

Durri Aboriginal Corporation Medical Service

Stakeholder Engagement & Cultural Protocol Policy



2026

Stakeholder Engagement & Cultural Protocol Policy

1. Purpose

Durri Aboriginal Corporation Medical Service (Durri ACMS) is a community-controlled Aboriginal health organisation grounded in the culture, values, and aspirations of the Dunghutti people, Durri members, and the broader Aboriginal community we serve.

As one of the largest and oldest Aboriginal community-controlled organisations in Australia, Durri ACMS carries a longstanding responsibility to uphold cultural authority, strengthen community wellbeing, and protect the legacy of our Elders and ancestors.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all engagement occurs at the highest possible level. Engagement must always be appropriate, respectful, culturally safe, accountable, and aligned with the strategic direction and organisational plans of Durri ACMS.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all external stakeholders, including but not limited to:

- Government departments and agencies
- Local Health Districts and Primary Health Networks
- NGOs and peak bodies
- Universities and research institutions
- Consultants and contractors
- Corporate and philanthropic partners
- Media organisations

It applies to all forms of engagement, including meetings, partnerships, projects, research, funding discussions, site visits, events, and communications.

3. Guiding Principles

All engagement with Durri ACMS must be guided by the following principles:

Aboriginal Community Control

Durri ACMS operates under Aboriginal governance and decision-making authority across the Kempsey and Nambucca LGA areas.

Cultural Respect and Safety

Stakeholders must engage in ways that are culturally respectful, trauma-aware, and safe for community, staff, and Elders.

Self-Determination

Engagement must support—never undermine—Aboriginal self-determination and community priorities.

Reciprocity and Community Benefit

Engagement must demonstrate clear, tangible benefits for Durri ACMS and the community, not solely for the stakeholder.

Accountability and Transparency

All engagements must be honest, transparent, and follow agreed processes.

4. Cultural Protocol Requirements**4.1 Acknowledgement of Country**

All engagements must begin with an Acknowledgement of Country, recognising the Traditional Custodians of the land and paying respect to Elders past and present.

4.2 Respect for Elders and Cultural Authority

Elders are holders of cultural knowledge and authority. Where Elders are involved, stakeholders must:

- Allow time for proper consultation
- Use respectful language and conduct
- Follow guidance provided by Durri ACMS staff

4.3 Engagement Pathways

Stakeholders must not bypass Durri ACMS governance or management structures.

All engagement requests must:

- Be formally submitted to the Chief Executive Officer, Chairperson, or approved Senior Staff
- Be approved through the appropriate management or governance pathways
- Respect internal decision-making processes

- Allow reasonable timeframes, acknowledging cultural obligations such as Sorry Business

Engagement must not be superficial — for example, sending a last-minute email and expecting staff or Board members to immediately attend a meeting or risk “missing out.” Engagement must be inclusive and respectful of local issues, customs, and culture.

Direct approaches to staff, Board members, or community members without prior approval is not acceptable.

4.4 Time, Process, and Decision-Making

Stakeholders must recognise that:

- Cultural consultation takes time
- Some decisions may require community or Board consideration
- External deadlines will not override cultural or governance processes

5. Expectations of Stakeholders

All stakeholders engaging with Durri ACMS are expected to:

- Engage respectfully and professionally
- Demonstrate cultural humility and a willingness to learn
- Listen to Aboriginal voices and lived experience
- Avoid deficit-based language or assumptions
- Refrain from tokenistic engagement
- Honour commitments and follow through on agreed actions

6. Research, Data, and Information Sharing

Where engagement involves research, data, or information:

- Aboriginal data sovereignty principles apply and you will need the appropriate approvals.
- Data remains the property of Durri ACMS unless otherwise agreed in writing
- No publication, reporting, or media use is permitted without prior written approval
- Community benefits must be clearly demonstrated

7. Breach of Cultural Protocols

Failure to comply with this policy — including ignoring cultural advice or bypassing governance processes — may result in:

- Suspension or termination of engagement
- Withdrawal from partnerships, programs, or projects
- Loss of support for current or future initiatives
- Refusal of future engagement opportunities

Durri ACMS reserves the right to protect its staff, community, and cultural integrity.

8. Roles and Responsibilities

Durri ACMS

- Provide guidance on appropriate cultural protocols
- Determine and communicate engagement pathways
- Uphold cultural authority and community priorities

Stakeholders

- Understand and comply with this policy
- Seek guidance when unsure
- Act in good faith and with cultural respect

9. Review and Continuous Improvement

This policy will be reviewed periodically to ensure it remains culturally relevant, effective, and aligned with community expectations and governance standards.

10. Statement of Commitment

Durri ACMS is committed to strong, respectful partnerships that honour culture, empower community, and deliver meaningful outcomes.

Engagement is a privilege, not an entitlement, and must always be grounded in respect, accountability, and Aboriginal self-determination.

11. Strategic Directions

Durri ACMS is guided by our Strategic Directions outlined in the Strategic Plan 2025–2030:

- Delivering Excellence in Primary Health Care
- Strengthening Leadership Across the Organisation
- Valuing Our People as Our Greatest Asset
- Securing Durri's Future
- Building Strong Partnerships and Networks

12. Outcome

Durri Aboriginal Corporation Medical Service (Durri ACMS) will strengthen its position as a culturally grounded, community-controlled health organisation by ensuring all stakeholder engagement is respectful, culturally safe, and aligned with Aboriginal governance structures. Through adherence to this policy, Durri ACMS will:

- Protect cultural integrity and uphold the authority of Elders and community leaders, consistent with the organisation's responsibility to honour cultural knowledge and traditions.
- Ensure all engagement processes follow proper pathways and governance approvals, reinforcing accountability, transparency, and respect for cultural timeframes.
- Strengthen partnerships that deliver tangible community benefit, support Aboriginal self-determination, and align with Durri ACMS's strategic priorities.
- Promote stakeholder conduct that is culturally respectful, professional, and committed to genuine inclusion of Aboriginal voices and lived experience.
- Safeguard Aboriginal data sovereignty and ensure that research and information sharing is undertaken ethically, with community-first principles.

By embedding these expectations and protocols, Durri ACMS will continue delivering on its Strategic Directions—including excellence in primary health care, strong leadership, valuing its people, securing the organisation's future, and building enduring partnerships.

Through this commitment, Durri ACMS strives to reach its full potential and achieve the best possible outcomes for the Dunghutti people, Durri members, and the broader community we serve.

13. What to do if you are unsure about this policy.

If you are unsure about this policy and how to engage. Please contact Durri ACMS on 0265602300 and ask to speak to the CEO or Executive Assistant.

Appendix A – Stakeholder Engagement Summary

This summary provides a practical, quick-reference guide for all external stakeholders engaging with Durri Aboriginal Corporation Medical Service (Durri ACMS).

1. Who to Contact

All engagement requests must be formally submitted through the correct pathway. Stakeholders must not bypass Durri ACMS management or approach staff or Board members directly.

Primary Contacts:

- **Chief Executive Officer (CEO)**
- **Chairperson**
- **Approved Senior Staff** (as advised by the CEO's Office)
- **General Contact Line:** 02 6560 2300
 - Ask to speak with the **CEO** or **Executive Assistant** if you are unsure how to proceed.

2. Expected Timeframes

Engagement with Durri ACMS must respect cultural, community, and organisational processes.

- Cultural consultation and approvals take time.
- Some decisions require **Board** or **community consideration**, adding additional time.
- External deadlines **do not override** cultural obligations or governance processes.
- Reasonable time must be allowed for responses, particularly during periods of **Sorry Business**.
- Last-minute or rushed requests — such as “dropping in,” giving short notice, or expecting immediate attendance — are not appropriate.

Recommended minimum notice:

While the policy does not prescribe fixed days, stakeholders should expect that meaningful engagement often requires **one day to six weeks**, depending on complexity, cultural considerations, and governance requirements.

3. Cultural Considerations

Durri ACMS is grounded in Aboriginal cultural authority, community control, and respect for the Dunghutti people.

Stakeholders must:

- Begin all engagements with an **Acknowledgement of Country**.
- Show respect for **Elders**, who hold cultural knowledge and authority.
 - Allow proper time for consultation.
 - Use respectful language and conduct.
 - Follow staff guidance.
- Avoid deficit thinking, assumptions, or stereotyping.
- Demonstrate cultural humility and a willingness to learn.
- Engage in a way that is culturally safe, trauma-aware, and respectful.

Important:

Cultural authority and community priorities always shape engagement processes. Durri ACMS governance cannot be bypassed under any circumstances.

4. What Not to Do

The following behaviours are **unacceptable** and may result in suspension or refusal of engagement:

Do NOT:

- **Bypass this policy** by approaching staff, Board members, or community members directly without approval.
- **Rush** the organisation or demand immediate responses.
- **Ignore cultural advice**, obligations, or timeframes (including Sorry Business).
- Use **tokenistic**, superficial, or performative engagement.
- Use deficit-based language or assumptions about Aboriginal people or communities.
- Proceed with research, data use, reporting, or media without prior written approval.
- Publish or use Durri ACMS information without consent.
- Engage solely for stakeholder benefit without demonstrating clear community benefit.

Consequences of Breach

Failure to follow cultural protocols or governance processes may result in:

- Suspension or termination of engagement
- Withdrawal from partnerships
- Loss of organisational support
- Refusal of future engagement opportunities

Appendix B – Quick Reference Table

Area	Summary
Primary Contacts	CEO, Chairperson, or approved Senior Staff; phone: 02 6560 2300
Required Steps	Submit formal request → allow time for internal approvals → follow staff guidance
Timeframes	Allow adequate time; external deadlines do not override cultural processes
Cultural Essentials	Acknowledgement of Country; respect Elders; cultural safety; no deficit language
What Not to Do	No bypassing staff/Board; no rushed requests; no tokenism; no publication without approval

Authorized:

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Durri Aboriginal Corporation Medical Service
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