



Australia's National
Science Agency

GISERA | Gas Industry Social and Environmental Research Alliance

Progress report

Pathways for Indigenous socio-economic development in the
Beetaloo region of the Northern Territory



Progress against project milestones

Progress against milestones/tasks are approved by the GISERA Director, acting with authority in accordance with the [GISERA Alliance Agreement](#).

Progress against project milestones/tasks is indicated by two methods: [Traffic light reports](#) and descriptive [Project schedule reports](#).

1. Traffic light reports in the Project Schedule Table below show progress using a simple colour code:

- **Green:**

- Milestone fully met according to schedule.
- Project is expected to continue to deliver according to plan.
- Milestone payment is approved.

- **Amber:**

- Milestone largely met according to schedule.
- Project has experienced delays or difficulties that will be overcome by next milestone, enabling project to return to delivery according to plan by next milestone.
- Milestone payment is withheld.
- Milestone payment withheld for second of two successive amber lights; project review initiated and undertaken by GISERA Director.

- **Red:**

- Milestone not met according to schedule.
- Problems in meeting milestone are likely to impact subsequent project delivery, such that revisions to project timing, scope or budget must be considered.
- Milestone payment is withheld.
- Project review initiated by GISERA Director.

2. Progress Schedule Reports outline task objectives and outputs and describe, in the 'progress report' section, the means and extent to which progress towards tasks has been made.

Project schedule table

TASK NUMBER	TASK DESCRIPTION	SCHEDULED START	SCHEDULED FINISH	COMMENT
1	Preparatory work and study design	2 May 2025	31 Aug 2025	Completed
2	Literature Review	2 May 2025	30 Apr 2026	
3	Introductory fieldtrip, Communicate project objectives and establish local Aboriginal co-researchers	1 Jul 2025	30 Sep 2025	Completed
4	Collaborative Field Research: fieldtrip 2	1 Aug 2025	31 Jan 2026	
5	Final report	1 Jan 2026	30 Jun 2026	
6	Communicate project objectives, progress to stakeholders communicate and ground-truth findings: field trip 3 near project completion)	2 May 2025	31 Jul 2026	

Project schedule report

TASK 1: Preparatory work and study design

BACKGROUND

- Prepare contract between CSIRO and UQ
- Gather previous GISERA surveys and workshop processes to inform ethics application.
- Desktop research to identify key rights holders and stakeholders (drawing on the SREBA) in communities of study.
- Undertake an initial assessment to identify existing capacities, plans, organisations, and networks related to economic development
- Identify and contact Technical Reference Group members, ensure Terms of Reference are drafted.
- Draft ethics application.
- Draft and submit NLC research permit, engagement with NLC anthropologists.
- Engage with potential Aboriginal co-researchers on the phone and in-person.

OBJECTIVES

- To have NLC research permit and the draft ethics application
- Undertake an introductory trip to the region to co-design the project scope with Aboriginal co-researchers, also required for the ethics application
- Establish key networks within the regional communities and organisations.
- Refine project plan (including identifying research participants, determining options for field research, data elicitation/collection/analysis plans).

TASK OUTPUTS AND SPECIFIC DELIVERABLES

- Contract between CSIRO and UQ executed
- Project ethics submitted
- NLC research permit obtained.
- Project research team – including Aboriginal co-researchers - confirmed
- Compilation of SREBA individual reports on socio economic status for each of the towns being studied.
- Key rights holder and stakeholder maps for the region, key communities and organisations
- First Technical Reference Group Meeting
- Research Reference Group established.

PROGRESS REPORT

This task was completed in August 2025.

- The contract between CSIRO and UQ was executed on the 19th of May 2025.
- UQ's ethics approval was granted on the 28th of August 2025 and has been submitted to CSIRO's ethics committee for reciprocal approval.
- UQ received their NLC research permit in July 2025
- UQ have confirmed their research team and have compiled relevant data from their previous work for SREBA. Key rights holders and stakeholders in the Beetaloo region have been identified, including through on the ground engagement during an exploratory field trip in early June.
- UQ have established the Research Reference Group.
- The Technical Reference Group members have been identified and initial briefings about the project have occurred. The TRG will meet in early October.

TASK 2: Literature Review

BACKGROUND

- Desktop literature review on Indigenous-led economic development, incorporating Australian and some international examples (Canada, and Aotearoa)
- Focus on central Australia / semi-arid / remote regions with extractive industries

- The review will continue throughout the project as new relevant topics and materials come to light in an iterative way.

TASKS OBJECTIVES

- Collate and synthesise relevant published and grey literature on Indigenous community led development, the role of Indigenous land use agreements, community economies
- To ensure that we are fully informed on previous case study materials from this region and comparable regions.

TASK OUTPUTS AND SPECIFIC DELIVERABLES

- Synthesis of relevant prior research
- This collation and synthesis will inform subsequent field research and feed into the final report.

PROGRESS REPORT

This task will be completed April 2026.

TASK 3: Introductory fieldtrip, communicate project objectives and establish local Aboriginal co-researchers

BACKGROUND

- Social science research with local communities, including field-based qualitative methods, requires relationship and trust building through spending time in regional communities and towns.
- This project includes a large regional population of Indigenous rights and interest holders, who are also a vulnerable group, as such a culturally sensitive approach to inclusion will be established.

TASK OBJECTIVES

- Introduce the project and some members of the project team to regional rights and interest holders.
- Develop a collaborative and inclusive method that actively ensures a mutually beneficial research approach is developed with Aboriginal rights holders.
- Co-designing research methodologies, gathering data, and conducting collaborative analysis to ensure that the perspectives and needs of Aboriginal communities are central to the research outcomes.

TASK OUTPUTS AND SPECIFIC DELIVERABLES

- Establish networks with regional groups.
- Support and enable local Aboriginal community-based researchers to actively participate and contribute to the research method and outputs, thereby developing local capability and opportunity.
- Project ethics approved.

PROGRESS REPORT

This task was completed in September 2025.

- The introductory fieldtrip (June) and an initial research trip (July) have been completed.
- The UQ research team have been building their network with regional groups and have identified local Aboriginal community-based researchers to participate in the project. The research method is being finalised in collaboration with these researchers.
- UQ's ethics approval was granted on the 28th of August 2025 and was submitted to CSIRO's Social Science Human Research Ethics Committee for reciprocal approval which was granted on the 16th of September 2026.

TASK 4: Collaborative Field research (trip 2)

BACKGROUND

- Social science research with local communities, including field-based qualitative methods, to explore:
 - What Indigenous-led development means to communities in the Beetaloo Basin
 - Understand existing capacities, plans, organisations, and networks and their success/challenges to date
 - Identify opportunities that can be supported in the future, particularly to maximise opportunities related to the development of the shale gas industry and other emerging sectors.

TASK OBJECTIVES

- The major period of field research in the Beetaloo Basin region meeting with as many interest groups as possible, building networks and connections.
- With Aboriginal co-researchers, undertake semi-structured face-to-face interviews, informal conversations in public places, focus groups, attending community meetings and forms of participant observation.
- Identify the types of social and economic opportunities that align with the visions of local communities in the Beetaloo region.
- Explore mechanisms that enable these opportunities to be captured, including governance mechanisms and the negotiated agreements (ILUAs).

TASK OUTPUTS AND SPECIFIC DELIVERABLES

- Establish networks with regional groups.
- Support and enable local Aboriginal community-based researchers to actively participate and contribute to the research method and outputs, thereby developing local capability and opportunity.
- Provide opportunities for rights holders and stakeholders to share their socio-economic development visions and support shared discussions and dialogue.

- Consolidate field research data to ensure that we have captured the diverse cross-section of relevant rights holder and stakeholder views in a way that have been inclusive and empowering.

PROGRESS REPORT

This task will be completed January 2026.

TASK 5: Final report

BACKGROUND

- Current research practice seeks to ensure that research involving Indigenous people leads to forms of self-determination and empowerment.
- In areas of high need and vulnerability – such as the Beetaloo Basin – Aboriginal rights holders have a major stake in the outcomes of any research in the region and as such have to play key roles in determining the findings and recommendations of the report.
- Making all efforts to include diverse Aboriginal voices and regional stakeholder perspectives is central to the report.
- As a collaborative project, ensuring that Aboriginal co-researchers have sufficient time to respond to and engage with drafts of the report will take time.

TASK OBJECTIVES

- Active collaboration with Aboriginal researchers leading to co-authorship of the final report.
- Develop options for a Beetaloo-specific approach to Indigenous-led development, including policy and program initiatives.

TASK OUTPUTS AND SPECIFIC DELIVERABLES

- Preparation of a final report outlining the scope, methodology, scenarios, assumptions, findings and any suggestions/options for future research
- Preparation of a plain English summary report for community groups.
- Following CSRM peer review, the report will be submitted to the GISERA Director for approval
- Draft peer-reviewed scientific manuscript ready for submission to relevant journal – draft at end of 2026

PROGRESS REPORT

This task will be completed June 2026.

TASK 6: Communicate project objectives, progress and findings to stakeholders (including trip 3)

BACKGROUND

Communication of GISERA's research is an important component of all research projects. The dissemination of project objectives, key findings and deliverables to relevant and diverse audiences allows discourse and decision making within and across multiple stakeholder groups.

TASK OBJECTIVES

Communicate project objectives, progress and findings to stakeholders and rights holders through meetings, Knowledge Transfer Session, fact sheets (ethics), project reports and journal article/s, in collaboration with the GISERA Communication Team.

The final field trip will present the draft findings to the participant rights holders and stakeholders engaged to ground-truth the data and ensure it aligns with the perspectives and understandings recorded.

TASK OUTPUTS AND SPECIFIC DELIVERABLES

Communication of project objectives, progress and results to GISERA stakeholders according to standard GISERA project procedures which may include, but not limited to:

- 1) Knowledge Transfer Session with relevant government/gas industry representatives.
- 2) Field trip to the region for a final check-in and confirmation of the findings in a ground truthing exercise (trip 3).
- 3) Preparation of an article for the GISERA newsletter and other media outlets as advised by GISERA's communication team.
- 4) Two project fact sheets: one developed at the commencement of the project (ethics), and another that at completion of the project summarising the findings and recommendations. Both will be hosted on the GISERA website and the CSRM website.

PROGRESS REPORT

This task will be completed July 2026.

Variations to Project Order

Changes to research Project Orders are approved by the GISERA Director, acting with authority, in accordance with the [GISERA Alliance Agreement](#). Any variations above the GISERA Director’s delegation require the approval of the relevant GISERA Research Advisory Committee.

The table below details variations to research Project Order.

Register of changes to Research Project Order

DATE	ISSUE	ACTION	AUTHORISATION

As Australia's national science agency and innovation catalyst, CSIRO is solving the greatest challenges through innovative science and technology.

CSIRO. Unlocking a better future for everyone.

Contact us

1300 363 400
+61 3 9545 2176
csiro.au/contact
csiro.au

For further information

1300 363 400
gisera.csiro.au

GISERA is a collaboration between CSIRO, Commonwealth and state governments and industry established to undertake publicly-reported independent research. The purpose of GISERA is to provide quality assured scientific research and information to communities living in gas development regions focusing on social and environmental topics including: groundwater and surface water, greenhouse gas emissions, biodiversity, land management, the marine environment, and socio-economic impacts. The governance structure for GISERA is designed to provide for and protect research independence and transparency of research.