

RESEARCHING ON NOONGAR BOODJA

CONSULTATION REPORT 2002

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Strategic planning at Edith Cowan University (ECU) identified opportunities for improvements in the way research is conducted with Noongar people and Aboriginal people living on Noongar country. In 2021, the Deputy Vice Chancellor Research supported a project to consult with industry partners and community representatives to identify key research priority areas for future research with the Noongar community and/or Aboriginal people on Noongar country. The project aimed to support a formal strategy for research with the Noongar community and/or Aboriginal people on Noongar country by identifying priorities for future research through consultation and workshops with key stakeholders.

Method

Consultation with stakeholders was undertaken through:

- Interviews with key informants from government agencies, universities and research institutes, and non-government organisations.
- A workshop with interviewees to discuss the findings from the interviews.
- Interviews and a workshop with community representatives to discuss the project and seek consensus on the findings and next steps.

Findings

Twenty-five key informants from 18 organisations took part in 19 interviews between August and November 2021.

An important goal of research is to generate evidence to support and facilitate improvements in policies, programs and practices. Health services and government agencies utilise research to better understand problems, to inform decision making, to identify effective solutions and to validate ways of working and models of care.

Despite the critical role of research, the consultations undertaken for this project highlight that there continue to be many gaps and concerns with how Aboriginal research is being designed and conducted and its findings applied. Significantly, many of the issues raised during the project's consultations with representatives in government and non-government agencies and services and higher education were also confirmed through the consultations with representatives of community.

A number of factors were identified as contributing to the concerns and gaps in research and research practices. These include limited community engagement and involvement in the design and conduct of research; research projects with little consideration for the priorities and needs of those outside the research team; inconsistent, or lack of, commitment to disseminating research findings and explaining their relevance and use; and the absence of efforts to prevent the duplication of research projects. Many of these limitations are, in part, the result of the ways in which research is funded, the time pressures placed on research projects, the requirement of ethics committees, and an absence of understanding, guidance and mentoring of non-Aboriginal researchers. There is also a disconnect in the value many non-Aboriginal researchers accord relationship building, different knowledge systems and cultural authority.

Recommendations

ECU have taken an important leadership role in bringing together a range of stakeholders to identify opportunities for improvements in the way research is conducted with Noongar people and Aboriginal people living on Noongar country. ECU is well placed to continue to take the lead in advancing a best practice model for Aboriginal research conducted on Noongar country, including the establishment of a Noongar Research Professional Network. The following recommendations are further ways in which ECU and other relevant agencies, ethics committees and research institutes can advance some of the solutions proposed during this project.

Recommendations cont.

Edith Cowan University	
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish and formalise as ECU policy, a set of prerequisites for Aboriginal research across all schools to ensure consistent standards that align to best practice. Develop an ECU policy to expand the career pathways of Aboriginal early career researchers and Higher degree students at ECU.
Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand the ECU Elder in-residence program to two days per week with sustained core funding for this position (and provided in Perth and Bunbury). Role to include mentoring of non-Aboriginal researchers and higher degree students, the provision of tailored workshops, yarning circles, and other avenues to facilitate links to students and staff across the campuses.
Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand curricular to address the necessary considerations for designing and conducting research with Aboriginal people across undergraduate courses.
Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a requirement for each school to have an Aboriginal higher degree student as a member on its committees/Boards.

Relevant Stakeholders	
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DOHWA research funding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to require Aboriginal research projects to plan and cost the dissemination of research and ensure a translation component. to require Aboriginal research projects to include involvement of policy, program and service delivery stakeholders and the community as part of the research design process. WA Government funding for a Noongar Research Professional Network to lead strategic change in Aboriginal research on Noongar country. Funding and research budgets to provide for resources including time to accommodate stakeholder (including community) input.
Ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human Research Ethics Committees commit to a developing a more effective means of ensuring researchers undertake genuine community consultation and engagement with relevant Aboriginal people and community-controlled organisations.
Capacity building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify ways to build networks between policymakers and researchers to increase the influence that evidence has on policy and facilitate an evidence-based culture for policymaking.