

Strategic Plan

2014

A framework of priorities, strategies and goals to guide the ECH section's work

ILC

Environment, Carbon & Heritage Section

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Glossary

Some of the key terms used throughout this document are defined here for easy reference.

Biodiversity offsets

Biodiversity offsets are measurable conservation outcomes resulting from actions that are designed to compensate for the residual impacts of development activities. They can be compliance-based or voluntary.

In deciding whether or not a development project should go ahead, regulatory bodies must balance the positive and negative social, economic and environmental impacts that are expected to occur as a result. All Australian states and territories require proponents of major projects to assess the likely environmental impacts of a proposed development; regulators must take the results into consideration when deciding whether consent will be granted for the project to go ahead.

Offsets are measures of last resort. They are generally only used after all reasonable steps have been taken first to avoid and minimize the impact of a project, and then to restore biodiversity on-site. The goal is to achieve no net loss and preferably a net gain in environmental values in the area affected by the project.

Climate change

Various human activities cause pollution that is altering the balance of gases in the atmosphere at a global scale. This pollution is predicted to have a number of related effects (known as the greenhouse effect), which have implications for climate change.

Australia is among the developed countries most vulnerable to climate change. Our climate is highly variable and predisposed toward extreme weather events and our ecosystems are finely balanced and often unique. Climate change will have direct social and economic costs for Australia, including Indigenous people, which need to be managed.

Heritage

Heritage values are tangible and intangible qualities that give significance to certain ecosystems, landscapes, objects, events, cultural products, buildings, monuments, traditions and people over and above their economic or physical face value. Heritage values give places and things deeper meaning; they provide an importance beyond that which can be measured quantitatively.

The Australian Government Department of the Environment recognises three categories of heritage – natural heritage, Indigenous heritage and historic heritage. Heritage places in Australia are classified into lists and registers that guide their protection and management; these are managed by various levels of government and peak bodies.

Indigenous Protected Area (IPA)

An Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) is an area of Indigenous-owned land or sea where traditional owners have entered into an agreement with the Australian Government to promote biodiversity and cultural resource conservation. IPAs make a significant contribution to Australian biodiversity conservation - making up over a third of Australia's National Reserve System.

There are currently 60 declared IPAs covering just over 48 million hectares across Australia. IPAs now cover an area which equates to around 36% of our National Reserve System. The IPA program is part of the Australian Government's Caring for Our Country initiative

Payments for ecosystems services

Ecosystems provide a range of services such as reliable flows of clean water, productive soil, clean air, waste absorption, and carbon sequestration. People, companies and societies rely on these services for raw material inputs, productive processes, biodiversity and climate stability.

However, many of these ecosystem services are either undervalued or have no financial value at all. In response to growing concerns about ecosystem degradation, markets are emerging that aim to invest in the restoration and maintenance of ecological systems and the services they provide. Examples include: carbon sequestration and abatement, watershed protection services, soil protection services and biodiversity protection, such as through offsets and credit programs.

Renewable energy

Renewable energy is energy which can be obtained from natural resources that can be constantly replenished. Renewable energy technologies include technologies that use, or enable the use of, one or more renewable energy sources. Types of renewable energy technologies include: biofuel, hydropower, solar energy, wind energy, ocean energy and geothermal energy.

“Indigenous land management in Australia extends to more than 20% of the continent.”

“The ILC has a key role in supporting Indigenous communities to manage this land to support sustainable livelihoods that maintain heritage values.”

Introduction

In August 2013, the ILC formally established a section responsible for matters relating to environment, carbon, heritage, water, biodiversity, energy and the like.

The Environment, Carbon and Heritage (ECH) section facilitates the development and delivery of policy, programs, strategic planning, evaluation and reporting based on sound research and consultation. It develops ILC policy positions and enables practical projects on Indigenous-held land in collaboration with other stakeholders, including in relation to carbon markets, biodiversity offsets, the protection of heritage values and renewable energy initiatives. The section provides advice and support to the ILC Board, senior management and staff on relevant policy matters and is involved in the development, implementation and evaluation of demonstration projects on Indigenous-held land.

To this end, the ECH section provides support to Indigenous people to help them better understand and manage environmental challenges on their land and to support the creation of sustainable land-based economic development opportunities. It seeks to be innovative, both in the design of new initiatives and policy positions, and in its approach to research and development. Additionally, the ECH section assists the ILC to meet its corporate environmental objectives and legal obligations relevant to environment, carbon and heritage.

The following points provide further context as to why the ECH section was established and what its primary functions are.

- A significant portion of the Australia landmass is managed by Indigenous people
Approximately 20% of the Australian continent is directly owned or managed by Indigenous people. When areas such as co-managed national parks, lands subject to Native Title claim and Indigenous Land Use Agreements are included, the total is even higher. However, much Indigenous land is undeveloped, has marginal productive capacity and is of low economic value. Accordingly, the ECH section is keen to explore and support innovative opportunities, best-practice management and ‘out-of-the-box’ solutions to deliver benefits for Indigenous landholders.

- The wellbeing and livelihoods of Indigenous people are closely associated with land
Indigenous beliefs, customs and identities are closely connected with the land. This includes a strong sense of obligation to care for the land appropriately and respectfully, such as caring for and protecting threatened species and conserving the integrity of ecosystems and landscapes.
- Indigenous people face significant land management challenges
The vast tracts of Indigenous land across Australia face significant challenges, including control of wildfires, maintaining fragile ecosystems, sustainable economic development, control of weeds and feral animals, mitigating the risks of climate change, and protecting cultural and environmental heritage values. The ILC seeks to collaborate with other agencies and business partners that share responsibility for these matters to address these challenges in innovative and sustainable ways and to contribute to lasting solutions that involve and benefit Indigenous people.
- Significant and emerging opportunities
As the global community becomes increasingly aware of the risks of climate change and the associated need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, opportunities for landholders to generate income from carbon abatement activities, such as early dry season savanna burning to avoid emissions and increase carbon stocks, are emerging. Further, there is growing interest, both globally and domestically, in opportunities for landholders to produce sustainable biological feedstock for conversion into biofuels, as well as investment in renewable energy technologies such as solar and wind power generation. The ILC is keen to take advantage of emerging opportunities in this space and to support the development of innovative pilot projects that deliver benefits for Indigenous people.

“The ILC is an independent statutory authority of the Australian Government established in 1995”



Background

Indigenous Land Corporation

The Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC) is an independent Australian Government statutory authority set up in 1995 under the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act 2005*. Its purpose is to assist Indigenous people to acquire and manage land to achieve economic, environmental, social and cultural benefits.

The ILC’s priority outcomes for achieving Indigenous benefits (defined as long-term improvements in Indigenous wellbeing) through acquiring and managing land include:

- Access to and protection of cultural and environmental values
- Socio-economic development

National Indigenous Land Strategy

The ILC’s key policy document is the National Indigenous Land Strategy 2013-2017 (NILS). The NILS outlines the policies, strategies and priorities that guide the ILC’s core land acquisition and land management functions.

Strategic Plan 2014

This plan is intended to provide a framework of priorities, strategies and goals which will guide the ECH section’s work over the next twelve months. It seeks to frame the strategic issues and challenges that the ILC faces in seeking to create value for Indigenous stakeholders and to articulate the ILC’s legislative and statutory obligations in relation to ECH matters¹.

It will be important for the section to remain flexible in adapting to its changing environment, including new government policy and any changes to the organisational operating environment that may arise. Accordingly, this plan is considered a guide for decision-making and resource allocation in the future, rather than a fixed, inflexible document.

¹ The ILC’s primary legislative responsibilities are via the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act 2005* (ATSI Act) and the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999* (EPBC Act).

Purpose

Our purpose is to help Indigenous people achieve benefits from environment, carbon and heritage opportunities through:

1. The identification, investigation and development of innovative, practical projects.
2. Supporting ILC compliance with relevant environment, carbon and heritage legislation.
3. Leadership and policy influence.

Values

The following values and principles are fundamental to the way in which the ECH section works:

- Innovation and best practice
- Clear, proactive communication
- Willingness to take calculated, strategic risks
- Diligence and hard work
- Sound research and thorough investigation
- Respect and integrity
- Leadership
- Collaboration and teamwork

Goals and Outcomes

Goals

- To support the identification, investigation and development of environment, carbon and heritage opportunities into innovative, practical projects to benefit Indigenous people.
- To support the ILC's leadership and policy influence in relation to environment, carbon and heritage.
- To support ILC compliance with relevant environment, carbon and heritage legislation and other statutory responsibilities.
- To foster efficient, effective and good practice operations within the ECH section.

Outcomes

The following points describe the types of outcomes and success factors the ECH section is striving to achieve in its work:

- Indigenous enterprises are engaging in a diversity of markets relevant to environment, carbon and heritage, including the Carbon Farming Initiative, biodiversity offsets, sustainable ecotourism, renewable energy and the like.
- The ILC is abreast of, and responding to, emerging national and global issues and trends relevant to environment, carbon and heritage, such as energy management, climate change and biofuels.
- The ILC has a 'seat at the table' at influential forums, committees, advisory groups and the like, and is actively influencing relevant decision-makers within the public, private and not-for-profit sectors.
- Environment, carbon and heritage legislative requirements are embedded into LA and LM activities and the ILC has systems and processes in place to ensure its ongoing compliance.
- The ILC is actively collaborating with other agencies and business partners to develop innovative opportunities and design sustainable enterprises that benefit Indigenous people.

Opportunities and Challenges

Opportunities and challenges have been identified that are expected to impact and shape the work of the ECH section over the next twelve months.

Opportunities

- Shape the direction of future Government policy and respond to new Government policy and program priorities related to environment, carbon and heritage issues.
- Support the development of practical, innovative demonstration projects that benefit Indigenous people.
- Ensure that the interests of Indigenous people are prominently positioned in national and international networks related to environment, carbon and heritage.
- Ensure the ILC is responsive to emerging global and national mandates, such as Kyoto targets, UNESCO World Heritage guidelines and business targets for biodiversity management.
- Better communicate our activities and achievements, both internally and externally.
- Provide guidance to stakeholders in the ways we can help Indigenous people to navigate this space and achieve ongoing benefits.
- Investigate, develop and support Indigenous enterprises, especially those related to payments for ecosystems services.
- Investigate and demonstrate viable models of integrated land management on Indigenous-held land that incorporate economic, environmental and cultural heritage management priorities.
- Develop strategic collaborations with key stakeholders, including other agencies with responsibility for environment, carbon and heritage matters and other business partners.
- Possible changes to the ILC's organisational operating environment and/or program delivery arrangements that may be introduced as a result of reviews of existing administrative structures may provide opportunities to expand the scope of the ILC's support to Indigenous people in environment, carbon and heritage matters.

Challenges

- The impact of new government policy on the availability of funding and other support for environment, carbon and heritage initiatives.
- Maintaining compliance with legislative and statutory obligations related to environment, carbon and heritage matters, and ensuring requirements are embedded into core LA and LM activities.
- The lack of a comprehensive map of Indigenous-held land is an ongoing challenge because it limits the ability of the ILC to identify and examine the feasibility of new environment, carbon and heritage opportunities.
- Finding new and innovative ways to attract and leverage external funding.
- Increasing competition for internal ILC funds for strategic projects.
- Striking a balance between leading the way with best-practice approaches and demonstrating value for money in a limited funding environment.
- Given that the ILC is a significant landholder, environmental pressures will create increasing challenges for the ILC, especially with regards to climate change and extreme weather events, decreasing availability of water resources and increasing demand for food production and energy efficiency.
- It is difficult to ensure that consultation with Indigenous groups is comprehensive and representative, both geographically and across all issues that the ECH section works on.
- Politics, both within and amongst Indigenous groups and in the broader government context, can affect the way we work.

Ways of Working

The ECH section will use different ways of working to pursue its goals, achieve its intended outcomes and address and respond to the different challenges and opportunities it may face over the next twelve months.

- Design and create innovative demonstration projects in collaboration with internal ILC stakeholders, including the Divisions and Business Operations, as well as with external stakeholders such as Indigenous groups, other agencies and business partners.
- Provide advice and assistance to both internal and external stakeholders in relation to environment, carbon and heritage matters, including arranging training for ILC staff, where necessary.
- Support the development of new methodologies under the Carbon Farming Initiative.
- Respond to calls for submission on proposed new government policy and legislation relevant to the ILC's environment, carbon and heritage work.
- Call for specific projects such as biodiversity offsets, renewable energy or payments for ecosystems services in future LA/LM funding rounds, including through calls for EOIs and/or requests for tender.
- Analyse and understand emerging environment, carbon and heritage markets from a national and global perspective, including their possible relevance to Indigenous people. This may include canvassing and monitoring relevant networks, groups, websites, journals and email lists, as well as participating in key discussions and/or initiatives.
- Engage external expertise to provide specialist knowledge, where appropriate.
- Actively engage with Indigenous groups and other stakeholders about environment, carbon and heritage issues on ILC-held properties and ILC agricultural businesses.
- Seek to implement best-practice environment and heritage management on ILC-held properties and identify and implement ways to demonstrate corporate leadership and innovation in policy and practice.
- Share knowledge and communicate widely to assist Indigenous groups to engage effectively with carbon and biodiversity markets.
- Identify and leverage external funding to support the development and implementation of environment, carbon and heritage initiatives.

Areas of Focus

Key areas have been identified that the ECH section intends to focus on over the next twelve months, using the types of approaches that have been identified elsewhere in this document. The areas of focus are separated into primary and secondary areas to reflect their level of priority for the ECH section.

Primary

Carbon

- Oversee the operation of the Fish River Fire Project
- Provide support to Indigenous groups to engage with the CFI
- Support the development of new land-based CFI methodologies
- Develop and implement the NT Savanna Burning Program, funded by INPEX
- Establish new CFI projects on Indigenous-held land
- Assess the opportunity to engage with the VCS and other voluntary markets
- Continue to measure the ILC's carbon footprint and conduct ESD reporting
- Assess the opportunity to reduce the ILC's emissions and become carbon neutral

Heritage

- Ensure the ILC complies with the EPBC Act with regards to heritage management
- Implementation of the Heritage Strategy, including training ILC staff and establishing a heritage register
- Embed heritage management considerations in core LA/LM business practices
- Engage with Traditional Owners in the identification, assessment and management of heritage values on ILC-held properties

Biodiversity Offsets

- Establish partnerships with agencies, private sector stakeholders and Indigenous groups
- Develop a biodiversity offset demonstration project
- Share lessons learned and assist other Indigenous groups to engage with state and/or federal biodiversity offset policies

NRM on Business Properties

- Integrating production and conservation on agricultural properties
- Support threatened species, weed, fire and feral animal management
- Establish rangelands condition monitoring sites on agricultural properties and conduct ongoing monitoring and reporting
- Seek funding from external sources, where possible
- Foster best-practice environmental management and identify opportunities to demonstrate leadership and innovation

Secondary

Renewable Energy

Investigate the opportunity to produce sustainable feedstock for biofuel on Indigenous-held land

Assess the feasibility of using biofuel to meet the energy demands of the agricultural businesses

Investigate the opportunity to support the generation of renewable energy, such as solar and wind power, on Indigenous-held land

Climate Change

Assessing climate change risk for ILC-held properties and planning to adapt to change

Investigating the opportunity to build the resilience of Indigenous landholders to cope with extreme weather events and a changing climate

Prioritise the protection of heritage values that may be threatened by the consequences of climate change

Sustainable IPAs

Contribute to the investigation of possible sustainable funding models for IPAs in collaboration with relevant agencies and business partners

Encourage and support appropriate economic development opportunities on IPAs, such as sustainable grazing and ecological tourism

Water

Investigate possible opportunities for economic development associated with water rights and allocations for Indigenous landholders

Prioritise the maintenance of water flows and water conservation for the protection of cultural and environmental heritage values on Indigenous-held land