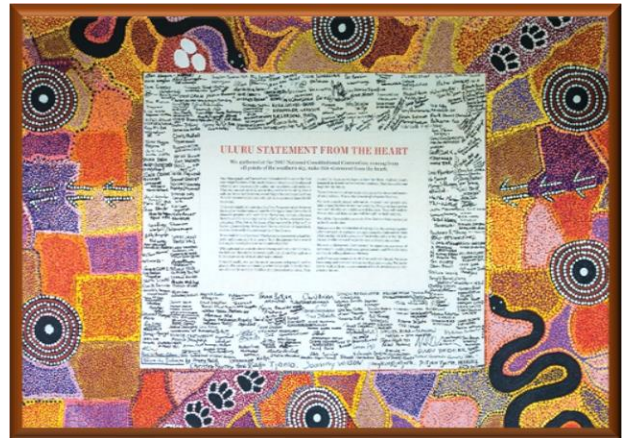


Acknowledging the past | Moving forward together

A response to the Uluru Statement from the Heart by the Australian Council of Learned Academies

We welcome and support the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*

The Australian Council of Learned Academies (ACOLA) represents Australia's five Learned Academies and seeks to contribute expert interdisciplinary advice to inform policy and to develop innovative solutions to complex national and global problems. ACOLA has followed the development of the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* and attended to community discussions surrounding the importance of the principles of voice, treaty and truth in reconciling Australia's past with the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. ACOLA acknowledges the momentous effort and significance of the *Statement*, and we respect and support the importance of the journey it sets forth.



We support the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* and welcome Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' invitation "to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future". As an organisation committed to the pursuit of learning and knowledge, ACOLA responds to the *Statement's* call for truth-telling.

Reflecting on the past and present

We recognise that throughout our history as a nation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have often been the object of research and the target for racialised and exploitative research discourse. ACOLA and the Learned Academies acknowledge that our history, structure and membership are a product of Australia's colonial history. Research questions, activities and outputs have often been an enabler and tacit supporter of colonialist values and logics, with flow-on effects to management strategies, political agendas and government policies. These structures have often shaped the questions we ask, the research paths we pursue, and have built on false, racist and entrenched assumptions.

For many within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, research and scholarship have come to represent a tool of suppression, marginalisation and subjugation. Whether intentional or not, research and its collective institutions and communities have often served to dehumanise and devalue Indigenous peoples, their knowledge and their aspirations. We must reconcile with those harmed by this history of systemic injustice.

We recognise that we must do more to acknowledge and understand the deep knowledge held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We recognise that this knowledge has been developed over millennia of the Country of which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are traditional owners and custodians.

ACOLA and the Learned Academies acknowledge that there is much work to do in our own institutions, and much to learn from the ancient wisdom and knowledge systems of our first peoples.

Responding to the *Statement*, ACOLA's commitment to a journey of change

ACOLA and the Learned Academies aspire for a future in which we work together to enrich and strengthen our and others' understandings of the world. We will actively **listen, learn, reflect and engage** to further our commitment to, and support of, the *Statement*:

Listen: We commit to listening and drawing on a breadth of expertise to advance recognition and involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in research and engagement activities.

Learn: We seek to engage with and learn from, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems, histories, ecosystems and ways of being into and alongside collaborative research and policy endeavours with the goal of creating solutions for all people.

Reflect: We acknowledge the need for truth-telling about the often detrimental impact of research and the research community, past and present, on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Moving forward, modes of questioning, sharing, and implementing knowledge must respectfully recognise the depth and contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and cultures. We will strive to better understand and combat current barriers to the uptake of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and contributions across research.

Engage: We will actively seek collaborations with, support for and promotion of, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experts, early career researchers and students within our networks. We will engage and build partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, stakeholders and communities through our consultative projects and organisational relationships, towards recognising the diversity of Australian history and cultural experience.

Moving Forward Together

ACOLA acknowledges that actions speak louder than words. ACOLA and each Learned Academy has a Reconciliation Action Plan approved or in development. We recognise the importance of reconciliation, and the sustained actions required to move from words to an active process of change, and the positive outcomes it can have for everyone.

As a collective, we commit to ensure that ACOLA’s processes and activities respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems and perspectives, including in our commissioned studies and advice on national issues to governments. This includes ensuring the activities we undertake and the research we promote is conducted in accordance with appropriate ethical arrangements and research principles and practices.

We urge our Fellows, industry, academia, all levels of government and fellow Australians to support meaningful inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, and ensure we are moving towards stronger engagement and real action together.

We acknowledge the critical role that the voice and representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples must play in our collective future. Tokenistic considerations in research efforts are not the solution for equity and benefit. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples must be true partners in the conduct of research and benefit from its results.

We accept our leadership role and responsibility to expose actively and foster dialogue about racism and bigotry in all of its forms, as a key action in reconciliation and truth-telling, to help create the future to which we aspire.

We commit to participate in the creation of a harmonized, national research culture that values diversity, removes structural inequity, delivers benefit, and transforms and accelerates the pace of discovery and understanding of the world in which we all live.

We recognise that this cannot be achieved without appropriate and deep engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Indigenous knowledge systems to create a better future for all humanity.

Learned Academies of Australia



Australian Academy of
Technology & Engineering



Australian
Academy of Health and
Medical Sciences



ACOLA thanks the various Indigenous and non-Indigenous Learned Academy Fellows who have helped craft this ACOLA Statement. We also deeply respect and thank the Indigenous leaders who provided their time and counsel in guiding ACOLA in the development of this document to ensure ACOLA moves forward in a constructive, respectful and productive way.