



Australian
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University

National Centre for Indigenous Studies Consultation

Summary of Feedback and Development of Future Model

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Contents

Forward.....1

Summary of Consultation Process.....2

Feedback..... 2-7

 Hub and Spokes Model.....3

 Coordination of Activities 4-5

 The Indigenous Studies Major 5-6

 Governance 6

 Operational Matters 6-7

Key Issues 7-8

Concept for a Future Model for NCIS 8-10

 NCIS Hub.....9

 NCIS Spokes 9

 Indigenous Research, Education and Community Engagement Programmes 9-10

Next Steps 10

Attachments.....11-12

Forward

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Elders past and present of all the lands on which The Australian National University operates.

The University released the National Centre for Indigenous Studies (NCIS) Discussion Paper on 19 March 2018. The purpose of the paper was to seek feedback on how best to position NCIS for the future, as a flagship, national centre for Indigenous activity, at the national and international level. It recognised that there are many excellent, but sometimes disparate, activities which are not always well connected across ANU.

The discussion paper outlined a proposed increased remit for NCIS in order to facilitate collaboration both within ANU and between ANU and Indigenous communities to ensure ANU achieves our stated mission of leading the nation in Indigenous research, education, and engagement activities. Elevating the role and capacity of NCIS under a new leadership and governance structure has enormous potential to significantly enhance collaboration and partnerships with improved outcomes and impact, above and beyond what has been achieved to date.

Thank you to all members of the University, both staff and students, from within and beyond the NCIS, for your active participation in this process. The feedback highlighted the opportunities, challenges and details that need to be carefully considered before a fuller concept model for the Centre is developed.

The purpose of this paper is to summarise the feedback, identify issues that require further detailed consideration and outline a timetable for the next stages of the consultation.

I look forward to your participation and contributions to the next phase of the consultation.

Professor Brian P. Schmidt
Vice-Chancellor

1. Summary of Consultation Process

The NCIS Discussion Paper was released on 19 March 2018 and open for feedback until 6 April 2018. A copy of the paper was provided to all NCIS staff, and senior Indigenous academic staff, prior to the wider release to the University community.

During the consultation period a total of 16 formal submissions were received. The feedback was provided on both an individual and team/area basis. There was strong engagement from a wide range of areas across the University.

The Vice-Chancellor also met with NCIS staff and students on 6 March and 31 May and CAEPR staff on 10 April.

2. Feedback

Overall, the feedback for the proposal to expand the remit of the NCIS in the future in order to ensure all Indigenous research, education and engagement activities are connected and coordinated across ANU was strongly supported. The proposed 'Hub and Spokes' model was supported, emphasising the need for clear roles and responsibilities, and further details on operational details to implement this model. The importance of ensuring that any changes do not duplicate or impact negatively on existing areas of activity across the University, which are functioning well, was emphasised.

It was noted that the NCIS Charter is 15 years old and further updating should be considered in advance of the next iteration of the paper. Suggestions included:

- Removing the research priorities, which are reflective of current interests.
- Emphasising the NCIS's role as fostering and collaborating in Indigenous research across the University to build an ANU-wide research agenda for Indigenous peoples.
- Explicit mention of NCIS as the 'public face' for ANU in taking research findings and teaching opportunities to the wider Australian public and to Indigenous communities.

- Reference to the international dimension of NCIS's work was welcomed including a suggestion that a name change to the "International Centre for Indigenous Studies" be considered in the future, to include responsibility for international teaching/courses; international exchanges and partnerships; and convening international debates on issues of Indigenous Studies, and formalising institutional partners with a focus on Indigenous topics.

The key themes of the feedback (in no order of priority) included:

2.1 Hub and Spokes model

Central to all feedback was the need to have a detailed model of the "Hub and Spokes" that outlined clearly the difference between the Hub and the Spokes, with clear responsibilities and accountabilities, decision-making powers, communication mechanisms and accountability. There was a consistent view that in 'connecting' the Hub with the Spokes, there should be acknowledgement that this is already being done very effectively across a number of areas within the University, but with the concession this is not uniform across all areas of ANU.

There was some concern that Indigenous Studies may be centralised through this process and that any perception of this should be clarified, and that it should be clear that Indigenous research would not be 'moved' into NCIS nor would it become a 'gatekeeper' or isolated from the rest of the University. Rather it needs to be made clear that NCIS has a vital role in facilitating collaborations across the ANU and between ANU and Indigenous communities. Equally, any changes should not result in NCIS evolving to a small or 'virtual clearinghouse' but to a dynamic research institute/centre, which must contain a core vibrant research programme and active scholarship and leadership in ANU degree programmes in Indigenous Studies.

While reference in the consultation paper was made to the Energy Change Institute, Climate Change Institute and China Studies, there are both positives and negatives in these existing models at ANU. There were some views that the gender institute was also a relevant model, specifically with reference to the Institute responding to, and supporting, local initiatives while performing a coordinating, facilitating, strategic function.

2.2 Coordination of activities

A common theme was acknowledgement that there is no central place within ANU whereby researchers and teachers can locate all relevant activity within ANU, to inform College and School led projects and course development. The development of a “Hub” that is led from NCIS to achieve this function, with academic leadership was therefore strongly supported.

Specific points raised regarding education included:

- ANU could do more to build expertise, understanding and competency within the undergraduate cohort of Indigenous issues and research and there is role for NCIS to provide more input and support to undergraduate courses with an Indigenous content.
- NCIS could develop even stronger links with Tjabal that would include pathways into further research and/or education. For example, asking NCIS HDR students to tutor undergraduate Tjabal students.
- The relevant education committees could be a useful mechanism to coordinate the teaching of Indigenous specific content at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

As noted in the Consultation paper, examples only of categories of activity across ANU were provided that would benefit from linking to NCIS. Submissions highlighted the following areas could be included:

- Sir Roland Wilson Foundation – new postgraduate scholarship for Indigenous APS employees.
- Anthropology and Archaeology, in particular the Centre for Native Title Anthropology and ANZSOG.
- The major partnerships list should include: the Department of Communication and the Arts; Flinders University; Melbourne University; University of Tasmania; KALACC; Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority, Gur a Baradharaw Kod Torres Strait Sea and Land Council.
- Greater reference to CAEPR and how this process can build on CAEPR’s existing strengths and expertise.

- ANU's research strength in quantitative analysis of Indigenous outcomes and determinants of those outcome.

The relationship with the Public Policy and Societal Impact Hub was unclear, with some endorsing that NCIS should have strong links with the Hub and others querying why it was explicitly referenced.

There was support for the central Hub in NCIS to have oversight over which parts of the Indigenous population are invited to participate in ANU research, and a record maintained of this engagement to ensure the associated burden on various communities or organisations is managed appropriately. Similarly, a central Hub that maintained a database of all research activities, a full list of researchers, partners and major programmes was seen as beneficial to research activities and in establishing collaborations. The Hub could also serve to create a community of practice across ANU with NCIS coordinating regular seminars and a public lecture program.

2.3 The Indigenous Studies Major

The feedback indicated that the terminology in the paper (specifically the use of the term co-convenor) led to misinterpretation of the intent of the consultation. Key points noted included:

- The Indigenous Studies Major is already staffed and resourced within CASS and should remain hosted by a College which has the infrastructure, academic and professional staff and committees in place to deliver the degree; an active partnership between NCIS and CASS was welcome, noting the need to ensure Indigenous Studies courses are available to students in all faculties. There is also enormous opportunity for other academic colleges to become more engaged in the major beyond the course that is currently jointly taught by CASS and Science.
- Two convenors could be difficult to operate in practice. It was suggested that an Indigenous convenor could be based in CASS, do their teaching and research within the College but hold a fractional appointment with NCIS to enable them to oversee the strategic development of the Major while the operations would be overseen by CASS administrative staff. Indigenous HDR students currently in NCIS welcomed the opportunity to teach into the major as part of their research training.

- The next iteration of the paper needs to distinguish between an Indigenous Studies major taught by a College and Indigenous studies across the University. It was suggested that NCIS would add the most value to the latter.
- It was suggested that NCIS has potential to build on its existing expertise to develop undergraduate and postgraduate courses. Examination of the Major could include building a pathway into the HDR programme.
- There was concern that ANU may not have an Indigenous languages specialist teaching into courses and there was feedback from Indigenous Students regarding the need for more Indigenous staff teaching into the degree.

2.4 Governance

Some feedback raised concerns about the role and membership of the proposed advisory board. The inclusion of three College Deans led some to conclude that this may result in the incorporation of the NCIS into the College system and weaken the level of autonomy. In addition, the need for Indigenous representation was noted and more discussion is needed regarding external representatives such as alumni, as well as current staff. A reference group was proposed as an alternative. The purpose of the group and ensuring it adds value and does not impede the work of the Centre and the Director was noted.

In terms of reporting lines, the current reporting of the Director of NCIS to the Vice-Chancellor was considered extremely important, rather than to a member of the Executive.

2.5 Operational Matters

To operate effectively the model should be clear on the issue of subsidiarity including clarity of roles/responsibilities, decision-making powers, communication mechanisms; and accountability.

NCIS currently sits outside the College structure, with the Director reporting to the Vice-Chancellor, and the support services (legal, HR, research services, IT, finance etc) provided by NCIS Professional Staff or by a Central Service Division.

Feedback on NCIS remaining outside of the College structure included:

- The importance of researchers affiliated/connected with NCIS to be embedded within a College/School to ensure they interact with colleagues from their discipline.

- NCIS does not benefit from the critical mass of College support services and consideration of the benefits of a single College providing some or all of the administration services for NCIS warrants strong consideration; this should be taken into account when determining administrative requirements of the expanded remit. For example, a critical mass of research support staff is needed to be across all potential funding opportunities from different funding agencies and the different post-award requirements.
- There was some concern that a centralised model might shift responsibility from local areas. Instead, devoting resources to enabling parts of the University to enhance their local and discipline specific initiatives could be considered.
- If NCIS remains outside of the College structure, but has an increased remit, increased administrative support would be required (and may not be efficient). It was suggested that the expanded remit would require an increase in staff capacity beyond the proposed 'small number of core professional staff.'
- Views were presented that NCIS is currently understaffed both professionally and academically but also that relative to other areas the Centre has adequate staff, but that they do not benefit from connection to peers in College administrative areas that allow building of capacity, backups in absences and efficiencies that flow from a critical mass of staff.
- A number of submissions emphasised the importance of ensuring a smooth flow of information between the Hub and the Spokes. For example, staff from Schools meeting and collaborating in the 'Hub' to learn from other perspectives and enrich the overall discussion, and then relaying and disseminating this within their relevant 'Spoke' to help embed Indigenous perspectives throughout ANU.

3. Key Issues

There were a number of key issues which arose from the initial consultation. Summarised below are those which will require more analysis and input to inform the development of a detailed operational model for NCIS that achieves the vision for NCIS outlined in the Consultation paper:

- NCIS Charter: refresh to reflect the ambition of the ANU Strategic Plan, international as well as national role and capture expanded remit outlined in the consultation paper.
- Definition of the functions, roles and responsibilities, accountability of the Hub and the Spokes.
- Definition of the specific activities to be coordinated via the Hub versus normal College and School activities.
- Indigenous Studies Education: clarifying an expanded role for NCIS in undergraduate and Masters teaching, including the Indigenous Studies Major, and ensuring active participation of Indigenous staff and HDR students into teaching programmes as appropriate.
- Governance: consideration of alternate Reference Group and membership with role of group and reporting line clarity to ensure this is value-add.
- Staffing and Budget: NCIS staff appointments, joint appointments, affiliated staff, professional staff to deliver agreed functions in a new model with strong academic leadership and a critical mass of activity at NCIS preserved, supplemented by additional resources (yet to be defined).
- Operational model outside College structure may benefit from consideration of delivery of some support services from outside NCIS (Division or College); to be considered once functions are defined.

4. Concept for a Future Model for NCIS

Attachment 1 provides a **high level** concept of the functions only for a future model of NCIS outlining the Hub and Spokes model. Attachment 2 outlines a proposed updated NCIS Charter.

Please note that staffing and resourcing implications have **not** been addressed in this paper as decisions on these matters should be considered after the core functions of NCIS

and the Hub and Spoke functions and activities have been defined. Final decisions will be made with the input of the Director NCIS once this position is filled after advertisement.

4.1 NCIS Hub

The core functions of NCIS are centred on Research, Education and Community. These core activities are interlinked, with, for example, the Visitor programme (Distinguished international and national scholars, short-term visitors, scholars, interns) attracting appointments across all areas. Similarly, the events/outreach programme would showcase all areas of activity in Indigenous Studies.

Further development of the overall concept requires input from the University community. A key part of this process will be a workshop facilitated by an external Indigenous facilitator that through breakout and plenary sessions allows Research, Education and Community issues to be both explored separately and brought together. This will allow a detailed discussion of how best to carry out the proposed functions and activities, and interactions between the Hub and Spokes. Discussion questions and development of a full agenda for the workshop will be developed with key stakeholders and released to registrants.

4.2 NCIS Spokes

The Spokes are intended to identify and connect all Indigenous Studies staff and HDR students to the NCIS Hub. Suggestions on the best mechanism(s) to achieve this will be discussed at the workshop, with some examples provided in Attachment 1.

4.3 Indigenous Research, Education and Community Engagement Programmes

Central to the proposed concept is a detailed picture of all relevant activities across campus, including an understanding of all partners and collaborators. Work is underway to summarise activity across ANU and input will be sought on missing information during the workshops.

Please note that the University Research Committee (URC) at its June 2018 meeting

discussed development of an Indigenous Research Strategy, including a baseline audit of activities, an objective under the Reconciliation Action Plan. An initial proposed framework and current inventory of research is underway, and Colleges have been invited to complete the inventory via College RAP committees. This exercise will inform the identification of cross-University initiatives that would be coordinated and/or led from the NCIS, as well as a list of all staff who would be formally affiliated with NCIS.

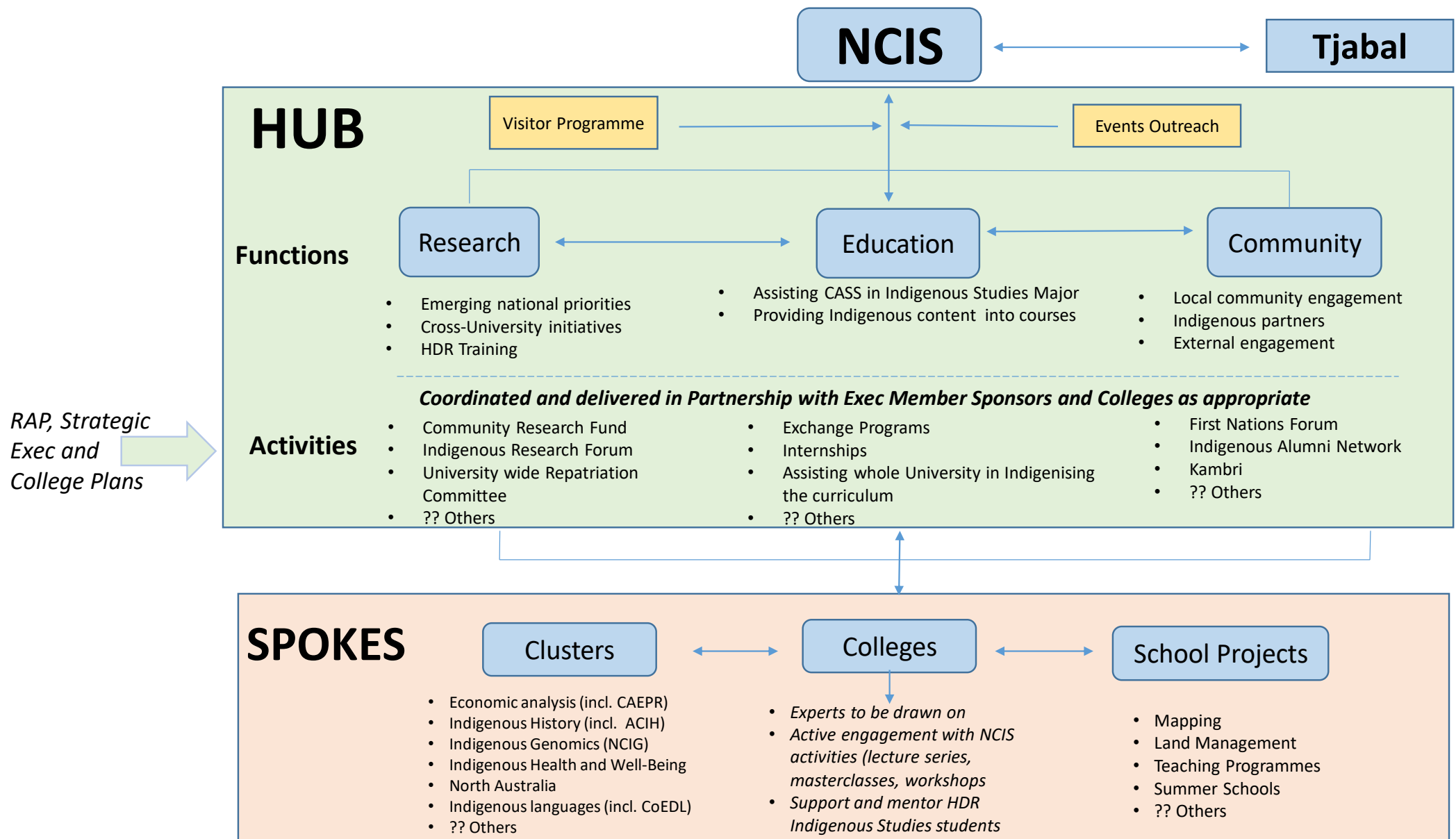
The communication and engagement strategy across all three pillars (research, education, community) in the proposed concept model could include the following, led from NCIS:

- A single website that would provide a portal for all activities in both the Hub and Spokes
- An inventory of all research activities, education offerings, and community partners
- Bi-annual forums/updates
- Masterclasses, lecture series, informal discussions groups that would bring together staff and students from across ANU (Spokes)

5. Next steps

2 July	Summary of Feedback and Development of Future Model Paper released
9-13 July	Key stakeholder input into the workshop
16-20 July	Workshop agenda released
30 July	Workshop
Early August	Concept model updated to incorporate feedback from workshop
Late August	VC meeting with NCIS Staff and other key stakeholders for input into Director role and seeking suitable names
September	Advertise Director NCIS

Attachment 1



Attachment 2

Proposed Updated NCIS Charter

Vision

The NCIS will drive activity which will establish the ANU as a leader in Indigenous research, education and community and into the university of choice for students and staff in Indigenous studies nationally and internationally.

Core Functions – Research, Education and Community

NCIS will promote:

- the inclusion and coordination of Indigenous research, education, and community outreach at the ANU, with our First Nations Peoples, across Australia, and beyond
- understanding and mutually beneficial relationships between academics, students and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- research in partnership with Indigenous communities addressing emerging issues of national significance to Indigenous Australia.
- education which incorporates appropriate Indigenous content and knowledge across ANU
- understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, policy-makers and researchers about our shared past, present and future, at the local, national and global level
- a strong and special relationship with the Tjabal Centre for Higher Education.