

Indicator 6.4c: The extent to which Indigenous values are protected, maintained and enhanced through Indigenous participation in forest management (2026)



This indicator measures the extent to which Indigenous people participate in forest management. Active participation in forest management reflects the relationship between people and the land, and the integration of Indigenous peoples' values with forest management practice, policy and decision making.

Context and definitions

Indigenous peoples value forests for a range of cultural, social and economic reasons. This indicator discusses the relationship between the participation of Indigenous people in forest management and the protection, maintenance and enhancement of the values associated with forests.

Indigenous owned – Freehold land or forest that is owned by Indigenous communities, or land or forest for which ownership is vested through other mechanisms.

Indigenous managed – Land or forest that is managed by Indigenous communities, or

Indigenous co-managed – Land or forest that has a formal, legally binding agreement in place to include input from Indigenous people in the process of developing and implementing a management plan.

Other special rights – Land or forest subject to Native Title determinations, registered Indigenous Land Use Agreements and legislated special cultural use provisions.

See [Australia's forests and forestry glossary](#) for definitions of other terms.

Key points

- Participation by Indigenous peoples and communities in the management of forest land occurs through a variety of arrangements, including direct land management, co-management or consultation.
- A range of legislative and policy instruments exist that provide Indigenous peoples and communities with opportunities to own, manage, and be involved in the management of forest land. The degree of management control and influence that Indigenous peoples have over forest is dependent on the provisions and conditions specified in the instruments.
- Preferences in terminology when referring to Australia's First Peoples can vary across Australia and can change over time. The term 'Indigenous' is used throughout *Australia's State of the Forests Report* to encompass all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Indigenous values

Indigenous peoples value forests as part of Country for environmental, social and economic reasons. These relationships are grounded in enduring cultural responsibilities to care for Country, and in rights and interests in land and waters that are recognised through a range of tenure, governance, and agreement-making arrangements.

Indigenous values associated with land and forests can be described across three related dimensions:

- **Cultural and heritage values**, which connect people to Country through cultural sites and places, natural landscape features, and areas of spiritual significance, and underpin responsibilities for protecting cultural heritage and knowledge.
- **Contemporary values**, reflecting the ongoing practice of culture alongside modern living, including community wellbeing, employment, enterprise, and participation in land and forest management that supports sustainable environmental outcomes.
- **Future focused aspirations**, include increased autonomy in decision-making, strengthened governance arrangements, and opportunities for Indigenous-led management, ownership and self-determined economic participation in forest-related activities.

For each value, the ownership, management and access are key components of the relationship of Indigenous people with land and forest.

The National Agreement on Closing the Gap¹ provides the overarching partnership framework between governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, with Priority Reforms focused on shared decision-making, strengthening Indigenous governance, transforming government systems, and improving data and information sharing. In the context of forest management, this has contributed to growing recognition of Indigenous knowledge systems and practices, including cultural land and fire management, and to increased efforts to support First Nations participation in decision-making, management and economic activity in ways that contribute to sustainable forest outcomes, resilience and long-term productivity.

Land rights and participation in forest management

The participation of Indigenous peoples in the management of forests occurs through a variety of arrangements, including:

- exclusive forest ownership
- direct forest management (without ownership)
- formal shared or joint management arrangements
- other arrangements that include consultation, or that permit use and access to land.

Exclusive forest ownership includes the direct management responsibility by Indigenous peoples and communities, commonly from the transfer to, or purchase of land for Indigenous groups via land rights legislation. The management of forest land may apply or integrate contemporary and traditional land management practices, and the employment of, or partnership with Indigenous peoples. For example, the Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation is a Commonwealth Government-owned corporation with a mandate to return land to Indigenous groups to realise the opportunities and benefits from returning possession of land and its management.

Direct management of land and forest by Indigenous peoples and communities can also occur without the holding of title to land, or by being held by governments in trust for particular Indigenous communities. In Western Australia, the Aboriginal Lands Trust is responsible for the control and management of land for the benefit of Aboriginal people. Most of the Western Australia Aboriginal Lands Trust estate is held under Crown reserve but provides rights to specified Indigenous communities to exercise management rights over the estate.

¹ closingthegap.gov.au/

The **formal shared or joint management of land** between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous entities occurs through a variety of arrangements, most commonly through the involvement in management of national parks and conservation reserves. This can occur on land that is both Indigenous owned and non-Indigenous owned. In the Northern Territory, Kakadu National Park is primarily on Indigenous owned freehold tenure and is leased back to the Commonwealth Government and jointly managed by the Bininj/Mungguy Traditional Owners and the Director of National Parks.

Additional arrangements also provide Indigenous peoples and communities with rights of use and access to land for customary purposes. These arrangements may provide for Indigenous communities' participation in formal consultation processes (for example, on cultural heritage protection), membership of advisory committees, or participation in the development of land management plans. Arrangements that provide special use or access for Indigenous communities enable traditional use of natural resources or access for customary purposes (for example, walking on Country). Common examples include land subject to a Native Title determination, which recognises existing rights or interest to land based on traditional laws and customs. Native Title does not grant title to land but instead co-exists with established land rights. Typically, Native Title provides rights of use or access to land for Indigenous groups and in some cases can permit exclusive possession.

Additional arrangements provide for Indigenous participation in forest management through employment in the forest sector, research programs, or partnerships with industry. Information on the participation of Indigenous peoples in forest and wood product industries is reported in [Indicator 6.5d: Resilience of forest dependent Indigenous communities to changing social and economic conditions](#).

Land management instruments

A range of Commonwealth, state and territory legislative and policy instruments exist that provide Indigenous peoples and communities with opportunities to own, manage, access or use land, and be involved in the management of land, including the management of forests on that land (Table 6.4c-1). [Indicator 6.4a Area of forest to which Indigenous people have use and rights that protect their special values and are recognised through formal and informal management regimes](#) reports on the 80 million hectares of forest that are in Australia's Indigenous forest estate. The *Australia's Indigenous land and forest estate (2024)*² dataset assembles the various arrangements that exist under the instruments listed in Table 6.4c-1. The degree of management control and influence that Indigenous people have over these forest areas varies and is dependent on the provisions and conditions within each instrument.

² agriculture.gov.au/abares/forestsaustralia/forest-data-maps-and-tools/spatial-data/indigenous-land-and-forest

Table 6.4c-1: Main legislative and policy instruments in Australia relevant to Indigenous land and forest, and significant changes from 2016 to 2023

Jurisdiction	Legislation/policy	Purpose	Comment on applicable significant changes 2016 to 2023
Commonwealth			
	<i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act 2005</i>	To establish Indigenous representative entities, including an Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation.	The <i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Amendment (Indigenous Land Corporation) Act 2018</i> amendment extended responsibilities to include water rights and changed the Corporation's title to the Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation.
	<i>Aboriginal Land Grant (Jervis Bay Territory) Act 1986</i>	To grant land in the Jervis Bay Territory to the Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community.	The <i>Aboriginal Land Grant (Jervis Bay Territory) Amendment (Strengthening Land and Governance Provisions) Act 2023</i> recognises Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community Council custodianship over both land and waters of the Jervis Bay area and enhances governance structures and provisions.
	<i>Aboriginal Land (Lake Condah and Framlingham Forest) Act 1987</i>	To provide for the vesting of land at Lake Condah and Framlingham to Aboriginal communities.	n.a.
	<i>Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976</i>	To provide for the granting of land in the Northern Territory as Aboriginal land.	Amendments to the Act that enables specified lands across the Northern Territory to be granted as Aboriginal land (2019 amendment) and leased to Traditional Owner groups (2020 amendment).
	<i>Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006</i>	Establishes and regulates the registration and governance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands corporations.	n.a.
	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i>	Australia's main national environment legislation, which enables the declaration of Commonwealth conservation reserves, including on Indigenous-owned lands that are subsequently jointly managed.	To be replaced by new national environmental laws, subject to a reform process, ongoing in 2023.
	<i>Native Title Act 1993</i>	To provide a national system for the recognition and protection of native title rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples, and for its co-existence with the national land management system.	The <i>Native Title Legislation Amendment Act 2021</i> amended the <i>Native Title Act 1993</i> introducing measures to improve and strengthen the operation of the Native Title system including measures addressing Native Title claims resolution, agreement-making, Indigenous decision-making and dispute resolution processes.
Australian Capital Territory			
	See <i>Aboriginal Land Grant (Jervis Bay Territory) Act 1986</i> (Commonwealth)	To grant land in the Jervis Bay Territory to the Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community.	Commonwealth legislation applicable to lands of the Australian Capital Territory. The <i>Aboriginal Land Grant (Jervis Bay Territory) Amendment (Strengthening Land and Governance Provisions) Act 2023</i> recognises Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community Council custodianship over both land and waters of the Jervis Bay area and enhances governance structures and provisions.
	Namadgi National Park Plan of Management 2010	Provides for cooperative management arrangements of Namadgi National Park.	n.a.
New South Wales			
	<i>Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983</i>	To provide the legal framework to establish representative Aboriginal Land Councils and to claim ownership of unallocated Crown land and purchase freehold land.	n.a.
	<i>National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974</i>	Provides for protection, joint management and special use for declared Aboriginal places.	n.a.

Jurisdiction	Legislation/policy	Purpose	Comment on applicable significant changes 2016 to 2023
Northern Territory			
	<i>See Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 (Commonwealth)</i>	To provide for the granting of land in the Northern Territory as Aboriginal land.	Amendments to the Act that enables specified lands across the Northern Territory to be granted as Aboriginal land (2019 amendment) and leased to Traditional Owner groups (2020 amendment).
	<i>Cobourg Peninsula Aboriginal Land Sanctuary & Marine Park Act 1981</i>	Gazetted the Garig Gunak Barlu National Park (Cobourg Peninsula) and granted Indigenous ownership and joint management of the park.	n.a.
	<i>Crown Lands Act 1992</i>	Provides for Indigenous Traditional use and access of leased land.	n.a.
	<i>Parks and Reserves (Framework for the Future) Act 2003</i>	To grant conservation reserves under Indigenous ownership and joint management arrangements.	n.a.
	<i>Pastoral Land Act 1992</i>	Provides for the establishment of community living areas for Indigenous peoples on parts of pastoral leasehold land.	n.a.
	<i>Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1976</i>	Provides for Indigenous joint management of certain parks and reserves.	n.a.
Queensland			
	<i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land (Providing Freehold) Act 2014</i>	To provide the option of obtaining ordinary freehold title for specified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.	n.a.
	<i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Holding Act 2013</i>	Provides the means to align and resolve issues between Acts with regard to land holding leases.	n.a.
	<i>Aboriginal Land Act 1991 and Torres Strait Islander Land Act 1991</i>	To provide for land to be granted to groups of Indigenous people in Queensland.	Amendments from the <i>Nature Conservation and Other Legislation (Indigenous Joint Management – Moreton Island) Amendment Act 2021</i> provide for Indigenous joint management of protected areas on Moreton Island.
	<i>Cape York Peninsula Heritage Act 2007</i>	To provide for the identification and joint management of significant natural and cultural values of Cape York Peninsula.	Amendments from the <i>Natural Resources and Other Legislation (GDA2020) Amendment Act 2020</i> transferred specified land to Aboriginal ownership with parts dedicated as national park.
	<i>Land Act 1994</i>	To administer and manage all state land, particularly non-freehold land.	Amendments from the <i>Natural Resources and Other Legislation (GDA2020) Amendment Act 2020</i> included the provision to grant unallocated State land under an Indigenous Land Use Agreement to Indigenous peoples.
	<i>Nature Conservation Act 1992</i>	For the conservation of nature while allowing for the involvement of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the management of protected areas.	Amendments from the <i>Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2016</i> allows for the involvement of Indigenous people in the management of protected areas in which they have a recognised interest.
South Australia			
	<i>Aboriginal Lands Trust Act 2013</i>	To enable Aboriginal Land Trusts to acquire and hold land.	n.a.
	<i>Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Land Rights Act 1981</i>	To provide for the vesting of titles to land recognised as Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara land.	Amendments to governance arrangements made in 2016 and 2017.
	<i>Maralinga Tjarutja Land Rights Act 1984</i>	To provide for the vesting of titles to land recognised as Maralinga Tjarutja land.	n.a.
	<i>Wilderness Protection Act 1992</i>	Provides for co-management arrangements to wilderness protection areas.	n.a.

Jurisdiction	Legislation/policy	Purpose	Comment on applicable significant changes 2016 to 2023
	<i>First Nations Voice Act 2023</i>	To establish a First Nations body to inform the policy and legislative decisions which impact the lives of First Nations people.	Passed by the South Australian parliament in March 2023.
Tasmania			
	<i>Aboriginal Lands Act 1995</i>	To provide for the establishment of the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania and granting of land of historic or cultural significance.	Subject to a reform process, ongoing in 2023.
	Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan (2016)	Statutory plan for the management of all land within the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area.	Prescribes a process to establish formal joint management arrangements.
Victoria			
	<i>Aboriginal Lands Act 1970</i>	To recognise and grant freehold title to the Indigenous communities of Framlingham in Southwest Victoria and Lake Tyers in Gippsland.	n.a.
	<i>Aboriginal Lands Act 1991</i>	To recognise and grant freehold title to the Indigenous communities of three burial sites at former missions.	n.a.
	<i>Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006</i>	To provide for the protection of tangible and intangible Aboriginal cultural heritage in Victoria. It provides statutory decision-making and advisory powers to registered Aboriginal parties for site-specific protection measures.	Three additional registered Aboriginal parties appointed by the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council.
	Ngootyoong Gunditj Ngootyoong Mara South West Management Plan	A strategic guide for managing and protecting the parks, reserves and Indigenous Protected Areas of south-west Victoria	n.a.
	<i>Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010</i>	The Act allows the Victorian Government to recognise Traditional Owners and certain rights in Crown land.	Two Recognition and Settlement Agreements were signed and came into effect for the Taungurung Traditional Owner Group (August 2020) and for the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagulk People (December 2022).
Western Australia			
	<i>Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority Act 1972</i>	To provide for the economic, social and cultural advancement of Indigenous peoples, including the establishment of the Aboriginal Lands Trust to acquire and hold land.	Proposed future amendments to divest lands held by the Aboriginal Lands Trust to enable direct control by Indigenous peoples.
	<i>Conservation and Land Management Amendment Act 1984</i>	Provides for opportunities for national parks and conservation reserves to be jointly managed.	n.a.
	<i>Land Administration Act 1997</i>	To consolidate and reform the law about Crown land, including transferring, granting and accessing of Crown land to Indigenous peoples.	n.a.
	<i>Noongar (Koorah, Nitja, Boardahwan) (Past, Present, Future) Recognition Act 2016</i>	To recognise the Noongar people as the Traditional Owners of lands in the south-west of the State.	The South West Native Title Settlement between the Noongar people and the Western Australian Government commenced in February 2021.
	<i>Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage By-laws 1981</i> and <i>Country Areas Water Supply By-laws 1957</i>	Provides for special access for the Noongar people and customary use of catchment and water reserve areas across the State.	n.a.

Area of forest with Indigenous participation in management

To quantify the Indigenous participation in the management of forest land, information collected on the Indigenous land and forest estate has been grouped into four attributes that capture the range of management arrangements between Indigenous peoples and land and forest across all public and private tenures (Jacobsen et al. 2020). Information on the area of forest that is Indigenous owned, Indigenous managed or Indigenous co-managed, and/or subject to other special rights of use for customary purposes is reported in [Indicator 6.4a: Area of forest to which Indigenous people have use and rights that protect their special values and are recognised through formal and informal management regimes](#). Information reported here summarises the areas of forest in each of the four attributes using data current to 2023. The degree of management control and influence that Indigenous people have over these forest areas varies and detailed information on the area of forest in the main contributing arrangements is available in the [Supporting Information for Indicator 6.4c: The extent to which Indigenous values are protected, maintained and enhanced through Indigenous participation in forest management](#).

Indigenous owned land

Forest on Indigenous owned land is owned by Indigenous communities or is vested through other arrangements. The area of forest that is Indigenous owned is 24.2 million hectares (Table 6.4a-1, [Indicator 6.4a](#)). All Indigenous owned land also has a recognised form of Indigenous management arrangement, whether Indigenous managed or Indigenous co-managed.

Indigenous managed land, or Indigenous co-managed land

Forest on land with an Indigenous management arrangement may be either Indigenous managed, which is managed solely by Indigenous communities, or on Indigenous co-managed land where a formal agreement is in place to include Indigenous peoples in the process of developing and implementing a management plan. The area of forest that is under a form of Indigenous management arrangement is 31.4 million hectares (Table 6.4a-1, [Indicator 6.4a](#)), with 20.7 million hectares being Indigenous managed and 10.6 million hectares is Indigenous co-managed (areas do not tally due to rounding). Land that has an Indigenous management arrangement occurs on both land that is Indigenous owned and non-Indigenous land. Land that is Indigenous co-managed most frequently occurs in conservation reserves and protected areas within the National Reserve System where formal shared or joint-management arrangements are in place with designated Indigenous communities.

Land subject to other special rights

The area of forest on land that provides other special rights for Indigenous peoples, including special cultural use provisions and access, is 62.4 million hectares (Table 6.4a-1, [Indicator 6.4a](#)). This area includes other legislated arrangements that enable access by Indigenous groups or communities.

Supporting information for Indicator 6.4c: The extent to which Indigenous values are protected, maintained and enhanced through Indigenous participation in forest management

Land management arrangements

The degree of management control and influence that Indigenous peoples and communities have over forest land largely depends on the Australian, state or territory legislation that applies in each situation and the policies that are implemented in each jurisdiction (Table 6.4c-1). A summary of the main arrangements that relate to these instruments is provided below, by jurisdiction, and the area of forest that occurs on the land area that is subject to each arrangement.

Forest area figures reported here use information from the inputs used to assemble the [Australia's Indigenous land and forest estate \(2024\)](#) spatial dataset. Some forest areas may be subject to more than one arrangement; therefore, totals will not tally to area figures reported on the Australia's Indigenous land and forest estate.

Commonwealth

Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation owned and transferred lands

The Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation is a corporate Commonwealth entity established under the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act 2005*. The purpose of the Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation is to acquire, grant and manage land and water for Indigenous peoples to derive economic, environmental, social or cultural benefits. A range of measures under the corporation's performance model provide tailored facilitation and support for the acquisition and sustainable management of land.

A total of 1.6 million hectares of forest is across all land that is owned or granted by the Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation.

Indigenous Protected Areas

Indigenous Protected Areas are a category of formal protected area in Australia's National Reserve System managed by Indigenous peoples designed to achieve biodiversity outcomes in accordance with Indigenous peoples' management objectives. Under the International Union for the Conservation of Nature protected area categories, most Indigenous Protected Areas are a managed resource protected area that permits the sustainable use of natural ecosystems.

As a protected area in the National Reserve System, all Indigenous Protected Areas must have a plan of management to deliver cultural heritage and biodiversity conservation outcomes, through combining contemporary management practices with traditional knowledge, often engaging Indigenous peoples through the Indigenous Rangers Program³.

Indigenous Protected Areas are increasingly being dedicated on appropriate Crown land tenures after initially being primarily dedicated on private land tenure. A total of 8.8 million hectares of forest is on Indigenous Protected Areas on private land with a further 0.5 million hectares on Crown land tenures (including leasehold, nature conservation reserves and other Crown land).

Indigenous owned Commonwealth national parks

Under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* Commonwealth national parks are managed by Parks Australia via the Director of National Parks. Three of these parks are owned by Indigenous

³ niaa.gov.au/our-work/environment-and-land/indigenous-rangers-program-irp

peoples, which are each leased to the Commonwealth and jointly managed between respective Indigenous communities and Parks Australia, including:

- Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, Northern Territory
- Kakadu National Park, Northern Territory
- Booderee National Park, Jervis Bay Territory

Together, 1.2 million hectares of forest occurs on Indigenous owned Commonwealth national parks.

World Heritage sites with Indigenous advisory committees

Sites on the World Heritage list are places of natural and/or cultural values of outstanding global significance. In Australia, World Heritage sites are recognised as a Matter of National Environmental Significance under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. Australia's World Heritage sites occur across land tenure classes and with different ownership and management arrangements, including Indigenous representation on advisory committees that provide advice to World Heritage management committees for the management of sites of Indigenous cultural significance.

A total of 4.7 million hectares of forest is on World Heritage areas.

Areas with recognition of Native Title

Native Title is the result of recognition under the *Native Title Act 1993* of particular Indigenous peoples and communities' existing rights or interest to land according to traditional laws and customs. Native Title itself does not grant title to land and co-exists with established land rights. Native Title rights may be exclusive or non-exclusive possession. Exclusive possession grants the ability to control who has access to land and commonly occurs on unallocated Crown land or where title to land is held by Indigenous peoples. Non-exclusive possession may include rights to access and personal use of land, and/or include consultation with Indigenous groups on land management practices.

A total of 36 million hectares of forest is on areas where Native Title is recognised, including both exclusive and non-exclusive Native Title.

Indigenous Land Use Agreements

Under the *Native Title Act 1993* Indigenous Land Use Agreements are voluntary agreements between Native Title parties and other entities about the use and management of land. Provisions in individual Indigenous Land Use Agreements may pertain to how Native Title rights are exercised, how the land is managed (particularly for conservation reserves), or to enable development to occur, exercise mining interests or implement arrangements on the access to land.

A total of 43 million hectares of forest is on areas subject to an Indigenous Land Use Agreement.

Australian Capital Territory

Indigenous co-managed national parks

In the Australian Capital Territory, the Namadgi National Park plan of management includes cooperative management arrangements between the ACT Government and the Ngannawal Aboriginal community to participate in the management of the park and included in consultation.

A total of 101 thousand hectares of forest occurs in Namadgi National Park.

New South Wales

Aboriginal Land Council lands

The New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council was established under the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983* to claim land rights or purchase land for designated Local Aboriginal Land Councils across New South Wales. Under the Act the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council may make claims over limited classes of Crown land tenure (for example, unallocated Crown land) and grant a freehold title to a Local Aboriginal Land Council to own the land outright and use or develop land.

There are 105 thousand hectares of forest located across all New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council land, which is owned and/or managed by a total of 121 Local Aboriginal Land Councils.

Conservation reserves with Indigenous joint management

In New South Wales, the joint management of national parks and conservation reserves between government entities and Indigenous communities occurs through a variety of arrangements, including Indigenous ownership, memoranda of understanding, or Indigenous Land Use Agreements.

Indigenous ownership and lease-back arrangements of designated parks and reserves are established by Part 4A of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* and the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983*, where reserves are owned by Indigenous communities, leased to the New South Wales Government and then jointly managed by a board of management.

Conservation reserves subject to memoranda of understanding are voluntary collaborative approaches between the New South Wales Government and Indigenous communities that have a range of specified benefits including Indigenous participation in park management and cultural heritage management and protection.

Together, 1.5 million hectares of forest occurs across all national parks and conservation reserves with a specified New South Wales joint management arrangement, with 21 thousand hectares of that forest being on parks and reserves with an Indigenous owned, lease-back arrangement.

Northern Territory

Aboriginal Lands Trust

Northern Territory Aboriginal Lands Trust lands are granted under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* with freehold land title held by an Aboriginal Lands Trust for the benefit of specified Traditional Owners. The legislation established land councils in the Northern Territory, which are the representative bodies to determine how land is used and managed, for example, for a community purpose or commercial activity.

There are 12.2 million hectares of forest located across all land held by Northern Territory Aboriginal Lands Trusts.

Indigenous freehold parks with joint-management governance

The joint management of certain Indigenous owned national parks and conservation reserves in the Northern Territory occurs under different legislation. The *Cobourg Peninsula Aboriginal Land Sanctuary and Marine Park Act 1981* vested the Cobourg Peninsula to Traditional Owners, and dedicated the area as national park (Gurig National Park) and specified associated provisions for the management of the land. Additionally, under the *Parks and Reserves (Framework for the Future) Act 2003* numerous national parks and conservation reserves under Indigenous ownership were leased back to the Northern Territory Government. Under this legislation plans of management are developed in partnership with Indigenous communities to jointly manage parks and reserves, and incorporate Indigenous culture, knowledge, and participation in decision making.

A total of 1.2 million hectares of forest is on Indigenous owned, joint-managed national parks and conservation reserves covered by this Northern Territory legislation.

Queensland

In Queensland, land grant arrangements primarily occur under the *Aboriginal Land Act 1991* and *Torres Strait Islander Land Act 1991*, including Deed of Grant in Trust land and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land trusts.

Deed of Grant in Trust

Deed of Grant in Trust land is a class of freehold land tenure granted in trust to Indigenous communities for Indigenous purposes. Located on former reserves and missions, Deed of Grant in Trust land is managed by incorporated Indigenous councils, with councillors elected every three years who administer, manage and use the land for the benefit for Indigenous communities. Councils can lease Deed of Grant in Trust land in accordance with the *Aboriginal Land Act 1991*, *Torres Strait Islander Land Act 1991* and the *Land Act 1994*.

A total of 509 thousand hectares of forest is on Deed of Grant in Trust land.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land trusts

Indigenous communities in Queensland also have land ownership through land transferred to a land trust to hold for the benefit of Indigenous people. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land trusts have been established under the *Aboriginal Land Act 1991* and *Torres Strait Islander Land Act 1991*, respectively. New trusts are no longer being established, with the granting of land occurring to either existing land trusts or to corporations registered under the *Commonwealth Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006*.

A total of 5.1 million hectares of forest is on land held in Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island land trusts.

Conservation reserves with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander co-management arrangements

In Queensland co-management of conservation reserves between Indigenous communities and government entities occurs through different legislation. Under the *Cape York Peninsula Heritage Act 2007* certain national parks in Far North Queensland are designated as Cape York Peninsula Aboriginal Land, which is Aboriginal freehold tenure, owned by Indigenous trusts or corporations, and dedicated as national parks that are jointly managed between the owners and the Queensland Government. The co-management of other national parks and conservation reserves in Queensland is also enabled under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*, which was amended in 2016 to allow for the involvement of recognised Indigenous peoples in the management of protected areas.

A total of 2.1 million hectares of forest is on conservation reserves in Queensland that have co-management arrangements with Indigenous peoples.

South Australia

Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara and Maralinga Tjarutja lands

In South Australia, lands traditionally owned by the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara peoples and Maralinga Tjarutja peoples were recognised and granted freehold title via the *Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Land Rights Act 1981* and *Maralinga Tjarutja Land Rights Act 1984*, respectively, with both managed by representative bodies corporate.

Aboriginal Land Trust lands

First established in 1966 Aboriginal Lands Trusts in South Australia are legislated under the *Aboriginal Lands Trust Act 2013* to hold land for the benefit of Indigenous people of South Australia. Lands held occur across freehold land and Crown land tenure classes, primarily leasehold land.

Across South Australia, a total of 869 thousand hectares of forest is on land owned by Indigenous peoples or by an Aboriginal Lands Trust, with 309 thousand hectares on freehold land and 561 thousand hectares of Crown land tenure classes (areas do not tall due to rounding).

Tasmania

Aboriginal land

Under the *Aboriginal Lands Act 1995* the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania was established to hold and manage land in Tasmania for the benefit on Indigenous peoples. Part of the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania's functions is to develop plans for the use and sustainable management of land while maintaining natural, cultural and community values that exist on Aboriginal land.

A total of 56 thousand hectares of forest in Tasmania is on Aboriginal land.

Victoria

Land granted under the *Aboriginal Lands Act 1970*

The *Aboriginal Lands Act 1970* granted freehold title to Indigenous communities over two former mission sites. A total of two thousand hectares of forest is on land granted under the *Aboriginal Lands Act 1970*.

Additional lands rights of other former mission sites in Victoria were granted under the *Aboriginal Lands Acts 1991*, however data are insufficient to identify forest areas.

Aboriginal Title joint management of parks and reserves

In Victoria the *Traditional Owner and Settlement Act 2010* recognises Traditional Owners with certain rights on Crown land tenure classes. Land that is subject to a Traditional Owner Land Management Agreement between a Traditional Owner Corporation and the State of Victoria provides Indigenous peoples with opportunities to jointly manage public land, including parks and reserves. Joint management of parks and reserves involves the cooperative development and implementation of a plan of management between recognised Indigenous communities and the government that sets the strategic management goals of conserving and enhancing natural and cultural values.

A total of 863 thousand hectares of forest is under joint management of parks and reserves.

Natural Resources and Land Use Activity agreements

Under the *Traditional Owner and Settlement Act 2010*, other special rights of use or access are allowed for by a Land Use Activity Agreement or a Natural Resource Agreement. A Land Use Activity Agreement allows recognised Indigenous peoples to comment on or consent to certain activities on public land. A Natural Resource Agreement allows recognised Indigenous peoples to hunt, fish, camp and gather natural resources on public land.

Together, a total of 2.2 million hectares of forest is covered by a Natural Resources Agreement or Land Use Activity Agreement.

The *Traditional Owner and Settlement Act 2010* provides for the granting of freehold title to certain land for Indigenous groups, however data are insufficient to identify forest areas.

Freehold Aboriginal Community held land

Certain freehold title land in Western Australia is owned and managed by Indigenous corporations and entities, including land granted by the Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation. A total of three thousand hectares of forest in Western Australia is Freehold Aboriginal Community held.

Indigenous owned co-managed national parks

Murujuga National Park on the Burrup Peninsula of the Pilbara coast was established in 2013 on freehold land vested to the Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation. Murujuga National Park is jointly managed with the Western Australia Government as a conservation reserve under provisions specified in the *Conservation and Land Management Amendment Act 1984*.

Murujuga National Park covers five thousand hectares of land which contains less than 100 hectares of forest.

Aboriginal Lands Trusts estate

The Western Australia Aboriginal Lands Trust is a statutory board established under the *Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority Act 1972* and is responsible for the control and management of land for the benefit of Indigenous peoples. Most of the Western Australia Aboriginal Lands Trust estate is held under Crown reserve but provides rights to specified Indigenous communities to exercise management rights over the estate.

A total of 756 thousand hectares of forest is on Western Australia Aboriginal Lands Trust land.

Indigenous pastoral leases

In Western Australia, the *Land Administration Act 1997* established the Pastoral Lands Board which administers all pastoral leases, including those leased to Indigenous corporations. The primary use of a pastoral lease is for the commercial grazing of authorised livestock on native vegetation. Lessees are not permitted to use other natural resources such as timber or soil resources. Lessees need to apply for additional permits for other activities, for example, clearing of native vegetation or sowing of non-native pastures.

A total of 370 thousand hectares of forest is on pastoral leases in Western Australia that are leased to Indigenous corporations.

Parks and reserves with joint management arrangements

Formal and informal joint-management arrangements between relevant Indigenous communities and the Western Australian Government are in place for some national parks and conservation reserves. Joint management arrangements establish a joint management body comprising Indigenous community members and government staff, who together give direction and advice on park management issues, and participate in park management projects and activities.

A total of 119 thousand hectares of forest is on Western Australia national parks and conservation reserves that have a joint-management arrangement.

References

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More information

Learn more about [Criterion 6 of Australia's State of the Forests Report](#).

Web agriculture.gov.au/abares/forestsaustralia/sofr/

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continuing connection to land and sea, waters, environment and community. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live and work on, their culture, and their Elders past and present.

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