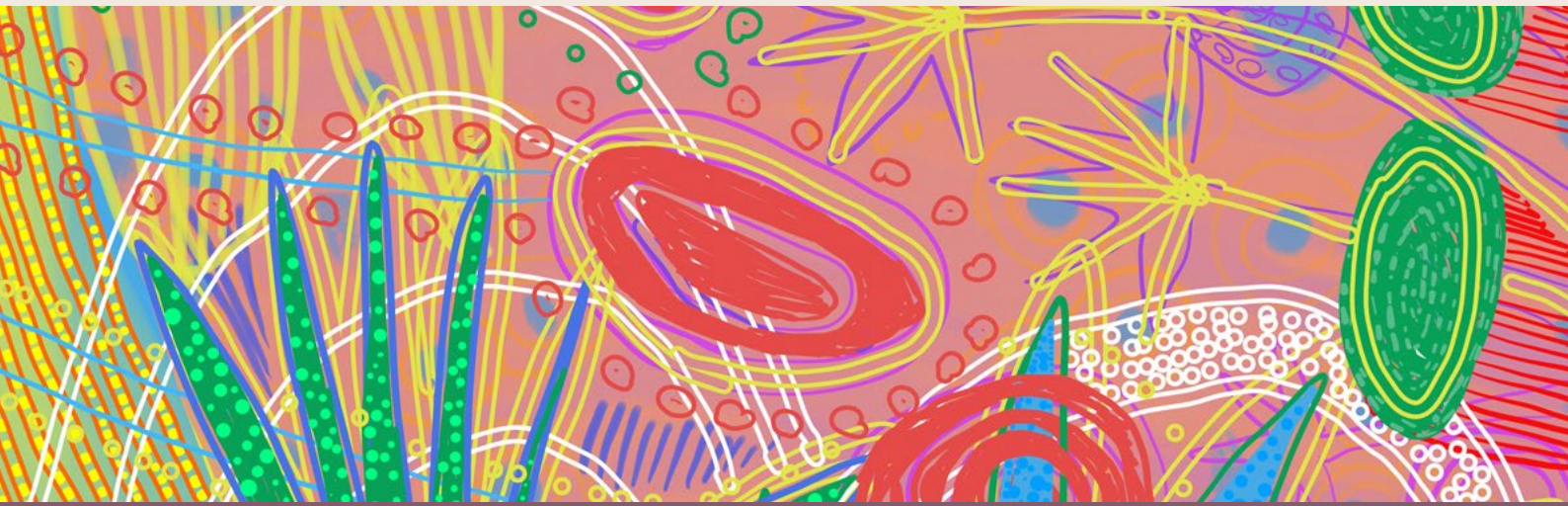


AERO First Nations Charter

November 2024



This charter underpins the Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO)’s ambition to make a positive contribution to the success of First Nations children and young people. It establishes the foundations and mechanisms through which the organisation will pursue reconciliation efforts and confirms AERO’s commitment to First Nations peoples through the work that it performs and the operations enabling that work.

This involves honouring and celebrating First Nations cultures, traditions and knowledge systems by ensuring First Nations perspectives and contexts are represented and included in AERO’s:

- research and evaluation projects
- resource development
- strategic and operational planning and delivery
- stakeholder engagement and relationships
- organisational governance and administration
- financial dealings
- communications and publications
- legal and research governance and ethics-related matters.

Background

The Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respect to First Nations cultures, and to the Elders past and present. We endeavour to continually value and learn from First Nations knowledges and educational practices.

AERO's vision is for Australia to achieve excellence and equity in educational outcomes for all children and young people through effective use of evidence. AERO seeks to actively champion reconciliation by nurturing a safe and culturally responsive work environment that leads to positive impact on the lives of First Nations children and young people. Ensuring First Nations people, communities and organisations are represented and included in AERO's endeavours is central to achieving these goals.

To ensure genuine First Nations representation and inclusion, AERO draws on principles outlined in key First Nations resources. These include, for example, the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples \(2007\)](#); the [AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research \(2020\)](#); and the [Maiaam Nayri Wingara Principles for Indigenous Data Sovereignty \(2018\)](#). In the context of AERO's work, these principles will inform:

- conducting culturally responsive research, evaluation and resource development
- collaborating and co-creating with First Nations employees, colleagues and stakeholders
- attending to and amplifying First Nations voices and scholarship in the work AERO produces so that it cultivates understanding and respect for First Nations cultures, histories and lived experiences
- engaging and communicating with First Nations students, educators, researchers, families, leaders, communities, organisations and peak entities in authentic and respectful ways
- pursuing reciprocal relationships, partnerships and agreements with First Nations people, communities and organisations
- seeking guidance from, actively listening to, and involving First Nations people, communities and organisations in decision-making
- recognising the value and contributions of First Nations knowledge systems
- aligning work with First Nations priorities, cultural protocols, needs and aspirations, and sharing knowledge equitably and with the aim of maximising accessibility
- respecting the rights and diverse cultures of First Nations peoples
- respecting First Nations peoples' right to self-determination and, as part of that, supporting First Nations leadership of relevant work
- upholding Indigenous Data Sovereignty, which protects the rights of First Nations people to govern the collection, application and ownership of data and information relating to them
- advocating for policies and practices that support reconciliation with First Nations cultures and communities.

Measures supporting this Charter

AERO has various initiatives in place to support the realisation of this Charter and will continue to develop and implement these as part of applying the aforementioned principles. These initiatives include:

- a dedicated First Nations team who work across all areas of AERO to advance and embed the privileging of First Nations priorities and aspirations
- operation of a First Nations Expert Reference Group comprised of members from urban, regional and remote communities that offers strategic counsel and expert review of AERO's organisational and external policies, resources and initiatives, ensuring alignment with the goal of excellence and equity in educational outcomes for First Nations students
- Board members with expertise in education, policy and research who can act as valuable advisors
- a 'shared approach' to research governance and ethics, and data and information management, which involves equal recognition of broader constructs such as legislation, national research standards and Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles, as well as First Nations ways of knowing, being and doing
- Indigenous Data Sovereignty guidelines that show how the Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles can be applied in practice to facilitate culturally appropriate data collection, use and sharing
- deepening staff understanding of First Nations cultures, histories and knowledges
- a First Nations research rationale that emphasises responsible and respectful ways to engage in First Nations education research that will yield richer data and provide a more holistic understanding of the many interrelated factors that impact learning outcomes for First Nations children and young people
- a First Nations employment policy that sets targets to increase the representation of First Nations staff within the organisation, identifies strategies for retention and guides the implementation of inclusive recruitment practices
- a First Nations procurement policy that prioritises engagement with First Nations-owned businesses and suppliers
- an anti-racism complaint form, providing a platform and pathway for staff and stakeholders to report incidents and ensure a fair and impartial investigation process
- the identification and implementation of relevant initiatives, such as cultural responsiveness training, language revitalisation programs, community engagement activities and knowledge sharing by First Nations leaders
- customs for Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country in meetings
- leadership that sets a respectful and inclusive tone for meetings and encourages active participation and feedback from all attendees
- a [Reconciliation Action Plan \(RAP\)](#)
- reporting on AERO's progress towards its reconciliation endeavours (e.g., to Executive, AERO staff, the Board, Reconciliation Australia, the public).

Conclusion

AERO is resolute in its commitment to reconciliation, and to the representation and inclusion of First Nations people, communities and organisations through the work it performs and the operations enabling that work. This Charter provides a roadmap for achieving this commitment.

The Charter and the measures supporting it will be continuously reviewed and evaluated to ensure efficacy and alignment. AERO welcomes feedback on this Charter from all its stakeholders as part of an ongoing dialogue and collaboration in support of reconciliation. Together, we can pave the way for a more inclusive and respectful future for all Australians.

AERO acknowledges Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia, recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and community, and pays respects to Elders past and present.





Artist's statement

The artwork represents the journey of life and our connection to language, spirituality, food, shelter, plants and water. It tells the story of the universe.

In the centre is the cabbage palm, *ma peal*, which is central to our lives. My knowledge of *ma peal* comes from the bush classroom, taught to me by my mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, who understood the interconnectivity of their surroundings.

This artwork is a declaration of my country and illustrates my rights to its ownership, to its freshwater and saltwater estates, and all the land from Staaten to Nassau River and east to Staaten River National Park.

Artist biography

Ma Wanjibung Pukun
(English name, Shaun Edwards)

Wanjibung is a Traditional Owner and leader of the Kokoberrin peoples of western Cape York Peninsular. He is an established visual and cultural artist and the founder of Wildbarra clothing company.

Wanjibung's art is about his homeland, its creation and its story. His work is featured in such collections as the Art Gallery of NSW, ANU, Cairns Regional Art Gallery, and many private institutions.

Wanjibung was the Director of Opposition Research of the Give us a Go Campaign, the founder of the Kowanyama Baby Festival, and co-founder and spokesperson for the Indigenous Environment Foundation. In 2020 he received a cultural award as part of the Australia Day acknowledgements. He holds a Master of Philosophy in Public Health (University of Sydney) and is completing a Ph.D. Visual Anthropology.



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