



Approval of vessel operations or diving activities for Indigenous Rangers Program (IRP) Grant Activities

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Purpose

This document provides guidance to Indigenous Rangers Program (IRP) providers (Providers) for seeking NIAA's approval to undertake vessel or diving operations, or to acquire vessels or diving equipment with grant funding.

The document provides advice to support Providers in meeting the requirements of the Head Agreement and Funding Agreement Schedule with regard to meeting Work Health and Safety requirements relevant to the delivery of the IRP Grant activities (Head Agreement clauses 118-119).

1. Seeking approval of vessel operations as part of IRP grant activities.

Vessels used to deliver IRP activities are regulated under Australia's National System for Domestic Commercial Vessel Safety, administered by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA). Please see the AMSA website for details - [Domestic commercial vessels \(amsa.gov.au\)](https://www.amsa.gov.au).

Recreationally registered vessels and recreational boat licences cannot be used for delivery of IRP grant activities.

Before vessel operations can be approved as part of an IRP Annual Project Plan, the Provider must make a declaration to the NIAA that:



- Provides NIAA with the AMSA issued unique vessel identifying number for each vessel.
 - The Provider has a certificate of operation or exemption from AMSA for the activities to be undertaken and maintains a safety management system, compliant with AMSA's Marine Order 504 (see: [Safety management systems | Australian Maritime Safety Authority](#)).
 - Crew who will operate vessels hold relevant certificates of competency (or exemptions),
 - The Provider has appropriate insurance cover for delivery of vessel operations.
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2. Approving the purchase or lease of vessels with IRP grant funding (in-full or part-funded)

General information on acquiring assets with grant funding

- The use of grant funds to acquire any Asset must be in accordance with your obligations under the Head Agreement and Project Schedule relating to the acquisition and disposal of grant funded Assets.
- You must obtain prior written approval from the Commonwealth to use a Grant or any part of a Grant to purchase, lease or acquire an Asset (Head Agreement clauses 40-47).
- You must also seek the consent of the Commonwealth to dispose of any Grant funded Asset (clause 45).
- General guidance on acquiring IRP grant funded assets can be found at [Attachment A](#) and can also be provided by your NIAA Agreement Manager.

Before the NIAA can approve the acquisition of a vessel using grant funds, a Provider must make the following declarations to the NIAA:

- **For used vessels:** that the Provider has obtained advice from an accredited marine surveyor confirming the vessel can meet AMSA registration requirements for its intended purpose.
- **For new vessels:** that the Provider has obtained manufacturer's advice (in the quote) confirming a vessel will be constructed to meet the relevant AMSA registration requirements.
- **For both new and second-hand vessels,** please provide the name of the AMSA accredited Marine surveyor engaged to certify the vessel in the declaration.

A list of accredited marine surveyors in each state and territory can be found at: [Find an accredited marine surveyor | Australian Maritime Safety Authority](#)

3. Charter vessels

- A Provider must obtain the NIAA's approval to hire a charter vessel during the negotiation of the Annual Project Plan and Budget.
- Where a Provider charters a vessel to undertake an IRP grant activity, the responsibility for complying with statutory requirements rests with the charter vessel operator, rather than the Provider.

- The Provider must have appropriate insurance cover for employees delivering IRP grant activities from charter vessels.
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4. Approval of grant funded activities involving snorkelling, surface supply breathing apparatus (SSBA) or self-contained underwater breathing apparatus (SCUBA)

- Snorkelling / diving activities involving Rangers funded through the IRP are occupational in nature.
- Each state and territory has regulations governing occupational and work diving to meet the requirements of Australian Occupational Diving Standard (AS/NZS 2299.1:2015). See ([AS/NZS 2299.1:2015 | Occupational Diving Operations | SAI Global](#))
- Due to the cost and specialist training requirements for occupational divers and dive-supervisors, compressed air (SSBA or SCUBA) diving activities are not typically undertaken independently by IRP Providers.
- Where an IRP Provider plans to undertake compressed air diving activities that are supervised by a partner organisation, the IRP Provider must establish whether the diving safety management systems utilised by the partner organisation are applicable to their employees. **** note that the diving safety management systems utilised by research or volunteer organisations may not be applicable to paid employees.***

A Provider must make a written declaration to the NIAA regarding the following information when seeking approval for IRP funded diving activities (including snorkelling):

1. That the Provider has written advice from the relevant state or territory work-cover authority, demonstrating their organisation has the capacity to undertake occupational (work) diving operations, in accordance with state / territory requirements.

** This advice must be specific to the IRP Provider and their employees, rather than partner organisations involved in the proposed diving activities.*
 2. That the Provider has work-cover insurance for their employees that specifically covers occupational (work) diving.
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All evidence supporting the declarations made above should be made available to the NIAA upon request as per clauses 57 and 118 of the Head Agreement. Declarations must be timely and in advance of activities. They can be made via email as part of the Annual Project Plan and Budget negotiations or revisions each year.