NIRAKN RESEARCH POLICY FRAMEWORK

Background

The Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, or as it is more commonly known the Behrendt Review, in July 2012 identified there was an urgent need to build research capability relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives in universities to:

- Further enrich Australia's research endeavours.
- Strengthen relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities regarding research.
- Ensure research relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is based on identified good practice to encourage engagement and participation.
- Increase opportunities and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their research within publicly funded research as a priority.

In February 2013, Universities Australia launched its Smarter Australia policy in which it recognised that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people constituted only 1.1 per cent of all higher degree by research enrolments. The policy notes that there are important factors contributing to this significant under representation. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' often withdraw from studies due to 'financial pressures, social or cultural alienation caused by the academic demands of study, and insufficient academic support' (Universities Australia 2013:18). What the findings of the Behrendt Review and Universities Australia's Smarter Australia Policy indicate is that two of the most important factors in retaining and attracting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders into higher degree by research are the provision of sufficient academic support and social and cultural inclusion. The National Indigenous Research and Knowledges Network, addresses these factors in its research policy framework in order to contribute to attracting and retaining a new generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers.

The National Indigenous Research and Knowledges Network (NIRAKN)

The National Indigenous Research and Knowledges Network (NIRAKN) is a national, inclusive, multidisciplinary hub and spokes model network consisting of forty Indigenous members who are at various stages of their careers as researchers. Over fifty Aboriginal nations are represented by NIRAKN members as well as twenty-one collaborating universities and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS). The network is led by distinguished senior scholars with strong track records who bring extensive experience in collaborative research and capacity training. The network is strategically partnered with international, national and community organisations and its governance includes eminent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on its Advisory Board.

A flow on effect of the Network will be the recruitment of undergraduate students to honours, Masters and PhDs. NIRAKN offers opportunities not otherwise realised. The Indigenous research environment in Australia is in its infancy and individual researchers tend to be institutionally, disciplinary and geographically bounded. NIRAKN opens the potential for research strengths to be disseminated, co-ordinated and extended beyond their current horizons and promises the eventual

development of a critical mass of Indigenous researchers to progress a national Indigenous research agenda for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the nation.

Mission Statement

Indigenous Knowledge Production, Generating Change through Connections

Our Vision

NIRAKN's vision is to develop a critical mass of skilled, qualified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers to address the urgent needs of our communities through the delivery of culturally appropriate research. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems inform and frame our research. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems are understood as continuing and living, embodied, and culturally situated within our respective Indigenous nations, communities and the broader Australian society and includes Indigenous ethics and protocols. As such NIRAKN's multi-cultural research program seeks to facilitate and encompass a wide range of research topics and projects, reflecting that the production and application of our respective knowledge systems requires a comprehensive agenda as well as a robust engagement with disciplinary knowledges.

NIRAKN's multi-cultural approach to research is informed by our Indigenous standpoints, which are grounded in our respective relations to countries and involve our ontologies, our epistemologies and our axiologies as well as our disciplinary knowledges and experiences. Our research is predicated on **Relationality** encompassing in a holistic conception of the inter-connectedness and inter-substantiation between and amongst all living things and the earth. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges systems give expression to an ethics and awareness of the world we inhabit by operationalizing culturally appropriate protocols of respect, responsibility, generosity, obligation and reciprocity.

Research Policy Framework

NIRAKNs vision informs a practical and pragmatic research policy framework consisting of three key themes and six objectives that shape our research capacity building and grants program. These themes are:

1. **Creating Pathways;**
2. **Applying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Knowledges and Building Networks;**
3. **Establishing an Integrated Research Grants Program.**

The themes are presented as being separate but are inextricably connected to one another through NIRAKN's objectives, which form the building blocks of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander higher degree research capabilities:
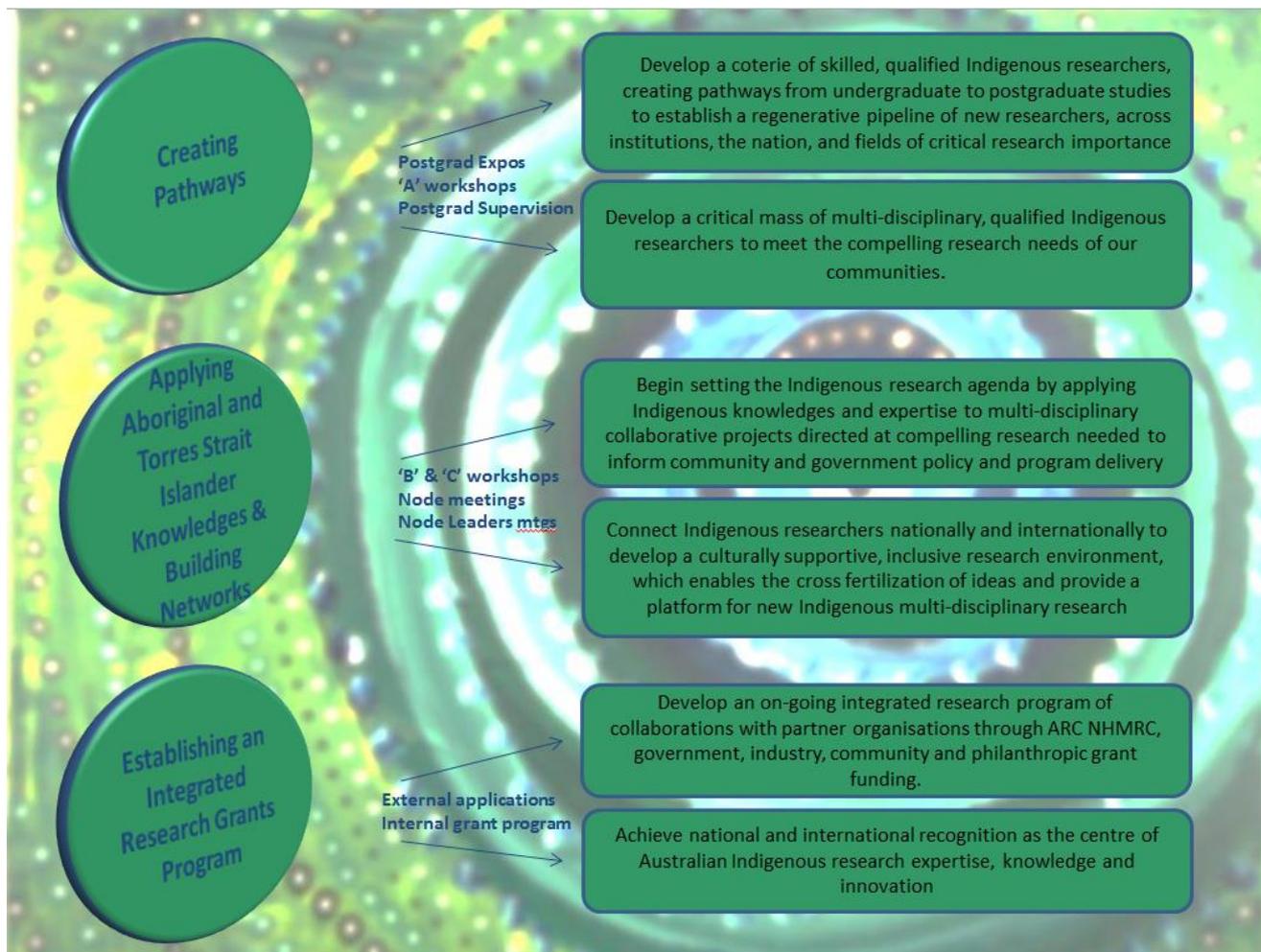
A. Creating Pathways

Objectives

1.	Establish a coterie of skilled, qualified Indigenous researchers, creating pathways from undergraduate to postgraduate studies to establish a regenerative pipeline of new researchers, across institutions, the nation, and fields of critical research importance;

2.	Develop a critical mass of multi-disciplinary, qualified Indigenous researchers to meet the compelling research needs of our communities.

These objectives will be activated through a postgraduate expo, a series of level A research capacity building workshops and postgraduate supervision by network members.

Postgraduate Expo

NIRAKN will roll out an annual national postgraduate recruitment strategy with the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Consortium and various Indigenous Education support centres across Australia. The postgraduate recruitment strategy targets second and third year Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander undergraduate students by inviting them to attend attending a one day postgraduate expo to learn about becoming a postgraduate student and the career opportunities that affords.

NIRAKN has designed workshops for commencing or pre-enrolment, research higher degree Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. High-level support is needed at this vulnerable stage so workshops are Node led and delivered at or as near as possible to each student's home university. Each workshop will based around generic content developed by Network Participants (NPs) but adaptable to meet student need. Outside expertise (i.e. library staff; post-graduate office staff) will be invited to contribute. Level A+ workshops will be established and delivered virtually across Nodes and the NIRAKN Hub. These workshops include:

Level A. Workshops include:

Beginning Candidacy: How to enrol in a higher degree by research; your HDR relationship with your supervisor; preparing a research proposal; requirements of confirmation; thesis/dissertation expectations; how you will be examined.

Technical Skills: Abstract/data base searching; Endnote; using Word/Excel to best advantage

How to Complete an Ethics Application: technical details plus how Indigenous research methodologies fit and need to be positioned within ethics application to gain institutional support.

Level A+ workshops include:

Academic writing skills: the structure of academic writing, constructing a chapter, editing and referencing.

Critical Reading Groups: Each Node will convene and conduct on-line critical reading groups.

Postgraduate Supervision

Node Leaders and network participants are available to supervise and will be encouraged to actively participate in the supervision of new postgraduate students. This will ensure and contribute to socially and culturally inclusive supervision through operationalizing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and methodologies.

B. Applying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and building networks

3.	Connect Indigenous researchers nationally and internationally to develop culturally supportive inclusive research environments, which enable the cross fertilization of ideas and provide platforms for new Indigenous multi-disciplinary research.

4.	Begin setting the Indigenous research agenda by applying Indigenous knowledges and expertise to multi-disciplinary collaborative projects directed at compelling research needed to inform community and government policy and program delivery

Objectives three and four will be operationalized by the delivery of level B and C research capacity building workshops and monthly node and node leaders' virtual meetings.

Research Capacity Building Workshops

NIRAKN will bring together Network members and postgraduate students annually to participate in a week of research capacity building level B and C workshops. The current Level B and C workshops may change over time and a new set of workshops will be offered on a rotational basis based on evaluations from participants. Level B workshops are designed for RHD candidates moving into the 'active' part of their research and are also available for early and mid-career researchers. A key design component is the cross fertilisations of ideas and to bring our participants together to build cross-discipline and cross-institutional networks and collaborations. Node Leaders and network participants hold expertise across these fields and, according to their key strengths, will nominate to take carriage of workshop development and delivery. Level C workshops are designed for those nearing PhD completion as well as early and mid-career researchers. As well as providing high-level skills and knowledge transfer they will bring participants together across disciplines and institutions. They will be organised by the Network annually, conducted at a collaborating institution and open to all Indigenous researchers, not just network members. Outside expertise will supplement the skills of our workshop leaders as required. Members from our non-Indigenous mentor group and grant funding bodies such as the Australian Research Council, the National Health and Medical Research Council, the Office of Learning and Teaching and others will participate in the delivery of workshops relevant to their institutional research programs. These relationships will assist in building foundations for mentoring as well as future collaborative research related activities and projects.

Level B Workshops include but are not restricted to:

Indigenous Research Ethics (Kath Clapham, Mark McMillan and Jaki Troy): This workshop will draw on the expertise of AIATSIS and explore the range of Indigenous research ethics.

Indigenous Quantitative Methodologies (Maggie Walter): How to do statistical analysis (basic to mid-level), how statistics fit within an Indigenous methodology paradigm, basics of surveying.

Research Project Management (John Maynard and Pat Dudgeon): Basics of research project management, managing your PhD, managing community research and managing collaborative research.

Indigenous Qualitative Research Methodologies (Aileen Moreton-Robinson and David Singh): What is a research methodology, what are Indigenous research methodologies and how are they applied?

Level C workshops include but are not restricted to:

Supervision Training: Indigenous/non-Indigenous supervisors (Bronwyn Fredericks/Kathleen Clapham), how to supervise an Indigenous RHD candidate; Indigenous protocols and praxis.

Preparing Journal Articles and Book Chapters (Larissa Behrendt, Aileen Moreton-Robinson and John Maynard): article structure; identifying journals; peer review, responding to reviewers; revision and resubmission.

Career Pathways (Bronwyn Fredericks and Steve Larkin): Career options and planning your career post RHD; supporting and mentoring your Indigenous peers and junior scholars, promotion.

Copyright and Intellectual Property (Asmi Wood): Publishing contracts; CAL; protecting Indigenous intellectual property.

Archival Research: (John Maynard and Vicki Haskins); how, where and when to conduct archival research.

A Grant Writing Retreat (John Maynard and Larissa Behrendt + input from AIATSIS): Fundamentals of grant writing; developing your track record; writing your expertise; gaining institutional support.

National Critical Reading Workshop (Aileen Moreton-Robinson, David Singh, Alissa Macoun); the focus of this annual workshop is the work of prominent Indigenous scholars from the United States of American, Canada, Hawaii, New Zealand and Australia.

Additional workshops developed through university partnerships i.e. What Counts as Research? Writing workshop (Bronwyn Fredericks and Donna Brien CQU).

Monthly Node and Node Leaders Meetings

Each month the four nodes will hold a virtual meeting with their respective members. The meeting will provide a forum for discussion on research related activities and an opportunity to network. These meetings inform the monthly Node Leaders meetings, which report on node activities and research and concerns. Node meetings will also take place during the week of the annual research capacity building workshops.

C. Establishing an integrated research grant program

5.   Develop an on-going integrated research program of collaborations with partner organisations through ARC NHMRC, government, industry, community and philanthropic grant funding.

6.   Achieve national and international recognition as the centre of Australian Indigenous research expertise, knowledge and innovation.

Objectives five and six will be operationalized through an external and internal research grants program.

Research Grants Program

External Grants

NIRAKNs research grants program extends our pathway of research capacity building and is constituted by two components: external grants and internal grants. Our new and emerging researchers must be given the opportunity to apply their skills in a supportive environment and our early, mid and senior researchers require cross discipline/ institution collaborative opportunities. To this end Node Leaders will convene research roundtables/node meetings for Network Participants and Partner Investigators to develop and enable new collaborative research project applications for NHMRC, ARC Discovery Indigenous and Discovery Linkage, AHURI and OLT grants. External grant applications are the preserve and responsibility of Node Leaders and network member applicants.

The direct capacity building aspects of the external research grant applications are that each project will endeavour to incorporate some of the following components:

•   use Indigenous research methodologies to produce Indigenous knowledges

•   support at least two PhD candidates

•   be led by senior researcher node leaders but be multidisciplinary and cross node in personnel and include senior, mid, early career and postgraduate CIs and partner organisations to foster the multidisciplinary integration of our network participants' expertise and knowledges

•   include all NPs on at least one project with participation determined by capacity and interest

•   provide direct skills transfer and training opportunities for PhD and early career participants.

•   provide senior Indigenous PhD supervision for our network supported PhD candidates

•   provide supported associate/co-supervision opportunities for our early career participants

•   provide data and opportunities for collaborative research publishing

•   provide base data for future diverse research project initiation

•   address Closing the Gap Agenda

Internal Research Grants Governance framework

NIRAKN's internal research grants fall under the auspice of the Management Committee and Node Leaders and align to the strategic goals. Node Leaders will assess their respective node research grant applications and make recommendations for funding to the NIRAKN management committee. The Management Committee approves the funding of internal grant applications based on the recommendations of the Node Leaders. For establishment grants Node Leaders may choose to provide feedback on a project that is deemed to be broadly fundable but in need of clarification on some points and request resubmission within a few weeks.

Reporting arrangements

Node Leaders are responsible for administering their node internal grant funds, including the application and reporting processes. Node Leaders report to the Management Committee. Successful applicants will be required to provide to their respective node leaders a report within six months of commencing on the progress/outcome of their application and expenditure.

Internal Grants

The key objective of NIRAKN's research funding for internal grants is to enhance and build network members' research performance, capacities and profiles by:

- Producing measurable high quality research;
- Applying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges;
- Improving the likelihood of external grant success; and
- Strengthening the ongoing conditions for the production of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research by providing support to early career researchers.

Funding

Each node will be allocated $50,000 annually for internal research grants. Funds will be made available to successful applicants during August each year with projects due for completion by July the following year with a report expected every six months. Funding is allocated for expenditure in the calendar year in which it is awarded.

Internal research grant applications must be consistent with NIRAKNs guidelines. There are three levels of internal grant funding available as follows:

1. Small research project: funding of up to $2,000 (including support for conference attendance and costs of publication)
2. Medium research projects: funding of up to $5,000 (research assistance for a grant application)
3. Establishment grants: funding of up to $10,000 (to initiate a small pilot project)

Appendix

1. Internal Grant Application Guidelines
2. Internal Grant Application Form
3. Current Node Members

Appendix 1. Internal Grant Application Guidelines

Introduction

The NIRAKN internal grants fund was established to provide financial support in the form of annual grants for a select number of small to medium research engagement activities.

Internal Grants Focus and Priorities

It is expected that Grant projects/activities will support NIRAKNs vision and demonstrably advance a minimum of two objectives.

Eligibility

Internal grants are open to an individual NIRAKN network member or a node/cross node group of members and can include a partner investigator.

Types of Projects

The internal grants program supports high quality research which will enhance network participants' performance and profile. In particular, research project funding supports:

- High quality research projects/activities with publication outcomes
- Pilot projects that form a plausible first stage in the process of graining external grant support and are relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- Projects/activities showing clear evidence of strong research capacity building.

Assessment Criteria

Grant applications will be assessed on how they meet the following assessment criteria:

1. How the grant supports high quality research outcomes that will strengthen the research profile of the applicant/s. (Relevant to grant levels 1, 2 and 3).
2. How Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander knowledges will be applied (relevant to grant levels 1, 2 and 3).
3. Scholarly significance of the publication and/or appropriateness of conference attendance (relevant for level 1 grant applications)
4. The research record relative to opportunity of the researcher and current support infrastructure (relevant for level 2 and 3 grant applications)
5. The potential for an external grant funding application being developed as an outcome of the internal grant (relevant for level 3 grant applications).
6. Acknowledgement that the NIRAKN grant will be acknowledged in subsequent work as assisting the research.

Ethics

If required, appropriate ethics clearance is to be issued before commencing a pilot project and it is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that clearance is obtained. A copy of the ethics approval needs to be forwarded to NIRAKN for projects using NIRAKN monies.

Accountability and Reporting

Grant recipients are accountable for the outcomes listed in their applications. Failure to realise these outcomes may affect the success of future applications.

Expenditure/Budget Items

Internal research grants must outline a budget and comply with the Australian Research Council's Special Research Initiative for ATSIRN Funding Rules, as well as Discovery Indigenous Funding Rules. Items that can be supported by NIRAKNs internal grants are:

a.   access to national and international research and infrastructure facilities including specialist archives, collections and databases;
b.   access to workshop services linked to and justified explicitly against the Project (for example, machine tools and qualified technicians)
c.   equipment;
d.   expenditure on fieldwork essential to the project, including technical and logistical support, and travel and accommodation costs;
e.   maintenance;
f.   personnel: for example, research associates and assistants, technicians and laboratory attendants;
g.   specialised computer equipment and software essential to the project;
h.   travel costs essential to the Project, including economy travel costs for domestic and/or international travel.

Important Dates and Process

25 March 2014	Formal call for internal grant applications from NIRAKN members
5 May 2014	Due date of applications
18 July 2014	Node Leaders' recommendations ratified by Management Committee
30 July 2014	Applicants advised of outcomes in writing
August 2014	Accounts established and funds will be made available to successful applicants with projects due for completion by 31 August 2015 with the final report on the grant's expenditure due by 30 September 2015.
30 January 2015	Node Leaders receive first report on the grant.

NIRAKN Internal Grant Form

Application

Application Details	
Project/Activity Title:	
NIRAKN Applicant/s Name/s:	
NIRAKN Node:	
Date Proposal Submitted:	
Expected Start Date of Project:	
Expected Finish Date of Project:	

Aims and Brief Background of Project	
What are the key aims of the project/activity? (100 words)	
What is the background and rationale of the project/activity? (200 words)	

How the project fits within NIRAKN's research capacity building brief (200 words)	

NIRAKN Network Members Involved in Project	
List here all NIRAKN members, including those from Partner Organisations, who are directly involved in the project	
Are non NIRAKN members involved in the project?	Yes No
Please list these personnel and their role in the project	

Project/Activity Details	
Provide here the specifics of each element/phase of the project/activity – add approximate time lines	
Expected Project Outcomes	

Project Budget Details Item Description	Item Cost
Grand Total	

Other Funding Sources: (List here the details of any sources of funding other than from the NIRAKN)	Source	Cash	In-Kind
Grand Total			

*Please note the applicant/s will provide a written six monthly progress report on approved projects/activities to their Node Leaders during and at the completion of the project.

Recommended for Approval/Decline

………………………………………………..   ………………………………………………   …………………………………………………

Node Leader Signature   Node Leader Signature   Node Leader Signature

Date…………………………………………..

Please attach CV's and relevant support material to this application form, and submit via email to nirakn@qut.edu.au

OR by Post to: NIRAKN Hub, Indigenous Studies Research Network

Queensland University of Technology
Victoria Park Road
Kelvin Grove, QLD, Australia 4059

Appendix 3. Current Node Membership

Indigenous Health and Well Being Node

Professor Bronwyn Fredericks, Professor Pat Dudgeon, Professor Kath Clapham, Dr Deb Duthie, Dr Roxanne Bainbridge, Associate Professor Dawn Bessarb, Professor Ian Anderson, Ms Marlene Thompson, Professor Terry Dunbar, Associate Professor Claire Andersen, Professor Len Collard, Dr Michael Adams, Professor Jill Guthrie, Dr Jeffery Hudson.

Yuriaki: History, Politics and Culture Node

Professor John Maynard, Associate Professor Jaky Troy, Professor Kim Scott, Dr Odette Best, Dr Steven Kinnane, Dr Shino Konishi, Associate Professor Linda Ford, Ms Natalie Harkin, Professor Len Collard, Associate Professor Barry Judd, Dr Greg Blyton, Professor Sue Stanton, Associate Professor Julie Coffin. Professor Lyn Henderson-Yates, Ms Professor Simone Tur, Mr Chris Wilson.

Indigenous Sociology and Knowledges Node

Professor Steve Larkin, Professor Rowena Ball, Professor Terry Dunbar, Associate Professor Maggie Walter, Associate Professor Kathleen Butler, Associate Professor Michelle Trudgett, Associate Professor Sue Green, Associate Professor Kevin Williams, Associate Professor Peter Radoll, Associate Professor Karen Martin, Dr Gawaian Bodkin-Andrews, Dr Wendy Aitken, Dr Damien Jacobsen.

Law Node

Professor Larissa Behrendt, Dr Mark McMillan, Dr Asmi Wood, Dr Loretta Kelly, Professor Anita Lee Hong, Professor Aileen Moreton-Robinson, Mr Sam Johnston.