

# International development and Indigenous Australia: 'learning from each other'

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**ONE** FOR REMOTE  
AUSTRALIA

# Outline

1. Introduction
2. A bit about the two worlds
3. Are we learning from each other already?
4. Effective approaches used in each program
5. Conclusions: learnings

# 1. Introduction

The research question:

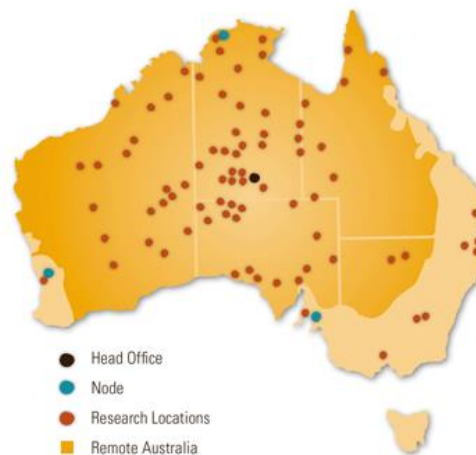
‘Can approaches used in Australia’s Indigenous program and Australia’s foreign aid program benefit each other?’

- Common approaches were identified
- Experienced practitioners from both worlds were interviewed (in Australia and in Indonesia) about their perceptions of the effectiveness of these approaches
- Areas where we can learn from each other were identified

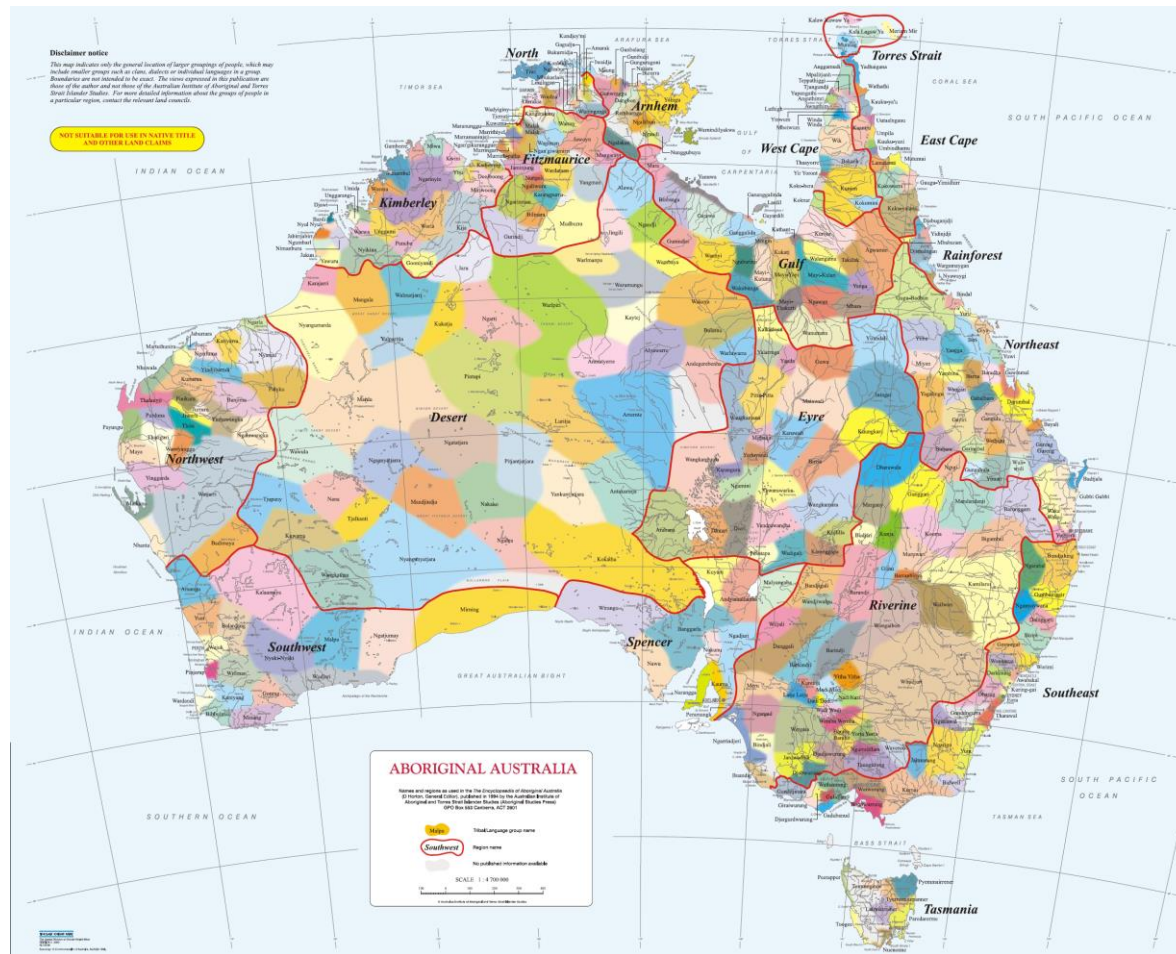
## 2. A bit about the two worlds

Two important things to appreciate about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people:

1. Aboriginal people have little or no ‘partner government’ authority – compared with working with an authorised foreign partner government where bilateral MOUs exist
2. A ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach is not workable



# ~400 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 'nations'



Compared with Europe, the average Aboriginal 'nation' would be about the same size as Austria or Ireland



- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Roxir\\_U1Nj4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Roxir_U1Nj4)

# The objectives and the funding are different

DFAT's stated purpose is for Australia's aid program *'to promote Australia's national interests through contributing to economic growth and poverty reduction'*



PMC has an objective of 'working more closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on the government's priority areas of getting children to school, adults to work and making communities safe'





### 3. Are we learning from each other already?

In Indigenous Australia:

- ACFID and its members are most active. ACFID prepared a paper entitled: 'Effective Development Practice with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities', in February 2014
- Of the INGOs: WVA and Oxfam are most active in Australia. WVA has an MOU on 'Indigenous Development Effectiveness'.
- Not many commercial firms are contributing– the exception is JTA ABT e.g. Support Services for the Australian Nurse Family Partnership Program \$2.3m p.a.
- By and large, it is a not-for-profit environment; c.f. ~\$50 million of Australia's foreign aid program that is spent on profit

# \$. Research methodology

- First, I listed 10 main development approaches that are used in each of the two contexts (DFAT and PMC)
- Then I interviewed experienced people working in International Development and Indigenous programs, about their views on the effectiveness of these 10 main approaches in each context. I focussed on people who had worked in the area of private sector development
- I used a simple Likert scale of a 1-5 ranking system to give a general indication as to whether the approaches are perceived as being effective or not.
- Interviewees included people working in indigenous Australia, and Australian & Indonesian aid workers.

# Approaches used in each program

Interviewed experienced practitioners about the effectiveness of:

1. ... long-term strategies and funding commitment
2. ... application of recognised 'development principles' e.g. Paris, Accra, Busan, Mexico declarations
3. ... community representation and participation
4. ... evidence-based policy and decision-making
5. ... being able to access expertise on-site
6. ... using strength-based approaches
7. ... gaining personal trust
8. ... flexibility during implementation
9. ... using rights based approaches
10. ... cross-cutting issues and 'do no harm'

Approach:	Perceived effectiveness by practitioners		
"Effectiveness of .....	Indigenous Australia	Notes	International Development
... community representation and participation	☹️ (recent times only)	International development work is governed by sub-national and national plans and MOUs. Local leaders are the key in all places. Indigenous 'locus of control' is questionable	☹️ (NB, survey was for PSD sector)
... evidence-based policy and decision-making	😊 (recent times only)	The Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) approach	☹️
... using strength-based approaches	☹️	Indigenous work tends to focus more on the problems and deficits	😊
... gaining personal trust	☹️	Indigenous work relies heavily on inter-personal trust	☹️
... using rights based	😊 (recent times only)	Consistency with the UN Declaration of Human Rights (and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples). Not used systematically in international development, unlike indigenous ethics approvals	☹️
... cross-cutting issues and 'do no harm'	☹️ (recent times only)	Gender considerations are complex in Indigenous settings	☹️

😊 Satisfactory

☹️ Neutral

☹️ Unsatisfactory

# 5. Conclusions

## 5.1 Learnings for International Development

IDEV can learn from Indigenous approaches in the areas of:

1. Evidence-based policy and decision-making (more money and time invested in research)
2. Community representation and participation (this was the surprise for me)
3. Rights-based approaches (e.g. introduce ethics approval standards, and benefits-sharing agreements – as with ethics protocols when working in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander areas)

# 5. Conclusions

## 5.2. Learnings for Indigenous Australia

Indigenous programs can learn from IDEV approaches in the areas of:

1. Long-term strategy, funding and commitment (bipartisan long term programs (e.g. Iraq rehabilitation of polices in the NT)
2. Application of recognised 'development principles' of Partnerships; Ownership; Alignment; Harmonisation; Managing for Results; Accountability
3. Accessing expertise on-site (provide incentives, as on IDEV programs)
4. Using strength-based approaches