**Guidelines for Recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Country**

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1. **Intent**

These Guidelines provide advice on appropriate, culturally-sensitive, recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples:

* at the commencement of significant ECU events. The important difference between a *Welcome to Country* and an *Acknowledgement of Country* is included;
* at the commencement of semester; and
* in important ECU publications (official documents and webpages).

## Organisational Scope

All ECU students, staff and Council members.

1. **Guidelines Content**
2. *Confirming the Traditional Custodians of the Land*

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 Aboriginal Affairs 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.

1. *Recognised Aboriginal Elders*

Where possible, and particularly for large public events, defined as significant ECU events, and events celebrating or commemorating matters of importance to Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander communities, a local Aboriginal Elder is the most appropriate person to offer recognition via a *Welcome to Country* ceremony.

1. *Welcome to Country or Acknowledgement of Country*

Less formal, or smaller ECU events may not require a *Welcome to Country* ceremony from a local Aboriginal Elder. This may also apply to cases where an appropriate Aboriginal Elder is not available. In such circumstances, an *Acknowledgement of Country* should be offered by the Vice-Chancellor or a nominee, such as a senior staff member of the University, or a staff member from the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities.

1. ***Welcome to Country* Ceremony**

4.1 At ECU events a *Welcome to Country* ceremony can only be performed by an appropriate Aboriginal person. Such ceremonies are usually performed by a recognised Elder within the local community.

4.2 Organisers of significant ECU events should provide the person performing the *Welcome to Country* ceremony with information on the theme and purpose of the event.

4.3 Aboriginal Elders may be invited to include a traditional focus to the theme or purpose of the event in the ceremony.

4.4 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.

1. **Responding to a Welcome**

5.1 The speaker who follows immediately after the *Welcome to Country* ceremony must provide a response. Part of the response should acknowledge the person or persons who delivered the *Welcome to Country*, together with any Aboriginal Elders who are present.

The following responses may be used in response to a *Welcome to Country*:

*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.*

Once the response to the *Welcome to Country* ceremony has been offered, it is not necessary for future speakers to offer a response.

1. ***Acknowledgement of Country***

6.1 An *Acknowledgement of Country* is offered at the commencement of ECU events by the Vice-Chancellor, or other senior staff member, or a staff member from the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities.

6.2 It is important that the person undertaking an *Acknowledgement of Country* identifies any Elders in attendance at the outset.

6.3 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 or Torres Strait Islander Person** 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 Person:**

*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 \_\_\_\_\_.*

*OR*

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

1. **Recognition at the commencement of semester**

7.1 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, to recognise the traditional custodians of the land and to reaffirm ECU’s commitment to reconciliation:

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

1. **Recognition in official documents and webpages**

8.1 The following words may be used to acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in ECU documents, including correspondence and reports and 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*.

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

ECU’s webpages will also include information on NAIDOC Week and Sorry Day activities, Aboriginal artworks on campus and the ECU Reconciliation Action Plan.