



Document Details

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PURPOSE

AIMS recognises that greater research impact and value can be created, and new insights gained when AIMS science is interwoven with the knowledge, perspectives, customary practices, capacity, and capability of this country’s original marine scientists – the Traditional Owners of land and sea Country.

The AIMS Indigenous Partnerships Plan was endorsed by AIMS Council in December 2019. It established a tiered system of engagement expectations in AIMS projects. Strategy 2030 sets a target for 90% of AIMS projects on sea Country to meet at least tier Silver, and 10% to meet tier Gold. This policy sets out the underpinning principles and values that guide the implementation of the Indigenous Partnerships Plan and the Indigenous Partnerships Procedure.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all AIMS research that is conducted on or related to Australia’s marine estate. The underpinning principles and values in this policy may also be applied to AIMS international projects and the involvement of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities outside Australia, on a case by case basis. This policy applies to AIMS staff (including casual and temporary staff), Council members, students, collaborators, and visitors including external contractors and those who utilise AIMS’ facilities.

POLICY STATEMENT

AIMS acknowledges that Traditional Owners have inherent rights and responsibilities and an enduring spiritual and cultural connection with their land and sea Country and all within it. These rights, responsibilities and spiritual and cultural connections are recognised in international instruments that have been adopted by the Australian Government (eg United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples), and increasingly in Australian domestic legal, regulatory and management frameworks (eg Native title, Indigenous Protected Areas, co-management arrangements in state and Commonwealth marine parks, AIATSIS Code of ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research).

AIMS recognises that its mission is strongly aligned with Traditional Owners’ responsibility for sea Country. AIMS will establish genuine research partnerships with Traditional Owners in areas of mutual interest to build knowledge that supports the sustainable use, protection and management of Australia’s marine estate for future generations, according to AIMS values and the following underpinning principles.

UNDERPINNING PRINCIPLES

Traditional Owners are more than Stakeholders

The inherent rights and interests of Traditional Owners extend beyond the rights normally attributed to stakeholders (such as government, industry, and the general community). AIMS recognises that Traditional Owner rights and interests have continued for millennia and are inseparably tied to their country (land and sea).

Traditional Owners are the original custodians of land and sea Country

AIMS recognises that the interests, culture and traditions (lore) of Traditional Owners have existed for millennia. They are inalienable and inseparable from their land and sea Country.

AIMS recognises the right of Traditional Owners to be decision makers on their Country, through procedures to obtain Free Prior and Informed Consent.

Recognising the enduring spiritual and cultural connections to and inherent responsibilities for their land and sea Country, AIMS acknowledges that Traditional Owners have a central role in deciding which activities can be conducted on their sea Country. AIMS will seek Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) for all projects that have a strong intersection with sea Country or Traditional Owner interests. For example, this may include projects that involve the collection or movement of samples, deployment of instruments, conduct of manipulative experiments, or operation within a culturally sensitive area. The scope of FPIC sought will include the use, storage and disposal of all samples collected. AIMS will abide by the decisions of Traditional Owners and will ensure that the scope of projects and use of any samples collected remains within the scope of FPIC granted. A project that would normally require FPIC may only proceed without FPIC in emergencies or extraordinary circumstances, for example after a ship grounding, oil spill, or coral bleaching event, or if directed by AIMS' minister.

AIMS will maintain best practice standards in research ethics.

AIMS will apply the AIMS Responsible Conduct of Research Framework, and the AIATSIS Ethical Research framework when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including obtaining formal research ethics review where required.

AIMS will engage with First Nations people through their cultural governance structures.

When engaging with Traditional Owners, AIMS will identify and engage with appropriate Indigenous governance structures to ensure that consultation occurs with parties that have the cultural authority for the relevant Traditional Owner group.

AIMS recognises that Traditional Owner interests endure in Samples collected by AIMS

AIMS recognises Traditional Owners' enduring cultural and spiritual connection to Country extends to Samples collected from their sea Country, including historical collections (eg the coral core archive). Samples held in perpetuity by AIMS remain part of sea Country and are subject to the scope of the FPIC originally granted.

AIMS acknowledges the scientific standing of Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property

AIMS acknowledges that Traditional Ecological Knowledge and other Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property held by Traditional Owners is part of a valid knowledge system as is western science. AIMS will only incorporate Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property into projects in accordance with the AIMS Intellectual Property and Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property Policy and associated Procedure.

AIMS will inform Traditional Owners about AIMS research on their Country

AIMS will share knowledge and results from AIMS research (including with collaborators) conducted on sea Country using culturally appropriate communication products.

AIMS will appropriately resource implementation of this policy and related procedures.

AIMS will allocate sufficient resources to support appropriate engagement with Traditional Owners to ensure compliance with this policy and the Indigenous Partnerships Plan.

AIMS will hold partners and collaborators to the same standard

AIMS will ensure that collaborators and users of AIMS facilities comply with this policy and related procedures.

AIMS commits to continual improvement to this policy and related procedures

Recognising that government agencies are currently in the process of repositioning and strengthening the role of Traditional Owners in Australia for example through implementing policy reforms and targets in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, AIMS will update this policy and related procedures from time to time to maintain best practice standards in Indigenous Partnerships.

REFERENCES

[AIATSIS Ethical Research](#)

[AIMS Indigenous Partnerships Plan](#)

[AIMS Indigenous Partnerships Procedure](#)

[AIMS Intellectual Property and Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property \(ICIP\) Policy](#)

[AIMS Responsible Conduct of Research Framework](#)

[Ministerial Statement of Expectations](#)

[National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#)

[United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)

[Who are Indigenous Peoples? – Factsheet, UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.](#)

DEFINITIONS

Country	The place to which a Traditional Owner group is connected, encompassing all living, non-living, tangible and intangible elements and cultural obligations connected to that place.
sea Country	A particular area of Country that is currently within the marine environment.
Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities	Considering the diversity of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, this policy adapts the understanding used by the UN-system based on the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self-identification as Indigenous peoples at the individual level and accepted by the community as their member.• Historical continuity with pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies.• Strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources.• Distinct social, economic or political systems.• Distinct language, culture and beliefs.• Sometimes form non-dominant groups of society.• Resolve to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities.
Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property	Indigenous peoples’ arts, culture, practices, stories and knowledge including Traditional Ecological Knowledge.
Samples	Samples are any material collected as part of AIMS projects on sea Country, and includes biological material, non living material (eg coral cores), water and sediments.
Traditional Ecological Knowledge	Knowledge acquired by Indigenous peoples over millennia of contact with the environment, including knowledge passed from generation to generation.
Traditional Owner	An Indigenous person (or group) with a spiritual or cultural affiliation to a site or area of Country.