



AIATSIS

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ABORIGINAL  
AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STUDIES

# Youth engagement in native title

Exploring the experiences of Aboriginal  
and Torres Strait Islander youth

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# Overview

- Native title
- Methodology
- Findings
  - Connection to country and culture
  - Access to information & knowledge
  - Active & ongoing mentorship
  - Barriers to participation
- Next steps

# Native title

- Recognises Indigenous peoples' rights in land and waters
- Determination of native title outlines the rights and interests of the particular group
- Registered Native Title Bodies Corporate (PBCs) are set up to hold and manage the rights and interests on behalf of the native title holders

# Young people & native title

- Widely recognised that effective succession and knowledge transmission are integral to the sustainability of native title organisations
- There is no earlier research that asks young people:
  - about their experiences and aspirations
  - how they are being engaged and informed by their native title organisations

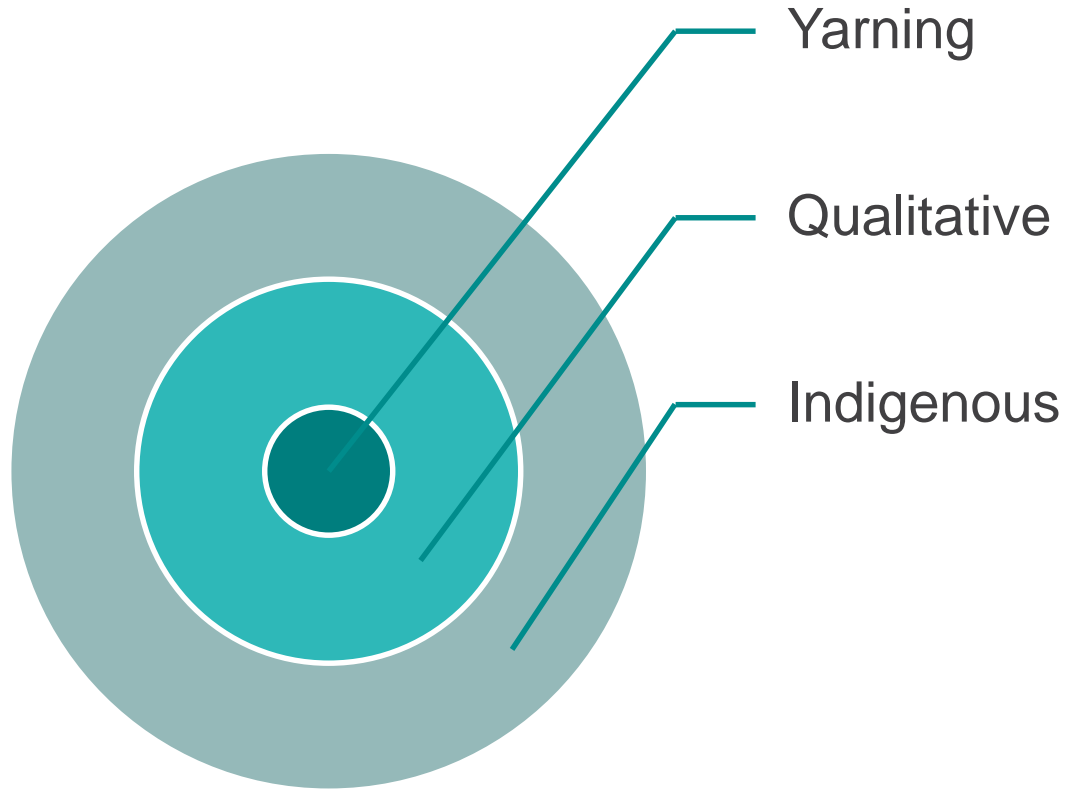
# Beginnings

- Impetus came from the National Native Title Conference Youth Forums
- Attendees identified:
  - A lack of knowledge, engagement, education and training in the sector
  - A need to better understand and engage with young people



Panel at the NTC Youth Forum 2018

# Methodology



# Methodology

## Recruitment:

- Networks from previous youth forums
- Social media
- Email and subscription networks
- Personal connections including friends and family

# Methodology





# The participants

- Strong connections to country
- 85% live away from country
- Equal split of those involved and not involved in native title
- Directors of PBCs, PBC or NTRB employees, or no involvement



# 1. Connection to country and culture

- The way people maintain their connection is evolving
- Mobile population
- “Collapsed time”
- Navigating “two worlds”

“I spose you get stuck between two worlds. You know you sort of went up through school and then I went off into the trade industry and just a lot of when you’re caught between the, whatever you want to call them, like the Western society and what’s familiar and still just mob back at home and even like a lot of knowledge that you feel doesn’t get passed down.” – Kurru Williamson, Euahlayi

“I see a lot of young people undergoing pressure from the two worlds... you have to go to school and you have to be this thing in this Western world, and you’re never good enough at that. And then you have to go home and be this thing with your family and also your community.”

– Vanessa Farrelly, Pertame

## 2. Access to information & knowledge



NTC Youth Forum delegates, 2017

- Demonstrated an awareness of the native title status of their community
- Perception from participants that they lacked sufficient knowledge of native title and governance
- Lack of suitable training opportunities to address their needs

# 3. Active & ongoing mentorship

- Advanced native title knowledge linked to active mentorship
- Participants with mentors felt more confident about being involved in the governance and business of their PBC

# 4. Barriers to participation

- Vested decision-making powers in older generations can impact on young people's involvement
- Gender
- Conflicting obligations
- Immediate benefits of native title?

“I don’t really feel confident taking over responsibility but that’s fine. That is why I have everyone around me, cos I wouldn’t do anything if I didn’t have approval from my family. But I would like to be more involved because then I would have a better understanding when it comes to me taking over.” – Dana Anura, Wajarri Yamatji

“It’s hard to [learn native title]! Especially when you’re working fulltime and you’re trying to learn that as well.” – Kerenza Royee, Malanbarra Yidinji and Olkola



# Emerging trends

- Connection to Country and culture is evolving
- Familial mentorship is key to involvement
- The need to create opportunities to work on Country



Wynston Shovellor being interviewed by the ABC at the NTC18

# Next steps

## Indigenous Youth in Governance and Political Processes Project

- Explore how young people are participating in governance and policy
- Examine existing engagement models and succession structures
- Support the development of those approaches

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What do young fellas reckon?  
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