off the property. There has been cremations of repatriated remains.
>
> There are middens and stone tool quarries there.
>
> Focus so much energy on weed control. We want to build things in. Not just kill weeds.

At Ngunya Jargoon IPA, women indicated that they wanted to learn more about the registered cultural sites on the IPA, to build their comfort in going on Country and ensuring their adherence to cultural protocols.

Many IPAs engage with digital technologies to assist them in managing Country. These include the use of drones for remote surveillance and monitoring and automated camera traps to monitor feral animals and threatened species, including at putalina IPA where the rangers deploy motion-activated cameras to monitor wildlife and pests on the IPA.

Some IPAs reported that they would like to engage with emerging and innovative technologies to assist them in managing Country. There may be opportunity for increased cross-IPA learning and skills development via ranger-to-ranger training to build this capability across the IPA Program.

At Lake Condah IPA, understanding the aquaculture system and its preservation is a key focus of the Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners. The Gunditjmara used the local volcanic rock to construct channels, weirs and dams and manage water flows to systematically trap, store and harvest kooyang (short-finned eel; *Anguilla australis*). The reconstruction of weirs, reconstructing lakes and

environmental flows and conserving native species has been a key focus of the work of the GMTOAC. One goal of the future is to engage in satellite tagging of kooyang, which supports increased understanding of the aquaculture system.

Biodiversity outcomes can be strengthened where a ranger program and the IPA Program are working together on the ground. Strong evidence for this partnership approach is outlined in Chapter 6.

However, that model might not necessarily work for all IPAs as each situation is unique:

> When they're together there is an opportunity to be more effective in delivering the biodiversity outcomes. It's not just a simple addition, the more resources that you put in, it's exponential; whether they're federal or state, and it's the same when we get small amounts of funding for other things that the value is exponential. It might be about where a group is on its journey; they might not be ready for the full-time ranger program, yet the IPA might be a really good starting point and of course there are groups where IPAs don't work for various land ownership and other reasons, so ranger teams are still really valuable. The more you can add the better, but each group will have its own journey and I wouldn't want to suggest that it should only be run together. (Stakeholder interviewee)

3.3. Management effectiveness of the IPA Program

Management effectiveness is considered a proxy measure of biodiversity conservation outcomes by the Australian Government for the purposes of this evaluation and is widely recognised as an appropriate metric (Hockings 2006; Leverington et al. 2010).

The IUCN framework for assessing management effectiveness has been integrated into the 'Effective Management' standard for the Green List (IUCN and World Commission on Protected Areas 2017) and identifies 6 key components:

1. understanding the values, threats and overall current status of the protected area
2. developing management and other plans
3. resourcing the plans
4. taking management actions
5. achieving and measuring outputs
6. producing outcomes.

This section provides detail on the key areas that the 10 case study IPA providers have identified as enabling management effectiveness, specifically as they relate to taking management actions, achieving and measuring outputs and achieving outcomes. The importance of good process and governance in developing management plans and the criticality of resourcing these plans sufficiently is covered in Chapter 5.

3.3.1. Strengths, challenges and opportunities in biodiversity management and monitoring

Many of the stories told during the site visits offered detail of environmental activities being undertaken at the local site scale. In contrast, the focus of conversation during the key stakeholder interviews and the national dialogue predominantly focused on the higher level challenges of delivering biodiversity outcomes through the IPA Program, as well as current opportunities in biodiversity management provided by the IPA Program and ideas for upscaling the delivery of benefits. This is captured well in the following key stakeholder interviews:

> I think the IPA is like any protected areas system in that it varies across the country ... driving up to Bardi Jawi Country you can pretty much see the difference in the bush when you cross the border into that IPA because they've done an amazing job. There are many success stories which are amazing and then there is a whole bunch of stuff in the middle and some that aren't performing well; that's not something that is unique to IPAs, you also see it across other government programs. (Stakeholder interviewee)

The evaluation stimulated considerable discussion about what monitoring was being undertaken by IPA providers, the intent of that monitoring and how it was delivered with on-ground managers to enable them to evaluate their management actions and respond effectively to enhance management outcomes. This included concern about the appropriateness of current data collection, analysis and management, and overall usefulness of current monitoring and evaluation activities. Key to engaging with this information is understanding that there is significant diversity in the capability of IPAs to develop and deliver monitoring programs.

> The reporting process is quite low tech, that is, excel spreadsheets with not many pre-determined fields, so sometimes it is not very easy to bring all the reporting details together; for example, what projects are working on weeds of national significance? how many hectares are they working on? Getting basic information like that to say what they are doing across the program is currently difficult. (Stakeholder interviewee)

> The data that they potentially collect out on Country when doing things isn't necessarily the full scope of information that we require as government to monitor the grant. I think a bit of that question probably lies with the Department of Environment… Our view has been that, while it might be hard to drill down into individual IPA project level achievement in terms of biodiversity outcomes, we have used as a proxy POMs to demonstrate that biodiversity outcomes are being achieved. (Stakeholder interviewee)

The IPA Program was viewed by participants as an enabler in raising the profile of biodiversity on Country, and this acted as a lever for attracting further funds, resources and capability through partnership arrangements:

> When it comes to achieving biodiversity outcomes, you can't underestimate how powerful IPAs have been in getting people out there talking about biodiversity on people's Country. If you go back 20 years, there was no one doing that kind of stuff, so while sometimes the science might not be perfect and you might not have the good robust results, everybody is out there talking about it. (Stakeholder interviewee)

> When I think about the groups that I know in NT, one of the strengths there might be about having an IPA and having core funding to enable them to leverage other funding to be able to monitor their own biodiversity. (Stakeholder interviewee)

3.3.2. Monitoring for biodiversity or cultural outcomes

Questions were posed by stakeholders about the disconnect between monitoring for biodiversity and/or cultural outcomes, and plans to reconnect the 2 outcomes as articulated in the following comments:

> … that intersection of culture and biodiversity is connected and we don't quite capture it. We are just starting this transformative process of capturing data on the ground to enable ranger teams and IPA crews to report back to Traditional Owners and funding organisations on 2 fronts: biodiversity and cultural values. (Stakeholder interviewee)

> … I don't think it is biodiversity that is the strength in terms of the monitoring. I think it's the culture and the species that are important to those groups…we are seeing a lot of uptake in how people are monitoring their own cultural values and that is very much tied to what we might call biodiversity. So, I think if we can include the cultural realm of species and their connections then it does a really great job in terms of ecological metrics and indicators. (Stakeholder interviewee)

A lack of resources and support was identified as a key barrier to building monitoring programs that effectively accounted for both biodiversity and cultural management outcomes:

> Some of the links with cultural knowledge and ecological and western scientific knowledge are coming closer together. It does take additional resources and partnerships … to be able to take on those pieces in terms of bringing culture and biodiversity together and monitoring it and looking at the outcomes; that should be central to what an IPA does. (Stakeholder interviewee)

3.3.3. Monitoring effectiveness

Comments were made by key stakeholder interviewees about the need to refocus attention on monitoring programs to better support IPAs, including scrutiny of what is being monitored, what is the intent of the monitoring and being realistic about what can be delivered given the capacity of the individual IPA. The extent to which IPAs can achieve their biodiversity goals varies widely and is frequently dependent on funding availability:

> This is one of the things that varies widely between different IPAs … the extent to which groups have the capacity and the additional funding and partnerships to be able to implement their biodiversity priorities in line with their plans. (Stakeholder interviewee)

> … where they're doing traditional burning in the desert, we know it has a biodiversity outcome, but capturing and measuring that as well as the different outcomes across the IPA system so that it is proven is another thing. (Stakeholder interviewee)

> IPAs make a big contribution to biodiversity and conservation, but … it's specific to location. Bardi Jawi and Girringun IPAs are a great example of this; they are achieving biodiversity outcomes. They also bring together a whole range of other types of protected areas like local parks, marine parks that also achieve biodiversity outcomes. They bring the cultural aspects of conservation into those tenures as well, which is really important for conservation and makes it more meaningful and integrated. (Stakeholder interviewee)

> Biodiversity outcomes are longer term and can be difficult to quantify … The challenge is demonstrating the biodiversity outcomes with limited resources, particularly in small IPAs, on their own in a rigorous way that aligns with western science. There needs to be more capacity to support groups to undertake work around biodiversity outcomes. (Stakeholder interviewee)

Comments on the effective managing and monitoring of Country included the technical challenges and the investment needed as well as the motivations for data collection and reporting as communicated by a non-Indigenous respondent in the online survey:

> While there are many examples of IPAs managing and monitoring Country in constructive ways, IPA funding on its own is insufficient generally to effectively manage the myriad of threats and management actions required to remove or

mitigate the threats. Monitoring biodiversity outcomes, particularly across large landscapes, is costly and difficult to do. For instance, there are quite diverse approaches and views as to how abundance of threatened fauna can be monitored in a reliable way. This tends to lead to measurement of work outputs rather than outcomes, which are generally longer term.

3.3.4. Indigenous-driven solutions for biodiversity outcomes

One factor that drives the diversity of projects in the IPA Program is the scale and degree of networks and partnerships that IPAs have developed. Sections 6.3.3 and 6.5 describe in detail the importance of networks in the IPA Program, and section 5.2.5 reveals both the opportunities and challenges that partnerships and collaborations offer. Frustrations have been expressed at the lack of control or direction IPA providers have in determining the research direction, and associated prioritisation of management, on their Country.

Indigenous-led research prioritisation

There are calls for more concerted efforts to support IPA providers to identify the research priorities and specific questions that will more closely support their management priorities for Country.

> … there is still a big challenge around having non-Indigenous research priorities sit at the top of the list in terms of what happens on Country. There is also a continual challenge between mob on the ground not being heard in relation to what research they want on their Country. For example, it might be research around something that's going to lead to better protection of Country, but a lot of the research priorities lean towards the researchers' agenda or the university. Mob are continually telling us they want to do things that are culturally important for them and the community but they don't have that power in saying where that research investment goes. (Stakeholder interviewee)

> If there was a strong team overseeing the entire IPA Program who focused on quantifying environmental outputs and partnered with IPAs and universities to get strong information that would help community members as well that would be great … work closely with community and ask, 'What do you want to know? How can we help you?' (Stakeholder interviewee)

> … all the time we have been told that our western knowledge and western science validates traditional knowledge whereas it should be other way around. Whatever we can do to strengthen Traditional Owners and mob on the ground getting more use out of research the better; they have got their local aspirations and goals but it's a challenge to find strong support from researchers to help support those aspirations and goals. (Stakeholder interviewee)

Good partnerships, research protocols, attention to Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property, mutual benefit through research on Country

> Related to the call for greater Indigenous-led research prioritisation on IPAs is the associated need to ensure all research is undertaken in a culturally appropriate way. At the very least partnerships should be underpinned by the principles of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC), mutually beneficial outcomes, and with attention to Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property rights (including fair attribution) … generally people want to make sure collaborative partnerships are on their terms.

> People have fought for a long time to get control of their Country back; they don't want in any shape or form to be ceding control. (Stakeholder interviewee)

> There are some IPAs that have good research protocols in place and it is all done in terms of what they want with IP and findings reflected back to those Traditional Owners, but it is still a big issue when researchers find a new animal, species, plant etc. If you look at the role that the rangers and managers have been playing in keeping Country healthy – good fire, good management – if they didn't do those activities those little animals wouldn't be there, but in terms of who gets the credit for that, it's researchers and scientists. (Stakeholder interviewee)

> Anyone wanting to do something on IPAs, whether its joint management, surveillance and monitoring when partnering with researchers, Indigenous groups/rangers need to be properly compensated and paid for their time and expertise, not just jump in and we'll give you some lunch for the week while we're doing these research plots; this keeps that same precedence that their knowledge isn't valued, so however we can strengthen that, and there are opportunities through the way researchers apply for ethics approval. (Stakeholder interviewee)

3.3.5. Data collection, analysis and management

Opportunities to build rigour in data collection, management and evaluation as part of an IPA's monitoring program were discussed by stakeholders and partners. A lack of 360-degree feedback from the managing agency was also raised as a key issue, as was missed opportunity for building management capability and strengthening biodiversity outcomes.

For both the IPA provider and the government partner, the potential for data collection that is being enabled by technology requires careful navigation to ensure the terms of data sovereignty are met. This is a priority area of future work for the IPA Program.

> There's a big challenge across government in general, what data you collect, where do you store it, how do you make it available in our context to First Nations people so that they can be making decisions … When we do things with data are we making sure that we retain that data sovereignty? Who is going to hold it, what do you need to know, and what helps you inform your biodiversity outcomes? There is a lot that can be done in the technology space … noting that not everyone has access to all of the same technology, internet access, etc. (Stakeholder interviewee)

> … not just imposing things from government down, looking at what are people already using, what works for them, what support would they need, such as capability building support to be able to use technology. It's a big area for us to consider. (Stakeholder interviewee)

A disconnect between data collected by IPAs and subsequent management actions was raised as a key area requiring attention to build management effectiveness. Specifically, a lack of data analysis to inform adaptive management, gaps in information being aggregated to tell the whole story, and further the missed opportunity to use the date to demonstrate IPA management effectiveness was highlighted.

> Majority of the excel reporting spreadsheet data that NIAA receive from groups is not used to tell a story or promote the IPA Program. If you're not going to use it don't collect it, unless it is critical to demonstrate that groups have done the work. (Stakeholder interviewee)

> I'd love to see some harder reporting on the scientific outcomes tied to the funding, more of a requirement for data to be collected and reported in a way that is useful, rather than reporting on having done the activities and not necessarily ever seeing the data flow back. (Stakeholder interviewee)

Lack of data capture

The absence of monitoring of important management activities was raised, with a lack of capability, partner support and resourcing identified as contributing factors.

> … where there is really good partnerships going on that's good; you can put individual results on the table and say this IPA is doing really good stuff with World Wildlife Fund or the Indigenous Desert Alliance. On the other hand, you might have another IPA without a strong partnership; you have a lot of cultural activities going on which is part of the intent of an IPA but then what is missing is tracking that or proving how that relates to biodiversity outcomes. (Stakeholder interviewee)

> … it's varied and piecemeal depending on where, who, the capacity and the partnerships. I also think that our knowledge is general and anecdotal because one of the weaknesses of the IPA is unless they have a great partner the data is not captured and the Commonwealth is not focused on that. (Stakeholder interviewee)

Data management

Appropriate site-based management of data was highlighted as a potential issue, exacerbated by a high turnover of staff in data management roles, including ranger and IPA coordinators:

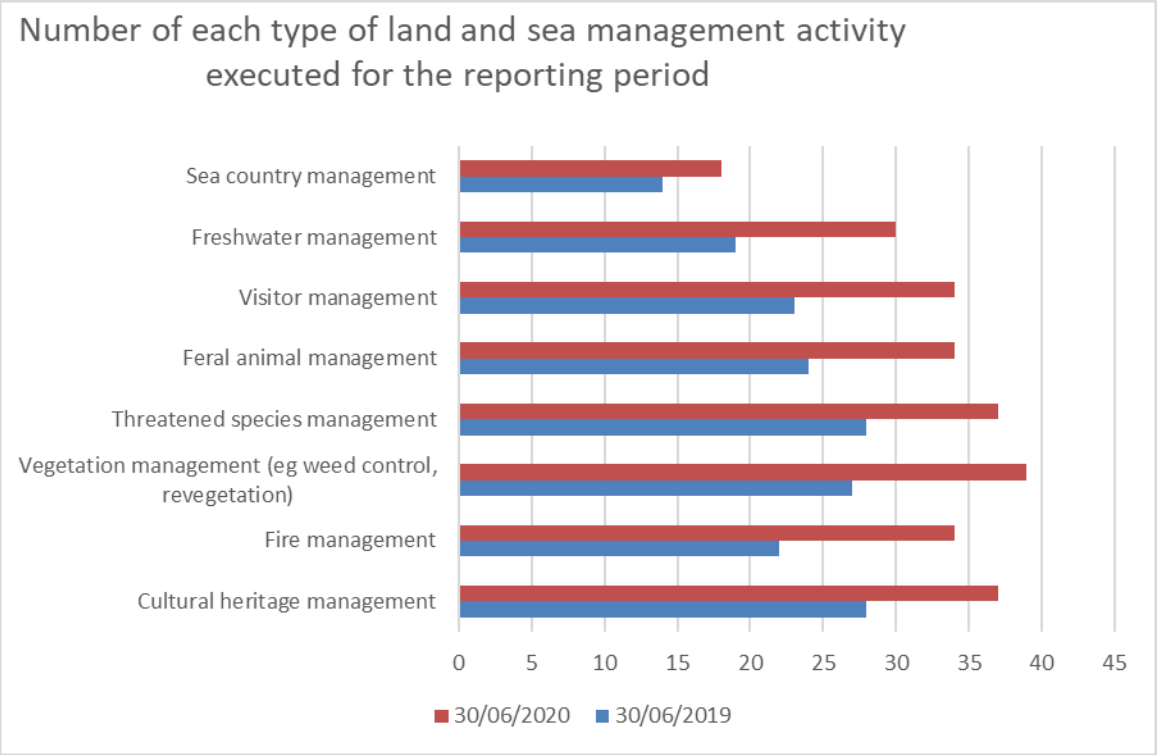
> … I have seen IPA coordinators churn and burn every 12 months. One of them would come in and say I've got this hard drive with the stuff we've been doing, and I don't know what to do with it. (Stakeholder interviewee)

> The collection and use of information benefits the Traditional Owner group and also benefits broader society, so where are the partnerships between a PBC [Prescribed Body Corporate] or a land council or a PBC and the State Library of WA? They can work through ways to make the information manageable and useful for everyone and through this you can get good results. It's the same with the scientific information collected through the IPA network, partnerships with state-based conservation agencies or Commonwealth conservation agencies: it would be useful if groups could work through how they're going to use the information. I think if you want biodiversity outcomes, you want better compliance in terms of information and proving the value of these IPAs; the Commonwealth needs to encourage or provide incentives for partnerships to work through the use of that information. (Stakeholder interviewee)

3.4. Management effectiveness identified through IPA reporting

IPA sites regularly report their activities to NIAA via 6-monthly and annual Project Plan and Activity reporting. From these data, the types and numbers of activities occurring via the IPA Program can be displayed (Figure 3.6).

Figure 3.6 Number of IPA projects undertaking each type of land and sea management activity for each reporting period, based on the 43 IPA projects that reported for year ended 30/06/19 and 66 that reported for year ended 30/06/20.



Average number of activities undertaken by the reporting IPA projects were 4.3 and 4.0 for years ended 30/06/19 and 30/06/20 respectively.

NIAA's Project Plan and Activity Reporting template also required IPA providers to report on the completion of the activities' planned 'actual outputs'. These data underpin KPIs analysed for the 2-year period 2018–2020 for this evaluation.

One key measure tracks whether the IPAs have met their key delivery requirements (see Figure 3.7). A further key measure tracked is the satisfaction of the Traditional Owners with progress on land and sea management. The measure reports the percentage of Traditional Owners on the IPA Committee who are satisfied with the progress made on land and sea management by the provider. The KPI is then calculated by comparing the measured percentage to the target. The target specifies the percentage of Traditional Owners who are satisfied with the progress made. The KPI reporting indicates whether the target proportion of satisfied Traditional Owners has been met, determined for each annual reporting period (see Figure 3.8). Generally, the service delivery did meet or exceed the targets, on average over the two-year period, indicating that the IPA Program is contributing to achieving environmental (including biodiversity and caring for Country) outcomes.

Figure 3.7 Delivery of core service commitments rated by the NIAA agreement manager for each 6-monthly reporting period, showing number of IPA projects in each reporting period exceeding, meeting or failing to meet delivery of service commitments, or failing to report, over 2018–19 and 2019–20 (based on 72 IAS dedicated IPA projects funded over period).

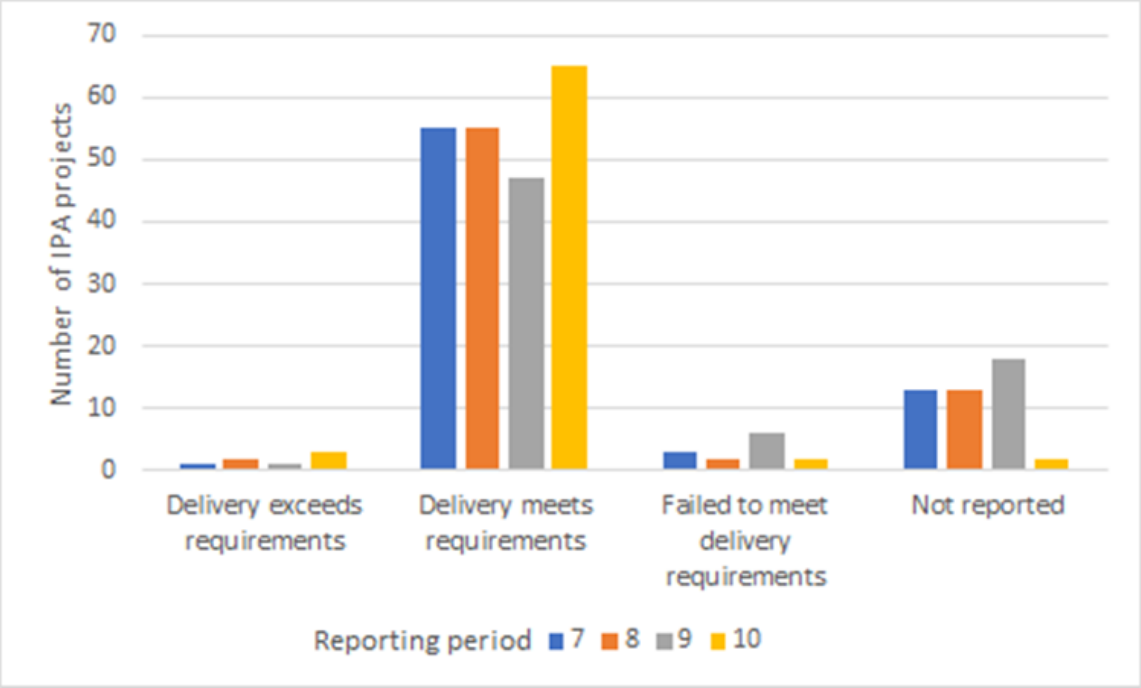
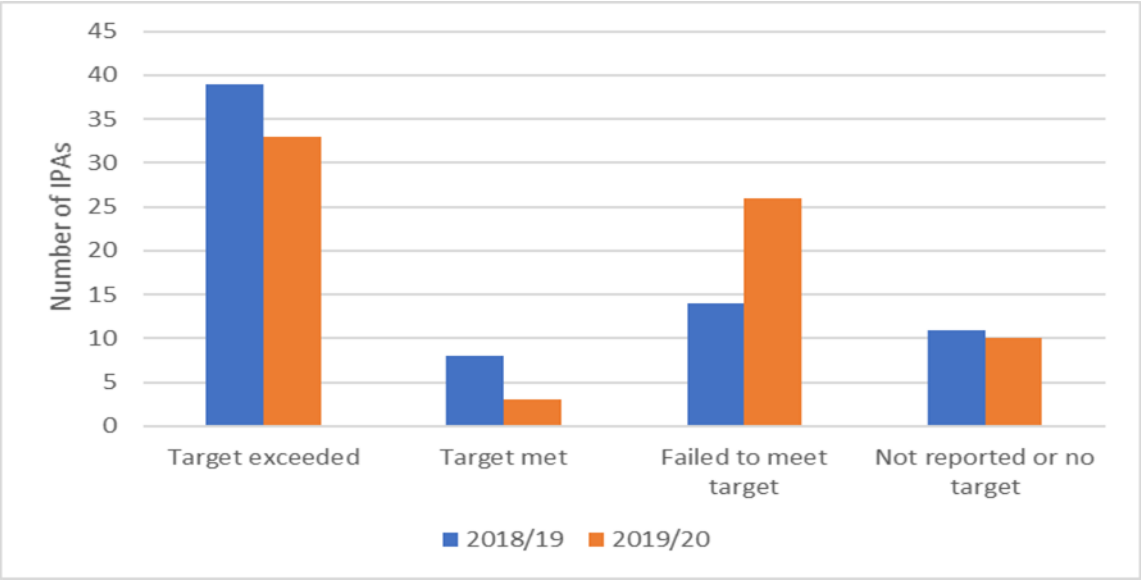


Figure 3.8 Number of IPA projects exceeding, meeting, failing to meet or not reporting and/or having no target for the percentage of Traditional Owners on the IPA Advisory Committees satisfied with land and sea management results, showing numbers for each of the annual reporting periods 2018–19 and 2019–20.



For the 10 case study sites, core service provision, based on the activities delivered compared to target, was reported as having met or exceeded requirements in the majority, but not all, of the case study sites (see Table 3.3). The number of activities planned and completed within the IPA project sites, and number of IPA committee meetings (Table 3.3), varied significantly across sites, again

suggesting this is a highly context-specific measure. In all cases where data was reported, the number of activities completed was less than the number of activities planned. It should be noted that the reporting periods include the period where COVID-19 restrictions were in place, which is likely to have impacted on the completion of some projects and the opportunities to hold Advisory Committee meetings.

In addition to the 6-monthly reporting, IPA sites also report additional data to NIAA annually. For these items, information was available for 4 reporting periods, from reporting period 8 (year ended June 2019) to reporting period 14 (year ended June 2022). The key measure (with KPI code P103.04) reports the percentage of Traditional Owners on the IPA Committee that are satisfied with the progress being made on land and sea management by the IPA project, and each period is compared to target. The average performance across the 4 reporting periods is shown in Table 3.4. Across the case study sites, some IPA projects achieved target in all reported periods; some had mixed performance reporting (achieved for some years but not others); and one IPA reported failing to meet target in all years. Again, these results indicate the context-specific nature of IPA performance, demonstrating considerable variations from site to site and within some sites and across time. As before, the impact of COVID-19 restrictions may have had some effect on the results.

When reviewing this information, it is important to note that while many IPA sites report data on a single IPA project basis, for others the data is reported in consolidated form for a number of IPA projects together. This is a limitation of the analysis as it prevents true like-for-like comparison across the case study sites. A further limitation is a lack of complete reporting; that is, not every reporting entity submit reports for each reporting period, and when reports are submitted, not all fields are always completed. Consequently, there are gaps in the reported data available.

Table 3.3 Summary of KPI data reported for 6-monthly reporting periods relating to the number of activities planned and completed, and the number of IPA Advisory Committee meetings, for each case study IPA

Case study sites	Core service provision target: % delivery against target (MKP1.M1 target)	Core service provision performance: % delivery against target (MKP1.M1 result)	Core service performance target met in most periods (MKP1M1)	Average number of activities planned (D103.01)	Average number of activities completed (D103.02)	Average number of IPA Advisory Committee meetings (D103.03)
Overall	69.85	62.24	Mixed: 3 sites No; 7 sites Yes	68.98	41.78	2.80

Table 3.4 Summary of KPI data reported annually relating to the percentage of Traditional Owners on the IPA Committee that are satisfied with progress made for land and sea management, for each case study IPA

Case study sites	Target % (P103.4 target)	Reported actual % (P103.4 result)	Target % met? (P103.04)
Overall 10 sites	Not reported or not required for 3 sites; ranged from 60% to 100% for remaining	Ranged from 72.5% to 100% for those reporting	Mixed results; 4 sites met target in all years.

IPA projects receive an annual funding stream to assist with improving Country and managing the various activities on the IPA. The sites all conduct a wide range of different activities as part of their land and sea management, as can be seen in Table 3.5. This indicates the context-specific nature of IPA activities – while each IPA conducts many of the same activities, other are context-specific.

Table 3.5 Reported types of activities engaged in by IPAs, based on annual outcome data reported.

	Cultural heritage management	Fire management	Vegetation management (e.g., weed control, revegetation)	Threatened species management	Feral animal management	Visitor management	Freshwater management	Sea country management
Anindilyakwa	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
CLC incl Katiti-Petermann	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
KLC incl Bardi Jawi	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Lake Condah & Kurtonitj	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Ngadju	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Ngunya Jargoon	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre incl. putalina	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
TSRI incl. Pulu Islet	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Yappala	X	X	X	X	X		X	

Note: for some sites reported activity is by funding organisation rather than specific to the particular IPA within the case study sample

From comparing funding data to the KPI reporting data (discussed in section 3.4) and to the site satisfaction survey data (discussed in section 4.5), as shown in Table 3.6, there appears to be no relationship between funding per hectare received and the view that the IPA is improving management of and health of Country. However, a statistically significant correlation (at 5% level, correlation 0.431, n=50) was found between satisfaction that the IPA has improved Country health (from satisfaction survey) and the total funding provided in 2022–23 to the IPA funding organisation: that is, based on the data available, we can be 99% confident that increasing funding for an IPA will increase satisfaction that the IPA is improving the health of Country. However, a limitation of this analysis is that there were only 50 responses to the satisfaction surveys, drawn from only 6 of the case study IPA project sites.

Table 3.6 Comparison of IPA hectares and funding compared to the satisfaction reported by Traditional Owner with progress made on land and sea management (from KPI reporting) and with the reported satisfaction that IPAs improve Country health

IPA	Funding organisation	IPA hectares	Funding hectares	2022–23 funding	Funding per hectare	Traditional Owners satisfied with progress made on land and sea management[#]	Satisfaction survey score: Improved Country health
Anindilyakwa	Anindilyakwa Land Council	261,053	261,053	$312,914	$1.20	100.0%	10.00
Bardi Jawi	Kimberley Land Council Aboriginal Corporation	95,121	1,614,586	$770,544	$0.48	82.5%	9.38
Girringun	Girringun Aboriginal Corporation	368,568	368,568	$181,381	$0.49	97.5%	NR
Katiti-Petermann	CLC	5,043,755	19,521,302	$1,665,590	$0.09	95.7%	10.00

IPA	Funding organisation	IPA hectares	Funding hectares	2022–23 funding	Funding per hectare	Traditional Owners satisfied with progress made on land and sea management[#]	Satisfaction survey score: Improved Country health
Lake Condah	Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners AC & Winda-Mara Aboriginal Corporation	1,715	2,082	$216,863	$104.17	72.5%	NR
Ngadju	Ngadju Conservation Aboriginal Corporation	4,401,225	4,401,225	$472,148	$0.11	NR	6.60
Ngunya Jargoon	Jali Local Aboriginal Land Council	861	861	$149,542	$173.64	85.0%	NR
Pulu Islet	Torres Strait Regional Authority	15	122	$225,332	$1,848.76	NR	8.75
putalina	Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre	38	11,167	$652,841	$58.46	100.0%	NR
Yappala	The Aboriginal Lands Trust of South Australia	10,885	10,885	$199,068	$18.29	100.0%	5.33

See data from KPI reporting, for reported actual % for P103.4 (the KPI that measures and reports the percentage of Traditional Owners on the IPA Committee that are satisfied with the progress made on land and sea management by the provider, enabling checking whether the progress made meets or exceeds expectations. A target is set for the proportion of Traditional Owners that are satisfied, with the KPI reporting whether this target has been met, determined for each 12 monthly reporting period as in Table 3.4). See further discussion on the satisfaction surveys in section 4.5. NR indicates no response to KPI reporting or to satisfaction survey.

The key take home from this analysis is that IPA sites conduct a wide range of activities that generate environmental benefits, with Traditional Owners generally satisfied on the progress being made and that the activities are perceived to improve the health of Country. Further, increased funding levels per IPA (rather than per hectare, as many costs are fixed rather than related to the area managed, from cost of vehicles and other equipment to cost of administration and management staff) are likely to further improve outcomes.

3.5. Governance effectiveness

3.5.1. Introduction to good governance for protected areas

Managers of IPAs face the unique challenge and opportunity of responding to (i) Traditional Owners' governance and requirements to follow customary protocols and cultural institutions; and (ii) addressing the Australian Government requirements for adherence to standards of accountability for the use of public funds.

> There is mainstream governmental and cultural governance. Growing up knowing how Traditional Owners have taught us culturally to make decisions and balancing it with the modern world way of implementing governance is the important part. The 2 governance strategies have made Ngurrara strong in going forward in both worlds.

> (Peter Murray, Waluwai-Ngurrara Traditional Owner in Yununijarra Aboriginal Corporation 2012, p. 36)

IPAs have diverse arrangements for providing accountability to both Traditional Owners and government partners. At the Katiti-Petermann IPA:

> As the owners of the IPA, Anangu are to be kept informed of all activities undertaken on their Country. Adoption of a transparent system for reporting back to Traditional Owners is imperative to maintaining good working relationships between Anangu, IPA staff and external agency personnel. (Katiti-Petermann IPA PoM, Central Land Council 2015a)

Achieving accountability towards Traditional Owners is a high priority for IPA providers and is an expensive and time-consuming process:

> Anangu will not make decisions for Country they have no responsibility for and they are usually inflexible about this issue. If a major decision needs to be made, it not only needs to have the right Traditional Owners involved, but meetings may be required to be held on the Country in question. This can make decision-making, be it for the entire IPA or a particular place in it, extremely challenging as the people who need to be consulted may live in towns, communities or outstations that are great distances apart. (Katiti-Petermann IPA PoM, Central Land Council 2015a)

As suggested by the planning guidelines (Hill et al. 2016) IPA PoMs usually include a significant section on governance. PoMs in general demonstrate high levels of attention to the benchmarks for good governance and to arrangements to navigate between cultural and mainstream rules, processes and protocols.

'Good governance' is now part of the international standard for the delivery of successful biodiversity conservation outcomes from protected areas, with 3 benchmarks for good governance:

- guarantee legitimacy and voice
- achieve transparency and accountability
- enable governance vitality and capacity to respond adaptively (Borrini-Feyerabend et al. 2004; IUCN and World Commission on Protected Areas 2017).

3.5.2. Governance and management of IPAs

IPAs deliver successful conservation outcomes (Social Ventures Australia 2016), but the specific focus of conservation outcomes currently differs with governance type in Australia. Government and private protected areas in Australia conserve more at-risk vegetation types (threatened by clearing, fragmentation or both) than do IPAs, which protect lower-concern vegetation types (Archibald et al. 2020). This pattern reflects the history of colonisation of Australia – many of those areas where Indigenous peoples have retained sufficient control over their traditional territories to dedicate an IPA are areas with less dense occupation by the colonists, and hence have less clearing and fragmentation of native habitat. These patterns may shift in the future through IPAs being taken up by state/territory governments and through IPAs overlapping other protected area types (Archibald et al. 2020).

Table 3.7 Percentages of Australia's terrestrial protected areas in each governance type and management category

IUCN classification	Community % of this type	Joint % of this type	Government % of this type	Private % of this type	Total (%)	Total area (ha)
Ia	0%	2%	23%	5%	10%	15,981,019
Ib	0%	2%	5%	0%	2%	3,847,645
II	4%	63%	41%	22%	24%	38,343,750
III	1%	9%	0%	0%	1%	1,867,857
IV	0%	1%	2%	13%	2%	2,401,392
V	5%	22%	3%	0%	5%	7,924,748
VI	90%	0%	26%	58%	56%	88,813,275
Total area of this type (ha)	**74,040,957**	**10,787,591**	**65,659,107**	**8,921,111**	**-**	**159,179,686**
Percentage of total area	**46%**	**7%**	**41%**	**6%**	**100%**	**159,408,766**

Data sourced from the Collaborative Australian Protected Areas Database (CAPAD) 2020 (DAWE 2021c) with the inclusion of 3 additional protected areas that have been dedicated subsequently.

The IPA Program also contributes to the diversity of management categories included in the NRS (Table 3.7). Management categories are classified according to their management objective (Table 3.8). Concerns have been raised by the World Wide Fund for Nature Australia that 90% of IPAs are Category VI and, due to the growth in IPAs, the NRS is now dominated by this category, in which commercial-scale natural resource harvest or extraction may be permissible (Taylor 2021).

Table 3.8 IUCN management categories and their objectives (Dudley 2008)

IUCN Management Category	Description of objectives
Ia Strict Nature Reserve	Strictly protected areas set aside to protect biodiversity and also possibly geological/geomorphological features, where human visitation, use and impacts are strictly controlled and limited to ensure protection of the conservation values. Such protected areas can serve as indispensable reference areas for scientific research and monitoring.
Ib Wilderness Area	Usually large unmodified or slightly modified areas, retaining their natural character and influence without permanent or significant human habitation, which are protected and managed so as to preserve their natural condition.
II National Park	Large natural or near natural areas set aside to protect large-scale ecological processes, along with the complement of species and ecosystems characteristic of the area, which also provide a foundation for environmentally and culturally compatible, spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational and visitor opportunities.
III Natural Monument or Feature	Protect a specific natural monument, which can be a landform, sea mount, submarine cavern, geological feature such as a cave or even a living feature such as an ancient grove. They are generally quite small protected areas and often have high visitor value.
IV Habitat/ Species Management Area	Protect particular species or habitats and management. Many Category IV protected areas will need regular, active interventions to address the requirements of particular species or to maintain habitats, but this is not a requirement of the category.
V Protected Landscape/ Seascape	Where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant, ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value: and where safeguarding the integrity of this interaction is vital to protecting and sustaining the area and its associated nature conservation and other values.
VI Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources	Conserve ecosystems and habitats together with associated cultural values and traditional natural resource management systems. They are generally large, with most of the area in a natural condition, where a proportion is under sustainable natural resource management and where low-

IUCN Management Category	Description of objectives
	level non-industrial use of natural resources compatible with nature conservation is seen as one of the main aims of the area.

However, most of the commercial activities in the IPAs are based on non-extractive uses including tourism, interpretive services, land and sea management fee-for-services (biosecurity surveillance, weed and pest control, fire management, wildlife and vegetation surveys, monitoring patrols and cultural heritage surveys). One IPA is involved in crocodile egg harvest. Other than sustainable cattle production, the commercial-scale harvests identified in the analysis for this report are focused on feral animals, including goats and camels. Traditional Owners frequently see IPAs as an alternative to unsustainable extractive uses.

Overall, the scale of commercial natural resource harvest appears low across the IPAs from the data available from NIAA for Phase One of the evaluation and generally complementary to biodiversity conservation goals. Commercial natural resource harvest was not discussed by any of the 10 IPA case study projects; however, multiple goals for IPAs was identified as a factor potentially impacting on both the management effectiveness and governance effectiveness of IPA, as discussed in the next section.

IPAs implemented within the context of delivering on multiple goals

Tension can arise when there are multiple, potentially competing, interests in the use and management of Country. This arises partially as a result of the IUCN category under which an IPA is designated, potentially allowing for the limited use of natural resources:

> Some people might have a very large IPA and are okay with a little bit of mining on it, but if you have sites that they don't want mining on, that's not okay. Same as the cattle: if there's a little bit on an IPA but it's mostly functioning as an IPA then it's probably okay, but then if you get a broad intensification of land use across an IPA then probably not. So there is a bit of a grey area because there is multiple use … the governance of the IPAs, the PBCs and cattle stations are just not in alignment. (Stakeholder interviewee)

> I am working with a group … who are pursuing a national park on one part of their country; in another part they are trying to stop mining; and on another part they are pursuing an IPA. They want funding to get out on Country and undertake activities on specific sites, but they also want the ability to enter into mining agreements. (Stakeholder interviewee)

Supporting biodiversity outcomes across value systems

While diversity in opinion among Traditional Owner groups on the future of IPAs can create management tension, so too can the multiple values people hold for aspects of Country. What is considered a feral animal requiring culling by one individual may be accepted as part of Country:

> A trouble point is that the conversation around feral animals is very difficult to have. What we are seeing is that people don't want to do anything about feral animals, regardless of the damage it is doing to waterholes, springs or soakages. Half the people will want to fix it and half won't, because there are animals that are there now and that's their country too, they're living there. So, the perception on the wholesale destruction of animals varies throughout the community and having complete community control on a protected area can mean that quite serious damage occurs on Country but people would rather that than going out and shooting. That's the Traditional Owners' decision to make, but if you were looking at it from an ecological

> lens, I think you would be conflicted about what to do about it. Over time you may be able to shift that conversation because people will spend more time visiting those sites and seeing the damage, looking at Country and saying it was never like this. Or you use funding to make small barriers around certain soakages, but is it a long-term solution to put a fence around every waterhole in the desert? (Stakeholder interviewee)

Governance is further discussed as a key enabler in delivering successful IPA outcomes in section 5.2.

3.6. Summary/key findings

Chapter 3 addressed the key evaluation question: 'To what extent has the IPA Program achieved biodiversity conservation outcomes, including those at a landscape-scale?' by investigating the following sub-questions:

- To what extent has the IPA Program contributed to the NRS being comprehensive, adequate (including through connectivity), and representative of biodiversity and cultural diversity?
- To what extent does the IPA Program contribute to achieving Australia's international obligations for biodiversity conservation under multi-lateral environmental treaties?
- To what extent is the IPA Program achieving 'management effectiveness'?
- To what extent is the IPA Program achieving 'governance effectiveness'?

IPAs enhance the comprehensiveness, adequacy and representativeness of Australia's NRS and contribute to achieving Australia's international obligations for biodiversity conservation by:

- providing 50% of the overall area and contributing to conservation outcomes in at least 51 (57%) of Australia's 89 terrestrial bioregions and ≥ 104 (25%) of Australia's 419 terrestrial sub-bioregions
- providing various amounts of habitat representation for ≥ 66% (~441) of Australia's threatened species and 100% (~26) of Australia's listed threatened ecological communities
- providing a globally significant connected corridor of protected habitat in central Australia, enhancing resilience and improving the connectivity of the NRS overall.

IPAs were found to generally address all components of management effectiveness for conservation, taking actions to (i) assess values and threats; (ii) develop PoMs; (iii) ensure resource availability; (iv) undertake appropriate management activities; (v) deliver and measure outputs; and (vi) evaluate outcomes through monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement plans. However:

- The level of resources at $0.21 per ha per year (< 2% of the funding to the remainder of the NRS on a per ha per year basis) is insufficient to meet the management requirements. The level of resources is higher when the separate Australian Government funding for Indigenous rangers who work on IPAs is included, at $1.07 per ha per year (< 7% of the funding to the remainder of the NRS on a per ha per year basis) but still insufficient to meet the management requirements.
- There was found to be a statistically significant relationship between total funding and reported agreement that IPAs provide benefits to the health of Country, suggesting increased and sustained funding is key to further improving biodiversity outcomes provided by IPA projects.
- The ability of each project to demonstrate measured biodiversity conservation outcomes is a direct result of their ability to access sufficient support to develop programs of management that collect rigorous data, and which include a monitoring and evaluation component – including sufficient analysis of data to enable adaptive management.
- A lack of resources and support was identified as a key barrier to building monitoring programs that effectively accounted for both biodiversity and cultural management outcomes.

There is a significant opportunity for IPAs to contribute more strongly to biodiversity conservation by:

- investing adequate and equitable funding to ensure sufficient infrastructure, staff, planning and other resources commensurate with the task of managing the IPAs
- increasing terrestrial IPAs in areas of overlap between the under-represented bioregions (where current protection is <10%) and the Indigenous estate (at least 57% of Australia).

The IPA Program is achieving 'governance effectiveness' by supporting Traditional Owners to follow customary decision-making processes about the declaration and subsequent management of the IPA enabling legitimacy and voice in the initial stages of engagement in the program. Most IPA PoMs set out clear lines of reporting to Traditional Owners and organisations, which frequently involve networks with nodes rather than hierarchies. Support for these customary decision-making processes is vital to achieve accountability to Traditional Owners.

All IPAs are required by NIAA to provide regular reports to the Australian Government, and opportunities to strengthen the reporting process includes strengthening monitoring programs and the subsequent interpretation and management of data.

Recommendations

- Review effectiveness of current monitoring programs across the IPA Program, including data collection and management processes, to determine barriers to adaptive management. Review current support and capability across the IPA Program, as this is shown to be influenced by partnerships.
- Review metrics for IPA management and reporting and ensure alignment with the goals articulated in the IPA PoMs.
- Support 360-degree feedback on monitoring data to both review usability of data and support adaptive management. Support revision of management actions and/or monitoring programs that can't effectively demonstrate outcomes.
- In partnership with IPA providers, support the review of IPA data management needs.
- Review pathways for the effective monitoring of cultural management actions, to illustrate how they contribute to biodiversity outcomes.
- Determine a process to enable Indigenous-led prioritisation of research, and allocate specific research funds to support delivery of IPA management priorities.

4. Multiple benefits

4.1. Introduction

This chapter of the report provides findings in relation to the second of the 4 overarching evaluation questions: 'To what extent has the IPA Program worked to strengthen Indigenous peoples' connections to Country and culture and create social and economic benefits?'

The sub-questions that address this key evaluation question are as follows:

- To what extent is the IPA Program working for economic benefits through:
    - Indigenous business development
    - household incomes
    - Indigenous employment
    - targeting socio-economic disadvantage
- How is the IPA Program working to strengthen Indigenous:
    - languages
    - cultural practices
    - connections with Country
    - cultural institutions (both formal and informal)
    - social and health outcomes
    - overall wellbeing.
- To what degree does the IPA Program support a holistic approach to the creation of benefits?
- How are Australia's diverse Indigenous cultures contributing to IPAs? (addressed in previous chapter)

Chapter 8 provides a synthesis of the creation of these benefits through an Indigenous lens.

Phase One of the evaluation highlighted that much is understood about the multiple benefits of IPAs. Knowledge gaps relate to the need for better understanding of:

- ways that Indigenous people perceive that the benefits are synergistic and inseparable, with individual and community wellbeing linked to the condition of and caring for Country
- the apparent cost-effectiveness of IPA jobs and level of satisfaction of IPA workers with the employment conditions
- how the IPA Program creates the pathways to employment outside IPAs (as suggested by the data
- the size and impact of the partnerships created by IPAs (beyond the number)
- how time frames (e.g. short vs long) affect the delivery of all the multiple benefits
- how enhanced employment opportunities in IPAs, for example through alignment with ranger projects and other options, can impact the delivery of benefits and outcomes
- options for enhancing the provision of direct funding for activities that support the distinctive cultural connections of Indigenous peoples to IPAs.

We focus first on the literature relating to the multiple benefits of the IPA Program, then turn our focus to economic and then social, cultural and wellbeing benefits.

4.2. Literature review on economic, social and cultural benefits provided by the IPA Program

The earlier social return on investment (SROI) analyses (Social Ventures Australia 2016) established that the returns from IPAs are very large. During the 2009–15 financial years, an investment of $35.2m from government and a range of third parties generated social, economic, cultural and environmental outcomes with an adjusted value of $96.5m (Social Ventures Australia 2016). These benefits can be categorised as:

1. wellbeing benefits for individuals involved, including increased skills, pride, confidence, self-agency and less offending
2. wellbeing benefits for communities, including less violence, increased respect for and from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, more positive role models and greater respect for traditional knowledge
3. cultural benefits for individuals and communities, including increased connection to Country, more time spent living on and accessing Country and greater immersion of language and cultural practices
4. environmental benefits, including fewer noxious weeds and feral animals, more burning using cultural practices and mitigation of carbon pollution
5. economic benefits, including increase in income tax paid, less reliance on income support, low-cost land management and successful engagement in businesses
6. partnership benefits, including deeper connections and relationships
7. Indigenous organisational benefits, including more effective governance (Social Ventures Australia 2016).

These findings monetised and added weight to a large volume of evidence about the multiple benefits of IPAs from research prior to 2016 (Altman et al. 2007; Weir et al. 2011; Zander and Garnett 2011; Concu 2012; Garnett et al. 2018).

More recent research has further elucidated the benefits generated. Economic research has found that in addition to social returns, ILSMPs – including IPA and Indigenous rangers – deliver direct economic returns on investment through business development (Jarvis et al. 2018a, 2018b). Prior and recent research has identified a wide range of socio-economic benefits from programs such as IPA and Indigenous ranger projects working on IPAs, including creating employment opportunities (Altman et al. 2007; Smyth 2011), helping to close the income gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples (Jarvis et al. 2018b), providing business opportunities (Weir et al. 2011; Jarvis et al. 2018a) and creating employment and active involvement for Indigenous people in other industry sectors (mining, tourism, etc.), thereby assisting in reducing welfare dependence (Zander and Garnett 2011).

Recent research also confirms the health, wellbeing and life satisfaction benefits that can arise from Indigenous land management, IPAs and Indigenous ranger programs (Schultz et al. 2018; Stoeckl et al. 2019; Larson et al. 2020; Wright et al. 2021).

Indigenous-led approaches to strengthening and sharing cultural knowledge for land and sea management have been the focus of recent research (Woodward et al. 2020). IPAs and Indigenous ranger projects working on IPAs are identified by northern Australian Indigenous communities as opportunities for the learning and exchange of knowledge. Many aspects of life were perceived to be improved through this learning: relation to self, to others (community and family) and the Indigenous culture overall (Jarvis et al. 2021). Knowledge co-production, bringing together scientific disciplines and Indigenous knowledges, has been found to improve adaptive environmental management where it fosters learning together, is grounded in Indigenous-led institutions and

addresses Indigenous priorities (Hill et al. 2021). Practices to strengthen Indigenous knowledge, keep cultural governance and cultural protocols strong, revitalise language and culture, build partnerships based on trust and respect, share and weave across Indigenous knowledges and scientific disciplines, and engage with Indigenous networks at multiple scales are vital contributions to land and sea management (Ford et al. 2020).

Knowledge for Country is kept alive and passed on through language, story, song, dance, art, through being on Country, hunting, harvesting and through many other cultural practices (Woodward et al. 2020). Co-production between Indigenous knowledges and scientific disciplines produces many benefits for the resurgence of Indigenous knowledge, cultures and practices in responding to new threats, such as climate change (Lyons et al. 2019, 2020; Hill et al. 2020). The relationship between the Indigenous people and the nation state through IPAs and rangers that empowers local decision-making and learning is essential to the delivery of these benefits (Hill et al. 2020).

Further, a review of the literature on co-benefits affirmed the evidence that involvement in management of land and waters delivers benefits for health and wellbeing and for social, cultural and economic outcomes; these are co-benefits to the category of 'political' outcomes, which recognise the benefits to governance and partnerships (Barber and Jackson 2017).

4.3. How well is the IPA Program creating economic benefits for Indigenous communities through contributing to Indigenous business development?

We set out to understand to what extent IPAs deliver direct economic returns on investment through business development, building on earlier findings (Jarvis et al. 2018a,b). Focusing on 13 years of data (from 2008–09 to 2020–21), we explored whether the number of Indigenous businesses in each postcode at the end of each year was related to the expenditure on ILSMPs (Indigenous ranger groups and IPA projects) in that same postcode during the same year and/or during the previous 3 years, thus specifically testing for current and lagged impacts of the expenditure. We also sought to determine the relative importance of rangers alone, IPA alone, and rangers and IPAs together in driving this impact.

As with previous analysis (Jarvis et al. 2018a, 2018b), we demonstrate a statistically significant association between total funds invested in ILSMPs and the growth in the number of Indigenous-owned businesses over time. Specifically, we find an investment in ILSMPs in year 1 will contribute to growth in the number of Indigenous businesses that year and to a more substantial (and increasing) growth in the number of Indigenous businesses over each of the subsequent 3 years. To use technical terminology, based upon our statistical testing the ILSMP funding can be said to 'Granger cause' the growth in Indigenous businesses over time.

Our analysis also demonstrates this statistically significant association when IPA funds invested in IPA projects are considered alone, and also when controlling for other types of ILSMP funding provided. Thus, in addition to our finding that ILSMP funding in total can be said to Granger cause growth in Indigenous businesses over time, the same can be said of IPA funding. When controlling for other funding streams in addition to IPA funding we find that the other funding has an impact over and above that of the IPA funding, thus we find that the IPA and ranger funding streams together have a larger impact than if the IPA project existed in isolation.

Beyond funding impacts alone, we demonstrate that the presence of both Indigenous ranger and IPA projects together has a significantly greater positive impact on growth in the number of Indigenous-owned businesses than if a ranger program or an IPA project existed in isolation. That is, the 2

programs appear to reinforce each other, with the effects of each program amplified by the presence of the other, resulting in the outcome from the whole (both programs together) being greater than the sum of the parts (the sum of the individual impacts of each program alone).

This analysis reinforces key recommendations from prior work: If a key objective of the IPA Program is to grow the number of Indigenous-owned businesses, our recommendation would be that, beyond maintaining (or increasing) funding of existing IPAs, efforts should be given to establishing and funding IPAs in locations where rangers currently operate without an IPA and to establishing and funding Indigenous ranger projects for current IPA projects that currently operate without an Indigenous Ranger group.

4.3.1. Results of analysis of contribution of the IPA Program to Indigenous business development

The provision of funded programs such as the IPA Program are believed to foster the conditions required to encourage the establishment and growth of Indigenous businesses. The nature of the IPA Program is such that it can provide both demand-side and supply-side stimuli to growth, via a range of mechanisms.

The econometric model applied in this analysis (set out in detail in Appendix 1) demonstrates a statistical link between funds invested in ILSMPs (ranger and IPA projects) and the growth in the number of Indigenous-owned businesses over time; specifically, that ILSMP funding can be said to Granger cause growth in the number of Indigenous businesses and that the impacts are greater if both ranger and IPA projects are funded, as described in Section 4.3 above.

The summary results of the econometric model are shown in Table 4.1 and discussed below (in sections 4.3.1 to 4.3.6); in this table we present the direction of impact of statistically significant variables but not the actual coefficients. The table should be interpreted as follows:

- + indicates that the variable has a positive relationship with the numbers of businesses in the postcode; that is, if the value of the variable is higher in a particular postcode, then the number of Indigenous-owned businesses is also likely to be higher
- - indicates the opposite, a negative relationship
- blank indicates there is no statistically significant relationship between the variable and the number of Indigenous businesses.

We have chosen to present and discuss these robust findings rather than the detail as a deliberate tactic to de-emphasise numbers, which may be imprecise due to limitations in the datasets available to us. A table of detailed results (and detailed description of the data, data limitations, and methods) can be found in Appendix 1, and a summary of the data and methods used in this analysis can be found in Chapter 2 Methods.

As can be seen from the results table, our findings clearly support our proposition that IPA funding, and other forms of ILSMP funding, can each have positive effects on the number of Indigenous-owned businesses and that the presence of IPA projects and Indigenous ranger projects working on IPAs also has an impact on the outcome. We first describe our key findings then apply an economic lens to discuss these findings.

Table 4.1 Summary of regression results on Dependent variable: number of businesses registered with ORIC. + variable significant at p = 0.1 and with positive coefficient; - variable significant at p = 0.1 and with negative coefficient; otherwise variable not significant at p = 0.1.

	Model 1: All ILSMP funding combined	Model 2: IPA funding only	Model 3: IPA and other ILSMP funding included separately
ILSMP funding – current year – Model 1 only	+		
ILSMP funding – lag one year – Model 1 only	+		
ILSMP funding – lag two years – Model 1 only	+		
ILSMP funding – lag three years – Model 1 only	+		
IPA funding – current year – Model 2 & 3		+	+
IPA funding – lag one year – Model 2 & 3		+	+
IPA funding – lag two years – Model 2 & 3		+	+
IPA funding – lag three years – Model 2 & 3		+	+
Other funding – current year – Model 3 only			
Other funding – lag one year – Model 3 only			
Other funding – lag two years – Model 3 only			+
Other funding – lag three years – Model 3 only			+
IPA proportion (being proportion of land area of each postcode represented by IPA for each year)			
Rangers (dummy variable representing presence [value of 1] or absence [value of 0] of Indigenous rangers in postcode for each year)	+	+	+
IPA and rangers (dummy variable representing presence [value of 1] or absence [value of 0] of both IPA and Indigenous rangers in postcode for each year)	+	+	+
Native title proportion (being proportion of land area of each postcode represented by native title declaration for each year)	+		+
Population	+	+	+
Indigenous proportion			+
Proportion of Indigenous population finished Year 12			
Percentage of postcode with landcover of type:			
Coral reefs	+	+	+
Cropland	+	+	+
Desert	-	-	-
Grass-rangelands	+	+	+
Tropical	+	+	+
SqKm	+	+	+
ARIA+ Average	+	+	
Internet proportion	+	+	+
Own home proportion	-		-
Volunteering proportion	-		-
Life expectancy			
Constant	-	-	-

Full results are set out in Appendix 3. Funding explanatory variables differed for the 3 different models, while all other variables (relating to IPAs, rangers and contextual variables) were included within all 3 model specifications.

4.3.2. Econometric analysis key result 1: Investment increases the number of Indigenous businesses

The investments expended in ILSMPs are associated with an increase in the number of Indigenous businesses in that same year and in each of the following 3 years. That is, ILSMP expenditure can be said to Granger cause growth in Indigenous businesses. This relationship is evident in our analysis for each specification of our model. Granger causality does not run the other way (i.e. testing demonstrates that growth in the number of businesses does not Granger cause increases in ILSMP expenditure, or IPA funding; results available on request). Furthermore, not only does ILSMP expenditure affect the number of Indigenous-owned businesses in current and subsequent years, the impact increases over time. Using the coefficients for the model including all ILSMP funding as an example (Model 1, using detail on coefficient values in **Error! Reference source not found.** and Table A.2 in Appendix 1), if we were to spend $1m on ILSMPs in year 1, we would see an increase of 0.5 in the number of ORIC businesses in that year. In the following year we would see a further increase of 0.3; in year 3 we would see a further increase of 0.5 and in year 4 we would see a further increase of 1.3 in the number of such businesses. Thus spending $1m on ILSMPs in a given year would have a cumulative impact of creating 2.6 businesses after 4 years have passed. Thus, the impact appears to be sustained and growing over time, suggesting that ILSMP funding is contributing to a self-sustaining growth cycle of new Indigenous-owned businesses.

4.3.3. Econometric analysis key result 2: Impact of IPAs and Indigenous ranger projects working on IPAs on business development

The statistical model tested the impact of the presence of IPA projects and Indigenous ranger groups separately, and also tested the additional impact from having both an IPA and a ranger group located together. The variable indicating presence of an Indigenous ranger group within the postcode was significant and positive in all versions of the model. However, importantly, the variable indicating the presence of an IPA project and Indigenous rangers together was also significant and positive in all specifications of the model. This indicates that while funding Indigenous ranger groups alone (i.e. not related to an IPA) has a positive impact on fostering new businesses, the presence of an IPA alongside the Indigenous ranger group has an additional positive impact over and above the impact of the Indigenous ranger group alone.

The variable representing the proportion of land comprising of IPAs within a postcode was found to have no significant effect. However, the inclusion of this variable in the model did increase the overall explanatory power of the model, indicating that the presence of IPA projects within a postcode does contribute to explaining increased numbers of Indigenous businesses. An alternate model specification, replacing this variable with a dichotomous variable to indicate presence or absence of an IPA within a postcode, performed less well, indicating that both the presence and the size of the IPA is of some importance. Further, there is a significant overlap between land held under Native Title and IPAs. Thus it is possible that by including both variables in the model, multicollinearity may have understated the impacts of these variables.

4.3.4. Econometric analysis key result 3: Findings regarding other contextual factors impacting business development

The control variables include the factors suggested by the literature (e.g. see Jarvis et al. 2018a) to have an impact on the growth in businesses in a region. The majority of the control variables incorporated in our model were found to have a significant impact; others appeared to have little effect or even to have a different effect from what was expected. This may have been because of data limitations (a number of our variables are based on the total population of the postal area rather than purely the Indigenous population) or it may reflect that our variables of choice are acting

as proxies for a number of (possibly conflicting) factors that affect business growth. We discuss the theory underpinning the inclusion of these variables, and their relevance in the context of Indigenous business development, in the following section. However, some of the significance and direction of impact of the control variables are worth consideration alongside the findings for our key ILSMP variables. Further, the proportion of the population in the postcode who have Indigenous status was found to have a significant impact in only one specification of the model: model 3 where IPA and other ILSMP funding are included separately. It is possible that there is significant overlap between this variable and some of our other variables (i.e. land held under Native Title, presence of IPA and presence of rangers may act as proxies indicating that Indigenous people are a significant presence in the postcode) with only the finer detail within model 3 providing a specification whereby the importance of the variable is revealed.

We now briefly consider the findings regarding the remaining control and contextual variables. Life expectancy is included in the model as a frequently used proxy for human capital; generally, higher life expectancy is linked to a healthier (and hence more productive) population and would be expected to have a positive relationship with business growth. Our finding is likely to be due to limitations within the data, whereby we are unable to differentiate between the life expectancy of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people within the postcode regions. Our other proxy for human capital, the proportion of Indigenous people who have completed Year 12, was not found to have any impact on the development of new businesses; initially this finding was puzzling, as the development of human capital (skills and knowledge) is generally considered to contribute to business development. However, it is likely that in this context our proxy variable is not a good measure of human capital as it fails to include traditional place-based cultural and ecological knowledge and skills that are fostered from Indigenous people sharing their knowledge on Country (facilitated by programs such as IPAs), which are likely important for business development in rural and remote regions.

Similarly, the finding that a region being more remote (as indicated by higher ARIA+ score) is related to higher growth in business numbers in model 1 and model 2 may seem counterintuitive. We can hypothesise about potential reasons for this: for example, this may be a consequence of IPA and ranger funding being mainly directed to remote rather than urban locations; or it may signal that within urban areas the more vibrant and favourable existing economic conditions enable businesses to grow without requiring the additional support offered by IPAs and Indigenous ranger programs working on IPAs, while their presence is of vital importance in remote regions; or there may be some other reason for the result. This variable is not found to be significant in our finer detailed model 3, perhaps indicating some positive relationship between funding for IPAs and remoteness of the region receiving that funding.

Our variable indicating the proportions of households in each region owning their own home has also produced counterintuitive results: we would expect greater home ownership to indicate greater economic capital in a region, which would be expected to increase business development. Instead, we found the opposite in 2 of our models. This may reflect that in lower wealth regions, a greater proportion of increased income is re-spent (rather than saved), thus providing a greater stimulus to flow-on economic activity (higher marginal propensity to consume resulting in a greater multiplier effect) and, further, such spending may be on the types of goods and services that are frequently supplied by Indigenous businesses (e.g. health services), as these tend to be offering necessities and everyday items, rather than luxuries. It is also possible that high home ownership indicates few Indigenous people within the region's population, thus reflecting that there may only be small numbers of people who could establish Indigenous-owned businesses.

The physical environment was found to have a significant impact on development, with desert environments having lower Indigenous business growth, and tropical, reef and grasslands and rangelands environments having faster rates of business growth. While this may reflect the additional difficulties any entrepreneur would face who seeks to establish and grow a business in a

harsh environment (like a desert) compared to a more benign and fertile region, it may also reflect variations in IPA and ranger funding across these different environments, with large IPAs located in desert regions receiving less funding per hectare than the small island-based IPAs in other regions for example.

4.3.5. Summary of overall findings of econometric analysis of impact of IPA Program on business development

While our ability to draw firm inferences regarding the impact of our control factors may be limited by data limitations, our key finding is clear: the positive and significant impact of ILSMP expenditure in total, and of IPA funding in particular, proved to be highly robust to different specifications of the models. That is, the inclusion or exclusion of some or all of the control variables had little impact on our findings of the relationship between funding of IPAs and other ILSMPs, and the growth of Indigenous business numbers. Similar confidence can be placed in our findings regarding the positive influence of ranger projects alone, and the even larger positive impact that results when a ranger project and an IPA are located together.

4.3.6. Opportunities for enterprise development revealed within case study regions

There were few internal IPA businesses or locally based enterprises identified by stakeholders across the visited IPAs. However, IPA providers expressed aspirations and opportunities for locally based enterprises (also see sections 5.5.6 and 6.3.7 on IPA objectives for Country-based enterprises). [Name withheld] IPA shared an early business model for cultural training:

> We designed a cross-cultural training; they were really impressed with the catering and everything. We took them out, our old people speak about their history, Stolen Generation.

Yarning reflection by IPA Indigenous Evaluation Team – everyday expenses in remote locations

We spoke with people [at remote IPA site] about the general store, which isn't owned by the Aboriginal community. The cost of food and goods in remote communities is very expensive and makes it hard to be healthy – it's cheaper to buy a can of Coke than a bottle of water, and buying fresh food is very difficult.

People in the community don't have large incomes and must constantly weigh up the decision of buying food locally or buying fuel at more than $2 a litre to drive the 2 hours to the closest Coles or Woolworths. And if you don't have a vehicle, you don't even have that choice.

The solution people came up with when we spoke to them about this was to have ownership over the local store, because then the money would be going back into the community. Of course, at another site, the community owned a store, but the local mine decided to build a clubhouse and a shopping centre, so that cut out the local business.

The Dhimurru camping permit system was shared through a stakeholder interview about local economy:

> Dhimurru in East Arnhem Land have got their own permit systems in place where people can hire a camp site for a week, the same way that you can on a national park through a booking system. This is an example of a side economy that is Indigenous-led on Indigenous Country. (Stakeholder interviewee)

IPA contribution to local businesses related to the servicing of vehicles:

> IPA has an account in the IGA. We get our vehicles serviced in the local garage. We spend money locally, BP fuel card. (name withheld IPA)

4.4. Creating economic benefit through contributing to Indigenous employment and Indigenous household incomes

4.4.1. Contribution of IPA Program to employment

IPAs contribute to the economic activity of the region where they are located in a range of different ways, both directly and indirectly. Each of these different contributions can provide employment opportunities and increase household incomes in those regions.

IPAs contribute directly to employment of Indigenous people, and thus to the incomes of their households, by providing employment within the program. Such roles may be on Country land and sea management roles, as rangers and ranger coordinators, but also include office-based management and administration roles. Based on the information provided by the IPAs for 2018–19 and 2019–20, we find that while the actual number of jobs created varies from period to period (see

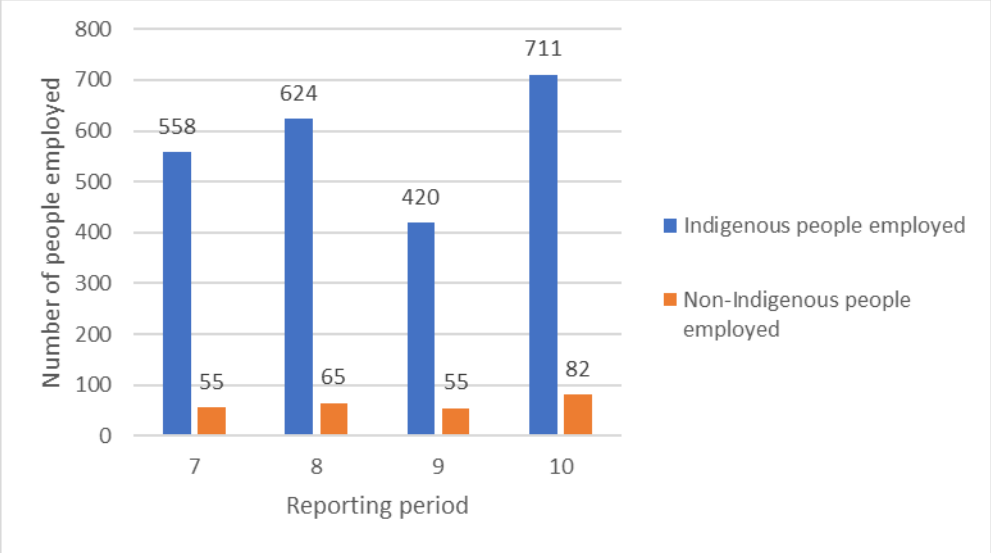


Figure 4.1

) a large majority of the workforce in IPAs for each of the periods were Indigenous, and over the 2 years as a whole, 90% of the people employed, on average, in the IPAs were Indigenous people.

The IPAs also report the number of hours worked by Indigenous and non-Indigenous people over each of the half-yearly reporting periods (see Figure 4.2). This analysis reveals that while most of the people employed are Indigenous, the hours worked by each non-Indigenous person on average are much greater than those by the average Indigenous employee, with 67% of hours worked by Indigenous people (comprising 90% of the workforce) and 33% by non-Indigenous people even though they are only 10% of the workforce.

Figure 4.1 Actual number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people employed in the IPAs by 6-monthly reporting periods (7 and 8 in 2018–19, 9 and 10 in 2019–20)

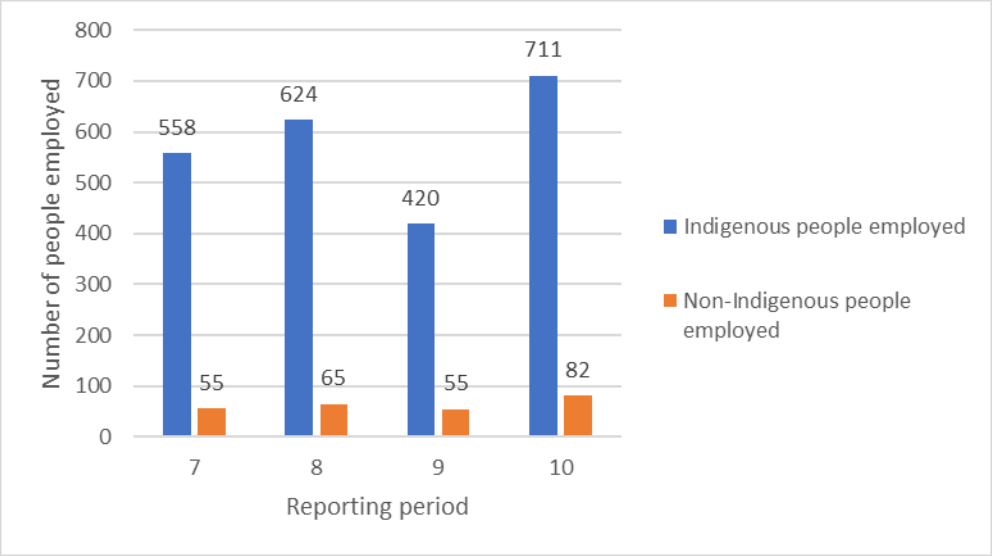
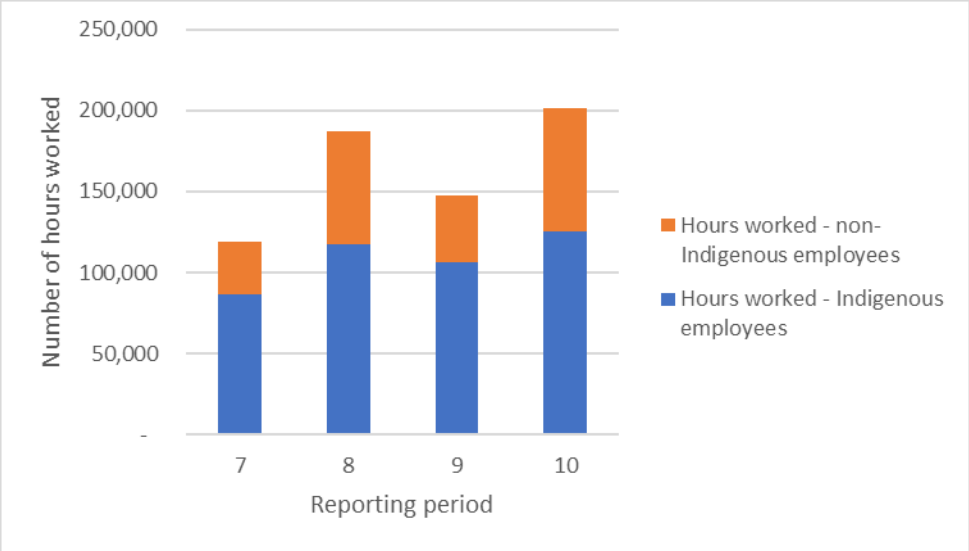


Figure 4.2 Number of hours worked by Indigenous people and non-Indigenous people during each 6-monthly reporting period (7 and 8 in 2018–19, 9 and 10 in 2019–20)



Combining the information on number of workers and number of hours worked indicates that the typical non-Indigenous worker is employed full-time while for Indigenous workers the jobs created appear to be part-time or casual in nature, as the average hours worked equate to 0.22 FTE.

Comparing the number of jobs created and number of hours of work created to the funding invested in IPAs over the period enabled an estimate of the maximum cost of creating each job or hour of work, based on the assumption that all IPA funding was spent on employment. As shown in Table 4.2, this calculation estimates the maximum cost of around $28,000 for each job created, while the estimated cost per hour of work created by the IPAs was a maximum of $53/hour (2018–19) and $46/hour (2019–20). These cost estimates are clearly overstated due to being based on the assumption that all IPA funding is spent on employment rather than any other type of expenditure. In reality, a proportion of IPA funding will be spent on a range of other items (vehicles, equipment,

fuel, office space, power, consumables, etc.), thus the actual cost per job and per hour of work created will be notably lower than these estimates. Indeed, prior analysis of specific ILSMPs (including IPAs and rangers) in the Kimberley, Northern Territory and Far North Queensland found that around 50% of the spend flows to wages, with the balance to other types of expenditure (Jarvis et al. 2018b). This prior research found that expenditure on ILSMPs (including IPAs and rangers) (i) had a bigger impact on per capita incomes of Indigenous compared to non-Indigenous peoples; and (ii) had a bigger impact than expenditure on other industries frequently considered important for increased development within rural areas, such as mining and agriculture (Jarvis et al. 2018b). If this proportion were estimated to apply across all IPAs, then it would imply the average cost per job created to be only $14,000 per year, or around $25 per hour of work generated. This analysis suggests that the IPA Program is fairly cost-effective at creating work opportunities, but further information on the proportions of the funding spent on employment compared to other expenses is required to refine this analysis.

Table 4.2 Average cost per job created, and per hour of work created, for 2018–19 and 2019–20

	2018–19	2019–20
Average number of jobs created	591	566
Total number of hours worked	305,693	349,046
Investment in IPA Program	$16.242m	$16.046m
Average cost per job created if all IPA spend flowed directly to incomes	$27,477	$28,375
Average cost per hour of work if all IPA spend flowed directly to incomes	$53.13	$45.97

4.4.2. Training and career pathways

Beyond the direct employment created in the IPAs, the program can also act as a career pathway. As IPAs provide work experience and training, those who work in them for a period are then able to progress their careers by accepting jobs or further study opportunities that may not have been available to them without their on-the-job experience and training from the IPA. For each Indigenous staff member who has left IPA employment each year, the IPAs are required to report information on their subsequent career pathways. While the IPAs reported being unsure of the future path of 40% of their leavers over the years 2018–19 and 2019–20, on average, they were also able to report that 24% of leavers commenced in non-government sector jobs (such as tourism, mining, pastoralism), 9% commenced employment in the government sector (such as conservation and land management, education, policing), and 22% followed another career path (including entering study or retirement). Only 5% of the leavers were known to have returned to unemployment.

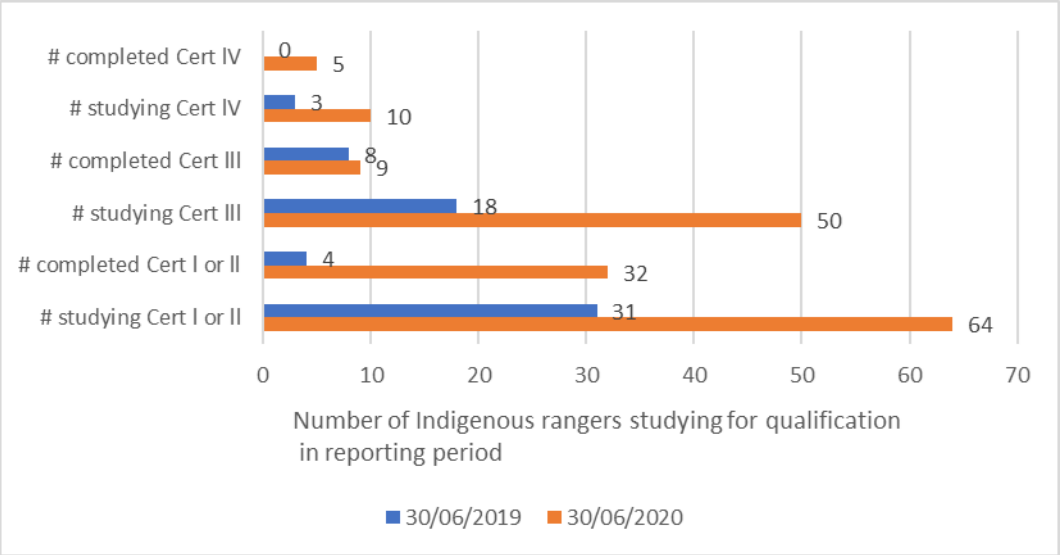
Ranger training and on-the-job experience build a diverse set of employment capabilities:

> The training and work enabled by the program improves employees' health and wellbeing by allowing them to work on Country and carry out meaningful employment. Protection of cultural sites and removal of pest and weed threats are seen as positive activities by employees who benefit by gaining the benefits of paid employment and useful training for their future careers. (IPA name withheld, Outcomes Report 2019)

The success in contributing to the future career path of the leavers is likely to be at least partly due to the range and extent of training offered by the IPAs, as illustrated in Figure 4.3 and Figure 4.4. While conservation and land management training courses were the most popular type of training courses offered (18% of total), a large proportion of courses also prepare the staff for a range of other work (including vehicle and coxswain licence training, numeracy and literacy courses, and workplace health and safety), with a number of courses preparing workers for more senior roles

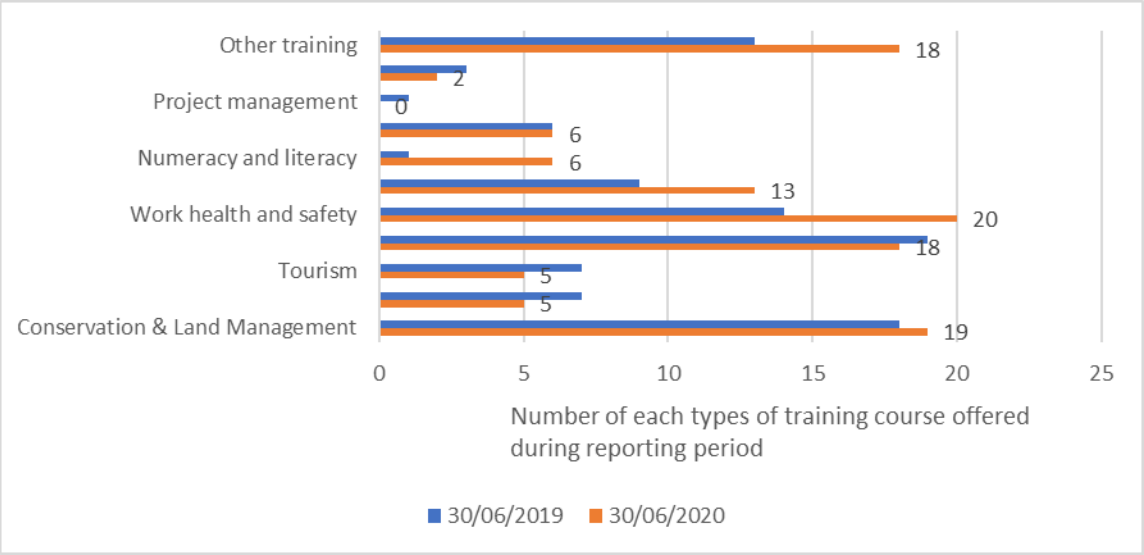
(communication, supervision, mentoring training, project management training and business management training).

Figure 4.3 Indigenous rangers who are studying or completed a certificate course (II to IV) over the 2 reporting periods



Source: NIAA data, Appendix 2

Figure 4.4 Types of training offered and number of Indigenous rangers who undertook training for each specified training type



Source: NIAA data, Appendix 2

4.4.3. Evidence from case study sites that IPAs support youth and career pathways

Anindilyakwa IPA stakeholders expressed their enjoyment at including the children from the local school in marine debris work and the monitoring of endangered species.

[Name withheld] IPA has started working with the school to assist kids in identifying career pathways, as well as supporting the running of youth groups:

> Maybe marine scientists or conservation jobs; caring for Country. Have started Youth Groups with kids from 9 tribes. Over 30 young people participated in the last one.

Key stakeholder interviewees also spoke about the positive outcomes when IPAs engage with schools:

> Schools are another positive area of potential growth. It depends on the capacity of individual schools, the ranger groups and interest of key people in community, but when that aligns there are some really positive outcomes. (Stakeholder interviewee)

4.4.4. Direct and indirect impact of IPA Program on incomes

The wider indirect impact of an injection of funding into a region (through activities such as the IPA Program), on incomes and economic activity in general, can be estimated using multiplier analysis based upon input–output tables. Simplistically, such analysis recognises that beyond the initial impact of spend on a program (including wages earned by those funded to undertake the land management activities on the IPAs), there is a further flow-on of benefits as the money received by local businesses from IPA spend (purchasing equipment, consumables, etc.) and the money received by local household in wages will be re-spent in other local businesses, thus generating additional regional economic benefits and resulting in additional household incomes being generated (as the local businesses employ more people to respond to the increased level of business activity generated).

Drawing on previous research (as detailed in Chapter 2), we have estimated the impact of all IPA spend on the regional economies and on Indigenous and non-Indigenous household incomes (summarised in Table 4.3). This indicative analysis suggests that IPA expenditure (based on 2019–20 levels) could stimulate between $13m and $23m of increased economic activity in the regions around where the IPAs are located, over and above the direct impact of the spend. Overall, including direct and indirect impacts, IPA spend could boost incomes of Indigenous households by between $5m and $7m per year, while also stimulating incomes of non-Indigenous households by a similar sum. While we accept the imperfections of this approach, this serves to highlight the important impact that funding programs such as IPAs can have on stimulating household incomes and regional economic activity in rural and remote, economically less-developed, regions.

Table 4.3 Estimated financial benefits from expenditure on IPAs for 2019–20 based on actual investment in IPAs during that year, and estimated multiplier and estimated proportion of benefits flowing to incomes based on Jarvis et al. 2018b

	Lower bounds estimate	Upper bounds estimate
Investment in IPA Program 2019–20 $m	16.05	16.05
Multiplier	1.80	2.46
Overall direct and indirect impact on regional economies $m	28.88	39.47
Indirect knock-on impact on regional economies $m	12.84	23.43
Estimated proportion of regional impact flowing to:		
Incomes of Indigenous households	17.9%	17.9%
Incomes of non-Indigenous households	19.3%	19.3%
Estimated direct & indirect impact on incomes of Indigenous households	5.17	7.07
Estimated direct & indirect impact on incomes of non-Indigenous households	5.57	7.62

4.4.5. Employment benefits revealed within case study sites

IPA sites report to NIAA on a 6-monthly basis for certain data elements, regarding the employment offered within the IPA, including both number of employees and hours worked, presenting the data in total, and for those who identify as Indigenous. Information was available for 8 reporting periods, dating from reporting period 7 (for the 6 months ending December 2018) to reporting period 14 (for the 6 months ending June 2022).

The employment data reveals significant differences between our case study IPA projects (see Table 4.4). Firstly, the majority of the people employed by IPAs are Indigenous, and indeed in some IPAs all employees are Indigenous. The number of employees varies greatly, from close to zero (e.g. Pulu Islet) to quite large numbers. However, the number of hours that each employee works is also often small, perhaps indicating that some of the employment is on a casual basis related to specific activities that are conducted on the IPA for short periods of time. The average number of hours that employees work varies greatly across the IPA projects, and between Indigenous and non-Indigenous employees, ranging from as low as one hour per week on average for an Indigenous employee and 7 for a non-Indigenous employee, up to an average 40 hours and 44 hours respectively. Thus, the success of IPAs in providing jobs and incomes for Indigenous people appears to be highly context-specific, with great variation across our case study sites.

The employment information contained within the KPI reporting data was also compared to the funding data for the IPAs (provided by NIAA) and to the site satisfaction survey data (discussed in more detail in the following section). In the limited sample size of the case study sites there was little evidence that the IPAs create full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs for Indigenous people, and if all funding was assumed to relate to job creation, then the cost per job would be very high. Of course, in reality the IPA funding does not relate purely to Indigenous jobs. However, it was notable that despite the small number of jobs created by the IPAs, a statistically significant relationship (at 1% level) was found between both the satisfaction that the IPA has created employment and that the IPA has created career pathways (from satisfaction survey) and the total funding provided in 2022–23 to the IPA funding organisation; that is, based on the data available, we can be 99% confident that increasing funding for an IPA will increase satisfaction that the IPA is improving employment and creating career pathways. However, a limitation of this analysis is that there were only 50 responses to the satisfaction surveys, drawn from only 6 of the case study IPA project sites.

It is also important to note that while many IPA sites report the KPI information on a single IPA project basis, for others the data is reported in consolidated form for a number of IPA projects together. This is a limitation of the analysis as prevents true like-for-like comparison across our case study sites.

Table 4.4 Summary of KPI data reported for eight 6-monthly reporting periods relating to employment numbers and hours reported by the IPA managing entities for each case study IPA

Case study site	Average of Indigenous employment numbers	Average of total employment numbers	Average of Indigenous hours	Average of all hours	Average hours per Indigenous person employed per week	Average hours per non-Indigenous person employed per week	Average hours per person employed per week
Overall mean data reported by entities including 10 case study sites*	15.95	17.88	1,665.76	3,230.63	4	31**	7
Lowest value site	0.13	1.13	130.00	1,257.98	1	7**	3
Highest value site	114.86	122.71	4,209.17	10,280.01	40	44**	44

* The KPI data is reported by the IPA managing organisations to the NIAA on a consolidated basis for a number of IPAs rather than each IPA reporting separately. No sub-analysis of this data by individual IPA is available. Accordingly, the data analysed represents data reported by 10 managing organisations, representing a total of 27 IPAs including the 10 case study sites

** Based on 6 sites, as no non-Indigenous people are employed at the remaining 4.

4.4.6. How IPAs contribute to workforce development within case study sites

Ranger roles on IPAs provide avenues for employment, skill development and pathways to employment in other sectors in natural resource management and resource development industries, such as mining, to government jobs. Girringun IPA staff state that one sign of success is that staff move onto other jobs from the IPA. Staff movement is not perceived negatively by Lake Condah IPA staff, as those who gain employment elsewhere continue to direct their capacity to the IPA through other means.

> If rangers get skills, they can go get a mining job for $150k per year … There is the need to move equipment between properties, can't afford to buy. Creating opportunities for upskilling rangers to get jobs elsewhere. (name withheld IPA)
>
> All about the youth. Paid for 6 people to get their licence. Next generation to get things done. Good some nephews that are now working. Need the white card – OH&S earning $2k per week. It's always sad when we can't get the jobs. People need to get out of their shell. (name withheld IPA)
>
> Ranger since 14, worked in school holidays. Recently graduated and was keen for a job. Might do an apprenticeship first and come back. (name withheld IPA)
>
> Groote Eylandt Mining Company (GEMCO, a Groote Eylandt-based operation) has a leadership training course. People often move from rangers to GEMCO. We also have people move from GEMCO back, often can't handle the rigid OH&S. (name withheld IPA)
>
> We request that people get a licence, working with KDP to get licences, weed identification, chainsaw; it's a good pathway. The need to be competent across a range of skills. There are a lot of Aboriginal ORICs [in the area]. (name withheld IPA)

> IPA opens opportunities for young people in the NRM space. Opens the door, gives them a chance. A lot of staff get poached to other places. Parks, smelter. (name withheld IPA)
>
> There has been people move on to other roles like Agriculture Victoria. (name withheld IPA)
>
> We don't care if people leave, they'll put back into Country. (name withheld IPA)
>
> Success has led people moving to other jobs within these (non-IPA) organisations. (name withheld IPA)

Findings presented in Chapter 6 highlight the importance of a sector-wide skill development plan and system that supports career pathways and the continual growth of capacity with IPAs and the Indigenous land and sea management sector.

4.5. Satisfaction with how the IPA Program is working for economic benefits relative to other benefits within case study sites

Satisfaction survey respondents indicated by providing a score (from 0 for strongly disagree to 10 for strongly agree) whether they agreed that the IPA has helped across various important aspects of life, relating to Country, culture, community and to sharing knowledge, and also to a number of economic factors. The average (mean) scores for the various statements ranged from the highest score of 9.2 (the IPA has helped promote sharing of knowledge of history and cultural heritage), to the lowest average score of 6.3 (the IPA has helped increase ownership by Indigenous peoples – land, house, business, destiny). The scores for each aspect are shown in Figure 4.5.

Looking at those aspects of life scoring highly, these scores indicate that the survey respondents agree that the IPAs have helped promote sharing of knowledge, have helped people to get involved in caring and managing Country, have helped people practise cultural activities and have promoted social and emotional wellbeing for people within the community. The average scores for each of these aspects were higher than satisfaction scores given for the IPA as a whole.

However, the scores indicate that IPAs are less clearly operating to help with economic aspects of life. The lowest 6 average scores all related to economic factors: promoting ownership (of land, houses, business, destiny) (score 6.3); facilitating better infrastructure (better roads, better internet, better buildings) (score 6.5); promoting Traditional Owner–owned and –led businesses (6.9); helping people access training (7.0); enabling, creating or developing pathways to career opportunities (7.6); and helping create more employment on Country (7.6).

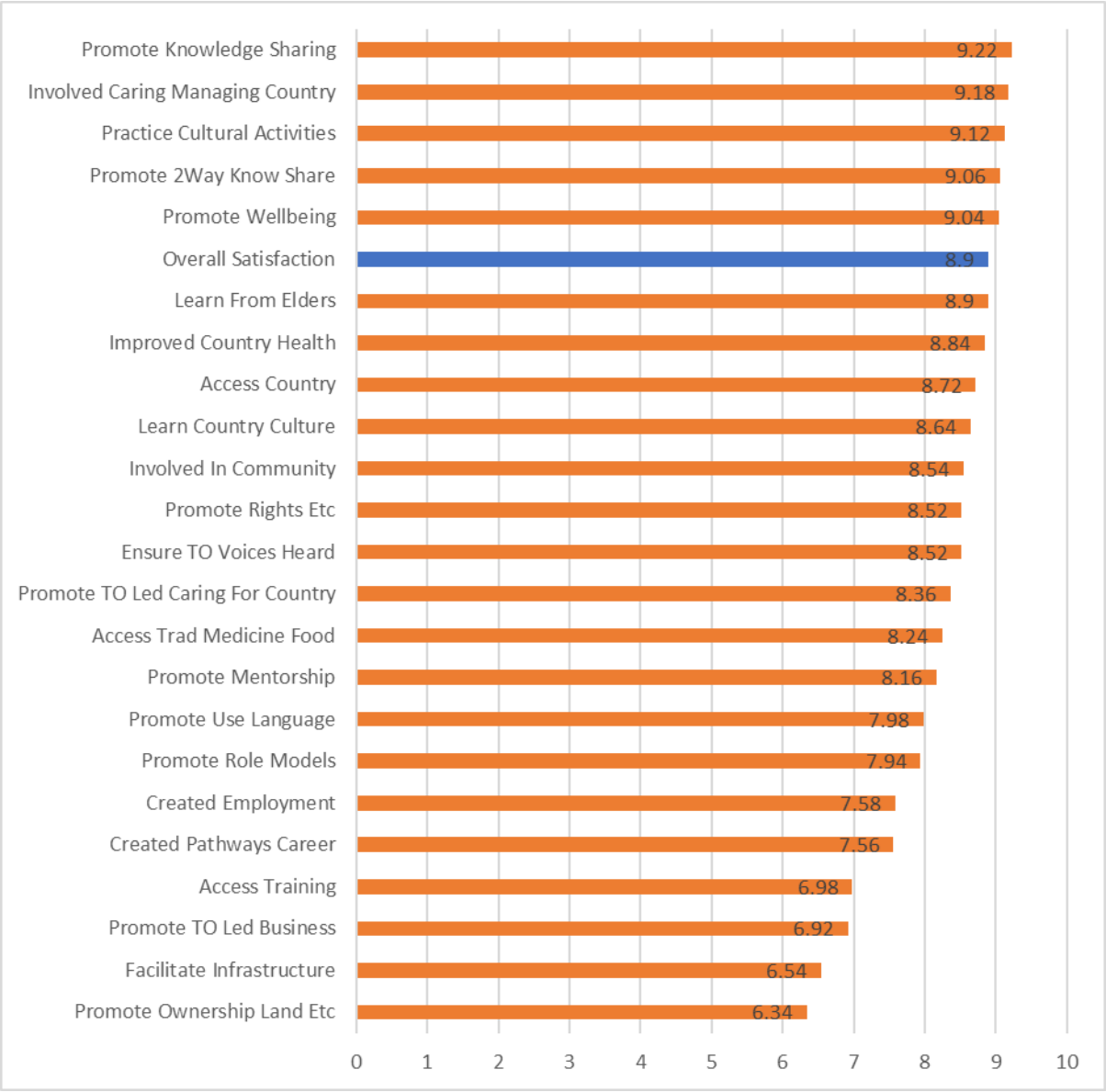
Deeper analysis was conducted on the scores given for the impact of the IPA on different aspects of life seeking to understanding the drivers and contextual factors influencing the variations in responses across the different IPAs.

The particular IPA site was found to have a significant impact on the scores for many of the different aspects of life. Beyond the IPA itself, socio-demographic factors were also relevant, with the age and/or gender of the respondent, and whether the respondent lived on Country, found to have a statistically significant impact on the scores given for some aspects of life. The statistically significant relationships found are set out in Table 4.5. As would be expected from the overall satisfaction scores, where the 2 lowest scores were for Ngadju and Yappala, there are also a number of different aspects of life where these IPAs score significantly lower. These differences encompass a range of different groupings of aspects of life, including those relating to caring for Country; to sharing knowledge; and to social, cultural and economic aspects. The only aspects where any specific IPA site was not found to be statistically important was for helping people access Country and for

promoting social and emotional wellbeing, which received relatively high scores across all the IPAs, and helping people access training, which received a fairly low score across all IPA sites.

It should also be noted that when the total funding provided (either to the IPA alone or for a number of IPAs when the funding organisation manages separate IPAs) was compared with the overall satisfaction score reported by survey respondents, a statistically significant correlation was found (with P value less than 0.05). Indeed, funding levels were found to have a statistically significant positive relationship with most of the factors: only access to Country, involved in caring for Country, promoting Traditional Owner–led caring for Country, promoting ownership and facilitating infrastructure were not positively correlated (p values exceeded 0.1). This could indicate that increasing funding provides the funding organisations with greater opportunities to deliver benefits to the IPAs and the related Indigenous communities, and hence improve satisfaction across a range of different aspects of life.

Figure 4.5 Mean score indicating agreement that the IPA has promoted benefits across various aspects of life (where 0 = strongly disagree to 10 = strongly agree) (n=50)



It was also clear that many of the perceived benefits from IPAs were strongly correlated with the annual funding received by the IPA, as shown by the correlations reported in Table 4.5 Notably particularly strong relationships (significant at 1% level) were found between funding levels and perceived benefits from key economic aspects of life: employment, creating career pathways and accessing training. Similarly high significance correlations were found between funding and promoting Traditional Owner–led caring for Country, ensuring Traditional Owner voices heard, promoting use of language, accessing traditional medicines and foods and promoting mentorship and role models. This indicates that while the IPA Program can provide multiple benefits to Country and to people across many domains of life, the perceived benefits of the program across the various domains increase as funding increases.

Table 4.5 Statistically significant relationships found between the scores for different aspects of life and respondent socio-demographic factors, and to overall IPA funding (n=50)

Aspect of life	Female respondent	Age of respondent	Whether respondent reported they live on Country	Total funding for IPA or group of IPAs	Specific IPA compared to other IPA sites
Access Country					
Practice cultural activities		+ve			-ve Ngadju compared to other IPAs
Access trad medicine food			-ve	+ve	-ve for Ngadju, Pulu Islet and Yappala compared to other IPAs
Involved caring managing Country					-ve Ngadju
Learn Country culture			-ve	+ve	-ve Yappala
Learn from Elders				+ve	-ve Ngadju
Promote knowledge sharing		+ve		+ve	-ve Ngadju
Promote 2-way know share		+ve			-ve Ngadju
Access training				+ve	
Involved In community		+ve		+ve	+ve Katiti-Petermann
Created employment				+ve	+ve Anindilyakwa and Katiti-Petermann
Created pathways career			-ve	+ve	-ve for Ngadju, Pulu Islet and Yappala
Promote Traditional Owner–led business					-ve for Ngadju, Pulu Islet and Yappala
Promote ownership land, etc.	-ve				-ve for Ngadju, Pulu Islet, Yappala and Katiti-Petermann
Promote mentorship				+ve	-ve Ngadju
Promote role models				+ve	-ve Ngadju, +ve Katiti-Petermann
Facilitate infrastructure					-ve for Pulu Islet, Yappala and Katiti-Petermann
Promote Traditional Owner–led caring For Country				+ve	-ve for Ngadju and Yappala
Improved Country health				+ve	-ve for Ngadju and Yappala
Promote use language				+ve	-ve for Ngadju and Yappala

Aspect of life	Female respondent	Age of respondent	Whether respondent reported they live on Country	Total funding for IPA or group of IPAs	Specific IPA compared to other IPA sites
Ensure Traditional Owner voices heard				+ve	-ve for Ngadju and Yappala
Promote rights, etc.					-ve for Yappala
Promote wellbeing					
Overall satisfaction				+ve	-ve for Ngadju and Yappala

+ve indicates a statistically significant positive relationship (i.e. females score higher, older people score higher; person living on Country scores higher than someone who doesn't), whereas -ve indicates a statistically significant negative relationship. Significance reported at 5% level or stronger; a blank indicates no statistically significant relationship (at .05% probability level) for that aspect of life.

The findings from the satisfaction survey data analysis were broadly supported by the annual outcomes data reported by each IPA site. For example, while the outcomes data reported that IPA staff were undertaking some qualifications and had been involved in a wide range of training programs, the majority of the 10 case study sites also reported that it was hard to access education and training, which may have contributed to the low score on the satisfaction survey regarding the level of satisfaction with the IPA having helped with access to training. Similarly, with IPAs promoting career pathways, the outcomes data revealed that of 11 workers who had left the case study IPAs over a 4-year period, less than half (45%) had gone on to a government or non-government job. With regards to encouraging enterprise and partnerships within their region, the case study IPA outcomes reports did indicate they mostly used local businesses for their goods and services and were involved in a range of commercial activities and partnerships.

The outcomes reports were generally supportive of the IPA Program, with more reports indicating IPAs had contributed 'a lot' towards the overall health and wellbeing of Indigenous employees employed on Country, compared to the alternate responses on the form of 'a little' or 'not really'. Reasons given for the generally positive responses varied from some IPAs relating the response purely to employment: 'ongoing satisfying employment' and 'continued employment'. Other IPAs reported more holistic reasons, linking wellbeing to employment, access to Country and caring for Country and culture; responses included 'Being on Country and working for local issue is key to identity and wellbeing', 'It is very important to Aboriginal people to be out on their own land, for them to be able to make a positive impact on Country gives them great sense of pride and also improves their health and wellbeing', 'Through accessing Country and providing opportunities for intergenerational knowledge transfer' and 'They get to reconnect and get access to Country'.

4.6. How are IPAs working to target socio-economically disadvantaged regions?

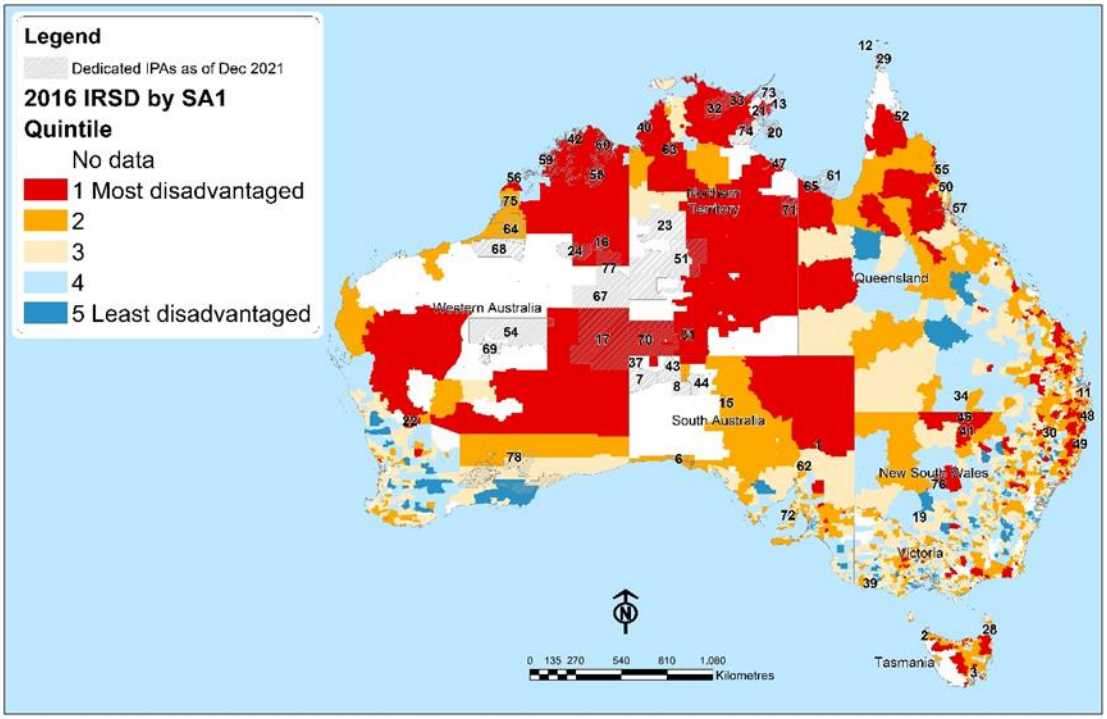
IPA funding has historically flowed predominantly to those regions of Australia that are the most socially disadvantaged (Pert et al. 2020). In Australia, the ABS measures the level of advantage or disadvantage in different geographic regions using SEIFA (ABS 2016a), as described in section 2.7.5. Of the 4 separate indexes, here we focus on the Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD). Further we focus here on data organised by quintiles; in each case, being classified within a lower quintile indicates greater relative disadvantage compared to a region in a higher quintile.

4.6.1. Spatial analysis of contributions of IPAs to socio-economically disadvantaged regions

Figure 4.6 shows the location of the IPAs dedicated by the end of 2021 mapped against a background showing the relative social-economic disadvantage of the regions. These maps clearly indicate that most IPAs are located in the more disadvantaged areas of the country. As IPAs provide incomes, jobs and education and training opportunities for the people of the regions where they are located (as discussed above in sections 4.1 to 4.5), it appears that IPAs are located in those areas where such government support would ideally be targeted to help address this relative disadvantage. IRSD only includes measures of relative disadvantage, and thus the lowest quintile will highlight regions where many households include people who have low incomes, or low qualifications or are in low skill occupations.

We sought to understand whether the IPAs dedicated by 2006 (19 IPAs were dedicated by the end of 2006 for which we were also able to obtain SEIFA 2006 index details for their regions) showed any improvement in the decile for their region, based on the SEIFA indexes over the 10-year period to 2016. We then sought to determine whether the IPAs dedicated by 2011 (we had 52 IPAs that were both dedicated by that date and for which SEIFA information was available) showed any improvement in their relative levels of disadvantage based on the SEIFA indexes. While IPAs may contribute to the overall level of education, training and occupational skills and business development in a region over time, helping regions with IPAs become less disadvantaged over time relative to those regions without IPAs, we were unable to find any clear evidence of any improvement over time that could be attributed to the IPA Program. Given the many different factors that can impact on relative advantage and disadvantage, and the fairly small size of the IPA Program in dollar terms, our failure to find a clear link is unsurprising.

Figure 4.6 2016 SEIFA Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD) quintile scores with IPA extant as of 2021. Numbers in the map refer to the IPAs listed in Table 3.2.



Sources: ABS 2016b, DAWE and NIAA 2021, DAWE 2021d

4.7. Social wellbeing benefits of the IPA

The social and wellbeing benefits and outcomes of IPAs flow to both individuals and to the wider community, and include intergenerational teaching, community relations, employment, skills development for disaster response, mob on Country that also allows separation from the stresses and pressures of everyday life, as well as other benefits. We first look at the overall view of the benefits provided to individuals and communities based on our case study sites then focus on the different types of benefits.

4.7.1. Overall satisfaction that IPAs are providing benefits to individuals and community within case study sites

Overall respondents from the Satisfaction surveys gathered at case study sites reported a high level of satisfaction with IPAs. In response to the question 'Overall, how satisfied are you with the way the IPA operates (0 = very unsatisfied to 10 = very satisfied)', respondents reported a mean score of 8.9. While the mean scores for each IPA were above the mid-point, indicating more people satisfied than dissatisfied, there was a notable variation by IPA, as shown in Table 4.6. There are no obvious similarities between the IPA sites reporting the lower scores compared to higher beyond simple geography: the 2 lowest scoring IPA sites (Yappala and Ngadju) are both in the south, while the other sites are all in central or northern Australia. A statistically significant positive relationship was found between the reported overall satisfaction with the IPA and the total funding paid to each IPA (or for group of IPAs when a number are managed by one organisation that receives total funding for the group as a whole). That is, we can be 95% confident there is a relationship between increased funding and increased satisfaction with how the IPA operates.

Respondents were also requested to indicate whether they thought the IPA project has been beneficial to them as an individual and to their community. Overall, a large majority of respondents did: 98% agreed it was beneficial to themselves and 92% to their communities. Again, there is some variation in responses across IPA sites, as shown in Table 4.6; however, as can be seen, a number of sites reported unanimous agreement that the IPAs had been beneficial. It is of note that the Ngadju IPA is very recent, having only been dedicated in 2020, whereas the other IPAs were dedicated between 2009 and 2015; this may provide some rationale for the lower agreement within Ngadju IPA compared to elsewhere.

Table 4.6 Overall satisfaction scores and percentage agreeing IPA beneficial to individuals/community, by satisfaction survey respondents within case study IPA sites (n=50)

IPA	Overall Satisfaction score (out of 10)	Beneficial to respondent as individual (% agreeing)	Beneficial to respondent's community (% agreeing)
Anindilyakwa IPA	10	100%	100%
Bardi Jawi IPA	8.75	100%	100%
Katiti-Petermann	10	100%	100%
Ngadju IPA	7.6	90% (1 respondent disagreed)	70% (3 respondents disagreed)
Pulu Islet IPA	7.75	100%	75% (1 respondent disagreed)
Yappala IPA	6	100%	100%
Overall	**8.9**	**98%**	**92%**

Beyond the mean scores, for a variable such as the overall satisfaction score, reported on a scale of zero to 10, considering the distribution of responses can also provide useful information. The frequency of respondents reporting each score can be found at Table 4.7.

Table 4.7 Frequency of scores, and mean score, for question asking respondent to indicate their overall satisfaction with the IPA Program (n=50)

Score	% of responses indicating respondents' overall satisfaction with the IPA
0 = very unsatisfied	0%
1	2%
2	0%
3	2%
4	0%
5 = neutral	14%
6	0%
7	0%
8	4%
9	0%
10 = very satisfied	78%
Mean score	**8.9**

The Net Promoter Score (NPS) scale was used to assess the strength of satisfaction. The NPS compresses the 0–10 scale into 3 distinct groups: promoters who are very strong supporters (scoring 9 or 10), passives who score above neutral but who are not highly enthusiastic (scoring 7 or 8), and detractors who are those who provide a neutral or negative, indicating they are not supporters (scoring 6 or below).For the question regarding how satisfied respondents were overall with the IPA, it is clear that respondents generally scored the IPA Program very highly, as the promoters (78%), strongly outnumbered the detractors (18%), giving an NPS of 60% (generally considered to be an extremely good NPS score). Focusing on the detractors, no particular age group predominated, and a little over half reported as being female. Analysis by IPA revealed that 44% of detractors were from Ngadju, 22% were each from Yappala and Bardi Jawi, and 11% were from Pulu Islet. However, with so few distractors (18% overall), it is important to note these are percentages of a very small sample.

4.7.2. Review of different types of social and wellbeing benefits identified

The social and wellbeing benefits of the IPA Program found in Phase Two of the evaluation are:

- being on Country away from trouble and distractions
- family and community wellbeing
- rewarding IPA role
- work culture and pride
- employment on Country
- leveraging networks and expanding opportunities in disaster recovery
- having and being role models
- skills and professional development
- community relations and awareness raising
- community engagement with educational institutions.

The social and wellbeing benefits shared by IPA providers, stakeholder interviews and through the online surveys demonstrate the diversity of these benefits and the importance of the IPA Program. Some of the benefits include people being distanced from trouble and distractions in their communities, having and being role models in the IPA Program to raising awareness and building community relations. Some of the variety of benefits is presented in the rest of this section.

Yarning reflection by IPA Indigenous Evaluation Team – working different ways at each IPA

We [the consultants] were going from one-horse towns to remote regions, meeting in isolated areas where people are dispersed, and reaching each person could take up to an hour. In these areas, time didn't allow us to reach people individually – it made more sense to come together and speak as a group.

In addition, it was evident that people had gone to a lot of trouble to organise for our visit. In [IPA location withheld] they had a whole presentation set up for us – all these people travelled from different towns and sometimes significant distances to meet us together and present. What felt respectful was meeting them in the way that they had arranged.

At another site, the CEO had arranged for many of the IPA rangers – some young and others more experienced – to attend the consultation. It felt it would be rude to leave the group and ask for someone to accompany me around [the IPA] to get surveys. Staying with them felt like the right thing to do. It was also clearly empowering for the young rangers to be involved in the group discussion and they all offered contributions to the yarn.

Being on Country is a break from trouble and distractions in communities

Being on Country can help people to distance themselves from trouble or distractions in communities:

> Here we have easiness around us; it's not felt on the mainland. (name withheld IPA
>
> I reckon it's really good to get them out of community. Some of them like to get away from community trouble … Some of the families are really difficult to work with; try to solve all that. But they really like to get out on Country. (name withheld IPA)
>
> We need to tell the stories and the benefits. I feel better about myself … We can see the change in people. (name withheld IPA)

Family and community wellbeing

Family and community wellbeing benefits generated through IPAs include employment of family members and having an income that supports families, employment conditions that have a positive effect on the family, and assistance to families to visit Country. An Indigenous online survey respondent highlighted the benefit of learning on Country to peoples' mental health.

IPAs can also provide an avenue for social support and a vocational pathway for youth as stated below:

> Families are happy that rangers are working. (name withheld IPA)
>
> Money going to families: it's the key difference. Many [Nation de-identified] don't even have Centrelink. (name withheld IPA)
>
> My partner is happy; there are economic and social benefits for everyone. People get time off in lieu. (name withheld IPA)
>
> Training and support for all wellbeing. Some of the kids have a tough background. The program has stopped the racism that people face. (name withheld IPA)

Employment on Country and flexibility that facilitates participation

While IPAs create some jobs, the actual number of jobs created and the number of hours worked vary widely across IPAs. For example, Katiti-Petermann reported creating more jobs than other case study sites; however, these numbers are small and, from the reporting of hours worked, are short

term or casual (see section 4.4). The benefits derived from employment on Country relate to the practice of looking after Country, returning to Country, healing of people and Country, earning an income and providing options for youth to work on Country. Responses from various sites are provided below:

> We're seeing Country, looking after all the rock holes (tjurkula). I've just become a ranger. The IPA's a really good thing. It's a really good thing to get out and see Country, and people think that we're doing really good work. (name withheld IPA)
>
> Just love what I do. Working with the land, culture and animals. Was doing some farming. I'm not an office person. Worked with land council for 10 years. Will be meeting with the shire next week about trails. (name withheld IPA)
>
> I think the flexibility is great and the ability to employ casual staff all the time with the money going to the Aboriginal corporation. This in turn allows them to employ Elders or youth who wouldn't necessarily get a job as a state-based ranger (as a public servant) for several reasons. They can be employed on a casual basis as a Traditional Owner to be out on Country; there is all of that flexibility in terms of employment. (Stakeholder interviewee)
>
> We employ approximately 300 rangers across the desert. I would say 95% of that is casual employment; that is the model that people want and that is why we do it. We are very much driven by the goals and aspirations and the positions of the groups we work with. (Stakeholder interviewee)

Yarning reflection by IPA Indigenous Evaluation Team – the people we met and their roles

All levels of governance came to the yarns – ranging from CEOs to Elders to the younger generations. This is because they're talking about Country and no one can talk for anyone else's experiences of country in our culture, so it's crucial to acknowledge and respect the different perspectives that come from different people in the community. Everyone had their own story to tell. With the example of the CEO, who invited all the rangers to sit with us - he could have just met with us himself, but it was clear he wanted to empower his young rangers and bring them in on the discussions of their Country and the work that they do.

Leveraging expertise within the IPA networks to expand ranger capabilities

IPA providers are leveraging expertise within their IPA and ranger connections to build new capability networks through ranger exchanges and partnerships. A clear example that came through the yarns is the disaster recovery work facilitated by (name withheld) IPA:

> Rangers could be helping out with national disasters down south. You can maintain your own cultural identity and still do the other. In Cyclone Yasi, 4 ranger programs come to help us. They got in trouble from other funders about where money can be spent. Went to arrange a conference at Ingham, agreed to put together a disaster response and recovery. We want some autonomy from SES [State Emergency Service] driven by Aboriginal people.

Peer-to-peer learning in regional forums

The peer-to-peer learning and the connections generated through regional and national IPA and ranger forums are highly valued by IPA providers and stakeholders. There are multiple forums that connect with IPAs, some landscape-focused, such as the Desert Alliance, others relating to roles, such as ranger forums. IPA stakeholders commented on the reduced number of forums and

opportunities for national and regional land and sea management knowledge exchange gatherings. These gatherings can be a source of strength of voice for rangers who share their sense of pride in their work, as the quote below describes:

> It's that pride and opportunity to not only be a part of something but to have a voice and to recognise the power of your voice at that meeting. Getting up in front of 400 people scares the pants off me; rangers from [location de-identified], lined up to give presentations to 400 people. You could literally see people shaking. That's how important it was to get up there. People were pushing themselves so hard, through all of their fears and nerves to get up and tell their story because they knew they have a voice and this is the opportunity to tell their story, not just to their peers but also to people of influence. (Stakeholder interviewee)

Rewarding roles in the IPA

IPA staff conveyed a sense of pride for their achievements, gratitude to work on Country, vision for outcomes of their work for Australia, stewardship of Country and accomplishment that they can share their experiences with family.

> It's about identity and empowerment. That's what I get from working on Country. Always been here on the mission. Having access to the fish and the lake. Now we've acquired more property. Now become a parent and connecting new people to it. Privileged to be here. (name withheld IPA)

> We're not in it for money. We're in it for education and training and capacity and sustainability as a people. (name withheld IPA)

Work culture and pride

IPA providers expressed the value of being part of a culturally safe workplace and working with like-minded people who have similar passion for their roles. For example, Lake Condah and Bardi Jawi IPA staff share their pride in their workplace where both Indigenous knowledge and western science are utilised and where cultural grounding is part of the work environment. Other benefits of the work culture within IPAs are:

> I enjoy the getting out. It's giving us a stable job … just need more babysitters. Getting childcare, it's a hassle … still manage. I like that I started at the bottom and now I'm a coordinator. It can be the same for everyone. Enjoy being the boss at 23 years old. The animal surveys and looking at what's there, exploring, going finding new places. (name withheld IPA)

> I love my job. I have been here since I left school, which is 3 years. I don't want to leave my community, my family or my Country to go down south. I am safe here working for my family, my culture, on Country. (name withheld IPA)

> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have gone into the national parks space, there is a high turnover. Because they're working in a system that doesn't align culturally or the work environment is not culturally safe. (Stakeholder interviewee)

> What we are hearing from our partners is that pride is a benefit and a positive to IPAs and confidence in terms of managing Country and making decisions. (Stakeholder interviewee)

Yarning Reflection by IPA Indigenous Evaluation Team – Bardi Jawi IPA

After talking to the Bardi Jawi IPA stakeholders, we reflected that the IPA is seen as another opportunity to help Aboriginal people stay grounded in culture. It is seen as having helped build spiritual connection to land and sea and helped to keep language and stories alive.

Role models within the IPA

IPAs have provided role models for families and community members, as expressed in the responses below:

> It's important to show the kids that dad goes to work each day. (name withheld IPA)
>
> It comes from leadership; seeing participants in the uniform gave us something to aim at. You can't be what you can't see. (name withheld IPA)
>
> It's a really common thing that people want to do ranger work because their older family members were rangers. You hear that ambition a lot. (name withheld IPA)

Skills and professional development for IPAs and across industry sectors

The professional development of rangers working across a variety of vocational areas was identified as a clear benefit associated with IPAs. The acquisition of licences for land and marine vehicles, drones and biosecurity training were some of the benefits of on-the-job training on IPAs. Several IPA provides share the broader application of some of the licences acquired within IPAs such as a driver's and drone licence that can be used in other industries such as mining. Below are responses from the on-site yarns:

> Staff training is important – getting driver's licence is important and a big deal. (name withheld IPA
>
> Conservation land management, fruit flies, formal qualification monitoring and inspection. Three communities in top western area. They can undertake some activities under the Border Force Act … Eyes and ears compliance training. They can inform agencies but cannot apprehend, etc. (name withheld IPA)

Raising awareness and building community relations

IPA providers shared a variety of positive experiences from awareness raising through programs on their IPAs that facilitated new understanding with the wider community about their work, the IPA and their culture. Lake Condah has a youth program with Victoria Police that is improving understanding between police and the youth. Pulu Islet and Lake Condah shared the achievement on their IPAs with international audiences. IPAs are using different methods to engage with their local and regional communities:

> The IPA is building a level of respect for (IPA provider name) by the broader community, as well as building community relations. A small thing is the signs put up by (IPA provider). There is respect for our work – no bullet holes in our signs – there is so much respect. (name withheld IPA)

Community engagement with learning and education structures

Engagement with educational institutions from primary schools to universities is seen as mutually beneficial to IPA providers and their communities, as stated below:

> With Areyonga School they've had a whole week out Country for 2 years now. That school has been great to work with. (name withheld IPA)

Go to schools for talks and multicultural days. One at high school tomorrow. Marine science with JCU [James Cook University]. People at detention centre have heard about it and one came and worked with (name withheld). Bush gardens buy plants from the nursery which is (name withheld)-owned. (name withheld IPA)

The Learning on Country kids had a look through the shed. The kids around the island are keen to see the rangers in the community. (name withheld IPA)

Yarning reflection by IPA Indigenous Evaluation Team – working with Elders and younger generations

On the first day of our site visit we met at the closest regional centre, which was located an hour and a half from the IPA. We met with the IPA service provider and Traditional Owners with one participant travelling 3.5 hours to accompany us over the 2 days. In the lead-up to the visit it was agreed by the IPA provider and Traditional Owners that the evaluation team would first have a yarn at the closest regional centre, acknowledging that this is where a number of the Traditional Owners live and work. On the second day the evaluation team would then travel to the IPA site and meet with the ranger. This approach allowed participants in both areas the opportunity to come and have a yarn with us about the IPA.

In attendance was a young Traditional Owner who accompanied her grandmother to the meeting; she was there to observe, learn and listen as her Elders talked with us about the IPA. This was an example of the vital role that our Elders play in providing guidance and knowledge to our younger generations.

During our lunch break I asked her if she would like to complete a satisfaction survey. She hesitated, so I respectfully moved on to ask her grandmother if she would like to complete a survey. A short time later with some encouragement from her grandmother and me emphasising that we would really love to hear her views on the IPA, she completed a survey.

4.8. How well are IPAs providing benefits to the environment, to individuals and community in the view of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander national survey respondents?

The national online survey responses provided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples reported their level of satisfaction regarding how well the IPA Program was delivering a range of benefits. Overall, the scores provided by the survey respondents to the different questions indicate that these respondents believe the IPA Program is working fairly well to provide the different types of benefits. Mean scores lie between the mid-point score of 5, a neutral response, and the highest score possible of 10, which would indicate that the IPA Program is working extremely well. For the different types of benefits, mean scores ranged from 7.61 for ‘Looking after Country and culture’ down to 6.23 for ‘Working for economic benefits’. The frequencies of the scores given, and the mean responses, to each question can be seen in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8 Frequency of scores, and mean score, provided by respondents indicating how well they think IPA projects are … (n=13)

Score	Working to look after Country and culture	Using two-way knowledge to look after Country and culture	Working for social benefits for Indigenous peoples	Working for economic benefits for Indigenous peoples	Working for wellbeing benefits for Indigenous peoples
0 = not all/poorly	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
1	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
2	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
3	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
4	8%	0%	0%	0%	0%
5 = neutral	23%	36%	23%	54%	31%
6	8%	0%	15%	15%	0%
7	0%	0%	0%	0%	8%
8	15%	27%	38%	15%	23%
9	15%	18%	15%	15%	23%
10 = extremely well	31%	18%	8%	0%	15%
Mean score	**7.61**	**7.46**	**7.31**	**6.23**	**7.54**

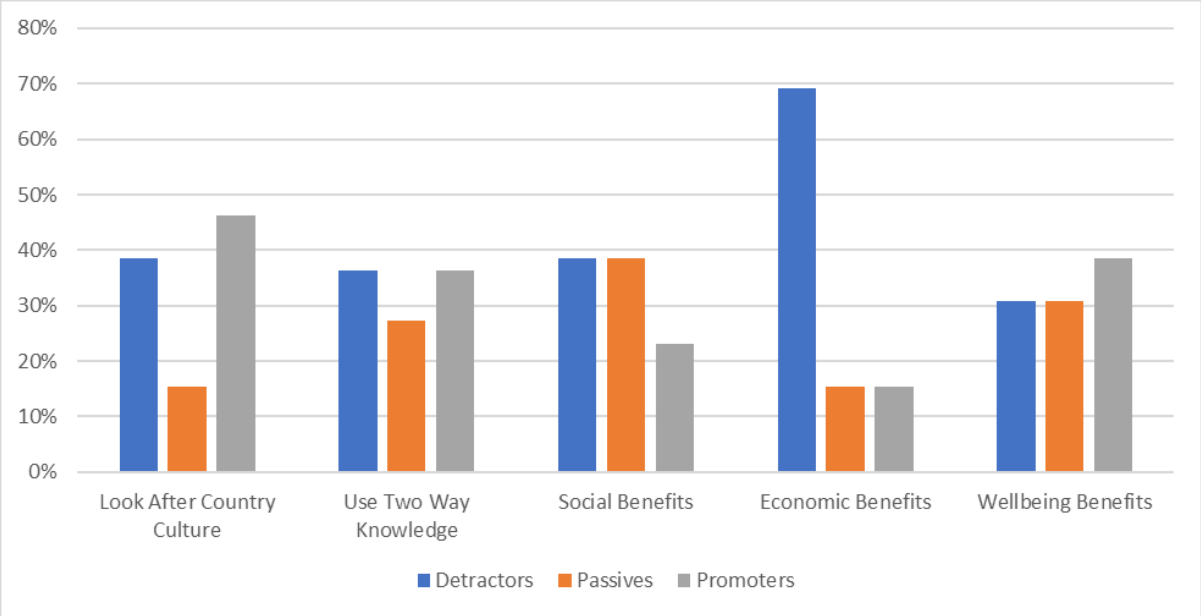
Frequencies greater than 25% are lightly shaded and greater than 50% have darker shading.

Examining the responses more carefully reveals the different patterns of responses given for each type of benefit offered by IPA projects; however, it appears that the pattern of responses for economic benefits does differ from the pattern for other benefits. For the questions other than how well the IPA Program is working for economic benefits, we see 2 clusters of responses, with one group of respondents clustered around the mid scores, thus feeling neutrally towards the IPA Program, and another cluster of respondents around the high scores, thus feeling that the IPA Program is doing well or extremely well. However, for the economic benefits, there is a much larger cluster towards the middle of the scale, indicating that a far greater proportion of respondents are fairly neutral towards the view that IPAs offer economic benefits, with no respondents scoring the IPA Program as doing extremely well for this aspect of benefits.

The graph (Figure 4.7) shows for each question posed the proportion of respondents within each of the NPS categories, and allows us to clearly identify those aspects of the IPA Program where the promoters outnumbered the detractors. The NPS, which is calculated as % of promoters less % of detractors, can be used to gauge loyalty and word-of-mouth between users/customers of a program and the program itself. Standards vary from industry to industry, but in general an NPS over 30% is considered good and over 50% is considered excellent.

For the question regarding how well IPAs were thought to look after Country and culture, it is clear that those respondents who scored the IPA Program very highly, the promoters, outnumbered the detractors, and this is clearly an overall vote of confidence in the IPA Program. The NPS for looking after Country and culture was +8%. For the question enquiring about how well the IPA Program is working for social and emotional wellbeing benefits, the NPS score was also +8%. Thus, for both these aspects of the program, the responses indicate that the survey respondents perceive that the program is doing well, although there is scope for improvement.

Figure 4.7 Frequency of national online survey responses for each benefit analysed using the NPS (n=13)



For the other questions asked, the NPS reveals a less positive story. When asked about how well the IPA Program is promoting the 2-way knowledge to look after Country and culture, the NPS is 0, and for social and for economic benefits the detractors exceed the promoters, resulting in NPSs of −15% and −54% respectively.

The relationship between the scores provided by respondents for the different types of benefits was explored using correlation analysis (see Table 4.9). This showed that the scores provided for social and wellbeing benefits were highly and significantly correlated, and the scores provided for using 2-way knowledge were very highly and significantly correlated with both social and wellbeing benefits. This indicates that those respondents who scored the use of knowledge highly were also scoring highly for social and wellbeing benefits. While this suggests that there may be some link between 2-way knowledge sharing and social and wellbeing benefits (as has been found previously; see Jarvis et al. 2021), a causal link cannot be proved with cross-sectional data analysis.

Table 4.9 Correlations between scores provided by respondents indicating how well they think IPA projects are performing to provide the different types of benefits (n=13)

Benefit type	Look after Country, culture	Use 2-way knowledge	Social benefits	Economic benefits	Wellbeing benefits
Look after Country, culture	1				
Use 2-way knowledge	0.5092	1			
Social benefits	0.4386	0.8630***	1		
Economic benefits	0.2028	0.5863*	0.4498	1	
Wellbeing benefits	0.3312	0.9190***	0.7778***	0.5333*	1

Statistically significant correlations at 1% level are shaded

*** Significant at 1% level ** Significant at 5% level * Significant at 10% level

While strong conclusions cannot be drawn from analysis of such a small sample of responses, it is notable that the ranking of the scores by national online survey respondents align broadly with the responses from the satisfaction survey completed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people involved directly or indirectly with the IPA case study sites. That analysis also revealed that when

considering benefits to Country; culture; knowledge sharing; and social, economic and wellbeing benefits, it was in the promotion of economic benefits that satisfaction with the IPAs was lowest.

4.9. How much is/are the IPA project/s working for Country and culture?

Representatives of IPA providers and Traditional Owners from 10 IPA case study sites were asked how well their IPA was working for Country and culture.

IPA providers described how Country and culture benefit from involvement in the program as Traditional Custodians are supported to be on Country, which allows for reconnecting, strengthening and renewing connection with Country. Through this connection, management occurs.

The qualitative information provided through the yarns is supported by the data collated in the satisfaction surveys (see section 4.5). Findings from the 2 types of data collection and the analysis are complementary and reinforce the key findings, particularly where participants were asked to reflect on how much the IPA is working for Country and culture.

4.9.1. IPAs support custodians on Country = management of Country

IPAs enable and support connection to Country. Many illustrative examples were provided through the yarns. For example, at [name withheld]IPA, stakeholders highlighted the important role of this connection in maintaining identify, stressing the importance of re-vitalising the everyday intergenerational transfer of Indigenous ecological knowledge; for example:

> The concept of honouring the people who went before. It brings it home and that's what IPAs are about. The folks are retaining the story, retaining the history. They need to teach the young kids and tell the kids who they are. They can be the educators. Kids need to know who they are so their kids know who they are. They shouldn't just be rangers, they should be educators.

The IPA projects work for Country and culture in diverse ways. The work plans and management activities undertaken across IPAs often reflect the size, geopolitical status, governance arrangements, degree of resourcing and human capital and length of time in operation of the IPA.

For example, [name withheld] IPA providers reflected on the diverse management activities they undertake at various scales, illustrating the complexity of their workplan and the myriad of networks and relationships they manage to support their goals:

> At the moment we're doing biosecurity … checking pest marine life, driftwood and ghost nets … Black scar oysters are a problem. Biosecurity: they support purchase of equipment. We'd like to look at having a lab and be able to help out with schools and other things. JCU [James Cook University] is looking at marine science. They want to see people go into tertiary pathway and looking to increase from 50 to 100 kids within a few years.

Likewise, the [name withheld] IPA, while fairly recently dedicated, is building from the activities that have been undertaken by the ranger program to date:

> In terms of biodiversity, we manage ferals, the rock holes and other places that were being poisoned by ferals. The IPA has been important to look after the waterholes for both culture and wildlife. The rivers and salt basin are important. We need to do more … had some issues with prickly pear.
>
> Weed management is something more to do.

> We want to look at native propagation, look at then being able to sell. The IPA is another step forward; it's a development of native title.

Traditional Owners of the Pulu Islet IPA have expressed that the IPA supports traditional culture, which remains central to community life on Mabuiag Island and across the Torres Strait. Fishing, hunting and travelling around land and sea Country have always been part of daily cultural practice, and Traditional Owners said that the IPA helped to support these important activities.

4.9.2. IPAs support knowledge sharing, strengthening of culture

Many examples were provided of how the IPAs are supporting intergenerational knowledge transfer, knowledge renewal and sharing of cultural knowledge about management, including plant and animal names in language. IPAs further support the opportunity to re-engage with culture and build connections across community.

Respondents from Pulu Islet and Ngadju IPA providers stated that getting people on Country strengthens their sense of belonging and connection. People on the Bardi Jawi IPA describe one of their strengths as being able to engage a strong cultural lens when engaging in their diverse management activities. For Katiti-Petermann, the teaching of the younger generation is a priority and necessitates the involvement of all family members on visits to the IPA.

Yarning reflection by IPA Indigenous Evaluation Team – the importance of maintaining connection

At [name withheld] IPA, the group talk about how they are working to locate a place that they went to in the 1950s that is a crucial place. Its name cannot be said here. They have been doing a lot of work because it is a missing piece in a really important story. They have done all the background work, spoken with all the people they need to consult and gained the right permission, so now they are ready to go find it. There are several other important trips planned for this year too.

> There are only one and half places, of all the stories that cross throughout the whole country, there are only one and a half that have not yet been found. And the reason we know some are missing is because of the song cycle. Things can drop off really quickly if you don't go to them regularly. The reason is because we had people who grew up in these places. If you're relying on only one really old person and they pass away it can be lost really quickly. There is one really key men's place now [mentioned earlier] that is missing and that's the real priority right now. There is a story about how a place gets made, and the people connected to that place are all part of that story and need to know that story.

For [name withheld] IPA, the IPA is delivering to the community in diverse ways:

> The IPA employs a lot of different people, and they travel all around. Started here, now they go out to all different places. There's a lot of language being spoken at home; the trips are good for helping promote language. (We're) still a young IPA … it's been fantastic! Rangers were here working towards projects … but the IPA let us have the freedom to plan for the future, like conserving rock art.

The [name withheld] IPA spoke strongly about the role of the IPA project in supporting culture, especially intergenerational knowledge sharing and use of language:

> … it's about exchanges between young people and old people. Language is very important … traditional names of places, not other names. The IPA is linked to stories

> from the island, they go out to [location de-identified]. They are our stories, we can share, but we own them. We're very mindful of language for our next generation. It is not pidgin; we have language. It's your culture you come back to.

At [name withheld] IPA, the rangers' job is getting Traditional Owners out to Country:

> Sometimes they do also speak to that Country themselves, but sometimes their role is to set up camp, do other work to support TOs [Traditional Owners]. One thing they have to get their heads around is that they are working on other people's Country sometimes and they can be shy about that and need to make sure they don't make any decisions they shouldn't.

Other examples of how culture is strengthened through IPAs included:

> The great story – there are parts collected there from on the IPA from people who have passed. I'm forever thankful that we have it. (name withheld IPA)
>
> Some of the family are doing it and keeping the cultural connections with painting, craft and everything else. (name withheld IPA)

4.9.3. IPAs support learning on Country

[Name withheld] IPA provided strong evidence for the importance of being on Country in order to 'learn the Country':

> And learn the Country. You learn the song, you learn the Country.
>
> Nothing beats getting out there on Country. If you're looking how to make things better, it's get us out there more, get out on Country.
>
> It's like school for us out on Country. That is school out there, all they learn out there. They have got to learn both ways and then make it as one.

The [name withheld] IPA is also seen as a positive enabler for reconnecting with Country and culture:

> The other positive is some guys haven't been shown their culture, haven't experienced the richness of the landscape. The IPA has helped this. Gets people out; gets them onto the coast … these rangers are being shown these places.

4.10. How well do all respondents (non-Indigenous and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples) think the Australian, state and territory governments are partnering with Indigenous peoples to make decisions about IPAs?

As part of the national online survey, all respondents were asked to provide a quantitative score to represent their view on how well the federal, state and territory governments are partnering with Indigenous peoples to make decisions about IPAs, on a scale where zero equalled not at all/poorly up to a score of 10, meaning extremely well (Table 4.10 and Figure 4.8). Neither group of respondents provided high scores in response to this question, with most responses clustered around the mid-point. Non-Indigenous respondents overall scored slightly higher than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, with mean scores of 5.6 and 5.0 respectively.

The NPS analysis clearly indicates that neither group are promoters of this aspect of the IPA Program, with the NPS being strongly negative for both groups of respondents. The NPSs were −85% for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents and −57% for non-Indigenous respondents,

indicating that neither group are satisfied with this aspect, and the Indigenous respondents being notably more dissatisfied than the non-Indigenous with how well (or poorly) governments partner with Indigenous peoples for decision-making.

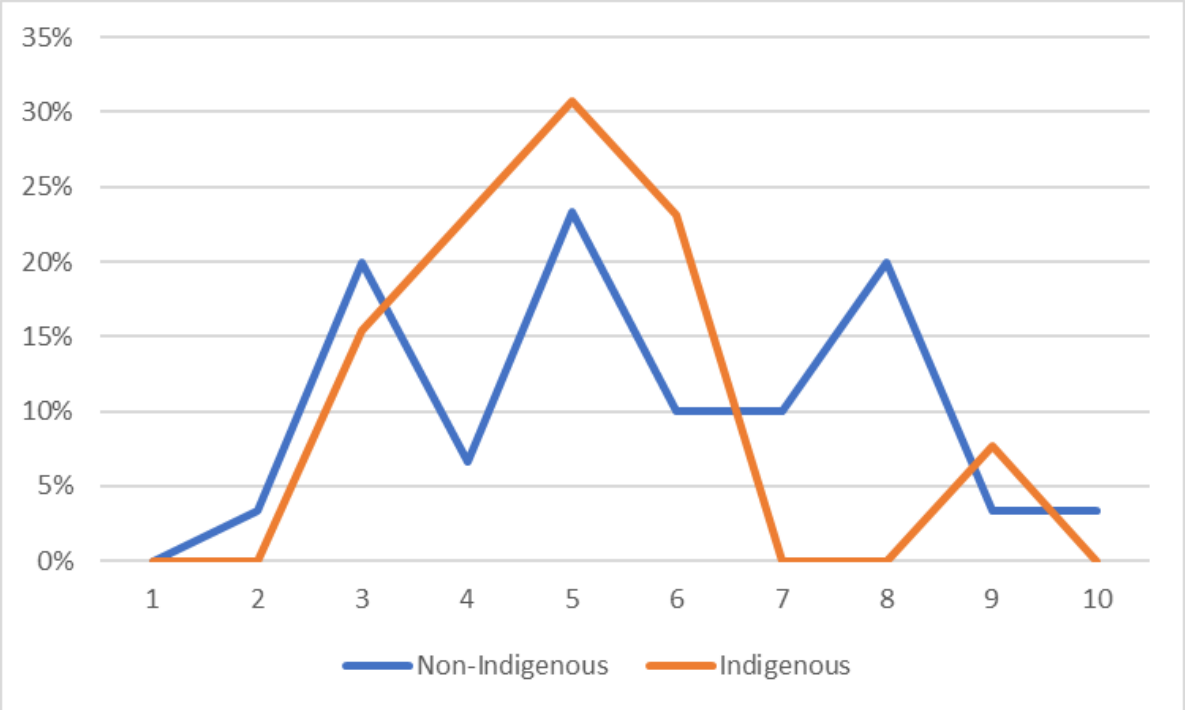
The key finding from this analysis is that there is significant opportunity for improvement in the way government partners with Indigenous peoples when making decisions about IPAs, when considered from the perspective of either group.

Table 4.10 Frequency of scores, mean score and sample sizes provided by respondents indicating how well they think the Australian, state and territory governments are partnering with Indigenous peoples to make decisions about IPAs

Score	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents	Non-Indigenous respondents	Total respondents
0 = not all/poorly	0%	0%	0%
1	0%	0%	0%
2	0%	3%	2%
3	15%	20%	19%
4	23%	7%	12%
5 = neutral	31%	23%	26%
6	23%	10%	14%
7	0%	10%	7%
8	0%	20%	14%
9	8%	3%	5%
10 = extremely well	0%	3%	2%
Mean score	**5.0**	**5.6**	**5.4**
Number of responses (n)	13	30	43
NPS scale	−85%	−57%	−65%

0 = not at all/poorly, and 10 = extremely well

Figure 4.8 Graph showing distribution of scores provided by respondents indicating how well they think the Australian, state and territory governments are partnering with Indigenous peoples to make decisions about IPAs (n=43)



0 = not at all/poorly, and 10 = extremely well

4.11. Summary/key findings of social and economic analysis

- IPAs deliver significant social, economic and other wellbeing benefits, but this must be tempered by the ongoing inadequate funding and support for many IPAs, which results in people working without pay for the love of Country.
- Ranger roles on IPAs provide avenues for employment, skills development and pathways to employment in other sectors within the natural resource management and resource development industries, such as mining, to government jobs.
- Few enterprises were reported across the visited IPAs; however, IPA providers expressed aspirations and potential opportunities for locally based enterprises.
- The social and wellbeing benefits and outcomes of IPAs include intergenerational teaching, community relations, employment, skills development for disaster response and enabling mob to be on Country, which allows separation from the stresses and pressures of everyday life. Significant pride is expressed by those working for IPAs: for Country and culture.
- IPAs can provide culturally safe workplaces and preferred terms of employment. Networks created and/or supported through the IPA program can be leveraged in times of disaster recovery.

A key finding of the quantitative analysis is confirmation of findings from previous research, indicating that the IPA Program promotes multiple benefits across multiple domains – economic, social, cultural and economic. Furthermore, the analysis indicates that:

- the benefits increase over time (relatively low benefits from the most recent IPA compared to those awarded IPA status longer ago; increasing relationship over time between the IPAs and the growth of Indigenous-owned businesses)

- the perceived benefits increase in response to increased funding levels (as shown by significant correlation between many benefits and funding provided).

However, the quantitative analysis also reveals that while the direct economic benefits vary significantly across the case study IPAs, both in terms of objective data (actual jobs created, actual hours worked) and in terms of subjective data (level of agreement that IPAs provide various economic benefits), in all cases the benefits provided are, and are perceived to be, relatively small.

Economic benefits are perceived to be less than benefits provided by IPAs across other domains of life.

5. Factors affecting IPA outcomes

5.1. Introduction

This chapter of the report addresses the third overarching evaluation question: 'What are the key contexts/factors that affect the achievement of IPA Program objectives, and how can they be used to strengthen impacts through future program design?'

Many factors affect the delivery of the multiple benefits and outcomes from IPAs. The key knowledge gap, identified in Phase One of the evaluation, concerns the ways these factors are connected in diverse contexts to deliver the desired outcomes. There is a requirement for a better understanding of:

- the Indigenous lens into factors affecting IPA outcomes
- a systems lens into the factors affecting IPA outcomes, further investigating the ToC presented by NIAA, to focus on which factors provide key leverage points for delivering IPA-intended outcomes (this is explored in Chapter 7)
- IPA providers' views about the factors supporting and disrupting their capacity to deliver benefits and outcomes, and their strategies for navigating these factors.

A review of the literature in the first phase of the evaluation identified that Indigenous-led governance (referred to here as cultural governance) is an emerging mechanism for delivery of environmental benefits across Canada, USA, Australia, Brazil and Russia (Artelle et al. 2019). Further, Indigenous peoples in northern Australia identify 'control, leadership, empowerment and independence' as the primary factors influencing benefits from community-based natural resource management – contrasting with government perspectives that focus more on material benefits (Addison et al. 2019). Connections between Country, culture and people are emphasised as the most important mechanisms in Indigenous peoples' understanding of factors influencing outcomes (Sangha and Russell-Smith 2017; Stoeckl et al. 2021). Indigenous cultural governance systems have been identified as key mechanisms for delivery of environmental benefits among Indigenous peoples in the Kimberley region (Poelina et al. 2019; Poelina 2020). Further, alignment of culture, cultural institutions and Indigenous priorities was recently identified as a key condition for knowledge sharing to lead to improved Indigenous adaptive environmental management (Hill et al. 2021).

Government policies and practices are important influences on IPA outcomes (Putnis et al. 2021). The legacy of colonisation and the post-colonial relationships that disempower local learning and decision-making, such as the policy of recentralisation, have a negative impact on people's ability to adaptively respond to environmental change (Hill et al. 2020). On the other hand, the devolved land stewardship arrangements through IPA and Indigenous ranger projects working on IPAs support delivery of multiple benefits. Nevertheless, the way the government delivers their devolved programs is important. Dedicated, experienced and capable staff are required by mandate to work adaptively with IPA providers in fulfilling both their mainstream and cultural governance and management responsibilities, rather than simply having a focus on deliverables of activities in contracts (Putnis et al. 2021).

The ToC for the IPA Program identifies 4 main mechanisms for producing outcomes from IPAs:

- strategic planning with Traditional Owner guidance
- organisational capacity
- community support
- training and employment.

Elements behind the success of IPAs and rangers have been identified in a recent study as:

- strong purpose and values
- proper resourcing to build sustainable organisations
- engaged and skilled government staff (Putnis et al. 2021).

Culture and cultural governance have also been identified as key factors behind effective Indigenous adaptive environmental planning and management (Hill et al. 2020, 2021; Lyons et al. 2020; Stoeckl et al. 2021).

The findings from Phase Two support the key findings synthesised in Phase One of the evaluation. A strong finding from the analysis of new research data in Phase Two was the strength and consistency with which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture was described as the key enabler in the success of IPA projects. This was consistently evidenced by the data which described the passion and commitment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to look after Country, motivated by a cultural obligation to care for Country.

It was also clear that IPA projects create a hub from which connections and networks can be made in support of the goals of Traditional Owners in the management of land and sea Country.

5.2. Strengths of the IPA project/s that make it/them work well

Through qualitative analysis of success stories and overview reports provided by IPAs for Phase One of the evaluation, the following factors were identified as key influencers in the successful delivery of multiple beneficial outcomes:

- cultural leadership and authority and the role of the Elders
- community support
- the role of youth (as a factor and key goal)
- Indigenous networks
- gender equity
- governance policies aimed at Indigenous peoples accessing and owning natural resources
- effective Indigenous organisations to work as IPA providers
- training and education of IPA staff (a key strategy in most IPA PoMs)
- the ability to acquire and maintain vital infrastructure such as vehicles, boats, sheds, tools and equipment
- multiple partnerships as a strategy to address the funding insufficiencies and resource constraints experienced by IPAs
- learning together across Indigenous and western scientific knowledge systems, among different Traditional Owner groups, and between Elders and youth
- Traditional Owner–led planning.

Key findings from Phase Two of the evaluation revealed similar factors influencing the successful delivery of IPA outcomes. They are:

1. Culture and connection to Country: this is recognised through the commitment of IPA providers to work above and beyond their paid positions to manage Country; realise their cultural obligations to Country; and deliver beneficial outcomes for Country, culture and community.

   This finding aligns with the key findings from Phase One of the evaluation and is identified as an underpinning enabler in the successful delivery of IPA projects.

2. Access to resources, including vehicles to access Country, is seen as critical in connecting with Country and, through that, managing the IPA.
3. Partnerships and collaborations support delivery of management outcomes; partnerships must deliver benefits to the IPA.

   Phase One of the evaluation also identified an ability to acquire and maintain vital infrastructure as a critical enabler of IPA project delivery, as well as partnerships as a strategy to address the funding insufficiencies and resource constraints experienced by IPAs.

4. IPAs are seen as an enabler for learning about Country and culture and are a mechanism for enabling and empowering people.
5. Strong Indigenous leadership and strong governance underpin success. Strong governance can require dedicated funding and support to be realised.

   These Phase Two findings align strongly with the evidence from Phase One of the evaluation. Cultural leadership and authority and the role of the Elders in supporting and driving good governance were seen as critical to the delivery of strong outcomes from IPAs. Conversely, IPAs provide the opportunity for cultural leadership and authority to be practised and recognised; for youth to be engaged in connecting with Country; and for the community to come together on Country to learn and share, building their social capital.

6. Cultural and biodiversity outcomes are supported, but the weighting of program support for biodiversity versus cultural outcomes needs to be reviewed to ensure the Program delivers desired outcomes for both partners.

   This finding was not made in Phase One of the evaluation but emerged in Phase Two. This was an unknown gap that was raised by IPA providers through the yarning process and supported by perspectives shared by key stakeholder interviewees.

   Further, organisational capacity, hosting arrangements and the time an IPA project had been in operation (longevity) were identified during Phase Two as factors influencing IPA project delivery.

5.2.1. Culture and connection to Country

Culture and connection to Country underpin the successful delivery of the IPA Program. It drives IPA providers to continue to manage Country, even when the conditions under which they work may be difficult and resources sparse to support the extent of management required to keep Country healthy.

At the same time, IPA projects empower Indigenous people to fulfil cultural obligations to Country, resulting in profound benefits including:

- happiness undertaking responsibilities as the right people, looking after the right Country, working with the Elders and being watched over by the spirits of the ancestors
- being together with family on Country, learning together
- speaking language/s
- healing spiritually as well as mentally
- restoring culture and cultural ways
- a sense of wellbeing from prioritising culture, Country, identity, spirituality.

The IPA was frequently seen as an enabler to learn about Country and culture. At [name withheld IPA] this was expressed in the following ways:

> As a young fella living near it [the IPA] … grew up out there. Now we get to light a fire.
>
> We didn't really know it was ours. We didn't know the scar trees, sites.

Further, [name withheld] IPA participants described their commitment in terms of connection and pride in protecting aspects of Country:

> The protection side of things … Frogs, animals and things to protect. There is a sense of belonging. You can go out and sit for hours. You can go there and heal.
>
> [I'm] proud of connection to Country: you could have the worst day in the world, but once you go home … We have 4 young local men that go to work and look after Country.

At [name withheld IPA], connection to Country was also described as a key reason for working in support of the IPA:

> It's about identity and empowerment. That's what I get from working on Country. Always been here on the mission and having access … and the lake. Now we've acquired more property. As a parent, we are able to connect new people to it. It's a privilege.
>
> Find it good; love working on Country. Kids always asking where I've been, what I've seen and get to tell them. One day I'll show them.

5.2.2. Cultural leadership and authority and the role of Elders

Cultural leadership and authority and the role of the Elders was identified as a key enabling factor in Phase One of the evaluation. In Phase Two this emerged as discussion around the importance of:

- strong governance
- Indigenous leadership
- empowerment, in the delivery of IPA projects.

Strong governance

Yarning reflection – talking about governance in IPA determination

At the IPA sites there needs to be compliance with the western notion of governance, but traditional governance – or cultural authority as I call it – is also very strong. One example of this was at one site that has several Traditional Owner groups across the IPA. They were hoping to broaden [the IPA] further to include some of the islands in the area. I spoke with a brother who is a Traditional Owner who was telling me that to coordinate this they were getting back to conducting business like their ancestors had. Each Traditional Owner group would meet with their own community and would then host a gathering of all local language group leaders to discuss important matters and solutions that they would then take back to their own group for discussion. It was a very culturally respectful and – to use a western description – democratic process. He was very passionate about restoring that and that was what was going on while we were at that site.

Pulu Islet describes a key strength of their IPA as being the fact that Traditional Owners have absolute cultural authority over the site. In describing all of their management activities they concurrently expressed the cultural links and connections between the people, the land and the sea.

The development of their new IPA plan through a Traditional Owner–led process was provided as an example, with wide consultation occurring among the community.

For example, this comment illustrates the critical imperative of strong cultural governance of IPAs:

> The chance to drive land management through a cultural lens (is) a strength of the IPA as this attracts and retains the workforce. (name withheld IPA)

At Katiti-Petermann IPA, it was noted that bringing the right people together or getting people engaged, to support good cultural governance, can be difficult when there are multiple families; however, it was these activities and efforts that ensured the ongoing success of the IPA project.

The critical role of Indigenous leadership and cultural governance in the delivery of IPA projects is highlighted in the deceptively simple comment from [name withheld IPA]:

> To respect which people speak for which places, and listen to them. It really can't come from Canberra about how to look after places.

Strong governance was also recognised by key stakeholder interviewees as being critical to the success of IPAs:

> Strong governance is critical to the IPA being successful. (Stakeholder interviewee)
>
> They can't manage to get people to work in the nearby [location withheld] national park, but we (IPA) have a full team of rangers so the proof is that the IPA Program is doing better than the national park in building the capacity of people on the ground. (Stakeholder interviewee)
>
> The core strength of an individual project is the strength of their governance structure and whether that governance structure provides a genuine avenue for Traditional Owner leadership and decision-making on country … if you have a strong governance structure and genuine decision-making by the Elders who want to be involved, then things work. (Stakeholder interviewee)

The intensive conversation and reflection that occurs in the review and renewal of an IPA PoM was also highlighted as an opportunity for IPA stakeholders to re-evaluate and refine their goals for the future together. It is also an opportunity to bring community back into the conversation if they have not been intimately involved in the day-to-day management of the IPA, strengthening the governance arrangement for the IPA project:

> Current plan of management is under review. In the consultations, need to make sure that world heritage considerations are covered. Need to be able to demonstrate what we do well. (name withheld IPA)

Yarning reflection – being in community during important sea Country business

At one site they were doing their general business while we were there. They had an AGM, a members' meeting and workshops to restore and revitalise language and culture – all of that was happening during our visit and we felt lucky that they could squeeze us in.

While that was going on there was also a new sea management agreement in negotiation with the local Traditional Owners, so that was important business. The council was also looking at their management plan for the IPA, so their executive were meeting at the same time. While this was all going on they also had a visiting ranger group, so they were hosting them too.

So, picture this – the whole community and kids were all there, the Traditional Owners and the visiting rangers; loads of meetings going on. This was a whole day from 7:30 am to 10:30 pm of

business, of decisions being made and information and knowledge being shared. That's the way that we have done things for thousands and thousands of years, and it was fantastic to see it.

Indigenous leadership

Strong Aboriginal leadership and a culturally informed vision for the Budj Bim Landscape were described as key strengths of the Lake Condah IPA. The protection and preservation of the aquaculture network, stone houses and smoking trees are a key focus of the Traditional Owners. Making sure that community has leading roles in the work and employment opportunities was a core principle expressed by stakeholders.

Having the Yappala IPA managed by Traditional Owners who are also leading the day-to-day operations was seen as a strength. Stakeholders said this was a demonstration of what can be achieved and how Aboriginal people can look after Country and deserve more opportunities to do it.

At [name withheld] IPA the importance of cultural leadership of the IPA is clear:

> The fact is there are 2 laws happening. Traditional law here is really strong and sometimes I think government doesn't really get that. The IPA runs under the old government way about how to do things. The right people have to speak for the right land.

The importance of Indigenous leadership of the IPA Program is further reflected in the following comment by a key stakeholder interviewee:

> It's led by their [Indigenous IPA providers'] aims, that practice of saying what they want for Country and then reporting against that, not you saying we are going to give you some money for a specific biodiversity outcome. It's only the mob who can talk about culture and put that front and centre and those sorts of things obviously, so I think that's the strength of the IPA Program. (Stakeholder interviewee)

Empowerment

IPAs are seen as a mechanism and enabler for empowering people. IPAs provide opportunity for cultural leadership and authority and the role of Elders to be promoted.

At [name withheld] IPA, the IPA is:

> … all about building up our people, to the things taken through colonisation. IPA is about rebuilding … (building) capacity of individuals to make much with little.

For Ngadju the IPA has provided the resources to better understand the plants, animals and cultural sites across Country, empowering Ngadju to argue against clearing and development in areas that need to be protected.

For [name withheld IPA], the IPA has:

> … enabled people to make decisions. It has given a voice, both negative and positive. Put people in the driver's seat.

[Name withheld IPA] also spoke of how, in contrast to the past, they are now leading their own consultations and planning:

> This time around we are doing the consultation with our TOs [Traditional Owners], doing it better.

A key stakeholder interviewee also described the IPA Program as being empowering in the following ways:

> Indigenous-led and voluntary aspect of IPAs are a strength … there is no time pressure. This allows people to enter in at their own time and voluntarily nominate themselves for it. Those are all strengths. It's letting First Nations people decide how they want to approach that and how they want to manage that. They know Country best and it leaves it up to them … It's letting First Nations people take control of their Country. (Stakeholder interviewee)

> The fact that it is a Traditional Owner–led program, which supports the idea of self-determination and place-based decision-making, is a strength. It is ahead of the curve in terms of some of the thinking or alignment with the Closing the Gap priority reforms and the movement towards a regional voice. So, we think in that respect it is a real strength of the program, but we could probably talk whether it can be pushed a bit further. (Stakeholder interviewee)

An online survey response from a non-Indigenous person stated:

> Indigenous-led planning is the superpower of the IPA Program.

Empowerment through peer-to-peer learning and sharing was also raised in the context of the role of IPAs in enabling opportunities to support each other. For example, where several IPAs are managed by the one organisation, enhanced networking and learning can result. This was expressed as a strength by the putalina IPA, which can share knowledge and resources with IPAs managed by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre.

Another example was provided of families working together through the IPA to support each other, including cultural activities:

> Also, with Country visits: a few years ago when a senior person passed away, that family really wanted to do things that honour their grandparents and so we did that. Then another family had things they wanted to do. (name withheld IPA)

5.2.3. Community support

Community support for IPA projects is a key enabler of the IPA Program. There are many powerful stories across the IPAs of committed individuals working above and beyond their paid positions to realise beneficial outcomes for Country. The work of these individuals is unseen: the extra hours are not accounted for in reporting. Without the commitment of these individuals, many projects would not be delivering the scale of benefits currently reported. At the same time, IPA providers describe their resilience and ingenuity in achieving much with few resources as a significant strength.

IPAs receive strong community support because of the opportunities that the IPA Program delivers to communities, including pathways to access training, development of management networks and building capacity within the community, which has flow-on effects across other sectors.

There is also strong support for the IPA Program due to the cultural safety individuals feel in working on activities in support of the IPA: being on Country, reconnecting to Country, caring for Country.

IPAs are seen as preferred places of employment due to the flexibility that the positions hold and the sympathetic managers who understand the many roles that employees perform in their day-to-day lives, which can act against ongoing employment in other industries or positions.

[Name withheld] IPA clearly expressed the importance of their workforce in delivering on their projects:

> The staff of the organisation are a strength of the IPA. Multiple long-term employees. 100% Aboriginal management team. The Aboriginal management team are also TOs [Traditional Owners] for the areas covered by the IPA.

The strength of commitment and passion expressed by IPA participants for working on Country is a clear strength of all IPAs. At [name withheld] IPA, stakeholders expressed pride in their ongoing ability to employ people despite their low levels of funding and talked of their commitment to management of Country before dedication. In the past, all people were volunteers and didn't have licences:

> Just had a wheelbarrow and walked. Shed's in one place … and then just walked.
>
> We love what we do and that's why we stay here.

Where employers are responsive to and accommodating of participants' social and cultural commitments and obligations, workers are more likely to stay and also return to these roles.

In many IPA regions, childcare and other services that affect people's ability to engage and stay in the workforce are patchy, which requires workplace flexibility:

> Also, with [name withheld] rangers doing the work of the IPA – sometimes they also leave. It's often because family things come up, like they have children or other people to take care of, but often it's just for a period of time and then they come back again. Sometimes they also get different jobs around the park and they like to do different things in life. (name withheld IPA)
>
> Number 1 is employment of our mob. Probably about 20 people employed, 2 full-time Indigenous ranger coordinators, 12 rangers and then Elders as cultural advisors. (name withheld IPA)
>
> Familiarity and feeling comfortable in the workplace: looking forward to working here, know everyone from school, and not having to make new friends. (name withheld IPA)

At Lake Condah IPA, community engagement has worked to promote the IPA, Aboriginal land management more broadly, and the unique Budj Bim cultural landscape. Stakeholders said a major success has been the junior ranger program and getting people out on Country. This has included conducting some bird, fish and plant surveys, while young people have also been involved in looking at the bugs and insects. Stakeholders said that more than 1,300 children have been on Country through the junior ranger program. Stakeholders described how this was giving the community a more complete understanding of what occurs on the IPA and is correcting some of the past misconceptions about Aboriginal land management.

When reflecting on the 20 years that they have been in operation at [name withheld IPA], the following comment was made:

> Rangers have done a great job; it's tough country and hard work. Maybe 50 or 60 rangers over the years. Some stick around.

The following comment from a non-Indigenous online survey respondent speaks of the many strengths of the IPA Program:

> The IPA Program provides a framework for Indigenous people to manage their land and sea Country and practise Indigenous knowledge in conservation spaces where Indigenous knowledge practices have been largely overlooked or ignored. Unlike co-managed reserves, the IPA Program ensures that Indigenous people retain control of the management of Country. It also provides training and capacity building

opportunities for young Indigenous people and an opportunity for them to reconnect with Country (online survey non-Indigenous #12).

Yarning reflection by IPA Indigenous Evaluation Team – having the right people involved in the IPAs at the right times

We learnt as we visited the IPAs that having the right people in leadership and working for the IPA is a big factor. In [IPA location] we heard positive stories of the white woman who has uprooted her life in Victoria to move to this one-horse town. She's come to take on the role of manager and help upskill and empower the people on their Country because there was no one else to do the role.

In another community, there is an Aboriginal man who is the CEO of the IPA partner organisation. We heard in yarns that the pay he and his staff receive for their work is so low, but they continue to work every day because they have so much respect for him, and because being a ranger and being on Country means so much to them. But they've got families to feed and they were aware they needed more funding. The CEO spoke of how he could find similar work elsewhere for a lot more pay but he recognised the importance of his role; he wanted to be there for the young fellas.

5.2.4. Resources to support management/connection to Country

Access to resources, including vehicles to access Country, is seen as critical in connecting with Country and, through that, managing the IPA. Phase One identified the ability to acquire and maintain vital infrastructure such as vehicles, boats, sheds, tools and equipment as being a key enabler for the successful delivery of IPA projects. Phase Two revealed a broader suite of resourcing issues, which featured heavily in all yarns and discussions.

Effective and adequate resourcing was discussed as a key enabler of delivery of IPA projects.

In the Ngadju IPA, travelling out on Country for IPA work was described as a major benefit of the project to community members. The resources provided through the IPA project make this possible with suitable vehicles and equipment to undertake the travel.

At [name withheld IPA] the rangers are currently employed with support from the Indigenous Rangers Program. This support has been described as:

> … really welcome and gives some certainty to planning.

At [name withheld] IPA, activities that support engagement of each of the Traditional Owners across the region must be carefully considered within the available budget:

> It comes out of the IPA budget. There is also one car from the IPA. There's an operational budget that has to be spread across projects. Have to balance out to support all 4 areas of the IPA and the families associated with each area. The budget is just about right for the number of staff.

This imperative to support engagement of all Traditional Owner groups within the IPA project is partially driven by the results of getting people out on Country:

> There is real importance to teach the young people. And they really want to learn. If a family wants to go to a particular place, we usually bring about 40 people from all generations, including about 10 people supporting from IPA. But we're not there to teach, we're there to learn.

Ngadju IPA highlighted the specific importance of IPA funding in supporting the involvement of cultural Elders in decision-making.

Yarning reflection by IPA Indigenous Evaluation Team – Katiti-Petermann: resources to get everyone together to look after Country for all places far and near

It's really hard to get to the north-west corner of the IPA, but there are driveable tracks for reaching the other 3 corners. The areas around the salt lakes (Neale and Amadeus) are really hard. Sometimes they use helicopters for Country visits so that the really old people don't get knocked about so much. The budget for that is really important because it takes the pressure off the old people. To drive out to many of the important places is very long, hot, dry, bumpy and dusty – it is such a big challenge to get the right people out there and the helicopter can help preserve health. They need the Elders to pass on the knowledge in those places, but if they take them out it is very important to make sure they can take care of them out there, and that the journey doesn't harm their health. The IPA Program also uses the helicopter for burning.

5.2.5. Partnerships and collaborations

A wide diversity of partnerships and collaborations support the delivery of management outcomes on IPAs, evidenced by the examples in this section. IPAs spoke of the need to be sufficiently externally facing to ensure that they could attract partnerships, whether they be at the community scale or with larger research entities, NGOs or philanthropies.

At Pulu Islet, IPA providers are looking at how they can strengthen knowledge of the IPA through increased engagement with the local school (curriculum), an opportunity identified by multiple stakeholders. [Name withheld IPA] also recognises the importance of being part of the broader community:

> It's been one of our greatest successes (being part of the broader community). We are remote, we are in mainstream society between centres an' we've shown to be leaders.

Yarning reflection by IPA Indigenous Evaluation Team – networking across IPAs is a strength of the Program

[IPA provider name withheld] staff: 'It's pretty good; if we organise some sort of training then all the rangers – IPA and national park –are invited.'

Ninti team: What is the training about?

Local man: 'We're doing some bushfire responding training and also first responder training.'

Ninti team: Do you do ever do training or work with people in [location name withheld]?

The group explains they don't usually because 'It's a long way away, really; we just stick here in town'; and there appear to be plenty of opportunities within the national park.

Local man: 'The purpose of training together [with national park rangers] is that we can work together really easily that way.'

When the [name withheld] rangers go out on Country for IPA activities, the national park rangers are welcome to participate if they can bring along a couple of cars.

[IPA provider name withheld] staff: 'Sometimes the [location name withheld] park rangers take the opportunity to come out with us and learn. Not because it's their job but because they're

taking the opportunity … If the park weren't so strict with bureaucracy and qualifications then a lot of the [name withheld] rangers here could work in the park.'

For the Bardi Jawi, their engagement with WA Tourism and local and regional authorities is contributing to their ability to plan and build capability to manage an increase in tourists and visitors as a result of a newly sealed road through Country. Planning includes identifying new needs such as design and placement of signage, traffic diversions and emergency equipment.

For Girringun, signing of the first Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement by Girringun Traditional Owners in 2005 has created a formal agreement between saltwater Traditional Owners, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service. This is seen as an enabler in the monitoring and management of dugong populations by Girringun.

Bardi Jawi identified that collaboration with researchers supported better understanding of the biodiversity and ecology of the area. Research activities were seen as important to inform future management plans and to set priorities for the future. Research engagements were also identified as helping to add layers of protection to cultural sites.

Pulu Islet IPA collaborates with several groups, including when engaging in training (e.g. oil spill response training).

At [name withheld IPA], partnerships, including relationships with researchers, are considered important in managing Country. The group has a relationship with the Arthur Rylah Institute, and through another partnership has access to a water tank to support the fighting of fires on other mobs' Country. These partnerships are seen as enabling the IPA providers to manage Country their way:

> We are the decision makers. We rely on support from everyone to achieve it.

Key stakeholder interviewees further provided examples of the opportunities and challenges of collaboration:

> Relationships are very strong if the agencies themselves are very strong … if the collaborator is not too much of a hard-minded ecologist, where they can't see a different perspective on knowledge, people generally get a lot out of those collaborations. (Stakeholder interviewee)
>
> The point about partnerships and getting people to collaborate has lit the flame across Australia in terms of the huge potential for Indigenous land management and collaboration and impact. This cannot be taken away from the IPA Program; it has led the entire movement and continues to do so, which is great. (Stakeholder interviewee)
>
> We know that many of the IPA projects that we fund have developed strong partnerships and relationships with different state or territory agencies … A number of our groups and the rangers are also undertaking contractual work in the biosecurity space or the fire space … having an IPA project provides that basis to develop those partnerships. Without that project there might not be a way for Traditional Owners to link up with state and territory agencies to develop those partnerships. (Stakeholder interviewee)

A further comment was made about the greater potential for collaborations and partnerships where IPAs operate across tenures:

> … one of the things that can happen is they can be a hub for bringing other government agencies and philanthropists and businesses together, particularly ones

> that usually don't work well together. So, if you have a good ranger team and a plan for the IPA, then other agencies that don't necessarily cooperate are able to cooperate through the ranger team. The downside to that is it puts the onus of providing that capacity onto the ranger team, but it also gives them control and becomes more Indigenous-led. I think that's a strength as some of those agencies don't work well together but are forced to because of their need to deal with Traditional Owners, which is good. The model allows you to take a whole-of-Country approach with multi-tenures. Allows Traditional Owners to bring in sea Country and national parks as part of that IPA. (Stakeholder interviewee)

Sharing knowledge through partnerships and collaborations was sometimes framed with caution, as many well-meaning partners may not be culturally competent to work on Country:

> You have to be really careful here to do things properly. You can't just go any way to places. If you're going to work here then it's one Country one law … there are sacred places that you could really harm, so you really have to listen as an outsider. Or else you can make real danger … For us here on the IPA, we have people from the cities who want to come and help. For them to come, you can't just talk freely about places and share knowledge. If you're coming from somewhere else, you've got to sit with the old people, learn language and learn from the old people about how to do stuff … It's [language group name withheld] Law and if you don't follow that then everything breaks down. (name withheld IPA)
>
> It's not that people don't want to teach outsiders who want to help, it's just the amount of effort that goes into teaching them and when they leave we're back to square one. (name withheld IPA)

Vignette from the [IPA name withheld] visit

Ninti shifts the topic towards what knowledge can be shared when scientists or other people from outside Country come along. Are there stories that need to be held secret? What can be shared or even recorded?

'There are some things that can't be recorded. They're restricted, but if you can manage it then there's also knowledge that you can record. Because it's about how to do your job properly.' (Local man)

The group agrees that there are stories for children – public stuff – that they record all the time. There's a 'first level' of every story that can be shared with children and shared publicly.

'We can openly share the knowledge of old people. There are rules around what we can record. Social stories, history, we can record. So the kids can learn how to dance. Can teach the story, teach them the dance. Can tell them this is what you've got to do and they can dance. Then teach them to do it really properly like how to stomp right. Then the women can do it with the little girls. And we line them all up and if they don't do it properly then we tell them off [laughing].' (Local man)

After the visit, the Ninti's Indigenous evaluators added context to this quote. There's a lot of significance here. How you stomp, the rhythm, the movement – you become in sync with that story and the story is the land. So when you learn how to stomp or move you are embedding that storyline.

5.2.6. Cultural and biodiversity outcomes

Yarns during site visits revealed the importance of cultural outcomes from IPAs and were considered at least as important as biodiversity outcomes. There is recognition that the IPA Program supports both cultural and biodiversity outcomes, as illustrated by the following key stakeholder interviewee:

> The program is holistic; it doesn't just say we only support work that has both the biodiversity and the cultural outcome. It says we will support work that meets all of those, so it could be cultural, it could be biodiversity, it could be both. It doesn't exclude things that are only cultural. And that, to my mind, is just so important for the IPA Program. (Stakeholder interviewee)

Another key stakeholder interviewee was emphatic about the role of culture in the IPA Program:

> The single greatest strength of the IPA Program is that it is premised on culture. (Stakeholder interviewee)

Recognition that the IPA Program supports cultural and biodiversity outcomes is illustrated in the online survey responses and stakeholder interviews. The responses demonstrate the importance of culture in enabling biodiversity outcomes and that the outcomes of the IPA Program stretch beyond biodiversity to improved social, economic and cultural conditions:

> I believe the biodiversity outcomes are enabled and increased by the fact that the IPA is a holistic program embedded in cultural priorities. This, combined with engagement with culturally aware scientists and partners, has led to impressive biodiversity outcomes. (Non-Indigenous online survey respondent)

> … I see significant cultural and wellbeing outcomes from the IPA Program for Traditional Owners and other Indigenous community residents. These are at least as significant as the biodiversity outcomes, and given the relationship between people and their Country, are intimately interwoven with ecological outcomes. (Non-Indigenous online survey respondent)

> While there is still the need, and it's absolutely important that they achieve those (biodiversity) outcomes, we are really starting to consider, given NIAA's management and where we are going in NIAA, how to better measure some of those cultural outcomes. (Stakeholder interviewee)

At the same time a mix of positive and negative reflections were made about the degree to which IPA providers felt they were supported in fulfilling cultural management obligations and aspirations. Support to enable effective governance is recognised as crucial to ensuring the right mix of cultural and biodiversity-targeted activities, while also recognising that management activities often deliver to both outcomes (and that the many cultural and biodiversity outcomes are interwoven).

The following comment from a key stakeholder interviewee reveals a concern with their current process of supporting engagement and decision-making to ensure that culture and good governance are the drivers of the IPA projects:

> When you look at the IPA and ranger programs … we do annual work planning exercises which results in workplans for IPAs and individual rangers. These workplans stipulate what activities we must undertake across thematic areas of work; these areas are articulated by NIAA and they typically talk about fire and weed management, feral animals and TO [Traditional Owner] consultation. Once you unpack what sits underneath those thematic areas and focus on the Traditional Owners' thematic areas of work … this is where the real clash of culture occurs. (Stakeholder interviewee)

Yarning reflection by IPA Indigenous Evaluation Team – Katiti-Petermann

They are worried that there are so many distractions for the younger people today that they aren't learning those stories and songs and inma [traditional dance and song] in this generation. But they hope that future generations will be interested again and want to learn those songs. The more senior Anangu women hope they can make enough recordings of her singing and dancing all the important songs before she dies, so that there will be something for the next generation to learn from if this generation doesn't. She reflects that maybe the people who need to learn from her haven't been born yet.

5.2.7. Organisation capacity, hosting arrangements and longevity

The local support arrangements for IPA projects, the ability to be flexible with funding across multiple IPAs and the benefits derived through longevity were all identified as enablers in the delivery of IPA projects.

For example, while many comments were made during the site visits about the lack of resourcing to achieve management objectives, positive comments were made about the flexibility that could be found in the use of funds, particularly where an organisation is responsible for managing several IPA projects but under one combined contract with the NIAA. These comments were, not surprisingly, made by the key stakeholder interviewees, who manage the funds:

> The reason [stakeholder name withheld] is able to be flexible with the funding is because we have such a huge operational bucket that we split over 4 (IPAs). If one is underspending or TOs [Traditional Owners] are focusing on Country-based activities rather than aerial activities, we can divert funding for helicopters to another IPA. Compared to the ranger program contract, where we have to get approval for expenditure over $5,000, the IPA contract is a bit more flexible. (Stakeholder interviewee)
>
> Flexibility in the funding is definitely a strength if you imagine IPAs as one way for people to get paid to get on Country and do cultural and conservation land management. In comparison, some of the state government programs are often a bit more rigid. (Stakeholder interviewee)
>
> There are differences between IPAs; for example, there are the strongly networked and high performing IPAs (CLC, etc.) who do a lot of sharing and learnings, but there are also isolated IPAs that simply do not have the support and are more reliant on DCCEEW. These isolated IPAs are feeling like they don't get the support that they used to get, but the next 5 years of funding includes provisions to increase the government's support. (Stakeholder interviewee)

Where several IPAs are managed by the one organisation, enhanced networking and learning can also result. This was expressed as a strength by the putalina IPA, which can share knowledge and resources with IPAs managed by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre.

The length of time that an IPA has been operating was offered as a strength for some IPAs. Phase One identified that more mature IPAs have developed higher levels of governance capability and a diverse set of partnerships, and they have evolved goals that build and leverage on their resource capabilities relative to new IPA providers.

The longevity of the putalina IPA and management by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre was described as a strength by stakeholders. Having the site as an IPA since 1999 has meant multiple

generations of Aboriginal community members have spent time at putalina as workers and festival attendees, staying overnight or walking the trails.

The longevity of the program is also considered a strength by government, a success that is based on ongoing bipartisan support from governments that has extend over the last 20+ years:

> The 5-year model is seen as a strength. This is longer than other government programs … when you come down to long-term commitment beyond government cycles it genuinely requires a strong bipartisan framework. As long as everyone manages the IPA and achieves the outcomes there is no good reason for any government to not continue funding. (Stakeholder interviewee)

5.3. Expressed barriers to reaching the goals of the IPA project/s

Phase One of the evaluation identified the following disruptors or barriers to IPAs delivering to multiple benefits:

- funding uncertainty and insufficiency
- COVID-19: the most substantial disruption to IPAs over the 2018–2020 period
- extreme environmental events, such as fires and drought
- extreme social events (including untimely deaths, and the cultural obligations associated with all deaths)
- changes to governance and management arrangements and personnel
- remoteness – presenting barriers to obtaining essential skills and resources.

Further, the following enablers were identified in Phase One that were framed in the Phase Two findings as barriers because they weren't present. They are addressed in this section and are:

- governance policies aimed at Indigenous peoples accessing and owning natural resources
- effective Indigenous organisations to work as IPA providers.

Phase Two identified the following barriers:

- resourcing IPAs to prioritise cultural and wellbeing outcomes, including involvement of the broader community to be engaged in management of the IPA and protection of cultural values
- differences in organisational support and administrative capacity having a significant impact on the overall operations of an IPA
- inadequate funding (including lack of funding for infrastructure and capital items), funding insecurity and the feeling of going backwards under inflation and rising costs
- lack of enforceable compliance authority; sense of inability to protect Country
- recognising and supporting the operation of IPA across diverse tenures and in unique social, economic and legal contexts
- lack of public profile of IPAs, lack of acknowledgement.

5.3.1. Inappropriate program focus: need for a holistic approach centred on people and Country

IPA providers highlighted the importance of cultural and wellbeing outcomes for people from their IPAs. Resourcing IPAs for these outcomes would inherently prioritise access of custodians to Country, especially Elders and the younger generation and rangers in their land management roles,

and involve a breadth of activities that include walking and burning, knowledge sharing, dance and song.

Facilitating community visits to IPAs necessarily involves greater planning and resources and is a crucial goal of IPA providers in Katiti-Petermann, Pulu Islet, Girringun and Ngunya Jargoon. Each of these IPAs share aspects of social, economic and physical remoteness:

- The IPA is physically remote, with variable road access and limited access to services.
- Remote locations of island IPAs require sea travel.
- The real estate within which the IPA is located has become prohibitively expensive so that the custodians of those lands do not live nearby.

Consultations to reach decisions for on-ground work on IPAs and to keep custodians aware of activities on their IPA take time, can involve communication barriers, such as language, and require time to reach all members and to support meaningful exchanges. The practice of strong governance can take longer for remote IPAs; however, their circumstance isn't necessarily well accounted for in the type of deliverables IPAs are resourced for.

Some of the challenges and barriers to engagement, consultation and travel out on Country (where the right decision-making is enabled and can occur) are highlighted in these comments by IPA providers:

> We've been doing a lot of teaching, and now so many of us senior people have tablets [medication]. We do a risk assessment, and talk about medicine, get a helicopter on standby in case there needs to be a medical evacuation. Everyone wants to get out there but we have to look after people. Vehicles are really important.
>
> A gathering with the Elders has been had in the past for years. Now it can be hard with wheelchairs for the Elders to get out there; we want a pathway to get them in.
>
> Consultations need to be genuine; leaders need to be involved from the start to be able to inform the solutions. How can the dots be joined in terms of the IPA linking to other programs: Tackling Indigenous Smoking [Program], drugs, etc. How can families connect to the IPA through activities such as hunting or gathering bush foods? How do we also sustain cultural activities and link them to the rangers' activities?

The smaller IPAs of Ngunya Jargoon and Pulu Islet raised their concerns that the funding of their IPAs does not recognise the cultural sites of significance that the custodians are caring for and protecting, and that other weightings for funding that register this value are needed:

> Resourcing should take into consideration the cultural weighting within the IPA area, not just the geographical ground mass. (name withheld IPA)

A key stakeholder interviewee raised the need for greater prominence and respect for traditional knowledge in 2-way learning engagements:

> I think it's the time to push the agenda of using 2-way learning and show that you need to be in favour of traditional knowledge a lot more. In certain places, when you have people speaking 3 different languages and English is their fourth language they'd be listening more to their Elders and practitioners than western science … Wherever it is appropriate we should be supporting stronger traditional knowledge systems. (Stakeholder interviewee)

An example was also provided of a well-developed 2-way management approach:

> [The] IPA were doing a lot of fire activities a few years ago – a lot of the traditional knowledge has been lost with that mob – and we saw the non-Indigenous western trained scientists talking about fire as well. The fire program that they put together was a really good example of how the mob went broader and brought in knowledge from elsewhere. It is a really good example of how two-way learning can work well. (Stakeholder interviewee)

5.3.2. Need for secure and/or increased funding across all IPA projects

All IPA providers raised funding concerns that related either to the uncertainty of funding, described as a 'feast or famine' circumstance, and/or insufficient funds to undertake the needed on-ground work with rangers and community on their IPA. Many comments were made about the need to increase funding for IPAs to cover the real cost of wages, on-ground work, IPA administration costs, and the impacts of inflation.

IPA providers shared a variety of situations where funding may be insufficient, including multi-year fixed funding agreements that are perceived to limit flexibility to respond to changing operating conditions, managing their budget to employ rangers on lower rates, or placing their IPA rangers on part-time contracts in order to employ more people. Three groups shared the reduced rates they are paying rangers on their IPAs. Support from Jali Aboriginal Land Council has allowed Ngunya Jargoon IPA to meet its reporting requirements and meet funding shortfalls. Two IPAs raised the increasing cost of administration and inflationary cost pressures:

> We can't have an IPA coordinator. If we had the coordinator, we wouldn't have the ranger numbers. It would be good to pass on the reporting … All the IPA gets is $140k. (name withheld IPA)

> We have to top up the wages. Income top-up is $35k per year. We have to draw it from other places … Seven years ago super was 9%; now it's 10.5%. Award increases continue, [as well as] general costs of program. Grant only increases by $2k per year. (name withheld IPA)

> Keen to flesh out employment. The award is $26 to $27 per hour. Have just done a review; does it [wages] make the cost of living? CPI has gone up 3%. At the bowser [fuel] has gone up 40% … Funded for 10 full-time Indigenous positions. We have gone back to 0.8, it gives us capacity for 13 different people [for Indigenous ranger group funding]. (name withheld IPA)

> With IPA there needs to be some decent funding. Heard of an IPA in [State, name withheld] that has tiny amount of funding … The IPA rangers forum will have [name removed] present on the true costs of programs and how it can be done better. (name withheld IPA)

> There's not so much extra we need for the IPA. We just want to build programs. More money and resources. We sometimes have a couple of people trying to do too much. There is so much asked of us and so much we need to do. (name withheld IPA)

> Coordination required across management plans – rangers responsible for many activities in each of the plans (e.g. IPA, sea grass, turtle and dugong plans). (name withheld IPA)

The costs IPAs face are diverse. At [name withheld] IPA they pay a significant amount of money for council fees that could be otherwise directed to the IPA:

> With our unique situation, we fall into local government area. We pay $12k per year. We don't get any benefit from it. We chatted with the CEO of Flinders Rangers Council, maybe there could be reduced fees.

Stakeholders who were interviewed expressed similar views as those expressed in the onsite yarns, that the IPA funding model is not keeping up with increasing costs and gaps in costs that IPAs cannot resource:

> Costs have gone up over the last couple of years and the amount of funding has not kept pace. If it wasn't for COVID, it would have impacted on our ability to deliver; it is only because COVID reduced the amount of work that could happen. The amount of funding and the costs in wages for both the external staff and the rangers plus all of the other costs, such as fuel – which is a massive cost, it really means that there is less money to do the work and to make it all happen. With the 5-year contract, the government has set the amount of money in that 5-year contract. Yes, there is a slight increase every year, but it's not reactive to what's been happening over the last few years in terms of increased costs. (Stakeholder interviewee)

> In terms of what the desert brings to the national conversation, with the new IPA declarations that have occurred recently, when reanalysing the government's data, there are 23 IPAs that the IDA [Indigenous Desert Alliance] works with as part of our stakeholder footprint in the desert. In terms of land mass and contributions to Australia's international obligations, so if you look at an average of $400,000 dollars per IPA, by 2023 that's 44% of the NRS. That's mindboggling when you consider the remoteness and size of those areas that we are operating in. It's impossible to expect that the biodiversity and conservation outcomes are going to be able to be achieved at that scale with the current resourcing. (Stakeholder interviewee)

> The voluntary component of how it's structured is important, I think the challenge for the federal government is how much do they value the contribution to the NRS? If we are going to play a part towards meeting our 2030 goals, the government needs to question how it supports that voluntary obligation going forward. What national park has 3 years of funding tenure? (Stakeholder interviewee)

> But it needs fire and biodiversity funding as well, that's the biggest thing. That's also the strength of the [stakeholder name withheld]: we have 4 IPAs, and the money sits in this one bucket and we are able to run a few fire trips from it. For a long time, we also had biodiversity funding; we don't get that anymore, but it helped to run very effective trips in the Tanami. (Stakeholder interviewee)

> It's great that the Australian Government wants to increase the NRS but in doing that they are spreading that jam a lot thinner; what would it look like if they consolidated that and put more resources into the reserves that we do have and try to fund them adequately? … some of those IPAs are covering up to 15,000 km^2 of Country; you need more than just a couple of positions to be able to properly manage them. So, it's good that there is growth in the IPAs, but the operational funding also needs to grow. (Stakeholder interviewee)

A reminder from one stakeholder is not to conflate the goals of the IPA and the ranger programs; the IPA Program funds initiatives to achieve biodiversity and conservation outcomes to an international standard. The author notes this does not represent the full list of outcomes of Indigenous Rangers Program and IPA Program:

> One challenge is ensuring we are distinguishing between the ranger and IPA Programs; while they are complementary, they have different purposes and often there is a misunderstanding in the general public and within government about the differences between the 2. It is important to make sure people are aware of the differences such as the IPA Program being based on biodiversity and conservation to an international standard while the ranger program (which includes biodiversity, conservation) is very much jobs, training and careers based. Making that clear and making sure future government doesn't roll them up into one is something we need to keep our eye on. (Stakeholder interviewee)

Mid-term review of long-term funding agreements and funding for capital and accommodation to house staff were identified as missing components of appropriately resourcing IPAs.

Ngunya Jargoon IPA entered into a 5-year funding contract after its dedication in 2013. On reflection the IPA staff would have included capital costs for vehicle replacement in their budget and welcomed a review mid-term to assess the suitability of the budget as the IPA became operational. In their view, their IPA plan was not appropriately budgeted. Both Girringun and Ngunya Jargoon IPA raise their particular circumstances of development around the IPAs that has resulted in increased land value and reduced the affordability of accommodation for staff working on the IPA. Ngadju IPA, which was dedicated in 2020, raise the challenges of a newly established IPA that is recruiting staff and creating the conditions to attract and retain staff, such as housing. Pulu Islet IPA seeks improved office conditions for its IPA staff. With grants being highly competitive and limited operating resources, IPA staff are becoming more discerning of potential grant submissions.

> The PoM doesn't match up to the budget … In a 7-year program there should be a few grand for vehicle replacement. The lock-in can be hard to change, if needed. Might be better with 3 years and a review. The mechanisms in the contract don't keep up [with changing operating conditions]. We are out by $25k–$30k. [We] shouldn't be signed for long times at such a low rate … In the initial plan community meetings were planned. They were never funded, and they should have been. (name withheld IPA)

> To the Board's credit, they kept it [IPA operations] going and kept people employed. The model needs to reflect the changes. Are we better to get money under the rangers program? The current budget is operational. There is no money for vehicle replacement and the long-term things that are required. All grant rounds are over-subscribed and need more money. (name withheld IPA)

> Not enough jobs and not enough houses. (name withheld IPA)

> Our land has gone up in value. Asset rich and cash poor. Level of reliance on government funding is too high and is an ongoing issue. On the balance, we own land, but don't get a return. (name withheld IPA)

> Staffing is always hard. We need housing. No one available to provide support in regard to this. A barrier to get out on the IPA is the lack of vehicles, lack of licence. It would be great to get out on a camp out. Maybe a week or two ... [We] need access to transport. (name withheld IPA)

> Ranger infrastructure needs to be updated. [Name] is operating from a small office that can only accommodate 2 people; there is no storage space. (name withheld IPA)

Capital investment to support infrastructure was further raised as an issue through the National roundtable and key stakeholder interviews:

> Infrastructure is not included in IPA funding. The 3 big things are ranger bases or sheds, vehicles and staff accommodation. All of those are big costs; once you have got staff accommodation and ranger bases, that's amazing and you don't need them again; obviously vehicles are more ongoing costs. IPA funding doesn't support these, so you have to find other ways of funding them by going through a different arm of NIAA, ILSC [Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation] or other big funders. (Stakeholder interviewee)

> Increasing resourcing to those IPAs is one thing, but you also need to structure it appropriately. One of the things that is a concern for me is that if you pulled away the support structures that are around the IPAs it would be very difficult for those individual IPAs to operate in a way that you could deem to be safe and adequate in a desert context. Some of those areas are bigger than Tasmania and they are serviced by a remote community which might be 4 hours away or several days drive to the core locations. The IPA Program supports one vehicle; you can't run a trip into that Country (desert country) with one vehicle. You wouldn't expect a government worker to run a trip into that Country with one vehicle. So, you have to find other money, support systems and partnerships and that's one of the nice things about the IPA, it leverages partnerships, but it would be a much more successful program if there was more resourcing to allow IPA and ranger teams to work in a safe and supported fashion to do a really good job. It's a different way of doing it. (Stakeholder interviewee)

> Is it about jobs or is it about properly resourcing the current IPAs and ranger teams, you know, to deal with the issues that they've got right now? … If they want to progress … Because I can tell you the coordinators are going to be flat out just trying to make sure he delivers on the work program and not … necessarily always been able to mentor the … upcoming ranger you know, so there's got to be investment in whatever organisation is running that, to have some sort of parallel processes around developing this new leader who's going to take over … there's lots of stuff that organisations need to do, but they need support to invest in their own staff to step up there. (National roundtable)

The uncertainty of ongoing funding towards the end of multi-year funding terms was raised as a major disruptor to planning, operations, staffing on IPAs and the ability of staff to enter into longer term agreements with third parties, at a time when they are building maturity as an IPA provider. It is challenging for IPA staff to operate to the final year of their contract without certainty of ongoing funding:

> Understanding how the funding will be going forward is a challenge. (name withheld IPA)

> Before the last 5-year agreement, May, didn't know what would happen on July 1st. Currently have a 7-year PoM … Then just get a bucket of money to do the work. It's feast or famine with funding. (name withheld IPA)

> We have a 7-year contract. Ends next year. You get to the last year and start to wonder. We then have to reapply. It's not ideal. (name withheld IPA)

Stakeholder interviews confirmed the importance of long-term stable funding for IPAs:

> Need to have a commitment of longevity to the current agreement term of the IPA, which is 5 years. Ten to 15 years is the recommendation. (Stakeholder interviewee)

> If longer term and more stable funding regimes are put in place, the better it is for groups in terms of consistency of staffing, their ability to lease vehicles or to enter into long-term agreements or to leverage support from third parties. (Stakeholder interviewee)

A further challenge raised by 4 IPA providers is the retention and recruitment of skilled staff, considering that employment conditions on IPAs may not be able to compete with the state and national park rangers and the high turnover in management roles where people were not suited to work on IPAs. State and national park rangers are perceived to be on higher wages and can have access to support systems for their on-ground management. Lake Condah and Girringun IPA highlight the movement of IPA staff to government ranger positions.

> Just got to do what we can with what we've got. The people in the past were new to the game. It was hard for them to understand. We've had a lot of CEOs and that's been a hassle. (name withheld IPA)
>
> With land management program we've got money … We've had a plan all costed, but couldn't get a full complement of people. (name withheld IPA)
>
> The barrier is getting the boots on the ground … we could use a bigger team. (name withheld IPA)
>
> Problem is rangers get poached by departments. For me it's an issue. They will get a better offer. (name withheld IPA)
>
> See a lot of problems with the IPA projects. Money, distance and inflation are a problem. Same opportunities not being offered to IPA rangers as other state funded rangers. (name withheld IPA)

Stakeholder interviews identified the skill gap of high-capacity staff in the Indigenous land and sea management sector, the small pool of candidates and the challenge of recruiting to this level:

> Long-term funding is an issue that if you could use a magic wand to [make the issue] go away overnight that would be one thing that I would do. Acknowledging that some of that is a hard slog, but it starts with the right strategies and policies which we don't necessarily have in place yet. (Stakeholder interviewee)

The challenge for the remote island IPA of [name withheld]is the high cost of travel that consumes the budget for staff to access the IPA to undertake work. In addition, the bundling of the 3 island IPAs in the Torres Strait into one funded project was raised as a concern, as IPA staff perceived that the protection of the unique value of the [name withheld] IPA was not being properly resourced:

> $5,000 per charter [flight] people have to pay on top of the jobs. All our places are remote. It's not easy to drive or walk. Unique situation here is 3 different Indigenous protected areas funded as one. Can mean that it's different looking to everywhere else. The money doesn't go far and can be blown quickly on a charter. (name withheld IPA)

5.3.3. Constrained capacity to fill funding shortfall for work on Country

IPA providers are creating partnerships to acquire funding beyond their NIAA IPA agreements, though funding sources remain largely state or national governments. The Indigenous Rangers Program has provided Ngunya Jargoon, Anindilyakwa and Pulu Islet with resources to undertake planned work on their IPAs. A number of IPA providers highlighted that managing multiple funding agreements from various state or federal programs with different reporting requirements creates a

strain on their organisational resources, with potentially hundreds of KPIs and insufficient systems or personnel capabilities to comply with and report on to the satisfaction of the funder/s. For example, Lake Condah IPA staff mention the high reporting requirement of running approximately 40 grants that can detract from the work they seek to carry out, and the resourcing challenge of delivering a range of project deliverables across multiple grants within short timeframes

> Don't have enough money in the IPA space. (name withheld IPA)
>
> The organisation currently has 40 or so grants. Even more probably. There is always reporting, auditing and everything else. A lot of the projects are condensed into a short time frame. We have to fit it all in a short time frame. Seasonal challenges is always a problem. (name withheld IPA)

[Name withheld] IPA spoke about their engagement with Uluṟu–Kata Tjuṯa National Park (UKTNP) to explore innovative ways to fund on-Country teaching and learning camps through engagement with tourists. With support from UKTNP, community members closely involved with [name withheld] IPA worked with the CLC to take over 30 community members out on Country for 3 weeks:

> The kids then did all the dances they'd been learning for another 2 weeks then camping out with those tourists. CLC staff did the development work for the tours, and Elders did the song and dance; they all got the kids out there and they used this 'cultural tourism' as a vehicle to getting out there for 3 weeks. These tourists did a 'cultural camp' for one week to see if it was okay for them do the proper camp and learn more.

5.3.4. Compliance and monitoring authority across the NRS is inequitable

IPA providers questioned the lack of enforceable compliance authority of IPA rangers in the marine and terrestrial environments. Anindilyakwa IPA staff seek to better understand how their rights under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* (ALRA) can enable them to enforce more sustainable fishery practices on their sea country. Girringun IPA established nature conservation powers for some of its rangers using funding from the ranger program. Pulu Islet, Ngadju and Bardi Jawi IPA staff seek compliance authority for their rangers that are equivalent to their state and national counterparts to manage people on their sea Country.

> Need to understand how the Aboriginal Land Rights Act works. Can the IPA have exclusive rights over areas and how can this be better integrated and managed? (name withheld IPA)
>
> Recruitment of Torres Strait Islander people to roles has worked. Rangers need more power; statutory bodies can only do things on the island. (name withheld IPA)
>
> Occupation of northern islands. They are sacred. Communities there caretake. Sometimes there are fishermen that go there. The western islands can be illegal nets and things set up. On Saibai ongoing conversation about compliance and authority. (name withheld IPA)
>
> Trespassing powers … Compliance training …There is a lack of signage/warnings from state authorities. How come these mob [fishing] get power but we got none. There are problems with the permit process. (name withheld IPA)
>
> The DBCA [Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions] rangers can get people off [land]. We need authority to get people off. If people are at a sacred site, [we] can't get people off … We need to do things the right way. (name withheld IPA)

The majority of stakeholder interviews confirmed the need to explore options for consistency in legislative arrangements for IPAs across jurisdictions and on waters and lands to ensure IPAs are equally protected in line with national parks. One stakeholder reiterated that IPAs operate under different contexts, which will require local capability to explore permissions, licences and appropriate authority to act.

> Rangers should be able to go through a process where they can issue breaches for trespassing and illegal access. Also, if a ranger has done the training and has obtained that badge/ticket/training they need to be remunerated appropriately. (Stakeholder interviewee)
>
> IPAs on the ground operate in different contexts when undertaking activities; compliance with fires, for example, varies between territories and states. In the NT the fire agencies have a framework in which they work closely with the IPAs; however, in Tasmania the state government agencies are restrictive about allowing others to do fire management, so there are whole range of licences and permissions that IPAs need to get in order to undertake these activities. It also depends on where the IPA is situated. (Stakeholder interviewee)

5.3.5. Diversity of IPAs not recognised in resourcing and support

Each IPA is unique and influenced by its social, environmental, economic and tenure contexts. Resourcing and support for IPA projects must be tailored according to the unique challenges in which they individually operate to achieve their goals.

Managing IPAs across multiple tenures and different regulatory environments, of local, state and national government, adds to the complexities of their operations to achieve their goals. The different environments that IPA providers operate in included:

- IPAs that operate within farming regions (Girringun, Yappala)
- Island IPAs and coastal IPAs that have sea Country interests (Pulu Islet, Bardi Jawi, Anindilyakwa, Girringun, Ngunya Jargoon)
- IPAs that operate within an increasingly regional development and urban setting (Ngunya Jargoon, Girringun)
- IPAs that operate within a resource development region (Ngadju).

For example, Girringun IPA operates across 3 tiers of government in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area and includes parts of the Girringun Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreements area, within a region with a long history of sugar cane farming. It operates within marine, coast and terrestrial settings.

Yarning reflection by IPA Indigenous Evaluation Team – diversity of IPA sites and sharing in the pride of everyone we met

The IPAs were so diverse – from Ballina with millionaires on your doorstep to Katiti-Petermann with Uluru and its surrounding lands; from very remote country to built-up areas like Hobart. An IPA site might be small, or so large that in the case of Katiti-Petermann it took community a week to walk it from one end to the other. In some IPAs people are still speaking their language, while in others they've been assimilated.

Despite this diversity, every community shared a great sense of pride in the land; pride that the government has given them ownership of their own country. Some of the IPA lands would be

worth a lot of money to developers, but it wasn't about that for the community; it was about having something that they can connect to, something that is theirs.

A representative of a case study site noted that working across multiple tenures and regulations is challenging. Pulu Islet IPA staff express the difficulty of asserting lore within the existing tiers of state, national and local council laws. Both Pulu Islet and Bardi Jawi raise their interests to protect sea country as part of their IPA responsibilities. Ngunya Jargoon IPA staff make clear that the construction of a new highway that cuts across the IPA is evidence of the pressures of increasing development on the coastal strip of the IPA, which holds significant cultural value.

> Legislation holds people back. Three tiers of government … who to speak to? Fisheries management has always been a big issue for us. Local government planning is a challenge … It all comes back to the legislation. (name withheld IPA)
>
> Without legislation change you're always blocked. When it comes to creating, legislation always plays a big part in it. Needs real people at the table, not just scientists … Complexity in tenure makes it tricky. (name withheld IPA)
>
> When you look at the Torres Strait, it's a mix a federal, state and local jurisdictions. Bottom line is how you mix the cultural. They don't see that. Australia can't understand cultural orientation … We've got a physical connection, it's where the law comes from. Always trying to work out how law can be brought up and aligned to lore. (name withheld IPA)

Findings from the site-based yarns were supported by key stakeholder interviewees:

> … when you look at the protection element of an IPA in terms of protecting Country from damage, it can get dug up at any time, even if that IPA is located on a pastoral lease in WA, crown land or exclusive Native Title … but if you are in the Territory on ALRA land you have control, so you get the protection. It depends on where you are and I think it's important for any review of IPAs to work through that and acknowledge that it is not a protection mechanism everywhere, it is tenure dependent. (Stakeholder interviewee)
>
> In terms of how the different tenure types affect the decisions that are being made – I think a lot of groups would prefer an aligned approach … you're working with totally different objectives and stakeholders across different tenure types so it is hard and decisions will be impacted by that. (Stakeholder interviewee)

There was also recognition that where IPAs were enabled to navigate across tenures, the effects were powerful:

> Some IPA providers work across Aboriginal controlled lands, council lands, national parks, etc. Cross-Country IPAs demonstrate a strong statement and assertion of peoples' traditional rights over Country. Very important for the owners of that Country (Stakeholder interviewee).

5.3.6. Blanket regulations hampering community participation

Regulations that operate in wider Australian society can hamper the way that IPA providers seek to work with Traditional Owners on their Country in certain circumstances. Katiti-Petermann and Lake Condah IPA staff mentioned that processes and paperwork to acquire working with children (WWC)

cards or having records of previous misdemeanours can limit participation of certain community members in the IPA Program, as stated below:

> Rules have really changed, especially about transport. You used to be able to load everyone up in the back of a ute, but now everyone needs to have seatbelts. There are also restrictions that make it more difficult to bring children out. (name withheld IPA)
>
> People also need WWC card. We have mentors to get their cards. CLC does the paperwork. (name withheld IPA)
>
> There is a structure that says, 'Must have working with children check'. Can't get it. (name withheld IPA)

Yarning reflection by IPA Indigenous Evaluation Team – additional difficulties people shared about getting involved in the IPA Program

The primary benefit that people spoke of in yarns is wellbeing. People told us of the importance of having land that they can connect to and are in control of, that they have a say in what goes on in their IPA. Having this is a massive boost to the wellbeing of the community and particularly those working on the IPA.

One challenge raised was difficulties around employing staff to work on the IPA; people in [IPA location] spoke of government red tape and the criminal check processes, including WWC checks, which some men can't get because they have a past conviction/s. That prevents them from getting a card, yet they could be the best rangers in the world and benefit so much from that work.

Accessing training and consistency of training were shared with us as struggles in one site. Rangers need to work together, and if some felt they were struggling with their studies or weren't up to speed with what others were doing or had learnt, it could make them feel shame.

5.3.7. Lack of public profile of IPAs

IPA activities and achievements are not well known publicly or consistently communicated locally, within the region and nationally. Ranger work is better understood by local and wider communities. Ranger groups existed before there was federal support for a more formalised ranger program. It is important to recognise the efforts of Indigenous land and sea managers who are not part of the IPA or Indigenous Rangers programs when building a public profile.

Ngadju, Ngunya Jargoon and Pulu Islet IPA staff all expressed an interest to share the results of their work, improve community understanding and increase the involvement of Traditional Owners in the IPA.

A number of IPAs raised the issue of their own communities not being sufficiently aware of what the IPA Program was about, and the need to raise awareness and dedicate time to engaging the broader community in the activities and aims of the IPA:

> The IPA is helpful for everybody and brings the community together, but it took some time to understand. (name withheld IPA)

[Name withheld] IPA staff were clear about the contributions their IPA makes to Australian biodiversity and the importance of their contributions being understood more broadly:

> The rest of the world doesn't know what we do. Our activities including firefighting first responder responses, rescue operations, park operations that impact on tourism, biodiversity research, land and sea preservation … Looking after Country not just for ourselves but for Australia … The way we describe the IPA, and the way the government describes it, is different. (name withheld IPA)

Stakeholders stressed the importance of widely communicating the contribution of IPAs to the NRS and the nation's biodiversity. They called for a greater role of government to promote the achievements of IPAs:

> NIAA does some promotions of groups in terms of what groups are doing in relation to contributing to the biodiversity of this country and the world (climate change, etc.) but a lot more could be done. CNP [Country Needs People] do a lot through social media stories and campaigning as well as advocating. Aboriginal Rangers in IPAs are working for the whole of Australia. (Stakeholder interviewee)

> The promotion of the benefits that IPAs and Indigenous people caring for Country is contributing to the biodiversity of the nation and national reserves is not promoted enough. The environment is everybody's business, but when it comes to the IPAs hardly anyone knows much about IPAs. This week is the COP15 on conservation and biological diversity. Globally the amount of biodiversity that is on Indigenous-held land is approximately over 80%, and in Australia with global targets of 30% by 2030, but when you look at it that will be done on IPAs. It's not given the importance it deserves from a government perspective. (Stakeholder interviewee)

Yarning reflection by IPA Indigenous Evaluation Team – listening to caring for Country stories

At one site, we spoke with a team leader who is a non-Aboriginal man. He moved to the region with his wife and ended up getting a job with the rangers. He told us that the non-Indigenous people he meets through his work don't understand what the rangers do. They don't recognise the ways that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – through the ranger program – are contributing to the biodiversity of this nation. First Nations participation and contribution to climate change and conservation of land worldwide is best practice. And this isn't being promoted or understood.

5.4. Key enablers for strengthening IPA outcomes

5.4.1. Stronger sector development pathways

Training and education of IPA staff was raised as a key enabler in the Phase One report. This is expanded here in response to the strong articulation by IPA providers of the need to create development pathways through formal training, accreditation and on-the-job skill development to diversify the IPA workforce; develop sector capacity; and establish career opportunities for Indigenous peoples. A sector perspective involves both Indigenous and non-Indigenous agencies working within and alongside IPA organisations.

putalina, Yappala and Bardi Jawi IPA pointed to the need for training and accreditation programs attached to the IPA that are cemented with on-the-job practical experience. The types of specialist skill development would vary with the IPA priorities and, from the responses provided below, it is

clear that the skills would vary from preventative management planning, community consultations and reporting to on-the-ground rescue and response expertise:

> One thing I reckon or notice with the management of our lands, through IPA or rangers, looking at other organisations: they have positions for specialists. We need that: fire planner, M&E, community engagement. (name withheld IPA)
>
> We've got a huge area but a lack of people on the ground. We aren't the KLC [Kimberley Land Council] or DSS [Desert Support Services] who have all the staff. We can't get the support that we need. The specialist efforts required, understanding projects is just hard. (name withheld IPA)

Responses from the national roundtable and stakeholder interviews below demonstrate that a variety of agencies fill this space for IPAs, such as the IDA, environmental non-government organisations (NGOs) and universities.

> Some views put out there by advocacy organisations is that more public servants are needed in environment to help service the IPA network. I think that's probably true, but there needs to be a national program to lift Indigenous land management capacity, training and sector development … it needs a sector development program to service Indigenous land and sea. This includes partnerships with universities, environmental NGOs, conservancies and land councils. It's not like 15 years ago where there were few IPAs: they are everywhere and we can't service them. It's not a critical weakness right now, but it is something I perceive will grow unless there are strategies put in to fix the problem. (Stakeholder interviewee)
>
> The other weakness is a sector-wide issue about the lack of capacity. As we see more IPAs being dedicated, for the groups that get one, there will be rangers employed but the skillset to be a senior ranger or an IPA coordinator just doesn't exist. In the Territory right now, I am getting phone calls for help, who can we get? What are we going to do? We just don't have enough people. There is a blockage in terms of how the whole sector is operating with Indigenous land and sea management; it's not just an IPA problem – it is across the sector and there isn't a nationwide or state-wide plan about how to fix that gap. (Stakeholder interviewee)

IPA providers discussed the need to provide opportunity for youth to engage (including through school initiatives and junior ranger programs):

> We've set up a junior ranger program. Point is they'll tell their parents and share it and become rangers later. We want to expose them to practices: the IPA needs a training or accreditation part attached to it. (name withheld IPA)

5.4.2. Greater support for career progression within the ranger program

Rangers are critical to the success of IPAs. Section 5.3 highlighted the frustrations experienced by IPA providers who are providing much reduced employment conditions to rangers within their limited budget. In the expansion of the IPA sector, the planning and initiation of career pathways and award systems for IPA rangers and staff would need to start today in order to secure the continued and future growth of the sector.

Girringun IPA, situated in an agricultural landscape within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, has begun engaging school children on caring for Country career pathways to offer opportunities outside of farming. putalina IPA has lost staff to government because it wasn't able to offer commensurate employment conditions.

> Pathways are a problem … Started working with the school for identifying career pathway. Maybe marine scientists or conservation jobs caring for country. Have started Youth Groups with kids from 9 tribes. Over 30 young people participated in the last one. (name withheld IPA)

Recognising ranger roles in line with other community roles, such as community health workers, and securing an award system within formal human resource systems was also supported through the stakeholder interviews:

> It would be great to have an award system to ensure there is a natural progression and support for rangers in the same way as any other sector; we have community health workers, community service workers but there isn't anything for community rangers. An award is one of things that is missing and could give more structure around HR [human resources] and could make it more enticing for Indigenous people to be employed. (Stakeholder interviewee)

Other opportunities to support career progression within the ranger system were identified in the stakeholder interviews. These include:

- greater flexibility in employment opportunities to suit the needs of the workforce
- greater recognition of the workforce that supports the IPA – including Elders who are operating in unfunded roles
- stronger leadership pathways.

The responses listed below address concerns raised by IPA providers (about funding uncertainty and insufficiency and the resultant impact on provider workforce planning and management) in section 5.3:

> Organisations that pay rangers need to be supported to allow for the casualisation of the workforce; it's a struggle and there needs to be HR support or mechanisms which can also allow for Elders, which in turn leads to the education of our young people. (Stakeholder interviewee)
>
> Our Elders and other community members are expected to engage in processes that relate to IPAs such as field trips, etc. They should be a part of the workforce with equal pay and recognition of their time and effort. (Stakeholder interviewee)
>
> That (non-Indigenous) coordinator lasts 12 months; they churn and burn, and they never have the opportunity to train that Indigenous person to get them to the next level. If there was a better sector development program where that Indigenous senior ranger could do training, or the non-Indigenous IPA coordinator could go on secondment somewhere else, it could keep people in the system and you will get better results. (Stakeholder interviewee)
>
> Stronger pathways for Indigenous rangers are needed to enable Indigenous people to fill management positions rather than non-Aboriginal people. From a national level, departments can do a lot more in setting higher targets and standards in relation to Indigenous employment in leadership roles, acknowledging that this approach is not going to fit all. That's fine if Indigenous employees don't want to take up management roles, but it would be good to have a strong Commonwealth backing on this. The key is to have a HR strategy around it with strong foundations in regard to the level of support individuals are provided so that individual capacity can be built. (Stakeholder interviewee)

5.4.3. Equitable allocation of resources within the NRS

The 2016 SROI analyses (Social Ventures Australia 2016) established that the returns from IPAs are very large. During the 2009–15 financial years, an investment of $35.2m from government and a range of third parties generated social, economic, cultural and environmental outcomes with an adjusted value of $96.5m (Social Ventures Australia 2016). These figures have frequently been used to support the argument for investment in the IPA Program.

Concern was expressed by multiple evaluation participants as to how these figures may now be acting against the interests of Indigenous peoples. Perversely, when multiple significant benefits can be derived from a relatively small investment, it can be used as argument against increased funding:

> I get worried when we talk about … good wellbeing outcomes and sometimes it takes the onus away from wanting more operational capacity for those IPAs because the government can view it as 'Oh well, these mob are all happy they got good outcomes, but hang on we want another 10 positions to help manage this properly and that is going to cost you money'. (Stakeholder interviewee)

> We haven't really spoken about how the IPAs contribute to the government's needs; it is a government instrument and I think in terms of strengths it is cheap and the program achieves a huge amount of land in protection for international targets. For that, it is terrific! But it is not equitable. (Stakeholder interviewee)

> I think the cost effectiveness is put out there as a benefit of the IPA Program; 'It's cost effective but actually it's not.' There is not enough money put into looking after IPAs. (Stakeholder interviewee)

> If you are declaring an IPA that is over 7 million ha and it is funded $400,000 per year, that's a cheap way to increase the percentage of country covered. The value given is not commensurate with the value that it provides the federal government ... Funding for national parks vs IPAs: it's a disproportionate weighting that you are getting. There needs to be thought given to how we work at both scales. (Stakeholder interviewee)

> The best example is to do a comparison of Kakadu and the surrounding ranger groups and what it costs them to manage their threats, fires, ferals and weeds. See how much they do on a shoestring budget compared to Kakadu; the power balance could be changed particularly around the per hectare amount … It's a big issue and for a program that's been around for a while it hasn't really shifted with the times. (Stakeholder interviewee)

> If you did a costing of what the NRS gets for national parks, state parks, conservation estates compared to IPAs it wouldn't be much ... I would hope to come out of this evaluation process to show what savings Australia is getting from IPAs. This could also push IPAs into a better position for more funding … We also need to stay in step with CPI, population growth, cost of living, etc. (Stakeholder interviewee)

> Traditional Owners have come together wanting to look after their Country for its environmental, social and cultural importance but it is not given the same amount of investment if it were non-Indigenous private land … They just have to 'take what you get and be happy'. (Stakeholder interviewee)

Government is aware of some of the concerns that relate to the level and consistency of funding of IPAs relative to the rest of the NRS and the need for improvement; the representatives also point

out that the goal of the IPA Program from the beginning was not to fund a workforce – rather, it was to establish governance and management systems of individual IPAs:

> One of the weaknesses of the program is the funding provided to support 50% of the NRS; it is probably well below the funding provided to support the other 50% of the NRS. I think a lot more could be achieved if there was consistency in funding across all NRS participants … The IPA Program was set up to establish a governance structure and a regime of management but not necessarily a workforce. (Stakeholder interviewee)

5.4.4. Strengthen government capacity to engage with IPA providers

Significant frustration was expressed by IPA providers during the site visits due to the perceived lack of engagement and support provided by the NIAA in delivery of the IPA Program. Frustration was specifically aimed at the lack of engagement on the ground, and a perception that the officers they engage with have no experience or understanding of what it means to work on Country, nor appreciation for the daily challenges that impact the delivery of the IPA goals:

> They never get out here. They don't see what has happened. They need to get out and about … NIAA are bureaucracies. No feedback on reports. They are very generic. (name withheld IPA)
>
> A big problem with NIAA is they don't come out. They'd get a feel for how much food [costs], how far things are apart. They could get an understanding of it. (name withheld IPA)
>
> The life blood is the ranger program and the social program. NIAA jobs are gate keepers. They go out and look at things, say 'get reports done' and then they disappear into the ether. (name withheld IPA)
>
> When [name withheld IPA] started review we asked NIAA for additional funding for 10-year management plan. We asked do you have guidelines or criteria for reviewing? No, nothing was provided ... governments use IPAs to say they're doing something. If that's it, show more support for everyone. (name withheld IPA)

A perceived lack of on-ground knowledge by NIAA staff contacts was raised as a frustration:

> IDA is always telling government to get out [on Country], but it is the wrong people. They are irrelevant … sometimes we don't want them here. It's a lack of knowledge to provide advice. We have people who don't know anything about land management. (name withheld IPA)
>
> When I first turned up ... nearly 5 years ago there were a couple of people who had been there a long time and that was a plus for us; they knew the Country, they knew the people, they knew the IPAs. But more recently it's new people that don't have the local knowledge, they also don't have the background in terms of the program itself. So, it's always hard to navigate the bureaucracy but that turnover doesn't help. I've found one or 2 people that are experienced and knowledgeable and good to talk to, but that's relatively rare and not so much on the local front for us at the moment. So it often depends on finding someone who actually knows what they're talking about and has been there for a little while. (Stakeholder interviewee)

A lack of relationship building as a result of what is perceived to be high levels of NIAA staff turnover is seen as significantly impacting on the overall relationship with government:

> The relationships are very important. It's hard to establish and then people move on. (name withheld IPA)
>
> It is frustrating dealing with the changeover of staff within the program; there is not enough staff at the moment. Maybe there is high turnover, so we feel we have to educate the new person every few months which is our contact with NIAA ... we are waiting on Canberra basically a lot of the time. I think some more attention to that would benefit the program as well. (Stakeholder interviewee)

The challenges of the loss of corporate knowledge and relationships is acknowledged by government as an issue that needs to be addressed, and one way of doing this is to establish systems that can sustain continuity through change, as expressed by a representative of DCCEEW:

> Having that familiarity and relationships with people is really important because you lose so much knowledge when you lose staff. Also having that historical knowledge, at a project/community level, can make a successful project … The question is, do we (government) have systems and corporate governance in place to support those changes? (Stakeholder interviewee)

The NIAA is working to build the capacity of regional offices to provide prompt support to its IPA providers:

> … our regional presence is not able to provide an immediate response sometimes so there can be delays in work happening on the ground. That's something that we are always working towards, supporting our colleagues working regionally to have the relevant expertise, recruiting the relevant people and also making sure they are across the program and understanding how they can provide the best support. (Stakeholder interviewee)

Government structure/coordination impacting on the delivery of the IPA Program

Concern was further raised by several IPA providers about the lack of coordination within the government, related to IPA Program administration. This included the impacts on IPAs of the change in administrative arrangements from DCCEEW to the NIAA. Further comment was made about a perceived lack of coordination across government agencies. Discussion about the effects of siloing of ILSMPs and funding is addressed further in the following section.

For [name withheld] IPA, which is in a complex multi-tenured environment, this extended to negotiating engagement with multiple levels of government:

> Tiers of government are the biggest challenges for a co-managed IPA. Who to speak to? (name withheld IPA)
>
> It can be quite hard for us, the service providers, to understand the relationship between NIAA and the department of environment, and who has what responsibility. I have seen really good operators brought back in as consultants to fill gaps; we had the same experience a few years ago when we were moving one of the IPAs from consultation to dedication. It was really slow, which in turn slowed down the program, and again on our side the Traditional Owners had done all the right things and the feedback [from the government] took quite a long time, so improvements on that. From the IDA conference last year, I heard a few good things about them (the

> government) trying to invest in having more staff and having both departments, but we need to see it on the ground. (Stakeholder interviewee)
>
> You also don't get a sense that NIAA, DCCEEW and ILSC are on the same page or if their programs complement each other. They appear not to talk to each other; where is the coordination there? (Stakeholder interviewee)
>
> If there were enough government people working on this and knew about the program and the local mob they're working with as well as the organisations that support them, and also worked closely in collaboration with the Traditional Owners and support organisations in a well-resourced environment, that to me sounds like heaven. (Stakeholder interviewee)

Representatives from the managing entity of the IPA Program are clear about the strategic links between NIAA and DCCEEW through the Indigenous Advisory Committee (IAC), as stated below:

> Where there are significant matters on policy, under our MOU [memorandum of understanding] with DCCEEW, we work to DCCEEWs IAC, and they provide us with advice. If there were potential major changes to the program, we would bring that to the attention of this committee. (Stakeholder interviewee)

Management of IPAs at the program level

Future management of the IPA Program was raised by key stakeholder interviewees within the context of addressing ongoing concerns about a lack of support on the ground:

> Which department should this program sit with? I am less committed to an individual department. If NIAA objectives are having people on Country fulfilling their obligations and that's coordinated well with the Department of Environment, I think that that would be totally fine. But where you have a series of objectives, which might be employment outcomes, rather than it being people's obligations to Country, which is what drives the mob to be on Country and doing their job, that's where the tension is and having people understand that, in whatever department that is, is really important. (Stakeholder interviewee)
>
> All I care about from an IPA perspective is that we get some proper services from a contract management perspective and subject matter knowledge irrespective of where that sits in government. (Stakeholder interviewee)
>
> The lack of resources and staffing in NIAA to work with rangers on reporting or important issues … if we're looking at doubling rangers and expanding IPAs without the relevant support mechanisms within departments, that's going to be another nightmare. (Stakeholder interviewee)
>
> Go back and see what worked before and reinstate some of that. Good example is every 2 years there used to be IPA managers meetings. Two people from each IPA, this would be included in your workplan and budget to make sure that the 2 people attended. Those are really important in supporting IPAs and allow new IPAs and well-established IPAs to share knowledge and information. (Stakeholder interviewee)

5.4.5. Review and address program silos

Key stakeholder interviewees provided program-scale comments on the need to review and re-evaluate how the IPA Program and the ranger program are currently administered and managed.

The overarching message that was delivered through the evaluation was a need to stop siloing the programs that deliver to similar end goals and start viewing the IPA Program and ranger program together.

Comment was also made about the need to look more broadly at all of the investment into ILSMPs at all scales and start to look more strategically and holistically at supporting the sector.

Efforts are being made to connect departments and policy programs to create partnerships across government at different levels, but there is still much to do before the benefits are realised by IPA projects:

> As of next week, we are launching into being a part of a new group and that consists of the CTG [Closing the Gap] branch … we are committed to a new way of working; can we push this program further in the partnership space? I would be really interested to see when we get the regional voice structure set up in a few years, after they focus on the national voice. (Stakeholder interviewee)

The disconnect between the IPA Program and other funding sources that support ranger employment, including the Indigenous Rangers Program, was repeatedly identified by IPA projects and key stakeholder interviewees as an area that could be addressed to improve delivery of the IPA Program. The IPA Program and Indigenous Rangers Program come together as a result of on-ground coordination of management activities, as well as overlapping aims and goals of the programs, but more strategic alignment would deliver capability into IPAs, as well as potentially reduce reporting loads:

> Getting more coordination on where those programs come from and who they are delivered to would be a way to improve the [IPA] program and the collective programs. (Stakeholder interviewee)
>
> I think IPA and ranger teams go hand in hand, they're really important … Having them together sitting on the same country, having a ranger and IPA, it adds to the resources and adds to the options for mob as to what types of roles they want to play in the programs. (Stakeholder interviewee)
>
> It allows for more resources in terms of vehicles or being able to have a male and a female person in coordinator roles. It allows people to engage on a casual basis, part-time or full-time basis. It allows for ensuring that you can pay Elders for their contribution to the program while at the same time building up the strength of young people. It doubles the capacity of the programs and has slightly different aims, goals and focuses. (Stakeholder interviewee)
>
> The synergies with the ranger program and how many operate on IPAs is almost like a supplementary solution. It provides a workforce … You may end up with situations such as, if a ranger was to decide to move away from an IPA, would the IPA be able to do the work that it was previously doing? With the 2 programs so intertwined in some areas it's a strength but it can also be a weakness having 2 separate programs. (Stakeholder interviewee)
>
> One of the problems with government siloing its IPA Program in a particular area is that the government is in community supporting a lot of services. Being able to make sure that IPAs run well requires all of those structures to exist and that is in the government and communities' best interest. (Stakeholder interviewee)

> The sector is more than just the IPA or working on Country [Indigenous Rangers Program]; the sector is state-based joint management, Bush Heritage, TNC, PEW, WWE, [department of] environment and natural resource management groups to name a few. They're all in the sector now and one way or the other are working with Indigenous land and sea management so the solutions need to come from the sector. (Stakeholder interviewee)

Related to the previous comments was a level of discomfort expressed at several sites visits about not including the ranger program in the IPA evaluation. Recommendations were made by evaluation participants that any future evaluation should simultaneously include a review of the ranger program:

> One of the challenges of your consultation is that it's a narrow focus to the IPA Program but it is the same holistic report; Country is Country and whatever the programs are and resources that TOs [Traditional Owners] have at their disposal to attempt to implement their own outcomes and aspirations for Country is always the challenge. (Stakeholder interviewee)

5.4.6. Build funding transparency into the IPA Program: who gets what and why

Frustrations were expressed through the yarns about a lack of transparency in decision-making regarding funding for IPAs. This included well-established IPAs as well as recently formed IPAs. Also, a perception was revealed that funding is directed to new IPAs rather than supporting existing IPAs that are in need of financial assistance:

> It was offensive how the new IPA got so much money. Plan has been moving for 18 years; for 13 years couldn't even establish a centre. We have signs, videos, brochures, but that's it, no centre was ever included. For administering there needs to be a better description of what can be done with IPA emphasis on Commonwealth and getting funds. We're looking to get state funding for cultural heritage. (name withheld IPA)

> The money went to other organisations [new IPAs]. When other groups came in the money goes to them. The money keeps going other places. Money is tight. (name withheld IPA)

> We are currently providing support to groups who are interested in establishing new IPAs and we are a bit unsure of the best way to provide them with the best information we can on the likelihood of them getting an IPA. What are all the steps that they must go through to get an IPA? The process feels a little haphazard and uncertain. Particularly when there are some large IPAs that have been around for a while, what happens to the groups that want to start now? Do they have a lower chance than these groups? Also, what about those wanting to extend their IPAs? There isn't any overarching clear information being given to people or groups that can provide answers to these questions; getting information to those groups is important. Also, what is lacking is an understanding of the program modelling, funding and the formula; it is not clear enough to enable an understanding of the program from the outset. (Stakeholder interviewee)

A concern was also raised about internal (organisational) processes for the distribution of funds where a funding contract for multiple IPAs is held by one organisation:

> In 2017 there were questions around the budgets for IPAs across the Torres Strait Regional Authority [TSRA]. The TSRA gets the money and then they divide how it goes out. (name withheld IPA)

5.4.7. Support appropriate governance

The role of good governance as an underpinning enabler of IPAs is addressed in section 5.2. This section explores how good governance can be further supported as a key component of the IPA Program.

> The weakness in every one of these programs is that there is an assumption that the community has a very big say in the way that the program is managed, but it's difficult to communicate Traditional Owner engagement in the management process ... If you are looking at approaching that in the future, it should be making sure that it is genuinely controlled ... and creating a communication stream that goes direct to Traditional Owners ... I don't think the IPA has enough money in it to really support true governance. (Stakeholder interviewee)

Reflections on the critical need for good governance processes at all stages of the IPA process were highlighted by the following key stakeholder interviewee. Poor governance in the development of an initial management plan has created an ongoing legacy with poor outcomes for Traditional Owners:

> All the other IPAs in the CLC region have been done properly and been built with at least a year and a half of planning ... In contrast, this one wasn't developed properly; the management plan was comprehensive but … it wasn't written in consultation with community like the CLC would write their plans. It's a bit western science heavy and it never really hit the mark; now we're in this dilemma where it's been underspent for years and the community are angry at CLC because they feel that they're not getting any value out of it. So we need to go back to the drawing board and start working with people a different way. (Stakeholder interviewee)

Respecting culture and good governance in the IPA Program extends to understanding how IPAs can best deliver to Traditional Owners in culturally responsive ways. For example, landscape-scale management is a more culturally appropriate approach to the management of IPAs in some regions.

Yarning reflection by IPA Indigenous Evaluation Team – People need time to talk to get the business of governance right

When I first arrived at one site, I caught up with a Traditional Owner whom I have known for years. She was telling me and asking for guidance around some complications with the local language groups, explaining that a Native Title determination has been made, and there has been a creation of a Native Title services group. She was saying, 'They're trying to bring us all together – we all know where our boundaries are and we manage our own affairs; we don't interfere with other peoples' business – and now the government is forcing us to commit to one landlord. And that's not the way that people do business.'

From an outsiders' perspective people might look for efficiencies, or if they don't understand how things work on the ground they try to create something they can understand, but it doesn't work for the people. It just creates complexities that interrupt governance arrangements. Governance issues are varied across the IPAs – some are strong and some are going through transitions. The important thing is to have faith in people to be able to organise themselves, with support.

5.4.8. Review and streamline reporting

Issues with reporting on IPA activities was reported by all sites and supported by key stakeholder interviewees. Key discussion points included the amount of time that reporting takes, the complexity or duplication of reporting requirements and the lack of tailoring to individual IPAs. Smaller IPAs and those with less administrative capacity were particularly concerned with the onerous nature of reporting, given the relatively small sums of funding and the lack of available support to fulfil reporting requirements.

A disconnect between IPA reporting demands and IPA provider priorities was raised as one area that might be addressed to support more beneficial outcomes for IPA projects:

> When we get to the reporting we keep getting asked how does this bit align to the other areas. The table and the contract. All for $140k. It's like they set us mob up to fail. Are they trying to take it back? The review needs to be back on NIAA. They aren't doing what they should to support. They need to remember we are building the next generation of storytellers. In 20 years these fellas are going to be teaching our grand kids. (name withheld IPA)

> There is a problem aligning to the objectives. It's hard to do the NIAA reporting, it's micro-managing and insulting. We have to do so much work across all the different sectors, more than 20–30 different things every 6 months … We do it to get paid, but it's a black hole. We never get anything back. It's huge pressure and stress. They can't be the same reporting. It is putting all these small individual projects to tick the boxes. The reporting system works against the practice on the ground. (name withheld IPA)

Reporting contributes significant stress for IPA providers, particularly those with low administrative capacity as illustrated by the following comments from IPA providers:

> Can some of the pressure be taken off reporting? We are always more stressed with the reporting than doing the work. (name withheld IPA)

> For $140k we have to do the reporting like its $1.4m. There are 3 lines of reporting. The reporting we do for aged care is easy compared to the IPA funding … I got out of the public service to give back to community. I'm not sure I can stay … In others there is a white fella to come in and then do the report. Maybe $10k would be spent. That $10k per year that usually goes to someone else, a consultant. We are working on getting our team to do the work (reporting). We sit together and share everything and then pull it together. (name withheld IPA)

> Jali pays the cost of doing the reporting … It's a big level of in-kind. NIAA aren't complaining. (name withheld IPA)

> There's a lot of crossover with the rangers. Would make sense to bundle it up – let us get on with it. (name withheld IPA)

> The IPA is 1.2 million ha. How can [name withheld] do it all? Need to get serious about this and support it better. The reporting back is a huge requirement. (name withheld IPA)

As a counterpoint to demonstrate the significant diversity in terms of administrative capability across the IPAs, the following comment is provided by a key stakeholder interviewee:

> We are funded by the ILSC and NIAA funding. Eight groups funded out of NIAA and 3 funded out of ILSC as well as a few funded out of an Aboriginal Benefits Account stimulus funding. We have a head agreement then the one contract for 8 ranger groups; each ranger group has an individual template that they report on. Then we have one contract with the 4 IPAs; they all report under a similar format. Then we have the IPA development contract for the Haasts Bluff IPA; this is in consultation phase. We also have a contract with the ILSC; we report on 3 groups then we have an internal contract with Aboriginal Benefits Account. We collect the same data for every group and have a person within the CLC dedicated to the reporting. (Stakeholder interviewee)

Duplication of reporting (across IPA and Indigenous Rangers Programs) was further raised as a barrier in the key stakeholder interviews:

> Multiple funding sources is a barrier. It's ridiculous that we have a Warlpiri ranger group and an IPA coordinator and the same in Katiti-Petermann; they all work to the wishes of the IPA management committee. They are the overarching Traditional Owner body, and they create the workplan, everyone works to that, but we create separate reporting streams for each entity, and it doesn't make any sense. You are effectively copying information and double reporting, so it is a problem and, if you are a small entity, it would be an even bigger problem. (Stakeholder interviewee)

The burdensome nature of reporting is also believed to be a reason why Indigenous people are reluctant to take up more senior roles, which often come with a higher administrative load:

> People are reluctant to take up senior roles because they end up having to deal with a whole heap of admin and management activities. This isn't why people become rangers; they want to work on Country. If there is more resourcing so that people have more management and admin support, then it might make it more feasible for people to take on some of those roles or part of the role. (Stakeholder interviewee)

The current reporting process was also seen as a missed opportunity for raising the profile of IPAs and the significant contributions Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make to the Australian community. From one organisation's perspective:

> There were 40 different positions looking after IPA and ranger reporting previously, then it went down to approximately 12 and that was nationally. I think they're still struggling and there has been a flow-on affect in the department in terms of IPAs and the ranger program in relation to priorities; it doesn't get the interest it deserves even though we all know they are some of the best programs. There are great things in the reports and in public-facing documents but they don't have a good backing to be able to highlight it a lot more and that computes to that negative presentation of what Indigenous people do. (Stakeholder interviewee)

While the time commitment required to undertake reporting was highlighted as a specific concern at the site level, the nature of the reporting was also raised as an issue, including inclusion of inappropriate and/or ineffective reporting metrics:

> They plant a seed to tick a box. They don't come back to see if it's growing. (name withheld IPA)

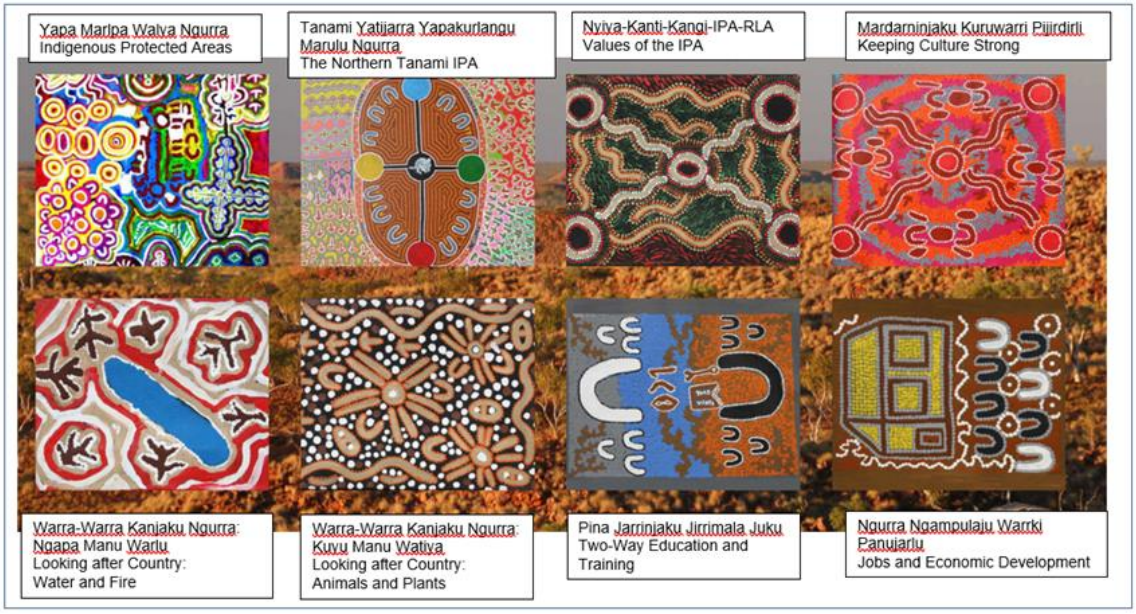
> … what are the outcomes that the federal government want to get out of this program? Is it management of the environment and supporting people to be on Country and managing their Country, or is it counting jobs? (Stakeholder interviewee)
>
> … people should be allowed and encouraged to determine their own priorities and approaches … Sometimes those standard IPA reporting templates don't necessarily reflect that. How can people be enabled to take their own lens rather than a prescriptive government informed lens? (Stakeholder interviewee)

5.5. Review of Plans of Management

5.5.1. Introduction

IPAs face the unique challenge of producing PoMs that address the IUCN Management Effectiveness (ME) framework as well as concepts of management effectiveness from Indigenous world views (Hockings 2006). For example, the PoMs of the Northern and Southern Tanami IPAs include both a high-standard technical planning document that meets the IUCN ME standards (Central Land Council 2012, 2015b) and a standalone online digital storybook IPA in Indigenous languages, with videos, which presents components based on their Indigenous world views (Central Land Council 2016, 2019) – see, for example, Figure 5.1. These multiple plans are clearly an outstanding example of navigating the requirements of both governments and Traditional Owners.

Figure 5.1 Northern Tanami IPA digital storybook



Source: Central Land Council 2019
The words shown in text boxes here appear when hovering over each painting, and there is a link to a video.

As noted in the preceding paragraph, this requirement to navigate 2 lenses on management has resulted in high-quality attention to good governance with substantial involvement of relevant people, as illustrated by the Warddeken PoM:

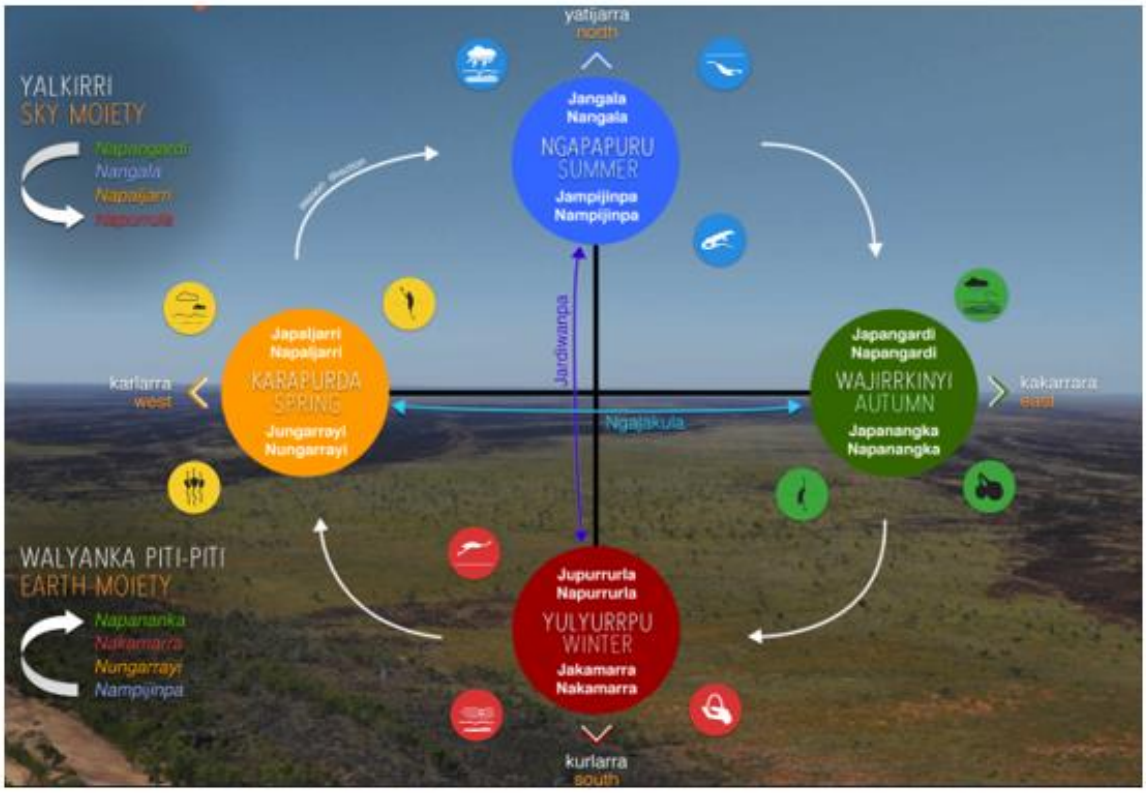
> The 2016–2020 Plan of Management has been developed in consultation with hundreds of Nawarddeken using the Healthy Country Planning process under the

guidance of the company's Board of Directors. (Warddeken Land Management Limited 2016 p. 7)

Further, the need to develop both technically complex and culturally responsive plans has resulted in distinctive plans that are highly visual and use many different forms of maps, including some that are paintings (Davies et al. 2013).

The presentation of Warlpiri knowledge in Figure 5.2, which clearly links the earth, sky, people and seasons in their traditional management system, provides a small window into millennia of experience (Central Land Council 2012).

Figure 5.2 Northern Tanami IPA Storybook Plan of Management – Warlpiri knowledge



Source: Central Land Council 2019

5.5.2. Analysis

An analysis of 10 IPA PoMs was conducted during Phase Two. The analysis shows a high level of diversity in the plans, reflecting both the site context – economic, social, environmental and colonial context – and the capacity of the host organisation.

It is worth noting that some of the PoMs have expired and others are undergoing renewal. Risks are evident where IPA PoMs are out of date.

Phase One revealed that in terms of addressing all aspects of the IUCN ME framework (Hockings 2006), the standard of PoMs reviewed for the evaluation is very high.

5.5.3. Governance

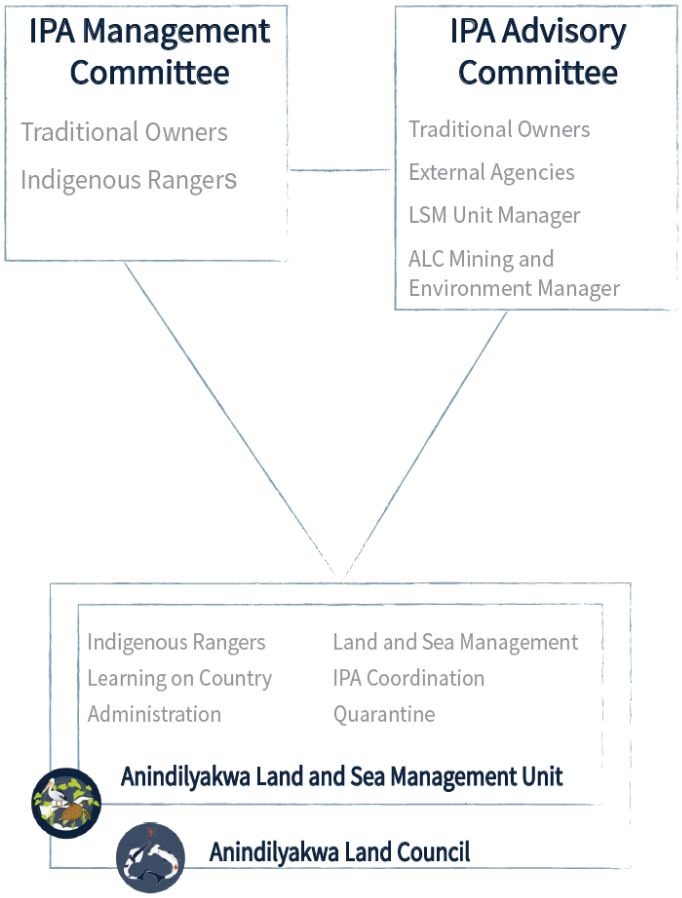
Governance is about the structures and management process by which Traditional Owners make decisions and share power (Woodward et al. 2020). Some of the key features across all governance models analysed are described below.

Their cultural foundations: For example, the cultural underpinnings to Girringun's regional governance strengths are firmly based in the Aboriginal laws and customs of Girringun's Aboriginal Traditional Owner member groups (Girringun Aboriginal Corporation 2014).

They address Traditional Owners' needs and aspirations: They do not unduly favour the Traditional Owners of one part of the IPA over another. For example, at Katiti-Petermann the IPA has been divided into 4 management committee regions as a means of ensuring that governance arrangements do not unduly favour the Traditional Owners of one part of the IPA over another (Central Land Council 2015a).

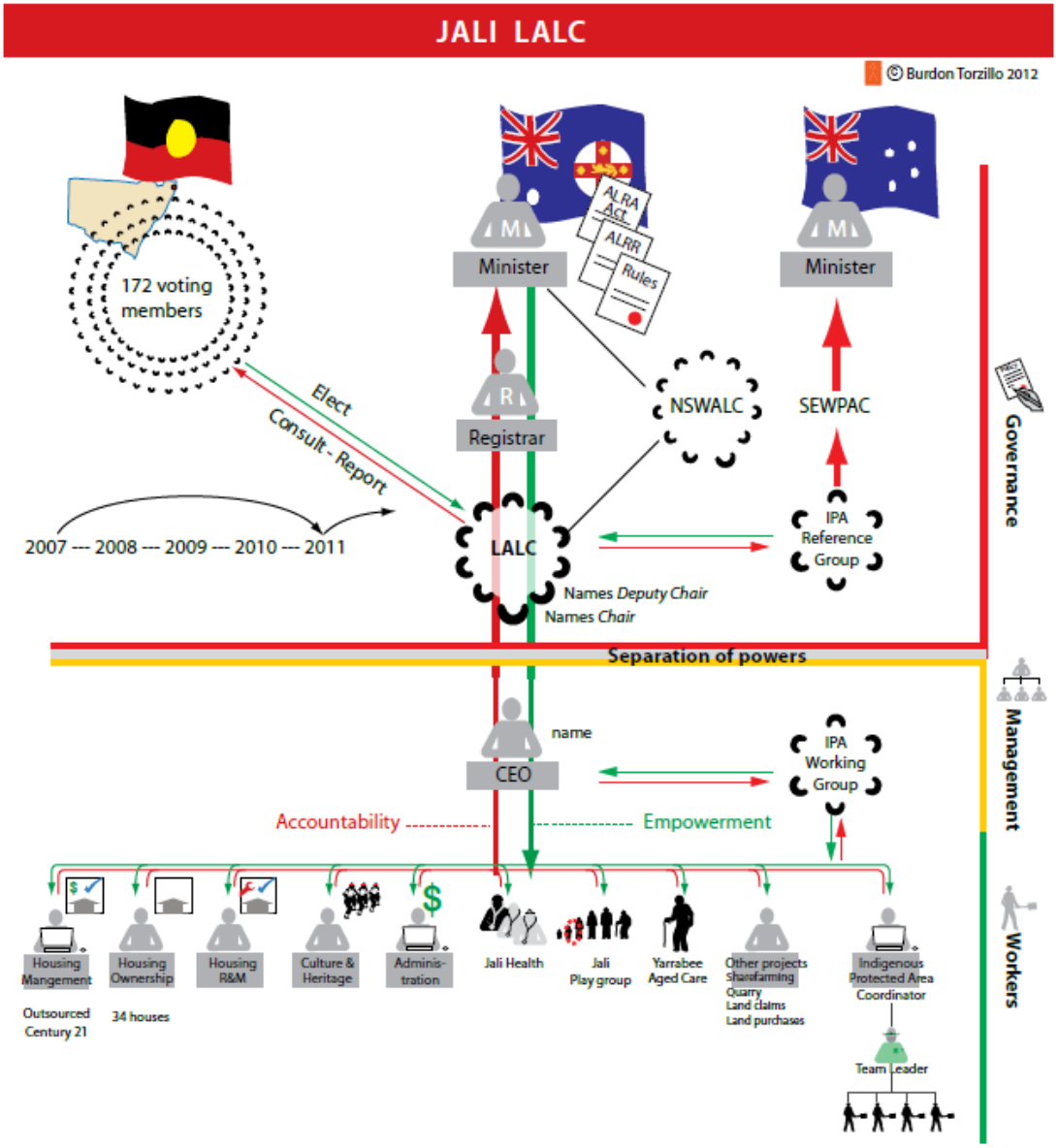
They describe and/or use visuals to show how their IPA governance structure operates, the objective/function of each element and the relationship between each element: For example, the Anindilyakwa PoM demonstrates their attention to governance through support of both a management and advisory committee, which works with the Anindilyakwa Land and Sea Management Unit with the land council (Figure 5.3).

Figure 5.3 Governance structure of the Anindilyakwa IPA



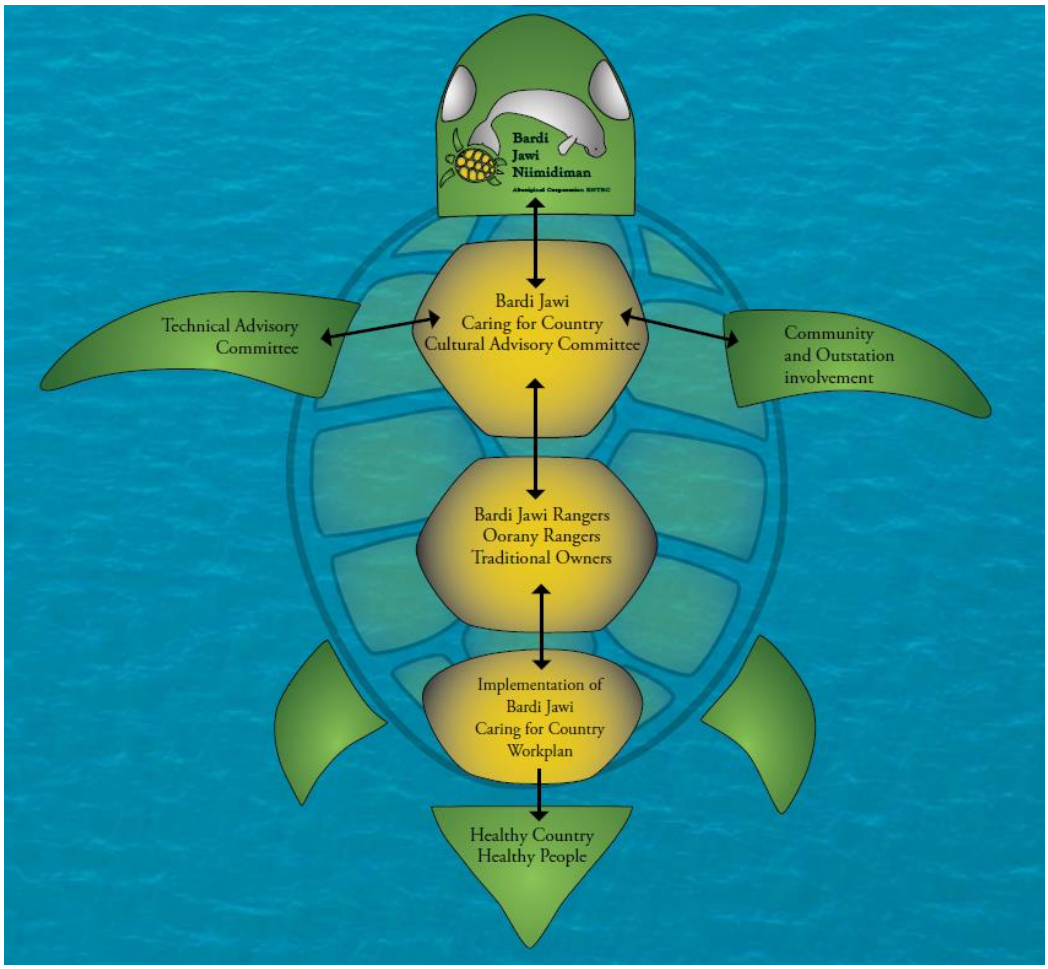
Some PoMs show how they navigate the 2 governance systems while clearly delineating where Indigenous empowerment and decision-making powers lie. This is demonstrated in the Ngunya Jargoon IPA PoM (Figure 5.4).

Figure 5.4 Ngunya Jargoon governance map



Bardi Jawi's proposed governance structure is represented by a turtle, an animal important to Bardi Jawi life (Figure 5.5). This highly visual example shows that strong governance has a cultural foundation.

Figure 5.5 Proposed Bardi Jawi IPA governance structure



Some hosting organisations act as the top tier of the governance arrangement. For example, as a Prescribed Body Corporate (PBC), Ngadju Native Title Aboriginal Corporation (NNTAC) provides the top tier of governance for Ngadju. Through the endorsement of the Ngadju Native Title holders, NNTAC has devolved responsibility for planning, dedication and on-ground management of the IPA to Ngadju Conservation Aboriginal Corporation. NNTAC has director representation in Ngadju Conservation Aboriginal Corporation.

Other IPAs are held in trust for the Aboriginal Corporation by the Aboriginal Lands Trust. This is the case at Yappala IPA, which is held in trust for the Viliwarinha Yura Aboriginal Corporation by the Aboriginal Lands Trust. The management of the IPA is carried out by the Yappala IPA rangers under direction from the Viliwarinha Yura Aboriginal Corporation through the Yappala IPA Advisory Committee.

Some IPAs have identified building governance capacity/governance training as a necessity, as illustrated by the following excerpt from the Yappala IPA PoM:

> We are going to build our governance and financial management skills within the board and staff of the Viliwarinha Yura Aboriginal Corporation so that we can manage

> the IPA and address the lack of capacity (Viliwarinha Yura Aboriginal Corporation 2021 p. 29).

Girringun IPA identifies the need for adequate and sustained resourcing in their PoM:

> For both PBCs and Traditional Owner community-based organisations, the question of adequate sustained resourcing of corporate capacity to ensure the necessary consistent governance, planning expertise and operational capacity is to hand for Traditional Owners remains the essential concern in generating real and meaningful socially, culturally, economically and ecologically sustainable outcomes for Traditional Owners, their respective Native Title or other returned lands, and their own desired, regionally collaborative management of their Land and Sea Country. (Girringun Aboriginal Corporation 2014, p. 18)

Katiti-Petermann IPA identify in their PoM an intention to:

> … undertake a limited five-year review of the IPA management plan to assess … the effectiveness of the IPA governance structure, management arrangements and partnerships. (Central Land Council 2015a, p. 146)

5.5.4. Disaster management

The one reference to disaster management was found in the Girringun PoM. For context, this PoM was produced 2 years after Cyclone Yasi. Girringun led the then-new Queensland Community Disaster Response initiative:

> In the immediate aftermath of Severe Tropical Cyclone Yasi in February 2011, Girringun employed 90 additional staff over a period of 18 months, leading a new Queensland Community Disaster Response initiative involving disaster management agencies. (Girringun Aboriginal Corporation 2014, p. 19)

While specific references to disaster management are absent from the other PoMs analysed, it was spoken about during the roundtable. One example from Bardi Jawi is their rangers helping local council with bushfires. Although Indigenous ranger jobs do not fall under the same jurisdiction and they are not funded to assist in bushfire management, it is their cultural responsibility as Traditional Owners to manage and protect Country they share with others.

5.5.5. Climate change

Climate change is mentioned in 9 of the 10 IPAs analysed and its impacts are discussed in relation to the context of each IPA.

For example, some IPAs are dependent on groundwater. Changes to the supply of it need to be better understood to better inform Traditional Owner decision-making under climate change scenarios:

> The likely impacts of climate change on groundwater resources, the only reliable water supplies in the IPA, also require investigation. (Central Land Council 2015a, p. 78)

For those IPAs who manage sea Country, such as Pulu Islet in the Torres Strait, cultural heritage management is a high priority action:

> Analysis of potential impacts on cultural heritage of processes associated with climate change, in particular storm surge events and sea level rise linked to global warming. (Hitchcock et al. 2009, p. 20)

Anindilyakwa IPA address the likely impacts climate change will have on the availability of food and critical habitat within their PoM:

> Climate change is likely to have considerable direct and indirect impacts on the local marine environment. Seagrass meadows, mangroves and coral are all negatively impacted by increasing ocean temperatures. The availability of food and critical habitat within the IPA marine zone will also be affected by changes in sand temperatures, sea level, storm activity and ocean currents. (Anindilyakwa Land Council 2016, p. 86)

Bardi Jawi clearly describe how change to one part of a system changes the whole:

> Climate change may affect everything. For example, when Goorlil, the gender of whose hatchlings is determined in part by the temperature of their nests, lay their eggs into sand that is too hot, there may be fewer male turtle hatchlings entering the sea. A rise in sea level and an increase in temperature can affect the health and distribution of coral reefs and fish populations, and reduce the abundance of seagrass meadows, the basis of the offshore food web. (BJNACRNTBC 2013, p. 41)

For Ngadju, the relationship between climate change and weeds may pose significant risks:

> Ngadju already see the effects of these changes in increased fuel loads, more frequent bushfires, an earlier flowering season and shifts in the ecology of dependant wildlife such as honeyeaters and butterflies … Climate change is an important factor in assessing the risk posed by specific weeds, e.g. several species of the invasive cacti pose significant risks to the IPA as environmental weeds. (Ngadju Conservation Aboriginal Corporation 2020, p. 1)

Girringun talk of loss of habitat in terrestrial environments:

> … particular loss of upland rainforest habitat, loss of key species, increasing coastal and riparian (river-side) erosion and sea level rise. (Girringun Aboriginal Corporation 2014, p. 32).

Droughts are also impacting IPAs' ability to form viable enterprises at Yappala, which impacts their ability to reduce their reliance on government funding:

> More frequent and severe droughts due to climate change will result in less water in waterways and rock holes and less water for plants and animals. It will also affect our ability to develop a bush tucker business and have viable cropping land. (Viliwarinha Yura Aboriginal Corporation 2021, p. 26)

While it is clear climate change impacts every aspect of the Indigenous cultural landscape – social, cultural, environmental and economical – it is also important to acknowledge that Indigenous people have adapted to changing environments for millennia.

A theme consistent throughout all the PoMs is that Traditional Owners continue to share in making decisions about their Country and bring traditional cultural knowledge to western science in formulating management actions. As Girringun state, collaborative partnerships are fundamental to manage threats, including those posed by climate change:

> Cooperative approaches and realistic resourcing are fundamental to tackling the serious environmental, natural resource and cultural heritage management issues facing our region. (Girringun Aboriginal Corporation 2014, p. 32)

This theme is articulated more strongly in PoMs written more recently.

5.5.6. Enterprise activities

A range of enterprises were described in PoMs across IPAs. While the activities varied depending on their context and the groups' priorities, they shared commonalities. First is that the IPAs view enterprise through a cultural lens (not a biodiversity lens). That is, enterprises are cultural activities and an expression and expansion of self-determination. They are holistic and their (shared) benefits are social, economic and environmental.

Second is the importance of collaborative partnerships to achieve Traditional Owner outcomes. A third feature they share is the expressed benefit of income generation from enterprises on Country supplementing and/or reducing reliance on government funding.

A feature common to IPAs with enterprises are they are holistic, centred around the environmental, cultural, economic and social wellbeing of Country and people. In regards to enterprise development, there is significant diversity across the IPAs.

As the Girringun PoM explains:

> Through Girringun, our member groups are investing in the development of the Girringun Native Plant Nursery (funded by a 6-year Biodiversity Fund grant), contracted fee-for-service ecological fire management and a local alternative energy pilot project (NQ Bio-Energy in Ingham). The NQ Bio-Energy initiative is a commercial joint venture with the private sector. (Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation 2014, p. 47)

For some IPAs, current enterprises provide an opportunity for the growth of other enterprises:

> An aquaculture centre and jetty are under construction. Once complete, the aquaculture centre will serve as a tourism operations hub, café and eel processing facility. A new track upgrade and crossing south of Kerrup Jmara weir are also under construction. (Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation 2014, p. 49)

Some enterprises have been impacted or constrained by environmental factors including drought and/or a lack of water allocation.

Compliance issues have constrained the Bardi Jawi from realising the full potential of their tourist resort, Kooljaman, which closed for major upgrades in order to meet with compliance.

Supporting existing sustainable business development is a key theme for both current and future enterprises as explained in the Ngunya Jargoon and Anindilyakwa PoMs.

Enterprises focus on cultural work. Land and sea management programs, or caring for the health of Country, incorporates caring for health of people and community.

Yappala describe the cyclicity or interconnectedness between spending more time on Country, managing Country, exchanging and transmitting knowledge on Country, drawing an income from Country, which all improve community wellbeing:

> We need to find new ways to improve economic sustainability so we will be less reliant on government funding for our IPA and to provide economic opportunities for our

> people so they can spend more time on Country and improve our community wellbeing. (Viliwarinha Yura Aboriginal Corporation 2021, p. 33)

5.5.7. Partnerships

Collaborative partnerships and agreements are considered vital to delivering Traditional Owners' outcomes. There are many different types of partnerships across the IPAs, including government, non-government, philanthropic, Indigenous organisations, research institutions and private landholders. Partnerships are a function of several factors which include the IPA, the surrounding tenure, where the IPA is in relation to infrastructure and/or industry and if there are other groups with shared interests within or around the IPA, or who support Indigenous self-determination.

Pulu Islet have expressed an interest in working with researchers and other partners around ongoing collaborative cultural heritage management and to develop research protocols:

> In order to progress the long-held and sincere aspirations of our Traditional Owner member groups in gaining greater and more concrete management engagement and enforcement powers on our Land and Sea Country, five key strategies are under Traditional Owner consideration and development in collaboration with our Girringun Region Indigenous Protected Areas partners - statutory agencies, local government, private landholders and regional NRM bodies. (Hitchcock et al. 2009, p. 13)

The Yappala IPA has developed many partnerships with government agencies, NGOs, education institutions and neighbouring land managers, which they see as vital in delivering outcomes for the IPA through collaboration with the Yappala Traditional Owners.

There are a number of government and non-government organisations that operate in the Groote Archipelago. Partnerships with these organisations supports the Anindilyakwa Land Council Land and Sea Management Unit to meet the objectives of this IPA PoM (Viliwarinha Yura Aboriginal Corporation 2021).

While Katiti-Petermann recognises the potential for mining, Anindilyakwa is transitioning away from income generated by mining.

IPA providers value partnerships where Indigenous expertise is valued and appropriately integrated with western knowledge. Ngadju identify several opportunities for collaborative partnerships, while Goemulgal (Pulu Islet IPA) talk about formulating research protocols.

A new relationship with the operators of the Nova mine in the Fraser Range is proving to be positive. Ngadju Rangers are currently contracted by the mine's owners and operators to undertake environmental work, including hazard reduction burning with their lease. Ngadju believe their experience at Nova could lead to venture partnerships in the mining environmental area, for example in skilled applications such as baseline environmental monitoring and site rehabilitation (Ngadju Conservation Aboriginal Corporation 2020).

5.5.8. The IPA as a place for intergenerational learning

Country is a place for education between generations, for whole of community and for visitors. Two-way education is important. IPAs are viewed in PoMs as enabling intergenerational learning:

> Part of the vision for the IPA is for the lands to be a teaching resource about culture and land. (Jali LALC 2013, p. 15)

The shared benefit of education is that it can facilitate the sharing of knowledge and culture and foster a greater understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians:

> The education of children in the ecology of the land and the cultural landscape; and the education of adults who are working on the Jali Lands, or who might come as visitors. (Jali LALC 2013, p. 13)

Two-way education is seen as critically important:

> Children need to have Udnyu (western) education but it is important that our children continue to learn our Yura (cultural) ways too. We would like our children to have more opportunities to learn Adnyamathanha culture and language. We wish to develop a program so that we can continue to take our children out on Country and practice culture. (Viliwarinha Yura Aboriginal Corporation 2021, p.28)

While both Anangu and Piranpa cultures view education as critically important, there are distinct differences in their underlying approaches to teaching and learning (Central Land Council 2015a).

For Anindilyakwa, community education around climate change has been noted, with community members observing the changing condition of their Country (and Country on the neighbouring mainland) but do not necessarily understand the threatening processes driving these changes.

The importance of rangers educating community is also highlighted. Rangers have raised community awareness of environmental issues such as feral animals, weeds and altered fire regimes through:

- community consultations and meetings (e.g. disseminating information related to feral animals, supporting Traditional Owners to make informed decisions regarding feral animal management and disseminating knowledge from scientific research projects)
- the production and distribution of cross-cultural resources (e.g. newsletters, flyers, electronic story board recordings and booklets)
- mentoring students on Country and in the classroom during Learning on Country activities (including collaborative activities with external experts)
- supporting relevant activities undertaken by local organisations (e.g. the East Arnhem Regional Council Animal Management Program).

For Ngadju, Country is the foundation for educational advancement and enterprise development, while Yappala are exploring 'campus on Country':

> We will continue to explore developing a 'campus on Country'. Yappala would be ideal for this, especially once we get the ranger base established. Many different subjects could be taught, including geology, hydrology, ecology, language, anthropology and archaeology, allowing students to have more hands-on activities. (Viliwarinha Yura Aboriginal Corporation 2021, p. 33)

Education is viewed as something that requires resourcing through the IPA, including for building cultural awareness, as described in the Pulu Islet PoM.

5.5.9. Future goals

Future goals articulated in the PoMs range from small scale to large scale, including highly strategic and visionary projects.

Future goals share the following features: knowledge sharing, spending more time on Country and sustaining/renewing language, knowledge and culture.

Language

Language, law and culture are intrinsically connected (like a web). The maintenance/revitalisation and protection of one part (of the web) supports the whole (web):

> Language is tied to the land and people's existence in it. (Ngadju Conservation Aboriginal Corporation 2020, p. 27).

Language, law and culture are important things to look after for all IPAs, and their loss concerns all IPAs. The ways in which the IPAs approach their maintenance/revitalisation and protection differs depending on their priorities and context.

One approach is through education. Adnyamathanha have a culture and language program to help strengthen their traditions and prevent the loss of culture and language. They hold an annual culture camp on Country that brings together children and Elders to share stories and increase understanding about Country:

> By strengthening our Adnyamathanha Yura Mudha and Yura Ngawarla (culture and language) program more culture and language will be passed on to the right people and our younger generations. This will reduce the threat of loss of culture and language and improve Adnyamathanha Yura Mudha and Yura Ngawarla (culture and language) and community wellbeing. We will collect stories and Elders talking on video. We will establish a database so it is retrievable. (Viliwarinha Yura Aboriginal Corporation 2021, p. 28)

Ngunya Jargoon want to implement a traditional language training program, and people under the Pulu Islet IPA have undertaken linguistic training and developed their own preferred orthography, which was used in their PoM.

A second approach to strengthening language is through documentation of language, as expressed in the Ngadju PoM:

> Although no longer a language of conversation, a number of senior Ngadju remain fluent in Ngadjumaya and the everyday English of younger Ngadju is often interlaced with Ngadjumaya words, phrases and metaphors. In 2008 a large body of Ngadjumaya was documented as a dictionary produced by the Wangka Maya Pilbara Aboriginal Language Centre. [A local] Language Centre currently supports a linguist. Their work involves the collection, linguistic analysis and archiving of the language in the development of a Ngadju Dictionary and Toolbox database. (Ngadju Conservation Aboriginal Corporation 2020, p. 27)

There has been significant investment in maintaining Indigenous knowledge on Groote, as senior Anindilyakwa people are concerned that some young people are disinterested in learning about their culture and the 'old ways'. They are also concerned that young people are not learning to speak, read or write their first language:

> A linguistics centre in Angurugu promotes Anindilyakwa language and culture by providing translation and recording services and creating resources for local communities. Cultural centres, which provide young and old people with the facilities to learn, record and engage in traditional (or contemporary) culture, art and language, are currently being established in the three communities within the IPA. The Milyakburra cultural centre, which was opened in 2016, features performance space, interactive technologies and media facilities. (Anindilyakwa Land Council 2016. p. 40)

Another approach to cultural maintenance/revitalisation and protection is through technology. Like Anindilyakwa, Ngadju have established electronic archives for the retention and use of cultural information.

Intergenerational transfer of traditional knowledge is a responsibility and priority

A key feature across all IPAs is the importance of passing on language, law and culture to future generations. IPAs are building on activities already taking place on Country and coming up with new ways to address and strengthen their cultural practices. The intergenerational transfer of this traditional knowledge is critical to the spiritual and social wellbeing of individuals. Thus, looking after culture is directly linked with managing the health of Country and is linked to community wellbeing.

Bardi Jawi have set a target to have the majority of people living on Country being fluent and regular speakers of their language and attending cultural ceremonies. They will build upon cultural activities already taking place and devise new ways to strengthen the practice of law and culture:

> By looking after country the right way, we will look after Bardi Jawi Law, Language and Culture. (BJNACRNTBC 2013, p. i)

While many Bardi Jawi people teach culture in their homes on communities or outstations, they see an increasing need to facilitate such transmission through school culture days.

Ngadju are developing a dictionary and archives for the retention and use of Ngadju cultural information, while Goemulgal wish to learn more about the cultural heritage and history of Pulu and surrounding islets, through collaborative site surveys and archaeological excavations.

For Goemulgal, the protection and management of sites is another way to transmit culture:

> Goemulgal wish to continue to protect the cultural values and associated culturally significant sites on Pulu. Sea level rise, bushfires, pest species (e.g. rubbing of rock art, and treadage of artefacts by pigs) and termite mounds (covering/damaging rock art) are all potential threats to the cultural heritage of this sacred islet, which need to be monitored and responded to. (Hitchcock et al. 2009, p. 20)

Expansion (IPA, outstations, sea Country)

Connections and responsibilities to country extend beyond the IPA boundary. Expansion, or growth, looks different across the IPAs (also see section 6.3.2). For Girringun, it includes expanding country under the IPA and in gaining greater, more concrete management, engagement and enforcement powers on their land and sea Country.

At Yappala IPA, Traditional Owners would like to expand their care and protection of cultural sites to pastoral leases with whom they share a boundary:

> Hookina Springs is a very important recorded cultural site for us and it is currently not part of the IPA. There is also a midden site across the road from Hookina Springs [that] has a large number of artefacts. If we can have them included in the IPA then we can protect and care for them properly. There will be a bit of work with our neighbours to negotiate it being included. We will also need to get funding to purchase the sites and to manage them. If we can include Hookina Springs in our IPA then this important cultural site will be protected and maintained properly. (Viliwarinha Yura Aboriginal Corporation 2021, p. 28)

The Anindilyakwa IPA PoM describes expansion of outstations to support the goals of the IPA. There are 14 outstations across this IPA and the sustainable growth of them is important because they:

> … facilitate Traditional Owners accessing and staying on Country. Many Traditional Owners who regularly visit or live at their outstation feel they maintain a connection to their Country and escape some of the negative influences in communities. As such, it is important that the sustainable growth of outstations is managed effectively into the future. (Anindilyakwa Land Council 2016, p. 41)

Employment

Jobs on Country is important. Partnerships are key. Capacity building is a common theme, as is reducing reliance on government funding. Jobs on Country fulfil responsibilities to look after Country and for community wellbeing.

For some IPAs, particularly in remote areas, employment opportunities are limited. Many people face barriers to educational achievement and maintaining permanent employment later in life:

> Many young Anindilyakwa people have been raised in families in which few or no relatives have had a formal education or employment opportunities and thus they lack relevant role models. Many school-aged children do not attend school regularly and thus they fail to develop the skills and knowledge required to undertake further training. (Anindilyakwa Land Council 2016, p. 47)

> We have a wide range of skills that we are able to use on our IPA including certificates and experience in: tour and cultural education guides, cross cultural training, cultural knowledge of Adnyamathanha country and working with Operation Flinders (youth correction/guidance program), horticulture and land management, handyman skills and bus driving for archaeological digs, visual arts; painting and art exhibition, horsemanship/husbandry; livestock management (sheep and cattle), business management and community services management, for family well-being, justice/courts system, education, mental health and suicide prevention. (Viliwarinha Yura Aboriginal Corporation 2021, p. 15)

Training and employment opportunities build the capacity of rangers and extend the range of services they can provide for a fee-for-service basis, which has been demonstrated by Girringun:

> In the Girringun region presently an effective, legally recognised enforcement role for Traditional Owners is restricted to engagement through the general and specified employment structures of mainstream statutory management agencies. This is a key focus area for future policy reform. (Girringun Aboriginal Corporation 2014, p. 33)

Youth

Passing knowledge on to the next generation is a feature in all PoMs.

The vision of Yappala IPA is:

> Ngapala yakati, ngapala yarta martun, ngapala Mudha arnintha vartinth yakati nimbitch – wandupantha

> Our children, connected to our land, carrying our storylines and song lines and passing them onto their children – caring for Country to a good standard. (Viliwarinha Yura Aboriginal Corporation 2021, p. 11)

For Girringun:

> Our Land and Sea Management Vision Corporate objectives include: build confident, high-esteemed and inspired youth participating in the broader society and fulfilling their responsibilities and aspirations. (Girringun Aboriginal Corporation 2014, p. 15)

Capacity building

Building capacity is important. Some IPAs have identified building operational capacity as an issue; for others it's building governance capacity:

> We intend to take over management of the IPA but to do this we need to have good governance and staff that can do the administration of the IPA, like the work planning and reporting as well as managing the finances. Our IPA rangers have been doing a good job and will continue to build their capacity to take care of the IPA. (Viliwarinha Yura Aboriginal Corporation 2021, p. 25)

> Bardi Jawi people welcome visitors to their country but are concerned how to manage the growing influx of visitors and the impact increased visitor numbers on the Dampier Peninsula have on outstations and major communities. It is anticipated that the sealing of the road from Broome to Beagle Bay will soon be completed, so good visitor management is becoming urgent. (BJNACRNTBC 2013, p. 43)

Further, there is diversity in hosting arrangements and compliance powers which have a significant impact on the capacity of individual IPAs. Some IPAs have well-resourced host organisations to assist with capacity building; others have the capacity, but not the authority – for example to enforce compliance.

Funding to support IPA capacity building was revealed as an ongoing need.

Tenure

Various influences associated with colonisation have had a significant impact on Indigenous peoples' land and sea Country. Indigenous and western systems recognise Country differently. Indigenous tenure as recognised through western law may incorporate land, seascapes or both. It may be Aboriginal freehold land, hold exclusive Native Title rights, non-exclusive Native Title rights, or it may have cooperative management arrangements with other stakeholders. IPAs further share boundaries with a range of different tenure types.

IPA are also evolving their management frameworks. For example, Katiti-Petermann IPA is part of a cluster of 9 contiguous protected areas in the Northern Territory, Western Australia and South Australia tri-region. They share more than common boundaries. All are intrinsically linked through:

- shared Tjukurpa (stories, sites and responsibilities cut across reserve boundaries)
- shared family ties
- shared languages of Traditional Owners and community residents
- shared cultural knowledge of places and attributes
- shared cultural sites
- shared cultural responsibilities
- shared biodiversity values
- shared threatening processes (e.g. feral animals, wildfires, weed species)

- shared biogeographic regions and ecological communities
- shared social, health and educational challenges across communities
- shared staffing issues
- shared management aspirations and objectives. (Central Land Council 2015a, p. 35)

At Lake Condah, the management area is currently composed of 3 small separate IPAs. The associated corporations are working to have them recognised as one. There is an opportunity for these areas to be combined into one IPA in recognition of their connections, but also in support of practical management measures, including the administration of the three discrete areas.

Tourism

Where tourism is mentioned in the PoMs, it is in relation to both existing enterprises and as a goal for the future. For example, existing tourism management enterprises exist in the Bardi Jawi and Ngadju IPAs. Traditional Owner development of eco-cultural tourism enterprises was described in the Katiti-Petermann, Yappala and Lake Condah PoMs. Sustainable eco-cultural tourism is seen as delivering social, environmental, economic and cultural benefits to the wider community.

Involvement in existing tourism, together with more direct participation in the caring for Country and the decision-making processes, was described as a goal for Ngadju:

> Develop guidelines and agreement (MoU) with DBCA, shires and other tourism promoters on appropriate acknowledgement and inclusion of Ngadju culture in all recreation and tourism promotions, policies and developments. (Ngadju Conservation Aboriginal Corporation 2020, p. 26)

Expansion of existing tourist enterprises was described as a goal in the Yappala PoM:

> There are tourism enterprises on nearby pastoral stations so we know that there is demand for ecotourism in the Flinders Ranges. Being close to Hawker makes Yappala IPA very accessible and so we will start with short tours while we build up our capacity and reputation. We will provide tourists with a unique opportunity to learn about our culture and the nature of the Flinders Ranges. We will get some help on how to develop our tourism business and in developing a suitable program. Once the ranger base is developed we can also use this as a base for tourism activities and eventually run overnight trips. This is another enterprise opportunity that will enable us to be spending time on Country practising culture. (Viliwarinha Yura Aboriginal Corporation 2021, p. 33)

Commercialisation of existing visitation could provide for better management of IPA areas and generate income. For example, Ngadju IPA aspire to establish an eco-tourism business with tours and events occurring throughout:

> Many features such as breakaways, outcrops, salt lakes, old growth woodlands and historic sites are already focal points for tourism. (Ngadju Conservation Aboriginal Corporation 2020, p. 24)

While few tourists visit Groote Eylandt and Anindilyakwa people have no current significant involvement in organised tourism activities or enterprises in the IPA, recreation areas and the marine zone of the IPA could offer visitors rewarding 4-wheel driving, camping and fishing experiences:

> The significant cultural and conservation values of both the marine and terrestrial environments of the IPA increase its potential to attract tourists. If appropriately managed, eco-tourism could contribute to the sustainable economic development of local communities. (Anindilyakwa Land Council 2016, p. 50).

Anangu recognise the potential benefits of IPA tourism in relation to their health and wellbeing:

> If done properly, Anangu-controlled tourism activities could provide important employment, Anangu and business opportunities for current and future generations in a region where there are few alternative means of income generation. It could help strengthen young people's personal ties to country and their desire to fulfil their Tjukurpa responsibilities, as well as promoting personal pride in their culture. By doing so, it could also help alleviate some of the social problems which bedevil community life by giving people a sense of purpose. Income generated by tourism could also create an independent revenue stream to fund IPA management activities. (Central Land Council 2015a, p. 133).

Raising cultural awareness is seen as a key element of any tourism venture:

> For example, Ngadju feel existing facilities at the 'The Breakaways' impinge on the site's cultural and ecological integrity. Campers' proximity to the walls encroaches on a site of cultural significance as well as disturbing wildlife … They believe that if managed well this area could be used to raise cultural awareness and promote eco-tourism. (Ngadju Conservation Aboriginal Corporation 2020, p. 61).

For some IPAs, tourism is a concern or threat, but it also brings an opportunity for Traditional Owners to be involved in the management of them:

> Visits to islands and bays by boat are becoming a greater problem, as many culturally significant places are found on islands and sea Country. Visitors must seek permission before going to such places, and follow the rules (BJNACRNTBC 2013, p. 43).

5.6. Summary/key findings

Chapter 5 provided an Indigenous lens into factors affecting IPA outcomes, drawing strongly from IPA providers' views about the factors supporting and disrupting their capacity to deliver benefits and outcomes, and some of their strategies for navigating these factors. Key factors affecting IPA outcomes are identified as both strengths and barriers.

Strengths of the IPA project/s that have been identified as making them work well

- Indigenous culture and connection to Country
- Cultural leadership and authority and the role of Elders in ensuring good governance and appropriate decision-making
- Community support in delivery of the IPA Program
- Resources to support management and connection to Country
- Partnerships and collaborations
- Attention to cultural and biodiversity outcomes
- Organisation capacity, hosting arrangements and longevity: differences in organisational support – including hosting arrangements and associated administrative capacity – have a significant impact on the overall operations of an IPA

- PoMs provide opportunity for strengthening governance and community decision-making around IPAs.

Barriers to reaching the goals of the IPA project/s

- Inappropriate program focus: need for a holistic approach centred on people and Country
- Need for secure and/or increased funding across all IPA projects: inadequate funding available for critical infrastructure and capital items; wages and administrative support to enable effective delivery of management objectives
- Constrained capacity to fill funding shortfall for work on Country
- Compliance and monitoring authority across the NRS is inequitable: a current lack of enforceable compliance authority across IPAs leads to an inability to effectively protect Country
- Diversity of IPAs not recognised in resourcing and support
- Blanket regulations hampering local community participation
- Lack of public profile of IPAs, and lack of awareness and acknowledgement.

Recommendations: Key enablers for strengthening IPA outcomes

- Identify and support stronger sector development pathways, including formal training and accreditation, and capacity development across the IPA sector.
- Build support for career progression: identify career pathways, implement an award system for rangers.
- Pursue equitable allocation of resources within the NRS: greater proportion of funds to IPAs.
- Strengthen government capacity to engage with IPA providers through stronger program support, including committed network of program/contract managers with relevant skills and capabilities to support IPA providers.
- Review and address program silos by reviewing the separation of IPAs and the ranger program
- Build funding transparency into the IPA Program.
- Support appropriate governance, for example, strong Indigenous leadership and strong governance, which underpin success. Strong governance can require dedicated funding and support to be realised.
- Review and streamline reporting.

6. Relevance of IPA objectives

6.1. Introduction

This chapter of the report addresses the last of the 4 overarching evaluation questions: 'To what extent are IPA Program objectives still relevant and appropriate to meet the needs of IPA providers and the Australian Government?'

- To what extent does the holistic approach of Indigenous societies (interlinked Country-culture-social-environment-economic) fit with IPA objectives?
- To what extent do IPA providers support the IPA objectives?
- What other objectives are important to IPA providers?
- To what extent does the Australian Government support the objectives?
- What other objectives are important to the Australian Government?

The objectives of IPA Program are:

- to protect and conserve Australia's biodiversity
- to assist Indigenous Australians to deliver sustainable environmental, cultural, social and economic outcomes through the effective and sustainable management of their land and sea
- to build the extent and condition of the NRS.

The IPA Program strongly aligns with the objectives of the IAS Jobs, Land and Economy Program to assist Indigenous Australians to generate economic and social benefits, including through the effective and sustainable management of their land, and to get Indigenous Australians into work. The focus of the IAS is on Indigenous welfare, education, employment and economic development. The priorities set out for this strategy include 5 different program streams: Jobs, Land and Economy; Children and Schooling; Safety and Wellbeing; Culture and Capability; and Remote Australia Strategies (NIAA n.d.). The IPA Program has strong alignment with the Jobs, Land and Economy stream and, as mentioned above, it also contributes to other social, cultural and environmental policy objectives.

Phase One of the evaluation found that Plans of Management demonstrate a high level of consistency with the objectives of the IPA Program. The IPA plans reviewed demonstrated the importance of biodiversity and its protection consistent with the objectives of the IPA Program. IPA plans clearly communicated goals to deliver sustainable environmental, cultural, social and economic outcomes.

New objectives of IPA providers reflect priorities different from those of government and have an overall vision that is founded in the processes of reassertion of culture and authority. The emphasis on culture also includes greater focus on language and on cultural institutions and intergenerational knowledge sharing. Traditional Owners currently involved in IPAs are expressing aspirations for IPAs to be more equitably available for different First Peoples groups and for different parts of Country. IPA providers expressed aspiration to expand IPAs, to ensure their continued presence on Country, and to have better resourced IPAs. These findings are consistent with the results of Phase Two.

The objectives of the Australian Government in both environmental and Indigenous policy have shifted since the IPA objectives were established. The shift reflects a greater emphasis on (i) resilience in the face of rapid environmental change; (ii) the contributions and value of Indigenous land and sea management and Indigenous knowledge, cultures and languages to environmental and

social challenges; and (iii) policy making about issues that impact on the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people being conducted in full and genuine partnership.

Phase One of the evaluation identified increased mention of engagement with Indigenous land and sea management and combining Indigenous and western science and knowledge to inform resilience and environmental recovery. New goals were added around resilience in the face of rapid social and environmental change. The Australian Government established the National Recovery and Resilience Agency as a response into the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements Report (RCNNDA 2020). Much of the work of the Agency is targeted towards recovery from specific extreme events in specific places, but there is also a National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework (Commonwealth of Australia 2018). Three recommendations of the RCNNDA are particularly relevant:

- Recommendation 16.1 Environmental data. Australian, state and territory governments should ensure greater consistency and collaboration in the collation, storage, access and provision of data on the distribution and conservation status of Australian flora and fauna.
- Recommendation 18.1 Indigenous land and fire management and natural disaster resilience. Australian, state, territory and local governments should engage further with Traditional Owners to explore the relationship between Indigenous land and fire management and natural disaster resilience.
- Recommendation 18.2 Indigenous land and fire management and public land management. Australian, state, territory and local governments should explore further opportunities to leverage Indigenous land and fire management insights, in the development, planning and execution of public land management activities.

The National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy 2021–2025 (DAWE 2021e) commits to ongoing action on Indigenous knowledge for environmental management:

> The Australian Government will continue to facilitate partnerships to incorporate Traditional Ecological Knowledge and western science. There are opportunities to make better use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' ecological knowledge to improve the health of ecosystems. Incorporating Traditional Ecological Knowledge into decision-making through partnership and employment can have benefits for community resilience and adaptive capacity. (p. 24)

The Threatened Species Strategy 2021–2031 (DAWE 2021f) has high-level objectives:

1. To improve the trajectories of priority threatened species by 2031
2. To improve the condition of priority places by 2031.

The Strategy notes that improving the extent, connectivity and condition of habitat across our landscapes will support the persistence and recovery of threatened species. The Strategy commits to action to:

> … restore and rehabilitate habitat and provide incentives for habitat conservation to support landscape-scale restoration … partner with Traditional Owners to foster 'right-way' scientific research and support 'right-way' recovery of priority threatened species and places, engaging traditional knowledge and cultural aspirations in decision-making, recovery action and monitoring … and support 'right-way' recovery planning involving Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land and sea managers in decision-making.

In the Indigenous policy arena, the new National Agreement on Closing the Gap (Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations and Australian Governments 2020) reflects a

greater priority for Indigenous Country, culture and language. New socio-economic outcomes relevant to IPAs include:

- Outcome 14: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enjoy high levels of social and emotional wellbeing
- Outcome 15: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people maintain a distinctive cultural, spiritual, physical and economic relationship with their land and waters
- Outcome 16: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and languages are strong, supported and flourishing. (Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations and Australian Governments 2020, pp. 39–41)

The Agreement also commits governments to a new approach, where policy making that impacts on the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is done in full and genuine partnership. Broader outcomes relevant to this new approach of significance to the IPA Program include:

- Shared decision-making: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are empowered to share decision-making authority with governments to accelerate policy and place-based progress on Closing the Gap through formal partnership arrangements.
- Building the community-controlled sector: There is a strong and sustainable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector delivering high quality services to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the country.
- Improving mainstream institutions: Governments, their organisations and their institutions are accountable for Closing the Gap and are culturally safe and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including through the services they fund.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander–led data: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to, and the capability to use, locally relevant data and information to set and monitor the implementation of efforts to close the gap, their priorities and drive their own development. (pp. 3–4)

There are gaps between the current operation of the IPA Program and these agreed outcomes, in particular:

- Decision-making about the IPA Program policies is currently not shared with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – and there is no clear peak Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisation or network to undertake the role of partnering with governments.
- Data collection about IPAs is government-led rather than led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Independent Review of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) (Samuel 2020) considered ways to support the rights of Indigenous Australians and their knowledge in decision-making and made a number of recommendations, including:

> **Recommendation 5** To harness the value and recognise the importance of Indigenous knowledge, the EPBC Act should require decision-makers to respectfully consider Indigenous views and knowledge. Immediate reform is required to:
>
> a. amend the Act to replace the Indigenous Advisory Committee with the Indigenous Engagement and Participation Committee. The mandate of the Committee will be to refine, implement and monitor the National Environmental Standard for Indigenous engagement and participation in decision-making
> b. adopt the recommended National Environmental Standard for Indigenous engagement and participation in decision-making

c. amend the Act to require the Environment Minister to transparently demonstrate how Indigenous knowledge and science is considered in decision-making.

Recommendation 6 The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment should take immediate steps to invest in developing its cultural capability to build strong relationships with Indigenous Australians and enable respectful inclusion of their valuable knowledge. (Samuel 2021, pp. 27–28)

Knowledge gaps identified in Phase One that are addressed in Phase Two of the evaluation are:

- the relevance of additional objectives aligned to current Australian Government policy directions
- the relevance of new objectives to IPA providers
- options for a full and genuine partnership in considering new and/or revised objectives for the IPA Program
- options for data collection about IPAs that is led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (this is addressed in section 3.3.5).

6.2. Additional objectives aligned to current Australian Government policy directions

Findings from Phase Two of the evaluation reinforce the Phase One findings that there is consistency in goals with the IPA Program objectives for biodiversity outcomes. IPA providers seek to be appropriately resourced to achieve environmental outcomes across their IPAs.

6.2.1. Effective resourcing to secure and expand environmental outcomes

Consistent with the IPA Program goals, IPA providers aspire to secure and expand the environmental outcomes from their IPAs. Achievement of this goal requires secure long-term resourcing in staff, including rangers and management staff, expanded capabilities in digital solutions for monitoring and management of lands and waters and new ranger bases.

> Aboriginal people are government's best asset for environmental management. Invest in people to make it better. Definitely more staff, need a manager, 2–3 project managers and staff. Need 5 times the staff. (name withheld IPA)

> Engaging with technology/digital solutions for management … Grandkids are teaching technology. Rangers is not just about fencing. There is so much solar technology around. We need people using drones. (name withheld IPA)

Investment in capital

IPA providers with vast IPAs, such and Anindilyakwa and Girringun, seek to establish new ranger bases and shed facilities with equipment to expand their land and sea management operations and have a workforce that is ready to respond to emergency events. The onsite yarns and stakeholder interviews convey that investment in assets is an important condition in providing stability for IPA team operations.

> There's being able to allow for capital expenditure within the dollars that our mobs get, plenty of money for Toyotas and drive those Toyotas around. But there's very little for that shed in that remote area where they can have that capital infrastructure

to be able to allow them to do that work from remote areas or wherever they are. (National roundtable participant)

If you have got the infrastructure it feeds into the success of the program … We have a number of examples of before ranger base and after ranger base in the groups we support; the difference is exponential. It's a really practical way of enabling rangers to build their ownership of the program. It's a massive support for capacity building training, taking ownership, taking responsibility and leadership. When you're working out of a very ad hoc shipping container or whatever, it is very hard to set up really good processes for people to be able to build that. (Stakeholder interviewee)

6.3. Different objectives of IPA providers

Consistent with Phase One, IPA providers seek to expand their IPAs to include different parts of Country to be able to protect the multiple values of their Country and reassert cultural values through the IPA Program. The new IPA objectives identified by IPA providers (listed below) reflect different priorities to the Australian government and have a stronger focus on equity and partnerships that ensure Indigenous leadership in the IPA Program.

The new goals IPA providers identified in Phase Two are described below:

- protection and reassertion of culture
- extension of IPAs to include different parts of Country, consistent with IPA provider customary responsibilities
- Indigenous leadership and partnerships at all levels of the program
- IPA investment parity (IPAs vs other components of the NRS)
- building of capacity equitably to include diverse members of participating IPAs
- a vision of a land and sea sector approach
- diversification of funding and Country–culture based enterprises
- building of the profile of the IPA Program's contribution to Australia's biodiversity.

6.3.1. Protection and reassertion of culture

Phase One identified the different objectives of IPA providers to government for an overall vision in the processes of reassertion of culture and authority (this is also stated in some PoMs; see section 5.5). The Phase Two findings reinforce the importance of protection and reassertion of culture as a key goal for IPA providers. Sustaining culture through being on Country on the IPA, using language and intergenerational knowledge sharing that is part of looking after Country are elements of the practice of cultural re-assertion identified by IPA providers.

IPA providers identified the following elements of the protection and reassertion of culture as key IPA goals:

- sustaining knowledge and catalysing intergenerational teaching
- taking stock to protect cultural sites and values.

Sustaining knowledge and catalysing intergenerational teaching

IPA providers highlighted their concern of the loss of knowledge in their groups and the important role of families and multiple generations being on Country, their IPAs, as part of their customary obligations to enact place-based practices. These obligations include intergenerational teaching and the recording of knowledge and activities on Country, revival of language and the use of language names within IPAs, asserting the ownership of that Country. Maintaining geographical

responsibilities, such as through songlines and dance, are important objectives that IPA providers seek to enact as part of their connection to neighbouring people and Country.

> When we can all get together and follow a storyline, go place to place along a storyline, and bring the kids out and record the story, then that's really important to us... Part of that, you can't just teach women about any place. So my really important one is the Seven Sisters. But in Docker River there are other stories and I can't teach about that. There are other women there who have to teach about that. So we have to support all the different groups to support those stories getting preserved across all those lines. (name withheld IPA)

IPA providers expressed strong interest to develop archiving systems and keeping places to better store and utilise recordings and artefacts as one of the resources they can draw on to sustain their culture. Digital technology is being used within IPAs as a knowledge recording tool to share information about culture, Country and people that is then utilised by Traditional Owners to sustain intergenerational knowledge sharing in places beyond IPAs and Country. Katiti-Petermann IPA raised the possibility of audiovisual material being utilised at a local resort and in the National Park to enrich the experience of visitors and potentially contribute an additional revenue to Traditional Custodians.

[Name withheld IPA] seek to repatriate their artefacts to their Country as part of their cultural repository and resource:

> We've changed aims and objectives ... Heritage community is the place that could hold the knowledge. A keeping place is needed. There are a lot of things sitting at Queensland Museum. We'd like to develop our own cultural protocols around intellectual property. It's important to build a base here. It can be used in the future, [like] the books of a library. Discussing creating a language app for Mabuiag.

Taking stock to protect cultural sites and values

IPA providers across multiple sites identified the critical need to take stock of cultural sites and their values through mapping and sharing and recording knowledge of these to comprehensively understand the multiple outcomes Traditional Owners can properly plan to achieve through their management actions and the resource available to them:

> It would be great to see the caves, see the paintings and check out all those places. Need to check all the places we haven't been. Out that way there are heaps of caves. We need to control the caves, stop everyone going down there. (IPA name withheld)

A renewed focus on the management of culture and protection of cultural values through the IPA Program was supported by key stakeholder participants who highlighted the precarity of protection of cultural sites and values for Traditional Owners and the lack of understanding of how these can be appropriately captured and engaged with in the narrative of Healthy Country and People:

> There is a maturity in the program to start conceptually validating this idea that the healthy Country planning process, aside from environmental, can also capture Traditional Owner–driven cultural values and this work will continue to grow … [C]an we use this methodology to start capturing Traditional Owner–driven variables that sit underneath the values? This is a transformable and innovative piece of work which is going to take a few years to roll out across the program and it ensures that Traditional Owners are in the driver's seat. (Stakeholder interviewee)

6.3.2. Extension of IPAs to include different parts of Country consistent with IPA provider customary responsibilities

Concordant with Phase One findings, there is strong interest to expand IPAs to include different parts of Country, increase the number of IPAs and connect IPAs regionally in line with geographical customary responsibilities (also see section 5.5). A consistent view across IPA providers was that securing the goal to protect cultural values would also achieve scaled environmental outcomes. Managing IPAs within their official boundaries has uncovered the precarity of other parts of Country and the associated cultural values that are not being looked after or exposed to damage by outsiders and the critical need for IPA providers to have greater powers to protect Country.

> Need to look at extension of our IPA. We are river and sea people. The story of the river and sea is important, it's never been captured … We've got a lot of sites along the beach fronts. We need our own staff to monitor the beach. (IPA name withheld)

> IPAs are dedicated under 2 categories under that IUCN national convention; the majority of them deserve a stronger dedication under the importance of its cultural values but they all tend to go under an ecological or a conservation determination… What can we do to take into consideration these global conventions and how can they [government] support the cultural values? How can NIAA and ministers use that to strengthen or to put IPAs in a better position? (Stakeholder interviewee)

Regional management approach

Multiple IPAs expressed their aspiration for a regional approach to management connecting sites and places on Country and across groups. In Phase One of the evaluation it was found that remote IPAs expressed strong interest to include outstations in the IPA Program. For some IPAs multiple ranger groups are working in close proximity, and sometimes overlapping geospatially as they target different management issues. One model of a regional approach is expressed below by Anindilyakwa:

> Need to think about a regional approach towards the ranger issues. Our rangers have the connections to the other areas through family. Groote can go over to Blue Mud Bay, could do more work on the program. (name withheld IPA)

6.3.3. Indigenous leadership and partnerships in all levels of the program

This section presents aspirations that IPA providers and stakeholders have for IPAs and the future land and sea management sector. These include:

- taking stock of successes to build mentoring pathways for Indigenous leadership on the ground
- inves*t*ment in structures and support systems to mobilise Indigenous leadership in all aspects of decision-making
- IPA and sector knowledge networks at national and regional levels.

Taking stock of successes to build mentoring pathways for Indigenous leadership on the ground

Participants expressed the importance of taking stock of the successes of the IPA Program to plan pathways for Indigenous leadership as the program expands. As expressed by an IPA stakeholder, doubling ranger numbers will not necessarily address the gap in capacity to foster new Indigenous leaders. Installing capacity building and mentoring partnership models that draw on Indigenous and non-Indigenous expertise within IPAs and across sector would be highly beneficial to building local leaders:

> Getting the right people that are out there working with the community liaising between government and other partners is really important. In many cases people want their own local people in those roles but some of the groups we work with are just starting. We have just appointed our first Indigenous coordinator through a state funded program and it's a half-and-half role with a mentor supporting them. We are moving that way, but it is really hard for some groups … how do we support Indigenous mobs to build up to the capacity with coordinators from the local community? The other question is, how do we continue to bring in really good operators from outside and get them engaging in the right way, in a high-quality way, with the mob? For us, and I'm pretty sure generally across the board, a big part of those roles is mentoring and building the capacity of people around them in the programs. (Stakeholder interviewee)

Investment in structures and support systems to mobilise Indigenous leadership in all aspects of decision-making

IPA providers and stakeholders conveyed the view that the IPA Program has matured under its current model and that new partnerships that centre on Indigenous voices in all aspects of decision-making are needed. Re-centering the IPA Program to work fully with cultural protocols will deliver both environmental and cultural outcomes and require a greater time investment to support decision-making. Appropriate structures and adaptive support systems would need to be in place to respond to the different capacities of IPA providers and the land and sea management sector, from management, administration, governance, reporting and to on-ground operations.

> We want to have more meetings, allocate more time for those meetings and to use more participatory processes to get the ownership of programs back into the community instead of a fancy office here in Darwin. It requires fundamental paradigm shifts that need to occur, not so much with Traditional Owners on the ground but the support teams that I work with in HQ and it's a long-term process. (Stakeholder interviewee)

> What we have now is non-Indigenous environmental organisations advocating for us and for IPAs, we have got some plans on how we can better at enabling blackfullas to be leading their voices and talk about what they want to push for in their Country. I think through the evaluation process, if we can highlight the need for not just blackfullas working on IPAs, but blackfullas leading the voices of the Indigenous land management sector, because they're the only ones who have the cultural authority to be talking about their Country and what's important for their Country. (Stakeholder interviewee)

IPA and sector knowledge networks at the national and regional levels

Phase Two findings revealed that IPA providers and stakeholders have a vision of a well-networked land and sea management sector for peer-to-peer knowledge exchange, connection, capability building, mentoring and to have influence in decision-making to shape the future of the sector. Improving knowledge of how decisions are made at different levels of the program and building confidence in peoples' roles in larger forums of influence are some of the benefits highlighted in supporting Indigenous leadership. A strong example presented by several respondents was the IDA annual conference:

> The IDA is an annual conference that has grown over the last 7 years out of desert rangers. The last 2 years it was online, but this year we met at Yulara and it brought together over 400 people. Gradually things have shifted from it being an event where

> the people of influence come and talk at people, to what we have now, the rangers talking to the people of influence, saying this is what we are doing, these are the things we need you to come along with, these are the things that are important to us and this is what's happening on Country. It has flipped the conversation and that is where the strength is … To be able to spread that influence and strengthen that amongst other rangers and groups doing similar work and to give them the confidence to talk … and that's the movement part of it for me with the conference. (Stakeholder interviewee)

> This relates to the National Indigenous Ranger Forum as well and investing in them … but because they [funding agencies] have discontinued the IPA managers network and other networks people don't have a chance to get together and collaborate as much. This also relates to question 7 about the effectiveness of individual IPAs: some IPAs without neighbouring IPAs get stuck on their own without the opportunity to build on the bigger picture. (Stakeholder interviewee)

6.3.4. Build capacity equitably to include diverse IPA community members

Multiple IPAs expressed the importance of equity as goal of the IPA Program to involve diverse members of the community in IPA activities. This may include women, people of different abilities, older and younger group members in ranger or administrative activities. Particular attention to ensuring genuine partnership on IPAs that they have broad community support can strengthen legitimacy and broaden the opportunities that can be created through the IPA Program. For example, the involvement of rangers in local schools is not a goal of the IPA Program but it is an important goal for some IPA providers to guide career pathways for the youth and to establish role models. Greater participation of women rangers is also a goal for several IPAs.

> Women were involved in the process from the start. We need more female involvement, in particular female rangers who possess cultural leadership. (name withheld IPA)

A further comment was made by a stakeholder interviewee about the potential of the IPA Program to deliver greater benefit to a wider sector of the community:

> Another part is enabling equitable participation from everyone ... We hear from our partners that youth should sit in on meetings for maybe a decade before they can actually speak but that doesn't mean that they don't have an opinion and a viewpoint because they are the next leaders … the government needs to acknowledge or figure out how to get the full breadth of participation from groups to ensure they are participating with their own community and genuinely engaging in that partnership with the backing of the community. (Stakeholder interviewee)

6.3.5. Achieve IPA investment parity (IPAs vs other components of the NRS)

IPA providers and stakeholders aspire to have investment parity across different components of the NRS that will signal the important work of IPA providers and assist IPA providers to recruit and retain staff. As outlined in section 3.2.4, IPAs are currently funded at an average of $0.21/ha which is extremely low compared with comparative costs per hectare figures assembled by Queensland Treasury Corporation (2018) of other public protected area programs in Australia and other countries. Parity in regards to investment per hectare across the NRS, and ranger wages across state

and Commonwealth-funded protected areas, is seen as crucial to attracting and retaining Indigenous coordinators and managers, supporting investment in capacity-building and delivering on the goals of the IPA Program. Building capacity of Indigenous staff is seen as an important and long-term goal to be taken in partnership:

> … the disparity between IPA funding and the funding that goes into protected areas in any given state. We're talking about like between $13 and $14 difference per hectare ... So there's disparities in regards to not just management but the employment and outcomes of our mobs and the support around that. So I think that's where the funding model has to look at … how can we build more robustness within the system to be able to ensure that we're coming out with our mobs highly skilled. (National roundtable participant)

6.3.6. A vision for a land and sea sector approach

IPA providers and stakeholders expressed their vision to establish a land and sea management sector within which IPAs would operate and be connected. A sector approach would change the way that investment is strategised to attend to higher scale outcomes and embed peoples' skills and expertise as transferrable across career pathways within the sector. Transition to a sector approach will require sector-based powers and authority within IPAs, a transition that requires a high degree of planning and support as is stated below:

> The whole system needs to evolve; it's a real sector, it's a real thing we need to strengthen and in certain areas we need to let it evolve so that protection measures can be put in place so that if people want to use that money to stop stuff from happening on their Country, that is okay. I think it also needs to maintain all of the strengths but build on that so that it can be sustained and I see that as a risk. There is a lot of noise out there now about IPAs not doing much and that's wrong; it's mostly pretty bloody good. You need to leapfrog over potential problems on the horizon and actually start planning the new version of it. (Stakeholder interviewee)

6.3.7. Diversify funding and create Country-culture based enterprises

A future goal of multiple IPA providers is to establish alternative funding sources and financial independence, either through the private sector or philanthropists, and be less reliant on government funding. As identified in Chapter 4, the economic benefits of IPAs are perceived to be less than benefits provided by IPAs across other domains of life. Pathways for economic benefits identified by IPA providers include fee-for-service enterprises and participation in carbon and biodiversity offset markets to eco-tourism businesses (also see section 5.5). IPA providers expressed the importance of finding the balance in sourcing private sector funds while maintaining the integrity of their culture, their Country. Some of the enterprises mentioned by Girringun, Ngunya Jargoon and Anindilyakwa IPAs were carbon markets and biodiversity offsets as well as farming, forestry products such as sandalwood and mine-site rehabilitation:

> This bread-and-butter stuff is going to keep us where we are; we need to go further. Is there flexibility to pick up other stuff? There are big players – BHP, Rio Tinto – and we need to tap into it. Need to work out how to maintain cultural integrity while still doing the best work we can do. Balance is using the influence, getting money and still have integrity. (name withheld IPA)

Responses from both IPA providers and stakeholder interviews are that the biodiversity and nature repair markets are not fully understood nor engaged and remain an under-utilised opportunity that can deliver cultural and economic benefits:

> If you look at that IPA network nationally and the size of the country, the opportunities that open up in relation to the Commonwealth priorities in the biodiversity market and the nature repair market: they most likely couldn't keep up with the demand … [U]sing IPAs to better support mob's cultural values and their assets and put them in a better position, even commercially just like someone else on a pastoral lease might have. (Stakeholder interviewee)

There is some alignment of IPA provider aspirations to participate in nature-based solutions and nature repair markets with new Australian Government policies (see section 6.4).

6.3.8. Build the profile of the IPA Program's contribution to Australia's biodiversity

A lack of understanding and awareness of IPAs and the major role Indigenous peoples play in the management of Australia's biodiversity was revealed as a barrier in Chapter 5. All IPA providers have a vision that their contribution to Australia's biodiversity, emergency response capability and environmental resilience will be better understood and valued by Australian society. IPA providers were clear in articulating the need for a more concerted effort, and possibly a coordinated approach, to raising the profile of the IPA Program with the broader community:

> The rest of the world is ignorant about what people do on Country. (name withheld IPA)

> More broadly, promotion and marketing of the work of IPAs and rangers contributing to the ecology on their country and biodiversity. (name withheld IPA)

6.4. New objectives of the Australian Government

New goals have been identified in the Australian Government environmental policy domain that add investment to the restoration and protection of nature and environmental and disaster resilience under rapid environmental change. These new objectives have identified involvement with First Nations groups.

- The new Nature Repair Market Bill 2023 will be a framework for a voluntary national market that delivers improved biodiversity outcomes. Eligible landholders who undertake projects that enhance or protect biodiversity would be able to receive a tradeable certificate that will be tracked through a national register. In its development, the Bill considered engagement with First Nations people to enable communities to use their cultural and social knowledge and their environmental and economic assets.
- The new National Net Zero Authority 2023 that will:
    - support workers in emissions-intensive sectors to access new employment, skills and support as the net zero transformation continues
    - coordinate programs and policies across government to support regions and communities to attract and take advantage of new clean energy industries and set those industries up for success
    - help investors and companies to engage with net zero transformation opportunities.

  The authorities charter states that it will work with industry, unions, governments and First Nations groups to manage the transformation to a clean energy economy.

While there are alignments with a few of the new IPA provider objectives, consultations will be vital to securing outcomes that attend to the multidimensional cultural, social, environmental and economic goals of First Nations groups.

6.5. Creation of a national body to support a stronger partnership approach with government

This section is predominantly informed by the outcomes of the national roundtable that was undertaken by the evaluation team in February 2023. Supplementary supporting information is included from the key stakeholder interviews. More information about the national roundtable is available in section 2.5.

A collective yarn with participants centred on the following key areas:

- how to establish a national IPA representative group to enable full and genuine partnerships between federal, state and territory governments and Indigenous peoples to make decisions about the sustainability and growth of IPA projects
- how to provide long-term support for this group to enable Indigenous peoples' participation and IPA project contribution on matters of biodiversity, climate change, conservation and Indigenous cultural security
- the effects of legislative matters at all levels to be considered for consistency, objectivity, feasibility and alignment with the objectives of each IPA project's contribution to biodiversity and climate change across Australia
- how to work on program and policy collaboration and co-design aligned to the national partnership agreement framework to enable synergies and minimisation of harm to Indigenous lands, waters and cultures and the health and wellbeing of families and communities.

6.5.1. Create a national IPA representative group based on the principles of equity and inclusion of diverse IPAs, working from the ground up, combine experts across knowledge systems

Discussion about the creation of a national representative body focused on the need for a more coordinated partnership approach that takes into account the growth of the IPA Program to date and the scale of contribution that IPAs make to the NRS. The creation of such a group would need to carefully consider how it would meaningfully enhance current decision-making about the IPA Program. This would require consideration of the depth of diversity of the IPA Program and ensure that the diversity of voices to government in any partnership effectively represents the voices of IPA providers. Selection of members of a national representative group would be based on principles that would ensure equity across the states, territories and the different IPA ecosystems. The principles discussed in the roundtable were:

- **Equity and fairness:** Representatives are selected from different states and territories and from southern and northern Australia, and the interests of IPA providers from across diverse land and seascapes are included to ensure fairness:

  > So I think there's value in having something and I think there definitely needs to be an equity, I suppose, in terms of how IPAs can influence the NRS system and also achieve better outcomes in terms of funding and support from state, territory and Commonwealth. (National roundtable participant)

  > If you were going to have a central body, it would need to be very understanding of the fact that most of the IPAs are in remote desert country. Like if you look at land area, like there's obviously a lot on the coast too, but the centre of Australia is where a lot of mass, so it would need to really consider connecting with people properly. And the challenges of connecting with people remote. (National roundtable participant)

- **Free, prior informed consent:** Genuine partnership will involve those involved, particularly government, to listen to understand the key priorities communicated to them from the IPA and the land and sea management sector. Communication from government is translated and brokered to ensure understanding is achieved in the partnership:

  > One is funding and equity and the space to be able to do so. A lot of time, effort and energy is required to sit, listen and understand the priorities of those individuals in that realm … The government should be able to sit, listen and understand the priorities that come from the community and translate it across language and capacity barriers. Sometimes it takes months; you must have flexibility to ensure that the information from government is heard in whatever language that ensures people are able to understand the information that they are trying to convey. (Stakeholder interviewee)

- **Combine experts across knowledge systems – cultural authority and thematic experts:** People with cultural authority must be able to speak for areas or the interests for localities, and thematic experts can inject specialist knowledge:

  > … have some thematic experts as well, technical people that are not just there to represent the IPA. They're there because they've got specific skills … whether it's carbon or fire or biodiversity or business development, tourism … skills-based kind of roles that are helping with the development of the strategy and reporting and making sure that the IPA network is well supported. (National roundtable participant)

  > But listening to those networks is really important, and they have been developed according to both cultural network and need; that is where the government needs to listen and invest because that is the best place they can listen. (Stakeholder interviewee)

- **Ground-up:** Processes are established to ensure decisions about the NRS are being informed by regional and local interests:

  > Opportunity for the rangers to have a say and get to these forums because at the end of the day they're the fellas on the ground. And … yeah, they need to be telling the story. (National roundtable participant)

Managing the risks of establishing a representative group

National roundtable participants raised that achieving effective representation requires careful consideration; this process may not include existing representative bodies. There is a perceived risk that government will lean towards working with PBCs, which is not a common governance arrangement across all IPAs. Those who represent on a PBC may not be the people involved in running the IPA who have the intimate knowledge of Country on the ground. If the government chooses to work with PBCs rather than the organisation that administers the day-to-day running of the IPA, there is a concern that this is going to create friction:

> The government wants to work with PBCs … more or less they're shovelling everything to PBCs … to get the consent, and it's causing a lot of friction with us on the ground, people that live on Country, still on Country, and know Country and are the knowledge holders. [The people on the] PBCs are from Brisbane and wouldn't have a clue what water holes are on Country. (National roundtable participant)

6.5.2. Strategic advisory group with resourced policy analysis and research capabilities

The national roundtable yarn explored what the potential role of the new national level group might include and the type of support it may require. There was no interest in having a group without a decision-making role. Everyone saw the group as creating a stronger voice for IPAs in government decision-making, with potential roles across:

- **Investment prioritisation**

  Obviously, the sustained growth of IPAs and rangers … great if this, you know, nominated entity body could look at what should the investment go into. Is it about jobs or is it about properly resourcing the current IPAs and ranger teams, you know, to deal with the issues that they've got right now? (National roundtable participant)

- **Policy advisory body to inform the design of the expansion of the IPA Program**

  Informing the process is really important; if more than half of our national reserve is invested in IPAs, managers of that Country need to inform policy and program design. We have the programs and the structures to bring that information to light. You have great IPA Programs but making sure that those priorities are elevated and not lost in translation, at the administrative structure, to inform a national agenda for the environment is something that could be done through this process. (Stakeholder interviewee)

- **Secretariat or networks that support IPA Providers with policy research and coordination**

  So you know, just to have that body there that could fight for us. That yeah, that handles legislation reviews … So yeah, there could be an opportunity there to close that gap a bit, I guess. (National roundtable participant)

  I think getting some frameworks in place to prioritise and reprioritise investment is really critical … I guess a function of this body could be coordination around capability, research and development, policy … being able to share that knowledge and share those resources and coordinate responses (National roundtable participant).

- **Policy debate and its potential impact on IPAs**

  With the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation and the Cultural Heritage acts coming on, it's a good time for the government to think about how those 2 legislative changes are going to consider IPAs. Are they at all? I don't think I've heard that they will but it's an opportunity that needs to be considered. (Stakeholder interviewee)

6.5.3. IPA representative group supported by regional representative bodies and forums well connected to IPAs and the land and sea management sector

Discussions in the roundtable and interviews with government concurred on the formation of regional representative bodies and forums informing a national strategic partnership between government and Indigenous peoples. There is currently a lack of regional networks to support both IPAs and rangers, and if a national initiative were to proceed, then consideration should be made as to how Indigenous land and sea managers who sit outside the IPA Program can also benefit through these new networks: learning across activities and programs. Such an approach would be a significant step to recognising a land and sea sector. Regional forums and representations would require similar commitments to land and sea regional gatherings to:

> I think the opportunity to have an IPA community of practice and have regional forums that bring people together and there's the opportunity to then have an executive that could potentially have a strategic function that sets strategy and can influence decision-making at the Commonwealth and state levels. I think that would be beneficial as a framework. It definitely needs to have its roots in the ground. (National roundtable participant)
>
> Could be parts of our (IDA) membership, regional bodies who work with a collective of IPAs, or a role that groups like us or NAILSMA can play in elevating some of the regional priorities through the system. (Stakeholder interviewee)

The Australian Government acknowledges that partnering with Indigenous peoples with a regional approach design needs to involve state and territory governments and that IPAs engender opportunities to explore partnership:

> We know that many of the IPA projects that we fund have developed strong partnerships and relationships with different state or territory agencies to undertake particular activities; for example, in the NT it may be an arrangement with the Agriculture Fisheries Department. A number of our groups and the rangers are also undertaking contractual work in the biosecurity space or the fire space. The NT fire agency will come to meetings with IPA projects to discuss fire management … having an IPA project provides that basis to develop those partnerships. (Stakeholder interviewee)

Streamline hosting arrangements with one government department

Comments from the national roundtable yarns, and the key stakeholder interviews, raised the issue of where a national IPA representative body would best be hosted and where the most efficiencies can be achieved. A commonly expressed view was to house the representative group in the department with the greater strategic alignment:

> The issue is, is that where it's sitting currently [the IPA Program] there is no, in effect, support around natural resource management outcomes within the structure. And it has distinct disconnection from the Environment Department … So I think that's what we need to be able to fix. (National roundtable participant)

6.6. Summary/key findings

- New objectives are needed to bring greater alignment between the IPA Program and IPA provider objectives
- Securing IPA investment objectives to sustain and scale environmental outcomes will require capital investment in ranger bases and other infrastructure to build ownership of a program, respond to environmental events and enable providers to efficiently carry out land and sea management.
- IPA providers seek objectives that give priority to the protection and reassertion of culture that prioritises intergenerational sharing of knowledge, involves youth and implements multiple modes of sustaining culture such as digital media, keeping places and protecting sacred sites.
- Traditional Owners participating in the IPA Program seek to include different parts of Country and connect to neighbouring areas that align IPAs with customary responsibilities.
- Stronger Indigenous leadership at all scales: take stock of the success of IPAs and the opportunities to improve the program to establish pathways for Indigenous leadership as the program expands.

- IPA providers and stakeholders are highlighting the need to give greater resourcing and attention to equity in the IPA Program across various settings including:
    - parity of investment across the NRS
    - involvement of diverse members of Traditional Owner groups participating in the IPA Program in capacity-building opportunities (e.g. women rangers)
    - regional management and representational approaches.
- IPA providers seek greater independence and lessen the reliance on government funding through diverse enterprise portfolios on Country: alternative business models that involve IPA networks and the creation of peak bodies are key to the future diversification plans of IPA providers.
- Building the profile of the IPA Program with the community and broader Australia is everyone's responsibility, and a concerted, coordinated approach drawing on the resources and expertise of funders, partners and collaborators will create impact.
- Creation of a national IPA representative group will require attention to principles of equity and inclusion, combining experts across knowledge systems; free, prior informed consent and ground-up participation; appropriate and effective representation; commitment to a regional approach; exploration of roles that address strategic knowledge gaps; and scope of charter and hosting arrangements that facilitate communication.

7. Indigenous perspectives on the IPA Program

This section presents a narrative drawn together from the yarns, stakeholder interviews, online surveys and roundtable discussion of the IPA evaluation. It provides a summary of the relationships, resources, types of influence, knowledges, activities and outcomes expressed by IPA providers and their partners to actualise change and new futures through IPAs. This Indigenous perspective on the IPA Program, presented as a visual representation (see Figure 7.1 is presented here as a resource for Indigenous leaders and their partners to review as a conversation starter with government partners, that places Indigenous obligations and connections at the heart of the IPA Program. The text, incorporated in the figure, should be read in conjunction with the circular diagram illustrating the Indigenous perspectives of the IPA Program.

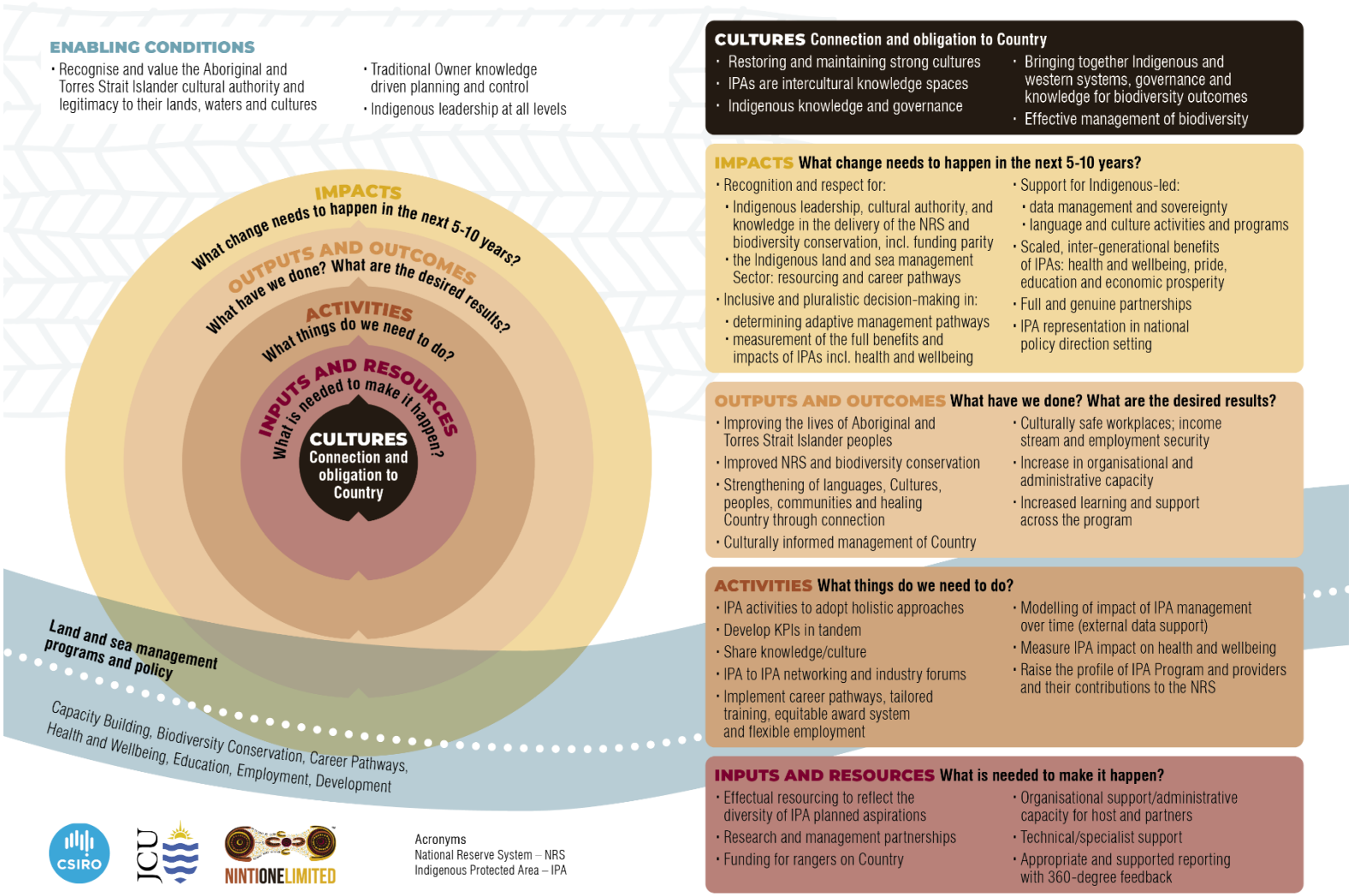
7.1. Components of Indigenous perspectives

The Indigenous perspectives on the IPA Program consists of 4 components:

- enabling conditions
- heart and driving motivations in participating in the IPA Program
- hierarchy of change from inputs and resources to activities, outcomes and impacts
- land and sea management programs and policy.

The boundary-less circles of the visual representation express the inter-connectedness, the multiple connections and confluence between the layers and the multiple pathways that can be enabled through the program with, by and for Indigenous peoples to realise impact. The Indigenous perspective on the IPA Program combines outputs and outcomes, attending to the multiple benefits achieved through activities that can include improved relationships, governance partnership processes and appropriate consent, cultural safety in the work environment, improved environmental outcomes as well as improved confidence.

Figure 7.1 An illustration of Indigenous perspectives on the IPA Program



Elements of Figure 7.1 are further expanded below.

Culture

At the heart of the graphic representing Indigenous perspectives on the IPA Program is strong Indigenous cultures, and people's connections and obligations to Country. The central role of culture is prominent in the PoMs (see Chapter 5), the social and cultural benefits of the IPA Program (see Chapter 4) and the objectives of IPA providers (see Chapter 6).

Within this graphical representation, the IPA Program supports and fosters an intercultural space for 2-way learning, partnership and governance between Indigenous and western knowledge systems and institutions for biodiversity outcomes. Key to this approach is intercultural dialogue that values both Indigenous and western ways of doing, being and knowing as equals in creating outcomes that centre on IPA provider goals and the benefits and opportunities that can be created across the land and sea management sector and NRS.

Inputs and resources

Inputs and resources include parity funding of the IPA Program in line with investments across the NRS; and benchmark funding that targets different IPA provider capacities and addresses contexts of social and economic barriers, maturity of IPA and type of IPA (marine or terrestrial). Secure, long-term and responsive funding for rangers and capital purchase and maintenance are critical to achieve immediate and longer-term outcomes on the ground. Investment will improve knowledge capability and partnerships through 2-way learning, to build evidence and reporting of program outcomes, training, secondments and communication products. Funding that covers administrative support for external and internal reporting is equally needed (see section 5.3 on barriers).

Activities

IPA Program activities are mobilised within a holistic approach that enacts customary practices, including Indigenous governance, and maintains and strengthens cultural obligations and connection to Country. This broader view of IPA activities was expressed by various IPA providers (see Chapter 5) where, for example, planning on-ground work involved long consultations with Traditional Owners, camping with families, knowledge sharing and performances of song and story. IPA activities include knowledge, capability development and evidence building to adaptively manage and realise outcomes of the IPA Program. These include raising the public profile of the program, networking to share knowledge and to shape decision-making, on-ground and community level monitoring and reporting, and technical modelling and reporting of biodiversity impact to facilitate multiple evidence streams of the IPA Program outcomes. This Indigenous perspective on the IPA Program presents some of the elements and links needed to achieve higher level and scaled outcomes for the IPA Program.

Outputs and outcomes

Outputs include accepted ways of measuring progress that is useful for managing the IPA Program and for IPA internal reporting and planning processes. Outcomes focus on the interconnectedness of the social, economic, ecological and cultural benefits of the IPA Program. This holistic approach aims to demonstrate improvements across multiple measures of biodiversity, wellbeing and health, social and economic security, meaningful workplace participation and fulfilment of cultural obligations. Strengthened and diverse networks and capacity across IPAs within the Indigenous land and sea management sector are key outcomes that address opportunities to scale benefits, peer-to-peer learning and replication for efficiency (see Chapter 4 and Chapter 5).

Impacts

In this new way of viewing the IPA Program, impacts are realised through 4 key streams: (i) improved lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and thriving biodiversity within the NRS; (ii) Indigenous-defined data management and sovereignty that strengthens Indigenous governance and

adaptive planning and financial independence; (iii) inclusive decision-making through Indigenous leadership and pluralistic governance processes; (iv) multi-scaled outcomes that deliver to local IPA contexts and the NRS and contribute to Closing the Gap.

As these longer-term impacts encompass multiple social, ecological, economic and cultural dimensions, they intersect with considerations of equity, legitimacy and cross-sector capacity. Equity addresses questions of recognition, procedural (transparent, inclusive and accountable decision-making) equity, distributional (access and experience of benefits from the IPA Program) equity and intergenerational legacy.

Enabling conditions

The enabling conditions are foundational to achieving genuine Indigenous leadership to fulfil long-term outcomes and impact of the IPA Program. A combination of policy drivers and inter-cultural partnership ethics at multiple scales from individual IPAs to the land and sea management sector are 2 prerequisites to establishing the enabling conditions. Enabling conditions include Traditional Owner–driven planning and control and Indigenous leaders and role models at all levels of the program (see sections 5.4 and 6.3).

Land and sea management sector programs and policies

The blue wave that moves through the picture represents the multiple land and sea management programs that interact with the IPA Program at different scales to contribute to its outcomes. At the local scale, mature and high-capacity IPAs can access diverse funding programs. The blue wave also represents the constant motion of policy contexts that influence the outcomes that can be achieved through the IPA Program and the changing funding cycles that happen with changing governments. Critically, the wave also represents the evidence and knowledge from the IPA Program that can be taken up by government and community to support evidence-based policy and practice.

7.2. Summary

This chapter presents Indigenous perspectives on the IPA Program, as a way of considering the IPA Program as summarised from the extensive yarns, stakeholder interviews and the roundtable discussion. This Indigenous-driven perspective on the IPA Program is intended as a resource for Indigenous leaders to review and further develop as part of the evolution of the IPA Program. At the heart of the graphical representation is Indigenous obligations and connections, a driving motivation for Indigenous people's participation in the program. This represents the IPA Program as a multicultural space that invites partnerships with Indigenous authority and leadership.

Chapter 8 presents pathways and options to address synthesis gaps that can strengthen outcomes in the IPA Program and provides recommendations from the evaluation.

8. High-level insights and recommendations

8.1. Introduction

Chapter 8 outlines the key findings from the IPA evaluation and offers high-level recommendations to be considered in the future development and support of the IPA Program.

The evaluation revealed 5 synthesis factors for consideration in the ongoing development and success of the IPA Program:

1. The importance of understanding and resourcing the mechanisms that link social, cultural, economic and environmental outcomes of the IPA Program
2. The criticality of Indigenous leadership and genuine partnerships with government based on inclusive and pluralistic decision-making
3. The need to integrate measurable social, cultural, economic and environmental goals and performance indicators for reporting and adaptive decision-making at multiple scales
4. Resourcing of IPAs to promote equity, and mechanisms that build funding transparency
5. Synergising goals across the IPA Program, the NRS and Closing the Gap to ensure actors across the program can identify their contributions at multiple scales and elevate the role of IPAs in delivering to Australia's biodiversity and international obligations.

These are discussed in detail in 8.7. They draw from the detailed key findings and recommendations of the IPA Program evaluation, aligned with the 4 key evaluation questions, as presented here in the following sections.

8.2. To what extent has the IPA Program achieved biodiversity conservation outcomes, including those at a landscape scale?

IPAs enhance the comprehensiveness, adequacy and representativeness of Australia's NRS and contribute to achieving Australia's international obligations for biodiversity conservation by:

- providing 50% of the overall area and contributing to conservation outcomes in at least 51 (57%) of Australia's 89 terrestrial bioregions and ≥ 104 (25%) of Australia's 419 terrestrial sub-bioregions
- providing various amounts of habitat representation for ≥ 66% (~441) of Australia's threatened species and 100% (~26) of Australia's listed threatened ecological communities (Taylor 2021)
- providing a globally significant connected corridor of protected habitat in central Australia, enhancing resilience and improving the connectivity of the NRS overall.

IPAs were found to generally address all components of management effectiveness for conservation, taking actions to (i) assess values and threats; (ii) develop PoMs; (iii) ensure resource availability; (iv) undertake appropriate management activities; (v) deliver and measure outputs; and (vi) evaluate outcomes through monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement plans. However:

- The level of resources at $0.21 per ha per year as reported by the Queensland Treasury Corporation in 2018 (which represents < 2% of the funding compared to the remainder of the NRS on a per ha per year basis) is insufficient to meet the management requirements.
- There was found to be a statistically significant relationship between total funding and reported agreement that IPAs provide benefits to the health of Country, suggesting increased and sustained funding is key to further improving biodiversity outcomes provided by IPA projects.

- The ability of each project to demonstrate measured biodiversity conservation outcomes is a direct result of their ability to access sufficient support to develop programs of management that collect rigorous data and which include a monitoring and evaluation component – including sufficient analysis of data to enable adaptive management.
- A lack of resources and support was identified as a key barrier to building monitoring programs that effectively accounted for both biodiversity and cultural management outcomes.

8.2.1. Recommendations

To strengthen biodiversity conservation outcomes from the IPA Program, the following recommendations are made:

1. Review effectiveness of current monitoring programs across the IPA Program, including data collection and management processes, to determine barriers to adaptive management. Review current support and capability across the IPA Program, as this is shown to be influenced by partnerships.
2. Support Indigenous-led dialogue about current IPA driven data collection, management and analysis in support of enhanced and adaptive management of IPAs with attention to Indigenous data sovereignty: Support 360 feedback on monitoring data and revision of monitoring programs
3. With Indigenous partnership establish regional IPA and land and sea management data networks to share learnings on data agreements and management systems to facilitate meaningful change in Indigenous data sovereignty and governance.
4. Review pathways for the effective monitoring of cultural management actions, to illustrate how they contribute to biodiversity outcomes.
5. Determine a process to enable Indigenous-led prioritisation of research, and allocate specific research funds to support delivery of IPA management priorities. Enable separate funding buckets to support discrete cultural outcomes (including sacred sites, discrete language or culture program; on-Country learning)
6. Develop analytical and reporting processes to capture the role of IPAs, and potentially the full Indigenous land and sea management sector, in delivering outcomes for the recovery of Australia's ecosystems and threatened species to inform Australia's climate resilience collaborations and strategy.
7. Undertake a review of cross-cutting capabilities in the land and sea management sector and the NRS, and identify options for staff development across the NRS (Indigenous and non-Indigenous).

8.3. To what extent has the IPA Program worked to strengthen Indigenous peoples' connections to Country and culture and create social and economic benefits?

- IPAs are seen as enablers for learning about Country and culture and are a mechanism for enabling and empowering people.
- Ranger roles on IPAs provide avenues for employment, skills development and pathways to employment in other sectors within natural resource management and resource development industries, such as mining, and government jobs.
- Few enterprises were reported across the visited IPAs; however, IPA providers expressed aspirations and opportunities for local enterprises.

- The social and wellbeing benefits and outcomes of IPAs include intergenerational teaching, community relations, employment, skills development for disaster response and enabling mob to be on Country, which allows separation from the stresses and pressures of everyday life. Significant pride is expressed by those working for IPAs: for Country and culture.
- IPAs can provide culturally safe workplaces and preferred terms of employment networks created and/or supported through the IPA program can be leveraged in times of disaster recovery.

A key finding of the quantitative analysis is confirmation of findings from previous research, indicating that the IPA Program promotes multiple benefits across multiple domains – environmental, social, cultural and economic. Furthermore, the analysis indicates that:

- the benefits increase over time (relatively low benefits from the most recent IPA compared to those awarded IPA status longer ago; increasing relationship over time between the IPAs and the growth of Indigenous-owned businesses)
- the perceived benefits increase in response to increased funding levels (as shown be significant correlation between many benefits and funding provided).

It has been previously demonstrated that investment in the IPA Program is returned many-fold, through a range of measurable benefits. What emerged strongly in the evaluation was the growing discomfort by IPA stakeholders that the benefits being delivered to the NRS through the IPA Program are coming at a hidden/unrecognised cost to IPA providers. Greater funding is needed to support a viable sector, and the perspective of evaluation participants is that IPA staff are underpaid (or not paid) but working for the love of Country. This raises the questions:

- Who are the main beneficiaries of the IPA Program?
- How are the costs of sustaining Australia's biodiversity distributed?
- How is the IPA Program responding to Australia's colonial historical accountabilities and the future aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

8.3.1. Recommendations

To strengthen Indigenous peoples' connections to Country and culture and create social and economic benefits for Indigenous communities, the following recommendations are made:

8. Increase opportunities for Indigenous leadership at all levels of the IPA Program, including program and policy decision-making; and in partnership with IPA providers, identify and enable career progression pathways (including consideration of an award).
9. Support an Indigenous-led process for determining a suite of new metrics for measuring IPA outcomes, including social and wellbeing determinants of success. Develop pathways for Indigenous-led monitoring of social and cultural wellbeing benefits of IPAs (benefits to be Indigenous-determined with input from IPA providers).
10. Review pathways for the effective monitoring of cultural management actions, to illustrate how they contribute to biodiversity outcomes.
11. Increase support for 2-way learning opportunities in the development of Plans of Management (PoMs) and to strengthen community capacity for delivering on the goals of the IPA, including strengthening language, culture and knowledge.
12. Increase resourcing to support development of capacity to better deliver to the community, through employment of more women rangers; support 2-way science initiatives; and engage community in more on-Country activities.

8.4. What are the key contexts/factors that affect the achievement of IPA Program objectives, and how can they be used to strengthen impacts through future program design?

There are many powerful stories across the IPAs of committed individuals working above and beyond their paid positions to realise beneficial outcomes for Country. The work of these individuals is unseen: the extra hours are not accounted for in reporting. Without the commitment of these individuals, many projects would not be delivering the scale of benefits currently reported. At the same time, IPA providers describe their resilience and ingenuity in achieving much with few resources as a significant strength.

The key enablers of achievement of IPA Program objectives were found to be:

- Indigenous culture and connection to Country: The commitment of IPA providers is the key strength of the IPA Program – the committed individuals working above and beyond their paid positions to realise beneficial outcomes of Country
- cultural leadership and authority and the role of Elders in ensuring good governance and appropriate decision-making
- community support, partnerships and collaborations
- resources and authority to support management/connection to Country
- recognition and support for both cultural and biodiversity outcomes; but the weighting of program support for biodiversity and cultural outcomes needs revision to ensure the Program delivers desired outcomes for both partners.
- strong organisational and administrative capacity, as well as experience gained over time (longevity).

8.4.1. Recommendations

To support achievement of IPA Program objectives, and strengthen impacts though future program design, the following recommendations are made:

13. Develop stronger sector development pathways: formal training and accreditation, skills and capacity development across the IPA sector.
14. Build greater support for career progression: identify career pathways; implement an award system for rangers.
15. Drive the equitable allocation of resources within the NRS: develop set of funding benchmarks that secures parity across the NRS and is designed to respond to diverse IPA organisational capacities, socio-economic contexts, including access to housing and capital, to deliver biodiversity and cultural outcomes.
16. Review and address program silos: review the separation of IPAs and the ranger program.
17. Build greater transparency into the IPA funding and investment model, including metrics and prioritisation for resourcing of different IPA types: respond to diverse IPA organisational capacities, socio-economic contexts, including access to housing and capital, to deliver biodiversity and cultural outcomes.
18. IPA partners to identify a baseline of resourcing required to deliver on agreed management outcomes set out in PoMs, recognising the diversity of IPAs (culturally, geospatially and politically) and the diversity of IPA management goals and capabilities.
19. Support appropriate governance, which may require additional resourcing.

20. Remove barriers and hurdles that exist in program management: review and streamline reporting requirements and strengthen government capacity to engage with IPA provider (inclusion of training and mentoring programs to build capability of government staff to deliver assistance to Indigenous providers).
21. Explore options for realising consistency in legislative arrangements for IPAs: pursue avenues that deliver greater control to IPA providers in the protection of Country (similar to National Park rangers).

8.5. To what extent are IPA Program objectives still relevant and appropriate to meet the needs of IPA providers and the Australian Government?

When IPA providers were asked how IPAs could help make more powerful changes to them and other Traditional Owners, they nominated these key areas for attention: strengthening and preserving culture, strengthening existing IPAs, diversification of funding streams, securing IPA investment to both sustain and scale management goals, stronger Indigenous leadership at all scales, and creation of a national body to support a stronger partnership approach with government. Specifically:

- New objectives are needed to bring greater alignment between the IPA Program and IPA provider objectives.
- Securing IPA investment objectives to sustain and scale environmental outcomes will require capital investment in ranger bases and other infrastructure to build ownership of a program, respond to events and enable providers to efficiently carry out land and sea management.
- IPA providers seek objectives that give priority to the protection and reassertion of culture that prioritises intergenerational sharing of knowledge, involves youth and implements multiple modes of sustaining culture such as digital media, keeping places and protecting sacred sites.
- Traditional Owners participating in the IPA Program seek to include different parts of Country and connect to neighbouring areas that align IPAs with customary responsibilities.
- Stronger Indigenous leadership at all scales: take stock of the success of IPAs and the opportunities to improve the program to establish pathways for Indigenous leadership as the program expands.
- IPA providers and stakeholders are highlighting the need to give greater attention to equity in the future across various settings including:
    - parity of investment across the NRS
    - involvement of diverse members of Traditional Owner groups participating in the IPA Program in capacity building opportunities (e.g. women rangers)
    - regional management and representational approaches.
- IPA providers seek greater independence and lessen their reliance on government funding through diverse enterprise portfolios on Country: alternative business models that involve IPA networks and the creation of peak bodies are key to the future diversification plans of IPA providers.
- Effective resourcing and attention to equity will support development of capacity to better deliver to the community through employment of more women rangers, support 2-way science initiatives and engage community in more on-Country activities.
- Building the profile of the IPA Program with the community and broader Australia is everyone's responsibility, and a concerted, coordinated approach drawing on the resources and expertise of funders, partners and collaborators will create impact.

- Creation of a national IPA representative group will require attention to principles of equity, cultural authority and thematic experts; free, prior informed consent; ground-up participation; appropriate and effective representation; commitment to a regional approach; exploration of functions and roles that address strategic knowledge gaps for IPA providers; and scope of charter and hosting arrangements that facilitate communication.

8.5.1. Recommendations

The following recommendations are made to ensure the IPA Program objectives deliver to the goals of both IPA providers and the Australian Government into the future:

22. Review IP Program objectives: need for a holistic approach centred on people, culture and Country.
23. Identify options for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled peak organisations and/or networks to undertake the role of partnering with governments (including in scoping national IPA representation to government).
24. Review opportunities for closer engagement of state and territory governments in the development and management of IPAs to enable expanded opportunities for IPAs to contribute to bioregional representation in the NRS, and offer more flexible arrangements for IPA designation and support (e.g. options for tripartite arrangements between Traditional Owners, the state government and the Australian Government).
25. Support IPA providers and Traditional Owners to embed climate change risk, disaster response and nature-based solutions for climate into IPA PoMs, capability development strategies that bring alignment to IPA provider and government objectives and build exposure by linking to national frameworks and reporting.
26. Align IPA reporting with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap targets such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and languages are strong, supported and flourishing and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enjoy high levels of social and emotional wellbeing.

8.6. Synthesis

The summary of findings outlined in the preceding section reveals a disjuncture with current IPA Program objectives. For example, question 1 of the evaluation sought to determine the extent to which the IPA Program is successfully achieving biodiversity conservation outcomes, including those at a landscape scale. This question is in support of the first objective of the IPA Program: to protect and conserve Australia's biodiversity. The evaluation revealed that IPA providers do not view protecting and conserving Australia's biodiversity as the pre-eminent reason for designating and managing an IPA. Connecting to Country and obligations to manage Country (including the ability to connect or reconnect to Country and strengthen culture) are at the core of all IPAs (see Chapter 7). The IPA Program could deliver more mutually beneficial outcomes supporting and fostering an intercultural space at its core, where Indigenous and western ways of knowing and doing are valued equally, and where outcomes and impact are directly aligned with the goals of IPA providers.

Additionally, IPA providers were strong on seeing meaningful outcomes for 'people' (individuals and the community) as a result of the IPA Program. Biodiversity conservation outcomes can be realised once IPA providers are adequately resourced and sufficiently supported to engage in consistent and/or rigorous management actions, which can be monitored effectively, with 360-degree feedback. An important element of program management is the capacity to effectively monitor progress towards outcomes, and feedback was provided on the current lack of support in measuring management outcomes over time (by effectively using the data being collected). Likewise, landscape-scale management approaches require coordinated efforts across tenures and

jurisdictions, which requires organisational capacity: an area identified by IPA providers as requiring strengthening in order to cope with competing demands.

Question 4 of the evaluation offers a reflection point here, as it asks to what extent are IPA Program objectives still relevant and appropriate to meet the needs of IPA providers and the Australian Government. Social and cultural outcomes that deliver benefits to people – including through meaningful work, career pathway and leadership opportunities, as well as programs that support on-Country learning, cultural strengthening and knowledge sharing – are central to the objectives of IPA providers. Likewise, mechanisms to monitor wellbeing outcomes, and not just biodiversity-related outcomes, are seen as critical to measuring outcomes and impact and in determining if the IPA Program is contributing to Closing the Gap by improving people lives.

The second objective of the IPA Program is to assist Indigenous Australians to deliver sustainable environmental, cultural, social and economic outcomes through the effective and sustainable management of their land and sea.

The evaluation revealed significant social, cultural and wellbeing outcomes as a result of the IPA Program (see Chapter 5), although there is a strong call for greater support to realise these outcomes, including through funding for ranger positions and cultural programs.

There was found to be a statistically significant relationship between total funding and reported agreement that IPAs provide benefits to the health of Country, suggesting increased and sustained funding is one key for further improving biodiversity outcomes provided by IPA projects.

IPA providers are exploring both economic opportunities and diverse partnerships to reduce their reliance on government funding and to simultaneously build resilience and sustainability into their management programs. At the same time, IPA providers are delivering significant benefits to biodiversity, and to Australia's international obligations, by designating their lands as part of the NRS and managing them for the benefit of the nation. Concern was raised in the evaluation about the perceived inequitable distribution of resources in the management of the NRS. Certainly in the earlier years of the IPA Program, contributions of Indigenous land to the NRS through voluntary IPA designation were seen as 'cost-effective':

> … in the ten years between July 1997 and June 2007, approximately 18.5 million hectares, representing 71 per cent of all contributions to the NRS, were made by Indigenous Australians through the IPA Program, at a cost of approximately $1 per hectare to the Australian Government. The contribution made through the IPA model is significant in terms of size and cost effectiveness relative to contributions by other NRS partners using other mechanisms to contribute land. (ANAO 2008, p. 4)

During the same period, the Australian Government paid on average $10 per ha for protected areas contributed by state and territory governments (ANAO 2008, p. 4).

Further, National Parks are afforded significant ongoing resources, without fear of funding lapse, while IPA providers consistently find themselves at the whim of government programs and policy as to whether they will continue to be resourced to care for their contribution to the NRS: their Country. Given that Traditional Owners, as contributing partners to the NRS, have committed to manage their land in perpetuity, the lack of surety in terms of support and funding to manage their IPA currently impacts on the ability of the IPA Program to support 'effective and sustainable management' of land and sea.

Question 3 of the evaluation asks: What are the key contexts/factors that affect the achievement of IPA Program objectives, and how can they be used to strengthen impacts through future program design? The following synthesis and key findings section reflects on this question, as it provides a pathway to IPA Program recommendations.

8.7. Synthesis factors to strengthen the impact of the IPA Program

The previous chapters identified the mechanisms and context factors that influence the delivery of benefits through the IPA Program. This evaluation categorised the benefits of the IPA Program into different parts such as social, economic, cultural, environmental and wellbeing, which helps break down the complexity to reveal how different parts interact to deliver outcomes. As shown in the previous chapters, the Indigenous peoples of Australia overwhelmingly emphasise the interrelatedness and connectedness among these parts as central to their worldview and understanding (Stoeckl et al. 2021).

Chapter 7 presented an Indigenous perspective on the IPA Program. The invitation through the IPA Program for Indigenous people to fulfil their cultural obligations to Country is the central point for the creation of outcomes and benefits. This empowerment of cultural obligation covers many aspects:

- priority of First Peoples' cultures, connections to Country, identity and spirituality
- happiness from fulfilling responsibilities as the right people, looking after the right Country, working with the Elders and being watched over by the spirits of the ancestors
- being together with families on Country, learning together, bouncing off each other
- speaking languages
- healing spiritually as well as mentally.

Many IPA providers identify how cultural obligations to Country and people interact to create benefits. Alignment with culture, cultural institutions and Indigenous priorities was recently identified as a key condition for knowledge sharing to lead to improved Indigenous adaptive environmental management (Hill et al. 2021). IPA providers expressed new objectives that reflect different priorities to government. These include reassertion of culture and authority, aspirations for IPAs to be more equitably accessible for different First Peoples and for different parts of Country, achieve IPA investment parity with other parts of the NRS.

This evaluation identified 5 cross-cutting synthesis factors that are needed to strengthen impact of the IPA Program as outlined in Chapters 3 to 6 above and in the Indigenous perspective on the IPA Program in Chapter 7 to strengthen alignments between the objectives of IPA providers and government:

1. understanding and resourcing the mechanisms that link social, cultural, economic and environmental outcomes of the IPA Program
2. the criticality of Indigenous leadership and genuine partnership with government based on inclusive and pluralistic decision-making
3. the need to integrate measurable wellbeing, social, cultural, economic and environmental goals and performance indicators for reporting and adaptive decision-making at multiple scales
4. resourcing of IPAs to promote equity, and mechanisms that build funding transparency
5. synergising goals across the IPA Program, the NRS and Closing the Gap to ensure actors across the program can identify their contributions at multiple scales and elevate the role of IPAs in delivering to Australia's biodiversity and international obligations.

The synthesis gap highlights the multiple interacting factors that need to be addressed in order to realise more effective impact of the IPA Program. These call for the incorporation of social, cultural, wellbeing and economic dimensions in the IPA Program goals and performance indicators that outline adaptive pathways and approaches to achieve outcomes with careful attention to equity issues.

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Appendix 1: Methodology and detailed results of updated econometric analysis of growth in Indigenous-owned businesses

Data and methods

This work sought to build upon previous econometric analysis of the relationships between funding for Indigenous land and sea management programs (ILSMPs), including the IPA Program, and the number of Indigenous-owned businesses (Jarvis et al. 2018b), seeking a closer focus on the impact of the IPA Program itself by separating the IPA funding stream from other sources and types of ILSMP funding.

We set out to determine whether the number of Indigenous businesses in each postcode at the end of each year was related to the expenditure on ILSMPs, which includes Indigenous ranger groups and IPA projects, within that same postcode during the same year and/or during the previous 3 years, thus specifically testing for current and lagged impacts of the expenditure. We also sought to determine the relative importance of rangers, IPAs, and rangers and IPAs together in driving this impact. To build our econometric model we collated data from numerous sources to build a statistical panel data model (with data relevant to more than 2,000 postcodes from across the whole of Australia for each of 13 years from 2008–09 to 2020–21) that allowed us to run Granger causality tests (described in the section Method of development of our econometric model) for the link between expenditure on the ILSMPs and growth in the number of Indigenous businesses while controlling for confounding factors. Our analysis is conducted at postcode level (i.e. the number of businesses within a postcode, and the amount of ILSMP expenditure flowing to a postcode) rather than working with business-level data due to limitations in data availability; however, our postcode analysis generates useful insights while also ensuring complete confidentiality of all information, in that it is not possible for anyone to identify corporation-specific data from our work.

Data selection and sources

We sourced data on expenditure and growth of Indigenous business, together with data relating to control variables highlighted by the literature discussed above (in the preceding 'Data and methods' section) as likely to be important for Indigenous business growth, particularly following the data selection and sourcing processes described in a previous study focusing on data for the 13 years up to and including 2020–21.

Our key data source to provide our measure of Indigenous business activities was the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC). ORIC is responsible for corporations registered under the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* (CATSI Act) (ORIC 2016). Importantly, registered native title bodies corporate determined by the Federal Court of Australia under the *Native Title Act 1993*, and royalty associations under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*, are required to register under the CATSI Act and are, therefore, managed by ORIC. However, other types of Indigenous corporations can choose to register with ORIC or under the *Corporations Act 2001*, managed by the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC), while unincorporated businesses (sole traders and partnerships) are required to register with neither. Thus, an important limitation of this work is that ORIC data do not provide a comprehensive dataset of all Indigenous businesses across Australia. Furthermore, this analysis assumes that all corporations registered with ORIC are businesses in the sense that they are operating and are delivering goods and services. This introduces a further limitation, in that some of the corporations registered with ORIC may not be actively trading; instead, they may have been established for non-trade purposes (such as relating to native title claims) or may be dormant. While accepting that the

ORIC dataset provides an imperfect proxy for the actual number of Indigenous businesses trading across Australia, we are not aware of an alternate dataset that would be better suited for these purposes. Data available through ORIC that are relevant to this research included details of all registered corporations, including registration (and deregistration date if relevant) and the postcode in which each corporation was registered.

Our second key source of data was the ILSMP expenditure each year per postcode. For the years up to and including 2018 we used a pre-existing dataset that compiled details of actual and committed spend each year, with the largest components of this database relating to IPAs and Indigenous ranger / Working on Country projects (Hill et al. 2013). Spend for the final years of analysis, from 2019 to 2021, was obtained directly from NIAA data on funding by year provided as part of Phase One of this project. However, a number of Indigenous ranger projects working on IPAs are funded at state and territory level, rather than by the Australian Government; furthermore, a small number of ILSMPs are funded from other sources, including NGOs. Thus, a limitation of this data is that not all funding flowing to ILSMPs has been captured; however, the most significant funding flows for each year are included in our dataset.

Our third key source of data relates to indicators of the presence or absence of IPA and Indigenous ranger projects working on IPAs within each postcode area. For the IPAs, we used the spatial data provided by DCCEEW (then DAWE) to estimate the proportion of the area of each postcode that was covered by IPAs for each year. For Indigenous ranger projects working on IPAs, we did not have data relating to the boundaries of the land over which these projects operated, but we did have spatial data from DCCEEW that indicated the key location for each ranger group, and from previous research we had similar data relating to other (non–Commonwealth funded) Indigenous ranger groups. Thus, from these datasets, we were able to analyse those postcodes that contained Indigenous ranger projects working on IPAs within their boundaries to derive a dichotomous variable indicating presence or absence of rangers. Finally, we were able to use our variables indicating IPA and ranger locations to derive a further dichotomous variable indicating the presence of both rangers and an IPA, or not.

These key datasets were supplemented with data relating to other variables previously indicated by the literature as being likely to be relevant to this analysis. The full details of all the variables used in our final models, the sources of the variables and descriptive statistics for each are set out Table A.1. It should be noted that there are also some limitations with the control variables:

- In particular, it should be noted that all ABS census data sourced is based on place of usual residence (PUR), as in previous analyses, rather than utilising data based upon estimated resident population (ERP). The use of ERP was considered as it has been noted that statistical data frequently undercount Indigenous people; indeed, the ABS estimates the net undercount rate for 2021 census as 17.4% for Indigenous population, similar to the 2016 undercount rate of 17.5% (see ABS 2022a). Unfortunately for the purpose of this analysis, the final estimates of census 2021 ERP data, including geographic disaggregation, are not scheduled for release until August 2023 (ABS 2022b). Furthermore, the geographically disaggregated data for the previous dataset, census 2016, was not released at postcode level (ABS 2016c). As a consequence, the analysis has to rely on PUR rather than ERP data, and the likely omission of uncounted Indigenous people is a limitation of the analysis.
- A further limitation is that spatial data for life expectancy is only available at a total population level, rather than disaggregated between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and households. While life expectancy data are available at large geographic scale for Indigenous people (such as by state and territory, or by major city and rural), the data are unavailable at the fine geographic scale required. Accordingly, we note this limitation to the analysis, recognising that life expectancy data relating to Indigenous peoples alone is likely to differ from the data related to the total population.

- A further limitation relates to the variable representing proportion of households having access to the internet. Information for this variable was based upon censuses 2006, 2011 and 2016, where information was gathered on this topic. However, census 2021 did not enquire whether dwellings had internet connection, noting that with the growth in internet access outside of the home on mobile and other devices and the fast pace of technological change, the collection of data on household internet access in the census now has less relevance (ABS 2021a). Thus a limitation of this work is that as we were unable to update data for this variable beyond 2016, we have assumed that later years remain at 2016 proportions.
- We have adopted the ABS postcode boundaries from the ABS statistical geography files for 2011 as our base unit of measure (ABS 2011) and utilised ABS boundary correspondence files (ABS 2016d, ABS 2021b) where available and possible, seeking to ensure all source data is based on this common unit of measure. However, given the 13-year time period covered by the analysis, and the number of boundary changes that have taken place, there is a risk that some mismatch may remain despite efforts to ensure comparability of boundaries over time. We note this as a further potential limitation.

Thus, we acknowledge the imperfections of some of the proxies selected for our analysis, and imperfections in the datasets themselves. These have arisen as a result of the scarcity of detailed and reliable data available relating to remote communities in general and Indigenous communities in particular. Consequently, our models are not perfect and some care needs to be taken when interpreting the results; however, the key findings with regard to the impact of ILSMP expenditure was found to be robust to model specification, with consistent findings resulting from a wide range of different model specifications tested; the direction and significance of impact of the key explanatory variables proved robust to inclusion or exclusion of a wide range and combination of control variables.

Table A.1 Description of data used within econometric models: descriptions, sources and descriptive statistics

Variable name	Variable description and source of data	Units	Mean	Standard deviation
Dependent variable for all ORIC businesses	Number of ORIC-registered businesses within postal area (ORIC 2021)	Number	0.998	5.953
ILSMP funding – current year*	ILSMP funding – current year (Hill et al. 2013) and NIAA funding data provided during Phase One	$m	0.032	0.407
ILSMP funding – lag one year	ILSMP funding – 1 year previous (Hill et al. 2013) and NIAA funding data provided during Phase One	$m	0.030	0.396
ILSMP funding – lag two years	ILSMP funding – 2 years previous (Hill et al. 2013) and NIAA funding data provided during Phase One	$m	0.029	0.379
ILSMP funding – lag three years	ILSMP funding – 3 years previous (Hill et al. 2013) and NIAA funding data provided during Phase One	$m	0.027	0.363
IPA funding – current year	IPA funding within ILSMP funding – current year (Hill et al. 2013) and NIAA funding data provided during Phase One	$m	0.005	0.075
IPA funding – lag one year	IPA funding within ILSMP funding – 1 year previous (Hill et al. 2013) and NIAA funding data provided during Phase One	$m	0.004	0.068
IPA funding – lag two years	IPA funding within ILSMP funding – 2 years previous (Hill et al. 2013) and NIAA funding data provided during Phase One	$m	0.004	0.060
IPA funding – lag three years	IPA funding within ILSMP funding – 3 years previous (Hill et al. 2013) and NIAA funding data provided during Phase One	$m	0.003	0.052
Other funding – current year	ILSMP funding excluding IPA funding– current year	$m	0.027	0.368
Other funding – lag one year	ILSMP funding excluding IPA funding – 1 year previous	$m	0.026	0.362
Other funding – lag two years	ILSMP funding excluding IPA funding – 2 years previous	$m	0.025	0.351
Other funding – lag three years	ILSMP funding excluding IPA funding – 3 years previous	$m	0.024	0.340
Native title proportion	Proportion of land in postal area held under Native Title (calculated from intersecting spatial files for Native Title declarations [NNTT 2021] and postal areas [ABS 2011])	Proportion	0.040	0.166
IPA proportion	Proportion of land in postal area covered by Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs) (calculated from intersecting spatial files for IPAs [DAWE and NIAA 2021] and postal areas [ABS 2011])	Proportion	0.003	0.039
Rangers	Rangers present in postcode – value of 1 indicates presence, 0 otherwise (determined from intersecting ranger location [DAWE and NIAA 2021, Appendix 2] and postal areas [ABS 2011b]	Proportion	0.027	0.163
IPA and rangers	Rangers and IPA present in postcode – value of 1 indicates presence, 0 otherwise (determined from intersecting ranger locations and IPA locations [DAWE and NIAA 2021] and postal areas [ABS 2011b])	Proportion	0.011	0.106
Population	Total population of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people within postal area (Census data obtained for 2006, 2011, 2016 and 2021 [ABS 2006, 2012, 2018, 2022c]; years between infilled by interpolation assuming the changes between census periods were equally spread)	Thousands	9.147	12.489
Indigenous proportion	Indigenous population as proportion of total population within postal area (Census data obtained for 2006, 2011, 2016 and 2021 [ABS 2006, 2012, 2018, 2022c]; years between infilled by interpolation assuming the changes between census periods were equally spread)	Proportion	0.039	0.082

Variable name	Variable description and source of data	Units	Mean	Standard deviation
Proportion of Indigenous population finished Year 12	Proportion of Indigenous population in postal area who have completed year 12 schooling (Census data obtained for 2006, 2011, 2016 and 2021 [ABS 2006, 2012, 2018, 2022c]; years between infilled by interpolation assuming the changes between census periods were equally spread)	Proportion	0.336	0.203
Coral reefs	Proportion of land in postal area covered by coral reefs (calculated from intersecting spatial files for land use of this type [ESA 2009] and postal areas [ABS 2011b])	Proportion	1.10E-05	3.71E-04
Cropland	Proportion of land in postal area covered by cropland (calculated from intersecting spatial files for land use of this type [ESA 2009] and postal areas [ABS 2011b])	Proportion	0.227	0.330
Desert	Proportion of land in postal area covered by desert (calculated from intersecting spatial files for land use of this type [ESA 2009] and postal areas [ABS 2011b])	Proportion	3.03E-04	9.27E-03
Grass-rangelands	Proportion of land in postal area covered by grass or rangelands (calculated from intersecting spatial files for land use of this type [ESA 2009] and postal areas [ABS 2011b])	Proportion	0.123	0.226
Tropical	Proportion of land in postal area covered by tropical vegetation (calculated from intersecting spatial files for land use of this type [ESA 2009] and postal areas [ABS 2011b])	Proportion	0.153	0.256
SqKm	Square kilometres of land within postal area (ABS 2011b)	Sq Km millions	0.003	0.029
ARIA+ Average	Average ARIA+ (Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia) index within postal area; 2011 data were purchased (HCPMR 2011); this data was used to indicate the remoteness of each postal area for each year.	Index value	2.429	3.225
Internet proportion	Proportion of all households (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) within postal area with internet connection (census data obtained for 2006, 2011, 2016 and 2021 [ABS 2006, 2012, 2018, 2022c]; years between infilled by interpolation assuming the changes between census periods were equally spread)	Proportion	0.779	0.123
Own home proportion	Proportion of households (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) within postal area that own their own home (Census data obtained for 2006, 2011, 2016 and 2021 [ABS 2006, 2012, 2018, 2022c]; years between infilled by interpolation assuming the changes between Census periods were equally spread)	Proportion	0.715	0.142
Volunteering proportion	Proportion of people (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) who volunteer within postal area (Census data obtained for 2006, 2011, 2016 and 2021 [ABS 2006, 2012, 2018, 2022b]; years between infilled by interpolation assuming the changes between census periods were equally spread)	Proportion	0.229	0.085
Life expectancy	Average life expectancy for all population (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) within postal area (calculated from using life expectancy data available at ABS SA4 geographic scale [ABS 2022d] and postal area spatial files [ABS 2011b] enabling calculation of average life expectancy by postal area weighted by the proportion of each SA4 region that fell within each postal area)	Years	82.208	1.710

*All remaining variables are explanatory variables

Method of development of our econometric model

We set out to update and estimate the model presented during Phase One of the evaluation process and to develop and estimate additional models that sought to identify the impact of IPA funding alone.

Our first (and core) model sought to determine whether the number of ORIC-registered businesses in each postcode/year was related to ILSMP expenditure within that same postcode during the same year and/or during the previous 3 years (thus specifically testing for current and lagged impacts of the funding), while also seeking to understand the impact of ranger and/or IPA projects operating in the postcode. Further, our sophisticated econometric model also incorporated a wider range of variables that may impact on the growth of Indigenous businesses as suggested from our review of the literature, acting as control variables, and providing important information regarding the context within which ILSMP program presence and funding levels can have an impact. Our second new model was based upon the same principles, but instead focused purely on IPA project funding, excluding all other types and sources of funding provided. Our third model included both IPA funding and other ILSMP funding as 2 separate variables. The second and third models included the same contextualising variables as the first model.

As previously in Phase One, we estimated these models using a generalised least squares random effects panel data multiple regression approach with robust standard errors. A random effects specification was used as indicated by use of the Breusch and Pagan Lagrandian multiplier test, while robust standard errors were used to control for any heterogeneity in the data.

The econometric model is used to test the relationship between funds invested in IPA and/or ranger programs and the growth in the number of Indigenous-owned businesses over time, seeking to test if there is a significant relationship between investment in the programs in one year and increased number of businesses in future years. The inclusion of lags in our explanatory variables allow us to conduct Granger causality tests (Granger 1969). Simplistically, the Granger causality test is a statistical hypothesis test for determining whether one time series is useful in forecasting another. A variable (say IPA expenditure) is said to 'Granger cause' another variable (say growth in Indigenous businesses) if it predates the other – for example if growth in IPA expenditure in year 1 has a statistically significant impact on business growth in subsequent years, or, framed technically, if it can be statistically shown that the values of X provide statistically significant information about future values of Y.

Developed for use in economic analysis, the Granger causality test is based on a precedence; that is, the test is checking that a value for the independent variable in one time period can be used to predict a change in the dependent variable that occurs in a specified subsequent period. The testing process adopted is itself based on a definition of causality that evokes 2 fundamental principles: (i) the effect does not precede its cause in time; and (ii) the causal series contains unique information about the series being caused that is not available otherwise (Eichler 2013). Thus, whereas regression models generally allow the researcher to determine whether a relationship exists between variables, the use of lags and Granger causality testing allows the researcher to understand more about this relationship, understanding how one variable statistically can be said to (Granger) cause a change in the other variable. Thus, for the purpose of this analysis, ILSMP expenditure could be said to Granger cause a change in the number of Indigenous businesses, if ILSMP spend in year 1 can be used to predict the increase in Indigenous businesses in subsequent years.

This econometric model was developed during Phase One of the analysis, building on the work of Jarvis et al. (2018b). The model was then extended during Phase Two, seeking to include more recent data within the analysis (as Census 2021 was released after Phase One) and to further explore the importance of IPA funding as a separate from other types of funding for ILSMPs, which includes

funding for ranger groups from all sources (federal, state and territory governments, NGOs, philanthropic organisations, etc).

Our first model was thus:

$$\text{All ORIC businesses}^{pct} = \text{ILSMP}^{pct} + \text{ILSMP}^{pct-1} + \text{ILSMP}^{pct-2} + \text{ILSMP}^{pct-3} + \text{IPA proportion}^{pct} + \text{Rangers}^{pct} + \text{IPA and rangers}^{pct} + \text{Control variables}$$

Where:

All ORIC businesses^{pct} is the number of ORIC registered businesses in postcode, pc (e.g. postcode 4810), at time, t (e.g. the year 2019/2020)

ILSMP ^{pct} is the money spent on ILSMPs in postcode, pc, at time, t, (e.g. the year 2019/20) (referred to as ILSMP funding – current year)

ILSMP $^{pct-1}$ is the money spent on ILSMPs in postcode, pc, at time, t-1 (i.e. one year ago, or 2018/19) (referred to as ILSMP funding – lag one year)

ILSMP $^{pct-2}$ is the money spent on ILSMPs in postcode, pc, at time, t-2 (i.e. two years ago, or 2017/18) (referred to as ILSMP funding – lag two years)

ILSMP $^{pct-3}$ is the money spent on ILSMPs in postcode, pc, at time, t-3 (i.e. two years ago, or 2016/17) (referred to as ILSMP funding – lag three years)

IPA proportion pct indicates that IPA is present (and size of IPA relative to size of postcode) in that postcode, pc, at that time, t

Rangers ^{pct} indicates rangers are present or absent within that postcode at that time

IPA and rangers ^{pct} indicates that both IPA and rangers programs operate within that postcode at that time

Our second model was of the same form, with ILSMP funding replaced with IPA funding alone. IPA funding forms a subset of the much larger ILSMP funding.

Our third model was again of the same form, but included both funding streams – IPA funding and other funding – separately, rather than combining these into the ILSMP total funding stream.

Detailed results

Summary results have been presented in the main body of the report, where we chose to present the direction of impact of statistically significant variables (Table 4.1) but not the actual coefficients as a deliberate tactic to de-emphasise numbers, which may be imprecise due to those limitations in the datasets available to us which have been described in the preceding 'Data selection and sources' section above. However, for completeness, we provide the detailed results of the analysis, for the full dataset and the subsets of data, in Table A.2.

Table A.2 Detailed regression results. Dependent variable for all 3 models: number of businesses registered with ORIC

Variables	Model 1: All ILSMP funding combined	Model 2: IPA funding only	Model 3: IPA & other funding separated
Total funding – current year	0.465 *	-	-
Total funding – lag one year	0.341 **	-	-
Total funding – lag two years	0.521 ***	-	-
Total funding – lag three years	1.282 ***	-	-
IPA funding – current year	-	5.359 ***	4.843 ***
IPA funding – lag one year	-	3.530 ***	2.700 ***
IPA funding – lag two years	-	3.421 ***	2.877 ***
IPA funding – lag three years	-	4.496 ***	2.927 ***
Other funding – current year	-	-	0.166
Other funding – lag one year	-	-	0 175
Other funding – lag two years	-	-	0.376 ***
Other funding – lag three years	-	-	1.016 ***
IPA proportion	1.252	-1.189	-1.360
Rangers	1.200 **	1.448 **	1.092 **
IPA and rangers	3.238 **	4.367 *	2.982 *
Native title proportion	0.265 *	0.190	0.221 *
Population	0.055 ***	0.052 ***	0.055 ***
Indigenous proportion	1.973	1.199	2.639 *
Proportion of Indigenous population finished year 12	0.051	0.021	0.036
Percentage of postcode with landcover of type:			
Coral reefs	2,153.734 ***	2,699.034 ***	2,318.814 ***
Cropland	0.777 ***	0.710 ***	0.753 ***
Desert	-63.200 ***	-59.649 ***	-58.652 ***
Grass-rangelands	0.866 *	0.997 ***	0.914 **
Tropical	1.154 ***	1.126 ***	1.154 ***
SqKm	88.645 ***	75.682 ***	76.225 ***
ARIA+ Average	0.088 **	0.119	0.093 **
Internet proportion	2.783 ***	3.017 ***	2.714 ***
Own home proportion	-0.876 *	-1.114	-1.101 *
Volunteering proportion	-1.326 **	-1.374	-1.198 *
Life expectancy	0.058	0.075	0.060
Constant	-6.803 **	-8.212 **	-6.809 *
	Summary statistics:		
No. of groups	2,399	2,399	2,399
No. of observations	33,549	33,549	33,549
ρ	0.8397	0.8745	0.8525
R^2 within	0.3361	0.3498	0.4138
R^2 between	0.5819	0.5358	0.5759
R^2 overall	0.5692	0.5269	0.5683

* significant at $P < 0.1$

** $P < 0.05$

*** $P < 0.01$

Appendix 2: Evaluation questions and sub-questions

Table A.3 An example of variables, indicators, analyses and datasets relevant to question 1 of the evaluation, Phase One

Sub-question	Variables	Indicators for Phase One	Analyses and datasets for Phase One
To what extent has the IPA Program contributed to the NRS being comprehensive, adequate (including through connectivity), and representative of biodiversity and cultural diversity?	• Adequacy • Comprehensiveness • Representativeness • According to IBRA • At national and state levels • Coverage of conservation-significant and at-risk species • Representative according to management categories and governance types • Priority areas for adding to the conservation estate	Total areas and percentages in each category Maps showing intersection between IBRAs and IPAs	Spatial analysis using GIS overlays and biodiversity models. Data: IPA spatial files Biodiversity datasets

Table A.4 A second example of variables, indicators, analyses and datasets relevant to question 1 of the evaluation, Phase One

Sub-question	Variables	Indicators for Phase One	Analysis and data for Phase One
To what extent is the IPA Program achieving 'management effectiveness' (as a proxy for biodiversity conservation)?	Key factors in IUCN ME framework: 1. Values, threats, etc. 2. Management planning (incl. updates) 3. Resources 4. Management actions e.g. threat reduction (weeds, ferals, fire, etc.), presentation (visitors), etc. 5. Outputs e.g. areas of weed control 6. Outcomes e.g. condition of areas inside IPAs	1. Achievement of KPIs 2. PoMs and PoM reviews in place 3. $ available, capability 4. Achievement of KPIs 5. Outputs in the success stories 6. Outcomes – results from M&E; biodiversity data	Qualitative thematic analysis according to categories and sub-categories in ME framework Descriptive statistics (achievements of relevant KPIs) in charts and possibly maps Data: IPA project performance data tracker, KPI data, 5-year and 10-year funding profiles, IPA management plans, annual activity reports, success stories, literature

Table A.5 An example of variables, indicators and analyses relevant to question 2 of the evaluation, Phase One

Sub-question	Variables	Indicators for Phase One	Analysis for Phase One
How is the IPA Program working to strengthen Indigenous: • **languages** • **cultural practices** • **connections with Country** • **cultural institutions (both formal and informal)** • **social and health outcomes** • **overall wellbeing?**	Use and applications of Indigenous: • languages • cultural knowledge and practices • being on Country and with Elders/knowledge holders • cultural institutions in decision-making. Comprehensive social variables in the SROI reports, including: • education and training • social and cultural determinants of health • clinical indicators of health. Overall wellbeing indicators	• Numbers and types of activities involving language use, etc. • Number and types of benefits identified in the SROI and other reports through literature review, and in the success stories and annual reports • Number and types of social and cultural determinants and clinical indicators of health • Number and types of wellbeing reported	Thematic analysis according to the categories listed, descriptive statistics using charts and figures (e.g. word clouds) Data: success stories, PoMs, annual activity reports, literature, IPA roundtables

Table A.6 An example of variables, indicators and analyses relevant to question 3 of the evaluation, Phase One

Sub-question	Variables	Indicators for Phase One	Analysis for Phase One
How do the social, cultural, economic, and environmental benefits interact to affect achievement of objectives?	Extent of holistic, interlinked, systemic impacts of the IPA intervention	Evidence for holistic, interacting impacts	Thematic analysis in relation to this category and any emergent sub-categories
How do context and mechanism variables affect the delivery of the economic benefits and outcomes?	Variables in the current model: • rights to access and use land • natural capital of land/sea • educational level • life expectancy • population size and density • distance from markets • access to technology • home ownership • social capital	Indicators presented in econometric model; see Appendix 1.	Included in economic analysis

Table A.7 An example of variables, indicators and analyses relevant to question 4 of the evaluation, Phase One

Sub-question	Variables	Indicators for Phase One	Analysis for Phase One
To what extent do IPA providers support the IPA objectives?	Key goals of the IPA providers in relation to: • protection of biodiversity • delivery of multiple benefits and sustainable management of land/sea • building the NRS	Number and type of goals aligned with the IPA objectives	Thematic analysis according to the categories listed Data: IPA PoMs, other plans of providers
What other objectives are important to IPA providers?	Goals that are not aligned	Importance and number of goals not aligned	As above

Appendix 3: Stakeholder Engagement and Data Collection Strategy

Table A.8 Stakeholder Engagement and Data Collection Strategy

Stakeholder classification	Stakeholder/s	Stakeholder needs/expectations for engagement in the evaluation and high-level benefits/impacts	Level of engagement (Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, Empower)	Level of engagement needed in the evaluation (High, Medium, or Low)	Risk mitigation for potential engagement barriers
Governance	PET	Oversee the coordination of the overall evaluation project to ensure evaluation objectives and outcomes are met. Undertake close liaison through regular communications and meeting schedules, including workshops and presentations.	Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate	High	Maintain regularity of scheduled meetings and daily communications. Prepare/present information as required in project timelines and key deliverables. Ensure capacity to engage at a high level with adequate planning and notice.
Governance	The NIAA's national and regional offices	Oversight and input throughout the design and implementation of the project, including supporting direct engagement with IPA providers, providing advice and assisting with relevant approvals and briefings to assist in the facilitation of evaluation objectives and outcomes. Close liaison through scheduled contact, meetings, provision of briefings and incorporation of advice in evaluation design and implementation.	Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate	High	Maintain regularity of scheduled meetings and daily communications for timely provision and receipt of advice and support required in IPA provider liaison. Ensure capacity to engage at a high level with adequate planning and notice.
Governance	DCCEEW's Biodiversity Policy and Water Science Branch and Geospatial and Information Analytics Branch, CSIRO	Ongoing consultation and input with respect to environmental (spatial) data, modelling and analysis relevant to the impact of IPAs on landscape-scale and other biodiversity values, to ensure due contribution is incorporated in evaluation design and implementation. Liaison through scheduled contact, meetings, provision / receipt of briefings for incorporation in evaluation design and implementation.	Inform, Consult, Involve	Medium	Maintain regularity of communication for environmental specific needs as they arise in the evaluation design and implementation. Ensure capacity to engage at a high level with adequate planning and notice.

Stakeholder classification	Stakeholder/s	Stakeholder needs/expectations for engagement in the evaluation and high-level benefits/impacts	Level of engagement (Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, Empower)	Level of engagement needed in the evaluation (High, Medium, or Low)	Risk mitigation for potential engagement barriers
Governance	The NIAA's IEC and the DCCEEW's IAC	Ensure Indigenous interests and perspectives are considered throughout the design and implementation of the Evaluation Plan and Evaluation Report to cover Indigenous interests and perspectives. The IEC's role is to help strengthen the quality, credibility and influence of evaluations relating to policies and programs led by the NIAA through the provision of independent, strategic and technical advice. IEC will provide technical advice and guidance for the NIAA's evaluations to ensure they are high quality, ethical, inclusive and focused on improving outcomes for Indigenous Australians.	Inform, Consult, Involve	Medium	Prepare/present information as required in project timelines and key deliverables and particularly as it relates to input in Evaluation Plan and Evaluation Report. Capacity to engage high with adequate planning and notice.
Key evaluation partners	10 study site IPA providers and 10 study site Traditional Owners	Ongoing relationship and trust building to support data collection once the Evaluation team arrive on site. Once on site, opportunity to contribute feedback, experiences and perspectives of what is and what is not working in the IPA Program to enhance cultural, economic, social, wellbeing and environmental benefits using culturally appropriate participatory approaches to data collection, analysis, reporting and learning. Opportunity to engage in the collection and analysis of data, building evaluation capacity.	Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, Empower	High	Adhere to culturally appropriate participatory protocols and approaches to maximise benefits, participation and evaluation capacity development in all 4 engagement phases of planning, preparing, implementing and reporting. Capacity to engage may be restricted or limited without sufficiently timed, consultative and flexible activities and communications. Contingencies in place for reserve IPA sites and virtual data collection / activity schedule in the event of inability to undertake any travel.

Stakeholder classification	Stakeholder/s	Stakeholder needs/expectations for engagement in the evaluation and high-level benefits/impacts	Level of engagement (Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, Empower)	Level of engagement needed in the evaluation (High, Medium, or Low)	Risk mitigation for potential engagement barriers
Other evaluation partners evaluation partners	Remaining IPA provider representatives and Traditional Owners associated with Commonwealth-funded dedicated IPA projects and other organisations such as Country Needs People, Central Land Council, Kimberley Land Council, Northern Land Council, Cape York Land Council, Indigenous Desert Alliance, NAILSMA, Australian Land Conservation Alliance, The Nature Conservancy (Australia), Pew Research Centre, Bush Heritage Australia and BHP Foundation	Opportunity to contribute feedback, experiences and perspectives of what is and what is not working in the IPA Program to enhance cultural, economic, social and environmental benefits. Culturally appropriate participatory approaches applied to level of survey response or interviews.	Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate	Low / Medium depending on participant response at 3 optional levels: **Stakeholder online survey** **Key stakeholder interview** **National roundtable**	Provide timely, relevant, engaging and targeted communications to maximise stakeholder benefits, participation and feedback. Capacity to engage may be restricted or limited without sufficiently timed, explanatory and consultative activities and communications.

Appendix 4: Timeline of stakeholder engagement

Table A.9 Timeline of stakeholder engagement

Activity	Description
Program evaluation participation: April 2022 to October 2022	10 nominated IPA providers contacted via phone and email confirming participation in the program evaluation, with a letter of support sought from each IPA provider. Subsequent contact was made to confirm availability for a site visit to occur over the period October 2022 to December 2022. Each IPA was provided with a factsheet containing information about the upcoming site visit.
Site visit preparation and site visits: October 2022 to March 2023	IPA providers worked with Ninti to organise logistics and on-the-ground engagement with IPA provider staff, rangers and ranger coordinators, board/management committee members, Traditional Owners, Elders and community members. **Site visit schedule** 1. Girringun IPA: 17–18 October 2022 2. Pulu Islet IPA: 19–21 October 2022 3. Ngadju IPA: 1–3 November 2022 4. Anindilyakwa IPA: 7–9 November 2022 5. Bardi Jawi IPA: 15–17 November 2022 6. Yappala IPA: 21–23 November 2022 7. Ngunya Jargoon IPA: 24–25 November 2022 8. Lake Condah IPA: 30 November – 1 December 2022 9. putalina IPA: 6–7 December 2022 10. Katiti-Petermann IPA: 27–28 February 2023
Key stakeholder interviews: December 2022 to February 2023	Emails were sent to key stakeholders, and these were followed by phone calls from the Indigenous Evaluation Team, inviting people to participate. All interviews were conducted virtually and lasted for approximately one hour. **Key stakeholder interview schedule:** 1. Country Needs People: 13 December 2022 2. Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water: 13 December 2022 3. Northern Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance: 13 December 2022 4. The Nature Conservancy: 14 December 2022 5. The Pew Charitable Trusts: 14 December 2022 6. Northern Land Council: 14 December 2022 7. Central Land Council: 15 December 2022 8. Indigenous Desert Alliance: 15 December 2022 9. National Indigenous Australians Agency: 25 January 2023 10. Desert Support Services: 27 February 2023
National roundtable: 24 February 2023	A 2-hour virtual roundtable facilitated by the Indigenous evaluation team leader and the Indigenous evaluation specialist. Eleven participants attended from NAILSMA, Aboriginal Carbon Foundation, Gur A Baradharaw Kod Sea and Land Council Torres Strait Islander Corporation, Kimberley Land Council, Central Land Council, Federation of Victorian Traditional Owners Corporation, Aboriginal Lands Trust of South Australia, and Bush Heritage.
Surveys: February 2023	Targeted engagement via phone and email to increase survey responses.

Appendix 5: Demographic breakdowns

Table A.10 Yarning Circle participants by IPA project sites visited during evaluation

Site	Number participants engaged in Yarning at each IPA project site	Indigenous (total)	Ind. Male	Ind. Female	Ind. Other	Employed by IPA service provider	Community Members	Indigenous Rangers	First Nations IPA advisory committee members / Traditional Owner	Non-Indigenous (total)	Non-Ind. Male	Non-Ind. Female	Non-Ind. Other	Employed by IPA service provider	Community Members	Gap/ Unknown demo-graphics
Girringun	6	6	3	3	0	5	6	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pulu Islet	10	9	6	3	0	4	1	6	6	1	1	0	0	1	0	0
Ngadju	27	17	9	8	0	11	7	9	7	2	0	2	0	2	0	8
Anindilyakwa	31	15	6	9	0	4	9	6	0	4	4	0	0	4	0	12
Bardi Jawi	36	14	10	4	0	8	11	7	5	2	2	0	0	1	1	20
Yappala	6	5	2	3	0	1	5	1	4	1	1	0	0	1	0	0
Ngunya Jargoon	8	8	7	1	0	6	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lake Condah	29	15	10	5	0	15	3	8	2	5	2	3	0	1	0	9
putalina	3	3	2	1	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Katiti-Petermann	8	7	5	2	0	2	5	2	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0
TOTAL	**164**	**99**	**60**	**39**	**0**	**57**	**47**	**40**	**32**	**16**	**11**	**5**	**0**	**11**	**1**	**49**

Table A.11 Site visit satisfaction survey demographics

	Total			Female									Male									No Ans								
Site	Satisfac-tion surveys	Indigeno us	non-Indig-enous	Total Female	< 20	20's	30's	40's	50's	60's	60 +	no ans	Total Male	< 20	20's	30's	40's	50's	60's	60 +	no ans	Total No Ans	< 20	20's	30's	40's	50's	60's	60 +	no ans
Girringun	0	0	0	**0**	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pulu Islet	4	4	0	**1**	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	**2**	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	**1**	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Ngadju	10	10	0	**7**	0	3	1	1	0	0	2	0	**3**	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	**0**	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Anindilyakwa	10	10	0	**4**	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	**2**	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	**4**	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	0
Bardi Jawi	8	8	0	**3**	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	**1**	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	**4**	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	1
Yappala	3	3	0	**2**	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	**1**	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	**0**	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ngunya Jargoon	0	0	0	**0**	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lake Condah	0	0	0	**0**	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
putalina	0	0	0	**0**	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Katiti-Petermann	15	15	0	**6**	1	0	1	3	1	0	0	0	**8**	0	2	0	2	1	0	3	0	**1**	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
TOTAL	**50**	**50**	**0**	**23**	**1**	**6**	**3**	**7**	**2**	**1**	**3**	**0**	**17**	**0**	**3**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**2**	**5**	**1**	**10**	**0**	**0**	**1**	**3**	**1**	**2**	**1**	**2**

Appendix 6: Total 10-year funding 2013–2023, Indigenous organisations

Figure A.1 Total 10-year funding 2013–2023, Indigenous organisations

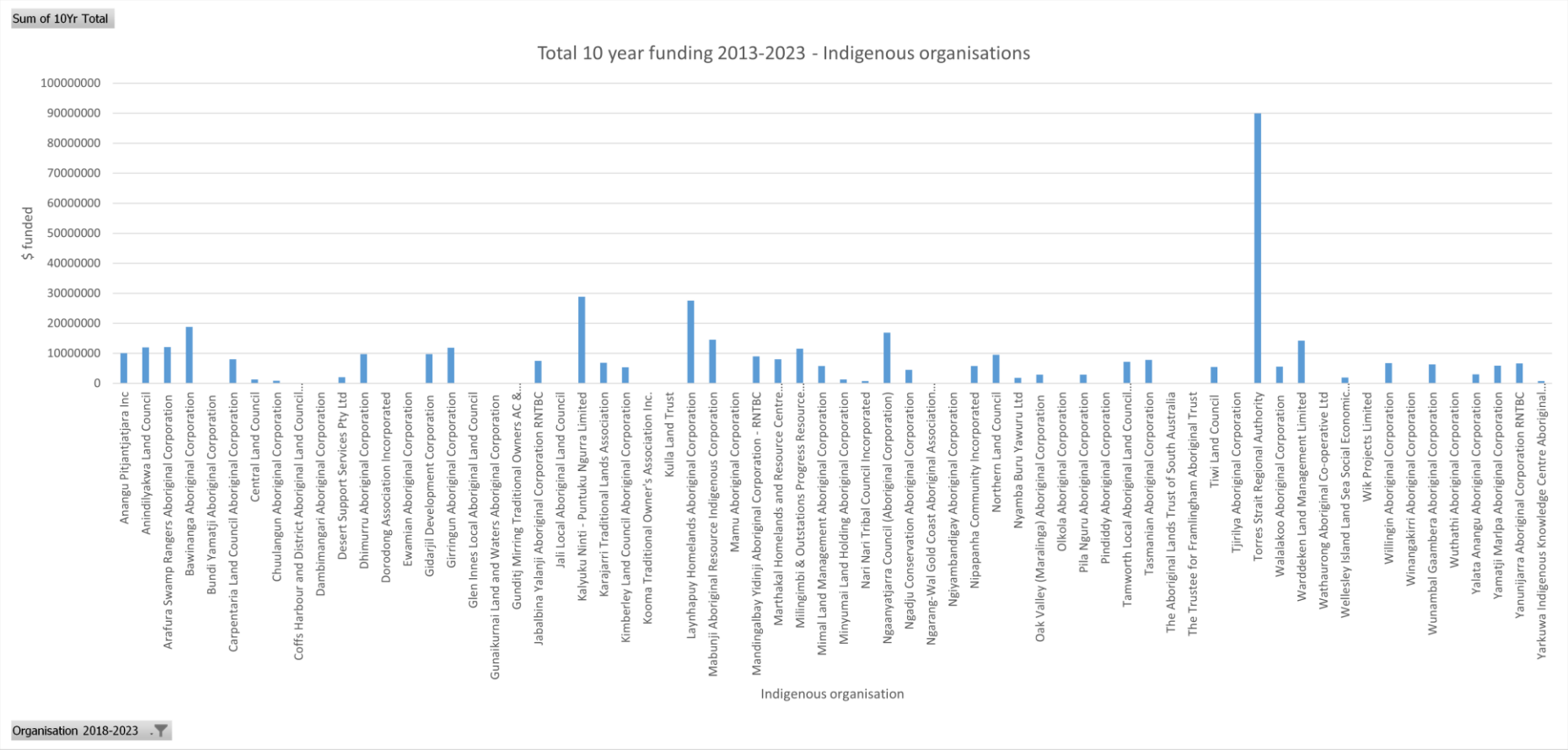

Table A.12 Alignment of IPA Program evaluation culturally safe principles with Australian Evaluation Society First Nations Cultural Safety Framework

AES culturally safe evaluation principle	IPA culturally safe evaluation principle
Sovereignty	The Evaluation team recognises 2 worlds and 2 knowledge systems, as Indigenous Australians never ceded sovereignty over their lands.
Know and understand the truth	The Evaluation team recognises the ongoing dominant culture, power and historical trauma Indigenous Australians endure and the challenges it places on expressing their perspectives and needs.
Diversity and uniqueness	The Evaluation team recognises Indigenous First Nations cultures are diverse and unique across the scope of the IPA Program evaluation and assumptions cannot be based on single cultural characteristics and values.
Time	Effective stakeholder engagement relies on trust and trust takes time. The IPA Program evaluation is based on staged engagement to allow the time for trust to develop.
Decision-making	Indigenous communities will be engaged and involved in a way that empowers decision-making and equity of voice in IPA Program evaluation outcomes.
Respect	Respect is a core value of the engagement plan and process, by valuing and using Indigenous knowledge systems to address the key evaluative questions.
Adaptability	Flexibility is built into approaches and contingencies in the stakeholder engagement activity plan to be adaptive in the application of cultural protocols and values.
Leadership and expertise	The engagement plan is led and will be executed by an Indigenous evaluator with supporting cultural expertise employed through critical stakeholders in governance and in partnership with key evaluation partners in the IPA Program.
Benefit	The communication plan leads with, and is based on, benefits and positive impacts of the IPA Program evaluation for critical stakeholders and how participatory methods build capacity among communities in evaluation. This also includes how the coordinating contribution of IPA provider organisations is recognised.
Intellectual and cultural property	Ninti One's Knowledge Management Protocol tracks, protects and ensures data sovereignty of Indigenous cultural and intellectual property is protected and preserved.