



## Indigenous Inclusion at AMSA Conferences

This document provides information about why and how the Australian Marine Sciences Association Incorporated (AMSA) promotes Indigenous inclusion at its annual conferences. The document is intended to be used by all those involved in planning and coordinating Indigenous inclusion at AMSA conferences, including AMSA members, Indigenous people and other collaborators.

### Why Indigenous inclusion?

AMSA recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have a long and enduring connection to Sea Country and should play a greater role in the delivery of marine science and management. The combination of traditional knowledge and Western science will give the strongest foundation to understand marine ecosystems and inform modern marine management decisions. It also expands our ecological and cultural knowledge, as well as increasing the capability, capacity and geographic reach of Traditional Owners' marine activities.

AMSA is committed to building cross-cultural relationships with Indigenous communities and organisations. AMSA recognises that more sustained and meaningful collaborations between Australia's First Nations people and scientific researchers are needed to improve environmental, cultural and economic management of Sea Country. AMSA endorses the [AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research](#) and encourages researchers to recognise and apply its principles and practices. The AIATSIS research ethics framework is summarised in Figure 1.

### What is the Australian Marine Sciences Association (AMSA)?

AMSA is Australia's peak professional body for marine scientists from all disciplines and has promoted marine science in Australia since 1962. AMSA's mission is to advance marine science in Australia, and one of the main ways this is done is through the annual AMSA conferences which are held in a different location around Australia each year. Conferences provide the opportunity to bring marine scientists and knowledge holders together from across Australia to share knowledge and insights. AMSA is run by volunteers through National and Branch councils and is a not-for-profit organisation. Our councils and conference committees give their time outside of their day jobs to undertake tasks for AMSA. AMSA also has an Indigenous Engagement sub-committee to provide consistent advice and long-term strategic planning.

Key activities for AMSA include the award program and annual conferences which are supported by membership fees, sponsorships, and conference registrations.

### How does AMSA support Indigenous inclusion at its conferences?

Since 2016 AMSA has convened five consecutive [annual Indigenous workshops](#) and a range of symposia. During this period, we have learnt a lot about Indigenous inclusion in our conferences and have used these insights to improve our approach. The current approach is Indigenous led, including five main components:

1. [Welcome to Country](#) – providing a culturally appropriate welcome at the start of the conference;
2. [Indigenous plenary speakers](#) – providing an opportunity for an eminent Indigenous researcher or knowledge holder to address all attendees at the conference;
3. [Indigenous symposium](#) – providing an opportunity to bring people together to hear from a number of speakers on a specific science topic (e.g. Sea Country monitoring);
4. [Indigenous workshop](#) – providing an opportunity to bring people together to interact and discuss specific topics or issues that are important for advancing Sea Country research and monitoring (e.g. promoting leadership, networks, partnerships, identification of research priorities, etc.). Each workshop is tailored to

the region in which the conference, and the program is therefore driven by the unique interests of those communities, as well as broader national issues; and

5. **Excellence in Sea Country Award** – providing recognition of the outstanding contribution or leadership potential of an Indigenous marine scientist, ranger, communicator, or educator to the advancement of marine science and knowledge in Australia.

AMSA also supports Indigenous participation in its conferences by including Indigenous sponsorship options in the AMSA Sponsorship and Exhibition Prospectus<sup>1</sup>. AMSA presenters are also encouraged to co-author or co-present with Indigenous partners who have participated in their research.

### What do Indigenous participants get from AMSA conferences?

Indigenous participants will have the opportunity to engage and network with other Indigenous people with an interest in advancing research and monitoring on Sea Country in Australia and New Zealand. Indigenous participants will also have an opportunity to have their voices heard by the broader marine science community, including:

- Aspirations and achievements in Sea Country research and monitoring;
- The importance and use of traditional knowledge in Sea Country research, monitoring and management;
- The importance of participation of Indigenous people in the marine science community; and
- Opportunities to establish and develop partnership approaches between Indigenous communities and marine science organisations.

Non-Indigenous participants have an opportunity to listen to current opportunities, issues and challenges related to Sea Country partnerships in marine science and apply these learnings to their own work.

All participants hear new ideas, meet new people from diverse communities, and help shape the future of marine science in Australia.

### What is the conference Indigenous working group?

A new Indigenous working group (IWG) is convened for each annual conference to tailor the approach to the region in which the conference is being held. Participation in Indigenous working groups is voluntary, as is participation in all AMSA committees. The IWG's primary role is to facilitate a coordinated approach to planning the five Indigenous conference components listed above. The working group has an important role in identifying Indigenous participants (e.g. Welcome to Country, plenary speakers and workshop leaders). The IWG works closely with the conference organising committee to integrate the Indigenous components into the broader conference program.

### What are the costs to participants?

AMSA makes every effort to ensure invited Indigenous conference participants are not out-of-pocket. We do this by securing sponsorship to offset registration and travel costs, noting the total cost of this changes from year to year. AMSA committees, including the Indigenous working group, usually work together to secure sponsorship. The committees also work together, where required, to subsidise rates for Indigenous attendance to lower barriers to entry and promote Indigenous inclusion.

### Who is invited to the AMSA conference and Indigenous workshop?

The number of Indigenous participants invited to AMSA conferences depends on the sponsorship secured, the planned Indigenous content (see five Indigenous components listed above) and constraints of the venue and logistical support. The workshops are designed to be inclusive, but as a not-for-profit organisation, AMSA is dependent on our sponsors to provide financial support for Indigenous participants. Since this is different every year, the number of invitees may therefore vary across conferences.

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<sup>1</sup> This will be done from 2023

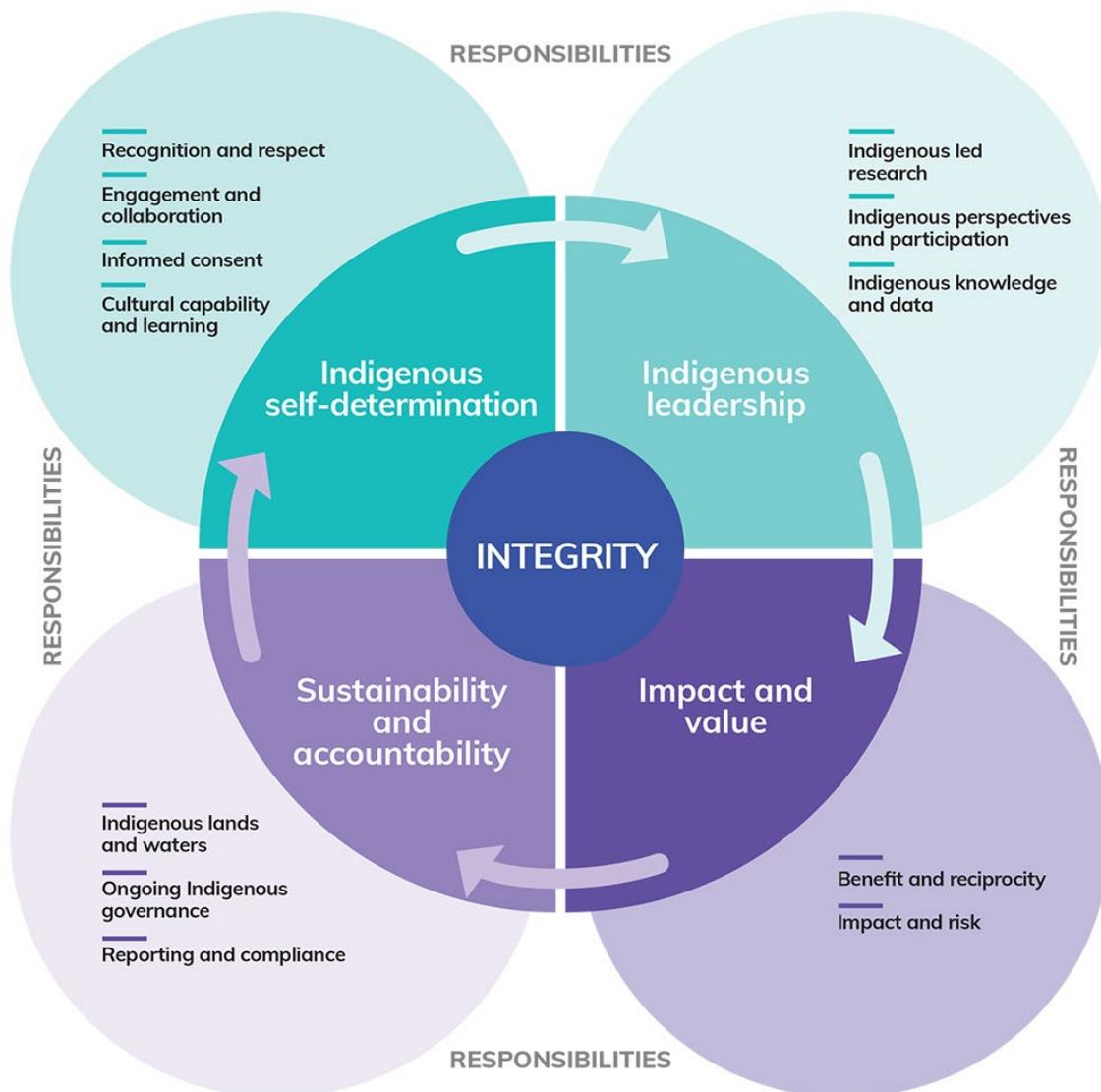


Figure 1: An overview of the AIATSIS research ethics framework showing how the four principles (Indigenous self-determination, Indigenous leadership, impact and value, and sustainability and accountability) give rise to numerous responsibilities ([AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research](#))