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# Whole of Community Engagement

Initiative

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## Self-determination and leadership in a remote Indigenous research context: The story of *Research Us*

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Ms Donna Stephens<sup>2</sup> and Associate Professor James Smith<sup>2</sup>

1. Research Us
2. Office of Pro Vice Chancellor – Indigenous Leadership, Charles Darwin University

# Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that this meeting is being held on the traditional land of the Larrakia people and pay respects to elders past, present and future. We recognise their strength and resilience.



# Background

- \* Aboriginal researchers leading and conducting Aboriginal research (National Aboriginal Education Committee 1985; Smith 1999; Anderson 2005; Bauman et al 2014)
- \* Indigenous knowledges, research methodologies and education (Smith 1999, 2005)
- \* *The comparative aboriginal cultural knowledge use as a guiding literature.*



# Context

- \* In August 2015, a Remote Indigenous Researcher Forum (RIRF) brought together 27 remote Indigenous researchers from across the Northern Territory and Torres Strait Islands to share and discuss research issues and strategies important to them

- \* Evidence suggests that there is a long history of non-Indigenous people conducting research on Indigenous people



# Context

- \* RIRF was led by the Whole of Community Engagement team in the Office of Pro Vice Chancellor – Indigenous Leadership at Charles Darwin University in partnership with:
  - \* Batchelor Institute;
  - \* North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance; and
  - \* Menzies School of Health Research.

- \* People involved on the Organising Committee included:
  - \* Ms Donna Stephens
  - \* Ms Aurelie Girard
  - \* Mr Dean Yibarbuk
  - \* Ms Millie Olcay
  - \* Dr Bronwyn Rossingh
  - \* Ms Peta Fraser
  - \* Dr Henk Huijser
  - \* Ms Erica McCreedy
  - \* Mr Glenn James
  - \* Ms Brianna Shaw
  - \* Ms Coralie Achterberg
  - \* Associate Professor James Smith





## Governance

Community leadership and governance in research and evaluation

Defining a clear message about research

Community participation in research and evaluation

How is research and evaluation in the community, understood by the community?



## Passing the Message

Indigenous ways of looking at information and data

How is research interpreted and who is involved in deciding what the message/findings are?

Thinking about ways of sharing research in communities and with community members



## Our Story

Indigenous enterprise and research

Research and research evaluation as employment

How do we research, what are good ways to research and evaluate research?

How do we 'own' our thinking and work? Walking, talking and sharing two knowledge systems.



## Building Research Communities

Research networks, learning from each other and sharing our work

Building connections across regions

Working with Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers and organisations

THEMES ARE INTERRELATED – KEY CONCEPTS IN EACH THEME ARE PROVIDED TO ASSIST IN THINKING ABOUT AND GUIDING (NOT CONFINING) DISCUSSION.



# Aspirational outcomes from RIRF

- \* **MoU** – the combining document
- \* **Remote Aboriginal Research Committee** – grass roots cultural knowledge
  - \* 2 Centre
  - \* 2 Top End
  - \* 2 Torres Strait
  - \* 6 Members
  - \* Meet twice a year
  - \* Telephone
  - \* Video link up
  - \* Darwin/Alice Springs
- \* **We would like to invite CDU and BIITE to work with us**



CDU

BIITE

Remote Aboriginal  
Research  
Committee x6

TE

TS

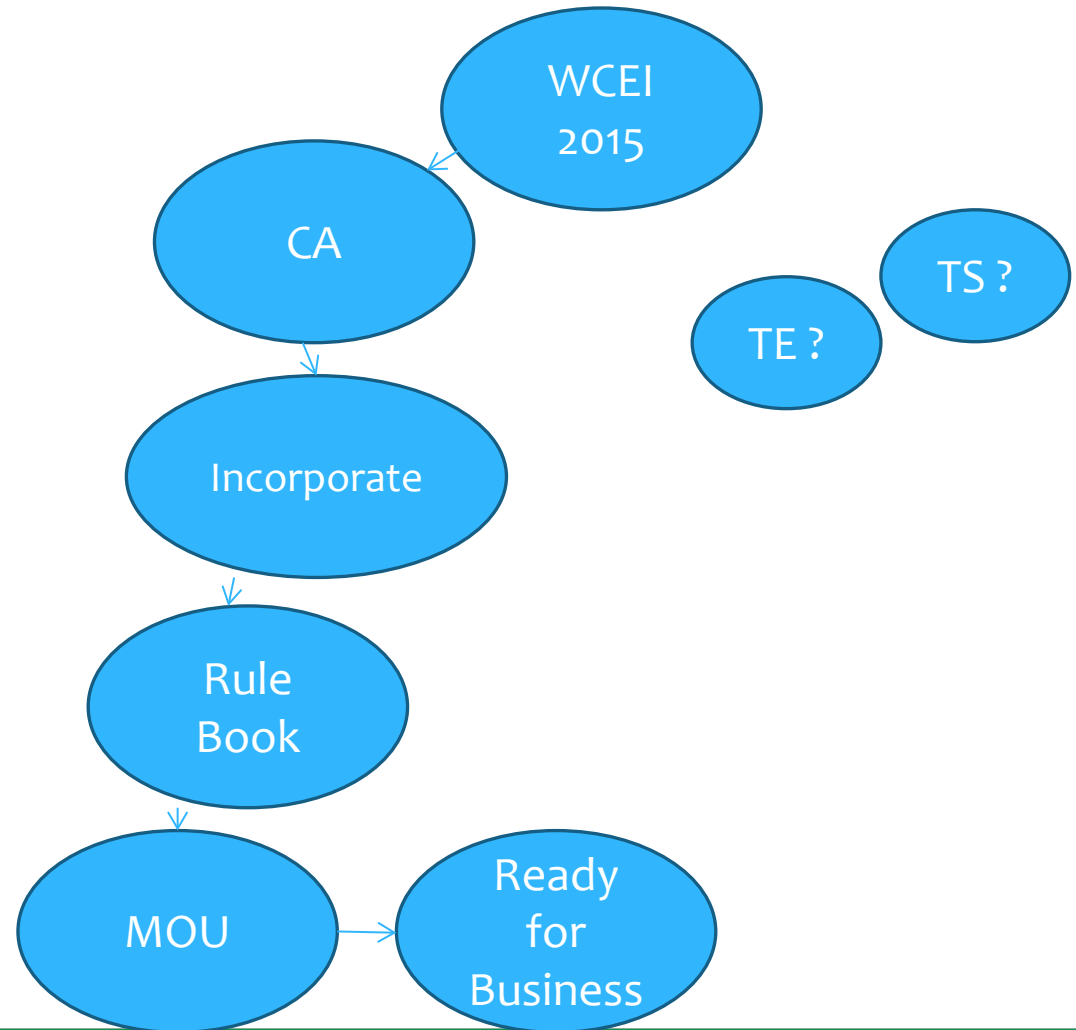
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**Local Aboriginal Research Members Corporation (LARMC)**  
Membership is by registration from community  
Training, Employment, Workshopping, Consultancy, Building Nation,  
Cultural Building





# The journey so far... Research “Us”



# Aim and objectives

Develop research expertise & use our knowledge, our cultural and our languages.

To build our capacity in research to **become self determined**. To engage and work in collaboration with two way learning and to ensure that aboriginal ethics is also met and understood.

Protect our rights, law, culture and Intellectual property in relation to research.

To communicate and to use research to inform Policy Makers for better living conditions for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander.



# Way of conducting our work

- \* Permission & consent is given from elders to be the voice of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people and stay confidential
- \* Ownership of our method and methodologies
- \* Analyse, interpret and report findings to benefit Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander
- \* Respect each other's protocols, policy and history
- \* Ensure fair and equitable research is done
- \* Show compassion and integrity in each other when doing research in Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander communities.



# Working in Partnership

- \* On 2 August 2016, CDU and Research Us committed to a partnership through a formal MOU arrangement until the end of 2018.
- \* This includes:
  - \* Access to facilities and resources for research training
  - \* In-kind administrative and finance support
  - \* Partnership activities



## Memorandum of Understanding

between

The Office of the Pro Vice Chancellor Indigenous Leadership at Charles Darwin University

and

Research "Us" Aboriginal Corporation

26 July 2016 to 30 December 2018



# Summary

- \* Research has always been in our cultural contrast from the beginning.
- \* Research in the past for our people was done by our people was a tool that they used to survive .
- \* Now our journey for aboriginal people is heading into the direction into modern research has just began for the future of our people.

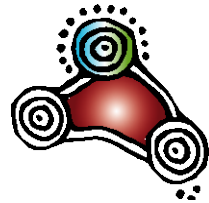




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# Whole of Community Engagement Initiative

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**Australian Centre for  
INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGES  
& EDUCATION**



**Batchelor  
Institute**

