

# Social Science Program

[www.desertknowledgecrc.com.au/socialscience](http://www.desertknowledgecrc.com.au/socialscience)

The social sciences use scientific methods to study human aspects of the world. The DKCRC Social Science Program makes sure that our research has people at its focus, and that it is relevant to communities and governments.

Our work in this area already shows that when local and scientific knowledge works together across disciplines we achieve more than we do by working separately. Results so far include a package of research tools focused on collaborative research methods<sup>1</sup>, Aboriginal research partnerships<sup>2</sup>, resource materials on various types of intellectual property and its use in protecting or benefiting Aboriginal knowledge<sup>3</sup>, and a revised Aboriginal Knowledge and Intellectual Property Protocol<sup>3</sup>.

These tools and resources on these issues can be found at [www.desertknowledgecrc.com.au/socialscience](http://www.desertknowledgecrc.com.au/socialscience).



*Researchers and community colleagues meet at a Waltja Research Nintiringtjaku workshop held at Ross River Homestead, Northern Territory.*

## Outcomes

- > Research that is relevant to and driven by people and their organisations. This creates a feedback loop in which people use the results of the research to advocate for themselves.
- > Researchers who use best practice policies and protocols for ethical, cross-cultural research with Aboriginal organisations and their local knowledge.
- > Research that aims to develop livelihood opportunities and makes sure that people are appropriately rewarded for their skills.
- > Understanding the origin of, and responsibility for management of, the intellectual property created as a result of DKCRC projects.
- > Promoting a culture that enables researchers to share emerging knowledge and insights.

## Strategy and action

In the DKCRC there is a diverse range of research projects and disciplines, including the natural sciences. The socially inclusive and collaborative approach to research advocated by this program applies, however, to all the sciences. We know that the process of doing the research is just as important as the outcomes. All of our projects are working in the wider community and many are in remote areas with Aboriginal people. The knowledge applied through social science research results in projects that are locally relevant, and that attain benchmark ethical standards.

DKCRC recognises that research is a two-way process, where local knowledge is valuable to researchers, just as the research should hold value for the community. DKCRC researchers support the need to incorporate people's aspirations and skills into the project. The process of research can bring opportunities, such as recognition of skills and knowledge, employment, training and skills development. When this happens, people understand the value of the project, they have local ownership (and with this responsibility), and they can become greater advocates for their community. This recognises that the social capital of the desert is an important asset to build upon and likewise that strong evidence-based research requires working closely with local knowledge.

We hold workshops and training sessions for researchers, students and Aboriginal people on topics such as social science research methods for students and researchers, and research nintiringtjaku ('learning for research', conducted with the Aboriginal organisation Waltja) with Aboriginal communities about the meaning and value of research and ethical research practice. Workshops are also hosted to share emerging research knowledge across the DKCRC about topical issues. Other workshops and focus groups are held to refine research protocols and policies, thereby acting as important outreach tools.

The following series of resources for DKCRC researchers and Aboriginal community groups were developed through workshops and focus groups:

- > Aboriginal Knowledge and Intellectual Property Protocol
- > Aboriginal Research Engagement Protocol
- > Good Manners Guide to working with Aboriginal People in Research
- > Free Prior Informed Consent form
- > Schedule of rates of pay for Aboriginal workers in research
- > Submission to the UN Permanent Forum on the Report of the Secretariat on Indigenous Traditional Knowledge

Other resources were developed to assist the work of the workshops and focus groups, including nine briefing papers on various aspects of intellectual property law<sup>3</sup>.

### Notes

1. Available from <http://desertknowledgecrc.com/socialscience/socialscience.html>.
2. Davies, J. 2007. *Walking together, working together: Aboriginal research partnerships*. DKCRC Research Report 26, Desert Knowledge CRC, Alice Springs.
3. Available from <http://desertknowledgecrc.com/socialscience/managingaboriginalknowledge.html>.



*DKCRC Social Science Coordinator Alicia Boyle with Waltja Research Nintiringtjaku project participants Natalie Petrick and her grandmother Agnes Petrick, both of Atitjere community.*



*Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people work together in a series of workshops to develop the new DKCRC Aboriginal Knowledge and Intellectual Property Protocol.*

## Participants

**Alicia Boyle** coordinates the Education and Social Science Programs of the DKCRC. She manages a national team of researchers and students who make people the focus of research.

**The project's participants** comprise a wide range of Aboriginal communities associated with the DKCRC and a wide range of our partners, including:

- > Charles Darwin University
- > Tangentyere Council
- > Waltja Tjuṯanguku Palyapayi

## Contacts

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