

**PhD Opportunity: Developing indigenous-specific ecosystem services metrics and tools for nature-based economies in Northern Australia**



The Research Institute for the Environment and Livelihoods ([RIEL](#)) is seeking applicants for an exciting PhD project that will lead to the development of indigenous-specific ecosystem services metrics and tools for nature-based economies to help indigenous land owners/managers engage with nature-based economies and related markets. This project is an exciting opportunity to work with Indigenous land managers and develop incentivising tools that help protect biodiversity.

**Scholarship and financial support:**

- CDU RTP stipend (\$35,489 per annum from 2026, indexed annually and tax exempt), for up to 3 years from commencement, open to Australian citizens/residents or New Zealand citizens (domestic students).
- Fee waiver for three years.

**About the project:**

This project will build upon current ARC Discovery research, where nature-based economic opportunities were explored. In recent years, there has been a greater emphasis by the Australian Government on the Nature Repair market. During the project, we developed the first-of-its-kind, ground-up nature-based economies framework, in collaboration with Indigenous peoples/Traditional Owners from across the north. This framework offers a list of ecological and socio-cultural indicators that can be used to assess ecosystems (Country in Indigenous ways of thinking) and people's connections with their Country. However, to progress and achieve practical outcomes and impact from this research, we need to develop the metrics and tools for the identified indicators, which can then help landowners/managers build their own toolkit to participate in the Nature Repair Market.

The research will enable Indigenous land managers and owners to talk directly with investors who want to invest in looking after the Country. Currently, there is no such metric or toolkit that suits Indigenous land managers/owners. This research will empower Indigenous groups to understand their Country and to participate effectively and actively in a fast-emerging Nature Repair Market.

**About you:**

- You have a research background (Honours or Masters) in ecological economics, ecosystem services, environmental science or similar, and bring a high level of academic merit consistent with RTP stipend scholarship requirements
- Hold an Australian driving license or the capacity to obtain one
- Would ideally be based or willing to relocate to Darwin
- Can work independently with a high level of initiative

**Benefits to you:**

- Receive generous support for project costs
- Play an integral role in a highly collaborative research team
- Contribute to research with real-world impact
- Access to Student Support Services and Wellbeing Support Program
- Work with a University committed to changing people's lives for the better through training, education, and research

**Selection criteria:**

- First Class Honours, MSc or equivalent containing a substantial research component in a relevant field such as ecological economics, ecosystem services, environmental science, economics or similar field
- Must meet the RTP stipend requirements, including being either an Australian permanent resident or citizen, or a New Zealand citizen, with intention to be a domestic student

**How to apply:**

Email an expression of interest to Professor Kamaljit Sangha ([Kamaljit.Sangha@cdu.edu.au](mailto:Kamaljit.Sangha@cdu.edu.au)), including:

- A curriculum vitae, including a list of any peer-reviewed publications, conference presentations and relevant work and/or research experience
- A brief statement, not exceeding 500 words, describing your background, research experience and interest in this research project/area
- Names and contact details of two academic referees

**Application closing date:** 11:59pm 10<sup>th</sup> August 2026

**Commencement date:** Early 2027

**Enquiries:** Professor Kamaljit K Sangha; [Kamaljit.Sangha@cdu.edu.au](mailto:Kamaljit.Sangha@cdu.edu.au), (08) 8946 6792

**Diversity and Inclusion:** At CDU, we actively celebrate our diversity. We innovate, embrace new ideas, and act with courage and kindness. We're about what we can give to the world rather than what we take, and we believe in the transformative power of education. We work hard to make sure every member of our university community feels that they truly belong. Understanding that it is through our focus on our people and leveraging our differences that will make CDU the most connected university in Australia, we are striving to ensure that our culture and our community are inclusive of all our staff, students and visitors. We are committed to maintaining a culture where everyone feels respected, safe, encouraged to speak up and supported in achieving their professional goals. You make CDU. And we want you to be exactly who you are.