Guidance Note
Acknowledgement of Indigenous Contributors

Version 1.0

29 January 2025

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to and stewardship of land, sea and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures and to their Ancestors, Elders and future leaders. Our Indigenous research partnerships are a valued and respected component of National Environmental Science Program research.

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1 Introduction

This guidance note outlines fair and appropriate acknowledgement of Indigenous contributors to the NESP Resilient Landscapes Hub ('the Hub').

The Resilient Landscapes Hub strives for genuine Indigenous participation. The Hub is committed to authentic, equitable and enduring partnerships that recognise the primacy of Indigenous Australians' obligations, rights and responsibilities to the stewardship of their traditional lands and waters. All Hub research will be co-designed, co-implemented and co-evaluated with Indigenous Australians, and Indigenous Australians will fulfil several Hub governance positions to ensure Hub activities provide tangible benefits to Indigenous Australians.

The Hub respects, values and honours the perspectives and knowledge of our Indigenous contributors. As such the value of this knowledge, and the contributions made by Indigenous contributors to the Hub must be recognised through both appropriate acknowledgement and fair and appropriate remuneration (see *Guidance Note: Remuneration of Indigenous Contributors*).

Co-authorship with Indigenous contributors is an appropriate and respectful way to recognise the input of each party into research. It ensures that research has been reviewed and agreed by Indigenous contributors before being published, and assists in the longer-term to support productive relationships and build trust between researchers and Indigenous communities. In many cases, the traditional knowledge held by Indigenous contributors is fundamental to the research being delivered, and co-authorship enables contributors to be acknowledged as subject matter experts.

2 Scope of Guidance Note

This guidance note has been developed to assist Hub staff with appropriate acknowledgement of Indigenous contributors. The guidance note outlines different options for acknowledging Indigenous contributors in order to assist staff to determine what may be appropriate. This is intended as guidance only and is not intended to replace any existing, functional arrangements.

Note: The Hub is a collaboration of multiple research providers. Please be aware that the policies of a collaborating institution will override the Hub's guidance notes where there is a difference. It is the responsibility of all Hub team members to be aware of their institution's policies and procedures.

3 Acknowledging Indigenous Contributors

As per the *AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies*, Indigenous Australians have the right to participate in research projects and processes appropriate to their skills and experiences, and to receive recognition and attribution proportionate to their contribution. This means that Indigenous contributions to research should be appropriately attributed through recognition as an author or via the acknowledgements.

3.1   Establishing Indigenous Research Agreements

Indigenous Research Agreements are a valuable tool to clearly set out the ways in which researchers and Indigenous contributors work together. In many instances, discussions to establish an agreement will identify important information that may not have been previously considered (for example, cultural considerations, site restrictions, community consultation needs, etc.). These discussions can help researchers to manage project risks while also developing productive and respectful working relationships with Indigenous contributors.

Indigenous Research Agreements often set out processes for the approval of project outputs and authorship/acknowledgement arrangements. As projects are delivered, researchers should always seek to ensure that Indigenous contributors are supported throughout the authorship and approvals processes. This may include being flexible around approval deadlines or undertaking active engagement with Indigenous contributors to ensure agreement is reached prior to publication.

NESP Resilient Landscapes Hub researchers can consult with the Hub's Indigenous Facilitation Team for assistance with establishing, negotiating or actioning agreements.

3.2   Authorship and Acknowledgement

Attribution of Indigenous contributors to Hub outputs must be by consent and should be undertaken in a culturally appropriate manner.

Reports, presentations, posters and visual media etc.

In the case of reports, presentations, posters, visual media, etc., recognition and attribution may be afforded through inclusion of the Indigenous contributor in the author list or via inclusion in the acknowledgements.

Academic journals

In the case of submissions to academic journals, recognition and attribution may be afforded through inclusion of the Indigenous Contributor in the author list or inclusion in the acknowledgements section; whichever is most appropriate. Authorship should be considered, discussed and agreed upon with the Indigenous contributor at the early stages of the project (it may be recorded in the Indigenous research agreement), revisited throughout the project, and confirmed at the end of the project.

For academic journals, Universities Australia and National Health and Medical Research Council guidelines identify an author as generally an individual who has made a significant intellectual or scholarly contribution to research and its output and agrees to be listed as an author.

While authorship conventions vary across disciplines, a significant intellectual or scholarly contribution must include one, and should include a combination of two or more, of the following:

- conception and design of the project or output
- acquisition of research data where the acquisition has required significant intellectual judgement, planning, design or input
- contribution of knowledge, where justified, including Indigenous knowledge
- analysis or interpretation of research data

- drafting* significant parts of the research output or critically revising it to contribute to its interpretation.

*Drafting is not limited to written materials and may include the formation of ideas and approaches through verbal engagement, or other means with the Indigenous contributor.

While the traditional western approaches to authorship are well recognised, there are a number of cases where authorship has been successfully attributed beyond the criteria set out above. This includes journals approving authorship by culturally important landscapes such as rivers[1] and collective groups such as Indigenous ranger teams[2].

NESP Resilient Landscapes Hub researchers are encouraged to consider how authorship can be delivered to respectfully recognise the contributors to the project. In some instances, researchers may need to consider the flexibility of publisher's specific authorship requirements prior to submission to ensure appropriate authorship can be achieved.

Acknowledgment should be extended to Indigenous contributors where the contributor has provided any of the following:

- permission to access/work on Country for the purpose of undertaking the research
- approval, agreement or contributions to the development of project outputs
- support to complete any identified activities within the project's Indigenous research agreement/s.
- any other contributions that have been instrumental in the delivery of the research.

Contributions of infrastructure, resources, facilities or hospitality used in the research should be recognised in the acknowledgements.

3.3 Attribution to individuals or collectives

Depending on what is most appropriate, contributions may be attributed to individuals or collectives. Preferred attribution style should be discussed with the individual contributors and consensus achieved with all contributors.

- **Individual attribution/authorship:** used to recognise the contribution of an individual.
- **Group attribution/authorship:** used to recognise the contribution of a group (e.g. association, committee, corporation) whose individual members wish to be named. For example, the Aboriginal Corporation or Traditional Owner/Custodian group would be listed as the author, with individual members named in a footnote.
- **Anonymous group authorship:** used to recognise a group where the individual members do not wish to be named, in which case the group is listed as an author.

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[1] Martuwarra, River of Life, Poelina, A., McDuffie, M. and Perdrisat, M., 2023. Martuwarra Fitzroy River Watershed: One society, one river law. *PLOS Water*, *2*(9), p.e0000104.

[2] Ngururrpa Rangers, Sunfly, C., Schubert, A., Reid, A.M., Leseberg, N., Parker, L. and Paltridge, R., 2024. Potential threats and habitat of the night parrot on the Ngururrpa Indigenous Protected Area. *Wildlife Research*, *51*(10).

3.4   Culturally appropriate recognition

3.4.1   Use of terms of respect

Acknowledgement of Indigenous contributors should be done in a respectful and culturally appropriate manner, including use of the appropriate cultural terms of respect where applicable. Terms of respect may include the use of 'Aunty' or 'Uncle' when referring to Elders, or 'Traditional Owner/Traditional Custodian'. Before using a cultural term of respect, it is important to clarify with the individual as to how they prefer to be cited.

- **Elder:** An Elder is an Indigenous Australian who is considered by their community as a custodian of knowledge and lore. As a custodian of knowledge, they have the right to pass this knowledge on, if appropriate. An Elder may be referred to as 'Uncle' or 'Aunty' to show respect, but it should not be assumed that this is how an Elder would prefer to be addressed.

- **Traditional Owner/Traditional Custodian:** A Traditional Owner/Traditional Custodian is an Indigenous Australian who is a member of a local descent group having certain rights and responsibilities in relation to a tract of land or area of sea. The terms 'Traditional Owner' and 'Traditional Custodian' are at times used interchangeably. Terminology used is often guided by state/territory definitions and so it is recommended to consult local usage and the Indigenous community for the preferred term.

3.4.2   Use of singular and plural terms

The use of singular or plural terms is appropriate in different situations (e.g. people versus peoples). The use of plurals (e.g. peoples, Nations, cultures, languages) recognises differences when speaking about collectives.

For example, 'Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander *People*' refers to a homogenous group, that is, all the people of Indigenous Australian descent. 'Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander *Peoples*' refers to the many distinct Nations, clans, languages and cultural groups of people who are descended from Indigenous Australians.

3.4.3   Use of broad and specific terms

The use of specific terms, such as the name of a community (e.g. Whadjuk or Noongar), is generally considered more respectful than the use of broader terms such as 'Aboriginal'. Language use, however, depends upon circumstance and the preference of individuals and communities. Thus it is important to clarify with individuals and communities how they prefer to be cited. Using specific terms for Nations, language and/or clan groups is usually more accurate as they are geographically specific. For example, 'We are standing on Whadjuk Noongar land' is generally a more accurate and respectful statement than 'We are standing on Aboriginal land'.

3.4.4   Use of an Indigenous contributor's name

Indigenous contributors may have several different names including a European name, traditional name (sometimes known as a bush name) or kinship names (sometimes referred to as skin names). It is important for researchers to discuss with Indigenous contributors how they wish to be listed as an author or acknowledged in the text, as it may not be appropriate to use particular names in publications or project outputs. Where Indigenous authors have been involved in previous publications, researchers should use these as examples to discuss with contributors and seek a consistent naming approach, where possible.

3.4.5 Spelling

The spelling that local Traditional Owners/Custodians, Elders or community members use to refer to their community or language group should be used. Indigenous Australian cultures are oral-based traditions, and therefore spelling of Indigenous words vary. For example, Noongar, Nyungar, Nyoongar, Nyoongah, Nyungah, Nyugah are all variations of spelling used in southern Western Australia. Sometimes, as is the case in southern Western Australia, community consensus has been reached on spelling – in this case 'Noongar' – and so this spelling would be used to represent all Traditional Owners/Custodians across the Noongar Nation. Where such processes have been undertaken and community consensus has been reached, the agreed spelling should be used.

Permission should be sought to use language in publications. In many instances, there will be multiple names used for a specific entity (species, object, artefact or place). Consideration should be given as to whether the use of a specific language name is appropriate for the scale of research, particularly when research is being conducted with multiple Indigenous contributors (individuals or groups) who may reference the entity differently.

3.5 Acknowledgement of Country

The inclusion of an *Acknowledgement of Country* statement in work produced by the Hub is a demonstration of respect to the Traditional Owners/Custodians of the land or sea Country where research was conducted, and recognises the continuing connection Indigenous Australians have to Country. See *Guidance Note: Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country* for further details.

4 Related Documents/Links

AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

Authorship - A guide supporting the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research – Universities Australia and National Health and Medical Research Council

5 Revision History

Version	Date	Hub team member	Key changes and notes
0.1	23 June 2023	**Haylee D'Agui** Senior Research Officer	Drafted
0.1	23 June 2023	**Oliver Tester** Indigenous Research Facilitator	Revisions to text, addition of new sections.
0.2	30 June 2023	**Stephen van Leeuwen** Senior Indigenous Facilitator	Revisions to text, addition of new sections.
0.2	28 October 2024	**Haylee D'Agui** Senior Research Officer	Revisions to text, to address feedback from Stephen van Leeuwen.

0.3	01 November 2024	**Oliver Tester** Indigenous Research Facilitator	Revisions to text, addition of new sections.
0.3	12 December 2024	**Stephen van Leeuwen** Senior Indigenous Facilitator	Minor revisions.
1.0	29 January 2025	**Research Executive Committee**	Approved.