

# ENGAGING AND COMMUNICATING WITH ABORIGINAL AND/OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER OR FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE PROTOCOL



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## 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 Under the aegis of the CQUniversity recognition of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, this protocol embodies the values and principles declared in the University pledge to support First Nations People of Australia in their aspirations for constitutional change, a voice in parliament and a makarrata.
- 1.2 This protocol offers practical guidance and methods for respectfully engaging and communicating with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander or First Nations Australian individuals and communities. It provides foundational guidelines for developing engagement strategies and verbal and non-verbal communication methodology. The protocols in this document are culturally aligned with nationally accepted best practice, mutually agreed upon by leading First Nations and non-Indigenous Australian individuals and entities.
- 1.3 This protocol supports the establishment and maintenance of reciprocal respectful relationships and cultural awareness in the areas of governance, leadership, teaching, research, employee interaction, student success, community engagement, communication, industry partnerships and strategy development. It is designed to inform policy documents and platforms across the multi-level spectrum of CQUniversity's influence and responsibility in the communities in which it operates, to create equal opportunities for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander or First Nations people.
- 1.4 Further, it guides the development of the social, physical and digital landscapes, in the context of including Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander or First Nation cultures and knowledges in the planning and executing of the University's present and future business.

## Prerequisites

- 1.5 University employees and students must complete the [First Nations Cross Cultural Competency Training](#) prior to using this document as a guideline. It is recommended that those using this document follow the live links in this section to gain an overview of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and current cultural position as considered by national organisations.
- 1.6 Language and terminology may vary according to geographical location. It is best practice to consult with local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander or First Nations people, Traditional Owners or community groups to determine preferred local terminology.

## 2 SCOPE

- 2.1 This protocol applies to CQUniversity employees, students, and its controlled entities. While there is no prescribed methodology for engaging and communicating with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander or First Nations people, employees and students are expected to comply with the core principles described in this protocol.

## 3 RESOURCES

- 3.1 The resource links below provide insight into the importance of knowing and understanding the historical and cultural background to the nation's contemporary social landscape, when planning an engagement program with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander or First Nations Australians. It is strategically important that in planning interaction with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander or First Nations People, one feels confident that the knowledge gathered can be used to build a well-informed, respectful plan for engagement and relationship building.
  - [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of Australia](#) (Australian Human Rights Commission)
  - [Share Our Pride](#)
  - [Reconciliation Australia](#)
  - [Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies \(AIATSIS\)](#).
- 3.2 It is essential to identify the names of the language/s and group/s of the people with whom the engagement is planned. This knowledge will aid in identifying initial community contacts.
  - [Gambay Map of First Nations Language](#)
  - [First Peoples of Australia Map](#)
  - [National Native Title Tribunal](#)
  - [Torres Strait Island Culture](#).

## 4 PROTOCOL

### Description of an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander or First Nations Australian person

- 4.1 In 1983 under the section 51(xxvi) of the [Constitution of Australia](#) (Cwlth), the High Court of Australia deemed that an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person:
  1. is a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent
  2. who identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, and
  3. is accepted as such by the community in which he or she lives, or formerly lived.
- 4.2 The term Aboriginal is not inclusive of Torres Strait Islander people, and conversely the term Torres Strait Islander is not inclusive of Aboriginal people. First Nations people who identify with continental Australia are Aboriginal Australians. Torres Strait Islander people identify with the lands of the Islands in the Torres Straits in the waters north of Queensland. An Aboriginal person may be offended if identified as a person from the Torres Strait Islands. A person from the Torres Strait Islands may be offended if identified as an Aboriginal Australian.

## Requirements for effective engagement and communication

- 4.3 Effective engagement is interaction that leads to reciprocal relationships based on understanding, trust and integrity. Thoughtful respectful engagement with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander or First Nations people builds mutually beneficial sustainable relationships and collaborative partnerships
- 4.4 Six core values widely recognised as important to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander or First Nations people, with each separate community expressing the values in ways inherent to local practice and culture (National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC, 2018)) form the basis of planning engagement and communication strategies. Engagement encompasses collaboration. As in any social interaction, a relationship is established before a partnership is agreed upon. When preparing to approach Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander or First Nations individuals and communities with the ultimate intention to establish a collaborative partnership, it should be considered whether the plan fits with the use of these six core values in the engagement process. Through honouring the six values, a relationship can be established.
1. **Spirit and integrity:** refer to the continuity of time and culture; the connected sequence of past present and future and the respect and honour given to behaviours that uphold that perceptive continuum.
  2. **Cultural continuity:** is about protecting the rights of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander or First Nations peoples knowledge, languages, culture and identities, in the gathering of information when conducting industry partnerships and research and preventing the harm of these inherent rights.
  3. **Reciprocity:** is concerned with shared obligations that support existing familial ties and care of land, animals and country, which includes air, waterways and oceans. Responsibilities include shared benefits in the distribution of resources, wealth, food and housing.
  4. **Respect:** is about acknowledging individual dignity and right to lifestyle and underpins trust and collaboration as necessary to the achievement of an outcome of a shared and generous social environment.
  5. **Equity:** is a concept focused on the recognition of the equal value of all individuals and a commitment to justice and fairness for each person.
  6. **Responsibility:** refers to the commitment to caring for country and people, recognising kinship bonds and sustaining and environment that all allows the maintenance of cultural and spiritual awareness and practice.

## Establishing a purpose and plan for engagement and communication

- 4.5 Create a plan and a brief for the project based on the following considerations:
- Consider the reason and purpose of the proposed planned engagement and intended outcomes. The engagement plan should be founded in reciprocity and in the outline of the project brief, the sustainability of the project clearly identified and explained. All involved should be familiar with the brief and be aware of what is expected of them.
  - It is essential to understand the core beliefs, practices and influences held by individuals and groups planning to engage with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander or First Nations people, and how these basic premises may impact interaction and communication with individuals and communities. Everyone carries bias when it comes to the unfamiliar and the unknown. All people have preconceived ideas and expectations when beginning a new project or enterprise. It is best to record these biases in the original brief, for self-reflection in the planning stages and reference during the engagement process.
  - Cultural history and social inequity require consideration in engagement and communication plans. Power structures within the proposed engagement necessitate identification, accountability and risk management. If cultural guidance is sought from a spectrum of the community membership and clear agreements are reached prior to the project, engagement should lead to relationships and eventually partnerships.
  - It is essential to acknowledge the significance and value of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander or First Nation cultural heritage and its inherent intellectual property that is gained through access to and sharing of knowledge, in the engagement process.

- It is essential to understand accurate historical facts about the community. Initial research should include delving into accurate historical backstory.
- Refer to the precepts held in the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) when devising the plan and brief. All members of the team involved must understand and honour the rights of those with whom they are engaging and be prepared to practice the principles held in this document.

## **Mechanisms for effective engagement and communication**

### 4.6 Plan knowledge-based engagement:

- Make use of current digital resources to develop and understanding the system of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander or First Nations people land tenancy and language in contemporary Australia as listed in the prerequisite resources of this document.

### 4.7 Seek permission, guidance and cooperation:

- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander or First Nations communities have existing cultural relationships and knowledge systems based on established values and protocols. Approach and seek advice of Local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander or First Nations Councils and/or Prescribed Body Corporate (PBC) or Registered Native Title Bodies Corporate (RNTBC) when looking for appropriate community members.
- When established who to approach in community, approach the person/s by telephone or in writing. Ensure that the reason for the request and the parameters of the intended project is clear. Outline the intention for establishing the relationship and the benefits for the community intended in the outcome.
- Request information on community protocols and write them into planning documentation.

### 4.8 Engage respectfully with communities to establish relationships and partnerships:

- Build relationships through considerate communication and collaboration over delivery of the engagement. Allowing time for relationships to emerge is important to creating future partnerships.
- Seek input for appropriate social interactive environments. Ensure the environment for meetings is relaxed and respectful.
- Take notes openly on a white board and distribute post meeting if appropriate.

### 4.9 Approach communicating with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people and communities with consideration:

- Take time to inquire where the best place for the planned engagement may be and how people would like to sit in a room or meeting place.
- Ask questions and listen carefully and closely to what is being said in answer. Silence may indicate that a person is continuing to consider or waiting for more information, or another to speak.
- When posing questions allow adequate time for consideration and reflection in the context of the issues discussed. Answers may take time to emerge. Be prepared to revisit at another time, allowing people to think and reflect. Verbally check for agreement.
- Be open minded in listening, considering the response in relation to your plans for engaging. Be mindful of one's social lens.
- In response speak carefully, using clear plain language in the first instance. Use respectful, non-discriminatory language. Be prepared for an alternative explanation in case English expressions fail to fully explain the concept; it may not be fully capable of expressing cultural imperatives, values and contexts.
- Be aware that non-verbal communication is important. Facial expressions, posture and gesturing are important aspects of communication. Tone of voice and eye contact are important. Good will is easily understood from all aspects of communication.

- Ask for the opinion of others and take the position that opinions are valid, helpful and may offer new perspectives. However direct questioning can be interpreted as personal and lead to misunderstanding, especially if the person questioning is in a position of authority. Agreement may be given to avoid speaking of private matters.
- Direct verbal confrontation is unsettling for most people, and expressing disagreement may be avoided, to preserve consensus for many Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander or First Nations people. It is important to recognise and work with this.

## Cultural awareness practice

- 4.10 Engaging and communicating with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander or First Nations people includes understanding the importance of their individual cultures and consideration of the core values with respect to family and kinship, and connections to land and spirituality. Whether the planned interaction be with individuals or groups, in circumstances of a remote community or an urban setting, it is essential to approach the engagement with the idea that each community expresses beliefs and practices in accordance with the agreement of its members.
- 4.11 Engagement and communication require consideration of each individual community's cultural stance.
- Cultural practices vary from place to place. What is appropriate in one community is not necessarily appropriate in another. Best practice requires liaising with community representatives prior to interactions with the people to be engaged with.
  - Confirm the names of groups of the people of the land on which the engagement takes place ensuring to identify the proper connection to country.
  - Identifying and acknowledging community Elders in a meeting or engagement program is an essential courtesy.
  - In some circumstances, deceased persons are not named, nor their image displayed. If there has been recent Sorry Business, check with family members to ensure what is appropriate.
  - Dress modestly when involved with engagement in an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander or First Nations community.

## Acknowledgement of country and/or welcome to country as part of event engagement

- 4.12 University events and meetings (informal and formal) on campus, at other venues or in community must include either an Acknowledgement of Country or a Welcome to Country in the initial stages of the program. An Acknowledgement of Country or a Welcome to Country expresses respect for the rights and connections of the Traditional Owners or Custodians of the land and sea where the event is held.
- 4.13 **An Acknowledgement of Country** expresses recognition and respect for the Traditional Owners and/or Custodians of the land on which you are conducting the event.
- An Acknowledgement of Country can be given by an Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian involved with the program or event.
  - The University has recommended text for Acknowledgement of Country. However, an individual may use any words, sincerely spoken and respectful of First Nations people with whom the individual is engaging.
  - The first speaker of the event program presents the Acknowledgement of Country or calls upon the elected person during the introduction process.
- 4.14 **A Welcome to Country** is a formal ceremony given by a Traditional Owner/s or Custodian/s of a specific land or sea country. Those giving the welcome are accepting visitors to their land and ensuring safe passage.
- Welcome to Country may include traditional language/s, traditional dance, smoking ceremonies and other cultural practice as Traditional Owner/s present the welcome ceremony in a way that is culturally suitable for the community and the place.

- The request to present the Welcome should be directed to the Traditional Owner or Custodian, Native Title Representative Body or an Indigenous Organisation of the land on which the event is to be held. Fees often are paid to those who give the Welcome to Country and this should be discussed at the time the invitation is issued.
- The first speaker or master of ceremonies of an event introduces the individual or group that is delivering the Welcome to Country presentation, recognising them by name and title.

## 5 RESPONSIBILITIES

### Compliance, monitoring and review

- 5.1 The Deputy Vice-President (Indigenous Engagement) is responsible for implementing, monitoring, reviewing and ensuring compliance with this protocol.

### Reporting

- 5.2 No additional reporting is required.

### Records management

- 5.3 Employees must manage records in accordance with the [Records Management Policy and Procedure](#). This includes retaining these records in a recognised University recordkeeping information system.
- 5.4 University records must be retained for the minimum periods specified in the University Sector Retention and Disposal Schedule on the [Queensland State Archives website](#). Before disposing of any records, approval must be sought through the Records Management Office (email [records@cqu.edu.au](mailto:records@cqu.edu.au)).

## 6 DEFINITIONS

- 6.1 Terms not defined in this document may be in the University [glossary](#).

### Terms and definitions

**Aboriginal person:** a person who identifies as a descendant of the original habitants of mainland Australia.

**Cultural awareness:** sensitivity and acknowledgement of similarities and differences that exist between two different cultures, when communicating and engaging with others.

**Cultural competency:** awareness of one's own worldview, and attitude toward cultural differences, personal will to build understanding between people of different cultural backgrounds and perspectives, and actively working toward strengthening cultural equality and security.

**Engagement:** the process of working collaboratively with individual groups of people and individuals to create relationships and partnerships to address social and environmental issues and ultimately achieve beneficial solutions.

**First Nations people:** refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Australia who lived in Australia prior to British colonisation.

**Makarrata:** a word from the Yolngu language that is synonymous with treaty or a legally recognised agreement.

**Reconciliation:** the re-establishment and promotion of respect, trust and positive relationships between people within the national Australian community.

**Torres Strait Islander person:** a person who identifies as a descendent of the Indigenous people of the Torres Strait Islands, of which there are 133 islands that are situated between the northern most tip of Queensland and Papua New Guinea.

## 7 RELATED LEGISLATION AND DOCUMENTS

[Confirmation of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander or First Nations Identity Protocol](#)

[First Nations Workforce Strategy](#)

## 8 APPROVAL AND REVIEW DETAILS

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Notes	This document was formerly known as the Engaging and Communicating with Australia Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocol (last approved 07/03/2018).

## 9 APPENDIX A: TRADITIONAL OWNERS FOR PEOPLE AND LOCATIONS LINKED TO CQUNIVERSITY CAMPUSES

### 9.1 University locations where there is knowledge of the Traditional Owners:

Campus	People	
	Spelling	Pronunciation
Adelaide/Appleton Institute	Kaurna	Garna
Biloela	Gangulu	Gun-gooloo
Brisbane	Turrbal, Jagera, Yuggera and Ugarapul	Toor-bull, Jag-er-a, Yoog-er-a and Oog-ar-a-pull
Broome	Yawuru	Ya-wu-ru
Busselton	Wardandi	Wardandi
Cairns	Gimuy Walubara Yidinji	Gim-oy Wal-you-burra Yid-ing-ee
Charters Towers	Gudjal	Goodjal
Cooma	Ngarigo and Walgalu	Ng-ar-ego and Wal-ga-lu
Emerald	Western Kanagoulu	Western Cangal-oo
Geraldton	Yamaji	Yam-a-gee
Karratha	Ngarluma and Yindjibarndi	Ngarluma and Yindjibarndi
Mackay	Yuibera	Yew-wii barra
Melbourne	Kulin	Coo-lin
Noosa	Gubbi Gubbi	Gub-bee Gub-bee
Perth	Wadjuk	Wad-Juk
Rockhampton	Darumbal	Darr-um-bull
Sydney	Gadigal of the Eora Nation	Gad-i-gill of the Ee-or-a Nation
Townsville	Bindal and Wulgurukaba	Bin-dal and Wool-gar-roo-kar-bar
Yeppoon	Darumbal	Darr-um-bull
Gladstone	Byellee, Gurang, Gooreng Gooreng, and Taribelang Bunda peoples	Bi-ellie, Goorang, Goore-ang Goorang and Tar-e-bel-ang Bunda peoples.
Bundaberg	Gurang, Gooreng Gooreng, and Taribelang Bunda peoples	Goorang, Goore-ang Goorang, and Tar-e-bel-ang Bunda peoples.

Please refer to the [National Native Title Tribunal website](#) if a location is not listed.