



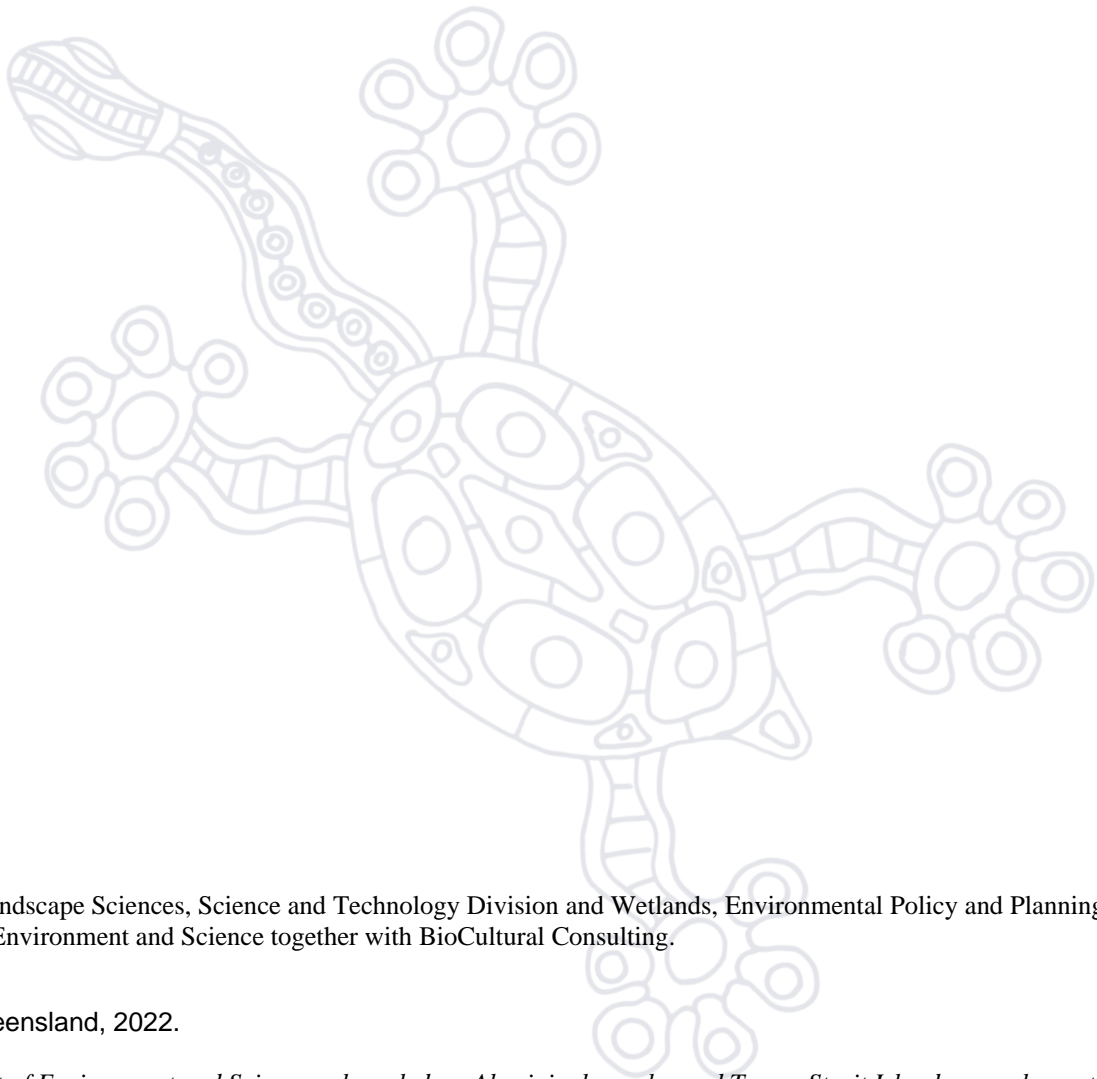
A roadmap for engagement with First Nations people

Integrating knowledge systems into the Queensland River Management Framework

Version 1.1



**Queensland
Government**



Prepared by: Landscape Sciences, Science and Technology Division and Wetlands, Environmental Policy and Planning, Department of Environment and Science together with BioCultural Consulting.

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The Department of Environment and Science acknowledges Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land. We recognise their connection to land, sea and community, and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

The department is committed to respecting, protecting and promoting human rights, and our obligations under the Human Rights Act 2019.

Acknowledgements

We thank Suzi Johnson and Kylie Pedofsky, Water Policy, Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water for sharing their knowledge and experience during the development of this document.

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Purpose

A guide to engaging with First Nations peoples' to integrate Traditional Knowledge, stories and connection to Country with the Department of Environment and Science's scientific understanding about managing rivers. It aims to establish a common framework to promote a more bilateral and collaborative approach to the recognition, generation and translation of knowledge, information and data about river management.

This roadmap was developed to align with the department's [Gurra Gurra Framework 2020-2026](#). It is intended to complement and not replace other existing strategies and guidelines that are also referenced in this document.

Key principles of the roadmap

The department recognises, respects and values First Nations peoples and cultures, including rights and interests in the Country on which the department works. To this end, the following principles will guide the department's engagement with First Nations peoples to deliver the Queensland River Management Framework (QRMF):

- Right Knowledge Right Country, Right Knowledge Right People. For example, identifying apical families/eldest members who can coordinate/facilitate knowledge partnerships and knowledge gathering in order to inform and reach consensus.
- Right to be consulted. This includes respecting reasonable timeframes and investing in relationships/building trust longer term, and building the department's cultural competence.
- Right to provide or withhold consent.

These principles will be applied to:

1. The development of the values framework underpinning the QRMF.
2. Queensland River Rehabilitation Management Guideline – incorporation of river related Traditional Knowledge and Values, co-benefits and risks into the Guideline.
3. Engagement and translation – including how we manage contributions to and outputs from the QRMF.

Background

The QRMF aims to develop robust decision support tools that consider economic, social, cultural and environmental values in river management. This will, amongst other things, improve our ability to prioritise investment in river resilience and disaster recovery, and provide an understanding of the remediation techniques best suited to different river types and locations. The QRMF is also aiming to promote a more bilateral and collaborative approach to integrating First Nations peoples' Traditional Knowledge, sciences, stories and connection to Country with the department's scientific understanding about managing rivers. For example, it aims to recognise Traditional Knowledge held by First Nations peoples about dynamic and complex hydrology practices, including the importance of cultural condition and customary function of related water bodies. This practical integration of different knowledge systems respects the valuable contribution each can provide to deliver co-benefits for all Queenslanders.

The department is committed to ensuring that the principles and values of its Gurra Gurra Framework 2020-2026 underpin the QRMF, particularly the development and piloting of the Queensland River Rehabilitation Management Guideline and the Queensland River Classification Scheme (proposed stage 2 of the project).

Starting down the path to an integrated knowledge system for river management

The department recognises that the path to integrating knowledge systems for river management starts with working in partnership from development through to implementation and evaluation. In applying this principle, the following must be applied:

- Understanding First Nations peoples customary and contemporary structures within a catchment to demonstrate respect and meaningfully partner
- Understanding the biocultural diversity/customary functions, not just the biophysical functions (e.g. water plants for weaving and slowing flow)

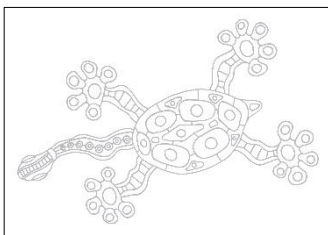
- Demonstrating that First Nations cultural rights are human rights, by satisfying our obligations and commitments with respect to obtaining free, prior, informed consent (FPIC), and providing the space and time for this to occur through related diverse knowledge holders
- Investing the time in building relationships and personal group safety, and respecting primary substantive rights
- Monitoring cultural capability through to cultural competency.

In time, the expected outcomes of this approach include:

- Integration of cultural and spiritual values in the Queensland River Rehabilitation Management Guideline
- Integration (through co-design) of Traditional Knowledge in the Queensland River Classification Scheme
- Embedding engagement and partnering with First Nations peoples as the expected method of implementing the QRMF and realising greater public benefit.

Resources to help inform action

- The [Gurra Gurra Framework 2020-2026](#) is the Department of Environment and Sciences commitment to working in genuine partnership with Queensland's First Nations people to achieve stronger outcomes for community and for all people.
- [Water Connections: Aboriginal People's Water Needs in the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin, 2019](#) is a guide to the water plans in the Condamine and Balonne, Border Rivers and Moonie catchments by the Department of Natural Resources and Mines.
- [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) is the most comprehensive international instrument on the rights of Indigenous peoples and establishes a universal framework of minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the Indigenous peoples of the world and it elaborates on existing human rights standards and fundamental freedoms as they apply to the specific situation of Indigenous peoples.
- Queensland's [Human Rights Act 2019](#) commenced in 2020 and protects fundamental human rights drawn from international human rights law and has special importance for First Nations peoples, with their distinctive and diverse spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional dimensions of their societies and economic relationship with the lands, territories, waters, coastal seas and other resources with which they have a connection under Aboriginal tradition and Ailan Kastom. Of particular significance to First Nations peoples is the right to self-determination.



Watermark: Freshwater long-neck turtle.

Artwork by *John Locke*.