

## Title: Building resilience in indigenous communities through engagement

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### Abstract

Indigenous communities in both Australia and New Zealand are constantly facing biosecurity threats from both naturally occurring new incursions and the human-mediated spread of existing pests, diseases and weeds. These incursions can have disastrous effects on commercial, traditional subsistence and niche-market cropping systems, the latter often occurring in relatively remote communities. For response programmes to be implemented, it is essential that effective communication, understanding and cooperation is achieved between agencies charged with controlling the incursions and communities affected by them.

The overall aim of the project was:

*To enhance the ability of indigenous communities and relevant regulatory authorities and industries to better manage social, cultural, environmental and economic impacts of biosecurity threats, and to participate in biosecurity strategies by describing and evaluating bicultural engagement models that build empowerment and ownership in indigenous communities and their response to those threats.*

The project was undertaken by a multicultural team drawn from the Institute for Plant and Food Research, New Zealand and the Northern Institute, Charles Darwin University, Australia. Because traditional cultural values, behaviours and protocols were recognised as essential elements of effective engagement, the team included respected elders (kaumatua) from both countries to provide guidance, support and validation on cultural issues.

Team members in each country used participatory action research to document procedure and identify key principles to the process. The careful collection of traditional knowledge from elders in both Māori and Aboriginal communities created trust, understanding and a willingness to share details the research teams could relate to and embed in the models. This methodology has resulted in models for engagement developed by indigenous communities for indigenous communities, thereby increasing the probability of adoption and success.

The work provides a knowledge base that can be utilised and implemented as procedure by government, agencies and industry. This has not been done before.