

Policy Title: **Recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Country**

Policy Owner: **Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Equity and Indigenous)**

Keywords: **Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, Welcome to Country, Acknowledgement of Country**

Policy Code: **PL101 [CI005]**

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1. INTENT

ECU is committed to reconciliation and recognises and respects the significance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' communities, cultures and histories.

This policy provides guidance on culturally-appropriate recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples:

- at the commencement of significant ECU events, including the distinction between a *Welcome to Country* and an *Acknowledgement of Country*;
- at the commencement of semester; and
- in important ECU publications (official documents and webpages).

2. ORGANISATIONAL SCOPE

ECU students, staff and Council members.

3. DEFINITIONS

TERM	DEFINITION
Aboriginal	People who are descended from, and identify as, Aboriginal and are accepted as such by the Aboriginal community with which they associate.
Acknowledgement of Country	The formal recognition of traditional custodians of the land at the commencement of a significant ECU event by a senior representative of the University who is <u>not</u> an Aboriginal person.
ECU's commitment to reconciliation	ECU recognises and respects the significance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' communities, cultures and histories. We are committed to working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, towards reconciliation. Our vision for Reconciliation is articulated in the <i>ECU Reconciliation Action Plan</i> .
Nyoongar	The traditional custodians of the land in the South West of Western Australia, from Geraldton to Esperance. The spelling adopted by ECU is that used by the Whadjuk people (the Perth Metropolitan Clan). Alternatives include Noongar and Nyungar.
Significant ECU events	Formal events or gatherings, including conferences, meetings and celebrations hosted by ECU at which large numbers of students, staff and/ or members of the community are present.
Torres Strait Islander	People who are descended from, and identify as, Torres Strait Islander and are accepted as such by the Torres Strait Islander community with which they associate.
Welcome to Country	The formal ceremony at the commencement of a significant ECU event to welcome guests and recognise the traditional custodians of the land. The ceremony is performed by an Aboriginal Elder or other recognised Aboriginal person from that area and with authority to Welcome.

4. POLICY CONTENT

- 4.1. This policy supports ECU's commitment to reconciliation and recognises and respects the significance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' communities, cultures and histories. The policy sets down the protocol for recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at significant ECU events.
- 4.2. At the commencement of all significant ECU events, the traditional custodians of the land must be recognised. Other occasions and media for recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are:
- at the commencement of the display of the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags;
 - at academic sessions at the commencement of each semester; and
 - in the reproduction of *ECU's commitment to reconciliation* in official documents and webpages.

A. Recognition at the commencement of significant ECU events

- 4.3. A *Welcome to Country or Acknowledgement of Country* must take place at the commencement of all significant ECU events.

Welcome to Country

- 4.4. A *Welcome to Country* ceremony is performed by an Aboriginal Elder, or another recognised Aboriginal person from the local community.
- 4.5. A *Welcome to Country* ceremony should be performed by a local Aboriginal Elder where the event is a large public event, and/or celebrates or commemorates matters of importance to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities.
- 4.6. A *Welcome to Country* ceremony will typically include information on the theme and purpose of the event, provided by the organisers of the event.
- 4.7. Where Aboriginal language is used to deliver the *Welcome to Country*, the English meaning should also be provided, so that all guests understand the welcoming message.

Responding to a Welcome

- 4.8. The speaker who follows immediately after the *Welcome to Country* ceremony must provide a response, acknowledging the person(s) who delivered the *Welcome to Country*, and any Aboriginal Elders who are present.

The following responses may be used:

I respectfully acknowledge the past and present traditional custodians of the land on which we are meeting: the Nyoongar Elders and people.

or

ECU is committed to reconciliation and recognises the traditional custodians of the land upon which its campuses stand.

The following responses may be used if there are two or more language groups that have traditional custodianship of the land where the ECU event is being held:

I respectfully acknowledge the past and present traditional custodians of the land on which we stand, the Nyoongar people.

or

ECU is committed to reconciliation and recognises and respects the significance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' communities, cultures and histories.

Acknowledgement of Country

- 4.9. An *Acknowledgement of Country* should be offered for less formal, or smaller ECU events, or where an appropriate Aboriginal Elder is not available.
- 4.10. An *Acknowledgement of Country* is offered at the commencement of ECU events by the Vice-Chancellor, or other senior staff member, or by a staff member from the Aboriginal community.
- 4.11. It is important that the person undertaking an *Acknowledgement of Country* identifies any Elders in attendance at the outset.
- 4.12. Once an *Acknowledgement of Country* has been offered, it is not necessary for future speakers to repeat the acknowledgement.

The following words may be used **by a non-Aboriginal** in an *Acknowledgement of Country*:

I respectfully acknowledge the past and present traditional custodians of this land on which we are meeting: the Nyoongar Elders and people.

or

ECU is committed to reconciliation and recognises the traditional custodians of the land upon which its campuses stand and their connection to this land. I acknowledge and offer my respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people present.

The following words can be used in an *Acknowledgement of Country* **by an Aboriginal**:

I would like to pay my respects to, and acknowledge, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and people here present and who have passed. I am a person from (reference to be added by speaker).

or

ECU is committed to reconciliation and recognises the traditional custodians of the land upon which its campuses stand.

Confirming the Traditional Custodians of the Land

4.13. In some areas of Australia, two or more language groups may be considered traditional custodians of the land. In circumstances where a significant ECU event is being held on such land, the advice of an Aboriginal Elder should be sought. It may also be advisable to seek advice from other sources (e.g. Aboriginal staff in the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage or local Aboriginal community organisations) to confirm the local traditional custodians of the land.

In these circumstances, all groups should be approached and consulted regarding appropriate recognition of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people at the commencement of significant events and gatherings.

B. Display of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags

4.14. The flying of the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags is a reminder of *ECU's commitment to reconciliation* and to recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The flags are flown in accordance with the requirements of the *ECU Flags Policy*.

C. Recognition at the commencement of semester

4.15. Academic staff conducting lectures, seminars and tutorials are encouraged to cite *ECU's commitment to reconciliation* and/or acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land at the commencement of each semester.

4.16. The following words may be spoken by Academic staff or displayed on a PowerPoint slide at the commencement of the first student lecture, seminar or tutorial of semester:

Edith Cowan University is committed to reconciliation and recognises and respects the significance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' communities, cultures and histories.

D. Recognition in official documents and webpages

4.17. Important ECU publications, including official documents (correspondence and reports) and webpages will cite *ECU's commitment to reconciliation* and/or acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional custodians of the land. Information on the University's *Reconciliation Action Plan* may also be provided where appropriate.

4.18. The following words may be used to acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in ECU documents, including correspondence and reports on ECU webpages:

ECU is committed to reconciliation and recognises and respects the significance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' communities, cultures and histories. ECU acknowledges and respects the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as the traditional custodians of the land.

or

ECU acknowledges and respects its continuing association with Nyoongar people, the traditional custodians of the land upon which its campuses stand.

5. ACCOUNTABILITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

In relation to this policy, the following positions are responsible for the following:

Policy Owner

The Policy Owner, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Equity and Indigenous) has overall responsibility for the content of this policy and its operation in ECU.

ECU Students, staff and Council Members

ECU Students, staff and Council members are required to comply with the content of this policy and to seek guidance in the event of uncertainty as to its application.

6. RELATED DOCUMENTS:

6.1. Other documents which are relevant to the operation of this policy are as follows:

- *ECU Reconciliation Action Plan, 2015-2018, to be superseded by the ECU Reconciliation Action Plan, 2018-2021 from May 2018.*
- [ECU Flags Policy \(PL068\)](#)

6.2. The policy aligns with *Theme 5 Promoting equality, diversity and social responsibility* of the *ECU Strategic Plan, 2017-2021 – World Ready*.

7. CONTACT INFORMATION

For queries relating to this document please contact:

Policy Owner	Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Equity and Indigenous)
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8. APPROVAL HISTORY

Policy Approved by:	Vice-Chancellor
Date Policy First Approved:	22/09/2008
Date last modified:	31/12/2017
Revision History:	02/07/2012 12/12/2014 06/06/2018 – Reviewed and Updated – Combined the Policy <i>Recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Country</i> (PL101 [CI005]) and <i>Guidelines for Recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Country</i> .
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