Vision

NIRAKN’s vision is to develop a critical mass of skilled, informed, and qualified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers who can address the urgent needs of our communities through the delivery of culturally appropriate research. NIRAKN will endeavour to facilitate a national Indigenous research agenda for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the nation.

NIRAKN’s premise is that 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 include Indigenous ethics and protocols. As such NIRAKN’s multicultural 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.

Aims

1. Establish a quality program of capacity building initiatives to form a skilled and qualified research community by supporting aspiring, postgraduate, and early- to mid-career Indigenous researchers.

2. Establish a regenerative undergraduate to postgraduate pipeline of new researchers, across institutions, the nation, and fields of critical research importance.

3. Connect Indigenous researchers across disciplines, nationally and internationally, to develop a culturally supportive and inclusive research environment which enables the cross-fertilisation of ideas and a platform for new Indigenous multidisciplinary research.

4. Develop an ongoing integrated research program of collaborations with the Australian Research Council and National Health and Medical Research Council, government, industry, community, and philanthropic grant funding.

5. Achieve national and international recognition as a leading network of Australian Indigenous research expertise, knowledge, and innovation.

6. Initiate the Indigenous research agenda by applying Indigenous knowledges and expertise to multidisciplinary collaborative projects of pressing research. These are needed to inform community and government policy and program delivery.

Activities

NIRAKN mentors, supports, and engages Indigenous researchers across disciplines and institutions through an extensive research capacity building program, which is designed to develop foundational and higher level skills as well as inform and transfer knowledge. The research capacity building program involves introductory level research workshops delivered locally at participating institutions, an annual series of more advanced research workshops, Indigenous research methodologies masterclasses, critical reading groups, research residencies, access to networking, mentoring, and other professional resources.

NIRAKN’s Collaborative Research Program provides a platform for cross-institutional and multidisciplinary Indigenous research. The research efforts of NIRAKN’s National and State Hubs are geared towards producing measurable high quality research. In addition to high quality original research and publications, NIRAKN also fosters engagement with Indigenous research and knowledges across the sector through international collaborations, symposiums, and seminars.
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1 Director’s Introduction  
2 Governance  
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3 Year in Review  
   3.1 International Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies (JCIS)  
   3.2 Online NIRAKN offerings  
   3.3 Research Projects  
4 Challenges and Mitigation Strategies  
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1. Director’s Introduction

We are pleased to present the eighth Annual Report of the National Indigenous Research and Knowledges Network (NIRAKN) for 2020. NIRAKN was established in 2012 under the Special Research Initiative (SRI) for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Researchers’ Network (ATSIRN) and was awarded $3.2 million over four years. In 2018, NIRAKN’s continuing success was recognised by the ARC through the granting of additional funds of $899,333. The Australia Research Council (ARC) has extended this initiative with an extension until 30 June 2021.

NIRAKN is now in a legacy phase in which State Hubs are completing work on their research projects and holding their capacity building programs (where possible), which will cease in 2021. Online offerings of the capacity building programs are currently being planned and developed.

We extend our sincere thanks to node leaders, State Hub Leaders and partner organisation representatives as well as members of the Advisory committee for contributing to NIRAKN’s outstanding success.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Peter Anderson
NIRAKN Director (2017–present)
Carumba Institute
Queensland University of Technology
2. Governance

In 2020, NIRAKN’s governance continued according to the restructured model created in 2017.

2.1 Changes to the Network

Professor Peter Anderson continues to lead the NIRAKN National Hub (which includes Queensland and is hereafter referred to as the National Hub). He has overall responsibility for the administration and coordination of NIRAKN. The National Hub continues to be based within the Carumba Institute (previously known as Indigenous Research and Engagement Unit) at Queensland University of Technology (QUT).

Each state has State Hub leaders and they are:

- Professor Peter Anderson, National Hub leader Queensland (QLD), Victoria (VIC), Tasmania (TAS), the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), and Western Australia (WA) (WA from June 2020)
- Pro Vice Chancellor Dr Leanne Holt, New South Wales (NSW)
- Associate Professor Linda Ford, Northern Territory (NT) and South Australia (SA) (commenced March 2020)

The National Hub leader and the State Hub Leaders are the Management Committee (refer to Appendix 1 for more information).

For a list of current NIRAKN Chief Investigators who are located across institutions and disciplinary fields refer to Appendix 2.

2.2 Changes to Governance

In 2020, there were several changes to NIRAKN State Hub leaders. In January 2020, Professor Barry Judd resigned as the State Hub Leader of the NT and SA. Associate Professor Linda Ford of Charles Darwin University expressed an interest in becoming the State Hub Leader for the NT and SA, which was approved by the ARC, and Associate Professor Ford took carriage of the State Hub in March 2020.

In June 2020, Professor Jill Milroy resigned as State Hub Leader for WA. We sought approval from the ARC for Professor Peter Anderson to take on this responsibility. The ARC approved this request.

Dr Leanne Holt, Pro Vice Chancellor Indigenous Strategy (MQU), remains the State Hub Leader for NSW.

With the extension of funding, the ARC outlined the Conditions of Extension for NIRAKN to report against, and no changes were made to these conditions for 2019 (see Table 1). All KPIs were met in 2018; however, this report will highlight any additional activities that contribute to the KPIs.

### Table 1: Conditions of Extension for NIRAKN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NIRAKN Conditions of Extension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. NIRAKN is expected to actively promote better practices within the participating organisations via its highly successful capacity building workshop model; the ARC requires NIRAKN to focus more on “train the trainer” in delivering the workshops. This legacy requirement is now centre stage for the program for the final year of funding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. While NIRAKN is planning to provide new seed funding for larger scale research projects among its participants, the ARC requires that funds be used to strongly enable cross-institutional and interdisciplinary work. NIRAKN is to develop performance measures of excellence for these projects, including the development of project-specific milestones and KPIs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. NIRAKN will prepare and present to stakeholders and the wider community more tangible evidence of the Network’s connection with the “regenerative undergraduate to postgraduate pipeline of new researchers”, such as enrolment and retention levels, undergraduate completions, higher degree by research completions, and case studies of successful Indigenous students and researchers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. ARC requires more consideration of succession planning to develop future research leaders: Senior researchers participating in the Network should be more active across Network nodes as supervisors and mentors to Indigenous students and postgraduates. This will provide a valuable platform for researchers to become leaders in their research field.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. NIRAKN and QUT to ensure future funding options are explored when expenditure of ARC funding concludes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. More effort towards strategic planning and an active approach within NIRAKN and QUT to help build cultural capacity and awareness of Indigenous needs within their institutions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The NIRAKN Management Committee comprises the State Hub Leaders and National Hub Leader. The committee will continue to connect, complement, and enhance existing Indigenous mentoring, advisory, and support structures within the higher education sector. The activities of the Network are coordinated by the NIRAKN Management Committee. However, during the legacy phase the National State Hub leader met individually with the State Hub Leaders via teleconference in 2020.

Professor Peter Anderson and Dr Levon Blue met with Liz Visher and Luisa Powell from the ARC on 26 February 2020 and again at the QUT Gardens Point campus on 20 July 2020.
The Office of Research Services at QUT continues to provide administrative support, including legal, reporting, and financial reporting. These services are required by the Office of Research Services to: (a) ensure that the Network is managed in accordance with the ARC Funding Agreement and the NIRAKN Collaborative Research Agreement; (b) provide advice on the Funding Agreement and a new collaborative research agreement; and (c) draft variations to the Collaborative Research Agreement as necessary. In 2019, the Office of Research Services provided support for the negotiation and execution of the Collaborative Research Agreement.

In 2020 NIRAKN did not offer internal research grants.

3. Year in Review

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the capacity building workshops offered were reduced. Below is a summary of activities that have further contributed to the key performance indicators in this legacy phase.

3.1 International Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies (IJCIS)

During 2020, two issues were published each containing four papers each.

3.2 Online NIRAKN offerings

Professor Peter Anderson sought permission from the ARC to use funds to develop online offerings based on the existing NIRAKN workshops as part of the NIRAKN’s legacy. Permission was granted by the ARC. During mid 2020 work commenced on reviewing existing NIRAKN workshops to redevelop these as online offerings. This re-development work will continue until 2021 with the website being made available in late 2021.

3.3 Research Projects

3.3.1 QLD State Hub

The QLD State Hub’s research project was titled “Exploring the Needs and Experiences of Indigenous HDR Students and Supervisors of HDR Students”. This project is led by Professor Peter Anderson and includes Dr Levon Blue, Dr Thu Pham and Melanie Saward. The team has completed the data collection and is analysing the data. The project is now at the stage of publication, and the QLD State Hub has submitted a book proposal to Springer that is currently under consideration.

3.3.2 NSW State Hub

Research projects

The research project “Success Factors and Opportunities for Indigenous PhD Graduates” has continued to progress, with surveys completed and interviews undertaken. A number of initial themes have been identified, such as:

- Methods and methodologies: the use of Indigenous methods as a desire but having issues with supervisors understanding and supporting these.
- Supervision: the need to find a supervisor who understands the work and the concerns in finding a suitable person.
- Responsibilities and expectations that come with being an Indigenous PhD graduate – to their community, but also within the academy/university. Academic levels vs expected responsibilities.
- The desire to study for a higher degree to assist community in some way but dealing the lack of understanding from family about what a PhD actually is (also touching here on “jumping classes” from low income/working class).
- Ambition for doing a PhD was mixed but the personal reasons included being a role model through showing that it could be done.

Interviews are still being conducted and findings are being analysed with consideration of their future publication.
Capacity building workshops
NSW completed their capacity building workshops in 2019–2020. We have, however, continued to invite NSW HDR students and NIRAKN members to online forums (due to COVID) throughout 2020, including “Shut Up and Write”, led by the Professor Bronwyn Carlson at Macquarie University, an online writing retreat in collaboration with Northern Arizona University. The workshop attracted 60 participants and received positive feedback.

A lecture series was also opened up to NIRAKN members, which included the following speakers: Distinguished Professor Aileen Moreton-Robinson, Professor Linda Tuhiiwai Smith and Dr Shawn Wilson

Grants

3.3.3 NT/SA State Hub
Capacity building workshops
Charles Darwin University held an online NIRAKN Capacity Building Masterclass from 14 December to 18 December 2020.

The Batchelor Institute trialled a virtual Masterclass series in 2020 due to travel restrictions and border closures in the year of COVID-19, which aimed to offer an innovative and exciting program given the restrictions. NIRAKN funding was used to provide a diverse range of voices in the Masterclass series, including two lectures from CDU’s Yolngu studies team, recent Batchelor Institute graduates from Torres Strait and Stradbroke Island, academics from Victoria, and an Indigenous research practitioner from Curtin University. The Masterclass series was well attended by Batchelor Institute PhD and Masters students.

Research projects
The NT/SA State Hub’s research project is called “COVID-19: Indigenous Health and Well-being Experiences of Indigenous People – A Social Science Research Project” and is led by Associate Professor Linda Ford. It has ethics approval pending.

4. Challenges and Mitigation Strategies
Since the Network’s commencement in 2013, it has been highly successful. However, the Management Committee continues to encounter challenges, which it addresses in a proactive manner, ensuring that network goals are fulfilled in NIRAKN’s legacy phase.
5. Financial Statement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2020 INCOME</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARC 2020 funding distributed as follows:</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Income Received</strong></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2020 EXPENDITURE</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capacity Building</td>
<td>6,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>1,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>13,221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel</td>
<td>135,143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expenditure</strong></td>
<td>156,330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surplus (Deficit)</td>
<td>-156,330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance bought forward from 2019</td>
<td>536,057</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL CARRY FORWARD</strong></td>
<td>379,727</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2020 IN-KIND SUPPORT</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Queensland University of Technology</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL In-Kind Support</strong></td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Appendices

Appendix 1: NIRAKN Management and Advisory Committees

Management Committee
The Management Committee is chaired by Professor Peter Anderson. Under the new governance model for NIRAKN, the Management Committee is comprised of the NIRAKN Director and State Hub Leaders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>POSITION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Professor Peter Anderson     | National Hub Leader
                             | NIRAKN Director, Queensland University of Technology                      |
| PVC Dr Leanne Holt           | NSW State Hub Leader, Macquarie University                                 |
| Associate Professor Linda Ford| NT and SA State Hub Leader
                             | (Commenced March 2020), Charles Darwin University                         |

Appendix 2: NIRAKN Chief Investigators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QLD²</th>
<th>NSW¹</th>
<th>TAS³</th>
<th>ACT</th>
<th>NT</th>
<th>SA²</th>
<th>WA</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peter Anderson</td>
<td>Leanne Holt</td>
<td>Clair Andersen</td>
<td>Asmi Wood</td>
<td>Linda Ford</td>
<td>Chris Wilson</td>
<td>Jill Milroy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aileen Moreton-Robinson</td>
<td>Giwaian Bodkin-Andrews</td>
<td>Maggie Walter</td>
<td>Jill Guthrie</td>
<td>Steve Larkin</td>
<td>Natalie Harkin</td>
<td>Stephen Kimnane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronwyn Fredericks</td>
<td>Greg Blyton</td>
<td>Wendy Aitken</td>
<td>Peter Radoll</td>
<td>Linda Ford</td>
<td>Simone Tur</td>
<td>Juli Coffin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odette Best</td>
<td>Jakelin Troy</td>
<td>Rowena Ball</td>
<td>Sue Stanton</td>
<td>Terry Dunbar</td>
<td>Kim Scott</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roxanne Bainbridge</td>
<td>John Maynard</td>
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<td>Len Collard</td>
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<tr>
<td>Levon Blue</td>
<td>Kathleen Butler</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lynette Henderson-Yates</td>
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<tr>
<td>Melanie Saward</td>
<td>Kathleen Clapham</td>
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<td>Michael Adams</td>
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<tr>
<td>Karen Martin</td>
<td>Larissa Behrendt</td>
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<td>Pat Dudgeon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anita Lee Hong</td>
<td>Loretta Kelly</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Shino Konishi</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marcelle Burns</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sue Green</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Michelle Trudgett</td>
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</table>

¹ Represents from previous partner organisations Marlene Longbottom and Jeffrey Hudson are not included in the CI list for 2020.
² CIs Anita Lee Hong and Karen Martin were left off the QLD CI list in the 2019 annual report in error.
³ CIs Michelle Trudgett was left off the NSW CI list in the 2019 annual report in error.
⁴ CIs Wendy Aitken and Maggie Walter were left off the TAS CI list in the 2019 annual report in error.
⁵ CIs Terry Dunbar was left off the SA CI list in the 2019 annual report in error.
Appendix 3: NIRAKN Member and/or NIRAKN Research Affiliate Publications

BOOKS


BOOK CHAPTERS


REPORTS TO GROUPS/ORGANISATIONS/INSTITUTES (INCLUDING COMMISSIONED REPORTS)


REFEREED JOURNAL ARTICLES


CONFERENCE PAPERS


OTHER (INCLUDING REPORTS, CREATIVE WORKS, MEDIA AND/OR ONLINE NEWS)


Konishi, S. (2020). What can we learn from the first smallpox epidemic and its impact on Aboriginal people? University News.
