



Morley Senior High
School Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander
Cultural Protocols

*Forging Connections, Building
Relationships, Showing Respect and
Supporting Reconciliation*

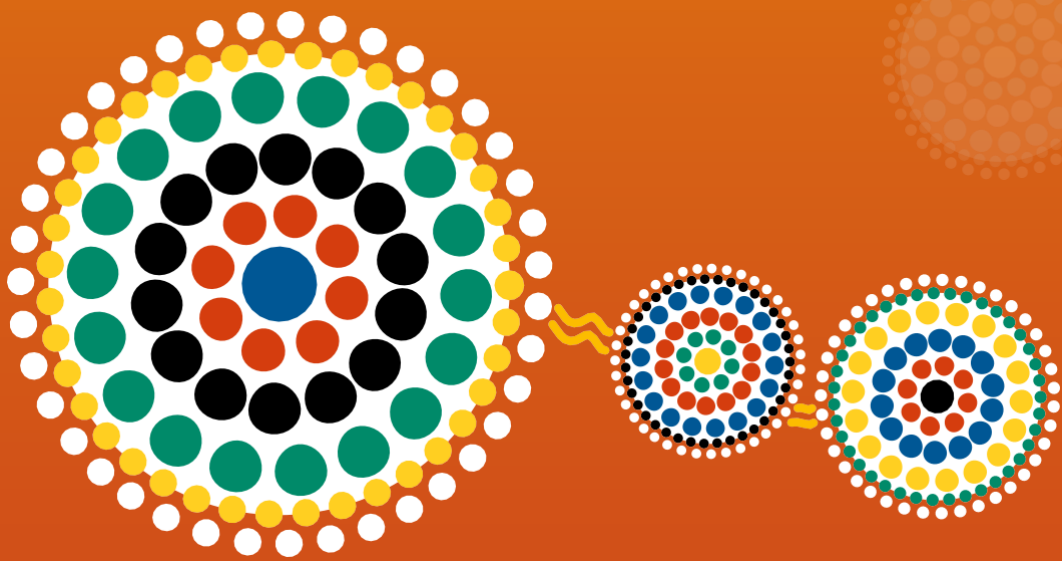


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Acknowledgement

We acknowledge and honour the Whadjuk peoples of the Perth Western Australia region as the Traditional Owners of the lands and waterways where Morley Senior High School is located.

Further, we acknowledge the cultural diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and pay respect to Elders past, present and future. We celebrate the continuous living cultures of First Australians and acknowledge the important role played by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australian society.

The school respects and acknowledges our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, staff, Elders and visitors who come from many nations across Australia.

Overview

MSHS recognises, respects and acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples', histories and the unique position held in Australian society and the deep-seated connection to land, culture and heritage. All Australians can be proud to learn of and share in these unique histories and cultures.

MSHS acknowledges the profound disruption through the processes of colonisation, dispossession of lands and cultures and the removal of individuals from families. With deep and ongoing respect for Elders past, present and future, and in the spirit of Reconciliation as a key underpinning value, Morley Senior High School supports and encourages staff and students in promoting Reconciliation. MSHS aims to empower all staff and students toward Indigenous cultural competency by acknowledging and implementing cultural protocols as ethical principles that guide our conduct.

The Purpose of the Protocols

The MSHS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Protocols represent an important step towards understanding, respecting and representing the world-views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, encouraging culturally-appropriate working practices, and valuing the cultural diversity that enriches, motivates and moves MSHS forward.

The purpose of the Protocols is to:

- assist all staff and students at MSHS to observe appropriate practices that recognise and pay respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, peoples, communities and cultures
- communicate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural practices within MSHS and to the broader community to promote learning, respect and understanding
- demonstrate that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are ongoing, living and enduring through the maintenance and practice of ceremonies, traditions and cultural protocols
- demonstrate the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and connection to land, and through this, assist in building ongoing relationships and partnerships
- generally support MSHS's efforts towards the achievement of Reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians.

The protocols identified in this document address Welcome to Country, Acknowledgement of Country, Engaging with Elders and Community, Cultural Service and Performances, Flag Raising, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Graduates, Intellectual Property, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Knowledges, Research, Terminology, Significant Dates and Resources.

1. Welcome to Country

A **'Welcome to Country'** is an official ceremony performed by an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person and preferably an Elder belonging to the country, that is, the Traditional Owners, in which the event is being held. A Welcome to Country is performed at the commencement of the event prior to all other matters. The Welcoming Ceremony continues the long held tradition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups welcoming visitors to country as a practice of respect for that country, the peoples of that country, the sacredness of that country and the rules and laws that govern that country. When planning an official event, staff are in the first instance, directed to consult with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Traditional Owners of the country in which the event is being held and if further assistance is required contact the Office of Social Justice.

A remuneration for the member of the Traditional Owners group who undertakes this important service for the school is required. Please refer to the section in this document titled Engaging with Elders and Community for further information.

2. Acknowledgment of Country

An **'Acknowledgment of Country'** is a means by which all people can show respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures and heritages and the ongoing relationship with the land.

An 'Acknowledgment of Country' is used at formal functions, committee meetings, lectures, seminars, forums, workshops etc. where there is a gathering of participants. This includes video- conference activities where the traditional owners at all the virtual locations should be included in the acknowledgement. On such occasions, a Chair or Speaker may begin by acknowledging that the event is taking place on the lands of the Traditional Owners.

As a sign of respect an 'Acknowledgment of Country' can also be provided in the signature line of emails.

An example of an Acknowledgment of Country is provided below.

EXAMPLE: I would like to acknowledge the Whadjuk peoples in the Perth region as the keepers of ancient knowledge where MSHS has been built and whose cultures and customs continue to nurture this land. I also pay respect to Elders – past, present and future.

3. Engaging with Elders and Community

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ceremonies and practices differ from country to country and community to community. When the involvement of the local community is sought in an official MSHS event, care must be taken to ensure that appropriate levels of consultation including arrangements for remuneration for a Welcome to Country is undertaken with the Traditional Owners, locally recognised Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Elders or Community member(s).

It is appropriate that at least 4-6 weeks prior notice to the official event be provided for these consultations. The consultations may consider providing full information of the event-day, date and time of the event, numbers participating, ages of audience, location, venue, transport requirements of the Elder or other Community member.

MSHS may at anytime engage with Elders and members of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities from various countries. This engagement can vary and be inclusive of Welcomes to Country by the Traditional Owners, the provision of lectures, Indigenous advice of/for research, student mentoring and acknowledging contribution to the school. Informed continuous contact and respectful engagement is critical if the school is to have a sustained relationship.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities are complex entities and the practices of colonisation has had and continues to have impact on our lives. For those non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who enter into our lives and communities and become *awash with the swirl* of our histories, societies, communities, it is politic to enter with caution. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities have long histories of un-invited and unwanted *help* that has manifested as neglect, interference, interruption, disruption, division and oppression. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of being, knowing and doing is ultimately the business of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the nuances of this business is best read by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

THE PASSING OF AN ELDER OR VALUED PERSONS

In the event of a death it is important to acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups have differing practices for the passing of Community members. In some Communities it remains that a significant period of time is given to mourning. It is also the situation in some Communities that the name of the person who has passed cannot be spoken for a period of time. In the Torres Strait, Tombstone Openings, occur approximately 1 year after a death to signify that mourning can cease and a celebration of the life that has passed can begin.

It is important that the school acknowledges these different practices and should consult with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities for the most appropriate and respectful response to the passing of an Elder or significant Community member. For example, it may be inappropriate for the school to continue to use the photograph of a deceased Elder or other members of the Community in documents or promotional material for a specific period of time.

It is also important for the school to recognise that the poor health status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples coupled with the wide kinship networks that constitute family will mean that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will attend and be involved in many funerals, with varying degrees of responsibility. This sad reality impacts upon Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples abilities to engage.

4. Payment for Cultural Service and Performances

It is appropriate that the school provide remuneration for cultural services and performances performed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The following are examples of cultural services and performances – A Welcome to Country performed by an Elder or a Traditional Owner, dance and other cultural performances at events, Smoking Ceremonies and Cultural Knowledge workshops.

The school representative engaging with an Elder or a member of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community may also need to make provision for arranging transport to and from the event, designate a staff member to receive the Elder and/or Community representative and ensure that general comfort and cultural safety is considered.

In working with Elders and other members of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities the school needs to acknowledge the family, cultural and Community responsibilities and obligations that continue to exist outside of the organisation of a school event. With this in mind, the school should understand that these responsibilities and obligations will take precedence. Respect of this situation will strengthen relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

When working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists it is important for the school to provide appropriate remuneration and clear understandings in the consultative process and matters of copyright and intellectual property ownership will need to be discussed. It is important that a true value be offered for the use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts, images, cultural works, designs, songs etc. The school needs to respect that Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property Rights resides with the author/creator/designer.

Additionally, in media engagements with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples MSHS will respect practices and processes that are ethical and culturally safe.

5. Smoking Ceremonies

Smoking ceremonies are used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for cleansing and renewing people and the land. Given its significant nature, smoking ceremonies are usually only performed at major and special events and when important spaces and the people who work in those spaces need to be cleansed.

Smoking ceremonies are only to be conducted by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with specialised cultural knowledge.

It is important to seek appropriate advice and assistance from Traditional Owners at all times. Appropriate levels of consultation and remuneration will need to be arranged prior to the smoking ceremony.

6. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flags. Protocols for Raising and Lowering the Flags

The Aboriginal flag was recognised as an official flag of Australia in 1995. This flag was designed by Luritja & Wombaya Elder Harold Thomas in 1971. The top half of the flag is black to represent Aboriginal people. The red in the lower half represents the earth (the relationship to the land). The circle of yellow represents the sun (giver of life).

The Torres Strait Islander flag was recognised as an official flag of Australia in 1995. This flag was designed by Bernard Namok from Waibenne (Thursday Island). At the centre of the flag is a white Dhari (headdress) with a five pointed star symbolising the five island nations. The green stripes represent the land – the top green for connection to Papua New Guinea and the bottom green for connection to Cape York Peninsula, the black stripes represent the people and the blue represents the sea.

As an ongoing sign of recognition and respect the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags should fly in conjunction with the Australian flag at MSHS on a daily basis.

With the passing of Elders and/or Valued Members of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities with which the school has an engagement, the flags need to be lowered to half mast as a sign of respect and remain in this position until the funeral of the Elder and/or Valued Member has occurred.

7. Graduands

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students eligible for graduation are entitled to wear a stole identifying cultural heritage under the approved academic dress. This means that an Aboriginal graduand will have a red, black and yellow stole. A Torres Strait Islander graduand will have a white, blue, green and black stole. A graduating student whose heritage is both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander will wear a stole that is both red, black and yellow and white, blue, green and black.

The school acknowledges the significance of graduation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, families and Communities. Graduation is a day of pride and celebration. The wearing of the stole by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander graduands signals an expression of that pride and celebration.

8. Intellectual Property

MSSH makes no claim to ownership of Intellectual Property in Indigenous works. Indigenous works may be inclusive of the following – art, ceremony, production of material culture, story, dance, song and other forms of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges. Where the creation of school Intellectual Property involves the traditional interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples then the school will consult with relevant Indigenous groups for the purpose of ensuring that the interests and knowledges is recognised and protected in accordance with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander protocols and the Australian law.

9. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Knowledges

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems are the first knowledge systems of Australia. It is important for the school to respect and recognise that these knowledges continue as living knowledge systems. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems are complex and provide deep understandings of the world, both physical and spiritual, and are maintained through story, law, song, dance and ceremony. Another key aspect of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems is that such knowledges are communally held and the sharing of knowledges is based on a system of relationships that have been established since the beginning of time. For this reason, Indigenous knowledges cannot be owned by any one person and that access to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges is framed by Indigenous protocols and ethics which may run counter to non-Indigenous systems of intellectual property, ethics and protection. The school will respectfully treat Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems by acknowledging the communal source of knowledges, remuneration to Communities for knowledges used and implement measures for the protection of the knowledges in consultation with the relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

10. Research

Research is an activity undertaken by the school for producing new knowledge. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Communities and societies have historically been viewed as a source of research for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers that has not always benefitted Indigenous Communities. To correct harmful practices, research conducted by school staff and students needs to be both respectful and ethical and protect the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Communities. The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and the National Health and Medical Research Council have produced guidelines for ethical research. The references to these guidelines are provided in the Resources section and should be the first point of reference for researchers developing projects with and about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Communities.

11. Terminology, Language and Naming

All staff and students rely heavily on language to exchange information and to communicate ideas. Language however, is also a vehicle for the expression of discrimination and prejudice as cultural values and attitudes are reflected in the structures and meanings of the language used. This means that language cannot be regarded as a neutral or unproblematic medium, and can cause or reflect discrimination due to its intricate links with society and culture. Language has power and it is important to understand the historical context of its use.

The following clarifies appropriate language use for the histories, societies, naming and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Whilst many aspects of terminology in this area are contested, every effort should be made by the school to adopt terms and phrases that do not offend Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

NAMING ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES

In the naming of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples the school can use the following commonly supported terms – Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, Indigenous and First Nations. Such terms however are constructed within non-Indigenous communication systems. Where it is known the preferred term for naming Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Communities should be used. For example, Whadjuk Noongar people are the Traditional Owners of country in the Perth region. It is not appropriate to use terms such as ‘the Aborigines’, it is appropriate to use terms such as Aboriginal peoples, Aboriginal nations or Aboriginal language groups.

CLASSIFYING ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES

In the past, governments tried to classify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people according to location, parentage and skin colour. The use of these inappropriate terms became fixed in the ways in which non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples then historically engaged in relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. For example, Aboriginal peoples from rural, remote and isolated communities in Central and Northern Australia have been considered 'more traditional' than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who live in the cities. The assumption here is that if you identify as a Torres Strait Islander person and live in Perth for example, that you do not have connection to your cultural traditions and Communities and are 'less' of a Torres Strait Islander person. This assumption cannot be read as the absolute truth.

The practice of determining the identification of an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person based on skin pigmentation is both harmful and hurtful. Terms and phrases such as 'half- caste', 'quarter-caste' and the questioning of an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander persons identity particularly based on historically disproved genetic understandings is inappropriate and should not be used.

It must also be remembered that the Commonwealth legal definition for identification of an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person has adverse implications for individuals and families who have not been able to show connectedness to a country (the land which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people identify with) or a Community because of the past policies of forcible removal, the deliberate breaking up of families and the dispossession from land.

REFERRING TO ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES.

The use of pronouns such as 'they', 'them' and 'those' should not be used as substitutes for the phrasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders peoples. The use of pronouns is a communication practice that objectifies Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and creates a social distance for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples wanting a meaningful relationship. Additionally the acronyms 'ATSI' and 'A&TSI' are inappropriate when making reference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

REFERENCE TO LANGUAGE TERMS IN COMMON USE

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will, in communication, make reference to common language terms and Anglicised words that have Indigenous meanings. The speaking of these terms and words in public spaces, however does not give tacit permission for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to make use of such terms and words out of these contexts.

When used out of contexts the authority of it's use is questioned by Indigenous communities.

The following list provides further information as to appropriate terminology when engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The quality of the relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will determine whether or not non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will be able to use such language terms.

APPROPRIATE TERMINOLOGY	INAPPROPRIATE TERMINOLOGY
Aboriginal people.	Aborigine, Aborigines, ATSI and A&TSI, Part-aborigine, full-blood, half-caste, quarter-cast, hybrid.
Torres Strait Islander people.	TSI, ATSI, Part-islander, full-blood, half-caste, quarter-caste, hybrid
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nation(s), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities, Aboriginal Countries, Seasonal Occupation of Land, Cultural Groups, Language Groups, Elders, The Dreaming, Spirituality, Dreaming stories.	Primitive, native, nomadic, Chiefs, Kings and Queens, myths, folklore, legends, Dreamtime, tribes.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' spiritual beliefs determine that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have existed since the beginning of time.	Statements that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people(s) have lived in Australia for 40–50–60–80000 years is based within non-Indigenous knowledge systems. This type of measurement is closer to non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scientific theory rather than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples occupied Australia before Captain Cook visited this Country.	Captain Cook discovered Australia.
History did not occur when non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples arrived in Australia. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories stretch back millennia and are as valid as non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories.	Pre-history, settler society and post colonial.
	The term 'settle' assumes peacefulness. From the perspective of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Australia was violently invaded. The term post-colonial assumes that colonisation has completed. For many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples colonisation continues in various forms.

12. Significant Dates

MSSH includes in its Calendar dates that are of significance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The school encourages staff, students and the broader community to show their support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities by acknowledging these dates and attending events.

Significant dates include:

SIGNIFICANT DATE	EVENT
26 January	Survival Day – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples choose to mark Australia Day as a day to highlight the invasion of Australia by Europeans and to acknowledge the survival of their cultural heritage.
13 February	Apology Anniversary – On 13 February 2008, the then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd moved a Motion of Apology to Australia’s Indigenous Peoples in the House of Representatives, apologising for past laws, policies and practices that devastated Australia’s First Nation’s peoples. The anniversary of this event is now celebrated annually.
20 March	National Close the Gap Day – Since 2006 this day has provided a way for all Australians to join together and remind our political leaders of their commitments to close the life expectancy gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians within a generation.
27 May – 3 June	National Reconciliation Week – This week of celebration commenced in 1993 with a week of prayer celebrated by major religious groups in Australia. This week begins with National Sorry Day on 27 May and ends with Mabo Day on 3 June. The week celebrates and builds on the respectful relationships shared by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians and is an ideal opportunity to explore and engage in Reconciliation.
26 May	Anniversary of the 1967 Referendum – Here Australians voted overwhelmingly to amend the constitution to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the census and allow the Commonwealth to create laws. While by 1967 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples had the right to vote (granted in 1962) and citizenship (by virtue of the repeal of relevant discriminatory federal and state laws by that time), the 91% ‘yes’ vote in the 1967 referendum launched Australia on the path to Reconciliation and to reforms which would eventually achieve better rights for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

SIGNIFICANT DATE	EVENT
3 June	<p>Mabo Day – This day commemorates the anniversary of the 1992 High Court decision in the case brought by Eddie and others (Reverend David Passi, Ceuia Mapoo Salee, Sam Passi and James Rice), which recognised the existence in Australia of Native Title rights. Specifically the case recognised the land rights of the Meriam people, traditional Owners of the Murray islands in the Torres Strait. On the tenth anniversary of this day in 2002 there were many calls for the day to become a public holiday, an official National Mabo Day.</p>
1 July	<p>The Coming of the Light – Torres Strait Islander peoples of all faiths come together each year to honour the adoption of Christianity through Island communities during the late nineteenth century.</p>
First week of July	<p>NAIDOC Week – The first Sunday of July sees the beginning of a week dedicated to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to celebrate NAIDOC (National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Day Observance Committee) Week. It is a celebration for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' survival. It is also a time for all Australians to celebrate the unique contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditions and cultures and to bring issues of concern to the attention of governments and the broader community.</p>
4 August	<p>National Aboriginal and Islanders Children's Day – This day was first observed in 1988 and each year it has a special theme. The aim of the day is to raise awareness and strengthen family relationships for the health and well-being of Indigenous children. The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care produce a poster to celebrate the day.</p>

13. Resources

These resources and references are provided for information and should be used in communication and consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

CULTURAL AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

- Our Culture our Future: Report on Indigenous cultural and intellectual property rights – Terri Jahnke prepared for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission.

ETHICAL CONDUCT IN RESEARCH AND MEDIA

- AIATSIS Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies (GERAIS).
- Values and Ethics – Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research (NH&MRC).
- Keeping research on track: a guide for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples about health research ethics (NH&MRC).
- Cultural protocols for Indigenous Reporting in the Media (ABC).
- Listen, learn and respect, indigenous cultural protocols and radio (Terri Janke and Co., Lawyers and Consultants).

PROTOCOLS AND TERMINOLOGY

- Guidelines for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Terminology (Western Australia Health).
- Communicating Effectively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Western Australia Health).
- Protocols for consultation and negotiation with Aboriginal people (Western Australia Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs).
- Appropriate Terminology, Representations and Protocols of Acknowledgement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples compiled by Tracey Bunda and Roland Wilson with assistance from Ali Gumillya Baker and Chris Wilson for the Yunggoendi First Nations Centre for Higher Education and Research, Flinders University in May 2012.



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