
Stephan Schnierer



NSW Ministerial Fisheries Advisory Committee
The Reef 2050 Plan Independent Expert Panel

The inaugural Excellence in Sea Country Award has two winners, one of whom is **Stephan Schnierer** for decades of work on Indigenous cultural fisheries practices through research, policy development and rights advocacy.

Stephan was previously an academic at Southern Cross University for 30 years holding an associate professor's position for 20 years, followed by an adjunct position at both the SCU and the University of Canberra until 2021. Stephan obtained his master's degree in zoology from University of Queensland where he investigated the biology of the Australian bass in northern NSW. In 1985, he started work at the then University of New England Lismore campus in the School of Environmental Sciences and Management where he developed and taught units in fisheries and marine biology. In 1989 he commenced PhD studies through UNSW focussing on the feeding ecology of various fish species in the freshwater reaches of the Richmond River.

In the early 90s, Stephan's work expanded to include overseeing the establishment of the College of Indigenous Australian Peoples, for which he was made the dean. He led the development of an indigenous academic program that included three Associate Diploma's for Indigenous people in health, legal studies, and business as well as a bachelor's degree. He also began a research program which combined his fisheries science background with Traditional Fishing Knowledge.

This research focus led him to give a presentation at a seminal indigenous conference in the Daintree in 1993 which resulted in the 'Julayinbul Statement on Indigenous Intellectual Property Rights'. This statement was presented at a United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) working group on Article (8j) in 1997 in Madrid Spain. Since that time Stephan has remained a member of the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity which advises to the CBD.

Stephan returned to the Environmental Sciences and Management School in 2003 where he began teaching Ecology and Fisheries Management. He also pursued his research interests becoming successful in obtaining research grants in 2010 from the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation. His research focused on developing a better understanding of the nature of Aboriginal cultural fishing in NSW. The research was conducted using a 2-way approach where information was exchanged between the researcher and the participants providing greater opportunity for 2-way capacity building. He believes by empowering mobs this way; we create a clearer pathway for better engagement between communities and fisheries agencies. This work has since led to two coastal Aboriginal communities in NSW developing Local Aboriginal Management Plans. His connection with the FRDC in part led to the establishment of the Indigenous Reference Group which plays a major advisory role to the FRDC on the fisheries research priorities of Indigenous communities around Australia.

Stephan has also recently finished a 2-year stint chairing the NSW Aboriginal Land Councils Fishing Fund Advisory Committee set up to assist Aboriginal individuals and communities to establish commercial fishing businesses in NSW. During his tenure people have been able to enter the wild harvest, aquaculture, and post-harvest sectors of the NSW fishing industry. Stephan is currently a member of The Reef 2050 Plan Independent Expert Panel which provides scientific and expert advice related to the Great Barrier Reef and is an advisor on fisheries to the Traditional Owners of the GBR. He is also a member of the NSW Ministerial Fisheries Advisory Committee and a coinvestigator on three current FRDC Projects looking at better Indigenous fisheries engagement models and adapting fisheries harvest strategies to better account for Indigenous cultural fisheries.