You can't say that!

BUT CONSIDER THIS

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG AUSTRALIA

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge that Country for Aboriginal peoples is an interconnected set of ancient and sophisticated relationships. The University of Wollongong spreads across many interrelated Aboriginal Countries that are bound by this sacred landscape and intimate relationship with that landscape since creation.

From Sydney, to the Southern Highlands, to the South Coast.

From fresh water, to bitter water, to salt. From city, to urban, to rural.

The University of Wollongong acknowledges the custodianship of the Aboriginal peoples of this place and space that has kept alive the relationships between all living things.

The University acknowledges the devastating impact of colonisation on our campuses' footprint and commit ourselves to truth-telling, healing and education.

ARTWORK BY SAMANTHA HILL, DHARAWAL/ WANDANDIAN WOMAN

The Illawarra Flame Tree is an iconic rainforest species of the lands on which the University of Wollongong campuses sit. During the summer, their clusters of vibrant red, bell-shaped flowers adorn the escarpment that provides the backdrop to our Wollongong campus, often appearing on otherwise bare trees, flowering most prolifically after a hot, dry summer. Its use in our Acknowledgment of Country is significant. Like the Flame Tree, our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures persist, flowering ever more brightly and prolifically in spite of the hardships and the trauma they have endured and continue to endure. The Flame Tree speaks of our responsibilities to this Country and its Traditional Custodians. It reminds us that our institution exists on unceded lands and is set against a vibrant cultural backdrop that always is, was and will be.

A word about our Acknowledgement of Country:

In recent years the University of Wollongong, as part of its journey of truth-telling, reflection and healing, has come to recognise that only Aboriginal peoples are qualified to determine or define their relatedness to their heritage and their connection to Country. Identification of Country names, geographic boundaries, and traditional relationships is complex. To impose these upon the Traditional Custodians and the Country on which our campuses are located perpetuates the violence against them.

It was on this basis that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff of the University advocated to omit specific names when our Acknowledgement of Country was developed in 2018.

Artwork: 'Flotilla'

Catherine Moyle is a Gamilaroi artist based in the Illawarra.

This artwork was inspired by a story shared with me by a Kaumātua (Maori Elder) who I had the privilege of working with and learning from while living in Tauranga many years ago. One day we were yarning about way finding and sea faring. Well, that's what anyone overhearing us would have thought. There were layers of meaning in the same way that all our stories have multiple learnings within them. When he spoke about the way that waka (canoes) are lashed together in rough seas, it was more than a lesson on buoyancy or survival skills, but a metaphor which has stuck with me since then. We can withstand anything if we align our waka through respectful relationships and paddle in the same direction. What would be insurmountable as an individual, we can survive as a collective. More than that, we will all thrive. This piece and its metaphor are deeply relevant to the contents of this resource. Think of the pages herein as a series of paddling lessons and an invitation to come and paddle with us – to imagine the world we will create by aligning ourselves and supporting each other in the right way.

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Introduction

'You Can't Say That' came into being in response to a need that was identified by students, staff and community here at the University of Wollongong. Language matters, words have power and sometimes those words are used in ways that create unsafe spaces, undermine otherwise respectful relationships and present barriers to meaningful engagement. Often this is unintentional and reflects a lack of understanding or consideration of what different terms mean and the impact they have. Intent does not mitigate or lessen the harm caused though, and the terminology we use can play a significant role in reinforcing the structures and systems of colonisation. 'You Can't Say That' was originally developed as a terminology guide, with a range of terms that you shouldn't say, others that require careful consideration, and the reasons why.

In the years since we first published this booklet, things have continued to change and evolve both within the University and society more broadly. We saw this in the respect and support demonstrated by the University community through the 2023 referendum process. This support was mirrored by our many allies and accomplices locally, nationally and internationally.

The same process also laid bare just how far we still need to go as a society. We all witnessed the ways in which lies and misdirection are used to divide and conquer, to deliberately hurt rather than heal. We also witnessed how readily these mistruths were taken up, speaking to a lack of education and meaningful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and our issues.

Sadly, many of our mob experienced firsthand an even darker side of our society. The opportunity was seized by many to reinforce the discourse of deficit and perpetuate acts of racism under the guise of 'debate' or freedom of speech. We saw these play out on a national stage. We felt them in our workplaces and social settings. They invaded our social media spaces and drew like-minded people together in online forums to share and spread their vitriol and fear. We have all been exposed to attitudes and behaviours which would not otherwise be tolerated within our society. It reflects on all of us. It hurts all of us, but particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for whom these scars are especially deep.

Respectful relationships matter now more than ever. This resource is our contribution to truth telling and healing. Our focus here has expanded to provide some guidance around what these respectful relationships look like. We've included content on cultural safety, allyship, how to recognise and call out racism and, importantly, what you CAN do.

We all exist in a complex and convoluted landscape, one where colonisation and colonial relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Australian society are perpetuated through social and political systems and structures. What exists before us is an opportunity. For us all, it is the opportunity to engage in respectful relationships and learn more about each other, to nurture the ways in which we are connected while celebrating our differences. For you, it presents the opportunity for exploration and experimentation, a time to learn new things, try new things and build new understandings. It also presents an opportunity to engage in negotiation and consultation, the essential ingredients for building new relationships, establishing new beginnings, having new conversations. These are the foundations for reconciliation and healing.

Cultural safety and safety of culture

CULTURAL SAFETY

Cultural safety is used to describe environments and behaviours that are spiritually, socially and emotionally safe and are free from judgement and critical comparison. In other words, it's about respectful relationships. Cultural safety does not mean that an individual or group's interests are prioritised over everyone else, but that the spaces and interactions we have are free from prejudice and discrimination.

Cultural safety is essential for flourishing, particularly for people from minority or marginalised cultural and religious groups. On the other hand, a culturally unsafe environment or practice will disempower or diminish the cultural identity and wellbeing of an individual or group.

Everyone has a right to cultural safety. Equally, everyone has a responsibility to contribute to it in their relationships, workplaces, communities and other environments.

Cultural safety requires reflection and self-evaluation. It's important to understand your own cultural identity and the position that you are engaging from. Consider how this influences your actions and the way you contribute to environments and interactions that aresafe and respectful for everyone.

SAFETY OF CULTURE

Cultural safety has a second meaning for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It relates to the safety of our cultures, their protection and revitalisation. Cultural safety in this sense is maintained within community by doing things 'rightways'. This includes making sure that the appropriate people are consulted with on decisions and that advice, particularly cultural, comes from those recognised within community as knowledge holders.

YOU CAN'T DO THAT!

Under no circumstances should you appropriate or assume cultural knowledges, practices or language.

YOU CAN DO THIS!

You can support the safety of culture by adhering to the cultural protocols of the area you live or work.

Not sure what the local protocols are? Ask the UOW Indigenous Strategy Unit who can help you or refer you to someone local for appropriate advice.

If you're from outside UOW, you can reach out to the Aboriginal community organisations in your area. Many government bodies also have Aboriginal advisory or reference groups which can advise on local cultural protocols or refer you elsewhere to make sure that you have the appropriate advice.

CULTURAL SAFETY CONTINUUM

CONSIDER THIS:

The terms cultural awareness, sensitivity, competency, and humility can all be used in relation to cultural safety but have very different meanings. Looking at the diagram:

Where do you think you are?
Where would you like to be?
What steps will you take to get there?

CULTURAL AWARENESS	**Aware** that there are differences. Doesn't seek broader context or understanding. **Limited behaviour change.**
CULTURAL SENSITIVITY	**Acknowledges** different ways of seeing the world. Integrates **some changes** in practices or behaviour.
CULTURAL COMPETENCY	**Acknowledges** own culture and respects other cultures. **Action** on the part of an individual or organisation. **Cross cultural** skills acquisition.
CULTURAL SAFETY (HUMILITY)	Lifelong **commitment** to **self-evaluation**, redressing power imbalances and biases. Develop and maintain **respectful relationships** based on mutual trust.

Understanding racism

Unfortunately, not all spaces and relationships are culturally safe. Prejudice, discrimination and racism exist in different forms – some are obvious and others less so. Knowing what they look like will help you address issues around you or avoid making some of the mistakes of your own.

PREJUDICE:

Prejudice is more than just a bias, preference or a leaning. Prejudice can be thought of as a negative attitude and involves making a judgement or decision about something or someone, generally without being fully informed and without knowing the person, group or thing that is being judged. Instead, prejudice generally draws on and reinforces stereotypes that exist about groups.

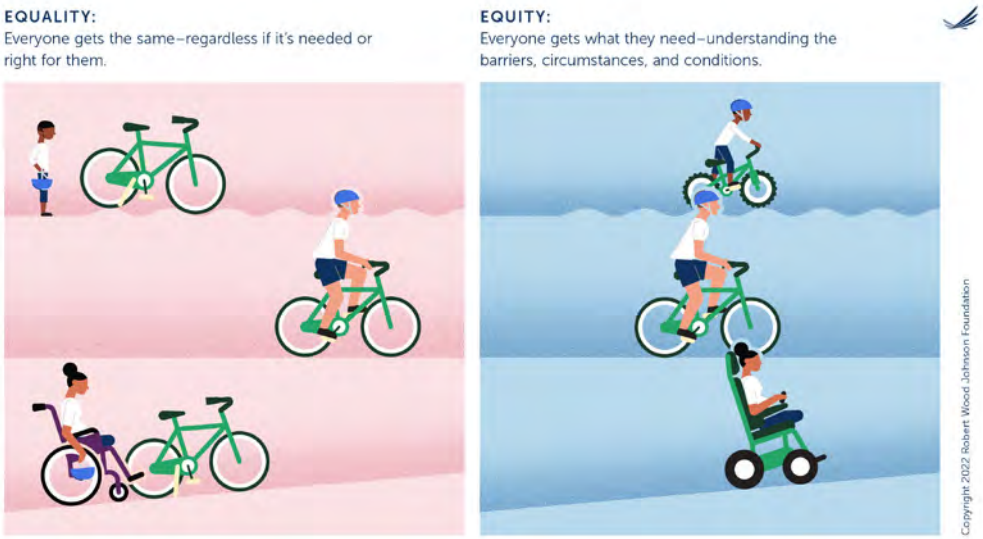
DISCRIMINATION:

Discrimination involves disadvantaging or treating a group or individual less favourably based on their personal characteristics. These may include race, colour, sex, sexual, orientation, age, gender identity, gender expression, intersex status, marital or relationship status, family or carer's responsibilities, pregnancy, religion, political opinion, national extraction, social origin, disability or physical or mental health status.

Discrimination can be direct or indirect.

Direct discrimination involves treating, or proposing to treat, someone differently to others in the same or similar situations. Direct discrimination is an issue of equality.

Indirect discrimination occurs where an expectation, rule, requirement or condition is the same for everyone equally but has an unfair or negative impact on individuals and groups with certain attributes. Individuals with certain attributes may have greater difficulty meeting the expectation than individuals without these attributes. The expectation, or the consequence of failing to meet it, is often not reasonable. Indirect discrimination is an issue of equity.



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While prejudice relates to attitudes, discrimination relates to actions. It is important to note that not all prejudice is put into action as discrimination, and not all discrimination comes from prejudice. Indirect discrimination can reflect a failure to take equity and diversity into consideration.

Ignorance is not an excuse. Reflection and self-evaluation are key to identifying and addressing all forms of discrimination.

RACISM:

Racism is the discrimination, subordination, restriction or exclusion of individuals and groups based on race.

The Australian Human Rights Commission describes it as:

"...the process by which systems and policies, actions and attitudes create inequitable opportunities and outcomes for people based on race. Racism is more than just prejudice in thought or action. It occurs when this prejudice – whether individual or institutional – is accompanied by the power to discriminate against, oppress or limit the rights of others."

In other words, racism impacts those who have relatively little social power and is perpetrated by those who have relatively more social power. The power imbalance magnifies the impact of racial prejudice and discrimination resulting in the oppression, disadvantage, and restriction of the rights of those individuals and groups that are targeted.

Racism:

- is experienced by minority and marginalised groups in societies that are affected or underpinned by a discriminatory social structure
- may be generalised or directed towards specific groups and individuals, symbols or markers representative of that group. It can also be experienced within and between these groups in what's known as lateral violence
- is not limited to dominant roles, power relationships or other hierarchies such as age and seniority of position. For example:
  - a senior staff member may experience racism from a junior staff member, or vice versa
  - a staff member can experience racism from a community member, student, or client
- can be compounded when different aspects of a person's identity expose them to overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation. This is known as intersectionality
- can lead to cumulative trauma for the individual or group
- can be overt or covert, and intentional or unintentional. The intention behind an idea, act or behaviour does not determine whether something is racist.

YOU CAN'T DO THAT!

It is never appropriate for someone from the dominant social group to deny an individual's experience of racism.

CONSIDER THIS: there is no such thing as reverse racism. Racism operates within power structures and imbalances which privilege the dominant social group regardless of socioeconomic status or experience. Because it is systemic, dominant groups can benefit from this privilege without even being aware of it. This privilege, known in Australia as white privilege, reproduces and sustains racism.

Racism is not:

- the provision of services and programs that would otherwise be considered affirmative action or 'special measures' under the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Commonwealth)
- being denied access to equity or culturally targeted services and programs
- being denied access to events that are not otherwise open to the public e.g. closed events whether or not they are cultural in focus
- addressing personal or professional behaviours that would be considered unacceptable, unethical or inappropriate if undertaken by any other person, particularly of the same group
- a feeling of discomfort associated with the realisation of your own privilege or having that privilege identified by others.

REMEMBER: recognising privilege is an important step in eliminating unconscious bias and racism.

OVERT AND COVERT RACISM:

Racism comes in many forms and can be obvious or subtle, direct or indirect, intentional or unintentional. Below are some examples of overt and covert racism. It is important to remember that all forms of racism have a significant impact on the social, emotional and physical wellbeing of those who experience them.

Overt racism is deliberate and generally intended to ridicule, harm or cause offence. Overt racism is the easiest to recognise and describe as racism. Examples include:

- hate crimes and racial vilification (see page 11)
- white supremacy and similar ideology and group membership
- racial slurs
- black or brown face
- the use of symbols associated with racism, e.g. the swastika
- any action or statement where the perpetrator is aware of and acknowledges the racist undertones and attitudes.

Covert racism is more insidious because it is subtle or hidden and as a result it often goes unchecked. The perpetrator may not even be aware of the action or statement is racist. Examples of covert racism include:

- Eurocentric beauty standards promote European or white physical attributes as being more favourable than non-western or Aboriginal attributes. This is particularly evident in television, print and film
- curriculum that focuses on European or Western knowledges and perspectives, often ignoring, minimising, or patronising Aboriginal experiences and knowledges
- prioritising white 'expertise' and knowledges
- deficit discourse refers to the representation or characterisation of a group in terms of deficiency and failure. These failings are wrongly positioned as the responsibility of the impacted group rather than recognising the complex social, political and historical context they occur in. The deficit discourse reinforces stereotypes and is used to disempower the impacted group and justify the actions undertaken on or against them
- denying white privilege
- excusing or 'white-splaining' racism
- invalidating or denying experiences of racism
- rewriting or denying history
- coded racist language and actions
- cultural appropriation
- microaggressions (see page 12)
- othering (see page 13)
- deaths in custody
- "All Lives Matter" emerged to counter the "Black Lives Matter" movement which calls for an end to racism and violence perpetuated against Black people, including deaths in custody. "Black Lives Matter" does not mean that other lives don't matter. "All Lives Matter" however is used to undermine, dismiss, deny and distract from the issue of racism
- colourism is the discrimination against individuals based on their colour
- racial profiling involves targeting a member of a group based on how they look or identify, for example when a shop attendant follows an Aboriginal person in a store to prevent shop lifting
- invisibility involves ignoring people of certain groups or acting as though they are not there
- crossing the street includes changing behaviour based on the perception that individuals and groups belong to a certain race or culture
- racial fetishisation is a fixation on race and racial difference including its idolisation or demonisation
- 'colour-blindness' claims that the best way to end discrimination is to treat all people equally without consideration of race or culture. This effectively ignores racism and race-based inequities, disparities and trauma. It excuses the perpetrators and implies that the individual or group are responsible for their own situations including any deficits or negative impacts

- respectability politics is the belief or assertion that conforming to mainstream standards or being 'respectable' will protect individuals from minorities against prejudice, disadvantage, injustice and acts of racism
- meritocracy and bootstrap theories are fallacies which claim that no matter what an individual's beginnings or situation, they can change their situation and achieve wealth if they work hard enough. It denies the history, systemic racism, and trauma of minorities such as Aboriginal people and groups
- tokenism refers to the how Aboriginal people are included and the way that non-Aboriginal people engage (see page 16)
- white silence refers to the silence, failure or refusal of white people to speak up against racism or to talk with others about how they knowingly or unknowingly contribute to racism and oppression
- claims of 'reverse racism'
- tone policing is a form of gaslighting and is used to derail conversations and undermine messages by focusing on the emotions of the situation instead of the content.

CONSIDER THIS: it is the impact, NOT the intention, behind an act or behaviour that determines if something is racist or not. Denying or invalidating someone else's experience of racism compounds this impact. If we are willing to acknowledge our own mistakes, then unintentional incidents can be opportunities to reflect and learn. It can be uncomfortable at times, but self-awareness, evaluation and personal responsibility are critical to creating culturally safe spaces.

YOU CAN'T SAY THIS!

"I'm not racist but..."
"No offence but..."

Any statement that starts with either of these is almost guaranteed to cause offence. It is also a fair indication that the individual is aware of this on some level but is choosing to say or behave in a certain way regardless. Acknowledging that something may cause offence, particularly in such an offhanded and dismissive way, does not mean that you can say or do whatever you like. These phrases are often used to excuse or avoid taking responsibility for behaviour and attitudes.

Another tactic people sometimes use is to retell a story or share the perspective or sentiment of someone else. Using a third party to express something racist, sexist, or offensive is often used to gauge audience support for their attitudes or to avoid taking responsibility. This is again an indication that the individual knows on some level that the attitude or action is inappropriate or offensive. This is different to raising and critically analysing or reflecting on a situation or attitude.

YOU CAN DO THIS!

Call out people when they try to hide racist attitudes behind statements, stories and other peoples' perspectives.

TYPES OF RACISM

INTERPERSONAL RACISM:

When we think of racism, most people will think of specific acts of racist behaviour by individuals or groups. This is known as interpersonal racism and includes any language or action which is:

- racist in nature, and
- offensive, degrading, intimidating or embarrassing.

CONSIDER THIS: interpersonal racism is not always directed at a specific person. The individual or a member of the targeted group does not even need to be present for an act of racism to occur.

RACIAL HATRED AND VILIFICATION:

Racial hatred and racial vilification are very specific acts of racism and are deemed unlawful within Commonwealth and State legislation.

- Offensive behaviour based on racial hatred is referred to in the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Commonwealth). It refers to public acts that are reasonably likely to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate another person or group of people because of their race, colour or national or ethnic origin. These acts include communicating words, sounds, images or writing to the public, in a public place, or in the sight or hearing of people who are in a public place.
- Racial vilification is referred to in the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW) as public acts that incite hatred towards, serious contempt for, or severe ridicule of, a person or group of people on the grounds of their race.

Any public act that threatens or incites violence towards an individual or a group of people on the basis of race is a criminal offence.

INSTITUTIONAL RACISM:

Institutional racism refers to the way that institutions and organisations discriminate directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally, through their structures and the policies and practices that inform their operations. This results in the reproduction and maintenance of privilege and power dynamics. The omission or exclusion of relevant knowledges and ceremonial commitments, responsibilities and customary obligations is also a form of institutional racism.

SYSTEMIC RACISM:

Many, if not all, of our systems were founded on racist principles and practices. The justification of terra nullius (unoccupied land) to 'claim' the country we now know as Australia is just one example. We see similar issues in other systems such as judiciary, education, health and academia. Because of the underlying principles, these systems then perpetuate racism and discrimination across generations.

Structural racism is sometimes used interchangeably with systemic racism but refers more to racism within the structures, laws, cultural values and entrenched norms.

MICROAGGRESSIONS:

Microaggressions are casual expressions of racism that occur in everyday contexts and interactions. They are generally indirect and may be so subtle that they are not visible to everyone, particularly to those with no lived experience of discrimination or racism. Microaggressions can be verbal, behavioural, or environmental, such as the naming of buildings exclusively after white people or displaying statues of historical figures such as colonisers, slave owners and known racists.

CONSIDER THIS: while microaggressions are often subtle they have a cumulative effect on individuals who experience them. You've probably heard of sayings like 'death by a thousand cuts' and 'the straw that broke the camel's back.' Microaggressions work the same way, each one may seem small but when they are added together the overall impact can be catastrophic.

Microaggressions typically take three forms:

1. Microassaults – behaviour that is deliberately discriminatory however offense may be unintentional or dismissed e.g. telling racist jokes, or saying 'I'm not racist but...'
2. Microinsults – racist comments, offhand remarks and behaviours e.g. compliments that have a discriminatory undertone or convey racist assumptions; perpetuation of stereotypes about racial or cultural groups; not acknowledging individuals based on colour or religion; or appropriation of terms and culture.
3. Microinvalidations – comments and behaviours that exclude, undermine, or deny racialised experiences e.g. claims of oversensitivity, denial of one's own racism and privilege, looking for the targeted group to absolve or make you feel better, denying the experience and impact of historic and ongoing events such as colonisation.

OTHERING:

Othering involves the labelling of certain individuals and groups as not fitting into the norms of a social group. This is different to recognising and celebrating diversity. Othering is an "us versus them" mentality which negates another person's worth and humanity. It is the thinking that underpins most racist behaviours, it is also used to justify or excuse racist behaviour.

Othering can also be thought of as both a form and impact of racism. It draws on negative stereotypes and other forms of racism, such as racial slurs and racist jokes and results in social exclusion from the rest of the group, also known as the in-group.

Othering perpetuates racism by reinforcing the idea and exclusion of the 'other' or the out-group. This can influence the way other people think, particularly when the opinion is trusted, or it aligns with their own way of thinking.

CONSIDER THIS: racial slurs in sports, especially when used by children, are an example of how othering is passed on and manifested. The behaviours and attitudes we model to those around us matters.

LATERAL VIOLENCE:

Lateral violence occurs within disadvantaged, oppressed and marginalised groups as a result of complex historical, cultural, and social factors. It involves the displacement of anger and violence towards other members of the group rather than towards the systems and societies that oppress them. Lateral violence can be perpetrated by an individual or a group. Behaviours include but are not limited to:

- gossiping, backstabbing and bullying
- aggression, intimidation and open conflict
- social exclusion and isolation
- publicly challenging, undermining or otherwise censoring identity and lived experience
- undermining cultural capital and reputation for example, through public claims of cultural inappropriateness.

CONSIDER THIS: while lateral violence is generally internalised within a group, other individuals can be complicit in their behaviour. Identity and cultural censorship in particular can involve the vicarious recruitment of individuals who are not from the in-group. This can happen directly, through the perpetuation of claims, or indirectly, through the creation of culturally unsafe and unmoderated spaces where these occur. The dismissal of these behaviours as typical within Aboriginal communities and excusing them as 'black politics' also contributes to perpetration of lateral violence and its impact on the targeted individual.

Responding to racism

Knowing how to respond appropriately to racism will allow you to address it and minimise the harm or impact.

Sometimes the racist behaviours and opinions of those nearest to us can be the most confronting and most difficult to address.

Our relationships are important. Being respectful is especially important in these situations.

- Understand the issues yourself.
- Use 'I' statements.
- Talk to them quietly.
- Use a measured tone.
- Listen to their perspective.
- Clarify their stance.
- Let them walk in other people's shoes. Provide examples of alternatives and some of the impacts.
- Provide your opinion or perspective.
- Look after yourself.

CONSIDER THIS: racist attitudes and behaviours are learned and practiced over a long period of time. If you are in a close relationship or have regular contact with someone then you will likely have multiple opportunities to have these discussions. Sometimes it's best to let people pause and reflect then follow up later, rather than trying to convince them or win them around.

The same approach works with people you don't know particularly well.

Remember that your safety matters. Assess the situation or context, who is involved and how they will or might respond. Sometimes it can help to prepare some responses especially if you know you're going into a contested space.

CONSIDER THIS: we all handle conflict and uncomfortable situations differently. What's your style?

- Call it like it is – that's not a joke, that's racist.
- Play dumb, ask them to explain their comment or joke.
- Use statistics.
- Use humour or sarcasm.
- Be honest about how it makes you feel.

ACTIVE BYSTANDERS:

Overt incidents of racism can be intimidating if you are a bystander (someone who is present and witnesses an event but is not directly involved).

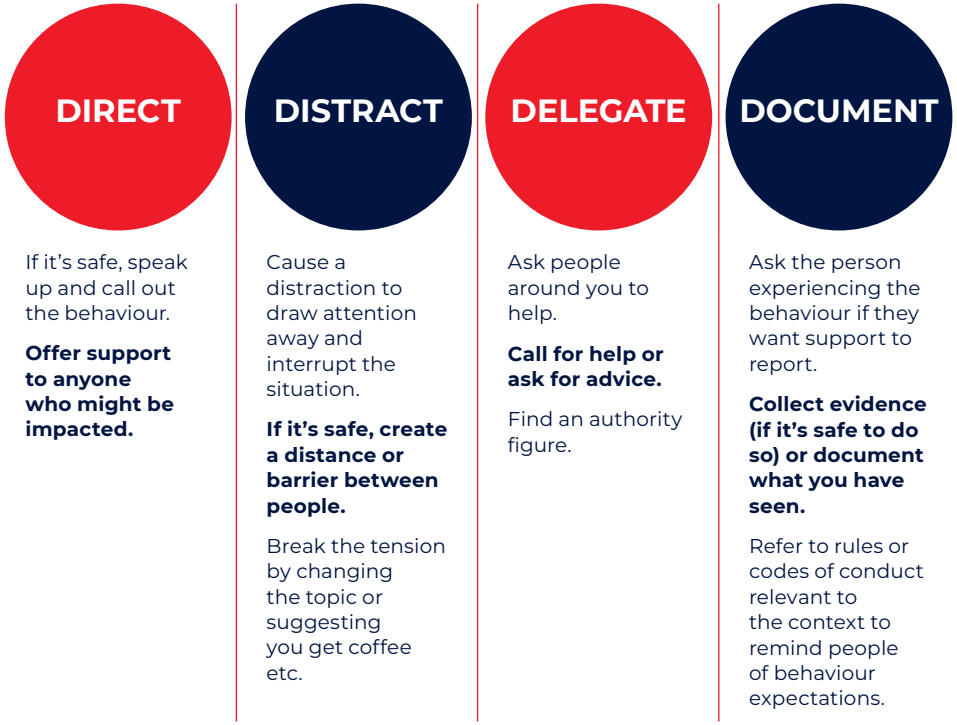
Remember that this intimidation and discomfort is greatest for those who are the focus of the incident. Their safety relies on active bystanders.

An active bystander is someone who recognises a potentially harmful situation and speaks or acts in support of an individual or group. They are willing to take action to keep a situation from escalating or to disrupt a problematic situation.

Active bystanders are valuable allies in combating racist behaviours, attitudes and systems and play a pivotal role in helping prevent incidents from occurring in the first place.

The 4Ds is a framework to help us think about different options we have or approaches that we may take in any given situation.

THE 4 Ds OF BYSTANDER INTERVENTION



CONSIDER THIS: it is never too late to be an active bystander. Sometimes you might only realise that an incident was racist after the event. Other times you might reflect and regret not stepping in or doing more. You can reach out, even after an incident, and check in on the person who was targeted or ask them what support they need.

Allyship

Allyship is a relationship of mutual respect. It involves Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous peoples working together to promote and advance the rights and interests of Indigenous people.

Allies support Indigenous people and communities by helping to ensure that their aspirations and agendas are being properly represented.

Being an ally is about more than just wanting to support the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It requires commitment to the promotion and advancement of these rights in order to eliminate the inequality which allies themselves benefit from.

CONSIDER THIS: actions speak louder than words. A lot of people declare themselves an ally. A non-Indigenous person may aspire to be an ally, but they can't self-appoint themself as one. It is a title that is given to them by Indigenous people in recognition of the ways in which they act and support our causes.

ALLIES ARE NOT:

Performative: sometimes an individual or organisation will publicly declare solidarity with Aboriginal people and our agendas, but they don't actually walk the walk (model what they say). These acts are made in their self-interest and may actually harm the interests they claim to support. Performances such as this are often aimed at distancing themselves from scrutiny or being aligned with popular opinion.

CONSIDER THIS: an ally may make public statements however the key is the framing, relational accountability, who benefits and how the act is followed up or maintained.

Tokenistic: tokenism is still fairly superficial but does involve a greater level of engagement in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues and interests. Tokenists may attend a Black Lives Matter rally or a NAIDOC event. They may hang an Aboriginal artwork on their wall or wear Ally friendly clothing. They may even have a token Aboriginal friend or extended family member. While self-interest is a key motivation, these acts do not cause the same type of damage as performative acts. Sometimes tokenists use their involvement in activities and interests as a platform. The ways they speak may be harmful (e.g. perpetuate stereotypes) or they may suggest that their views and opinions are aligned with or endorsed by Indigenous people. Tokenistic acts lack relational accountability because their relationships are not maintained or followed up.

Silent (refuse to act): doing nothing is a choice. Choosing not to act either out of guilt or fear of getting it wrong is different to being unable to act due to constraints associated with capability or capacity, or genuine concerns about your own safety and wellbeing. Refusal to act is often justified by denying the situation or experience of the individual or group. This denial of experience, whether conscious or not, is a form of microaggression.

ALLIES ARE:

1. **Reflexive:** allies are aware of their position of power and privilege and how this influences their perspective. They recognise the ways that unjust systems work to benefit them while disempowering and marginalising Indigenous peoples.
2. **Educated in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues:** allies educate themselves about the historical and cultural context to understand the impact of intergenerational trauma and the issues which impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities as a way of deepening their understanding of their own position.
3. **Listeners:** allies prioritise relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities. They listen to our voices. Allies understand the uniqueness of our experiences and listen to our priorities and aspirations rather than going it alone.
4. **Accommodating:** an ally understands that their role is to create the space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices to be heard. You can't do this when you're doing the talking. Allies are prepared to step back when needed, acknowledge and work with our voices rather than copying them. They also understand the uniqueness of the perspectives and experiences that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have. Allies don't take it personally when we don't agree with them.
5. **Mindful:** allies are mindful about their own behaviours and change them where necessary so that their action or inaction do not contribute to disadvantage or inequality. Allies do not need to give up their privilege, but they can help to remove barriers and create opportunities for Indigenous people. Allies actively try to avoid compounding the impact or burden on Indigenous peoples. They do not turn to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for absolution or to assuage feelings of guilt.
6. **Active:** allies use their own power and position of privilege to try and redress discrimination at an individual and systemic levels. Efforts are genuine and obvious, such as calling out racism in personal relationships, structures and processes. Action can take many forms and is specific to the context, capability, capacity and radius of effect of the individual ally.
7. **Accountable:** an ally is accountable for their relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities. We all make mistakes. An ally will accept responsibility for their mistakes and actively learn from them.
8. **Self-care practitioners:** doing the right thing isn't always easy. Self-reflection and taking action can be confronting. Allies realise that this does not overshadow the challenges and trauma experienced by Indigenous peoples. It is important that allies look after themselves and each other. Networks of allies and communities of practice can provide additional support.

CONSIDER THIS: there is no such thing as a 'good' ally. This suggests that there can be 'bad' allies. Allyship is like Aboriginality, either you are or you're not. There's no in-between.

Terminology

ABORIGINAL

'Aboriginal' is used to refer to the original inhabitants of mainland Australia and Tasmania, and their descendants.

YOU CAN'T SAY THAT!

Aborigine

There is no Aboriginal word that refers to all Aboriginal people in Australia. The term comes from the Latin ab origine, meaning 'from the beginning'. Australia's original inhabitants were labelled as 'Aborigine' at colonisation. The term features in the legislation, policies and practices of colonisation and assimilation. It is associated with the pain and suffering experienced by generations of Aboriginal peoples. While the word 'Aborigine' is grammatically correct it should NEVER be used because of this history.

YOU CAN DO THIS!

Respectful use of the word:

- Aboriginal in this context must always start with a capital A
- Aboriginal must NEVER be abbreviated. Abbreviations have historically been used as racist slurs
- Aboriginal must be used as an adjective not as a noun. For example, 'she is an Aboriginal person', 'she is Aboriginal' NOT 'She is an Aboriginal'.

YOU CAN'T SAY THAT!

It is disrespectful to replace the word 'Aboriginal' with other terms.

The ONLY exception is the use of an Aboriginal Country, nation, language group or cultural identity, e.g., Yuin, Gamilaroi, Wiradjuri, Dharug. If using these, the same rules apply as for the term Aboriginal.

Pronouns such as 'the', 'they', 'them', 'their' and 'those' should not be used to replace Aboriginal. This is a form of othering. The use of pronouns is degrading and promotes social distance between the author and Aboriginal peoples.

The objectification of Aboriginal people by governments and non-Aboriginal Australians has made the historic acts of genocide and assimilation permissible. It is a way of thinking that is responsible for the pain and suffering of many Aboriginal people, families and communities.

CONSIDER THIS: the term Aboriginal is sometimes used to refer to the First Peoples of Canada. This should be considered particularly when accessing information from websites, academic literature, and other sources.

CONSIDER ALSO: 'Non-Aboriginal' refers to people who are not Aboriginal. This may include Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians.

LOCATION-BASED IDENTIFIERS

Aboriginal people from different parts of Australia use different terms to identify themselves. These terms come from the languages and names used by the Aboriginal peoples of these areas.

Term	Area
Koori	South East Australia – NSW and Victoria
Murri	Queensland and North West NSW
Goori	Northern NSW coastal regions
Nunga	South Australia
Palawa	Tasmania
Yolgnu	Northern Territory/ North East Arnhem Land
Anangu	Central Australia
Noongar	South West Western Australia

The University of Wollongong has campuses in several Aboriginal nations, all of which self-identify as Koori. This is generally accepted as the appropriate term to identify Aboriginal peoples in these areas. Aboriginal people in the local area may personally identify in ways that more appropriately describes their Country, e.g., Murri or Goori.

YOU CAN DO THIS!

Respectful use of location-based terms:

Non-Aboriginal people may use location-based identifiers, however it is disrespectful to use them in a title of a program or a resource without consultation. The Aboriginal community should lead and own the decision to use 'in-group' words in this way.

WHO IS ABORIGINAL?

A three-part definition of Aboriginality was introduced in the Aboriginal Land Rights Act (1983).

An Aboriginal person is defined as someone who:

i. is of Aboriginal descent
ii. identifies as Aboriginal
iii. is accepted as Aboriginal by the community in which they live (or have previously lived).

This definition has been adopted by all federal, state and territory governments. The Confirmation of Aboriginality is based on these criteria and is used to confirm Aboriginality for access to equity-based programs and positions. It also plays a role in Land Rights and Native Title claims. Similar requirements are placed on Torres Strait Islander people.

Confirmation of Aboriginality is generally an eligibility requirement for accessing affirmative action initiatives such as employment, scholarships, education and health services. These special measures are allowed under the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Commonwealth) and are aimed at fostering greater equality for groups who experience entrenched discrimination. The focus is on providing support and increasing the accessibility of opportunities available to others in the community.

The use of these criteria can create mixed emotions for some Aboriginal people including:

- anger at similarity to past legislation and policies that required Aboriginal people to carry documentation and wear 'dog tags'
- resentment that the burden of proof is on them to authenticate their identity to the governments that tried to take it away
- sadness because they may not know where they are from or how to connect and be accepted by the local Aboriginal community.

Many Aboriginal people find the requirement for a Confirmation of Aboriginality offensive. Our ancestors fought against previous attempts to censure and control identity, such as the 'dog tags'. The process can also be difficult, particularly given the focus of colonisation on disrupting connections to families, communities and Country.

There are organisations and services which are able to support people seeking to obtain a Confirmation of Aboriginality. Many initiatives and programs will also recognise alternative methods of confirmation. Information related to these will be provided by the relevant organisation, institution or government agency.

CONSIDER THIS: No other group of people in Australia are required to prove their identity.

It is NOT the role of non-Aboriginal people to police Aboriginal identity.

YOU CAN'T SAY THAT!

There is NO criteria based on skin colour, lifestyle or 'the gap'. It is HIGHLY offensive to use terms or phrases such as:

Mixed blood
Half-caste
Quarter-caste
Full blood
Part-Aboriginal
What 'percentage' Aboriginal?
'How' Aboriginal?
'But you don't look Aboriginal'.
'Are you sure?'

Terms such as these have been used in the past to classify Aboriginal people and are associated with trauma for many Aboriginal people and communities.

YOU CAN'T SAY THAT!

Blackfella

This term was once used to label and put down Aboriginal people. It has been reclaimed by the Aboriginal community and is appropriate when used by Aboriginal people. It is highly offensive when used outside the Aboriginal community.

YOU CAN'T SAY THAT!

Real Aboriginal

Many people have the idea that the 'real' Aboriginal people live in Arnhem Land or the Central Desert and that only 'traditional' Aboriginal peoples and cultures are 'really Aboriginal'. This is offensive and denies the identity and experiences of Aboriginal people in other contexts and with other histories.

The idea of what makes a 'real Aboriginal' is generally based on the many stereotypes associated with Aboriginal peoples and culture. Stereotypes are negative views that ignore cultural and individual differences. They are deficit focused and used to 'other' and socially exclude Aboriginal people. Stereotypes are displayed in many places such as the media and are reinforced within society. These stereotypes include:

- physical characteristics such as skin, hair and eye colour
- poor language, literacy and numeracy
- low rates of completion of higher education
- low socioeconomic status
- unemployment
- drug and alcohol issues
- sexual health issues, including promiscuity and sexually transmitted infections
- large families
- teen pregnancies
- victims of violence and sexual abuse
- incarcerated or delinquent
- knowledge of language
- degree of connection or loss of culture
- connection to nature
- remoteness
- in urban areas all Aboriginal people live in low socioeconomic areas and 'enclaves'
- don't own homes
- have beat up cars
- are great sports people
- love country music.

It is important to recognise that while some Aboriginal people meet some of these stereotypes, this is not the norm.

Aboriginal people come from a wide range of social and cultural backgrounds and have diverse experiences.

The successes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people need to be acknowledged. Examples of these successes include filmmakers, artists, doctors, academics, lawyers, nurses and politicians such as Ivan Sen, Lowitja O'Donoghue, Dr Mark Wenitong, Mick Dodson and Linda Burney. These are often, unfortunately, the untold stories of Indigenous Australia.

Research and statistics may contribute to these misunderstandings about Aboriginal people. Be careful when applying and referring to population data such as socioeconomic and health statistics. Remember that these are based on population figures and do not take into account the personal context.

CONSIDER THIS: The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reported that in 2008 gonorrhoea in young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people occurred at 81 times the rate as in the general population.

This is a population statistic. Population statistics identify discrepancies and inequities that must be addressed.

It does NOT mean that every young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person in 2008 had gonorrhoea.

In fact, in 2008 for every young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person with gonorrhoea there were almost 65 without it.

When taken out of context, population statistics can be disempowering, reinforce the discourse of deficit and contribute to the racism experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This negative emphasis undermines culture and identity, promotes the internalisation of stereotypes and contributes to the negative outcomes experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

YOU CAN DO THIS!

Tip: Treat Aboriginal people as individuals with individual needs, experiences, and understandings.

TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER

The Torres Strait Islands are at the tip of Queensland between Cape York and Papua New Guinea.

Torres Strait Islander people is used to refer to the original inhabitants of the Torres Strait Islands and their descendants.

YOU CAN DO THIS!

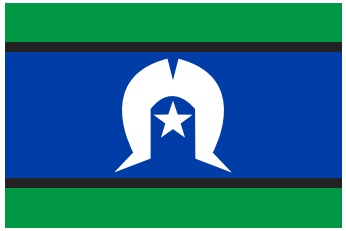
Respectful use of the term:

- All words of 'Torres Strait Islander' must start with a capital letter.
- 'Torres Strait Islander' must NEVER be abbreviated or initialised, e.g., TSI.
- 'Torres Strait Islander' must be used as an adjective not as a noun. For example, 'he is a Torres Strait Islander person', 'he is from the Torres Strait Islands' NOT 'He is a Torres Strait Islander.'

THE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER FLAGS

The Aboriginal flag was designed in 1971. The flag and its colours hold great symbolic meaning for Aboriginal people and their identity.

- Black: represents the Aboriginal peoples of Australia.
- Red: represents the red earth and spiritual connection to Country.
- Yellow: represents the sun, provider of life and protector.



The Torres Strait Islander flag was first flown in 1992. The Dhari (headdress) symbolises the Torres Strait Islander peoples. The five pointed star beneath it represents the five major island groups and reflects the navigational importance of stars to these seafaring people.

- Green: represents the land.
- Black: represents the Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Blue: represents the sea.

YOU CAN'T DO THAT!

Hanging either of these flags upside down is a sign of disrespect. There are additional protocols surrounding all official flags. These include not flying two flags from the same flagpole, and never allowing a flag to fall or lie on the ground.

YOU CAN DO THIS!

Respectful use of the flags:

Both flags were introduced as official flags of Australia in 1995. The official order of display, from the audience's left to right, is the Australian flag, the NSW flag, the Aboriginal flag and the Torres Strait Islander flag.

Many organisations have additional protocols such as flying the flags at half-mast when there has been a death in the local community or of a significant Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER

The term 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person' is used to refer to the original inhabitants of all states and territories now known as Australia.

The terms 'Aboriginal' and 'Torres Strait Islander' refer to different cultural groups and are not interchangeable.

YOU CAN'T SAY THAT!

ATSI

Use of the acronym ATSI is highly offensive because it further diminishes cultural identity.

YOU CAN DO THIS!

Respectful use of the term:

- all words must start with a capital letter, i.e., Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander must NEVER be abbreviated or initialised, e.g., ATSI
- initialisms and acronyms are only acceptable if it appears this way in the name of an entity or organisation, e.g., Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission = ATSIC and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies = AIATSIS
- 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' must be used as an adjective (a describing word) not as a noun (a naming word)
- all words must appear in their set order
- it is appropriate to use either Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander by themselves providing the use reflects the context appropriately, e.g. when referring to one of the cultural groupings in particular or where it reflects the cultural identity of a specific geographic location.

INDIGENOUS

'Indigenous' refers to the original inhabitants and their descendants of a country.

Indigenous is used in a way that is similar to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and features within program and position titles across government, higher education and community services.

- 'Indigenous' in this context must always start with a capital 'I'.
- The World Health Organization uses 'indigenous' with a lowercase 'i' when referring to First Peoples in the international context.

There is criticism that 'Indigenous' is not specific to Australia and it does not represent the cultural identity and diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' is the preferred terminology.

YOU CAN DO THIS!

Respectful use of the term:

The use of 'Indigenous' is considered appropriate if:

- it is a direct quote
- it is in the name of a program, unit or position.

The use of Indigenous may also be accepted in shorter documents, which require the repeated use of the term Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. Longer documents will usually explain which adjective or identifier they are adopting throughout the document. This may be determined based on location or application e.g. a document relating to the Torres Strait Islands is unlikely to be referring to Aboriginal people, likewise a document referring to communities and individuals on the south coast is more likely refer to Aboriginal people and communities.

Tip: ask if you are not sure which term to use or if the document is going to be made public or used within the Aboriginal community. The UOW Indigenous Strategy Unit can provide advice if required.

CONSIDER THIS: 'Non-Indigenous' refers to people who are not Indigenous to Australia, i.e., are not Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

YOU CAN'T SAY THAT!

Native
Savage

'Native' and 'savage' are colonial terms used to describe the original inhabitants of a land. They have links to Social Darwinism, the idea that Darwin's theory of natural selection could be applied to cultures and societies.

Social Darwinists believed in survival of the fittest: that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were less evolved and destined to die out. This view was used to justify the dispossession, genocide, oppression and assimilation of Aboriginal people.

These terms are considered offensive to use in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Some international terms such as 'First Nations' and 'First Peoples' are becoming more widely used in Australia as an alternative to Indigenous.

'First Nations' is still predominantly used to refer to the original peoples of Canada.

'First Peoples' is becoming more common and can be used instead of 'Indigenous' as a collective term for the original inhabitants of Australia and their descendants.

The terms *'Aboriginal', 'Torres Strait Islander', 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, 'First Nations'* and *'Indigenous'* must always be used as adjectives, not as nouns.

Appropriate nouns to use with these terms include:

- Individual: individual, person, woman, man, child, Elder
- Collective (of individuals): people, community
- Collective (of cultural groups): peoples, nations.

'Peoples' is commonly used to acknowledge the cultural diversity found among Australia's original inhabitants. It recognises that there are hundreds of different language groups, cultural identities and communities.

YOU CAN'T SAY THAT!

Aboriginals

Remember: 'Aboriginal', 'Torres Strait Islander', 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' and 'Indigenous' are adjectives, NOT nouns.

It is disrespectful to use a pronoun in place of 'Aboriginal', 'Torres Strait Islander', 'Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander' and 'Indigenous'.

HIERARCHY OF NAMING

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are generally recognised or referred to in the order below, depending upon what information is known. If in doubt, it is always best to ask the individual or group regarding how they would like to be identified.

1. Country, language group, clan, or nation.
2. Area a person comes from or self-identifying term.
3. Aboriginal.
4. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or Indigenous.

COUNTRY

'Country' has a special meaning for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It is more than the dictionary definition of 'country', relating to more than just geography or landscape. It includes the ancestral, cultural, spiritual and social connections to that land. Country is the holder of all knowledge and lore. It is both our teacher and our place of learning. Country includes the intimate relationships Aboriginal people have with the environment in its entirety, including the landscape, the seasons, the flora (plants) and the fauna (animals). Connection to Country strengthens Aboriginal identity.

Being 'on Country' for an Aboriginal person means that you are on your traditional lands.

'Being on Country' on the other hand can mean that you are engaging with Country in a conscious and deliberate way, practicing deep listening and reflection.

People often mistakenly think that 'being on Country' means being in nature or out bush. While this may be the case, the two are not the same thing.

CONSIDER THIS: we are always on Country. It does not cease to exist because it has been renamed, bought, sold, or built on. We are still on Country despite the concrete and the asphalt. You can 'be on Country' even in the heart of the city.

YOU CAN DO THIS!

Respectful use of the term:

- Country in this context must always start with a capital C.

CONSIDER THIS: 'Connections with Country have been actively targeted over the last 250 years. Aboriginal people have historically been displaced from cultural lands and endured repeated efforts to destroy kinship networks and relationships with Country. As a result, there are many Aboriginal people who may not be able to identify where their ancestral Country is.

NATION

'Nation' refers to a distinct group of people associated with a particular, culturally distinct country and language.

'Nation' is generally considered to be the most respectful term. Language groups can also be used.

YOU CAN DO THIS!

Respectful and accurate naming of 'Country' and nations:

In 1940 the White anthropologist Norman Tindale created a map of the 'Aboriginal Tribes of Australia'. An expanded version was released in 1974. The work of Tindale demonstrated the cultural landscape pre-invasion and helped to counter the claim of terra nullius. It must however be recognised that many Aboriginal communities have a deep distrust of anthropologists and that, however accurate it is intended, it is subject to cultural bias. Tindale did not consult with the vast majority of Aboriginal peoples and in many cases did not even visit the parts of Country he mapped. The maps of Tindale and others cannot definitively reflect the 'borders' of Aboriginal Countries pre-invasion. This is particularly the case in areas along the south-east coast which were the point zero of colonisation and experienced its full force. They also do not reflect the relationships or intersections between Aboriginal groups. 'Boundaries' on these maps should not be taken as absolute.

The recognition of Country names, tribal boundaries, and traditional relationships is complex. The history and ongoing impact of the colonisation in the region covered by the University of Wollongong increases this complexity. To impose titles upon the Traditional Custodians and the Country on which our campuses are located perpetuates the violence against them.

We continue to resist the push to name Country that has been adopted by Australia Post, the media, and others. We also resist the indiscriminate naming of Country on resources and publications. We recognise the implication and potential damage associated with naming Country on works which do not reflect appropriate respect or care for Country.

CONSIDER THIS: local Aboriginal Elders, organisations and groups are the best source of information on how to most appropriately name the Country that they are on. They can also provide advice on the most respectful way to identify the local Traditional Custodians.

WELCOME TO COUNTRY AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

A 'Welcome to Country' follows thousands of years of protocols around welcoming people to Country and offering safe passage and protection to visitors. A Welcome to Country or Acknowledgement of Country is now a regular feature of meetings, community events and conferences. This is an important practice as it recognises Aboriginal peoples as Traditional Custodians and shows respect for the enduring relationship between Aboriginal peoples and Country.

There are significant differences between a Welcome to Country and Acknowledgment of Country.

Welcome to Country	Acknowledgement of Country
A formal welcome onto an Aboriginal Country.	A statement of recognition of the Traditional Owners of that land.
Performed by a Traditional Owner or Custodian of the Country on which you are meeting. Performed by an Elder or leader in the community. Do not bring someone in from outside the community unless local Elders have approved this. Some Traditional Custodians will feel it is more culturally appropriate for them to do an Acknowledgement rather than a Welcome.	Performed by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people as a way for all people to show awareness and respect for Aboriginal peoples, their culture and heritage. An Acknowledgement of Country can be used exclusively if an Elder or other appropriate member of the Aboriginal community is not available to perform a Welcome to Country.
Should be included in public events and/or those that involve dignitaries.	May be used independently for smaller or internal events. If you are at an official event and directly follow an Elder performing a Welcome to Country, it is appropriate to make a brief Acknowledgement as a sign of respect for the Elder.
Should always be the first item on the agenda.	Should be the first item on the agenda. The only exception is if it follows a Welcome to Country.
Can take different forms including a speech in language or in English with or without an accompanying performance, such as a smoking ceremony, playing of the Didgeridoo, singing or dancing.	Examples of both long and brief Acknowledgements of Country are provided in the University of Wollongong Guidelines and Protocols for Welcome to Country, Acknowledgement of People and Country and Aboriginal Cultural Performances.
In providing cultural services such as a Welcome to Country, artistic performances or ceremonies, Aboriginal people are using their intellectual property. Appropriate remuneration should be discussed and arranged prior to the event.	

YOU CAN'T SAY THAT!

A Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country are NOT the same. It is disrespectful to have an inappropriate person do a Welcome to Country.

It is particularly offensive to have a non-Aboriginal person say or claim they are entitled to say a Welcome to Country.

If in doubt, ask UOW Indigenous Strategy Unit, Woolyungah Indigenous Centre (WIC), the relevant Local Aboriginal Land Council or other Aboriginal Community Organisations for advice.

TRADITIONAL OWNER OR CUSTODIAN

A Traditional Owner or Custodian is a person who is from the Country that is being referred to. They have ancestral connections and a cultural association with that Country. The name recognises the unique relationship of Aboriginal peoples with Country.

While Traditional Owner has become widely used, many people prefer Traditional Custodian because it recognises the unique relationship based on custodianship and caretaking. Ownership is a Western construct. Country cannot be owned.

YOU CAN DO THIS!

Respectful use of the term:

Traditional Owners or Custodians are highly respected. Both words MUST be capitalised.

ELDER

An Elder is someone recognised within their community for their cultural knowledge, wisdom and contribution to the community. Age alone does not make someone an Elder. They are highly respected and are responsible for making decisions within and speaking on behalf of the community.

YOU CAN'T SAY THAT!

Chief

Chief is a term that comes from other cultural groups and is not applicable to Aboriginal peoples.

YOU CAN DO THIS!

Respectful use of the term:

Elder MUST ALWAYS start with a capital E as a sign of respect.

Elders are often referred to as 'Uncle' or 'Aunty' as a sign of respect even if they are not related. You should not use these titles unless you are familiar with the Elder, have been invited by the Elder to call them this or are advised to do so by a member of the Aboriginal community.

CONSIDER THIS: Elder has different meaning in different communities. It tends to be an honorific term in major urban areas but linked more closely to relationships within a family in more rural or remote communities.

Age makes someone an 'Older' NOT an 'Elder'. Aboriginal community will determine who is an Elder locally. It is not a title that can be bestowed on an Aboriginal person by non-Indigenous people and organisations.

KINSHIP

'Kinship' is a system of family and social organisation that defines where a person fits within an extended family and community. It describes an Aboriginal person's family connections and social relations and dictates their rights, responsibilities and behavioural expectations.

Aboriginal values, beliefs, identity and language are developed and nurtured within the family. Keeping the family strong and healthy, both physically and spiritually, is vitally important to the continuance of Aboriginal society.

Children learn early that to refer to their 'family' is to refer to the extended family. An Aboriginal family might include mother, father, several children, numerous aunts, uncles and cousins, a number of grandparents and several grandchildren. These family members are both real and classificatory.

CULTURE

'Culture' refers to the accepted customs, understandings and social behaviours shared by members of a group or community. Culture consists of Country, language, the Dreaming, artistic expression, ways of living and working, relationships and identity.

Aboriginal Australia is multicultural. It is respectful to refer to cultures in the plural as it reflects the diversity of Aboriginal peoples.

YOU CAN'T SAY THAT!

It is offensive to use terms that classify culture.

Primitive
Native
Simple
Prehistoric
Stone Age

These terms imply that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and societies are inferior and not as advanced as Western European cultures.

DREAMING

The Dreaming is the Western European name for Aboriginal spirituality. In the Dreaming, ancestral beings created the natural world. These creation stories are the basis of Aboriginal culture and lore. The Dreaming is linked to Country and is a source of identity for Aboriginal people.

The Dreaming has existed from the beginning of time and is ongoing and infinite. Aboriginal people continue to engage with the Dreaming and spiritual beings today.

YOU CAN'T SAY THAT!

Myths
Folklore
Legends

These terms imply that the Dreaming is not true or that it occurred in the past. The Dreaming is ongoing.

YOU CAN DO THIS!

Respectful use of the term:

- Dreaming should be capitalised as a sign of respect
- The Dreaming is preferred to the Dreamtime which implies a specific period of creation that has finished. The Dreaming and cultural connections to Country are ongoing and eternal.

Other terms

CLAN

'Clan' is generally accepted as a subset of Nation and refers to a local descent group, larger than a family, and based on common ancestry. The term however is not widely used locally.

YOU CAN'T SAY THAT!

Tribe
Moiety

'Tribe' is not appropriate. It is borrowed from European experiences in North America and Africa. It doesn't communicate the diversity between Aboriginal peoples.

Words like 'moiety' have been used by anthropologists to try and describe cultural groupings.

Some Aboriginal people may choose to use these terms, but non-Aboriginal people should avoid using them.

COMMUNITY

Aboriginal communities are based on culture, family ties and shared experiences.

Community can also be used in the geographic sense. However, it is important to remember that these communities are culturally diverse.

Geographic-based communities in the Illawarra and South Coast consist of Aboriginal people with direct ancestral links to the area as well as Gamilaroi, Wiradjuri, Dunghutti, and Bundjalung among others. Geographic communities also consist of Aboriginal people who do not know what their cultural identity is as a direct result of the policy of assimilation.

Community is about connection and belonging and is central to Aboriginal identity. Aboriginal people may belong to more than one community.

MOB

'Mob' refers to a group of people associated with a particular place or Country.

It is an important term used between Aboriginal people to identify who they are and to acknowledge family and social connections to each other. Knowing who your mob is/are tells you where and how you belong.

The policies and processes of colonisation set out to break down these connections. As a result, many Aboriginal people don't know who their mob are or how they belong.

While it is widely acceptable, some Aboriginal people do not like to use the term 'mob' due to its link to the time when Aboriginal people were considered part of the Australian fauna.

YOU CAN DO THIS!

Respectful use of the term:

This is an in-group term. It is not appropriate for non-Aboriginal people to use this term unless they have community acceptance for its use, particularly if used to name or promote a service or a program.

STOLEN GENERATIONS

The term 'Stolen Generations' is used to describe the forcible removal of children from their families and communities under acts of parliament. Fairer-skinned Aboriginal children were considered easier to assimilate into white Australia and were targeted by governments, churches and welfare bodies in an effort to eradicate Aboriginal people and culture.

As many as one in three Aboriginal children were stolen from their families and communities. This practice occurred primarily between the late 1800s and the 1970s, although some institutions continued this practice into the 1980s.

For example, Bomaderry Children's Home (United Aborigines Mission) operated between 1908 and 1988. It is known as the birthplace of the Stolen Generations in NSW. Children between birth and 10 years were housed there before being relocated to Cootamundra Girls' Home or Kinchela Boys' Home.

Children in these institutions experienced extreme physical, mental, cultural, and spiritual abuse. The effects of these policies are still felt today by these children, their families, and their communities.

Other Aboriginal people and families reduced their visibility to avoid being targeted under the policies of assimilation and other discriminatory practices. These are sometimes referred to as the Hidden Generations. Strategies included hiding in plain sight and sometimes adopting alternative public identities such as Spanish or Black Irish, which were considered safer. This is not the same as giving up their cultural identity or Aboriginality.

NEW IDENTIFIER

The term 'new identifier' or 'race shifter' is used to describe a person who is raised non-Aboriginal and later asserts an Aboriginal identity.

There are many reasons why this may happen, including being a member or descendant of the Stolen Generations, or otherwise impacted by practices of colonisation which specifically targeted cultural identities and connections with families, communities, culture, and Country.

All Aboriginal people, families and communities have been impacted by colonisation in some way. There is general support for individuals and families seeking to develop their connections and cultural capability.

YOU CAN'T SAY THAT!

Johnny-come-lately

This term is used sometimes within Aboriginal communities to describe someone who is a new identifier that self-appoints themselves as an authority on Aboriginal culture and community without having the required knowledge, lived experience or connections. It is a term that is used in frustration and reflects the complex social and cultural context resulting from the policies and practices of colonisation. The term should never be used outside the community.

DEADLY

'Deadly' is another in-group term. It is used in the same way as 'excellent' or 'very good.' For example: the 'Deadlys' or National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Music, Sport, Entertainment and Community Awards were held between 1995 and 2014.

Locally, the Northern Illawarra Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) holds the annual Deadly Encouragement Awards to recognise and reward Aboriginal children and youth who have demonstrated commitment, improvement and achievement in schools.

YOU CAN DO THIS!

Respectful use of the term:

Non-Aboriginal people can use the word as an expression, however, it is disrespectful to use it in a title of a program or a resource without proper consultation. The local Aboriginal community should lead and own the decision to use 'deadly' and other in-group words in this way.

SHAME

'Shame' refers to the discomfort and sense of humiliation that Aboriginal people often feel when they are singled out, feel awkward and/or self-conscious. The experience of shame is not limited to negative causes such as being ridiculed, criticised or behaving in a foolish way. Aboriginal people can also feel shame if they are publicly praised or appear to be better than other people, particularly other Aboriginal people.

YOU CAN'T SAY THAT!

Some non-Aboriginal individuals appropriate the term 'shame' and invoke it as a criticism or as a way of coercing an Aboriginal person. This is grossly inappropriate and is a form of manipulation. This is deliberately offensive and exploitative when mention of ancestors and family are included e.g. 'your ancestors would be ashamed'.

SORRY BUSINESS

'Sorry business' refers to the cultural practices and protocols associated with the death of a family or community member. The collective nature and interconnectedness of Aboriginal families and communities means that the loss of an individual is felt deeply by the group. Sorry business is an important part of the mourning and healing process.

Sorry business can also refer to the forcible removal of children from their families, known as the Stolen Generations.

MEN'S AND WOMEN'S BUSINESS

'Men's and Women's Business' is commonly understood as the practice of men and women discussing gender-specific issues separately. This is only one aspect of Men's and Women's Business.

In Aboriginal cultures, there are certain knowledge, practices, customs and places that are gender specific. Men's and Women's Business refers to these gender-based practices collectively.

If you aren't sure whether or not a topic, conversation or issue is Men's or Women's Business, then ask. The Indigenous Strategy Unit, Woolyunguh Indigenous Centre, the Local Aboriginal Land Council or the local Aboriginal Medical Service can help you identify any sensitivities and the appropriate way in which they can be addressed.

YOU CAN'T SAY THAT!

It is offensive to use terms such as Men's and Women's Business in a trivial manner. It may not be appropriate for non-Aboriginal people to use these terms.

'Walkabout' and 'Koori time' are other terms based on cultural practices that are often trivialised or used to mock people. Non-Aboriginal Australia has made a habit of misappropriating and trivialising culturally significant practices.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING (SEWB)

Aboriginal peoples have a holistic view of health and wellbeing. The health of an Aboriginal person's connections to Country, community, culture, kinship, spirituality, as well as their physical and mental health, contribute to their wellbeing.

Telling the right stories

Aboriginal history has been misrepresented for almost 250 years. Much of the popular language used denies Aboriginal peoples their histories and their experiences of colonisation.

YOU CAN'T SAY THAT!

Settlement

Use of the term 'settlement' is offensive and denies the history and impact of colonisation on Aboriginal peoples. Settlement implies that people established a community in a place that was previously uninhabited. The land now known as Australia was invaded, occupied and colonised.

YOU CAN SAY THIS!

It is more appropriate to use the terms:

Invasion
Colonisation
Occupation

YOU CAN'T SAY THAT!

Discovered
First

It is offensive to say that Australia or any part thereof was 'discovered' or that any non-Aboriginal person was 'the first to' accomplish any feats of discovery. Use of these terms reinforces the myth of terra nullius and denies the existence of Aboriginal peoples pre-invasion.

YOU CAN SAY THIS!

It is more appropriate to specify European descent, e.g.:

"Captain Cook was the first Englishman to map the east coast of 'New Holland'" or

"Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth were the first European men to cross the Blue Mountains".

YOU CAN'T SAY THAT!

Pre-history

It is offensive to use this term as it suggests that Aboriginal peoples did not have a history before European invasion.

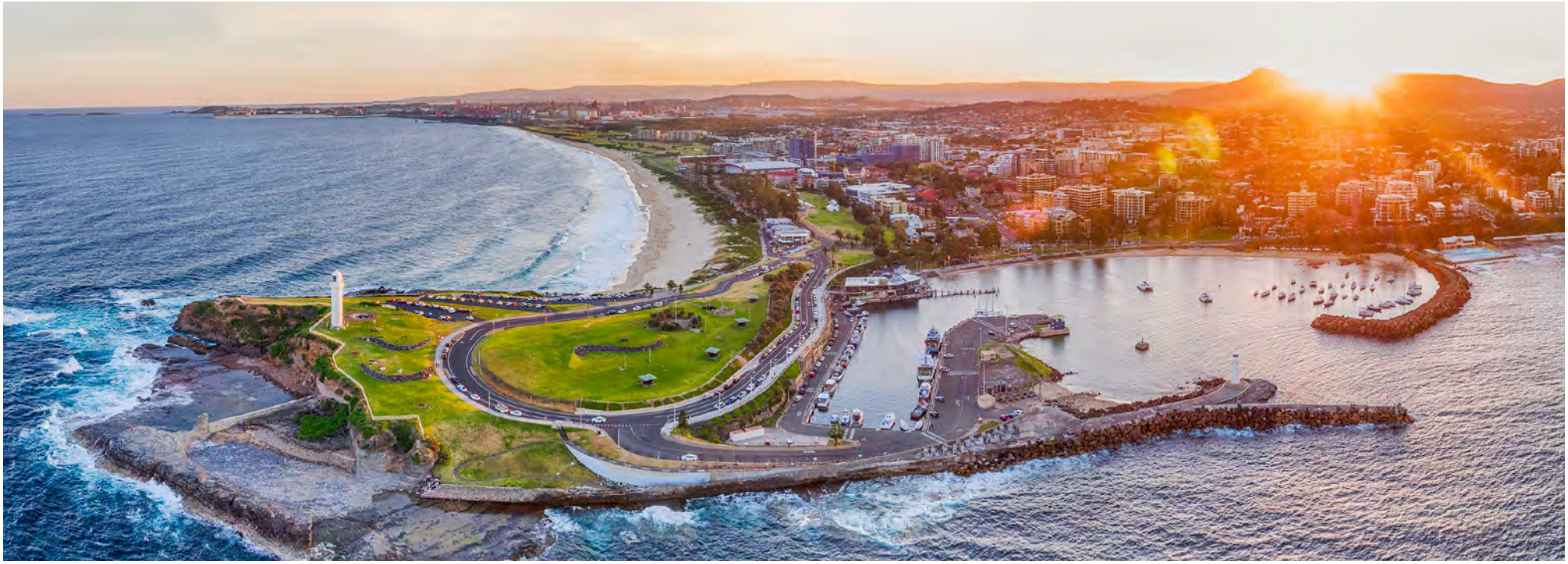
YOU CAN SAY THIS!

It is more appropriate to use the terms:

Indigenous (Australian) Pre-invasion history
Invasion history
Post-invasion history

Avoid limiting Aboriginal history and occupation of the Australian continent.

The earliest date of Aboriginal occupation is constantly changing as dating techniques are improved. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander view of creation is that people have been on Australia since the land was created by Ancestral beings. It is more appropriate to use terms such as 'since the beginning of the Dreaming'.



Engagement and consultation

EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT

A worldview is a set of beliefs and cultural values held by a group of people. Your worldview influences the way that you think, behave, interact with, and interpret the world and others in it.

Understanding basic elements of Aboriginal worldviews will form the basis of engaging and communicating effectively with Aboriginal people and communities.

There are a number of cultural values common among Aboriginal peoples including:

- People and relationship orientation. Relationships are more highly valued than objects and material possessions.
- Family is everything. Family for Aboriginal people extends beyond the nuclear family of parents and children to include grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and the mob.
- Relationality – everyone and everything is interrelated.
- Collectivism – group wellbeing has priority over individual wellbeing. Individuals share responsibility for each other and the group. Sharing is both a responsibility and a privilege.
- Reciprocity – the practice of exchanging things for mutual benefit.
- Country is sacred – all things are connected to Country: culture, spirituality, family, identity. Country gives Aboriginal people a sense of belonging.
- Acceptance – each individual is accepted for their contribution, their strengths and their weaknesses.
- Equality – every person has a right to be equal.
- Respect – for position and responsibilities within kinship groups and communities.

Effective communication with Aboriginal people and communities relies on relationships, respect and responsibility. All engagement requires that you operate in ways that are consistent with these interrelated cultural values.

1. **Relationships**
2. **Respect**
3. **Responsibility**

1. DEVELOP RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships are highly valued by Aboriginal people and communities. They often develop slowly and depend heavily on trust.

- Relationships should always come first, business comes later.
- Take the time to form relationships with individuals, their families and communities. Pre-determined or rigid timelines for engagement outcomes will be detrimental to the relationship.
- Show respect for the people you engage with, the community and their responsibilities. Relationships are NOT transactions.
- Keep nurturing your relationships after you've finished your formal engagement.
- Be open and honest. Many Aboriginal people and communities are sceptical and cynical due to their experiences with governments, services and non-Aboriginal people. Do not take this personally, just talk straight. Remember that actions speak louder than words.
- Know what you're promising. All engagement and communication have an implied promise, it doesn't matter what culture you come from or who you are engaging with. Be aware of what this promise is or how it might be interpreted. If you're not explicit, then assumptions will be made. Do not make promises that you cannot or will not deliver on. This is a common experience for Aboriginal people and communities and creates barriers to future engagement.
- Co-design and collaboration: the best ideas and outcomes come from working directly with the impacted group or community and their representatives. All research, practice and programs involving Aboriginal community and individuals have greater impact when they are developed from the grassroots up.

CONSIDER THIS: it is the responsibility of non-Aboriginal people and Aboriginal people from outside the local community to make sure that they are consulting with the right people.

If you are not sure, then ask a recognised Aboriginal group or service such as the Indigenous Strategy Unit, Woolyungah Indigenous Centre or the relevant Local Aboriginal Land Council.

2. SHOW RESPECT

Respectful communication depends on the context. It includes showing respect for the person or people you are engaging with, respect for the community, respect for culture, respect for Country and respect for the message or issue.

- Use the correct terminology.
- Allow time for effective consultation and communication. Remember that information is processed, and decisions are usually made in a group. Allow time for this to occur.
- Be yourself. Do not talk yourself up, brag or drop names to make yourself look better. Aboriginal people and communities will see through this. It may also have the opposite effect by putting people down and shaming them.
- Do not try to appease Aboriginal people or community with empty gestures or measures.
- Treat others as your equal and value their contribution.
- Know who you are engaging with, particularly if introducing them formally.

3. TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

Responsibility for each other underpins Aboriginal families and community. Consider your own contribution and impact on Aboriginal people, their families and communities.

- Be open about your priorities, what you need to achieve and what you can offer. Aboriginal people and communities function on the principle of reciprocity or exchange for mutual benefit and are generally willing to support others achieving their goals.
- Make sure that there is real benefit for Aboriginal people and communities.
- Do not promise anything that you cannot or will not deliver.
- Admit fault or take responsibility where it applies.
- Take responsibility for making sure that engagement and consultation is appropriate.

WHEN CONSULTING:

Remember: no one person or group speaks for all members of a community or all knowledges and interests in the area.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you're consulting with the appropriate people for the given focus and context. Subject matter 'experts' can be sourced and referred to by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, however do not expect everyone to be an expert in everything. It is your responsibility to make sure that those you are engaging with have the authority to provide the required feedback or information. Failure to do this appropriately or follow local protocols can result in tension and conflict within the community.

For example, Traditional Custodians and knowledge holders will have the cultural authority to provide guidance regarding culture and cultural heritage. The appropriate people however will be determined by if and how community recognise the knowledge and cultural authority of an individual in relation to the questions being asked.

Information relating to the community more broadly however may be more appropriate coming from other individuals, particularly where:

- the issues or interest is social rather than cultural such as service delivery needs etc.
- the individual or group have the appropriate relationships, experience, and recognition for this.

Another example which comes up often across all sectors is where new identifiers are expected or compelled to speak on behalf of Aboriginal community or culture. This creates a culturally unsafe space for them and their audience, particularly where other perspectives are absent or given lower priority. Organisations tend to do this as a shortcut for community consultation with little regard for the damage to the individual and their relationships within community.

Do not shop around for support. Consult broadly including those who you know may disagree with you. There is a difference between going to a particular Elder, knowledge holder or group that is specific to your business and targeting the people and voices that you know will support your position.

'Cherry picking' or 'shopping around' for opinions is disrespectful and can be divisive within Aboriginal community. While no community or group is expected to have consensus and not all information can be acted on, it is important that you take diverse opinions into account, within the scope of your project or work. It is also important that you can explain who you consulted with and why, if you are asked.

YOU CAN'T SAY THAT!

Black Politics

Black politics is a term that is used to dismiss poor decisions and behaviours, usually from outside Aboriginal communities. Poor consultation and contracting practices tend to magnify tensions or damage relationships within Aboriginal communities creating unsafe spaces for all parties. It also impacts and interrupts the business related to the delivery of projects and programs.

Blaming the social and cultural context for any fall out, particularly when community protocols and established processes are not followed, is used to excuse the underlying issue and transfer blame to the community or specific community members. This attitude reinforces the discourse of deficit, undermines the agency of community, and silences alternative opinions and insights.

CONSIDER THIS: the social and cultural context of Aboriginal communities is complex, particularly to those outside them. These situations however can largely be avoided if you consult and engage appropriately and follow community protocol and rightways.

If you find yourself in a situation where tensions have flared: reflect on the situation, seek more information and take personal responsibility. If you hear the term 'black politics' being used, then it should be an invitation for you to seek out more information to increase your understanding of the context.

The UOW Indigenous Strategy Unit is able to provide guidance on community engagement across the University footprint and engagement principles more broadly.

COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES

Aboriginal cultures are high context. This means that Aboriginal people communicate in ways that are implied rather than explicit stated and rely on context.

The majority of non-Aboriginal Australians come from low context cultures and rely on explicit communication where information is clearly defined.

Understanding this difference is key to communicating effectively with Aboriginal people and communities.

Reflect on your own communication style. Would you consider your communication to be high context or low context?

Consider the following when communicating with Aboriginal people and communities:

- Nonverbal communication is significant. What is not said is just as important as what is said.
- Voice tone, facial expressions, eye movement and gestures are important elements of communication. Disagreement or conflict is often expressed through these nonverbal cues.
- Direct eye contact may be considered rude or disrespectful. Not giving direct eye contact does not necessarily indicate an Aboriginal person is being evasive. This generally does not come up locally. It may, however, be a consideration in some other areas and communities or with Aboriginal people who have come from other locations.
- Verbal messages are indirect. This also applies to the way questions are asked and answered. Many Aboriginal people are more likely to respond to indirect questions.
- Silence is common and should not be confused for a lack of understanding or hearing. It creates the space for people to listen to the views of others and think about what is being said before responding. Equally, silence does not mean that a person either agrees or disagrees with what is being said. It can also mean that an Aboriginal person is non-committal. Relationships and trust are the key to understanding the difference between these and creating spaces where people feel safe to communicate.
- The level of trust and commitment to a relationship determines the amount of information shared.
- An affirmative response does not necessarily mean 'Yes'. This is particularly likely if an Aboriginal person is put on the spot, confronted or asked questions. Aboriginal people have often been conditioned to respond with 'Yes', particularly to authority figures and systems. This will occur even if a person disagrees or if agreeing is not in their best interests. Be aware of this and try to avoid creating these situations.
- Communication is most effective when face-to-face. This provides an opportunity to establish trust, build relationships and read the nonverbal cues that are characteristic of communication with Aboriginal people.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Indigenous Strategy Unit

Contributors and collaborators for this booklet include:

Catherine Moyle
Pippa Burns
Jaymee Beveridge

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