



Environment Institute
of Australia and
New Zealand Inc.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' KNOWLEDGE AND ENGAGEMENT

EIANZ Position Statement | February 2022

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 framing the context of Indigenous Peoples' rights and interests.
2. Accepts the invitation from the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* to support fair and practical reform 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 fully participate in Aotearoa / New Zealand society.
4. Recognises the important contribution Indigenous Peoples' knowledge and values make to achieving effective environmental management practices.
5. Supports the remuneration of Indigenous Peoples for services relating to the provision of traditional knowledge about places and natural resources.
6. Seeks to foster and support an environment profession that participates in culturally appropriate and competent ways of working with Indigenous Peoples in personal and professional multicultural settings.
7. Advocates, in the protection of environmental values and mitigation of harms, adoption of a multiple evidence approach that draws on science and the knowledge, values and perspectives of Indigenous Peoples.
8. Seeks to foster and support an inclusive environment profession that provides opportunities for Indigenous Peoples to share their knowledge.

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 prior history of occupation, knowledge of, and connection to place, natural resources, 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.

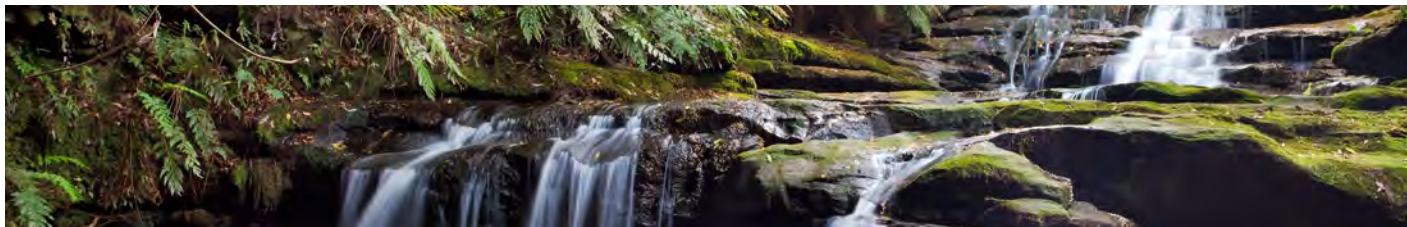
These rights are codified through the provisions of treaties, laws, policies, settlements, and agreements. They are also found in the traditional obligations that Indigenous Peoples have for their culture and connection to place, natural resources, and the cosmos.

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 will understand the importance of including Indigenous Peoples' diversity, culture, knowledge, history, and protocols in environmental practice and engage in culturally appropriate and competent ways in personal and professional intercultural settings.

The environment profession shares an affinity with the ideals of 'caring for Country', that in Australia is associated with protecting environmental values and maintaining culture; 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 knowledge stemming from Indigenous Peoples' connection to places and natural resources, their cycles and values.



Role of decision makers

Governments are key to protecting and managing environmental values as a foundation for the maintenance of culture through clear leadership, legal instruments, and policy frameworks. To be effective governments must engage with those who understand, own and care for the environment and its associated cultural values.

The EIANZ encourages governments to:

1. Adopt legislative, policy and program measures that enable Indigenous Peoples to fully contribute to environmental management decisions and practices, especially when these decisions and practices may impact on Indigenous peoples' wellbeing, their places or 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 Peoples' knowledge about the nature and protection of environmental values, the mitigation of environmental harms, and the maintenance of culture.

Policy into practice

Environmental practitioners prepare and implement environmental legislation, policies, standards, and practices. They have a moral and ethical obligation to engage with Indigenous Peoples about activities that are planned or are being undertaken that may impact on places and natural resources, their cycles and values. In some cases, these obligations may be codified in treaties, laws, policies, settlements or agreements.

The EIANZ supports action by environmental practitioners to implement laws and policies for environmental management that include Indigenous Peoples in culturally appropriate and competent ways in decision making and governance; and incorporates

their knowledge systems and values, and economic and social interests, in environmental management practice using a multiple evidence based approach.

It will continue to:

1. Implement the [EIANZ Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct](#) as the standard for professional practice by environmental practitioners;
2. Encourage environmental practitioners to become culturally competent in their practice;
3. Encourage Indigenous Peoples to be members and leaders of the environment profession;
4. Encourage knowledge sharing that benefits the environment, Indigenous Peoples, and environmental practitioners; and
5. In Australia, implement an approved Reconciliation Action Plan.

Notes:

1. **Cultural competence** means the ability of individuals, professions and organisations to understand and respect values, attitudes, beliefs and practices that allow them to function effectively in multicultural settings.
2. **Environmental practitioners** are persons who use their skills, knowledge, and experience to protect environmental values, mitigate environmental harms, and facilitate the maintenance of culture in a professional role (paid or unpaid). They may have extensive cultural knowledge and authority, practical experience, formal education in relevant disciplines, or some or all of these credentials. They may be members of a professional organisation that requires members and those certified for the competence of their practice to follow a code of ethics.
3. **Interests** includes cultural and spiritual connections with and knowledge about places, natural resources, and the cosmos, their cycles and values; and economic and social interests.

The EIANZ is a not-for-profit, professional association for environmental practitioners from across Australia and Aotearoa / New Zealand. The Institute has a certification scheme that recognises ethical and professional practice which assures government, industry and the community of practitioners' professional standing. It is represented by jurisdictional Divisions, a New Zealand Chapter and supported by Special Interest Sections covering climate change, heritage, contaminated land, ecology, environmental accounting, and impact assessment. Its membership is drawn from all areas of environmental practice, and includes practitioners with industry, government, community and academic careers.