QUEENSLAND WATER MODELLING NETWORK

Review of Protocols for Engagement with First Nations Peoples

A literature review of engagement guidelines and frameworks in water management

Queensland Government

The Queensland Water Modelling Network (QWMN) is an initiative of the Queensland Government that aims to improve the state's capacity to model its surface water and groundwater resources and their quality. The QWMN is led by the Department of Environment and Science with key links across industry, research and government.

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Executive Summary

The Queensland Water Modelling Network (QWMN) is improving the state's capacity to model its water resources and their quality, by providing the tools, information, and collaborative platforms to support best practice use of water models and the uptake of their results by policymakers and natural resource managers. QWMN aims to strengthen and reframe existing relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples by establishing lasting and authentic partnerships. This is essential for successful engagement that would create significant cultural and scientific benefits for the QWMN.

The document has been developed to be used as a resource to inform QWMN's focused engagement initiatives. It reviews the relevant literature available between November 2021 and February 2022 including engagement guidelines within the Department of Environment and Science (DES), guidelines and frameworks developed by other state governments, journal articles on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples water management practices and engagement in water management. Additionally, the relevant national and state legislation and international protocols were also reviewed. All of the resources consulted are publicly available online.

Key findings and gaps in knowledge have been discussed in addition to summarising the principles of engagement with First Nations peoples.

Explanation of Use of Terms

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples

An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person is a person: of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent; identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person; and is accepted as such by the community in which they live or have lived, regardless of skin colour (AIATSIS n.d.a.).

The word 'peoples' recognises the collective dimension and the diversity of cultures and identities across Australia (AHCR n.d.). This is affirmed by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

First Nations peoples

A collective term for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Island peoples.

The relevant First Nations peoples

The Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples with interests in a place.

Traditional knowledge

Information based on Aboriginal tradition or Island custom.

Traditional Owners or Traditional Custodians

The bloodline descendants to the original people from a particular area. They have a connection to that particular area by birthrights, handed down to them from their ancestors (QPWS 2016).

Country

The term is often used by First Nations peoples to describe the lands, waterways, and seas to which they are connected. The term contains complex ideas about lore, place, custom, language, spiritual belief, cultural practice, material sustenance, family and identity (Kingsley et al. 2013).

Connection to Country

'Connection to Country' refers to complex layers of meaning associated with traditional lands and waters, identity and belonging, and has associated spiritual, social, cultural, environmental, and economic elements.

Engagement

A sustained relationship between groups of people working towards shared goals; a deliberative and negotiated process, which moves beyond information giving or consultation (Hunt 2013).

Introduction

The Queensland Water Modelling Network (QWMN) is improving the state's capacity to model its surface and groundwater resources and their quality, by providing the tools, information, and collaborative platforms to support best practice use of water models and the uptake of their results by policymakers and natural resource managers. Water models are developed and used in Queensland to inform decision making and program design and implementation across a range of water policy, planning, and management issues.

QWMN recognises the value of First Nations peoples' knowledge and connection to country, and the importance of building authentic partnerships. QWMN aims to strengthen and reframe existing relationships through the implementation of focused initiatives, strategies and action plans that assist with the co-design and co-delivery of work with First Nations people guided by several overarching initiatives including engagement, agreement making, recruitment and retention, cultural capability, and procurement.

This document is a review of the relevant literature available, undertaken over 10-weeks to inform the development of guidelines aimed at improving engagement with First Nations peoples and supporting the incorporation of their priorities and perspectives in QWMN's operations. While intended to be a resource, this document makes no pretence at being a definitive guide.

1. Purpose of Engagement

The literature review is the initial step of QWMN's focused initiative aimed at strengthening and reframing existing relationships and creating new strategic partnerships. It will be used as a key resource to understanding best practice approaches for engagement with First Nations peoples. Establishing lasting and authentic partnerships with First Nations peoples is essential for successful engagement that would create significant cultural and scientific benefits by encouraging discussions about ideas for new opportunities (Queensland Government 2021a).

Informed by this review, the future engagement protocols will be based on the principles of shared agency and mutual benefits, consistent with the Department of Environment and Science's Gurra Gurra Framework 2020-2026 (DES 2021a). This includes:

- working in partnership from the earliest stages of a project
- working together to define outcomes and benefits
- empowering First Nations leadership
- structurally enabling co-governance and co-stewardship
- respecting community-led decision-making processes and timeframes
- exploring new ways of working through co-design and co-delivery.

2. Context

2.1 Histories

Before engaging with First Nations people, it is important to have an understanding and appreciation of their history, culture, customs, and relationship with governments. This includes historical struggles as well as the current and ongoing concerns of First Nations peoples.

First Nations peoples have lived in Australia for thousands of generations. It is important to acknowledge and address the historical injustices and inequities experienced by Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples since European settlement (AHCR 2012). Simultaneously, it is essential to acknowledge the strengths and resilience shown by First Nations peoples, cultures, and communities in the face of discrimination, and to celebrate the continued significance of their contributions.

First Nations peoples have valued and used water extensively before European settlement and continue to do so. Water is an essential part of Country and is considered an inseparable part of the living landscape. First Nations peoples have a unique and strong connection to land, sea, and waterways and the management of Country is underpinned by their complex value systems. In their view, land, water, natural resources, and people form a connected system that needs to be managed holistically (DNRME 2019). Water is the link because it flows across and connects humans to nature. It is vital for many aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples life with a range of cultural, spiritual, social, environmental, and economic values associated with both ground and surface water sources (COAG 2017).

For over 65,000 years that First Nations peoples have lived in Australia, water has played a critical role for survival and its significance in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples culture and identity. First Nations peoples have lived by and looked after waterways for thousands of generations; their indispensable knowledge and perspectives are needed to achieve sustainable water management (Queensland Government 2021b).

2.2 Policy context

Table 1: List of relevant international standards, national and state policies and legislation

International	The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)	The Declaration recognises the importance of consulting with Indigenous peoples on decisions affecting them and that respect for Indigenous knowledge, cultures and traditional practices contributes to sustainable and equitable development and proper management of the environment. It provides an international expression of best practices required in engaging with Indigenous people (UN 2007)[1].
Australia	*Native Title Act 1993* (Cth)	A law passed by the Australian Parliament that recognises the rights and interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in land and waters according to their traditional lores and customs. This Act binds the Crown in right of the Commonwealth, of each of the States, of the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory. This Act extends to each external Territory, to the coastal sea of Australia and of each external Territory, and to any waters over which Australia asserts sovereign rights under the Seas and Submerged Lands Act 1973.
Queensland	*Native Title Act 1993* (Qld)	In accordance with the Commonwealth Native Title Act, this act validates past acts, and intermediate period acts, invalidated because of the existence of native title and confirms certain rights; and ensures that Queensland law is consistent with standards set by the Commonwealth Native Title Act for future dealings affecting native title.
	Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld)	The main objects of the Act are to protect and promote human rights; help build a culture in the Queensland public sector that respects and promotes human rights; helps promote a dialogue about the nature, meaning and scope of human rights. The Act requires the government to consider human rights in all decision-making and action, and only limit human rights in certain circumstances and after careful consideration. Government departments and public service employees have a responsibility to respect, protect and promote the human rights of individuals. They must act in a way that is compatible with human rights obligations when delivering services and interacting with the community. This means fairer laws, policies and practices in the government's day-to-day dealings with the community.
	Water Act 2000 (Qld)	The Act provides for the sustainable management of water and the management of impacts on underground water, and other purposes. It states that sustainable water management recognises the interests of Aboriginal people and their connection to water, among other things.

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[1] Australia endorsed the UNDRIP in 2009 and has since committed to take actions to implement the declaration and promote Indigenous People's enjoyment of rights in an equal basis.

Queensland	*Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003* (Qld)	The main purpose of the Cultural Heritage Acts is to provide effective recognition, protection, and conservation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage. The Cultural Heritage Acts: • provide blanket protection of areas and objects of traditional, customary, and archaeological significance • recognise the key role of Traditional Owners in cultural heritage matters • establish practical and flexible processes for dealing with cultural heritage in a timely manner.
	Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Act 2003 (Qld)	Every person in the Department of Environment and Science has a duty of care under the Queensland Cultural Heritage Acts. This requires recognising that First Nations peoples are the custodians and knowledge holders of their heritage.
	Gurra Gurra framework 2020-2026	The Gurra Gurra framework is designed to help the Department of Environment and Science (DES) to reframe relationships with First Nations peoples. It demonstrates the department's commitment to create permanent and productive relationships with First Nations peoples, to work in partnership to build a strong and shared future (DES 2021a). Informed by this literature review, the principles and values of the Gurra Gurra framework will underpin the development of engagement protocols for QWMN, which should be regularly monitored, reviewed, and adjusted as needed.

3. Research Findings

The Australian Government considers that best practice engagement includes:
- identifying and acknowledging all relevant affected First Nations peoples and communities
- committing to early engagement at the pre-referral stage
- building trust through early and ongoing communication for the duration of the project, including approvals, implementation, and future management
- setting appropriate timeframes for consultation, and
- demonstrating cultural awareness.

(Australian Government 2016)

3.1 Key resources

Resources that were consulted during the literature review which may be of assistance for the development of engagement guidelines include:

Table 2: Existing literature and frameworks that provide lessons about engagement with First Nations people.

	RESOURCE	FOCUS
1.	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples	A comprehensive international instrument to affirm, advance, and protect the rights of Indigenous peoples. It establishes a universal framework of minimum standards for the survival, dignity, security, and well-being of Indigenous peoples across the world (UN 2007).
2.	Free, Prior and Informed Consent of Indigenous Peoples	Explanation of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC). The document also provides a list of normative standards and further reading regarding FPIC (OHCHR 2013).
3.	Gurra Gurra framework 2020-2026	Designed to help DES to reframe relationships with First Nations peoples by holding Country and people at the centre of everything, from policies and programs to service delivery (DES 2021a).
4.	Jawun – Knowledge & Resource Hub	A knowledge and resource hub providing a platform for DES staff to learn, explore and discuss a wide range of First Nations topics and issues, develop skills to build strong, permanent relationships with First Nations peoples (DES n.d.).
5.	A Roadmap for Engagement with First Nations People – Integrating knowledge systems into the Queensland River Management Framework	The roadmap provides guidance for the integration of Traditional Knowledge with the Department of Environment and Science's scientific understanding of river management. It aims to establish a common framework to promote partnership with First Nations people from development through to implementation and evaluation (DES 2021b).

	RESOURCE	FOCUS
6.	Protocols for consultation and negotiation with Aboriginal people	Background information that may be used as a general guide when consulting with Aboriginal peoples in Queensland. Information about useful contacts is also provided (DSDSATSIP 1999a).
7.	Protocols for consultation and negotiation with Torres Strait Islander people	Background information that may be used as a general guide when consulting with Torres Strait Islander peoples in Queensland. Information about useful contacts is also provided (DSDSATSIP 1999b).
8.	Water connections – Aboriginal people's water needs in the Queensland Murray-Darling basin	Information about Aboriginal people's connection to water and partnership with Aboriginal people for Condamine and Balonne and Border Rivers and Moonie water plans – including engagement, outcomes, and lessons (DNRME 2019).
9.	Traditional Knowledge Guidelines: Biodiscovery Act 2004	Practical information and best practice advice for engaging in a culturally appropriate way with First Nations peoples when seeking permission to use their traditional knowledge (Queensland Government 2021a).
10.	How did Aboriginal peoples manage their water resources	Easy-to-understand background information about the significance of water for Aboriginal people and traditional management practices (Queensland Government 2021b).
11.	Traditional Owner and Aboriginal Community Engagement Framework	Aboriginal empowerment and self-determination centred framework, discussing necessary protocols and mechanisms for meaningful engagement between the State of Victoria, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning staff and Traditional Owners (DELWP 2019).
12.	Communicating with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Audiences	Recommendations for effective communication with First Nations audiences. Information about communicating face-to-face, use of silence, body language, communication through different media, and terminology (PM&C 2016).
13.	Australia's First People	Easy-to-understand general background information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia. Information about appropriate language and terminology (AIATSIS n.d.b).
14.	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Engagement Toolkit	The toolkit provides general information regarding engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It includes information about recognition, acknowledgements, history, visual media, and writing, engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples with disabilities, FPIC, language, access, and consultation (AHCR 2012).
15.	Engage Early – Guidance for proponents on best practice Indigenous engagement for environmental assessments under the EPBC Act	Guidance for project proponents on when Indigenous communities should be consulted. Information regarding the Department of the Environment's expectations on how Indigenous engagement should occur during the environmental assessment process under the EPBC Act (Australian Government 2016).

	RESOURCE	FOCUS
16.	Engaging with Traditional Owners	The principle of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent for engagement with Traditional Owners (AIATSIS 2020).
17.	Opening Doors Through Partnerships: Practical approaches to developing genuine partnerships that address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community needs	Based on multiple case studies of partnerships, the paper explores the principles underpinning successful partnerships. It addresses and identifies requirements for genuine partnerships at different stages of partnership development, operation, and management as well as resources and practical support required to enable successful, genuine partnerships (Burton 2012).
18.	Engaging with Indigenous Australia – exploring the conditions for effective relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities	A research-based overview of how engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities can be developed and sustained. With a research emphasis on government engagement at the regional level, the article assesses conditions that enable effective engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and considers how these conditions can be enhanced (Hunt 2013).
19.	National Water Initiative (NWI) Policy - Engaging Indigenous peoples in water planning and management	A module to support the development and implementation of inclusive water planning and management processes that support Indigenous social, spiritual, and customary objectives consistent with the National Water Initiative (COAG 2017).
20.	Our Knowledge, Our Way (OKOW) Guidelines	Indigenous-led approaches and best practice guidelines from Australian experience to support strengthening, sharing, learning, and using of Traditional knowledge for land and sea management (Woodward et al. 2020).
21.	Aboriginal Water Knowledge and Connections	Thorough information regarding relevant legislation for Indigenous representation in water management, the value of water to Aboriginal people, cultural flow and gaps in knowledge (Moggridge 2010).
22.	Effects of changes in water availability on Indigenous people of the Murray-Darling Basin: a scoping study	A scoping study on the impacts of changes in the availability of water on Indigenous people in the Murray-Darling Basin. The literature review synthesises the knowledge available in the social science, legal and policy literature and identified knowledge gaps (Jackson et al. 2010).
23.	Compartmentalising Culture: the articulation and consideration of Indigenous values in water resource management	The article discusses the application of value concepts in water resource management with the example of consideration and expression of Indigenous values in an environmental planning exercise for Daly River in the Northern Territory (Jackson 2006).
24.	Watering Country: Aboriginal partnerships with environmental water managers of the Murray–Darling Basin, Australia	Jackson and Nias (2017) explore the advent of collaboration and partnerships between Aboriginal organisations and water managers in the Murray–Darling Basin to enhance the quality of wetlands and share the benefits more equitably. The constraints and barriers are discussed along with the conditions that have laid the grounds for the emerging co-management of water.

	RESOURCE	FOCUS
25.	Indigenous water knowledge and values in an Australasian context	Moggridge and Thompson (2021) identify a need for clear and appropriate engagement with Indigenous people around water, gaps in water planning due to lack of rights and policy, and barriers owing to lack of guidance and training for Indigenous people engaging with water policy.
26.	Sustainability crises are crises of relationship: Learning from Nyikina ecology and ethics.	A case study from Nyikina Country in northern Australia is used as a basis to demonstrate how the ethical principles embedded in an Indigenous hydro-ecological knowledge system can help reframe, and address, sustainability crises as crises of relationships (Milgin et al. 2020).

3.2 Key Findings

3.2.1 What worked

- Nation-based rather than town-based meetings help to convey that the First Nations peoples have ownership over the engagement (DELWP 2019; DNRME 2019; Smyth et al. 2004).
- Establishing sustainable, long-term relationships based on trust and respect with accessible, ongoing communication (Burton 2012).
- Building on existing established friendships and networks with the relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples where possible (DSDSATSIP 1999a).
- Having a clear framework that is flexible and adaptable for local conditions and decision-making processes to facilitate a place-based approach (Bauman and Smyth cited in Hunt 2013; DSDSATSIP 1999b; Smyth et al. 2004).
- Long time frames so First Nations people can set time lines compatible with their cultural protocols (Smyth et al. 2004; Queensland Government 2021a).
- Establishing a common purpose (DSDSATSIP 1999a). Clarity and shared agreement around priorities, approaches, and desired outcomes (DNRME 2019).
- Transparency about achievable, realistic goals and outcomes (DNRME 2019).
- Providing resources and practical support required to enable genuine partnerships (Burton 2012)

3.2.2 What did not work

- Staff working on erroneous assumptions about the First Nations community, its customs, its governance, and who can represent its views. Lack of recognition of the diversity within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (Hunt 2013).
- Inadequate participation and sense of joint ownership by relevant First Nations communities (Hunt 2013).
- Not organising Nation-based meetings. Physical distances complicate communication and engagement.
- Not sustaining contact with the community. Hurried, one-off 'consultations' organised without Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples input into their design (AHCR 2012).
- Not communicating government processes and limitations transparently and clearly to the relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community from the beginning causes confusion and frustration (Carter cited in Hunt 2013).

3.2.3 Principles of engagement

3.2.3.1 Identifying relevant First Nations peoples

Identifying the relevant First Nations peoples, communities and representative organisations is necessary for an effective engagement process (Queensland Government 2021a). This is especially important where there is more than one relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. It is vital to identify custodians with customary authority to speak for Country about the intellectual property (DSDSATSIP 1999b). The local First Nations organisation, land council or native title representative bodies can be contacted for assistance with identifying and contacting the correct First Nations peoples as well as for guidance on cultural customs (Australian Government 2016).

Coordinating and collaborating on engagement efforts with other units and other government departments will help to avoid consultation fatigue and streamline engagement by building on existing relationships. It will also build our knowledge and organisational agility to know what other business units are doing.

3.2.3.2 Early engagement

Respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples knowledge, culture and Country are critical for the development of trust and relationship-building, which underpin strong partnerships. Taking the time and interest to build relationships will reinforce positive experiences in knowledge-sharing (Queensland Government 2021a). Cultural protocols must be respected, to enhance trust in sharing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge. It is important to ensure engagement practices and approaches are culturally sensitive, respectful, and flexible (Austrade n.d.).

Engagements should have a collaborative approach, with continuous, extensive communication and negotiation so that collaborative learning increases over time. In the past, First Nations people have often felt that governments have embarked on only symbolic consultation to support a foregone Government decision (DSDSATSIP 1999a). Consultation and negotiation are crucial to build more equal relationships that underlie successful engagement.

Consultation requires time and an effective system for communicating among the relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. First Nations peoples should be able to participate through their own freely chosen representatives or other institutions (AIATSIS 2020). The inclusion of a gender perspective and the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are essential, in addition to the participation of children and youth as appropriate (AHCR 2012).

3.2.3.3 Free, Prior and Informed Consent

Any engagement processes need to be based on the principles of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). FPIC is a specific right under the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP article 19) (UN 2007). It protects the rights of First Nations peoples to participate in decision-making processes that affect them and is considered integral to the exercise of the right to self-determination. First Nations peoples are entitled to make independent decisions in a manner suitable to their cultural needs, free from intimidation, time constraints or coercion (OHCHR 2013).

FPIC is important for sharing knowledge. FPIC is not merely informing and getting consent, it is about effective and meaningful participation to ensure the best decision making for sustainable outcomes. Gaining meaningful consent requires an FPIC approach based on mutual understanding, open, ongoing, and authentic relationships. Respectful engagement and the recognition of community protocols, customary lore and practice are essential to building trust.

FPIC should be sought sufficiently in advance of initiation or authorisation of activities, being mindful of First Nations peoples' decision-making processes. FPIC ensures that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are involved in the process at all stages. It minimises risks (such as disputes or other forms of conflict), establishes trust-based relationships and provides for a sustainable decision process. FPIC is an ongoing process where consent decisions can be revisited and it is important to be prepared to adapt to meet the needs of First Nations peoples (AIATSIS 2020; OHCHR 2013; Queensland Government 2021a; Woodward et al. 2020).

Consent is not fixed; even if a best-practice FPIC process is followed, relevant First Nations peoples may not grant consent (Queensland Government 2021c).

3.3 Tips for engagement

First Nations people are diverse, and each community has different protocols. Local cultural protocols must be clarified before engaging with the relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. There is no 'one size fits all' approach to engaging with First Nations peoples but some essential things should be generally kept in mind. The following information is general in nature and may apply differently in each community. It is to be used in conjunction with any community protocols. Protocols for consultation that First Nations communities have developed should be followed as closely as possible.

Table 3: Common general information available from the literature review for consideration during engagement with First Nations peoples.

Engage early and flexibly	- Find existing established friendships and networks that exist between other government agencies and the relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. This can help initiate engagement and avoid consultation fatigue (DNRME 2019; DSDSATSIP 1999a). - Establish contact early once relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have been identified. - Work with First Nations people to plan and organise an initial introductory meeting to seek the advice of key people on how meetings should be run, before holding meetings with the broader community. As the first formal part of the engagement, this would provide an opportunity to display we are listening, and that First Nations people have ownership over the engagement (AHC 2002). - Respect customary protocols for running meetings and discussions. - Nation-based meetings (Smyth et al. 2004). - Start FPIC discussions (UN 2007). - Ensure First Nations peoples are informed and receive timely responses about potential, existing and future engagement processes (Australian Government 2016).
Time	- In Western culture, emphasis is placed on time to meet deadlines and schedules. Time is perceived differently in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, as more value is placed on family responsibilities and community relationships (QPWS 2016). - Consider allocating flexible consultation times. - Incorporate timeframes compatible with the cultural protocols and decision-making processes of First Nations communities. Articulate and explain any time constraints (Australian Government 2016). - Community representatives can't always decide on the spot. Allow adequate time in your scheduling for First Nations people to make decisions according to their cultural protocols (DNRME 2019). - Be prepared to rearrange consultations due to sensitive issues.
Managing expectations	Informing the community about what the government or organisation can deliver on and what they are limited to with regards to the existing legislation is critical to having an honest and transparent relationship.
Respecting gender roles	Cultural protocol may require men and women to sit, meet or discuss separately (AHCR 2012; PM&C 2016).

Communication	• When giving a community presentation, research shows that First Nations communities are likely to respond better to group discussions, diagrammatical, or PowerPoint presentations (PM&C 2016). • Try to interact with the community rather than just give a speech. Question or discussion time is always a good way of doing this. • In Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, extended periods of silence during conversations are considered the 'norm' and are valued. Silent pauses are used to listen, show respect or consensus. The positive use of silence should not be misinterpreted as a lack of understanding, agreement, or urgent concerns. Be respectful and provide the people with adequate time (AHCR 2012; PM&C 2016).
Sensitive issues	• Times of cultural significance such as initiations, deaths, funerals, and mourning ('Sorry Business') may mean that it is not appropriate for a consultation to take place at that time (QPWS 2016). • Sustained contact with the community will enhance the likelihood of awareness of any issues within the community that may affect the consultation process (Hunt 2013).
Language	• Using respectful and inclusive language and terminology is an essential component of strengthening relationships. • English might not be the first spoken language (AHCR 2012). • When meeting with First Nations people, use accessible language, preferably plain English. Avoid the use of acronyms and jargon (DELWP 2019; Queensland Government 2021a). • Arrangements might need to be made for a community interpreter or translator to be present at meetings. This needs to be organised well before entering the community (DSDSATSIP 1999b). • Elaborate on responses during question time. Rather than using short answers such as 'yes' or 'no', try explaining what you mean as much as possible to enhance both participation and understanding (DSDSATSIP 1999a).
Eye contact and body language	• For some (but not all) First Nations people, avoidance of eye contact is customarily a gesture of respect. Making direct eye contact can be viewed as being rude, disrespectful, or even aggressive (AHCR 2012). • For some First Nations communities, direct eye contact denotes respect, however, if you are yet to obtain this, it can be viewed as threatening (Queensland Government 2021a). • Avoid cross-gender eye contact unless the person initiates it and is comfortable. • In some places, direct eye contact, particularly with elderly male members of the community is viewed as highly inappropriate. To convey polite respect, the appropriate approach would be to avert or lower your eyes in conversation (DSDSATSIP 1999a). • Avoid wearing sunglasses, this is seen as disrespectful and potentially untrustworthy (AHCR 2012).
Privacy and confidentiality	• Ensure that respect for First Nations people, and community privacy and confidentiality is maintained by everyone involved in collecting and storing information (DSDSATSIP 1999a).

Dress	• It may not always be culturally appropriate to wear whatever you want in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (AHCR 2012). • Once the relevant First Nations peoples have been identified, the local First Nations organisation, land council or native title representative bodies can be contacted for guidance on cultural customs (Australian Government 2016)
Visiting Country	• Nation-based meetings instil a sense of ownership for attendees at meetings (DNRME 2019; Smyth et al. 2004). • Acknowledge the Traditional Owners and pay respect to their Elders, past, present and emerging (DELWP 2019). • It is important to ask community members where you can and cannot walk as there may be men's areas and women's areas. • Seek permission before walking around the community. • Seek permission before taking photographs of the community and surrounding areas as there may be areas that are considered sacred sites (AHCR 2012; PM&C 2016). • It is important to seek permission from Traditional Owners before taking a memento (e.g. rock, shells, or any other object) from Country (QPWS 2016).
Give and take	• Honesty and openness with communities are key to a successful engagement. Point to something they will get out of engagement, however, do not make promises to the community that cannot be kept (DSDSATSIP 1999a). • Providing simple and healthy food during meetings can be a good way to give back to the community as well as maximise their participation during an engagement. Avoid offering unhealthy food options such as tea and biscuits (AHCR 2012). • Sharing reports once they are finalised, as well as any pictures that are taken, are a good way for communities to see that their effort was worth the time (Queensland Government 2021a).
Feedback	• Establish mechanisms to receive feedback and complaints.

3.4 Knowledge gaps and challenges

- How to overcome the persistent challenges in endeavouring to flexibly engage on the ground in a whole-of-government approach.
- How to engage effectively where an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community is in conflict, has highly fractured governance or has weak leadership.

4. Consultation List

- Alluvium Consulting
  - o Tony Weber, National Leader, Catchment Modelling

- Consultant - Greg Claydon

- CSIRO
  - o Dr Mark Baird, Team Leader, Coastal Biogeochemical Modelling

- Department of Environment and Science
  - o Paul Bikaunieks, Senior Project Officer, Landscape Sciences
  - o Joanne Burton, Principal Scientist, Landscape Sciences
  - o Dr Paul Lawrence, Executive Director, Science Delivery and Knowledge
  - o Trent Munns, Project Officer, Landscape Sciences
  - o Stephen Potts, Director, Landscape Sciences
  - o Jenny Riches, Program Manager, Landscape Sciences
  - o John Ruffini, Director, Water Planning and Coastal Sciences

- Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water
  - o Ian Gordon, Director, Water, Divisional Support

- Department of Resources
  - o Peter Noonan, Manager, Reef, Natural Resource Program

- Department of Seniors Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships
  - o John Schiavo, A/Director, Cultural Heritage
  - o Craig Trindall, A/Manager, Cultural Heritage Unit.

- University of Southern Queensland
  - o Associate Professor Celmara Pocock, Director, Centre for Heritage and Culture

- Water Technology
  - o Tahlia Rossi, Planner

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