



Environment Institute
of Australia and
New Zealand Inc.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' KNOWLEDGE AND ENGAGEMENT

EIANZ Position Statement

Acknowledging and valuing the rights and interests of Indigenous Peoples, the EIANZ:

1. Recognises the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, to which the Australian and Aotearoa / New Zealand governments are signatories, as establishing the basis for Indigenous Peoples' rights and interests^{N1};
2. Accepts the invitation from the Uluru Statement from the Heart to support reforms that will enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to fully participate in Australian society;
3. Recognises the Treaty of Waitangi and the settlement process through the Waitangi Tribunal as the foundation for Māori and Moriori Peoples to exercise their rights and interests as participants in Aotearoa / New Zealand society;
4. Recognises the important contribution Indigenous knowledge^{N2} and values make to achieving effective environmental management practices;
5. Supports the remuneration of Indigenous Peoples for contributions of Indigenous knowledge about places, values and nature;
6. Seeks to foster and support an environment profession to work with Indigenous Peoples in culturally capable^{N3} ways, in personal and professional settings;
7. Advocates that identification and protection of environmental values and mitigation of harms adopt a multiple evidence approach that draws on science and Indigenous knowledge, as well as the values, perspectives and lived experiences of Indigenous Peoples; and
8. Seeks to foster and support an inclusive environment profession that provides opportunities for Indigenous Peoples to contribute Indigenous knowledge.

Introduction

The Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand (EIANZ) acknowledges and values the rights and interests of Indigenous Peoples. In doing so it recognises Indigenous Peoples' long history of occupation, knowledge of, and connection to place, nature and the cosmos.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples sets out a universal understanding of the scope and nature of the rights and interests of Indigenous Peoples.

These rights are codified through the provisions of treaties, laws, policies, settlements, and agreements. They are also found in the obligations that Indigenous Peoples have for their culture and connection to place, nature and the cosmos.

The EIANZ recognises that there is a history of dispossession and exploitation of Indigenous Peoples, with disregard for their rights and interests, that must be understood and reconciled through genuine engagement, truth telling, and collaborative decision making and governance.

The EIANZ seeks to foster and support an inclusive environment profession by setting the expectation that environmental practitioners^{N4} will understand and integrate Indigenous Peoples' diversity, culture, knowledge, history, and protocols in environmental practice. Furthermore, ethical practitioners will engage with Indigenous Peoples in culturally capable^{N3} ways in their personal and professional settings.

The environment profession shares an affinity with the cultural obligations of 'caring for Country', that in Australia is associated with protecting the environment and maintaining cultural and spiritual values; and with kaitiakitanga (to suitably use the environment for future generations) that in Aotearoa / New Zealand is associated with the stewardship of natural resources.

Environmental practitioners care for and mitigate past and contemporary harms to the environment. To be effective they must draw from multiple sources of evidence including science and the rich body of Indigenous knowledge.



Role of decision makers

Governments have a key role in protecting and managing the environment and in maintaining cultural values, through clear leadership, legal and regulatory instruments, and policy frameworks. Project proponents also make key decisions affecting the interests of Indigenous peoples, offering opportunities for appropriate engagement and governance with Indigenous peoples. Decision-makers in agencies and industry are expected to engage with owners, custodians and managers of environmental and cultural values.

The EIANZ calls on decision makers in all levels of government and industry to:

1. Adopt legislative, regulatory, policy and program measures that enable Indigenous Peoples to fully contribute to environmental management decisions and practices, especially those likely to impact on Indigenous Peoples' wellbeing, cultural values, places and natural resources;
2. Promote the training, employment, retention, and leadership of Indigenous Peoples as environmental practitioners; and
3. Promote the integration and sharing of scientific and Indigenous knowledge, with protection through legislation, policy and regulations against exploitation and theft of Indigenous People's cultural and intellectual property.

Role of environmental practitioners

Environmental practitioners prepare and implement environmental legislation, regulations, policies, standards, and practices; and have obligations (statutory, contractual and ethical) to engage with Indigenous Peoples. Culturally capable engagement is required with respect to activities that may impact Indigenous Peoples' culture, places, natural resources, cycles and values. In some cases, these obligations may be codified in treaties, laws, policies, settlements or agreements.

EIANZ encourages environmental practitioners to acquire and maintain cultural capability as a basis for engaging with, understanding and respecting the rights and interests of Indigenous peoples, and integrating Indigenous knowledge.

Role of the EIANZ

The EIANZ supports environmental practitioners in recognising the rights and interests of Indigenous Peoples, implementing laws and policies in culturally capable ways, and incorporating Indigenous knowledge and values through a multiple evidence based approach. It also encourages government and industry decision makers, and environmental practitioners, to include Indigenous Peoples in governance and decision making.

The EIANZ will continue to:

1. Implement the [EIANZ Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct](#) as the ethical standard for professional practice by environmental practitioners;
2. Encourage and provide resources for environmental practitioners to become culturally capable in their practices;
3. Encourage Indigenous Peoples to contribute to the environment profession as members, collaborators and leaders; and
4. Encourage knowledge sharing that benefits the environment, Indigenous Peoples, environmental practitioners and the wider community.

Notes:

1. Interests includes economic, social and cultural interests, as well as spiritual connections with places, nature and the cosmos.
2. Indigenous knowledge includes traditional knowledge and cultural knowledge which may have been passed between generations for millennia, as well as ongoing/evolving knowledge and lived experience.
3. Cultural capability means the ability of individuals, professions and organisations to interact respectfully and effectively with Indigenous Peoples. The term includes cultural competence, as well as cultural awareness, responsiveness and sensitivity, cultural safety and continuing cultural learning.
4. Environmental practitioners use their skills, knowledge, and experience to protect and enhance environmental values and mitigate environmental



harms in a professional capacity. The delivery of environmental outcomes requires collaboration with Indigenous Peoples and others. Practitioners may have formal qualifications, certification or registration in relevant disciplines, as well as extensive knowledge, authority and/or practical experience; and may be members of a professional organisation that requires compliance with a code of ethics.

The Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand (EIANZ) is Australasia's peak body for environmental professionals. As part of a global network of more than 100,000 environmental practitioners, we advocate for sound environmental policy and promote ethical and competent practice.

EIANZ represents members and certified practitioners from a diverse range of technical disciplines including environmental scientists, policy makers, engineers, lawyers, and economists. Our members are at the forefront of challenging and complex issues such as climate change, sustainability and preserving biodiversity.

EIANZ has Position Statements on a range of key environmental issues. These are periodically reviewed by our Policy and Standards Committee and re-endorsed by the EIANZ Board. All current Position Statements can be accessed [here](#).