



TERMINOLOGY: ‘ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES’ AND ‘INDIGENOUS PEOPLES’

VESPIIA was founded in Boorloo on Wadjuk Noongar land. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of this land and pay our respects to Elders past and present. We recognise their enduring connection to Country, culture and community, and extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia.

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of Australia. We recognise the depth, continuity and diversity of their cultures, languages, kinship systems and governance structures. Cultural authority rests locally. Identity is specific. There is no single cultural model that represents all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We also recognise the longstanding and ongoing contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to Australia’s Defence forces, emergency services and policing services, and to the communities that support them. Their service forms part of the broader story of national service and sacrifice.

Language matters. The words we use shape recognition, identity and respect.

Within Australia, VESPIIA prefers the term ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ when referring collectively to the First Peoples of this country. Where known and appropriate, we will use specific Nation, community or language group identifiers. We do so in recognition that identity is not generic and should not be treated as such.

The term ‘Indigenous peoples’ has developed through international law and is widely used in global contexts. VESPIIA uses this term when referring to Indigenous peoples internationally, or where collective global identity is relevant. As our members work across Australia and internationally, references to ‘Indigenous peoples’ in Institute materials may extend beyond the Australian context.

Where VESPIIA references legislation, policy or official documents, we retain the terminology used in the source to ensure accuracy and consistency.

This statement is informed by guidance from the Australian Human Rights Commission and the principles contained in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

VESPIIA is committed to respectful and considered language. We recognise that terminology evolves, and that language should reflect the preferences of communities themselves. We will continue to listen, learn and review this statement as community guidance develops to ensure our language reflects respect, accuracy and integrity.