

Indigenous self-governance and 'nation' building: Considerations for a strategic self-analysis tool

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Abstract

Australian Indigenous governance operates in a high-pressured environment that is a jigsaw puzzle of jurisdictions, powers, policies, structures and legal and funding mechanisms at local, regional and national levels. This can undermine the ways that Indigenous peoples wish to collectively govern themselves and their 'nation building' aspirations, leaving little time or energy to reflect on where they are at or want to be in the future. Without a collectively created picture of the future to guide decision-making, opportunities for desired benefit can be lost, and the imposed agenda of outsiders becomes dominant.

CAEPR and the Australian Indigenous Governance Institute (AIGI) are working with First Nation partners in the *Indigenous Governance of Development: Self-Determination and Success Project* to explore issues involved in creating a practical tool which land-owning groups can use to strengthen their governance rebuilding efforts, and assess whether they are on track.

The paper considers a range of issues in designing an inward-looking, self-reflexive tool for these groups to think about their futures, rather than one which is focused on corporate organisational governance. The design of the tool is an integral part of the project's research methodology to make the research count. In the future, AIGI will host the proposed tool as part of its online Indigenous Governance Toolkit, making it accessible to other groups and able to be updated.