



Australian Government  
Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation



The ILSC GROUP

PEOPLE. COUNTRY. OPPORTUNITY.

# Returning and managing Country 2023-24

The activities we fund are leading to change for Indigenous people.



“

*ILSC funding was instrumental in securing the land for our purpose-built kindergarten and enabling the expansion of services to Community.*

Dallas Widdicombe, CEO, Bendigo & District Aboriginal Co-operative

[SEE OUR DJIMBAYA KINDERGARTEN CASE STUDY, PAGE 30](#)

”



*Growing the value of Country*



*Owning and managing Country sustainably*



*Driving policy and opportunity*



*Preserving and protecting culture*

These are the four long-term outcomes, or *pathways of change* we aspire to for Indigenous communities as we work together to grow Country – land and water – and unlock the Indigenous knowledge and culture collectively held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

**In *Returning and managing Country*, our annual highlights report, we:**

- profile some of the Country we returned and the management projects we funded in 2023-24
- return to a previously funded Indigenous corporation to ask ‘What changed as a result?’
- summarise how we’re broadly tracking in delivering positive change for Indigenous people.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that this publication may contain the names or images of people who have passed away.

## Unlock your change story

The stories in this publication showcase how the activities the Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation (ILSC) funds are leading to change for Indigenous people. Talk to us about how we can help generate change for your community: **call 1800 818 490.**

## Acknowledgement of Country

In all our activities we pay our respect to the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands, waters and skies on which we live and work. We honour the resilience and continuing connection to Country, culture, and community of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia. We recognise the decisions we make today will impact the lives of generations to come.

Glyde Point, NT, Larrakia Country

Front cover photo: Bendigo & District Aboriginal Corporation djimbaya kindergarten  
Image credit: Ashlee Jensen, Wirrim Media and the Indigenous Governance Awards 2024

# 04

## **We plant the seed together, you harvest the fruit**

We buy Country to give back to Indigenous groups. Our selection of project profiles show how the return of Country can lay the foundation for positive change for Indigenous communities.

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## **From little things, big things grow**

Our smaller investments can lead to big things too. Here we profile some of our less told stories that are driving change for Indigenous communities.

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## **What changed as a result?**

We regularly ask our proponents how they are tracking and the changes they are seeing emerge from their funded activities. Here we ask the Bendigo & District Aboriginal Co-operative 'What changed as a result?'

# 34

## **Supporting positive change since 1995**

Since 1995, the ILSC has worked to redress dispossession, providing for a more prosperous and culturally centred future for Indigenous people. Our numbers tell the story.

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## **Partners in change**

We partner with Indigenous groups across the broad diversity of Indigenous Australia from cities to regional and remote areas, and from inland to coastal environments.

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## **How we are tracking**

Are we delivering 'good value for money'? Find out in this snapshot of our annual performance.



Boab tree, Derby region, WA

# Returning Country

Since 1995, we have been using our funding to buy Country to give back to First Nations people.

This is our highest profile activity working towards redressing Australia's historic dispossession of First Nations people through the restoration of an Indigenous land and water base.

We prioritise acquisitions that can be immediately granted to Indigenous titleholders enabling benefits to quickly flow to Indigenous people.

If required, we also offer an initial leasehold period to prospective titleholders, devising a plan for granting the property while building experience, capability and expertise in property management.

We also help broker large partnerships between Indigenous corporations and existing commercial enterprises that can unlock new markets, capital, capability and capacity, and expand business potential for Indigenous products and services.

The return of Country - whether it be through the purchase of a large pastoral lease or a building in an urban or regional centre - is an intensely emotional experience.

The financial security inherent in ownership of Country can often lead to the development or expansion of enterprises, improved Indigenous employment, strengthened communities and cultural practices, and better protection of Country. This critical economic, cultural, social and environmental capital continues to generate over time to benefit future generations.

We are proud that over three quarters (83 per cent) of the land and water assets that we have purchased are under the care and control of an Indigenous title holder.

# 8

**PROPERTIES ACQUIRED (2023-24)**

**\$18.7m\*/1,139 ha**  
\* purchase price

# 8

**PROPERTIES GRANTED (2023-24)**

**\$23.2m\*\*/1,138 ha**  
\*\* valuation at grant

## We plant the seed together, you harvest the fruit

The following project profiles capture the diversity of our land and water acquisitions and demonstrate how the return of Country lays the foundation for positive change for First Nations communities.



Mapoon Rangers undertaking a beach clean-up - see story page 22  
Image credit: Mapoon Aboriginal Shire Council



Ebenezer and ILSC staff celebrating the Ebenezer Aboriginal Corporation divestment ceremony  
Image credit: Cole Baxter



Esperance Tjaltjraak rangers, Nyungar Country, WA  
Image credit: Jennifer Lavers, HCP Coordinator, Esperance Tjaltjraak

PATHWAYS

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Owning and managing Country sustainably

Preserving and protecting culture

Driving policy and opportunity

## New head office on Whadjuk Noongar Country to provide safer space for at-risk families, WA

*With the number of programs available, it's important for our staff, clients and community members to have a culturally safe place to access support, have a yarn and share their stories.*

**Martin Smith, Chief Executive Officer, Ebenezer Aboriginal Corporation**

Aboriginal people on Whadjuk Noongar Country in Perth, WA will have access to a culturally-safe space to seek support and advice thanks to a new, fit-for-purpose head office for the Ebenezer Aboriginal Corporation in Malaga.

For over 50 years, the not-for-profit organisation has been empowering and equipping at-risk individuals and families with the knowledge and skills to reach their full potential.

The new head office - which opened in February 2024 - provides its clients with appropriate links to accommodation, mediation, counseling/coaching, and legal services.

The corporation currently provides services to 500-700 clients each year through its programs; with its new head office, this number is expected to increase annually.

The permanent office will strengthen Ebenezer's abilities, providing more social services to local Aboriginal clients - increasing employee numbers from 37 to 47 - and allowing for additional employment opportunities for First Nations peoples by offering various traineeships and employment opportunities.

More recently, the corporation has expanded to include transitional facilities, Justice Reinvestment program, in-home support, youth crime prevention, as well as an employment program for ex-prisoners in Perth's northern suburbs.

The corporation also provides family and domestic violence support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including men's domestic violence service, Men Supporting Men, and women's domestic violence service, Naala Djookan Healing Centre.

ILSC funds were provided for the building purchase and a contribution to its refurbishment.

**ILSC investment \$1.8m**

**Partner** Ebenezer Aboriginal Corporation (F)

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## Expanded landholding and new enterprise unlock carbon farming potential, WA

Esperance Tjaltjraak Native Title Aboriginal Corporation (ETNTAC) has expanded its ownership of farmland in WA's Esperance-Goldfields Region and bolstered its income potential with the acquisition of a 1,135 hectare property and the launch of an innovative new enterprise.

The property has extended ETNTAC's existing landholding of Kardutjaanup to 3,955 hectares, an area that enables a long-term income stream that will capitalise on the two property's carbon sequestration potential through biodiversity and agriculture activities, and soil carbon projects.

ETNTAC launched its innovative Rejuvenation Tree program from the property in December 2023; a partnership between Carbon Neutral and Odonata Foundation, freehold land is acquired by Traditional Custodians through a loan repaid through the sale of native trees planted on the properties.

Funded and supplied by Rejuvenation Trees' corporate partners, those plants - which include a mix of sandalwood and bush tucker - then provide a long-term income stream (e.g. in carbon credits or bushfoods) as they mature.

The acquisition will enable additional Wudjari Nyungar employment opportunities; advance regenerative agricultural skills; secure ongoing sustainable funding for ETNTAC to reinvest back in charitable purposes; significantly increase the productivity of the Country; and further strengthen the Wudjari Nyungar people's connection to Country.

**ILSC investment \$2.16m**

**Partners** Rejuvenation Trees (F)

F = financial contribution



Image credit: South Coast Women's Health and Wellbeing Aboriginal Corporation



Yirrganydji Rangers, Yirrganydji Country, Qld

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## Birthing on Country Centre signals new era in Aboriginal-led family care, NSW

*The life expectancy gap between Aboriginal and non Aboriginal people will be significantly improved through care that is culturally safe and respectful through Waminda's Birthing on Country program. This is a key milestone for increasing the First Nations workforce that will fundamentally enhance generational wealth and sustainability for our people.*

### Melanie Briggs, Minga Gudjaga and Birthing on Country Manager, Waminda

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander women on NSW's South Coast will soon have access to a new purpose-built, culturally-embedded birthing centre in Nowra.

The first of its kind in Australia, the Gudjaga Gunyahlamia Birthing on Country Centre is central to the ambitions of the South Coast Women's Health and Wellbeing Aboriginal Corporation (known as Waminda) to revive and strengthen Aboriginal-led birthing care.

After a long period of lobbying and on the back of a Federal Election promise, Waminda secured capital funds for the construction of the build through the Australian Government, and operational funds through NSW Health. ILSC funding was also sought by Waminda to acquire the land on which the Centre will be based.

Underpinned by Australia's first Aboriginal-led midwifery model of care, and housing birthing and related mother and children's services, the Centre will provide for a culturally-appropriate transition to motherhood and parenting for the region's Aboriginal women, and their families.

With research demonstrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women face challenges in accessing culturally-safe and respectful mainstream care, Birthing on Country models have been shown to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for Indigenous women and their babies, contributing to closing the pre-term birth gap, and reducing the risk of infant deaths.

The Centre will also create meaningful employment and training opportunities for Aboriginal people in maternal and child health practice.

Led by Aboriginal women, Waminda is a community-controlled health organisation that supports Aboriginal women and their families living on the South Coast of NSW to access culturally safe, holistic, health and wellbeing services.

**ILSC investment** \$3.29m

**Partners** Australian Government Department of Health (F); NSW Ministry of Health (F)

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## New Yirrganydji home an investment in a self-determined future, Qld

A growing Aboriginal corporation, servicing and operating on the coast between Cairns and Port Douglas in North Queensland, now has a permanent new home to secure and expand its operations.

Dawul Wuru Aboriginal Corporation (Dawul Wuru) is responsible for managing over 200,000 hectares of Yirrganydji Country land and waters, including parts of the Great Barrier Reef.

Demand for its services, including its Land and Sea Ranger Program has significantly grown over the last three years.

ILSC funding has enabled the acquisition of two commercial properties located in Stratford, just north of Cairns, and has seen the corporation move its operations and diverse income streams from its existing leased premises.

On its new location, Dawul Wuru will create its Yirrganydji Collective Hub for the benefit of the Yirrganydji people.

The new home and asset ownership is expected to lead to increased self-determination; new training and employment opportunities; improved social and emotional wellbeing; and increased cultural resilience through Yirrganydji people working on Yirrganydji Country.

**ILSC investment** \$2.35m

**Partners** Dawul Wuru Aboriginal Corporation (F); Australian Tropical Herbarium (IK); Cairns Institute (IK)

IK = In-kind contribution



View from the CYLC building rooftop, Qld



Announcement of The Glen for Women, Darkinjung Country, NSW

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## New building for peak body supporting Aboriginal rights on Cape York Peninsula, Qld

The Cape York Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (CYLC) will soon be moving to its own new home. Since 1990, CYLC has been the peak Indigenous-led organisation working to expand the rights and interests of the Aboriginal peoples of Cape York Peninsula, Qld in land and sea Country.

Through its work with Traditional Owners, 45 per cent of the Cape is now under Native Title, and most of the remaining 55 per cent is now under a single determination claim.

CYLC has outgrown its existing Cairns-based premises with the leased building no longer fit for purpose or able to sustain the organisation or its projected 40 per cent staff increase over the next five years.

The new building is well positioned within the established business and trade centre of the Cairns Northern Beaches and is expected to meet the needs of CYLC in the decades to come. It will provide a healthy space for CYLC staff and Traditional Owners to work and meet, while also saving CYLC on rental costs, and providing the organisation with the improved self-determination enabled through property ownership.

ILSC funds enabled the property acquisition.

**ILSC investment** \$3.55m

**Partners** Cape York Land Council (F); National Indigenous Australians Agency (F)

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## New transition accommodation to empower First Nations women, NSW

*Knowing that there will be a transition house that will be able to help more women in recovery, gives hope to me and so many other women; I'm comforted knowing other women will be given the opportunity to live a life free from addiction and go home healthy to their families and communities.*

### The Glen for Women ex-resident (anonymous)

A holistic rehabilitation centre and program for women with drug and alcohol dependence will soon have a new facility to help its clients break the cycle.

Located at Wyong, NSW, on Darkinjung Country, the new property will become a 10-bed accommodation space for The Glen for Women's (TGFW) Transition Program.

Its purchase will allow both Indigenous and non-Indigenous women who have completed TGFW's 12-week residential program - located at another Wyong property - to re-enter community while maintaining a safe housing situation.

Up to 40 women per year will be supported to obtain job-skills training, employment opportunities and social support services as they transition back into the community.

Operating since April 2022, TGFW is the first Aboriginal community controlled, culturally responsive rehabilitation centre for women in NSW.

TGFW's work follows the 30-year success of The Glen for Men at Chittaway Point on the NSW Central Coast that has successfully placed 75 per cent of its participants into employment through its Transition Program.

With more than 145 females having been admitted into the program, clients have been provided with a new sense of hope and empowerment.

The acquisition of the property was announced with an Acknowledgement to Country and TGFW dance.

Clients were also provided an opportunity to share inspiring stories about their recovery and betterment.

The Glen for Men and TGFW are part of The Glen Group; the purchase of the new property was made by The Glen Group's asset-holding entity, Gulgul Nyugang Aboriginal Corporation (Gulgul).

**ILSC investment** \$2.75m

**Partners** Department of Health (Cth) (F); National Indigenous Australians Agency (F); HNECC Limited (F); Ngaimpe Aboriginal Corporation (IK)



New WYAC head office, Wajarri Yamaji Country, WA

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## New Geraldton home as Wajarri Yamaji look to the future – and the stars, WA

*The assistance received from the ILSC in the purchase of our new premises is a significant event in the Wajarri Yamaji Peoples' aspirations to own their own office. We are thankful for the help the ILSC has provided in enhancing the capacity of the Wajarri Yamaji Aboriginal Corporation to service its over 4,000 members and manage the native title rights and interests of the Wajarri Yamaji People.*

**Graham O'Dell, former Chief Executive Officer, Wajarri Yamaji Aboriginal Corporation**

The rapidly expanding Wajarri Yamaji Aboriginal Corporation (WYAC) will mark its current growth phase with the purchase of its new head office in Geraldton, WA.

Established in May 2013\*, WYAC represent the Wajarri Yamaji people who have traditional rights in the Murchison area of WA.

The acquisition and fit-out of the 2,188 square metre commercial property comes as new income, business, employment and training opportunities emerge from the signing of an Indigenous Land Use Agreement with the CSIRO and the Australian Government.

The agreement will initiate the Square Kilometre Array Project, enabling the construction of the world's largest and most capable radio telescope – called *Inyarrimanha Ilgari Bundara* or Sharing the Sky and Stars – to be built on Wajarri Yamaji Country.

With WYAC's existing rental premises in Geraldton at capacity, the new fit-for-purpose premises will enable the corporation to explore new businesses including catering, labour hire and tourism; develop a ranger program and associated fee-for service businesses; expand its heritage functions; and increase training and employment opportunities for local Wajarri Yamaji people.

In the next two years, WYAC anticipates it will onboard 20 new employees and establish eight new Indigenous enterprises, with up to 500 Indigenous people participating in training and 50 people placed into employment.

**ILSC investment \$850,000**

**Partners** Lotterywest (F)

\*initially as the Meenangu Wajarri Aboriginal Corporation



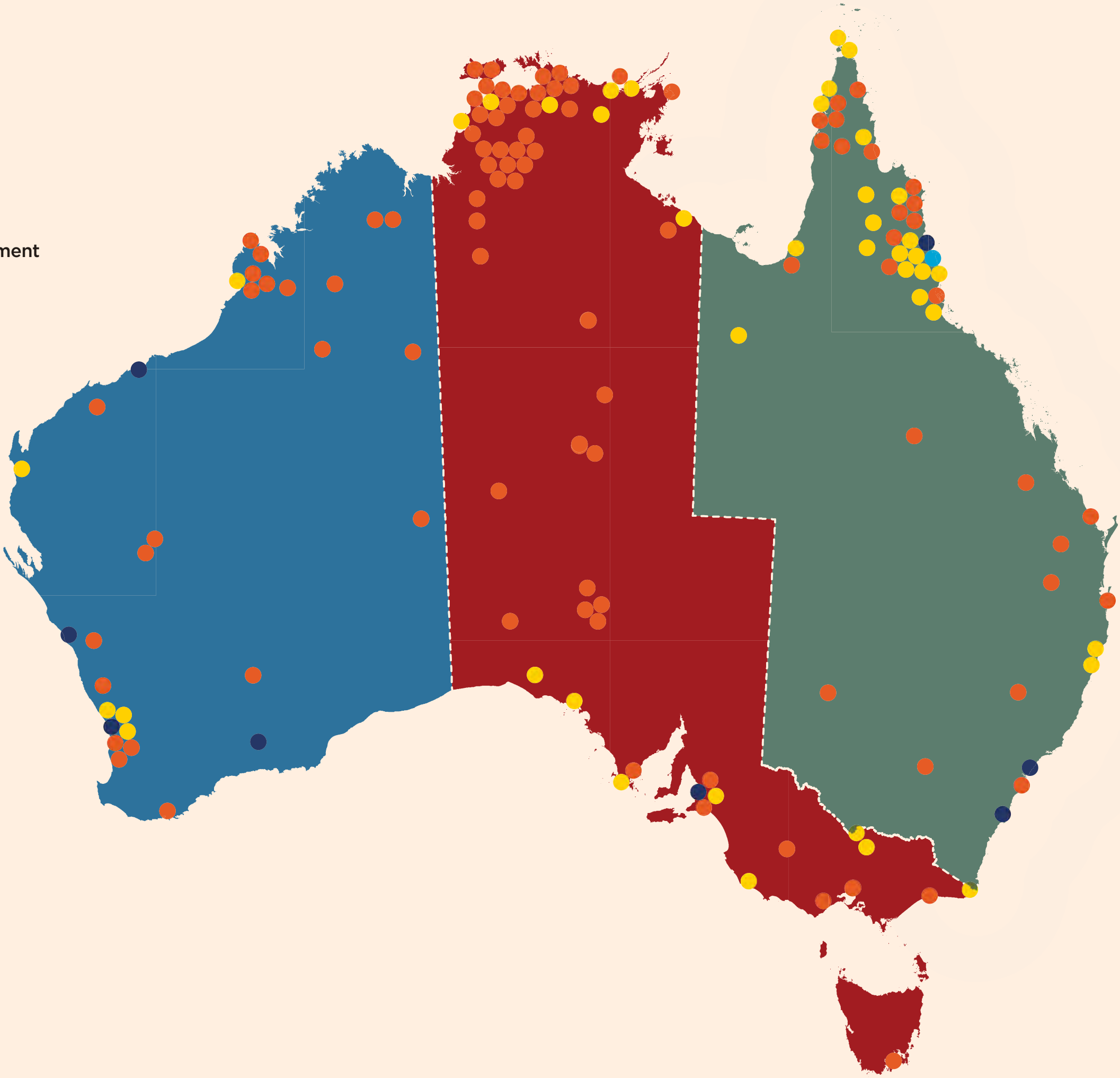
Senior Garawa man, Frank Shadforth on Seven Emu Station (see story page 21)

Image credit: Chaz De La Coeur, Northern Territory Indigenous Pastoral Program



# Returning and managing Country 2023-24

Our 2023-24 acquisition and management activities across the country



- - Active management projects
- - New active management projects
- - Granted properties
- - Acquired properties

## ILSC regions

- - Western
- - Central
- - Eastern

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## MANAGEMENT PROJECTS

(2023-24)

(including 33 new projects)

## Managing Country

We also assist First Nations people to manage their assets and realise their aspirations by investing in a huge variety of management projects.

Often involving smaller investments, these projects can lead to big things. For example, funds for a tractor can deliver greater productivity from an agricultural enterprise, in turn leading to revenue which can be driven back into a business.

Investment in building or upgrading a ranger station can provide Traditional Owners with greater access to, and ability to manage, their Country.

And financing strategic or business planning can help a corporation consider new income streams and opportunities for Country.

## From little things... big things grow

The following snapshots are all excellent examples of how a simple ILSC investment can lead to the generation of significant social, cultural, economic and environmental capital that will continue to deliver for future generations.



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Preserving and protecting culture

## Crocodile Islands ranger base upgrades to improve management of Country, NT

Traditional land and sea Country management of a group of islands in north-east Arnhem Land, NT will be better supported with infrastructure upgrades to the local ranger base.

The Crocodile Island Ranger base located at Milingimbi – the largest of the Crocodile Islands – will be upgraded by the Milingimbi Outstation Progress and Resource Aboriginal Corporation (MOPRA) with the installation of a four-bay shed/workshop, solar panels, battery storage, and secure perimeter fencing. The upgrades will allow the Crocodile Island Rangers to more efficiently carry out their diverse work plan that includes marine debris cleanups, weed and fire management, pest animal control and quarantine, cultural site management, sea Country patrols and surveillance operations, biodiversity surveys, Indigenous knowledge transfer and community engagement.

The Crocodile Island Ranger activities provide local employment and training and ensure Maringa people can access and stay on Country.

The Crocodile Islands consist of nearly 80,000 terrestrial hectares and 740,000 sea hectares and include the Maringa Indigenous Protected Area, an area of international conservation significance.

MOPRA is an Aboriginal corporation that has been servicing the homelands and communities of Milingimbi and surrounds for over 30 years.

**ILSC investment:** \$413,290

**Partners:** National Indigenous Australians Agency (F); Milingimbi Outstation Progress and Resource Aboriginal Corporation (IK)



Crocodile Island ranger activities, Yolngu Country, NT

Image credit: Milingimbi Outstation Progress and Resource Aboriginal Corporation

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## New co-designed Indigenous boarding house to boost school completion, Qld

*Year 12 completion is a critical step in closing the gap on many targets – not only education, but employment, income and health. This new living environment for students is definitely the way of the future and the level of cultural comfort our students need.*

**Fiona Jose, CEO, Cape York Partnership**

An Indigenous-owned and operated school located south of Cairns, Qld is constructing the state's first co-designed, purpose-built boarding house for Indigenous students.

Located in Gordonvale, on the Country of the Malanbarra Clan of the Yidinji Tribe, Djarragun College provides a holistic, culturally immersed, prep to Year 12 learning environment for over 400 Indigenous students, largely from regional and remote areas, including from the Northern Territory, South Australia, Queensland and Torres Straits.

With the existing boys' boarding facility no longer meeting the growing needs of the College, a new facility was designed in collaboration with Elders and parents from home communities, students, and staff. The new facility will provide a safe, welcoming, 'home-away-from-home' for an additional 20 boys.

It will include greater privacy, social zones and green space, with colours, textures, plantings and artworks inspired by First Nations' cultures and Country.

The expanded boarding facility is being constructed on vacant land owned by Djarragun and follows the College's own \$2.1m investment into upgrades to the nearby girl's boarding facility.

In addition to improving access to quality secondary education for Indigenous people, the expansion is expected to lead to additional College employment opportunities and improved student health and wellbeing.

Djarragun College Limited is part of the Cape York Partnership Group, a not-for-profit Indigenous organisation empowering the people of Cape York. It is one of only three Indigenous-owned and operated independent schools in Queensland.

ILSC funding is supporting the building construction.

**ILSC investment:** \$2.2m

**Partners:** Queensland Independent Schools Block Grant Authority Limited (F); Djarragun College (IK)



New boarding facility concept

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## Expanding commercial honey enterprise boosts opportunities for First Nations people, Vic

An Aboriginal-owned health and wellbeing service is adding a new string to its bow with its expansion into wildflowers and honey production.

Located in Mooroopna, northern Victoria, for over 40 years, Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative (RAC) has been providing community-controlled, whole of life health and wellbeing services to local Yorta Yorta and First Nations people.

Now, with support from the First Nations-led, not-for-profit Outback Academy Australia (OAA) and its Follow the Flowers initiative, RAC is working to scale a trial bee project on its nearby property into commercial honey and wildflower production.

Inspired by Fairtrade, OAA's Follow the Flowers focuses on providing an ethical supply chain that returns economic, social and environmental benefits to local communities.

Since commencing its bee trial, RAC has developed a small but successful operation and appointed a Farm Lead and three trainees.

Expanding the operation into commercial production is expected to create new opportunities for members while also bringing the former dairy farm – purchased by RAC in 1996 – into production.

Since the ILSC investment – for essential plant, equipment, hives and wildflower tubestock – RAC has purchased 150 bee hives and made its first harvest of honey; 108 jars were provided to OAA for on-selling to customers.

**ILSC investment:** \$390,878

**Partners:** Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative Limited (F); Outback Academy Australia (F)



Tubestock and farm employees

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## Aboriginal health and wellbeing services to unite in new Murray Bridge facility, SA

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Murray Mallee, Southern Fleurieu, and Adelaide Hills regions of South Australia will soon have access to a new, integrated home for its regional health, social and wellbeing services.

Located on Ngarrindjeri Country, the new Murray Bridge facility will bring together services operated across multiple sites in the town by Moorundi Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service Limited. The new fit-for-purpose facility will provide culturally-safe primary health, allied health, and social and wellbeing services to the growing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, including spaces to celebrate Ngarrindjeri culture, culturally landscaped outdoor areas, conference rooms, and a playroom with nature play space.

Improving the sharing of cultural knowledge and language will support holistic health outcomes and strengthen community ties and connections, through Elders, family, child and youth program opportunities. The ILSC funding towards construction costs will also support the provision of a much larger office space and reception area and increased storage for the facility's growing staff and services.

Co-location of Moorundi's staff and health services will provide for greater coordination of care delivery and will give rise to new revenue streams and employment opportunities.

Moorundi is an Aboriginal community-controlled health service that has been providing three pillars of care - Cultural and Country, Spiritual and Mind, Physical and Body - to the area since 2015.

The Centre is part of Moorundi's longer term plans to establish an integrated Health and Community Hub at the same site in Murray Bridge with increased focus on the spiritual, cultural, social and emotional elements of health care.

**ILSC investment:** \$1.1m

**Partners:** Department of Health and Aged Care (Cth) (F)



Moorundi Board members turn the first sod as construction commences, Ngarrindjeri Country, SA  
Image credit: Moorundi Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service Limited

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## Reliable water supply removes barriers to First Nations' programs, NT

*The bore will prevent the restrictions on all our activities on the property and help to run our business more effectively.*

**Frank Shadforth, Senior Garawa man**

The future of a successful youth program and bushfoods enterprise has been strengthened now a remote Gulf of Carpentaria, NT property has access to reliable, potable water.

Comprising over 200,000 hectares, Seven Emu is located on Garawa Country, nearly 100 kilometres from Borroloola. For many years, Seven Emu's activities and drinking water have relied on seasonally pumping water from the local river into tanks.

This has led to months of poor quality water after the wet season, and times when it is unfit for human consumption that, in turn, shortens the potential tourist season, restricts bush foods production to the dry season, and reduces cattle condition and pastoral productivity.

The issue also threaten the property's youth diversion and early intervention camps; run throughout the year, the camps expose at-risk Aboriginal youths to training, work experience and employment opportunities through the property's cattle, eco-tourism and bushfoods enterprises.

ILSC funding supported the installation of the new bore and solar pump, while Seven Emu picked up the costs of road construction, earthworks, plumbing, and contractor accommodation and meals.

Access to a reliable, clean water supply will provide Seven Emu with improved security for its enterprises and activities; financial and employment benefits for local Aboriginal people; and increased awareness and interaction with cultural products.

**ILSC investment:** \$76,572

**Partners:** Seven Emu Station (F); Northern Territory Indigenous Pastoral Program (IK)



Installing the new bore, Seven Emu Station, Garawa Country, NT  
Image credit: Chaz De La Coeur, Northern Territory Indigenous Pastoral Program

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## Solar power system to support Baiyungu tourism and cultural activities, WA

A new solar power system being installed on Cardabia Station will reduce power costs and increase economic viability for its owners, the Baiyungu Aboriginal Corporation (BAC).

Located six kilometres north-east of Coral Bay on WA's Coral Coast, BAC has been relying on increasingly expensive and unsustainable diesel-generated power since the existing 10-year-old solar power system became inoperable in 2021.

The installation of a replacement standalone solar power battery-operated system will meet Cardabia Station's current power needs as well as future demands on its power supply, as it expands into tourism and cultural activities.

This includes growth opportunities and property renovations associated with BAC's free cultural music festival, Jamba Nyinyai, first held on Cardabia in 2023, which has attracted a few thousand people, including hundreds of Indigenous participants.

ILSC funding is for the supply and installation of the solar power system and business planning funding to support BAC's future sustainability.

The pastoral lease was divested to BAC in 2015 by the ILSC.

**ILSC investment:** \$367,369



Jamba Nyinyai Festival, Baiyungu Country, WA  
Image credit: Blue Media Exmouth

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## New equipment supports new land and sea contracting initiatives, NSW

Yaegl Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (YTOAC) now has access to new equipment to support the operations of its new Land and Sea Contracting team based in Yamba, northern NSW.

The Land and Sea Contracting team will support YTOAC in managing its land and sea assets: over 30,000 hectares across three Yaegl Native Title Determination areas.

The team will offer natural resource management contract services to Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients in the region, while creating economic, social and cultural benefits for YTOAC members.

This will extend the often casual, sporadic work of the existing Cultural Heritage Monitoring Team and YTOAC's revegetation activities, generating additional contracts with the potential to significantly expand opportunities to the emerging YTOAC workforce.

In addition to creating long-term and casual employment opportunities, the contracting team will create new training opportunities such as Certificate II in Conservation and Land Management, White Card (construction induction), ChemCert, First Aid, and Occupational Health and Safety.

The ILSC-funded equipment included a heavy-duty trailer, ride-on mower, spraying unit/trailer, and assorted motorised gardening tools and hand tools.

Yaegl People are the Native Title holders of Country in northern NSW around the townships of Iluka, Yamba, Brooms Head and Wooli along the coast, extending inland to Tucabia, Ulmarra, Brushgrove and Lawrence, and as far north as Woombah.

**ILSC investment** \$90,022

**Partners** National Indigenous Australians Agency (F)



Land and Sea Contracting team with their new equipment, NSW



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## New barge to support Mapoon's economic and environmental goals, Qld

Mapoon's Aboriginal Rangers are benefiting from training that will enable them to participate in barge operations once the enterprise is operational. – Progress Report June 2024

A new barge for a remote Aboriginal Shire of Queensland will assist expansion of the local Land and Sea Ranger operations and provide for new environmental, commercial and tourism opportunities.

Located on the far western Cape York Peninsula, the Mapoon Aboriginal Shire Council's (MASC) vision is to deliver future prosperity and wellbeing for its residents through greater employment generation and related economic opportunities.

Funded by the ILSC, the 14 metre, high-speed barge will operate from the new \$1.4m barge ramp financed by MASC in 2022 at Cullen Point.

It replaces MASC's 6.2-metre landing barge that was too small to service the Mapoon Rangers needs, particularly the transportation of vehicles used for beach clean ups and turtle monitoring.

With the new barge possessing a crane, MASC will no longer need to hire a barge for the Mapoon Rangers' annual water quality monitoring and hydrophone project work with Rio Tinto, saving it thousands of dollars each year.

The barge is also expected to be a game-changer for the rangers in providing timely, post-monsoon access to beaches to remove 'ghost nets' – plastic nets illegally abandoned by commercial fishers – before they are scattered and covered by sand.

With no locally based service options in Mapoon, the barge is also in an ideal position to offer transport services to two local mining companies, Metro Mining and Rio Tinto, and an avenue for MASC to explore new income-generating opportunities in nature-based tourism.

**ILSC investment:** \$1.3m

**Partners:** Mapoon Aboriginal Shire Council (F); Royal Automotive Club of Queensland (F)



Mapoon Rangers undertaking a beach clean-up  
Image credit: Mapoon Aboriginal Shire Council



Growing the value of Country

Owning and managing Country sustainably

Driving policy and opportunity

## Indigenous-owned start-up acquires mud crab quota, Qld

Our business has enabled us to get out on country catching mud crab and reef fish species. We have established relationships with local buyers and have begun generating some revenue with 12 community members getting out on sea country to help with fishing and crabbing during our start-up phase. – Progress Report June 2024

A start-up Indigenous-owned and operated enterprise is looking to bolster its ambitions for the commercial fishing sector after acquiring a three-year Queensland commercial mud crab quota.

Based in Bessie Point near Cairns in Far North Queensland, On Country Seafood (OCS) was established by Traditional Owner fishers with over 35 collective years' experience working in the fishing industry, in addition to lifelong fishing for recreation and cultural reasons.

Mud crab has been a staple in the diets of Indigenous people for thousands of years, yet there is little to no Indigenous participation, or economic return, from Queensland mud crabs with limited quota and fishing licences available to support commercial harvest.

OCS has been working closely with Longreach Maris, Queensland's largest mud crab quota owner, which is seeking to facilitate long-term Indigenous participation in the industry through business development, quota leases and, eventually the sale of quota for outright Indigenous ownership.

The ILSC has supported On Country Seafood to purchase a commercial vessel, crabbing pots, safety equipment and a commercial fishing licence to meet the obligations attached to its three-year mud crab quota. OCS has the potential to be a model utilised for future Indigenous fishery business development, with the mud crab opportunity expected to generate Indigenous employment and training for people based in the community of Giangurra (Bessie Point) near Cairns.

**ILSC investment:** \$157,860

**Partner:** Longreach Maris (IK)



On Country Seafood team show off their catch

Owning and managing Country sustainably

Driving policy and opportunity

## Cheaper, reliable renewable energy solution to drive new opportunities for Yarrabah, Qld

Australia's largest Aboriginal community is the subject of a feasibility study to define a new renewable energy solution that will improve the sustainability, resilience and cost of energy for Yarrabah residents.

Home to about 4,000 residents, Yarrabah is located within the 160 square kilometre Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council (YASC), situated south of Cairns on the Far North Queensland coast.

Like many other fringe-of-grid communities, Yarrabah experiences longer and more frequent electricity supply disruptions than urban locations that compound other issues, such as inefficient appliances.

The applicant, Ener-G Management Group Pty Ltd, consults in the electrical power industry and delivers microgrid solutions to remote and regional communities in Australia and the Asia Pacific.

ILSC funding facilitates a feasibility study conducted by a consortia of planning and energy companies, that will be used to determine the final technical features and financial feasibility of the proposed microgrid and supporting infrastructure, and specifically to facilitate the involvement of YASC in the microgrid design, establishment, and operations.

YASC will become a key partner in the community's energy future which the community expects to be transformative in empowering self-determination, and enhancing community resilience.

It will reduce energy costs to community members and ensure a more sustainable energy future, with the added benefits of a more resilient energy supply system that will improve access to on-line banking, training and tele-health services, and health and education services that rely on reliable power.

With the full implementation of the Microgrid Project being under the direct control of YASC, employment opportunities are envisaged for Yarrabah community members.

**ILSC investment** \$250,000

**Partners** Qld Department of Energy and Climate (F); Energy Queensland (IK)



Ener-G planning sessions with Yarrabah community members



Growing the value of Country

Owning and managing Country sustainably

Driving policy and opportunity

## Thanakwith plan for greater self-determination, Qld

*The Thanakwith Aboriginal Corporation and broader members of the Thanakwith are benefiting from the development of the Business Case. Members participated in multiple project development meetings, including broader Thanakwith people that attended group workshops in Cairns and a site visit to Country to develop the Business Case/Country Plan.* – Progress Report June 2024

A Cape York Peninsula, Qld, Aboriginal corporation is taking the next step to self-determination through the development of a strategic plan that will unlock economic, environmental, social and cultural opportunities for its members.

Incorporated in 2017, the Thanakwith Aboriginal Corporation (TAC) represent the Thanakwith people, one of six language-affiliated groups whose Native Title rights were determined under the Northern Cape York #2 Native Title Claim Group determination of June 2014. The Greater Thanakwith Nation encompasses an area that stretches from Duyfken Point up to 70 kilometres north towards the community of Mapoon.

Thanakwith connection to Country has remained unbroken despite the forced relocation of its people, first to the Mapoon Mission and then, with the mission's closure, further north to Bamaga and New Mapoon. Many Thanakwith people continue to reside in this area and further south, as well as outer Torres Strait Islands.

With the corporation and its seven Directors currently based in Umagico, near New Mapoon, in addition to funding the strategic plan, the ILSC will also finance the Directors' travel to Thanakwith Country to participate in consultation. The strategic plan will consider the needs of the Thanakwith membership, the range of initiatives that might service these needs, and their comparative benefits; identify potential investment partners; and provide the TAC with options for further progression.

Ultimately, this is expected to lead to getting Thanakwith people back on Country to teach their stories to young people, care for Country, and create a shared sense of identity and purpose among Thanakwith.

**ILSC investment:** \$88,175

**Partners:** Emver Partners (IK); Aluminium Stewardship Initiative (IK); Rio Tinto Aluminium Ltd (IK); Qld Department of Environment and Science (IK)



Thanakwith Aboriginal Corporation members with the strategic plan

Growing the value of Country

Owning and managing Country sustainably

Driving policy and opportunity

## Plans advance for Aboriginal aged care facility on former Stolen Generation site, WA

Plans are a step closer to realising a \$45m Aboriginal aged care facility – the first of its kind in Perth – on the site of a former home to Stolen Generation children.

Located in the suburb of Queen's Park, the new facility would be built on the site of the former Sister Kate's Children's Home, where Aboriginal children were housed after being taken from their parents between 1934 and 1975.

With the site now owned by its former Aboriginal residents, Sister Kate's Children 1934 to 1953 Aboriginal Corporation (SKCAC) has teamed with Hall & Prior, one of the largest aged care providers in Australia, to provide a culturally appropriate and safe Aboriginal health and aged care facility and services.

The 100-bed home would provide for Aboriginal people with a direct connection to the Country and Sister Kate's legacy, as well as Aboriginal people living in urban and remote settings who require a high level of residential care.

The ILSC's funding contribution to the design and approval phase is a critical next step in progressing the proposed development, which will then support SKCAC's and Hall & Prior's efforts to secure additional partner funding for the facility's construction.

Construction is expected to provide for 150 Aboriginal jobs.

Once operational, hundreds more permanent employment opportunities and traineeships will offer new employment pathways for young Aboriginal people, while providing an additional opportunity for cultural connection between youth and Elders.

SKCAC will also benefit from a significant new income source through the facility's lease to Hall & Prior. The ILSC has previously divested separate blocks of land at the site of the former home to both the Sister Kate's Children's 1934-1953 Aboriginal Corporation (SKCAC) and Sister Kate's Home Kids Aboriginal Corporation (SKHKAC).

**ILSC investment** \$400,000

**Partners** Hall & Prior Health and Aged Care Group (F); Sister Kate's Children 1934 to 1953 Aboriginal Corporation (IK)

Growing the value of Country

## Flood-damaged irrigation repairs restore Indigenous farm operations, NSW

*The irrigation system will allow for the replanting of new seedlings...and the relocation of the pump to a new site above all known flood levels will ensure that similar incidents do not happen in the future.* – Progress Report June 2023

A flood-damaged pump and irrigation pipeline is being replaced on an Indigenous-owned farm on the Murray River, NSW.

Located 200 kilometres west of Albury-Wodonga, the 380-hectare Ulunja farm was purchased by the Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation (YYNAC) in 2009 to recover and protect the sacred sandhills that hold the Yorta Yorta story of the river, and to create sustainable employment and skills development opportunities for Yorta Yorta people.

With assistance from industry partners and the ILSC, YYNAC has been developing Ulunja since 2021 establishing a wattle seed orchard and staged Manuka (medicinal honey) orchard, and with plans to introduce a native tree nursery.

In October 2022, regional flooding wiped out the 45-hectare Stage 1 Manuka plantation and associated pump and farm irrigation, and washed away 30 hectares of Stage 2 seedlings that had been delivered on-site the same week. Fortunately, the wattle seed plantation situated on higher ground was unaffected. The flood has allowed YYNAC to seek advice and redesign the irrigation system, plus introduce several other significant learnings from project activities so far.

Functioning irrigation is imperative for YYNAC to continue its efforts to bring an underperforming agricultural property into full commercial production and to realise its aspirations for Yorta Yorta people. YYNAC paid for replacement Manuka seedlings from its own reserves.

**ILSC investment:** \$400,000

**Partners:** Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation (F)

Growing the value of Country

## Indigenous cattle producers strengthen practices through NB2 Program, Qld

Northern Indigenous cattle producers based in Queensland will continue to improve and implement the knowledge they are gaining through Meat and Livestock Australia's Northern Breeding 2 (NB2) Program. Launched in 2020, NB2's goal is to improve the long-term viability and sustainability of the northern Australian beef industry.

The program brings groups of pastoral operators together to exchange information and receive specialised advice and extension services on improving productivity and profitability from their properties. A two-year extension to the program supported by ILSC funding will enable existing Indigenous landholder participants to galvanise and embed their learning.

Activities include workshops, on-farm extension support and mentoring, establishing cattle performance baselines, and the roll-out of innovative technology for biosecurity training and monitoring.

The funding will also enable the participation of an additional four Indigenous landholdings that have expressed interest in joining the program, continuing peer-to-peer knowledge-sharing across Indigenous cattle-producing properties.

**ILSC investment** \$187,446

**Partners** Meat and Livestock Australia (F); Animal Health Australia (F); Tropical North Queensland Drought Hub (F)



Brahman cattle - Annaburroo Station, Northern Territory, Australia  
Image credit: Geoff Whalan, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

Growing the value of Country

Owning and managing Country sustainably

Driving policy and opportunity

## New land practitioner to support Regional Corporations in the transfer and management of Country, WA

A new, ILSC-funded land practitioner will support six new Regional Corporations (RCs) in the transfer of land as part of the South West Native Title Settlement, the largest native title settlement in Australian history (see below).

RCs will oversee Noongar interests in the six Indigenous Land Use Agreements created through the Settlement – Yued, Gnaala Karla Booja, Karri Karrak, Wagyl Kaip Southern Noongar, Ballardong, and Whadjuk.

The funds for the land practitioner come from the 2014 sale of an ILSC-held Barragup, WA property.

The proceeds have been held by the ILSC until such time that the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council (SWALSC) was able to establish a Noongar Land Management Team.

With SWALSC having recently transitioned from providing native title services to being the Central Services Corporation for the six RCs – each responsible for the management of Country – at SWALSC's request, these proceeds will now fund the land practitioner.

The role will guide and assist the RCs with the complex transfers of multiple parcels of land with various tenures, including unallocated Crown land, unmanaged reserves, and Aboriginal Lands Trust properties.

It will also support the development of management strategies for over 3,200 square kilometres of land, known as the Noongar Land Estate (NLE).

An outcome of the Settlement, the NLE is held by the Noongar Boodja Trust to provide significant opportunities for the Noongar community to achieve sustainable economic, social, and cultural outcomes.

The NLE is likely to grow as new parcels of land become available for allocation.

**ILSC investment** \$550,000

**Partners** South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council (IK)

### The South West Native Title Settlement

The South West Native Title Settlement is a landmark native title agreement negotiated between the Noongar people – traditional peoples of south-west Western Australia – and the Western Australian Government.

It affects an estimated 30,000 Noongar people and encompasses approximately 200,000 square kilometres of Noongar Country, WA's south-west region.

The Settlement resolves all native title claims in south-west WA in exchange for around \$1.3 billion in cash (over 12 years), land, and other benefits for Noongar people.

The Settlement commenced in 2021.



## What changed as a result?

Large or small, we want all ILSC investments to generate long-term positive outcomes for Indigenous people. We regularly check in with our proponents to ask them how they are tracking and the changes they are seeing emerge from their funded activities.

In the following case study, we return to the Bendigo & District Aboriginal Co-operative to find out how their new djimbaya kindergarten has brought change to the local First Nations community.





Image credit: Ashlee Jensen, Wirrim Media and the Indigenous Governance Awards 2024

PATHWAYS

Growing the value of Country

Owning and managing Country sustainably

Preserving and protecting culture

## New djimbaya kindergarten proving a culturally-safe haven for families living on Dja Dja Wurrung Country

*ILSC funding was instrumental in securing the land for our purpose-built kindergarten and enabling the expansion of services to Community. We know that if we can create connections with young people at an early age to their Community, Culture and to BDAC, it will support better health and wellbeing outcomes for our Community.*

**Dallas Widdicombe, CEO, Bendigo & District Aboriginal Co-operative**

In May 2023, the Bendigo & District Aboriginal Co-operative (BDAC) opened djimbaya, its new 99-place kindergarten for 3-4-year-olds located on Dja Dja Wurrung Country in North Bendigo.

djimbaya – the Dja Dja Wurrung word meaning “to teach” – was the second phase (see p 33) in BDAC’s masterplan to create a centralised hub that combines medical, community, allied health and education services for the local Djaara people and other First Nations’ people living on Dja Dja Wurrung Country in Victoria.

We chat to djimbaya Director Emily Gerber about the early days of building enrolments and staffing and how their whole-of-family approach is delivering positive outcomes for community.

We start by asking what early learning services were in place before the centre opened.

“For around 20 years BDAC has funded a Koori Preschool Assistant to visit the early years services operating in the Bendigo region to help embed Aboriginal perspectives into their curriculum.

“That position has also supported local families with enrolling their 3-4-year-old children into kinder with the aim of making all kindergartens in the region as accessible as possible for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander families.”

Another of BDAC’s earliest programs was its playgroup that brings Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander parents, carers and children together in a culturally safe space.

“They operate once a week during school terms and were reliant on funding to hire suitable venues - so it’s fitting that 20 years down the track, BDAC could build its own early years’ service.”

Plans for the new kindergarten – a long-held vision for BDAC – came into full swing when a block of land next to its existing health and community services became available for purchase.

The site would allow for a large outdoor area, a separate entrance for families using the centre, and create a level of separation from the adjacent adult health services.

In 2019, the ILSC funded BDAC to purchase the new property and construction soon got underway.

Emily – an early childhood teacher with 20 years’ experience operating mainstream early learning centres on Dja Dja Wurrung Country – was recruited in August 2022.

She reflects on the work to build enrolments and staffing for djimbaya.

“The centre had already been built when I came on board, but it hadn’t been furnished and the program hadn’t started; it was basically a blank canvas.”

As BDAC navigated government processes for accreditation, the approval to advertise for staff and enrolments left them with a shorter window than anticipated between advertising and opening.

Concerned they wouldn’t be able to staff sufficiently in that time, they decided to open with one program of up to 33 children that Emily would teach.

At the opening in February 2023, djimbaya had a solid 16 enrolments – and within the space of a few months, they had a waiting list.

“We ended up having 36 children come through our doors that first year – and 32 of those children identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

“To leave your child anywhere is a huge deal, but to leave them at a completely untested space, that was a brave thing to do.”

As a non-Indigenous teacher, Emily describes how she and BDAC collaborated to create a culturally-safe learning environment.

“Before I started, BDAC had enlisted Weenthunga to create a curriculum and they engaged local Elders and Traditional Owners for input – so that was helpful in getting things started.

“For example, when we work around literacy, we’ll talk about letters and how they make up words, but we’ll also talk about how symbols tell stories and how storytelling itself is a form of literacy.

“We take the colonial view of learning and expand it to fit Aboriginal practices, values and cultural beliefs.”

And the next step, Emily said, was simple: to listen.

“We worked hard to build relationships and listen to our families, so they felt safe enough to tell us what they wanted from the programs and what a safe environment would look like to them.

“We also worked closely with other teams within BDAC, tweaking our program to fit, while still ticking off on the curriculum requirements.”

Today, there’s a lot that sets djimbaya apart from mainstream kindergartens.

“Our whole-of-family philosophy seems to fit in well with Aboriginal ways of parenting and kinship.

“For instance, instead of a separate three-year-old group and a four-year-old group we run mixed age programs – this way siblings and cousins stay together and learn together.

“It’s more a family environment than a strict school setting.”

Elders get involved too. The day we interview Emily she has just sent a request to BDAC’s Elders Planned Activity Group that supports Elders to stay connected to Community, Country and culture to see if they would like to share some stories during Book Week.

BDAC also runs a djimbaya breakfast program where parents can share breakfast with their children, make a coffee and stay for a yarn.

“And one of our fathers will play his didge for the kids when he picks up his daughter.

“A lot has happened organically, I think because we have put in so much time to building these really trusting, reciprocal relationships with our families so they feel welcome to spend the time with us.”

The physical space and play materials reflect First Nations’ culture too.



Opening of djimbaya in 2023





Djimbaya main entrance



Djimbaya indoor area



Djimbaya outdoor area

“We incorporate Aboriginal artwork throughout the space – our furnishings, rugs, and décor – including a beautiful mural, ‘Journey to Djimbaya’, by a local artist that tells the story of the little ones coming to djimbaya from all over Dja Dja Wurrung Country.

“And we have a lot of artefacts throughout the room – for example, as well as dolls’ beds we have coolamons and possum skins.”

Of course, the other essential ingredient to running a culturally-safe centre has been employing Aboriginal educators.

“We now have 10 educators, five of them Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander; of those five, three are trainees who we are paying to complete their Certificate 3 in Early Childhood Education and Care.

“Some of our other educators are also given the option of upskilling to their accelerated Bachelor of Early Childhood Learning, so we’ll have more teachers on staff to enable us to grow our service.”

Having djimbaya co-located with other BDAC services is also paying off.

In addition to being located next to adult medical, health and community services, djimbaya itself is home to BDAC’s other early years programs, including the original playgroup, the Koori Preschool Assistant (now known as the bupup balak wayipungang initiative), a maternal child health nurse, and its Balert Gerrbik Koorie Families as First Educators Practitioner who works with local First Nations’ families to build parental capacity.

“We try to work in a holistic way, and we recognise that the best outcome for a child is the best outcome for a family. For example, if families need support with transport, we provide transport to make sure that the children are getting to and from kinder safely.

“There are times where we coordinate as a team to support families, things like enrolling in a daycare service, filling out the childcare subsidy paperwork, or liaising with Centrelink. We might link them into other BDAC services or refer them to external services like NDIS supports or through Bendigo Community Health.”

Equity is also part of their model.

“We are currently operating above ratio; it means we can offer individualised programs. Not everybody gets the same but everybody gets what they need; some learners need that little bit more, and so do some staff. “Likewise, there shouldn’t be any barriers to coming to kinder.

“If a parent can’t get to the store for groceries, we have a stocked pantry.

“We’ll make sandwiches so that the children will have a lunch box that looks the same as everybody else’s. The main thing is don’t keep them home because you don’t have lunch for them – we don’t care about that.”

Transition to school can also be a big hurdle for some families and Emily and the team recognise that their considerable experience in the sector and relationships with schools can help smooth the transition.

“It’s hard being a parent – you don’t know what you don’t know.

“Some families have expressed reluctance with enrolling, whether it’s because of literacy reasons, or social anxiety, or distrust of government organisations.

“So we’ve supported them with school enrolments and transition sessions or gone with them to school meetings.

“It’s capacity building in a supportive way.”

Other BDAC staff are also taking advantage of the warm, safe space provided by djimbaya with the site being used to host community yarns with the Board, a polling booth for the Voice referendum, training, workshops and meetings.

“It’s nice to do it in a space that’s for children,” Emily reflects. “It’s just a little bit warmer.”

Asked to look forward the next 5-10 years, Emily sees greater investment in the kinder, particularly with the Victorian Government currently rolling out additional funding to all kindergarten-aged children through its pre-prep program.

“We’ve doubled in size after one year; we have two programs running and we’re full. We have 66 learners this year.

“And with pre-prep rolling out for us in 2026, the funded hours for four-year-olds will be increasing so, for the moment, this site will focus on kinder.”

It’s worth noting too that the djimbaya has been open to non-Indigenous kids in the area from the start.

“BDAC recognises that the more people that receive an education through this cultural lens, the more we share what we do with the broader community, the better for everybody.

“So, while we do prioritise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, we keep enrolments open to everybody and we also share our work with mainstream services by hosting teacher networks and other collaborative opportunities.”

BDAC regularly take on students seeking placements across its business and are keen to capitalise on its existing relationships with tertiary education providers to explore moving into early childhood training.

“There’s a real appetite it seems in the local First Nations’ community for working in early learning.

“We’re keen to build a partnership with a mainstream organisation to rewrite the current curriculum and develop trainees, both so we can build our own workforce, but also to get more mob into mainstream centres.

“Ideally, I’d like to train the next me, and the trainees we’ve got now are fabulous. We have one that in six years will have her bachelor’s – she could do my job, and she’ll do it even better than I do.”

Meanwhile, with djimbaya’s first cohort of children navigating school this year, it seems that the whole-of-family approach that BDAC is taking is paying off.

“The feedback from the children who were with us last year has been overwhelmingly positive in terms of their transitions and their ability to cope with change.

“I think that’s been a reflection on our program.

“Families tell us how much their children love coming here, how safe they feel coming here.

“For so many reasons, there are families that have been so reluctant to leave their children in care before.

“But they do, and is there a bigger tick of approval?”

**ILSC investment:** \$510,030 for purchase of 40-48 Cohn Street, North Bendigo

**Partners:** Bendigo & District Aboriginal Co-operative; Department of Education and Training (Vic); Department of Health and Human Services (Vic)



Some of the djimbaya’s learning and play materials

### Bendigo & District Aboriginal Co-operative

Founded in 2001, the Bendigo and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BDAC) is a proud Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation delivering flexible, responsive, and culturally appropriate services to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander residents on Dja Dja Wurrung Country (djandak) in central Victoria. Djandak includes Bendigo and surrounding areas.

BDAC serves a growing population of nearly 4,500 Aboriginal and/or Torres Islander people.

#### BDAC’S MASTERPLAN

- 2017 - Health and community service opened
- 2023 - djimbaya kindergarten opened
- 2025 - Medical centre opens with allied health services

BDAC recently renewed its vision for the region through the release of its 2024 to 2029 Strategic Plan.

**Further information:** [www.bdac.com.au](http://www.bdac.com.au)

# Supporting *positive* change since 1995

Since our establishment in 1995, \$1.48 billion has been invested through 1,375 projects. This includes 1,052 management projects and 323 acquisition projects. The acquisition projects have led to the purchase of 291 land interests covering 6.5 million hectares, and four water interests.

We have supported Indigenous people to bring products and services to market – this includes carbon farming (ETNTAC p 7) and bushfood enterprises (Rumbalara p 19, On Country Seafood p 23 and Ulunja farm p 26) as well as social services such as child and maternal care (Gudjaga Gunyahlamia Birthing on Country Centre p 34), aged care (Sister Kate's p 25), rehabilitation (The Glen for Women p 11), education (Djarragun College p 18) and a health and wellbeing centre (Moorundi p 20).

We have also supported the preservation of locations with significant ecological and cultural values (Crocodile Island p 18) and other Caring for Country initiatives (Yaegl p 22, Mapoon p 22); promoted sustainable agricultural enterprises (Northern Breeding 2 p 26); and commissioned feasibility studies exploring renewables potential (Yarrabah microgrid p 24) and strategic planning to unlock new opportunities from Country (Thankawith p 24, land practitioner p 27).

Meanwhile, funding for new buildings (CYLC p 10, Dawul Wuru p 9, Ebenezer p 6 and Wajarri Yamaji p 12) and upgrades to a bore (Seven Emu p 20) and a

solar power system (p 21) have provided greater security for existing programs and services and self-determined futures.

Between 2018-24, ILSC projects have enabled 701 Indigenous people to be employed on average per year.

Between 2011-24, our projects have enabled 4,665 Indigenous people to participate in capability building activities (e.g. training, planning and traditional knowledge sharing), with 1,893 training courses completed on average per year.

In the same period, on average per year through our projects, the environmental and/or heritage values of almost 6.1 million hectares of Country have been managed; 8,912 Indigenous people have improved access to Country; 548 culturally significant sites have been managed; and 12,111 Indigenous people – and 7,591 non-Indigenous people – have participated in 728 cultural events on Country.

*All data is based on information supplied by proponents for ILSC Project Reports.*



Mapoon Rangers undertaking a beach clean-up - see story page 22  
Image credit: Mapoon Aboriginal Shire Council



## 1,375 projects

- 323 acquisition projects
- 1,052 management projects



## 291

### properties acquired

- 6.5 million hectares
- 4 water interests acquired
- 85% under Indigenous care and control

## 728 cultural events\*\*

- 12,111 Indigenous participants
- 7,591 non-Indigenous participants



## 701 Indigenous people employed\*



## 8,912 Indigenous people

### with improved access to Country\*\*

## 4,665

### Indigenous people participated in training, planning and cultural knowledge sharing\*\*

1,893 training courses completed by Indigenous people\*\*

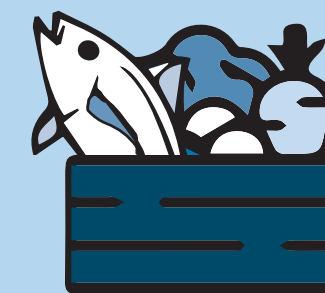


## 6.1 million hectares

### with environmental or heritage values managed\*\*



## 548 culturally significant sites managed\*\*



## 128 majority owned Indigenous enterprises created and/or improved\*\*



## 32,799 Indigenous people accessing culturally appropriate services\*\*

\*on average/year, 2018-23  
\*\*on average/year, 2011-23  
Unmarked values reflect ILSC lifetime data, 1995-2024

*Data discrepancies may occur between annual reports due to ongoing data cleaning*

## Partners in change

We partner with Indigenous groups to deliver projects across the broad diversity of Indigenous Australia and the Torres Strait Islands, from cities to regional and remote areas, and from inland to coastal environments.

In 2023-24, the ILSC allocated over \$31.8 million for new projects involving 37 Indigenous applicants through *Our Country Our Future*, our core acquisition and management funding program. Thirteen contributed \$3.2 million of their own funding towards their projects.

In addition, 20 third party project partners – including government, NGOs, industry groups, consultancies and private organisations – contributed nearly \$111.2 million towards projects plus in-kind contributions.

### 37 Indigenous groups funded\* (2023-24 new projects)

- Baiyungu Aboriginal Corporation
- Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation Pty Ltd
- Barronessa Farming
- Black Duck Foods Ltd
- Burrandies Aboriginal Corporation
- Cape York Land Council
- Dawul Wuru Aboriginal Corporation
- Djarragun College Limited
- Ebenezer Aboriginal Corporation
- Ener-G Management Group Pty Ltd<sup>^</sup>
- Esperance Tjaltjraak Native Title Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC
- Far West Coast Aboriginal Corporation
- Francis Shadforth T/A Seven Emu Station
- Gabalidi Garngoo Association Inc
- Jamukurnu-Yapalikurnu Aboriginal Corporation (Western Desert Lands) RNTBC
- Kalan Enterprises Aboriginal Corporation
- Mapoon Aboriginal Shire Council
- Meat and Livestock Australia<sup>^</sup>
- Milingimbi Outstations Progress Resource Aboriginal Corporation
- Moorundi Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service Limited
- Ngaimpe Aboriginal Corporation
- Northern Australia Aboriginal Kakadu Plum Alliance Cooperative Limited
- Olkola Aboriginal Corporation
- On-Country Seafood Pty Ltd
- Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative Ltd
- Sister Kate's Children 1934-1953 Aboriginal Corporation
- South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council Aboriginal Corporation
- Thanakwith Aboriginal Corporation
- The Place of Keeping Ltd
- Tjirilya Aboriginal Corporation
- Wajarri Yamaji Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC
- Waminda South Coast Women's Health and Wellbeing Aboriginal Corporation
- Yaegl Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC
- Yirra bandoo Aboriginal Corporation Land Trust
- Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation

### 20 project partners (third party)<sup>#</sup> (2023-24 new projects)

- Animal Health Australia
- Australian Government Department of Health
- Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care
- Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia
- Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
- Ekistica
- Hall & Prior Health & Aged Care Group
- HNECC Limited
- Indigenous Business Australia
- Lotterywest
- National Indigenous Australians Agency
- NSW Ministry of Health
- Outback Academy Australia
- Queensland Department of Energy and Climate
- Queensland Independent Schools Block Grant Authority Ltd
- Rejuvenation Trees
- Swisse Wellness Pty Ltd
- Torres Strait Regional Authority
- Water Corporation (WA)
- White Box Enterprises

\* Reflects all 2023-24 projects, including Urgent Health & Safety projects; data generated at 9 October 2024

<sup>^</sup> Strategic project - non-Indigenous proponent

<sup>#</sup> Includes all 2023-24 third party project partners with committed funds as at 9 October 2024

## How we're tracking

So how do we know whether we are making the best use of ILSC resources? Are the activities we fund leading to our four desired long-term outcomes and positive change for Indigenous Australians?

At the ILSC, we use an evaluation approach where we consider what 'good value for money' looks like from four perspectives: efficiency, effectiveness, equity and economy.

Considering these perspectives help us select the best projects and activities in which to invest. And we can use them to evaluate whether those projects are performing as expected.

### Of our active projects in 2023-24:

#### Efficiency

- **81%** of planned activities were delivered or exceeded across all projects
- **97%** of projects were rated 'satisfactory' or higher for delivering planned activities when context was also considered
- **81%** of projects were rated 'satisfactory' or higher for adaptability to project changes.

#### Equity

- **79%** of projects were rated 'satisfactory' or higher for equity: a reasonable proportion of the group and/or those within the Indigenous community at extra disadvantage (e.g. women, young people, elderly, disabled, and others) are benefitting from project activities.

#### Effectiveness

- **95%** of projects were rated 'satisfactory' or higher for effectiveness, meaning that project activities were leading to desired outcomes and objectives.

#### Economy

- **86%** overall performance reflecting that the ILSC is demonstrating good stewardship of its resources and choosing the right investments that contribute to positive change for Indigenous people.

For more information on our 'Value or Money' evaluation approach see the Annual Report and ILSC Performance Framework on our website

[www.ilsc.gov.au](http://www.ilsc.gov.au)



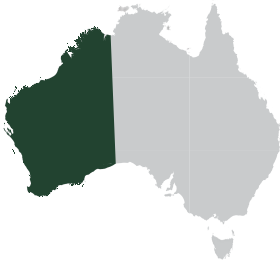
**Australian Government**

**Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation**



The **ILSC GROUP**

**PEOPLE. COUNTRY. OPPORTUNITY.**



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Established in 1995 under the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act*, we provide for the contemporary and future land needs of Indigenous people, particularly those unlikely to benefit from Native Title or Land Rights. We work with our Indigenous partners to grow their economic, environmental, cultural and social capital by supporting their acquisition and management of land and water. In redressing dispossession, we provide for a more prosperous and culturally centred future for Indigenous people.

The Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation is a Commonwealth entity under the  
*Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*