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Prioritising Indigenous knowledges in evaluations: submission to the draft Indigenous evaluation strategy

Summary

Indigenous Australians are often excluded from policy design, implementation and evaluation. Recognising this, the Productivity Commission has recently called for submissions to inform a new Indigenous Evaluation Strategy (IES) that prioritises Indigenous knowledges in policy design and evaluation. This submission to the Productivity Commission proposes a culturally appropriate framework to evaluate Indigenous policies that promotes Indigenous knowledges and experiences. The framework is a new approach, based on internationally recognised ground-breaking research, which will ensure Indigenous policies are designed collaboratively with Indigenous stakeholders to create sustainable outcomes for Indigenous Australians. This framework will benefit policymakers by enabling the development of Indigenous policies that create real social impact which is recognised as valuable to the communities they are designed to benefit.

Material in this submission is drawn from an innovative evaluation framework recently published internationally peer-reviewed paper exploring the notion of social value for Indigenous people in the context of Indigenous social procurement policies. It is directly applicable to programs funded by the Australian Government, which will require evaluation under the IES.

Social procurement must be visible and well-considered in the IES. Also required are implementation plans, resourcing and training for current government workforces in engaging with Indigenous knowledge concepts in evaluation. This framework extends western and Indigenous knowledges together into a new model for evaluation.

The need for this should also be clearly identified in the IES; in current form there is too little acknowledgement of the benefits of Indigenous knowledge systems and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Examples may be necessary to break down barriers non-Indigenous people have in engaging with non-western concepts of evaluation. The IES must include Indigenous people's concepts of evaluation.

The original paper the material below is drawn from is:

Denny-Smith, G, Williams, M, and Loosemore, M (2020) Assessing the impact of social procurement policies for Indigenous people. *Construction Management and Economics*. https://doi.org/10.1080/01446193.2020.1795217

Introduction

Indigenous Australians are the world's oldest continuous culture. They are a collectivist society, and have responsibilities clearly identified simultaneously across older and younger generations as well as for the physical environment – intergenerational caring for 'Country' being the primary responsibility (Bawaka Country et al. 2013). They have a holistic understanding of health being beyond the physical state of an individual to include mental, emotional, spiritual and social wellbeing of the community as a whole, and Country (National Aboriginal Health Strategy Working Party 1989, National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation 2011). Indigenous Australians are a young population, with approximately 50 per cent being under the age of 21 (ABS 2018) and are diverse with over 300 nations each with their own languages, community-level governance, Elders and visions for the future (Perkins and Langton 2010).

Since 1788, the lives of Indigenous Australians have been the subject of often conflicting, rapidly changing and poorly evaluated policies and programs. Specific policies have most often targeted Indigenous Australians separately to mainstream Australians. These have ranged from protectionism policies of the 1800s to 'smooth the dying pillow' of Indigenous Australian cultures and the expectations of extinction (Wolfe 2006), to assimilationist policies of the mid-1900s and seeking to subsume Indigenous Australians into a monoculture and Anglo identity (Arbon 2008). Shifts to support for self-determination were short-lived in the 1970s (Sullivan 2011) although that period saw the development of the first Aboriginal-community-controlled health, legal and childcare services which continue to operate today (Foley 1991, Grant et al. 2008). Today, these Aboriginal community-controlled services are organised into peak national bodies, with state bodies and networks across urban, regional and remote Australia. They are funded separately to mainstream services by the federal government, unlike other services generally which are state funded. The policy and funding arrangements that separate Aboriginal community-controlled services from mainstream also have a role in suppressing their growth, removing them from public policy development and evaluation, and maintaining them as 'other' in Australian consciousness (Sullivan 2011).

Evaluating policy

Government policies and programs are evaluated to assess their merit or worth (Productivity Commission 2020). Evaluations typically involve systematic processes of identifying the factors that make a policy or program successful or effective. Indigenous policies, such as the Commonwealth Indigenous Procurement Policy, are increasingly evaluated to determine the social value they create in Indigenous communities (Denny-Smith et al. 2019, 2020). Social value refers to the economic, social and cultural impacts of policies intended to benefit specified populations (Barraket et al. 2016, Raiden et al. 2019), such as Indigenous policies and programs. But government policies have rarely been developed or evaluated through the national network of Aboriginal services or involvement of Aboriginal leaders (Shokman and Russell 2017). There has therefore been "limited engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on evaluation selection, planning, conduct and reporting" (Productivity Commission (2020: 5).

Indigenous evaluations

Evaluations that consider Indigenous notions of value must account for diversity of Indigenous peoples (Taylor 2003), who are made up of many different communities have diverse histories, traditions and practices (tebrakunna country et al. 2019). But evaluations are rarely, if ever, built into the design of Indigenous policies or programs, and they are too often undertaken as an afterthought, with insufficient time or resources set aside for quality evaluations (Muir and Dean 2017). Non-Indigenous approaches to evaluating Indigenous policies and programs can therefore lead to distorted perceptions of success of these policies through oversimplifications of Indigenous processes and experiences, which do not address Indigenous values, aspirations and needs (Taylor 2003). To address this problem, an Indigenous evaluation framework is needed, to provide a more transparent monitoring and reporting structure on Indigenous outcomes that capture the social, cultural and economic influences on Indigenous programs (Williams 2016, Seivwright et al. 2017).

In responding to this need, this submission presents a new approach to evaluating Indigenous programs in partnership with Indigenous stakeholders. This submission is based on recent research involving Ngaa-bi-nya, a culturally appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander evaluation process (Williams 2018), decolonised

social impact research (Denny-Smith et al. 2019), and a new framework for evaluating Indigenous policies that prioritises Indigenous knowledges and experiences in the evaluation process (Denny-Smith et al. 2020). The table below explains how this submission responds to the need for an Indigenous Evaluation Strategy (Productivity Commission 2020: 6).

Need	Response
Centre Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, perspectives, priorities and knowledges in evaluations.	This submission is based on Indigenous scholarship and practice, which means Indigenous perspectives, priorities and knowledges are at its core.
Lift the bar on the quality of evaluations of policies and programs affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.	This evaluation framework prompts evaluators to ask questions based on the needs of Indigenous stakeholders, thereby improving the validity of evaluation findings
Enhance the use of evaluations to inform policy and program design and implementation.	Government departments can refer to the framework in this submission to inform policy development and evaluation. Using this model, policies could be reviewed by determining if they support *Ngaa-bi-nya* or create strain, and therefore negative value for the people affected by them.
Promote a whole-of-government approach to priority setting and evaluation of policies and programs affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.	The framework in this submission can be used by any government department in the areas they are based, meaning that programs and evaluations will be tailored for the needs of local communities and stakeholders.

Table 1. Alignment of this submission to the need for an Indigenous Evaluation Strategy.

The remainder of this submission critically reviews how Indigenous policy is currently

evaluated in Australia. The review confirms the findings of the Productivity Commission (2020) that Indigenous people are rarely included in policy or program evaluations. This submission questions the unexplored assumptions that underpin Indigenous evaluations. It does so using Indigenous Standpoint Theory (Foley 2003) and the Ngaa-bi-nya Aboriginal evaluation framework (pronounced 'naa binya' in Wiradjuri; Williams 2018). This promotes Indigenous Australians' ways of being (ontology), knowing (epistemology) and doing (axiology) (Martin and Mirraboopa 2003), and informs a new conceptual framework for evaluating Indigenous policies proposed in this submission. This work is critically important to overcome the misunderstanding, misinterpreting and misrepresenting that often occurs of Indigenous Australians' cultures (Foley 2000) as well as needs, and therefore solutions to address those needs (Jackson Pulver et al. 2019).

This submission argues that Indigenous evaluations may inadvertently create unintended negative impacts if Indigenous ways of being, knowing and doing are not accounted for in policy implementation and evaluation. For Indigenous policies we have termed these unintended negative impacts cultural counterfactuals. Drawing on accepted terminology of social impact assessment (Raiden et al. 2019), cultural counterfactuals refer to the unintended negative impacts Indigenous policies may have for Indigenous peoples where local needs, culture and decision-making are overlooked. A new conceptual framework is presented to stimulate consideration of possible risks of applying general, mainstream definitions of social value to Indigenous peoples compared to benefits, as well as opportunities for future evaluations and policy development.

Centring Indigenous knowledges in evaluations

Given the lack of Indigenous engagement, Indigenous perspectives and experiences have thus far been marginalised in policy evaluation. It is commonly people in a position of power who undertake evaluations and determine what should or should not be measured, and this can omit things that the people affected by evaluations see as being valuable (Hebb and Hechigian 2017). This further disempowers and marginalises groups targeted by policies such as Indigenous Australians and can result in Indigenous voices and priorities being side-lined or co-opted into government rhetoric around the claimed success of Indigenous procurement policies (Cutcher et al. 2019). Research also

shows that Indigenous cultures perceive value in a very different way to non-Indigenous groups (Byrnes 2000, Smith 2012). This is even more complex in the context of the diversity of Indigenous peoples in Australia and internationally (Foley 2000, tebrakunna country et al. 2019).

Culture refers to "the ways of knowing, thinking, and acting that are broadly shared by members of a social group" (Eversole 2018: 40). Culture therefore refers to socially situated beliefs and practices (tebrakunna country et al. 2019). In the context of Indigenous policies in Australia, 'cultural counterfactuals' refers to the unintended negative consequences of Indigenous policies on the ways of knowing, being and doing (see Martin and Mirraboopa 2003) of Indigenous Australians. In defining cultural counterfactuals, we acknowledge that we cannot speak to the cultures of all Indigenous Australians and the term may overlook the nuanced aspects of different Indigenous cultures.

Excluding these previously unaccounted for cultural counterfactuals means formal findings and recommendations of Indigenous policy evaluation reports can frequently have material variances between evaluator and Indigenous understandings and perceptions of social value (Taylor 2003). This is highly likely in the current Indigenous policy environment because scant attention has been given to Indigenous evaluation methodologies, with evaluations often generalising their findings across varied and different communities and contexts (Price et al. 2012). Price et al. (2012) criticise existing frameworks used to evaluate various Indigenous programs for: being too generalised across various and different communities and contexts; being conducted by outsiders who attempt to engage with communities on a short, one-off basis and arrive with a pre-determined agenda to extract specific data without prior consultation; and occurring without seeing any change or improvement, causing evaluations to be perceived as coming from outside the community's interest and control and based instead on an external agenda, such as seeking to know that project funds have been well spent. The following section explains how these limitations can be rectified to centre Indigenous perspectives in the evaluation process.

Conceptualising policy evaluation for Indigenous people

To answer the call for an Indigenous evaluation framework this section explains the notion of cultural counterfactuals. Bringing clarity to the debate about social value in an

Indigenous policy context, the following sections explain how Indigenous Standpoint Theory and the *Ngaa-bi-nya* evaluation framework are useful to conceptualise cultural counterfactuals in an Indigenous context. Indigenous Standpoint Theory (Foley 2003) promotes Indigenous epistemological approaches to conceptualising cultural counterfactuals in Indigenous evaluations. The *Ngaa-bi-nya* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander program evaluation framework (Williams 2018) is used because it prompts evaluators to consider the historical, policy and social landscape of Indigenous peoples' lives and allows for evaluations of Indigenous procurement policies that are culturally relevant, credible, useful, transparent and ethical.

These ontological and epistemological perspectives challenge the historical marginalisation of Indigenous knowledge (Foley 2003) and the use of non-Indigenous value frameworks used in Indigenous policy evaluations. We argue that social value in an Indigenous context means more than creating jobs or providing work. This framework is critically important to enable accurate reporting of the impact and effectiveness of new Indigenous procurement policies and avoid further loss of voice and marginalisation of the people they are meant to benefit. It is also a strategy for resetting the relationship of Indigenous policy evaluations that could be improved and extended by Indigenous researchers interested in this field.

Indigenous Standpoint Theory

Indigenous Standpoint Theory addresses historical attempts to oppress and exterminate Indigenous knowledge and epistemology, which has been viewed as inferior by western non-Indigenous researchers (Foley 2003). Indigenous Standpoint Theory was articulated by Gai-mariagal and Wiradjuri Aboriginal scholar of Indigenous entrepreneurship Foley (2003) in response to criticisms of post-structuralism and post-modernism for being dominated by Anglo Euro-centric and middle-class authors.

Indigenous Standpoint Theory gives primacy to Indigenous epistemologies and therefore promotes Indigenist research. Indigenist research is "research which focuses on the lived, historical experiences, ideas, traditions, dreams, interests, aspirations and struggles of Indigenous Australians" (Rigney 1997: 118). Indigenous Standpoint Theory ensures that theoretical constructs that emerge in research are consistent with Indigenous cultural perspectives (Jarrett 2019). Grounding cultural counterfactuals in Indigenous scholarship potentially increases the validity of this work and draws on

relevant theoretical and practical constructs to conceptualise cultural counterfactuals in an Indigenous policy context.

Ngaa-bi-nya evaluation framework

Ngaa-bi-nya, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander program evaluation framework (Williams 2018), identifies four domains where social value may be created by Indigenous policies: in the broad social landscape a policy is implemented in, in the resources used and generated, in the ways of social procurement in operation and in reflecting on learnings from the process and outcomes. *Ngaa-bi-nya* encourages Aboriginal programs to be evaluated qualitatively and quantitatively from Indigenous peoples' perspectives and captures the social, cultural and economic influences of programs like Indigenous procurement policies. The value of *Ngaa-bi-nya* for conceptualising cultural counterfactuals in an Indigenous policy context is its resonance with the arguments above about the economic, social and cultural influences on social value for Indigenous people. Table 2 below explains the four *Ngaa-bi-nya* domains in relation to Indigenous procurement policies.

Ngaa-bi-nya domain	Considerations
Landscape	• The broadest context Indigenous policies and employment opportunities are located in and influenced by • History of colonisation • Other programs that have generated outcomes for Indigenous peoples • Local socioeconomic factors like housing affordability, education and employment rates • The extent to which local Indigenous peoples have been engaged in identifying needs and setting priorities • Alignment between legislation and policies relating to the outcomes targeted by Indigenous policies.
Resources	• Human, material, non-material and in-kind resources and informal economies and relationships that often support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs • Employment, Indigenous workforce development and transfer of knowledge

	• Human resources draw on local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's knowledge and resources and volunteer community participation • Networks that support opportunities created by Indigenous policies.
Ways of working	• Delivery of Indigenous policies • Extent to which Indigenous policies promote self-determination for communities • Level of local engagement to plan for policy implementation • Activities, relationships, frameworks, principles and accountability mechanisms that support Indigenous policy implementation.
Learnings	• Reflects on the insights gained and what has been learned by the people who have benefitted from Indigenous policies. • Assesses whether policy objectives have been met • Relates to the movement of ideas, actions, purpose, ways of being, and ways of relating.

Table 2. Ngaa bi-nya evaluation framework domains in relation to assessing the impact of Indigenous procurement policies. Adapted from Williams (2018).

The *Ngaa-bi-nya* framework promotes Indigenous epistemologies that help to understand social value. For example, *Ngaa-bi-nya* prioritises Indigenous perspectives in social value research by sharing knowledge about the four domains as an example of working at the cultural interface of Indigenous and scientific knowledge systems (see Nakata 2007). The four domains of *Ngaa-bi-nya* recognise that local areas have their own histories, resources, and ways of working and relating, for example, that requires attention to the roles of communities, country and culture as a conceptual lens (see tebrakunna country et al. 2019) to conceptualise social value and therefore cultural counterfactuals. *Ngaa-bi-nya* therefore is useful to conceptualise that cultural counterfactuals may be created by Indigenous procurement policies when the policies negatively affect the domains Landscape, Resources, Ways of working and Learnings.

We explain below how Indigenous Standpoint Theory and the *Ngaa-bi-nya* framework conceptualise how cultural counterfactuals can be understood in the context of Indigenous procurement policies in Australia and how these perspectives extend

western theory. This new conceptual framework is an example of the 'cultural interface' of Indigenous social value and western social value, which can be mediated to promote Indigenous standpoints in policy design and evaluation. The cultural interface is the contested knowledge space that includes the "histories, politics, economics, multiple and interconnected discourses, social practices and knowledge technologies" of Indigenous and western science (Nakata 2007: 9).

Reciprocal benefits of Indigenous and non-Indigenous evaluations

The value of Indigenous Standpoint Theory and the *Ngaa-bi-nya* framework is that they talk across boundaries between Indigenous and western evaluations and help recover Indigenous epistemological foundations (Smith 2012). This includes accepting that Indigenous culture and community are key platforms to understand regional development (tebrakunna country et al. 2019), where "regional economic success (a key target of current Indigenous policies like Indigenous procurement policies) comes down to people and communities being able to work effectively and cleverly across organizational and cultural boundaries" (ibid.: 1510). Indigenous theory should be engaged to override the erasing effects of Western epistemological standpoints and to recognise the importance of cultural identity as a positive driver for Aboriginal peoples (Bodkin-Andrews et al. 2017). In other words, Indigenous and western theory should be used together to give reciprocal benefits to the other. Adopting this approach will support the guiding principles of the draft IES to improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through evaluations that are credible, useful, transparent and ethical.

This section explains how *Ngaa-bi-nya* interacts with Value Theory to highlight how effective and meaningful evaluations to Indigenous people might be conceptualised and performed.

Value Theory

Defining the concept of 'value' has been a long-standing point of contention between philosophers and social scientists going back to the philosophical foundations of Aristotle and Plato which first articulated the concept of value in terms of experiences and objects that provide pleasure and satisfy desires (Frondizi 1971). Subsequent work positions notions of value as arising from 'evaluative experiences' which elicit a

positive or negative emotional response. For example, Hirose and Olson (2015: 1) argue that value "concerns which things are good or bad, how good or bad they are, and…what it is for a thing to be good or bad". This highlights that different types of value are perceived by people or communities depending on how they perceive good and bad.

Despite its age, Meinong's (1894) Value Theory can be useful in understanding how evaluations can be made relevant to Indigenous peoples, because it proposes that there are four components acting together in a process of determining value. Table 3 explains these four components in relation to the social value created by Indigenous policies.

Value component	Description
Value subject	• An Indigenous person who is evaluating a policy to determine the social value it creates.
Value object	• Indigenous policies to which value will be ascribed.
Existence judgement	• Evaluation of the relationship between the value object (jobs) and Indigenous cultural values, that determines the social value created by Indigenous policies.
Value feeling	• An Indigenous person determining social value based on the relationship between a value object (policy outcomes) and the existence judgement • A positive relationship, where outcomes respond to local contexts (Landscape), provides employment with good training and pay (Resources), addresses local needs through meaningful community engagement (Ways of working) and has established processes for assessing objectives (Learnings) will create positive social value • Negative relationships promote negative social value – one or more of the domains is neglected or harmed.

Table 3. Components of value theory relating to social value and Indigenous procurement policies. Adapted from Meinong (1894).

This conceptualisation of social value is useful because it aligns with Indigenous epistemologies, which Chilisa (2012: 117) argues are based on "knowledge [that] arises out of the people's relationship and interaction with their particular environment" and this has significant implications for perceiving social value. While useful, Value Theory

is limited by its absence of Indigenous epistemologies (Foley 2003) and would benefit from being extended by Indigenous scholarship.

Through *Ngaa-bi-nya* for example, social value comes from someone's interaction with construction employment in relation to the *Ngaa-bi-nya* domains. Where construction employment aligns with or supports those domains it will produce a positive value feeling and hence positive social value. In an Indigenous policy context this means that communities and policy managers can plan for and assess social value when policy outcomes support *Ngaa-bi-nya* domains as explained in Table 4.

Ngaa-bi-nya factors	Policy on social value
Landscape	• Local employment rates, socioeconomic position, collaboration between policy implementation and local communities and self-determining practices
Resources	• Financial outcomes, skill and experience development of local Indigenous workers and community contributions that promote the sustainability of collective involvement in planning and implementation.
Ways of working	• Holistic and addressing the social determinants of health and wellbeing • Facilitating connection to culture and identity • Collaborating and engaging with community members to reach shared agreement on policy matters.
Learnings	• Commitment to make progress despite challenges and set-backs • Strength of relationships through improved trust, reciprocity and sharing with local communities.

Table 4. Ngaa-bi-nya benefiting the conceptualisation of social value in the context of Indigenous policy evaluations.

Table 5 presents a comparison of Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of thinking in Australia in Australia (Bessarab and Forrest 2017). It shows that Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies differ significantly to non-Indigenous ways of thinking, and we discuss the implications of this for evaluating Indigenous policy below.

Indigenous	**Non-Indigenous**

Based on a non-lineal understanding of the cosmos and life – circular and continual	Based on a lineal understanding of the universe and life – a beginning and end
Environment (nature) as capital	Money (particularly accumulation of wealth) as capital
Living with nature	Dominance of environment
Time and the measurement of time is less of an important element of society	Time and the measurement of time is a prevailing ridged element of society
Indigenous peoples are custodians of the land	Land is owned by entities
Land (environment and nature) is viewed as peoples' mother, the giver of life, and is protected to support life	Land is an economic resource to be used to benefit society
Kin-ism (kinship) and reciprocity are keystones	Individualism is a keystone
Oral societies	Literate societies

Table 5. Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of thinking in Australia (Bessarab and Forrest 2017: 11).

Given that Indigenous people continue to be excluded by non-Indigenous governments from policymaking (Westbury and Dillon 2019), and that Indigenous policies are therefore likely to reflect non-Indigenous values, Table 5 illustrates that Indigenous policies could create negative social value for Indigenous communities, based on the different values held by the two groups. Therefore, the framework presented below shows how Indigenous evaluations can be developed and implemented in ways that centre Indigenous perspectives, thereby promoting the aims of the IES.

Conceptual framework: cultural counterfactuals to evaluate Indigenous policies

Synthesising the above critical review, Figure 1 presents a conceptual framework of cultural counterfactuals which can be used by policymakers to better evaluate Indigenous policies. The framework uses the four *Ngaa-bi-nya* domains to highlight the areas to be promoted by policies: Landscape contextual factors like employment rates

and community socioeconomic position; Resources like existing Indigenous suppliers in an area and opportunities for Indigenous businesses; Ways of working that reflect Indigenous values, and; Learnings and evaluation opportunities and processes that inform ongoing work. The framework is bounded to recognise that Indigenous policies are implemented in unique contexts, including local histories, priorities and needs.
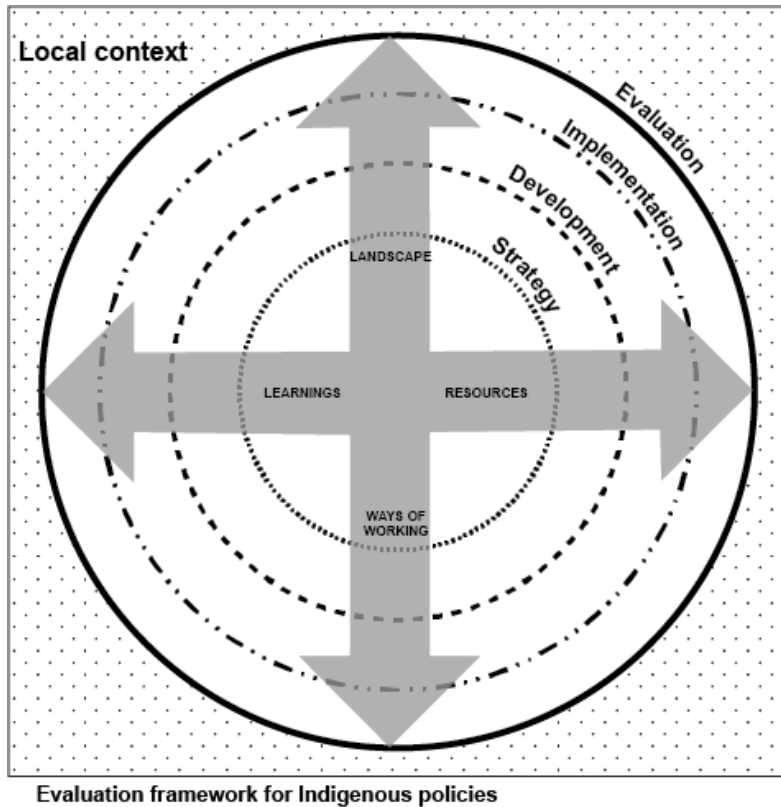

Evaluation framework for Indigenous policies

Figure 1. Conceptual framework of cultural counterfactuals to plan for and assess the social value created by Indigenous policies.

Four layers to the framework show planning for and evaluating social value can and should occur during stages of the policy lifecycle. Arrows extending from the centre of the framework show that stakeholders and their needs to create social value will change as time progresses (Mulholland et al. 2020). Table 6 explains the stages of the policy lifecycle used in this framework and the consideration that policy managers and those who implement them should make, to create social value.

Policy lifecycle phase	Consideration
Strategy	• Planning and design for policies (Landscape)

	• Researching and deciding options to promote Indigenous involvement in policy development, implementation and evaluation
	• Engaging Indigenous stakeholders in all policy aspects (Ways of working)
	• Collaborating on how the Landscape, Resources, Ways of working and Learnings domains can be supported on the project (Learnings).
Development	• Identifying local Indigenous needs and priorities for policies to target (Landscape)
	• Engaging Indigenous stakeholders to put the strategy developed previously into practices (Resources)
	• Determining capability of local Indigenous providers and identifying experience and development opportunities (Ways of working)
	• Developing processes to identify, communicate and resolve challenges that arise during policy implementation (Learnings).
Implementation	• Implementing the policy in the way it was designed (Landscape)
	• Opportunities for skills and experience development undertaken (Resources)
	• Indigenous-led strategies implemented and monitored by policy managers (Ways of working)
	• Policymakers continue to collaborate with stakehodlers to get initial feedback (Learnings).
Evaluation	• Evaluate policies for effectiveness and fitness-for-purpose (Landscape)
	• Identify opportunities and engage Indigenous stakeholders to contribute to evaluations (Resources)
	• Implement further opportunities for Indigenous-led solutions in policy improvement and development (Ways of working)
	• Lessons learned and practices adjusted if necessary (Learnings).

Table 6. Application of policy lifecycle phases to this conceptual framework.

The framework in Figure 1 should be used when a policy is in its planning stage to identify community stakeholders who should be engaged by a department to understand the specific needs of local Indigenous communities. This can be used to develop a plan for policy implementation which might show opportunities for local Indigenous businesses to be involved delivering policy objectives. This will ensure that community issues are addressed, and communities meaningfully engaged in the construction process. Figure 1 therefore prompts people who use it to plan or evaluate their policies to consider Landscape, Resources, Ways of working and Learnings that the framework is being used in. This will promote the rights of Indigenous peoples to participate in decision-making matters that affect them and improve their economic and social conditions through employment and vocational training (United Nations 2007).

The framework can benefit diverse stakeholders who implement, and are affected by, Indigenous procurement policies. For example, government departments can refer to the framework to inform policy development and evaluation. Communities can use the framework to assert their concerns with governments and contractors. This should leave communities in a better position to use the current infrastructure boom in Australia to ensure better training and employment opportunities for local people. Businesses can also use the framework to develop social procurement practices or evaluate their current Indigenous engagement. For example, businesses can review the material and non-material resources their Indigenous engagement involves. This includes the training and employment opportunities they have provided and the new networks and suppliers established in their supply chain. Table 7 gives examples of key questions which stakeholders in each stage of the policy procurement life cycle should ask to   evaluate Indigenous policies. The questions asked in Table 7 are past tense to locate them in an evaluation context. The wording could be altered to change the questions to future tense to stimulate thinking about local contexts for contractors developing their Indigenous procurement strategy.

Ngaa-bi-nya domain	Questions to evaluate social value and Indigenous procurement policies
Landscape	• Has the project promoted self-determining practices of local Indigenous people?

	• Has the project and supply chain improved the socioeconomic position of local Indigenous people?
Resources	• What Indigenous businesses have been subcontracted to different work packages on the project? • What employment and training opportunities has the project provided? • What financial outcomes did local Indigenous businesses and workers get from the project? • How were the skills and experience of local Indigenous workers developed on the project?
Ways of working	• How did the project address the social determinants of health and wellbeing? • How did the project promote cultural identity for workers? • How engaged were the local community during the project and were their concerns addressed?
Learnings	• What challenges and set-back were experienced on the project? • How were they overcome and did this contribute to positive relationships between the contractor and other businesses or the community? • What were the levels of trust, reciprocity and sharing between the contractor and local communities and businesses?

Table 7. Ngaa-bi-nya questions to plan for and evaluate social value from Indigenous procurement policies.

Discussion and Conclusion

This submission addressed calls for more culturally informed evaluation frameworks to assess the impact of Indigenous policies from the perspectives of those who they are meant to benefit.

We have shown how without consideration of the different ways that Indigenous cultures perceive value, initiatives aimed at improving outcomes for these people may create unintended strain in those communities they are meant to benefit. Introducing the concept of cultural counterfactuals and a conceptual framework to assess it into the social impact and policy debate, this submission addresses an important gap in policy

evaluation, where scant attention has been paid to allow for culturally specific perceptions of social value.

The practical contribution of this model in illustrating how Indigenous policies can have an unintended negative social impact – especially when they are developed by non-Indigenous people who do not deeply understand Indigenous culture and/or when Indigenous people have been excluded from their development and implementation. Using this model, policies could be reviewed by determining if they support *Ngaa-bi-nya* or create strain by requiring people to surrender important cultural values in taking the institutional opportunities they offer. Our submission adds to this debate by showing that if cultural counterfactuals are not considered, then the success of Indigenous policies will never be fully understood which could mean that scarce resources could be invested in ways which are counterproductive to the very communities they are meant to benefit.

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