



Australian Government

IP Australia

Fish Trap
© Bonnie Burarrngarra/
Copyright Agency, 2025



Indigenous Knowledge Panel communique February 2026

The conclusion of the first-year pilot of the Indigenous Knowledge Panel (IK Panel) presents an opportunity to reflect on how far we have come and bring focus to our priorities for the next 2 years.

Through the work of the IK Panel, we have been able to ensure IP Australia is better informed to support the cultural integrity and economic potential of Indigenous Knowledge (IK) held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and is committed to ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are fully considered within the intellectual property (IP) processes and systems.

Over the last 12 months I have overseen 5 official meetings, and we have participated in several specialist topic meetings. These have formed the basis of how we can help to inform improvements to processes, policy and legislative matters related to IK in the context of IP.


Establishing the Work Plan

We developed and launched the 2025–26 IK Panel Work Plan, which sets out the direction and priorities under 4 key functions of the IK Panel:

1. processes and policies related to IK
2. participate in assessments of applications
3. provide advice on policy and legislative matters
4. promote awareness and understanding of IK.

Integrating into IP Australia

Building trust and relationships with IP Australia's people and gaining an understanding of current processes and policies has been a major focus for the first year. We have been working closely with Michael Schwager, Director General, and Margaret Tregurtha, Deputy



Director General, as well as the senior executive team, to integrate and embed the role of the IK Panel into IP Australia.

We endorsed IP Australia's *First Nations Strategy 2025–2030*, this was an important step in helping to shape the future of IP Australia. As a pilot non-statutory body, we have also been working closely with the Indigenous Knowledge trade mark subject matter experts to support and inform the assessment of applications containing Indigenous Knowledge and establish processes and procedures for future legislative considerations.

Government connections

While our Panel was established with a focus on Indigenous Knowledge specifically relevant to the IP system, the Office for the Arts has also established the Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) working group, to help inform the standalone legislation intended to protect First Nations traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions. I have played an important role in participating in both the Panel and Working Group to provide a conduit between these 2 groups and to ensure consistency in establishing new laws for Indigenous Peoples in IP.

International engagement

Through IP Australia's membership, we are supporting First Nations interests at the international level through the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore (IGC). I was able to attend IGC 51 and participate in the Indigenous Caucus, giving the IK Panel a deeper understanding of the work and negotiations required to develop international agreements.

Looking ahead

We remain committed to supporting First Nations peoples to actively engage in the IP system. Many thanks are extended to fellow Panel members, Colin Saltmere and Shay Vigona-Goudge, for their continued support and expertise, and we look forward to the work ahead over the next 2 years.

Chrissy Grant
Chair, IK Panel