Supporting Indigenous led research through the Indigenous Research Exchange
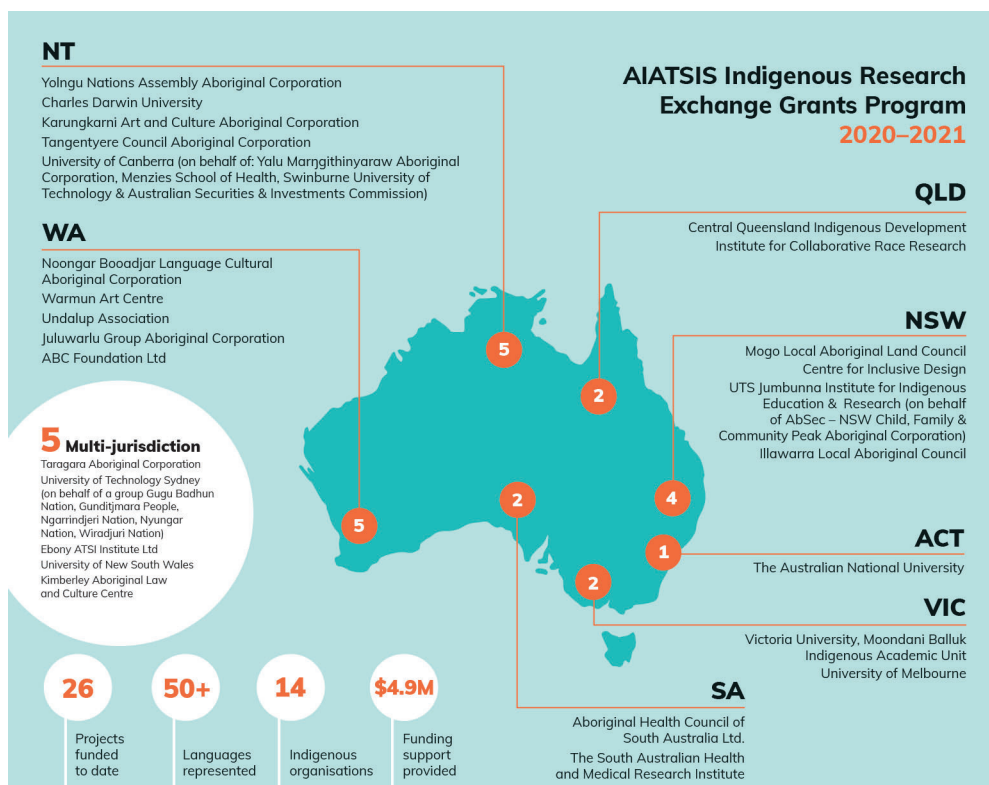
Sally Ward, AIATSIS

In 2017, the Prime Minister, the Hon. Malcolm Turnbull MP, announced a whole-of-government research and evaluation strategy for policies and programs affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. As part of this announcement, the Australian Government provisioned $10 million over three years to establish an Indigenous Research Fund. AIATSIS administers this fund, through the Indigenous Research Exchange (the Exchange). The aim of the Exchange is to promote and support the agency of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in research projects. This improves outcomes in research translation, utilisation and Indigenous data sovereignty.

The Exchange includes two pillars: a grant program, and a data platform (the Knowledge Exchange Platform). The grant program supports high quality, Indigenous-led research to improve the accessibility and availability of quality robust research and evidence based solutions. The program supports organisations to participate in research activities that will have relevance and impact beyond the community and project. The Knowledge Exchange Platform will provide access to data and information at a local level and provide an evidence base for policy makers to design more effective programs and policies.

To achieve the aim of the Exchange, the following themes have been priority research areas:

1. Valuing Indigenous knowledge and methods

2. Cultural resurgence and resilience

3. Indigenous governance and prosperity

4. Rethinking engagement with governments

5. Opportunities provided by technological change.

NT
Yolngu Nations Assembly Aboriginal Corporation
Charles Darwin University
Karungkarni Art and Culture Aboriginal Corporation
Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation
University of Canberra (on behalf of: Yalu Marŋgithinyaraw Aboriginal Corporation, Menzies School of Health, Swinburne University of Technology & Australian Securities & Investments Commission)

WA
Noongar Booadjar Language Cultural Aboriginal Corporation
Warmun Art Centre
Undalup Association
Juluwarlu Group Aboriginal Corporation
ABC Foundation Ltd

5 Multi-jurisdiction
Taragara Aboriginal Corporation
University of Technology Sydney (on behalf of a group Gugu Badhun Nation, Gunditjmara People, Ngarrindjeri Nation, Nyungar Nation, Wiradjuri Nation)
Ebony ATSI Institute Ltd
University of New South Wales
Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre

AIATSIS Indigenous Research Exchange Grants Program 2020–2021

QLD
Central Queensland Indigenous Development
Institute for Collaborative Race Research

NSW
Mogo Local Aboriginal Land Council
Centre for Inclusive Design
UTS Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education & Research (on behalf of AbSec – NSW Child, Family & Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation)
Illawarra Local Aboriginal Council

ACT
The Australian National University

VIC
Victoria University, Moondani Balluk Indigenous Academic Unit
University of Melbourne

SA
Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia Ltd.
The South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute

26 Projects funded to date
50+ Languages represented
14 Indigenous organisations
$4.9M Funding support provided

The IRX Grants Program supports Indigenous led initiatives across the county.

Since inception, the Exchange grants program has supported 26 Indigenous led projects across the Country. In the most recent tranche of funding, AIATSIS supported the following projects:

The South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute	**Insights into supporting the wellbeing of older Aboriginal people** What constitutes wellbeing changes over time but remains intrinsic to quality of life. We will explore what sustains the wellbeing of older Aboriginal people experiencing grief, loss and the staff who care for them.
University of Canberra	**"Waka Ngurrkanhayngu: Regenerating the existence of life": Reducing the risk of natural and social disasters reviving and strengthening** Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples working together two-way to facilitate the remote community Galiwin'ku reviving and strengthening their Yolŋu law, knowledge, culture and governance to heal from and reduce the risk of natural and social disasters.
University of Melbourne	**Stigma Stories** Working with ILBIJERRI Theatre Company to co-design and evaluate a theatre-based model for sexual health education in Victoria. The project will generate knowledge around community-engaged, participatory approaches to sexual health education for First Nations communities.
Centre for Inclusive Design	**Breaking the silence** Research into a culturally appropriate, co-designed Artificial Intelligence translation tool for Aboriginal visual (sign) language to English. This will support first contact and communication between mainstream justice/health systems and community.
Taragara Aboriginal Corporation	**Mura Maarni: Chasing Mob through the Archives** Mura Maarni is an oral history and interdisciplinary multimedia research project that focuses on the Mura of the Corner Country now held in collecting institutions such as archives, galleries and museums.
Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia Ltd	**Taking the next steps: Informing the transformation of the research sector to respond to Aboriginal research priorities and ways of conducting research** Health research contributes to improved quality of life and longevity. We aim to inform sector development to achieve equitable outcomes through Aboriginal-identified research priorities and principles that inform the conduct of research.
University of New South Wales	**Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Lived Experience voices in mental health and suicide prevention** This project will evaluate the experience of the first cohort of individuals recruited to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Lived Experience Centre as they are providing input into mental health and suicide prevention initiatives
UTS Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research	**Setting the foundation for Aboriginal community-led child protection research** This project will establish Aboriginal community-based frameworks, mechanisms and capabilities to drive child welfare policy reforms that align to Aboriginal values and aspirations, and build the localised evidence-base for Aboriginal child welfare systems and practice.

Institute for Collaborative Race Research	**Still Here: Sovereignty and the Queensland Aboriginal Community Controlled Sector** This project explores how the Queensland Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations support communities, exercise sovereignty, and negotiate with state agencies. ACCO partners will reflect on their struggles and achievements, and identify pathways to policy transformation.
Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation	**Local Decision-Making: Priority Setting in the Alice Springs Town Camps** Utilising our unique Wellness Framework we review surveys and place-based data from Alice Springs Town Camps, identifying priorities, community-controlled approaches to complex issues, and strategy with the NT Government, improving decision-making resulting in social transformation.
Juluwarlu Group Aboriginal Coporation	**Gulumarri Ngaja: All come together** The Juluwarlu Group Aboriginal Corporation seeks to capture, evaluate and report on 20 years of continuing innovative generative practices that have sustained Yindjibarndi Law, Knowledge, and Language and Cultural Resilience through contemporary expressions of Yindjibarndi identity.
Karungkarni Art and Culture Aboriginal Corporation	**Gurindji Heritage Project/Keeping Place** The Gurindji inspired 'Wave Hill Walk-off' was a defining moment for Indigenous recognition in Australia. This project celebrates this by framing a physical and digital heritage project/keeping place meeting Traditional Owners' aspirations.
University of Technology Sydney	**Indigenous Governing Authorities — Creating Jurisdictional Space for the Implementation of Indigenous Law** This project explores 'statutory authorities' as a possible response to First Nations' need for pluralist governing structures through which they can exercise land jurisdiction, fulfil responsibilities to Country & manage relationships with settler-colonial governments.

For a long time, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples had research done to them, with little or no say about what that research was, or how it was used. The Exchange is an exciting opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, organisations and researchers to determine what their research priorities are, how the research is conducted, and to work together to translate research into meaningful, useful and practical information.

Yirrganydji Country, 2021. Photo: Levi Lee