

Job Done? Is Indigenous capacity done?

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For many years, Indigenous representative and development agencies have agitated for increased engagement with the research community to support them in strengthening their ability to manage and/or develop their ancestral estates. Importantly, Indigenous people still maintain that they are not just another sector or stakeholder in the region, but with customary obligations and deep unmatched connections that extend thousands of years in the past. The Tropical Savannas CRC (TS-CRC) offered an opportunity to do just this, but with historical neglect and a focus on land rights, citizenship and equality the road to Indigenous engagement was going to be a hard one. The northern alliance that was formed to examine native title, presented as the means by which land and sea management could be maximised and provided a unified point of contact for engagement with groups such as the TS-CRC. After a long gestation this led to the eventual birth of the North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA).

So has NAILSMA achieved what it set out to with the TS-CRC? This paper presents the results in a broad range of key areas such as:

- Indigenous input into the governance arrangements,
- decision making,
- engagement with the immediate research community,
- links to the broader research and development community,
- ground up methodology for action research and implementation and
- advocating the rights, interests and requirements for remote Indigenous lands across the wet/dry tropics of the north.

What of the future? One measure of the success of NAILSMA is that it is now sufficiently robust and well-supported to continue in its own right beyond the life of the TS-CRC. It has achieved critical mass and has built a level of credibility which will serve it well in the immediate future. There is clearly strong support for NAILSMA at local, regional, national and international levels and the challenge is now to deliver meaningful outcomes to its stakeholders at these different levels.