



**NAILSMA position paper:**

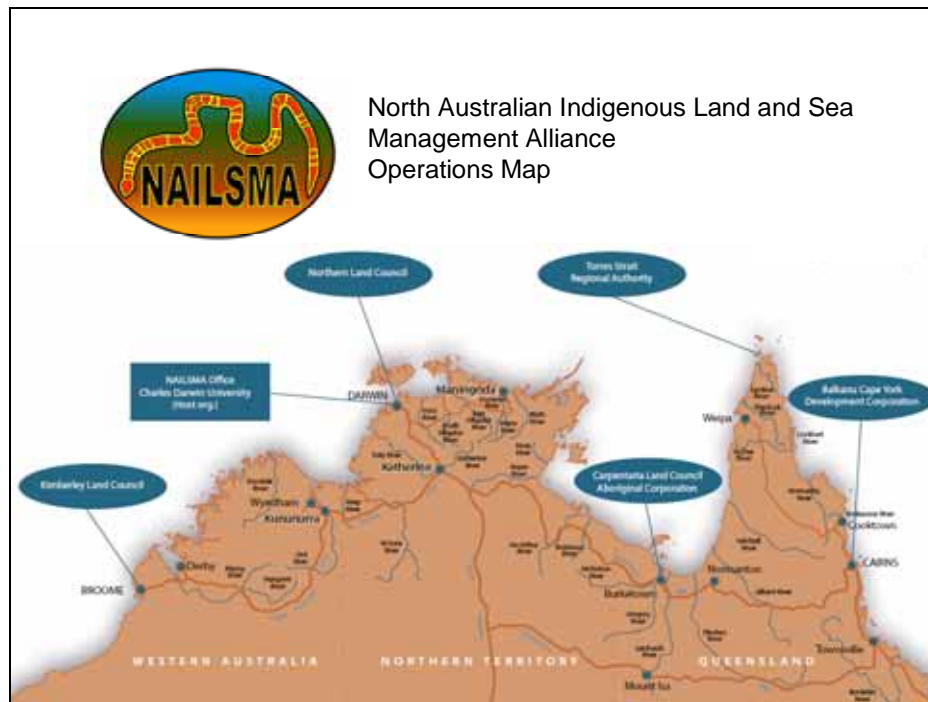
**presented by Samara Erlandson, NAILSMA Operations Manager**

**to the CSIRO's 2<sup>nd</sup> Indigenous Engagement Roundtable: Water and Climate Change  
Science and Indigenous Futures  
7<sup>th</sup> November 2008  
Mildura, Victoria**

Before I proceed I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners, whose land we are meeting on today. I would also like to acknowledge Joe Morrison, the chief executive officer of NAILSMA, who unfortunately was unable to attend today, but sends his apologies. And I would also like to thank CSIRO for inviting NAILSMA here today.

I will firstly talk briefly on NAILSMA, to provide an organisational overview, and then provide some detail of NAILSMA research activity specifically relating to Indigenous engagement in climate change and water, and then finish with providing NAILSMA's position on Indigenous engagement in research that identifies some key issues and offers solutions through a model for collaborative research.

NAILSMA is an alliance of peak Indigenous organisations across the north. Our partners have given us a mandate to facilitate and bring people together to work in partnership for better Indigenous outcomes relating to their land and seas, their management and development using Traditional Knowledge.



NAILSMA operates on the basis of a culture-based economy, one that is defined by Indigenous people, for Indigenous purposes. It aspires to new ways of engagement in existing industries, such as mining, pastoral and tourism, but also to lead the development of emerging new industries such as carbon offsets, water based economies and environmental service provisions.

The term '*Looking after our country our way*' is a theme NAILSMA embraces for all its activities which to me, best sums up the philosophical foundation of the Alliance. Indigenous people **are** 'Caring for Country' using knowledge and skills that have been passed on to them from countless generations. But within this philosophy, partnerships with governments and the scientific community are seen as vital to deal with contemporary challenges and the many emerging new threats. Partnerships must be inclusive and based on Indigenous terms in order to sustain research that engages with communities.

NAILSMA is already advocating, sponsoring and supporting collaborative research that involves communities and research agencies at all levels, from community to international fora. NAILSMA's core business is for engagement. Examples of engagement are highlighted through NAILSMA projects and programs.



The NAILSMA Dugong and Marine Turtle Project provides an exemplary example of successful collaborative research engagement in all areas. This project has been successful in delivery of a nationally recognized community driven research program for the sustainable management of dugong and marine turtle in the North.

There are many other projects that NAILMSA manages, however in the context of today's meeting I want to discuss how important equality within the research domain is for collective outcomes for the research community and Indigenous people.

NAILSMA has been engaged in water related issues since 2006 when the Indigenous Water Policy Group (IWPG) was formed. Its aim is to improve Indigenous community awareness of government water reforms so that informed and integrated decisions are made about water planning and management.

The IWPG provides another example of successful engagement in all areas. Since its inception, the IWPG has developed a well-established and continually growing network for engagement.

- It is made up of key regional Indigenous organisations across the north that engages with a large number of Indigenous communities and Traditional Owners.
- It supports the NAILSMA Indigenous Community Water Facilitator Network program that is establishing regional facilitators to engage at the community level and among a diverse range of stakeholders and interests for better facilitation of water management, planning and policy processes.
- It works successfully with a diverse range of other stakeholders including Indigenous and non-Indigenous research institutions; water resource managers; policy advisors; and economic policy officers. For examples;

- It is supported by an Advisory Group made up of research organisations and provides strategic advice on research and policies that at times are brokered to undertake Indigenous directed research.
- It is supported by a Policy Engagement Group that is made up of key representatives from state/territory and national water agencies.
- The IWPG engages in other national and international fora. It is supporting an upcoming National Indigenous water meeting that is being convened by MLDRIN; it has co-convened with the United Nations University the International Indigenous Water Experts Forum and it will be engaged at the World Water Forum next year.
- The IWPG is engaged through its memberships. For examples,
  - Joe Ross is Chairperson for the Northern Land and Water Taskforce.
  - Sam Bush-Blansi is a member of the National Water Commission Stakeholder Reference Group.
  - Richard Ah Mat is a member of National Water Commission Steering Committee for two nationally directed water projects.

To assist in making informed decisions to direct policy decisions, the IWPG directs its own research and has so far brokered external research agencies to do this.


- It has delivered three case studies, two literature reviews, briefing documents and a number of other publications. And I direct you to the IWPG brief for more information on those specific projects.
- The IWPG also collaboratively engages on external research programs, such as TRaCK and the Northern Land and Water Futures Assessment. NAILSMA manages Theme 6 of the TRaCK program, which encompasses Sustainable Enterprises. The major research activities under this theme include examining water markets and property rights, as well as undertaking a number of case studies that examine the market opportunities for Indigenous environmental service provision in key sites.



Specific to Climate Change, NAILSMA is part of a multi-disciplinary team that includes the University of New South Wales Climate Change Research Centre and CSIRO to map the risks and impacts of climate change on indigenous communities.

More specifically, the study will assess the vulnerability and adaptive capacity of many Indigenous communities to climate change impacts across an area spanning the Kimberley, Arnhem Land, Cape York and the Torres Strait.

Joe Ross is leading a National Indigenous Climate Change Working Group which aims to leverage additional Indigenous participation in the national policy arena. Two meetings have been held so far in which to create a national dialogue on issues and opportunities for Indigenous communities in climate change. The aim of the dialogue is to explore and direct partnerships and research programs between indigenous communities and private sectors and to join indirect opportunities with government.



NAILSMA has made submissions to the Garnaut Review, and is the only Indigenous group referenced in the review. We are maintaining continuing dialogue with its Review Team.

NAILSMA's Carbon Abatement Project is pursuing opportunities for indigenous people to participate in the emerging carbon economy through strategic fire management activities that reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It is anticipated that the Carbon Abatement Project will have significant biodiversity conservation outcomes, as well as social, cultural and economic outcomes for indigenous people in remote communities.

The examples of Indigenous research engagement that I have discussed so far provide a clear indication of NAILSMA's ability to form collaborative partnerships and facilitate outcomes.

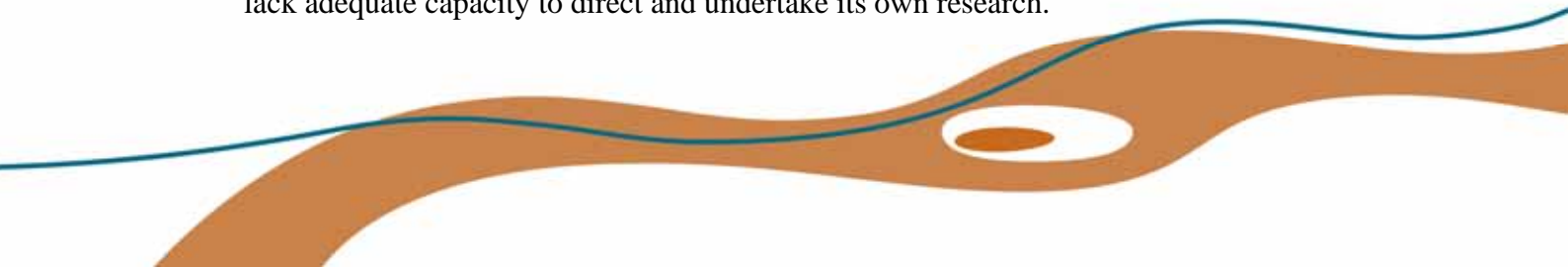
The last item I would like to present to you is NAILSMA's policy position for any future Indigenous engagement with research organisations, such as CSIRO.


The reason for developing a position is because, to date, Indigenous people have experienced skepticism and frustration with the nature of their participation in research related activities for a long time. A product of this is that research institutes are looking more toward Indigenous organisations for support to engage in Indigenous research.

NAILSMA's vision in this policy position is to achieve greater involvement for Indigenous directed and integrated research that addresses the issues and concerns of Indigenous communities, as well as their aspirations and needs.

NAILSMA's strategy is to achieve greater Indigenous participation in CSIRO's research agenda that instigates a new model for research engagement and partnerships. A new model for engagement with research institutions would clarify their relationship with NAILSMA, its partner organisations and Traditional Owners.

Through NAILSMA's current projects and programs, NAILSMA has been able to identify a number of key issues on Indigenous engagement in research that would be beneficial for non-Indigenous research groups to consider for better Indigenous research engagement. Some of those identified issue include:

- Indigenous people are seen only to assist rather than taking leadership roles within the research arena. Research that is not directed by the community does not satisfy community aspirations and interests. Government research agencies continue to direct the research and the research needs of Indigenous people and does not provide an Indigenous voice.
  - There is a clear identified lack of Indigenous researchers.
  - There is a lack of acknowledgement of the significant research contributions by Indigenous people.
  - Government research agencies are seen generally as the only research brokers for engaging in Indigenous research. As such, Indigenous research agencies receive limited support and lack adequate capacity to direct and undertake its own research.
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- Intellectual Property issues have been identified. Indigenous knowledge is taken and becomes the property of the research institution, and its further use is constrained by tight policies.
  - Our time is continually taken up by assisting other research agencies in developing their research agendas for Indigenous engagement.
  - There is a lack of awareness of research issues at the community level
  - And lastly, there is a lack of clear process and protocols for engaging with communities.

Ideally, research activities need to be coordinated in a way to minimise overlap and conflict, and strives to manage divergent interests, agendas, resources and expertise of multiple partners working together towards shared goals.

To address some of the issue that I have just identified, NAILSMA proposes a new model of engagement for successful collaborative Indigenous engagement in research that is driven with a bottom up approach and seeks to address community aspirations and interests.

To address the issues of research leadership, intellectual property, community awareness and protocols and process, we propose the following. In any collaboration, NAILSMA and CSIRO must begin a process of negotiating a memorandum of understanding and research agreement to formalise their relationship. Among other key areas, the MOU covers the framework of the partnership, protects intellectual property rights of Indigenous people and authorship.

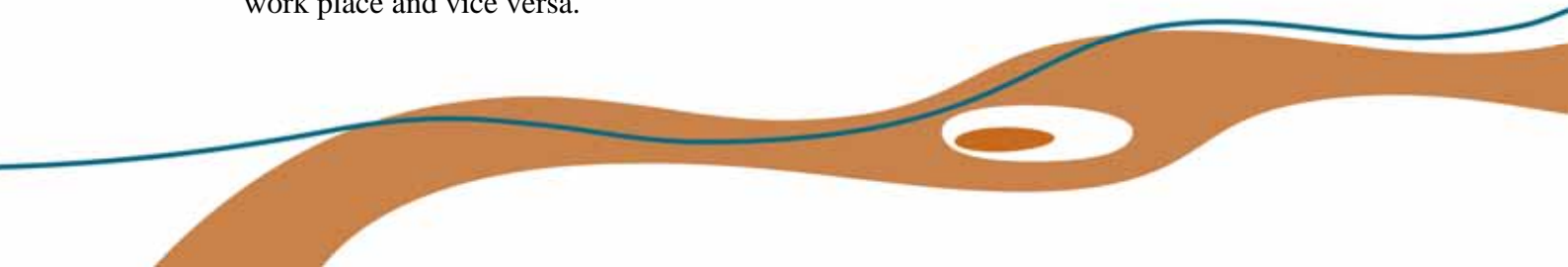
The protection of IP that have commercialisation possibilities needs to be addressed. There needs to be some level of flexibility to ensure that the emerging economies associated with Climate Change, such as carbon abatement using fire, sequestration, biodiversity offsets as they apply to indigenous lands, the control over IP is given firstly to Indigenous peoples. This could be CSIRO's contribution to "Closing the Gap".

Intellectual property protocols and policies for research need to be dramatically transformed to properly consider the rights of Indigenous people and their knowledge. We believe it is imperative that the intellectual property rights of indigenous people should be protected so as to avoid exploitation, particularly where there is an opportunity to commercialise IP and for the benefit of the most marginalised people in our society.

Such an agreement could provide a framework that promotes and protects Indigenous development through use of contractual arrangements that protect IP rights and includes protocols in the conduct of research to ensure protection of IP.

We believe that, where appropriate, publications should include Traditional Owners as authors.

To address the issues around the lack of capacity of Indigenous institutions, we propose that Indigenous agencies have the ability to outsource expertise, such as through a secondment process. For example, CSIRO researchers are seconded into the Indigenous research agency work place and vice versa.



Further to this is the concept of brokering that works both ways

- One way is to build capacity of Indigenous institutions whereby CSIRO brokers funds for the Indigenous institution to conduct research
- The other way is for Indigenous institutes to broker non-Indigenous agencies to conduct research through partnerships.

To address the issue of lack of Indigenous researchers we propose the following

- Government research institutes offer work placements and mentorship programmes that is promoted through career counselling and introduced at year 10;
- They engage a tertiary program for early career development that provides for recruitment and mentorship; for example that which is provided through the National Indigenous Cadetship Program
- And they provide guaranteed job positions following successful completion of their tertiary studies.

To address the issues of community awareness of research, we propose the development of communication tool kits appropriate for Indigenous peoples at multi level, regional, national and international.

In summary, NAILSMA has a strong track record in delivering community driven research outcomes. It has a recognised and established network for Indigenous engagement at multiple levels. Through its experience and identifying issues, NAILSMA strongly advocates a new model for Indigenous engagement when developing partnerships with non-Indigenous research institutions. It is hoped that an outcome of today's meeting is a proposal for a new framework for Indigenous engagement in research.



**Balkanu**  
Cape York Development Corporation P/L