Indigenous Community Governance Project

Understanding, Building and Sustaining Effective Governance in Rural, Remote and Urban Indigenous Communities

A collaboration between the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research and Reconciliation Australia

Final Report
January–June 2008

College of Arts and Social Sciences
The Australian National University
Canberra ACT 0200
FOREWORD

In the first six months of 2008, the Indigenous Community Governance Project (ICGP) brought to a close the first Phase of its work. Its aims were to investigate Indigenous community governance—what’s working, what’s not, and why—across rural, remote, and urban settings. It has made a substantial contribution to deepening understanding of these issues.

We would like to thank the participating Indigenous communities and organisations who have welcomed us to work with them. These research partnerships have been crucial to the ICGP and involve considerable time and engagement on the part of community organisations and leaders. We greatly appreciate this ongoing commitment.

We would also like to acknowledge the grant support of the Australian Research Council (ARC) and the valuable collaboration of our ARC Linkage Partner, Reconciliation Australia (RA), particularly their Board, our Partner Investigator, Jason Glanville, and the RA Governance Program team (Kate Brodie, Rowena Withers and Marianne Pinnington). Through RA, we also appreciate the financial support and engagement of the Northern Territory, Western Australian and Australian Governments. Part of the ICGP’s research in Central Australia has also been financially supported by the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre (DKCRC).

The ICGP has brought together a multi-disciplinary team of researchers largely from the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR), as well as from the National Centre for Indigenous Studies (NCIS) at The Australian National University (ANU), and from each of the collaborating institutions: Charles Darwin University, the Centre for Anthropological Research at the University of Western Australia, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, and the Centre for Indigenous Governance and Development at Massey University, New Zealand.

Our thanks go to the members of the ICGP’s International Advisory Committee, who provided thoughtful input to the research approach and focus, and to discussion of issues currently affecting Indigenous governance in Australia and elsewhere.

This phase of the ICGP has now come to an end. We trust that the research to date will be drawn on by those seeking evidence of what works in strengthening
Indigenous governance, and that, if funds are secured for a second phase, we will be able to continue action-research approaches to strengthening Indigenous governance in future years.

Professor Jon Altman
Chief Investigator, ICGP
Director, CAEPR, CASS, ANU

Professor Mick Dodson
Chief Investigator, ICGP
Board Member, RA
Director, NCIS, ANU
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## ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACGC</td>
<td>Anmatjere Community Government Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIATSIS</td>
<td>Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANU</td>
<td>The Australian National University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APAI</td>
<td>Australian Post-Graduate Award, Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARC</td>
<td>Australian Research Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATSI</td>
<td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATSIS</td>
<td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAC</td>
<td>Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAEPR</td>
<td>Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (ANU)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDU</td>
<td>Charles Darwin University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COAG</td>
<td>Council of Australian Governments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRAC</td>
<td>Coen Regional Aboriginal Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIMIA</td>
<td>Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DKCRC</td>
<td>Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DLGHS</td>
<td>Department of Local Government, Housing and Sport (NT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FaCSIA</td>
<td>Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (Australian Govt)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICGP</td>
<td>Indigenous Community Governance Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAAPD</td>
<td>Masters of Applied Anthropology and Participatory Development (ANU)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCATSIA</td>
<td>Ministerial Council for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOA</td>
<td>Memorandum of Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOU</td>
<td>Memorandum of Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSHR</td>
<td>Menzies School of Health Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCIS</td>
<td>National Centre for Indigenous Studies (ANU)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RA</td>
<td>Reconciliation Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCATSIA</td>
<td>Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UWA</td>
<td>University of Western Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>Western Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAS</td>
<td>West Arnhem Shire</td>
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1. THE STATUS OF THE RESEARCH

1.1 THE REPORT

This Final Report describes the activities and outputs of the Indigenous Community Governance Project (ICGP) in the first half of 2008 (the current ICGP team is listed in Appendix A). This is the final Report from this Phase of the project, which ended on 30 June 2008 (see ICGP 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007 for previous Annual Reports). The earlier reports and the ICGP web pages provide details about the project's aims, methodological framework, the participating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the International Advisory Committee.

The ICGP is a collaboration between the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) at The Australian National University (ANU) and Reconciliation Australia (RA). It is supported under the Australian Research Council's (ARC) Linkage funding scheme (Project No. 0348744) awarded in mid-2003, with additional funding provided through RA by the Northern Territory (NT), Western Australian (WA) and Australian governments. Australian Government funding was initially provided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services (ATSIS), and later through the former Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) and most recently, the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA). Additional funding for two case studies was provided by the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre.

1.2 OVERVIEW

In the six months of 2008 the ICGP's focus has been primarily on dissemination of the research results. Our most significant piece of work has been editing a Monograph to be published by ANU EPress, which represents the final major publication from the research.

The Monograph is entitled: *Contested Governance: Culture, power and institutions in Indigenous Australia*, and is edited by Janet Hunt, Diane Smith, Stephanie Garling and Will Sanders. It should be available in August 2008 as both a soft-cover book and as a freely downloadable web publication. The book features 13 chapters from 10 case studies and policy, methodology and overview chapters.

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A small amount of fieldwork has occurred particularly relating to the West Arnhem Shire and the Anmatjere Community Government Council.

MCATSIA has shown considerable interest in the policy implications of the research, and researchers have been invited to two SCATSIA meetings (April, May) and will make a presentation to the July 2008 meeting of MCATSIA. The NSW Government has also drawn on the project research through involving Janet Hunt on their Community Engagement Working Group advising on a community governance framework policy.

The proposal for Phase Two funding has been substantially revised and submitted to MCATSIA for their consideration.

1.3 PROGRESS OF THE CASE STUDIES

There has been very limited fieldwork in the last six months, but research has continued at two important field sites in the NT, with West Arnhem Shire Transitional Committee and Anmatjere Community Government Council (ACGC). The researchers have been closely involved with the 1 July 2008 transition to regional shires in both locations. Other researchers (e.g. Jon Altman, Frances Morphy, Bill Ivory, Kathryn Thorburn) are staying in touch with their case study sites, and using opportunities (not funded by ICGP) to make brief monitoring visits whenever possible, pending a new Phase of the research.

1.4 PROGRESS OF PHD STUDENTS

There are three PhD students working with the ICGP. Kathryn Thorburn is an APAI funded by the ARC as part of the project. Bill Ivory (CDU/MSHR/ANU) and Christina Lange (UWA/ANU) both received scholarship top ups and fieldwork funds through the project, and have supervisors at ANU who are Chief Investigators.

Kathryn Thorburn has extended her leave until September 2008. Kathryn will take up the last few weeks of her scholarship following this, and complete her thesis in late 2008.

Bill Ivory is in the last phase of writing up his thesis.

Christina Lange is now in Perth and has begun writing up her thesis with a view to completing it by the end of year.

1.5 RA INDIGENOUS POSTGRADUATE STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP

Ms Beth Craddy continues her Masters in Applied Anthropology and Participatory Development (MAAPD) at the ANU. This Semester she has studied a 12-point unit offered by CAEPR in ‘Indigenous Policy’. She has to complete the assessment for this
course and then do one more 6-point unit to complete in Semester Two to meet the requirements for her Masters degree.

1.6 LINKAGE WITH THE INDIGENOUS GOVERNANCE AWARDS AND TOOLKIT

The ICGP analysis of the 2006 Indigenous Governance Awards nominations has now been published in *Celebrating Indigenous Governance: Success Stories of the Indigenous Governance Awards 2006*.

Diane Smith has been significantly involved in the development of an *Indigenous Governance Toolkit* for Reconciliation Australia’s website. This work is continuing with substantial research and editing support from Stephanie Garling.
2. OUTREACH, PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATION

The ICGP is policy and action-oriented. The very process of conducting the research with Indigenous communities and their organisations has involved researchers working closely with Indigenous organisations and leaders, and assisting them with meetings, discussions, and a range of governance issues. At the same time, the ICGP works with government partners and other stakeholders, feeding back the preliminary research findings to contribute to critical policy thinking.

2.1 PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATION WITH INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Anmatjere Community Government Council (ACGC)

Sarah Holcombe and Will Sanders continue to work closely with the ACGC in Ti Tree. The ACGC has ceased to function as a community government shire since 1 July, but Will and Sarah will continue to work in that region, monitoring the processes and impact of the change to the new Central Desert Shire. Late in 2007 they gained further field research funding and support for local collaborators through the DKCRC and its Sustainable Desert Settlements Core Project 4. This has enabled them to continue fieldwork during 2008. They undertook a short period of fieldwork from 14-18 April 2008.

West Arnhem Shire (WAS)

Diane Smith attended West Arnhem Shire (WAS) Transition Committee meetings this year in January and March, at which DLGHS staff were also present. Diane continues to work in an official capacity as Special Advisor to the Indigenous Committee. On 10-11 July she will attend the first official meeting of the Shire Council. Diane has been collaboratively developing a Governance Handbook for use by the new Shire.

2.2 GOVERNMENT COLLABORATION

Researchers working on case studies in NT continue to liaise with NT and Australian Government officials relevant to their case studies. Janet Hunt and Diane Smith also met with Patricia Dodson from the WA Government (DIA governance policy officer) when in Perth in April.

The most significant government collaboration in the last six months has been with the MCATSIA and NSW Government (through DAA and DECC).
MCATSIA & SCATSIA

On 3 April Janet Hunt & Diane Smith made a presentation about the research findings and their policy implications to a meeting of the SCATSIA.

This was followed by Diane Smith being invited to a follow up meeting of the SCATSIA Working Group developing the second phase (the recommendations part) of the MCATSIA Governance and Service Delivery project held in Sydney on 21 May. It focused on the recommendations that will be made to MCATSIA at their July meeting.

Janet Hunt will join Jason Glanville to present the Research and a Proposal for a Phase Two of the ICGP at a meeting of MCATSIA in Perth on 15 July.

New South Wales

Following the ICGP presentation at a high level NSW interdepartmental meeting on implementation of their Aboriginal Affairs Plan, the Two Ways Together Forum, by Professor Mick Dodson and Janet Hunt on 26 November 2007 in Sydney, Janet Hunt was invited to join the DAA Community Engagement Working Group developing a community governance framework policy for NSW.

She has attended two meetings of this Group (one by phone hook up), and provided written feedback on position papers and related documents. The group will continue meeting until late September 2008, to provide further advice following consultations being held with communities during June/July.

On 16 June Janet also participated in a DECC Workshop on Community Resilience, an overarching concept which underpins the work of NSW Departments in relation to Indigenous Communities. The workshop was held in Sydney, hosted by DECC, and involved about 25 practitioners and academics from around Australia with an interest in community resilience issues. It explored defining community resilience, principles for designing a community resilience strategy, the characteristics of a resilient community, and discussed indicators of success. The purpose of the day was to assist the NSW Government to develop a Community Resilience Strategy for Aboriginal communities in NSW.

COAG

Key ICGP research documents were sent to the COAG Working Party on the Evidence base for their consideration.

The 2020 Summit

2.3 OTHER COLLABORATIONS

DKCRC

Sarah Holcombe and Will Sanders continued to work closely with DKCRC through Core Project 4: Sustainable Desert Settlements.

Patrick Sullivan's research is also supported by DKCRC, under Core Project Five: Demand Responsive Services to Desert Settlements.

Central Land Council

Janet Hunt participated in the Central Land Council’s Community Development Reference Group on 1 April.

Will Sanders and Sarah Holcombe liaised with the CLC during their April fieldwork relating to the ACGC.
3. COMMUNICATION & OUTPUTS

The ICGP continued to maintain and develop a range of tools for communicating the progress of the research, which are outlined below.

3.1 ICGP EDITED BOOK

The edited volume on Indigenous community governance, which is the final, major publication of the first phase of the ICGP, was sent to ANU EPress in the first week of July. It has brought together 10 of the project’s broad-ranging, evidence-based, ethnographic case studies of Indigenous governance across Australia, along with chapters on policy developments, methodological and ethical issues about researching governance, and an overview chapter which links the case studies to broader governance theory. The book has a Foreword by Professor Mick Dodson and contributions from eleven ICGP researchers. Considerable work was involved in editing each chapter and ensuring consistency across the volume, preparing the introductory overview chapter, drafting a Foreword, preparing consistently styled maps and diagrams, notes on contributors, etc. We expect the Monograph to be published in August. It will be for sale in soft-bound cover and will be available for free download from the web. Once it is available, a bound copy will be forwarded to each collaborating Indigenous organisation featured in the Monograph.

3.2 OTHER COMMUNICATION

The ICGP’s web pages (<http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/ICGP_home.php>) on the CAEPR website continued to be regularly maintained and updated.

3.3 INDIGENOUS GOVERNANCE MATTERS

The second in the series of briefing papers, Indigenous Governance Matters (No. 2), was published in February. This series of short (6-page), full colour, issue papers is specifically aimed at policy-makers, Indigenous leaders, and Indigenous community organisations. The series aims to provide concise, readily accessible information on best practice issues and applied research findings that will be useful to Indigenous community governance initiatives and people working with them. It is available for free download from the ICGP web pages.

The second issue focused on governance institutions, ‘the rules of the governance game’. It explores the challenges of aligning two different institutional demands placed upon them due to the complex intercultural world in which they operate. It explores the value base of governance and illustrates ideas about customizing
constitutions, devising codes of conduct and stresses the importance of having policies to guide operations.

3.4 ICGP PRESENTATIONS AT SEMINARS, CONFERENCES, & WORKSHOPS

Janet Hunt & Diane Smith

Presentation of research findings and policy implications to SCATSIA meeting, 3 April, Perth.

Janet Hunt


Development in Indigenous Australia: international meanings and local approaches, CAEPR Seminar, 11 June, Canberra.

Sarah Holcombe

Presentation about ICGP research methods, and other related issues on how the Aboriginal governance context affects research collaboration, in DKCRC Science of Desert Living workshop on Desert Methodologies, 4 June, Alice Springs.

Bill Ivory


Will Sanders

Presentation on the ACGC case study work at a DKCRC Core Project 4 (Sustainable Desert Communities) workshop, February 4–6, Hahndorf, Adelaide.

Diane Smith

Presentation on findings and policy implications from ICGP research at a DKCRC Desert Governance Workshop, 27 March, Perth.

Presentation on cultural geographies, from the West Arnhem case study, at the Institute of Australian Geographer’s Conference, 29 June–2 July, Hobart.
3.5 PUBLICATIONS/SUBMISSIONS

Janet Hunt


Submission to the Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities, on behalf of ICGP, June 10, 2008.


Frances Morphy


Will Sanders and Sarah Holcombe


Patrick Sullivan

4. TRANSITION TO PHASE TWO

Closing Down Phase One

Letters were prepared and sent to all participating researchers, Indigenous community partners, partner governments and the Advisory Committee thanking them for their contribution to Phase One of the research, providing feedback on what has been achieved, and, where relevant, inviting their participation in Phase Two, should we be successful in our search for funding.

Phase Two Proposal

The proposal for Phase Two has been substantially revised, and submitted to MCATSIA for their July meeting to consider.

In addition we have been collaborating with RA to develop a set of agreed guidelines for the new partnership arrangements for Phase Two.
5. APPENDICES

Appendix A: ICGP staff and research collaborators Jan–Jun 2008
Appendix B: Fieldwork completed Jan–Jun 2008
APPENDIX A: ICGP STAFF & RESEARCH COLLABORATORS 2008

ICGP STAFF

Professor Mick Dodson AM
Chief Investigator, Board Member of RA; Director NCIS, ANU; Faculty of Law, ANU
(Indigenous lawyer, researcher and advocate)

Mr Jason Glanville
Partner Investigator, Strategic Policy and Programs Director, RA

Professor Jon Altman
Chief Investigator, Director, CAEPR, ANU (economist and anthropologist)

Ms Diane Smith
Chief Investigator, Visiting Fellow, CAEPR, ANU (anthropologist)

Dr Will Sanders
Chief Investigator, Senior Fellow, CAEPR, ANU (political scientist)

Ms Janet Hunt
Senior Research Manager, CAEPR, ANU (international development)

Dr Stephanie Garling
Research Assistant, CAEPR, ANU

Dr Sarah Holcombe
Research Fellow, NCIS, ANU (anthropologist)

Ms Frances Morphy
Research Fellow, CAEPR, ANU (anthropologist and linguist)

Dr Benjamin Smith
Visiting Research Fellow, CAEPR, ANU (anthropologist)

Dr Manuhuia Barcham
Director, Synexe Research and Consulting (political scientist)

Ms Kathryn Thorburn
PhD (APAI) scholar, CAEPR, ANU (geography and political science)
Mr William Ivory
PhD scholar, CDU, Darwin, NT (anthropology and community development)

Ms Christina Lange
PhD scholar, Centre for Anthropological Studies, UWA, Perth, WA (anthropology and public policy)

ICGP RESEARCH COLLABORATORS

Dr Manley Begay
Director of the NNI, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ, USA; contributing comparative research advice from USA, under the ICGP MOA.

Professor Stephen Cornell
Director, Udall Centre of Studies in Public Policy, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ, USA; contributing comparative research advice from USA, under the ICGP MOA.

Mr Bill Gray AM
Centre Associate, CAEPR, ANU; contributing national and state policy analysis.

Mr Neil Sterritt
First Nations Consultant, Hazelton, BC, Canada; contributing comparative governance research and training advice, Canada.

Dr Patrick Sullivan
CAEPR Visiting Centre Associate; Visiting Research Fellow, Indigenous Regional Organisation and Governance, AIATSIS; contributing research analysis of Indigenous regional organisation and government service delivery.

Dr John Taylor
Deputy Director and Senior Fellow, CAEPR; assisting the ICGP in developing baseline community profiles.

ICGP STUDENT (RA SCHOLARSHIP)

Ms Beth Craddy
Postgraduate student, MAAPD, ANU.
## APPENDIX B: FIELDWORK COMPLETED JAN–JUNE 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ICGP Researcher/s</th>
<th>Field Location</th>
<th>Fieldwork Completed</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Will Sanders &amp; Sarah Holcombe</td>
<td>NT: Ti Tree (ACGC)</td>
<td>SH: April 14-18  WS: April 14-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Frances Morphy</td>
<td>NT: Yirrkala (Laynhapuy Homelands Association)</td>
<td>Brief monitoring April, June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Diane Smith</td>
<td>West Arnhem Shire</td>
<td>January, March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Diane Smith &amp; Leah Armstrong</td>
<td>NSW: Newcastle (Yarnteen ATSI Corporation)</td>
<td>Fieldwork completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Kathryn Thorburn</td>
<td>WA: West Kimberley, Fitzroy Crossing (Bunuba Inc. &amp; Kurungal Inc.)</td>
<td>No fieldwork, but maintaining contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Christina Lange</td>
<td>WA: Wiluna, and Perth</td>
<td>No fieldwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Patrick Sullivan</td>
<td>Ngaanyatjarra Lands, WA.</td>
<td>No fieldwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Manuhuia Barcham</td>
<td>WA: Noongar, south-west region</td>
<td>No fieldwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Ben Smith</td>
<td>QLD: Coen (CRAC)</td>
<td>No fieldwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Bill Gray &amp; Will Sanders</td>
<td>ACT: Secretaries’ Group (national)</td>
<td>Fieldwork completed</td>
</tr>
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