



FINAL REPORT OF THE NAME REFERENCE COMMITTEE

Principles and Considerations for Council

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A. Executive Summary

The University Name Reference Committee was established by Council to provide advice on how the University might responsibly consider questions relating to its name, should such a question arise now or in the future. The Committee was not asked to recommend whether the University's name should change, nor to propose alternative names. Its task was to develop a principled framework and process to guide Council decision-making in relation to this sensitive and complex issue.

This report responds to that task by setting out the historical, institutional and contemporary context of the University's name; examining comparative experience across Australian and international universities; and identifying governance, stakeholder, operational and legislative considerations relevant to any future deliberation. The report also draws on extensive comparative analysis across Australian and international universities, including the United States, the United Kingdom and New Zealand, identifying convergent lessons in governance design, evidentiary thresholds, engagement sequencing and legislative constraints. It recognises that questions of institutional naming intersect with identity, reconciliation, history, community expectation and public accountability, and that poorly governed processes can create reputational and cultural risk regardless of outcome.

Central to the Committee's work is an identity-first framing. Rather than commencing with the question of whether the University's name should change, the report emphasises that any future deliberation must begin with a clear articulation of James Cook University's contemporary identity, statutory mission and lived purpose as a place-based institution serving northern Australia and the Tropics. This framing ensures that questions of naming are assessed as expressions of institutional purpose rather than as symbolic reactions to external pressure.

The Committee also recognises that the University's name functions as a highly visible expression of its brand noting that, consistent with contemporary practice, brand is understood as an outcome of institutional purpose, mission and behaviour, rather than being determined by the name alone.

Drawing on this analysis, the Committee proposes a set of guiding principles to underpin any future consideration of the University's name. These principles emphasise identity-first framing, outcome neutrality, truth-telling and historical integrity, alignment with mission and values, respect for heritage and continuity, culturally legitimate and proportionate engagement, and procedural rigour with clear Council oversight. The report also outlines a staged decision pathway to illustrate how Council could, if it chose, progress from consideration of principles to consultation and decision-making in a deliberate and accountable manner. Importantly, adoption of the framework does not commit Council to consultation or to change; it provides a disciplined and enduring reference point should Council determine that further exploration is warranted.

The report further canvasses the operational and cost implications associated with both consultation and any potential name change, noting that these are material considerations for Council and, in some respects, extend beyond the authority of the University alone. It also identifies alternative and complementary pathways through which the University can continue to advance reconciliation, inclusivity and institutional identity irrespective of naming outcomes.

In preparing this report, the Committee has been mindful of its advisory role and of Council's ultimate responsibility for decision-making. The Committee has not reached, and was not expected to reach, a view on whether the University's name should change. That question remains solely for Council. Instead, it has sought to provide Council with a clear, balanced and evidence-based framework that supports good governance and preserves discretion. Recent

public commentary regarding the University's name underscores the sensitivity of the issue and reinforces the importance of a framework that is neutral, well-governed and clearly sequenced.

The Committee records its appreciation to Council for entrusting it with this work. The subject matter requires care, independence and rigour, and the Committee has approached its task in that spirit. The delivery of this report concludes the Committee's remit and provides Council with a roadmap to use, if and when it considers it appropriate.

B. Introduction and Context

This report has been prepared by the University Name Reference Committee to assist the Council of James Cook University by setting out a framework guiding how consideration of the University's name might proceed, should Council determine that it is appropriate to explore that question in the future. The Terms of Reference and membership for the Reference Committee approved by Council is at Appendix A.

The Committee's role is advisory and preparatory in nature. It is not charged with recommending whether the University change its name, nor with proposing alternative names. Rather, the Committee has been asked to identify the rationale, principles, considerations and processes that would be necessary to support any future deliberation in a careful, respectful and well-governed manner. No predetermined outcome is assumed or advocated through this work. In this context, the Committee distinguishes between institutional identity - grounded in statutory purpose, mission and lived experience - and brand which, as an outcome of institutional purpose, represents how that identity is communicated and understood by stakeholders; questions of naming sit at the intersection of both.

The Committee explored the historical context, societal implications, stakeholder perspectives, legislative and logistical considerations associated with a potential name change. The Committee did not undertake public consultation; those would perhaps occur later under a different body if triggered. If the process were to advance, a separate "Name Review Committee" or "University Name Committee" could undertake detailed consultation and any naming proposals at that time.

The establishment of the Committee reflects a broader institutional and societal context in which universities are increasingly expected to engage thoughtfully with questions of history, identity and reconciliation. At James Cook University, this context is shaped by the University's distinctive mission to serve northern Queensland and the Tropics; its presence on the lands of diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; and its longstanding commitment to reconciliation, truth-telling and respectful engagement. Over time, the University has taken substantive steps in this regard, including the adoption of a Reconciliation Statement, the development of successive Reconciliation Action Plans, the recognition of Traditional Owner language names for campuses, the naming of key facilities such as the Eddie Koiki Mabo Library, and the appointment of the University's first Indigenous Chancellor. These actions form an important backdrop to contemporary discussions about institutional identity and symbolism, including the legacy and meaning associated with the University's name.

The Committee has approached its task with an emphasis on neutrality, intellectual rigour and cultural legitimacy. Its work has been informed by background research into the historical context of the University's name, consideration of the ways in which institutional names operate symbolically and practically, and to issues that would require careful attention to stakeholder perspectives, including those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, alumni, staff, students and international partners. In doing so, the Committee has been mindful that perceptions and impacts may differ across communities and jurisdictions, and that any future consideration of the University's name would need to be grounded in a clear understanding of JCU's contemporary identity, purpose and footprint.

In developing this report, the Committee has also examined how other universities, in Australia and internationally, have approached questions of naming and renaming. This includes reviewing established frameworks and case studies from institutions such as Yale, Harvard, Deakin, Griffith and others, noting both the principles applied and the lessons learned. These case studies have been examined for comparative insight only, and have informed, but not determined, the development of a framework tailored to James Cook University's particular institutional context and obligations. The focus throughout has been on defining a process that is credible, transparent and aligned with the University's values, should Council decide at some future point that further consideration is warranted.

C. Background and Key Considerations

Historical Context – JCU's History, Mission and Regional Role

James Cook University emerged from a distinctive post-war expansion of higher education in Australia, driven by national development priorities, regional advocacy and a growing recognition that universities should not be confined to capital cities. From its earliest conception, the institution that would become JCU was intended to serve northern Queensland and the tropics, addressing the educational, scientific and professional needs of a geographically vast and climatically distinctive region. This purpose – often described as creating Australia's university for the tropics – has been a defining feature of the University's mission since its establishment and remains central to its identity today¹.

The question of the new University's name arose during the transition from the University College of Townsville, established under the auspices of The University of Queensland, to an autonomous university in the late 1960s. Archival material from the University College, The University of Queensland Senate, and contemporaneous Advisory Council records demonstrate that naming was a live and contested issue rather than a settled conclusion. In 1967, the University College established a formal Names Committee comprising staff, external members and the President of the then College Union. Its task was to consider potential names for the autonomous institution and report to the University College of Townsville Advisory Council, which in turn advised The University of Queensland Senate on matters of management and expansion.

Records of this process indicate that a range of names was actively considered, including regional and geographic options, and that consultation occurred with staff, students and community representatives. In April 1969, the Townsville University College Union conducted a survey of student opinion to inform the deliberations of the Names Committee. The survey was completed by approximately 300 students, representing around 65 per cent of the full-time student population at the time. Students were first asked to indicate their preference across broad categories of names. Nearly half expressed a preference for the University to be named after a historical figure, while others favoured a regional name or a place-based title such as "University of Townsville". When asked to nominate specific options, opinions were divided. Among historical figures, "James Cook University" and "Leichhardt University" attracted comparable levels of support, while "Dalrymple University" received less endorsement. Where regional names were concerned, a substantial majority favoured "University of North Queensland" over alternatives such as "Northern Australian University" or "Australian Tropical University".

The results illustrate both the breadth of options under consideration and the absence of a dominant consensus. They also demonstrate that students, like other stakeholders at the time, were weighing competing concepts of identity: commemoration of a historical figure, regional

¹ James Cook University has been a global leader in advancing understanding of the Tropics, notably through the *State of the Tropics* reports, and in leading the successful advocacy for the United Nations' declaration of 29 June as the International Day of the Tropics.

representation, and geographic specificity. The College Union's submission was provided to the Names Committee expressly to assist its deliberations, underscoring that the eventual naming decision emerged from a contested and consultative process rather than from a single, unified preference.

These materials point to a level of engagement and debate, but also to a lack of consensus. Following consideration of the Names Committee's report, the Advisory Council formally recommended that the autonomous institution be named the "University of Townsville", reflecting both its place-based identity and its service to the region. That recommendation was conveyed through the University of Queensland Senate to the Queensland Cabinet. Cabinet subsequently advised that it intended to recommend the name "University of North Queensland", and legislation introduced to the Queensland Parliament in 1969 was titled the *University of North Queensland Bill*.

At this point, however, the process shifted. While the Bill was before Parliament, The University of Queensland Senate intervened following a proposal from the President of the Royal Society of Queensland, Professor John Francis, that the institution be named in recognition of Captain James Cook, coinciding with the forthcoming bicentenary of Cook's 1770 voyage along the east coast of Australia (Bell, 2010, p.35).

The Advisory Council of the University College of Townsville was consulted on the proposed change at short notice and approved the name by a narrow margin. The Council formally recorded its reservations, noting that its preferred option remained "University of Townsville", and that, if a choice were required, "James Cook University" was preferred to both "University of North Queensland" and "James Cook University of North Queensland". The length of the proposed name was also a concern. Nevertheless, the legislation debated and passed shortly thereafter adopted the latter title².

This history makes clear that the naming decision was made to align with and reflect a broader national commemorative moment. The Cook bicentenary was a major event in Australia's civic calendar, marked by official ceremonies, public memorialisation and the visit of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. The Queen's visit to Australia in 1970 included events explicitly linked to the bicentenary, and it was on 20 April 1970 – exactly 200 years after Cook sighted the east coast of Australia – that Her Majesty granted Royal Assent to the Act establishing James Cook University of North Queensland at a ceremony on the Townsville campus. The symbolic alignment of dates underscored the commemorative intent behind the name and reflected the prevailing historical narrative of the period, in which Cook was widely celebrated as a figure of exploration, science and nation-building.

The history of the University's naming is significant because it demonstrates that the University's name was shaped as much by the symbolic and political context of the Cook bicentenary as by the University's foundational mission or regional identity. The association with James Cook was not intrinsic to the original conception of the institution, nor was it the outcome of a long-standing consensus within the University College or its Advisory Council. Rather, it reflected a late-stage decision influenced by national commemoration and the authority of the parent institution at a particular historical moment.

Captain James Cook's legacy, which informed that commemorative context, is now widely understood to be complex. For many, Cook represents navigation, scientific inquiry and Enlightenment-era exploration. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and for many others, Cook's arrival in 1770 symbolises the beginning of colonisation and the profound dispossession, violence and disruption that followed. In recent decades, Australia has increasingly engaged in truth-telling about this history, and colonial-era figures such as Cook

² In 1997, the name was amended to its current form, James Cook University.

have become focal points for debate about memorialisation, institutional naming and the narratives that public institutions choose to elevate.

An additional dimension raised in scholarly commentary concerns the extent of Captain Cook's connection to northern Queensland and northern Australia, and the relevance of that connection to a university established to serve the region. Historians, including the Committee's Professor Henry Reynolds, have noted that Cook's direct engagement with what is now northern Queensland was limited in duration and circumstance, and that his association with the region is largely symbolic rather than substantive. Cook's voyage along the eastern coast in 1770 involved brief and episodic encounters, shaped by the imperatives of navigation rather than sustained engagement with the lands, peoples or environments of the tropics. From this perspective, questions have been raised about whether the commemoration of Cook meaningfully reflects the distinctive histories, knowledge systems and lived realities of northern Australia, either at the time of the University's establishment or in its contemporary mission. These observations do not resolve the question of naming, but they add an important layer to understanding why the University's name has been subject to renewed reflection in light of the University's regional purpose and identity.

These questions take on additional significance when considering the demographic and social context of northern Queensland and northern Australia. The region is home to a higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples than many other parts of the country, and the University's role has long extended beyond the provision of education to include addressing regional inequity, supporting self-determination, and improving access to tertiary education and outcomes for First Nations students and communities. In this context, expectations of contemporary institutions increasingly encompass not only academic excellence, but cultural legitimacy, responsiveness to community aspirations, and alignment between institutional identity and the people they serve. These considerations do not prescribe a particular approach to naming, but they inform why questions of relevance, representation and meaning have become part of broader reflection on the University's identity.

A pivotal moment in the University's history, and in Australia's broader reconciliation journey, occurred at James Cook University in 1981 with the 'Land Rights and the Future of Australian Race Relations Conference', hosted by the University and held on the Townsville campus. Organised jointly by the Townsville Treaty Committee and the James Cook University Student Union, and co-chaired by Eddie Koiki Mabo and JCU historian Dr Noel Loos, the conference brought together Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander landowners, activists, legal scholars and historians to examine the legal foundations of land dispossession. It was during this conference that the decision was taken to pursue a legal challenge to the doctrine of *terra nullius*, a challenge that would ultimately culminate in the landmark *Mabo v Queensland (No 2)* High Court decision.

Eddie Koiki Mabo's connection to JCU was both personal and intellectual: he was employed at the University as a groundsman, lectured on campus, and engaged in formative discussions with JCU historians Noel Loos and Professor Henry Reynolds that crystallised his understanding that Indigenous land ownership had never been lawfully extinguished. The conference created a rare convergence of Indigenous advocates, legal expertise and historical scholarship, providing the intellectual and strategic foundation for the case that reshaped Australian property law and constitutional understanding. The renaming of the University's main library as the Eddie Koiki Mabo Library stands as an enduring acknowledgment of this history and of JCU's distinctive role as the institutional setting in which the Mabo case was conceived.

Against this backdrop, James Cook University has progressively articulated and strengthened its approach to respectful engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in ways that increasingly shape, rather than sit alongside, its institutional identity. Through successive Reconciliation Action Plans, governance and advisory structures, and symbolic and practical

actions, the University has sought not only to acknowledge First Nations histories and perspectives, but also to imbed Indigenous knowledge, leadership and connection to Country within its understanding of who it is and how it operates. Notable examples include the renaming of the main library as the Eddie Koiki Mabo Library in 2008, and the formal conferral of Indigenous names, gifted by Traditional Owners, on the Townsville and Cairns campuses in 2020, recognising Traditional Owner languages and enduring relationships to place. These actions reflect an institution grappling with identity as a living, evolving construct – capable of holding layered histories and perspectives, and of renewing its symbols and practices as understanding deepens over time.

Any consideration of a university's name arises within this historical and contemporary context. Nationally and internationally, universities are reassessing the legacies embedded in their names and symbols, particularly where those legacies are connected to colonial histories. In Australia, this has occurred alongside renewed emphasis on truth-telling and reconciliation, and within a political and media environment in which such issues can attract heightened scrutiny and polarisation. It is in this environment that the University Council has sought to ensure that it is informed, prepared and principled, should questions about the University's name arise.

By documenting the origins of the University's name, the circumstances of its adoption, and its relationship to broader historical commemoration, the Committee has sought to provide essential context for its work, reinforcing the importance of grounding any future consideration in historical fact, institutional purpose and contemporary values, rather than assumption or retrospection. The intent is not to revisit past decisions with the benefit of hindsight, but to ensure that Council is equipped with a clear and evidence-based understanding of how the University's name came to be, and why it now attracts renewed reflection.

More recently, questions relating to the University's name have entered the public and political domain. In late January 2026, public commentary by the Queensland Minister for Education in the context of Australia Day media reporting drew attention to the University's internal governance work, despite earlier assurances provided by the Vice Chancellor in November 2025 to the Minister that the University was not reviewing or proposing a change to its name.

Subsequent media reporting indicated that the Minister reiterated and strengthened his opposition, and legislative amendments to the *James Cook University Act* were progressed through a tabled amendment to the *Electrical Safety and Other Legislation Amendments Bill* on 24 March 2026, without consultation with the University. The amendments alter the composition of Council and increase government-appointed representation, in part in response to concerns regarding a potential name change. This constitutes a material change to the University's governance framework with direct implications for the composition and operation of Council.

This development reflects a broader national environment in which issues of history, identity and commemoration can move beyond particularly symbolic moments, such as Australia Day, to become highly contentious and attract intervention in a very different context. While such commentary does not alter the scope or intent of the Committee's work, it underscores the heightened sensitivity of the issue and the potential for external interpretation or mischaracterisation of preparatory governance activity.

The Committee considers it particularly important that the purpose and boundaries of its work are clearly understood. The Committee's remit is confined to developing a guiding framework and principles to support Council's future consideration and decision-making, should that ever be required. It does not constitute a review of the University's name, nor does it involve consideration of alternatives or consultation on change. Maintaining this distinction is essential to preserving institutional autonomy, ensuring procedural integrity, and avoiding the perception of pre-determination or advocacy.

The Committee notes that any future consideration of a name change would necessarily involve engagement with the State Government as a key stakeholder, and would be contingent on a policy and political environment that supports open, informed and consultative processes, noting that such conditions may vary over time, as further outlined in Section E.

Preliminary soundings and framing insights

In undertaking its work, the Committee engaged in a small number of targeted discussions with senior leaders and subject-matter experts to inform its understanding of the range of perspectives relevant to institutional naming. These discussions were exploratory and contextual in nature. They were not consultations, nor were they intended to test support for any particular outcome. Their purpose was to assist the Committee in understanding how questions of naming, legacy and identity are experienced across different contexts, and to inform the development of an appropriate framework should Council ever wish to consider the matter further.

Early discussions were held with the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor to clarify the intent of the work, and the governance question Council was seeking to address. These conversations emphasised that the Committee's task was not to revisit or reinterpret past decisions, nor to advocate for change, but to ensure that Council would be well prepared, should the issue arise, with a clear, principled and orderly way of considering it. The importance of neutrality, cultural legitimacy and institutional coherence was consistently reinforced.

The Committee also benefited from discussions with Professor Mark Rose, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous) at Deakin University, who provided insights into the ways institutional names and symbols can be understood within broader reconciliation and truth-telling conversations. Professor Rose emphasised that there is no single Indigenous view on questions of naming or commemoration, and that perspectives may vary significantly across communities, generations and personal experiences. He highlighted the importance of avoiding assumptions of uniformity, and of recognising that Indigenous perspectives may encompass both critique of colonial commemoration and pragmatic considerations about institutional continuity, place and purpose.

Further depth was provided through discussion with Professor Martin Nakata, JCU's Deputy Vice Chancellor Indigenous Education and Strategy, whose scholarship and leadership in Indigenous higher education informed the Committee's understanding of the conceptual and cultural dimensions of naming. Professor Nakata drew attention to the risks of oversimplifying complex historical legacies or framing naming questions as binary choices. He emphasised that institutional names operate within layered systems of meaning, shaped by history, power, identity and everyday practice, and that any consideration of change requires careful attention to context, process and consequence. His contribution reinforced the need for a framework that allows for a plurality of views, rather than seeking resolution through a single narrative.

The Committee also engaged with Professor Carole-Anne Upton, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Singapore), to understand how the University's name is perceived internationally and how legacy, brand recognition and regulatory considerations intersect in offshore jurisdictions. That discussion highlighted that perspectives on the University's name may differ markedly across geographies, and that any future consideration would need to take account of the University's multinational footprint and obligations.

The Committee also considered advice provided by JCU's Chief Marketing Officer, which emphasised that while a university's name is a prominent and symbolic element of its brand, it is not determinative in isolation. Brand is instead anchored in institutional purpose, mission and values, and in the consistency with which these are expressed through strategy, behaviour and stakeholder engagement. The advice further highlighted that stakeholder responses to institutional names are often shaped by emotional and experiential factors rather than purely

rational considerations, and that variability in perception reinforces the need for careful framing and process discipline. Importantly, any decision in relation to the University's name - whether to retain or change it - would establish an expectation of alignment across future institutional positioning, communications and actions.

Across these discussions, the Committee noted that views on the University's name are diverse and often nuanced, including within Indigenous communities themselves. Some perspectives emphasise the importance of truth-telling and reassessment of colonial-era commemoration, while others place weight on continuity, institutional mission and the practical implications of change. This diversity underscores the importance of a future-focused framework that is capable of accommodating complexity and respectful disagreement, rather than presupposing consensus.

Through these discussions, and as reflected in the progress update provided to Council on 18 October 2025, the Committee's thinking increasingly coalesced around an identity-first framing of the issue. Rather than any Council consideration beginning with the question of whether the University's name should change, the Committee recognised the importance of first articulating a shared understanding of James Cook University's contemporary identity, purpose and role. Professor Nakata's contribution was particularly influential in this regard, emphasising that questions of naming cannot be meaningfully addressed in isolation from deeper considerations of who the institution is, whom it serves, how it contributes to improved community outcomes, and how it understands its place within history and society. This perspective reinforced Council's earlier guidance that any consideration of naming should be grounded in mission and identity, not driven by external pressure, symbolic gesture or retrospective judgement.

Here, the Committee has sought to record the nature and scope of the preliminary soundings undertaken. It does not seek to privilege or reconcile these perspectives, nor to draw conclusions from them. Rather, it provides context for the framework and comparative analysis that follow, and signals the importance of a structured, culturally informed and well-governed approach should Council determine that broader consideration is required.

D. Comparative Review: lessons from other Institutions

To inform its work, the Committee undertook a comparative review of how universities in Australia and comparable jurisdictions have approached questions of institutional naming, historical legacy and renaming. The purpose of this review was not to identify a preferred outcome, but to understand the principles, processes and governance arrangements that other institutions have used when confronted with similar issues. The review focused on leading universities in the United States, the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia, drawing on publicly available reports, policies and documented case studies. A detailed comparative table and supporting material are provided at Appendix B.

United States of America experience: principles before decisions

Internationally, a consistent lesson is the value of establishing clear, institution-wide principles *before* addressing specific cases. Yale University's 2016 Committee to Establish Principles on Renaming and Harvard University's 2021 Committee to Articulate Principles on Renaming are frequently cited exemplars. In both cases, the universities responded to contested legacies by deliberately separating the development of principles and process from any immediate decision about a particular name.

Yale's approach is notable for articulating a "strong presumption against renaming", reflecting an emphasis on institutional stability and historical continuity, while still recognising that renaming may be warranted where a namesake's principal legacy is fundamentally at odds with the university's mission and values. Their approach emerged in response to sustained campus

debate regarding the naming of Calhoun College after John C. Calhoun, a prominent defender of slavery and white supremacy, which prompted significant student, faculty and alumni contestation about whether continued commemoration was consistent with the University's values.

Yale's principles introduced explicit criteria, including the centrality and severity of the conduct in question, the standards of the time, and the degree to which the honour impedes the institution's core purposes. Harvard adopted a similarly deliberative approach, emphasising rigorous historical inquiry, extensive community input, and openness to multiple outcomes, including retention with contextualisation, where removal would not clearly advance the institution's mission. Harvard's work was undertaken in the context of broader institutional reflection on that institution's historical entanglement with slavery, colonisation and exclusion, and growing scrutiny of names and symbols associated with individuals whose actions or beliefs are now considered abhorrent.

Across both institutions, two themes are particularly salient for JCU. First, renaming is treated as *exceptional*, not routine, and requires a high evidentiary threshold. Secondly, decisions are anchored in mission and identity rather than external pressure, with governing boards retaining final authority and publishing reasons for decisions to reinforce legitimacy. These approaches demonstrate that clarity of principle and process can reduce institutional risk, regardless of the outcome ultimately reached.

It is also important to recognise that these US cases concerned the naming of colleges and buildings within larger institutions, rather than the name of the university itself. While the governance lessons remain instructive, the symbolic, legal and reputational implications of reconsidering a university's primary name are materially broader. This distinction reinforces the need for caution, procedural rigour and clarity of mandate should Council determine that further consideration is warranted.

United Kingdom and New Zealand: contextualisation, law and legitimacy

United Kingdom cases reinforce similar themes, while highlighting additional considerations around heritage and planning constraints. Institutions such as the University of Edinburgh, the University of Liverpool and the University of Bristol have either renamed buildings or retained contested names with enhanced contextualisation, often following independent commissions or formal reviews. The Oriel College, Oxford, review of the Rhodes statue - undertaken in the context of sustained protest and public debate about Cecil Rhodes' legacy - illustrates the reputational and governance risks that arise when process is perceived as opaque or predetermined. In that case, the College's initial decision to retain the statue, without a clearly articulated or broadly understood process, attracted significant criticism from students, alumni and the wider public. The subsequent independent commission and more transparent engagement highlighted the importance of pairing retention decisions with visible and credible truth-telling measures, including acknowledgement of historical context and commitment to ongoing educational initiatives.

In New Zealand, the experience of universities such as Otago and Victoria University of Wellington underscores the significance of Indigenous partnership and legislative context. Otago's adoption of the Māori name *Tuakiritaka* alongside its legal name demonstrates a dual-track approach that foregrounds Treaty relationships and cultural recognition without altering the statutory title. Conversely, the Wellington case illustrates how legal thresholds and ministerial authority can constrain renaming: while the University's Council supported a legal name change to "University of Wellington", the proposal required approval from the Education Minister, who ultimately declined the request on the basis that consultation and stakeholder support were insufficient and that the case for change had not been adequately demonstrated. This outcome highlights that, irrespective of institutional preference, statutory approval processes and government

judgement can be determinative. These cases reinforce the need for institutions to understand jurisdictional requirements before contemplating change, and demonstrate that naming decisions sit at the intersection of cultural legitimacy, law and public accountability.

Australian experience: identity, values and institutional evolution

Within Australia, recent experience shows that naming debates arise in multiple forms and are not confined to post-colonial reassessment. Deakin University's 2023–24 review of its namesake, Alfred Deakin (a key architect of the White Australia policy and associated legislative frameworks that contributed to the dispossession and removal of Aboriginal children), demonstrates an approach grounded in Indigenous leadership, dialogue and truth-telling that ultimately led to a decision *not* to pursue renaming. Instead, Deakin entered into a formal *Tanderrum*³ with Indigenous representatives, committing to ongoing education and acknowledgment of historical complexity while retaining the existing name. This case illustrates that reconciliation objectives may be advanced through means other than renaming, where there is consensus that institutional mission and future work are better served by retention accompanied by deeper engagement.

Griffith University's experience similarly highlights the value of ideas-led discussion and scholarly debate. While public commentary and academic critique raised questions about Sir Samuel Griffith's legacy - whose role in shaping colonial law and governance in Queensland has been increasingly contested, particularly in relation to its impacts on Indigenous peoples and the legacy of frontier violence - the University did not move to rename, instead fostering forums that used the institution's name as a catalyst for education about frontier history and constitutional development. Both cases reinforce that naming questions can be approached as opportunities for learning and reflection, rather than binary decisions.

Federation University Australia provides a different, but instructive, Australian example. Its renaming in 2014, following the amalgamation of the University of Ballarat and Monash University's Gippsland campus, was not driven by ethical or reputational concerns about a namesake. Rather, it reflected an identity-led response to institutional evolution, with the new name chosen to avoid being defined exclusively by a single place and to signal a broader, multi-campus regional mission. While some local concern was expressed about the loss of the Ballarat name, this did not develop into sustained opposition, in part because the change was framed as forward-looking and because place-based identity was retained at the campus level. This case demonstrates that, in Australia, legal name change has occurred where identity, scale and mission have shifted and reinforces the importance of beginning with questions of institutional identity before considering symbolism.

Lessons for JCU

Taken together, the comparative review suggests a high degree of convergence across jurisdictions, despite differing legal and cultural contexts. Institutions that have navigated naming or renaming effectively have done so by grounding decisions in mission and identity, treating renaming as exceptional, and upholding strong obligations of contextual integrity and non-erasure whether a name is retained or changed. Clear process architecture - including independent review, explicit criteria, governing-body decision-making and published reasons - is critical to legitimacy. Equally important is credible engagement that combines broad opportunities for input with targeted expertise, particularly Indigenous leadership and scholarship.

³ 'Tanderrum' is a Kulin Nation term referring to a ceremony of safe passage and welcome. Deakin University used the term to describe its [formal agreement](#), developed with Indigenous representatives, to retain the University's name while committing to truth-telling and acknowledgement of Alfred Deakin's legacy.

Conversely, where institutions have encountered sustained criticism or reputational harm, this has more often reflected weaknesses in process design, clarity or communication than the substantive decision itself. Perceptions of predetermined outcomes, inadequate evidence or “tokenistic” consultation have proven more damaging than retention or change, reinforcing the importance of disciplined framing and careful sequencing of any engagement activity.

For James Cook University, these lessons do not point to a preferred outcome, but they do inform how Council may wish to approach any future consideration of the University’s name. In particular, the comparative experience highlights the value of an identity-led framing at the outset - clarifying who the institution is, whom it serves, and how its mission is expressed - as a means of de-risking any subsequent discussion or consultation Council may choose to undertake, now or in the future.

The Federation University case is instructive for James Cook University in two respects. First, it demonstrates that Australian universities have precedent for legal name change grounded in institutional evolution and identity, rather than controversy or repudiation. Secondly, it underscores the importance of starting with questions of *who the institution is and seeks to be*, before considering the symbolic function of a name.

These insights underscore the importance of understanding perceptions, expectations and stakeholder dynamics before any substantive options are considered, which is explored in more detail in the discussion that follows on engagement and perspectives. They also provide a foundation for the principles proposed.

E. Considerations around Consultation – community perceptions

Any decision on the University’s name - whether to change it or retain it - will be closely scrutinised by students, staff, alumni, Indigenous communities, government, the University’s key partners, the media and the broader public. The Committee recognises that managing community perceptions through genuine consultation is crucial to the success of this process. This section outlines how different stakeholders might react, the suggested approach to consultation, anticipated risks, and lessons from other institutions’ experiences, ensuring Council is aware of both tangible and intangible considerations.

While this Committee has not been tasked with undertaking consultation, it considers it important to outline the likely perceptions, sensitivities and risks Council would need to take into account if it were ever to contemplate engagement on the University’s name. The observations below are therefore not recommendations to consult, nor a proposed engagement plan, but an assessment of considerations arising from comparable experience and preliminary soundings, to support Council’s decision-making.

Indicative Stakeholder Perspectives

A range of stakeholder groups will have strong and varied views on a potential name change. Current students and staff may focus on what a name change means for their identity and daily experience at the University. Alumni and donors might be concerned about the value of their degrees and the legacy of the institution’s brand – some may feel pride in the historical name, while others could support change as part of the University’s evolution. Indigenous leaders and communities are a vital constituency; many may view a change (such as removing or modifying the “James Cook” namesake) as a long overdue step toward acknowledging Indigenous history and perspectives, whereas failure to change could be seen as a dismissal of those concerns.

Local community members in northern Queensland might be split – some valuing tradition and others welcoming a name that better reflects the region’s culture and people. Beyond the immediate region, the University’s partners and operations in Singapore and elsewhere add another layer: students, regulators and partners in Singapore will need clarity and engagement,

since any renaming affects regulatory approvals, marketing, and the University's brand recognition in that context. It is essential to identify these stakeholders early and understand their expectations to mitigate misunderstandings. Notably, in some international markets James Cook has little cultural or historical resonance, and in some cases the University's name is misinterpreted (as a cooking school), underscoring the need for careful consideration of how institutional identity is understood beyond Australia.

Government stakeholders represent a distinct category of interest, given their statutory, regulatory and political roles. The Queensland Government is the owner of the University's establishing Act, and any legal name change would necessarily require government involvement. Commonwealth agencies, including the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) and Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS) related bodies, would also have regulatory interests.

In addition, elected representatives may engage publicly on matters of university identity, particularly where issues intersect with national history, reconciliation or perceived "culture war" debates. Recent experience demonstrates that even preparatory or governance-focused work can attract political commentary if misunderstood or prematurely disclosed. For this reason, any future consideration of consultation would need to include early, carefully framed engagement with relevant Ministers and senior officials, clear articulation of purpose and scope, and disciplined communications protocols to avoid perceptions of pre-determination or politicisation.

A high-level stakeholder map has been prepared to illustrate the breadth of interests that would intersect with any future consideration of the University's name, including Indigenous communities, students, staff, alumni, government, regulators, international partners and the media. This mapping is provided at Appendix D to support Council's awareness of the complexity and reach of the issue, rather than to prescribe engagement.

Considerations for any future consultation process

Should Council ever determine that consultation is appropriate, comparative experience suggests that a phased and targeted approach is more effective than immediate broad public engagement. Rather than an immediate broad public forum (which may be premature), initial efforts would need to focus on engaging key individuals and groups who can provide critical insights and guidance. For example, respected Indigenous alumni, community elders, and respected Indigenous leaders, alumni and subject-matter experts with standing in higher education, history and public policy could be consulted early. Inviting their perspectives at the outset is likely to strengthen the credibility of the process while serving to enrich the Council's understanding of important cultural and symbolic factors. Such targeted early discussions are not seen by the Committee as a substitute for wider community input, but they would help to ensure that Council has a clear understanding of Indigenous protocols and viewpoints from the outset.

As the process advances, the Council would likely benefit from broadening consultation to include the wider university community - academics, professional staff, current students, alumni, and key partners - in a structured way. This might involve surveys, town-hall meetings, and online forums to gather feedback. Lessons from the University of Otago's recent rebranding illustrate the value of a comprehensive consultation: Otago kick-started its branding change by consulting *mana whenua* (local Māori custodians), student and staff groups, and its alumni network, through both in-person and online engagements, before making final decisions⁴. That

⁴ <https://thespinoff.co.nz/atea/15-03-2023/the-process-to-rebrand-our-oldest-university>

inclusive approach helped inform Otago's council on how to proceed and built broader support for the changes.

By adopting a similar ethos of early targeted engagement followed by wider consultation, the Council could ensure that any proposed change is informed by those who would be most affected and that potential issues are flagged early.

Anticipated Community Reactions and Risks

From the Committee's discussions, it is clear that any change (or decision not to change) will evoke significant reactions - both positive and negative - which carry associated risks. The considerations below are not exhaustive, nor predictive, but reflect common patterns observed in comparable cases and in the Committee's discussions. Key anticipated perceptions and risks include:

- **Emotional and Symbolic Responses:** For many, a university's name is deeply entwined with its identity and heritage. Changing the name could be applauded by those who see it as a progressive move that respects Indigenous history and modern values. However, it could also spark emotional backlash from those who feel a sense of loss or who view it as "erasing" tradition. Conversely, keeping the name *James Cook University* might reassure some stakeholders who prefer stability, but it could disappoint or anger others who feel the name does not appropriately reflect the University's values, community, or the times. The Committee anticipates polarised opinions in public discourse and suggests Council must prepare to address both praise and criticism constructively.
- **Alumni Concerns:** Alumni represent a large, diverse and influential constituency whose perceptions would materially shape the reception of any decision relating to the University's name. For many alumni, the University's name is closely bound to personal identity, professional credentials and lifelong affiliation. A potential name change may therefore raise concerns about the enduring value of degrees, the continuity of institutional reputation, and the preservation of legacy. Some alumni and supporters may oppose change on the basis that it diminishes tradition or weakens brand recognition, while others may support change as a legitimate expression of institutional evolution or alignment with contemporary values. The Committee notes that alumni sentiment is rarely uniform and can vary significantly by cohort, geography and personal experience.

Comparative experience highlights the importance of understanding alumni perspectives early, not to predetermine outcomes, but to anticipate sensitivities and areas of concern. The experience of Victoria University of Wellington, where strong alumni opposition influenced the government's decision not to approve a legal name change, illustrates the reputational and relational risks that can arise where alumni views are not adequately understood or acknowledged. Clear, respectful communication of rationale - whether for change or for retention - is critical to maintaining alumni and donor trust. Where institutions have succeeded, they have done so by emphasising continuity of mission, assurance around qualifications and reputation, and by demonstrating that alumni voices are valued within a principled decision-making process. Conversely, where alumni feel marginalised or surprised, opposition can harden regardless of the decision reached.

It is also relevant to note that changes to college and university names have occurred periodically within the Australian higher education system particularly following the Dawkins reforms of the late 1980s and early 1990s, which led to institutional amalgamations and demergers (including JCU's own merger with the Townsville College of Advanced Education) and, in some cases, the reissuing of testamurs. More recently, the establishment of Adelaide University and discussion of further sector consolidation

demonstrate that consideration of name change is not unprecedented within the higher education sector.

- **Indigenous Community and Cultural Considerations:** The perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples represent a central consideration in any discussion relating to the University's name, given the cultural, historical and symbolic dimensions involved. For many Indigenous leaders, alumni and community members, the continued commemoration of colonial figures can be experienced as inconsistent with contemporary commitments to truth-telling, reconciliation and self-determination. In this context, a name change - or other forms of symbolic recognition - may be viewed as a meaningful act of respect and acknowledgment.

At the same time, the Committee recognises that Indigenous perspectives are not monolithic. Views may differ across communities, generations and individuals, with some prioritising substantive outcomes in education, research and community partnership over symbolic change, and others seeing naming as an important marker of institutional values. Comparative experience and the Committee's own soundings reinforce the importance of avoiding assumptions of uniform Indigenous support for, or opposition to, any particular outcome.

Perceptions of process integrity are particularly critical in this context. Where Indigenous communities perceive engagement as superficial, delayed or instrumental, trust can be eroded regardless of the decision reached. Conversely, where institutions demonstrate respect through early recognition of Indigenous authority, acknowledgement of plurality of views, and visible alignment between decision-making and long-standing reconciliation commitments, outcomes are more likely to be regarded as legitimate even where views differ.

For James Cook University, this consideration sits within a broader history of reconciliation action and Indigenous recognition, including campus naming, governance participation and educational outcomes. Any future consideration of the University's name would therefore be interpreted not in isolation, but as part of an ongoing relationship. Whether the name was retained or changed, the way in which Indigenous perspectives are understood, respected and reflected would significantly influence how the decision is received and what it signals about the University's identity and values.

- **Operational and Brand Continuity Risks:** In addition to symbolic and cultural considerations, perceptions of operational readiness and brand continuity play a significant role in how any decision is received. While detailed operational impacts are addressed elsewhere in this report and supporting appendices, it is important to recognise that uncertainty or confusion about practical implications can quickly translate into negative community perceptions if not managed carefully. Brand continuity is closely linked to trust continuity and stakeholders' confidence that the University's identity, positioning and commitments remain coherent, credible and consistently expressed over time.

For students, staff, partners and the broader public, confidence in institutional stability is paramount. Any suggestion that a decision has not been fully thought through - for example, uncertainty about brand recognition, regulatory standing, or international positioning - can undermine trust in the process, irrespective of the substantive merits of the decision. This is particularly relevant for James Cook University given its international footprint, including operations in Singapore, where clarity of identity and regulatory continuity are essential.

A central consideration for Council is therefore whether any potential change to the University's name would address a clearly defined institutional objective, or whether alternative approaches - such as contextualisation, education or strengthened articulation of purpose - may more effectively achieve the intended outcomes.

Equally, a decision to retain the current name carries its own perceptual risks if it is seen to follow extensive discussion without clear explanation or accompanying action. In such cases, stakeholders may perceive the process as inconclusive or symbolic rather than substantive, unless retention is clearly linked to alternative measures that demonstrate responsiveness to the issues raised.

The Committee therefore considers that perceptions of operational coherence and institutional continuity should be treated as integral to any future consideration of consultation. Ensuring that stakeholders understand the practical implications, and limits, of any decision is as important as addressing its symbolic dimensions, and contributes directly to confidence in the University's governance and leadership.

Communications considerations and protocols

Underpinning all the above is the necessity of a professional communications and marketing strategy to shape community perceptions. Any communications activity associated with a future consultation would need to be led by the University, under Council direction, supported by formal communications and risk management arrangements. However, how the narrative is managed - both during the exploratory phase and, if it proceeds, after a decision - will greatly influence public reception. This includes messaging for media, handling of social media discourse, and clear communication of the reasons for the change or for retaining the current name. Proactive engagement can help set a positive tone: for instance, highlighting that any change is being considered to better reflect the University's principles and the communities it serves, or conversely, explaining that the decision to keep the name will be coupled with other initiatives to honour those communities. Further considerations on risk are at attachment C.

Any decision regarding the University's name would also represent a long-term positioning commitment, requiring sustained alignment across institutional strategy, communications and behaviour, rather than a discrete or time-limited branding exercise.

Learning from other institutions' experiences can guide these efforts. The University of Otago's dual-naming initiative provides an example of effective strategy - it was framed as an inclusive enhancement of identity rather than a loss, and the university openly celebrated the addition of a Māori name as enriching its brand, which was largely well-received after thorough consultation⁵. However, the Committee notes that dual naming practices of this kind are more established in Aotearoa New Zealand, where Te Reo Māori holds recognised national status and language frameworks are comparatively unified.

In Australia, the presence of multiple distinct Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language groups, and the absence of a single national Indigenous language, introduces additional cultural and governance complexity. Indeed, there are over 150 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language groups across Queensland⁶. Any consideration of dual naming in the Australian context would therefore require careful engagement with relevant Traditional Owner groups and recognition of the specific linguistic and cultural landscapes of each campus location.

On the other hand, less successful attempts elsewhere reveal pitfalls to avoid: abrupt announcements or "top-down" changes without stakeholder buy-in tend to generate mistrust. A

⁵ <https://thespinoff.co.nz/atea/15-03-2023/the-process-to-rebrand-our-oldest-university>

⁶ <https://www.slq.qld.gov.au/discover/first-nations-cultures/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-languages>

Carefully crafted communications plan will also outline how to handle potential criticism - for example, if parts of the media or public label the change as “political correctness,” or politically motivated, responses should anchor discussion in institutional values, cultural legitimacy and documented process. In this environment, inconsistencies between stated intent and organisational behaviour are likely to be identified and amplified rapidly, reinforcing the importance of coherence between institutional narrative and practice. Likewise, if the decision is not to change the name, the communications should clearly articulate accompanying measures that demonstrate commitment to regional and Indigenous identity, so that status quo is not perceived as inaction.

Broader Cultural and Symbolic Dimensions

Throughout its deliberations, the Committee has been mindful that this issue is not solely about operational or regulatory feasibility. The issue of naming engages with the University’s symbolic authority, its narrative about itself, and its relationship with the communities in which it operates. In the discussion with the Chancellor held on 8 August, the Chancellor emphasised that the report to Council must capture these broader cultural and symbolic considerations. At issue is not simply the technical status of a name, but what that name communicates - historically, regionally and nationally. How does the University understand the story it tells about its origins and its future? How is that story received by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, regional constituencies, and national and international partners? To what extent does the University’s symbolic identity reinforce, complicate or evolve alongside its contemporary mission? If the Council ultimately decides against a name change, what other avenues exist to ensure the University’s identity genuinely reflects the communities it serves?

Regardless of the outcome, the Committee considers it is important that the University’s public identity reflects its commitment to inclusivity, place and regional pride. James Cook University has undertaken sustained and evolving work in this regard over almost two decades. Early initiatives included the renaming of the Eddie Koiki Mabo Library in 2008, recognising the University’s distinctive role in the Mabo case, alongside the naming of Atika Creek in Cairns, and Wadda Mooli and Goondaloo Creeks in Townsville as part of 40th anniversary events in 2010. These initiatives marked an early and visible commitment to embedding Indigenous language and narrative within the campus environment.

This work expanded over time to include the naming of buildings, public spaces and infrastructure, such as Buralga Yumba (student accommodation) and, more recently, The Yeinie Building (2025), reflecting ongoing partnership with Traditional Owners and the incorporation of Dreaming narratives and local histories into the University’s physical environment.

A significant step-change occurred in 2020, as part of the University’s 50th anniversary, when each major campus was formally conferred an Indigenous name following consultation with relevant Traditional Owners: *Bebegu Yumba* in Townsville (Bindal), *Nguma-bada* in Cairns (Yirrganydji/Djabugay), *Murtupuni* in Mount Isa (Kalkadoon), *Ngudya Yamba* in Mackay and *Ngulaigau Mudh* on Thursday Island (Kaurareg). These names are not ancillary descriptors but recognised markers of identity grounded in language, culture and Country.

Indigenous art and design are also incorporated across campuses and within new infrastructure. Taken together, these initiatives demonstrate that JCU already operates with a layered institutional identity in which English and Indigenous naming coexist. Further consideration may include review of symbols and logos to ensure they reflect the University’s place-based character and evolving identity.

Such measures are not substitutes for careful deliberation on the University’s primary name, but nor are they incidental. They illustrate that institutional identity is dynamic and cumulative. Whether the name is retained or reconsidered, visible and substantive commitments to place,

regional history and Indigenous presence will remain central to maintaining legitimacy, trust and coherence between the University's symbolic identity and its lived purpose.

Brand and Positioning Considerations

The Committee notes that institutional brand is not synonymous with name, but reflects the cumulative expression of purpose, values and behaviour over time. While a university's name is a highly visible element of that brand, it does not in itself determine how the institution is perceived or understood. In this sense, branding is not merely a reputational or operational consideration, but a reflection of institutional coherence and credibility over time.

Any consideration of the University's name should therefore be grounded in a clear articulation of the institutional objective it is intended to address. A name change, in isolation, is unlikely to resolve underlying questions of identity, alignment or stakeholder perception if these are not otherwise addressed through strategy and practice.

Conversely, a decision to retain the current name does not preclude evolution of the University's brand, positioning or narrative, including through strengthened articulation of purpose, contextualisation of history, and visible alignment between institutional commitments and actions.

In all cases, the critical consideration is coherence: the degree to which the University's name, positioning, communications and behaviour operate in a consistent and mutually reinforcing manner over time.

Summary

In summary, the Committee's analysis indicates that community perceptions and stakeholder expectations are central to the legitimacy of any future consideration of the University's name. Comparative experience shows that outcomes are shaped less by the substantive decision taken, and more by whether stakeholders understand the purpose, feel heard, and trust the integrity of the process.

For Council, the key consideration is therefore not whether to consult, but how any consultation would be framed, sequenced and governed if it were ever to occur. An identity-led approach, clear distinction between exploration and decision-making, disciplined engagement with government, and robust communications protocols are critical to managing risk and maintaining trust. These considerations inform the principles set out in the following section, which focus on process integrity rather than outcome.

F. Guiding Principles for Council Consideration

The Committee proposes the following principles to guide any future consideration by Council of the University's name. These principles are intended to underpin both the threshold decision about whether to progress to public consultation, and the integrity, accountability and transparency of any process that might follow. They do not presume or recommend any outcome.

The principles draw on comparative experience across Australian and international universities, including the frameworks adopted by Yale and Harvard, and are tailored to James Cook University's statutory mission, regional context and reconciliation commitments.

1. Identity-first framing

Any consideration of the University's name should begin with a clear articulation of James Cook University's contemporary identity, purpose and role, including whom it serves, what it stands for, how it contributes to improved community outcomes, and how it understands its place in northern Queensland, northern Australia and the Tropics.

Rationale: Comparative experience demonstrates that processes framed around identity and mission are more legitimate and less polarising than those framed around symbolic change alone. An identity-first approach ensures that naming is considered as an expression of institutional purpose, rather than as a reaction to external pressure or isolated historical critique. It provides Council with a coherent basis for it to determine whether consultation is warranted at all.

Articulating James Cook University's Contemporary Identity, Purpose and Role

James Cook University is a place-based public university established by statute to serve northern Queensland and, by extension, northern Australia and the Tropics. Its identity is not incidental to geography, nor purely symbolic; it is foundational to its purpose. The University was created to expand access to higher education, research capability and professional expertise in a region historically underserved by metropolitan institutions, and that mandate continues to shape its mission, operating model and public responsibilities. JCU's contemporary identity is therefore anchored in service to place - defined not only by location, but by long-term commitment to the social, cultural, economic and environmental wellbeing of the communities of the North.

Over time, JCU has evolved into a genuinely multi-campus and multinational research-intensive university. Its major campuses in Townsville and Cairns are complemented by regional study centres, an international campus in Singapore, and a metropolitan presence in Brisbane. This footprint reflects a deliberate strategy: to combine deep regional engagement with global connectivity, particularly across the Indo-Pacific and tropical regions. JCU's closest capital city is Port Moresby in Papua New Guinea, not Brisbane. Therefore, JCU's international activities are not an adjunct to its regional role, but an extension of it - leveraging lived experience in northern Australia to contribute to global challenges such as tropical health, environmental sustainability, climate adaptation, Indigenous knowledge systems, and social resilience. In this sense, JCU operates simultaneously as a regional anchor institution and an outward-facing global university, unified by a common mission rather than constrained by a single place identity.

The communities JCU serves are distinct within the Australian higher education landscape. The University educates a disproportionately high number of students from regional, rural and remote backgrounds, including a significant and growing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student cohort. Many students are first-in-family, mature-age, balancing study with work, caring responsibilities or community obligations and plan to forge a career in regional Australia.

These demographics shape JCU's educational model: an emphasis on access, flexible delivery, applied and work-integrated learning, strong student support and community impact. JCU's success is therefore measured not only by conventional prestige metrics, but by tangible contributions to regional capability including graduate employability in regional labour markets, Indigenous advancement, health, education and economic sustainability.

JCU's research identity is similarly place-informed and impact-driven. The University is internationally recognised for research strength in areas that matter deeply to northern Australia and the Tropics, including tropical medicine and public health, marine and terrestrial ecology, climate science, Indigenous health and wellbeing, and regional development. This research is characterised by close partnership with communities, governments and industry, and by an emphasis on translation and real-world impact rather than abstract inquiry alone. JCU's role as a civic university - providing evidence, expertise and leadership on complex regional challenges - is a core part of its contemporary identity and is explicitly recognised in national policy settings and government engagement.

Taken together, these elements point to a University whose identity is defined by *service, place and purpose*, rather than by symbolism alone. JCU understands itself as an institution working in, with and for northern Australia, while contributing to global knowledge and capability in the

Tropics. Any consideration of the University's name, therefore, must be grounded in this lived institutional reality: who JCU exists to serve; how it balances regional obligation with global engagement; and how its identity is experienced by the diverse communities for whom the University is not an abstract brand, but a critical social and economic institution. An identity-first framing ensures that questions of naming are assessed as expressions of institutional purpose and responsibility, rather than as isolated responses to historical critique or contemporary pressure.

JCU's identity is therefore not reducible to branding, although branding remains an important mechanism through which that identity is communicated, interpreted and experienced by internal and external stakeholders. It is shaped by statute, mission, operating model and community relationships and interdependencies. The University operates within Indigenous lands and knowledge systems and increasingly centres Indigenous priorities within governance, research, teaching and civic engagement. Identity in this context is dynamic: formed through ongoing engagement with place, history and community expectations. The institution of today is not identical to that of its founding, nor fixed in its current form.

The Committee's discussions emphasised that naming questions cannot meaningfully be resolved in isolation from deeper questions of institutional maturity. Universities evolve. They are shaped by their students, staff, leaders and communities over time. An identity-first approach acknowledges this dynamism and asks whether the University's name coheres with the institution it has become and aspires to be.

This framing also serves an important governance function. It allows Council to assess whether any perceived tension between name and purpose is material to the University's mission, rather than reactive to momentary political or social pressure. By grounding deliberation in identity, Council can distinguish between symbolic discomfort and substantive misalignment. It also ensures that questions of naming are considered as expressions of institutional purpose and responsibility, not as mere gestures disconnected from operational reality or community impact.

In this sense, identity-first framing is not a prelude to change, nor a defence of the status quo. It is a disciplined starting point for deliberation. It recognises that before asking whether a name should change, Council must first be clear about who the University is, whom it exists to serve, and what kind of institution it seeks to be in the decades ahead.

Against this articulation of contemporary identity, the Committee acknowledges the underlying question that gives rise to this work: whether the name *James Cook University* continues to align with, or potentially sits in tension with, the University's stated purpose and the lived experience of the communities it serves. For some, the name is understood as a historical marker associated with exploration and scientific endeavour; for others, it is inseparable from the commencement of colonial processes that had profound and enduring impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The Committee reaches no conclusion on this question. Rather, it notes that any perceived dissonance must be assessed through the lens of institutional identity and mission, not symbolism alone.

2. Alignment with University mission, values and lived experience

Building on an articulation of the University's contemporary identity, Council should consider whether the University's name and associated symbolism remain aligned with its mission, statutory purpose and values, and how that identity is experienced in practice by communities it serves. Where a namesake's legacy is considered to be in material tension with the University's present-day values or purpose, that misalignment should be carefully assessed by Council in terms of its nature, extent and impact, and whether it is appropriately addressed through contextualisation, complementary measures, or, where warranted, consideration of change.

Rationale: Honorific institutional names are not value-neutral. Where a perceived misalignment exists between institutional values and symbolic representation, community trust and student or staff experience may be affected. This principle does not presume misalignment, but provides Council with a lens to assess whether concerns raised are material to the University's core purpose.

Alignment and commitment

This assessment of alignment and commitment is not about retrospective judgement, but about institutional coherence: the degree to which the symbols under which the University operates reinforce, or potentially undermine, its stated purpose and lived commitments.

Honorific institutional names are not value-neutral. They function as signals of what an institution chooses to elevate, remember and represent, particularly to students, staff and communities for whom the University is both a place of learning and a civic presence. Where a name is associated with contested historical legacies, questions may arise as to whether that symbolism sits comfortably alongside contemporary commitments, especially in institutions that explicitly position themselves as inclusive, place-based and socially responsive. Such questions do not, in themselves, establish misalignment; they signal the need for careful assessment grounded in evidence, context and impact.

For Council, the task is to determine whether any perceived misalignment is material to the University's core purpose and operations. This includes considering whether concerns about the University's name meaningfully affect community trust, student and staff experience, or the University's ability to engage authentically with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other communities it serves. Importantly, this assessment must distinguish between symbolic discomfort and demonstrable institutional impact, and between isolated viewpoints and issues that go to the heart of the University's mission.

If Council was to conclude that a name or associated symbolism is profoundly antithetical to the University's present-day values - for example, if it were found to materially undermine commitments to Indigenous advancement or inclusivity - this principle affirms that such misalignment should be addressed. Addressing misalignment does not predetermine a particular response. Depending on context, it may involve retention with enhanced contextualisation, complementary measures that reinforce values, or, in some circumstances, consideration of change.

The purpose of this principle is not to privilege symbolism over substance, but to ensure that institutional symbols do not operate in tension with the University's stated purpose or the communities it exists to serve.

In this way, alignment operates as a governance lens rather than a verdict. It provides Council with a structured means of assessing whether concerns raised are peripheral or fundamental, and of determining whether any response is necessary to maintain institutional integrity, credibility and trust. This ensures that decisions about naming are anchored in mission and values, rather than reactive or abstract considerations.

3. Truth-Telling and Historical Acknowledgement

The University should commit to honest, evidence-based acknowledgement of the full historical context associated with its name, including the complexity of James Cook's legacy and the perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Rationale: Truth-telling is a core component of reconciliation and academic integrity. Comparative experience shows that whether a name is retained or changed, institutions are expected to confront historical complexity rather than obscure it. This principle affirms that

education, interpretation and transparency are obligations regardless of outcome, and that understanding is preferable to erasure.

The University should commit to honest, evidence-based acknowledgement of the full historical context associated with its name, including the complexity of James Cook's legacy and the perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This commitment extends beyond the recounting of historical facts to the recognition of how history continues to shape lived experience, institutional trust and opportunity in the present.

Hearing and Understanding

Truth-telling has emerged as a foundational element of reconciliation and academic integrity, but it also has growing relevance in the contemporary shift toward Indigenous self-determination. In the context of Australia's recent national experience - including the failure of the Voice to Parliament referendum - it is evident that symbolic recognition alone is insufficient to address entrenched disadvantage or to build durable pathways for Indigenous agency, participation and leadership.

At the same time, the absence of shared understanding about history continues to undermine confidence, dialogue and progress. Within this context, truth-telling is not an end in itself, but a necessary condition for moving beyond contested narratives toward constructive, future-oriented relationships.

For a university, truth-telling is inseparable from its core purposes of education, research and public scholarship. It requires engagement with evidence, acknowledgement of complexity, and openness to multiple perspectives, including those historically marginalised or silenced. Importantly, this does not entail attributing personal responsibility for past actions to contemporary communities, nor does it excuse inaction in the present. Rather, it affirms that ignorance or avoidance is incompatible with academic responsibility and institutional leadership. Understanding historical context enables informed judgement, ethical decision-making and respectful engagement - all of which are essential to addressing contemporary inequities.

Comparative experience demonstrates that institutions are increasingly expected to confront historical complexity regardless of whether they ultimately retain or change contested names. Attempts to obscure, minimise or defer these conversations tend to erode trust and legitimacy, whereas transparent engagement with history can create space for dialogue, learning and progress.

For James Cook University, a commitment to truth-telling therefore functions as an enduring obligation, independent of naming outcomes. It affirms that education, interpretation and openness are responsibilities that sit alongside - and enable - broader aspirations for Indigenous opportunity, self-determination and a shared future shaped by understanding rather than denial.

4. Respect for heritage and continuity

Any consideration of naming should recognise the significance of institutional heritage, continuity and accumulated reputation, including the interests of alumni, staff and regional communities, and the educational value of engaging critically with history.

Rationale: Comparative cases demonstrate that renaming is treated as exceptional, not routine. Retention with contextualisation has been adopted where institutions judge that educational value and continuity outweigh the benefits of change. This principle ensures that heritage is neither dismissed nor privileged uncritically but instead weighed thoughtfully alongside other considerations.

Respect for heritage, continuity and institutional memory

Universities are long-lived institutions whose names carry meaning not only as symbols, but as repositories of shared experience, achievement and collective memory built over decades.

Institutional heritage has practical, cultural and reputational dimensions. For many alumni and staff, the University's name is closely tied to personal identity, professional standing and lifelong affiliation. For regional communities, it can represent stability, civic pride and continuity of public purpose. These attachments do not in themselves determine whether a name should be retained, but they are legitimate interests that warrant careful consideration. Disregarding them risks eroding trust, fragmenting community relationships and diminishing the sense of continuity that underpins institutional credibility.

Comparative experience demonstrates that renaming is treated as exceptional rather than routine, and that institutions often give substantial weight to continuity when evaluating whether change is warranted. In many cases, universities have concluded that the educational value of retaining a contested name - accompanied by critical interpretation, contextualisation and open engagement with history - outweighs the benefits of renaming. Such approaches recognise that confronting complexity can itself be a powerful pedagogical act, allowing institutions to model critical inquiry rather than historical erasure.

For Council, this principle reinforces the need to weigh heritage thoughtfully rather than uncritically. Heritage should not function as an absolute barrier to change, nor should it be dismissed as mere sentiment. Instead, it should be assessed alongside considerations of identity, values, community impact and future purpose. In this way, continuity becomes part of a balanced evaluative framework - one that acknowledges the University's past, honours the communities that have shaped it, and ensures that any decision about naming is proportionate, informed and respectful of institutional memory.

5. Proportionate, informed and culturally legitimate engagement

If Council were ever to determine that consultation is appropriate, engagement should be proportionate, staged and informed by cultural legitimacy, including early recognition of Indigenous authority and expertise, alongside broader stakeholder perspectives.

Rationale: Engagement that is poorly sequenced, overly broad at the outset, or inattentive to Indigenous protocols has been shown to amplify risk rather than resolve it. This principle supports careful consideration of *whether*, *when* and *how* engagement would occur, without committing Council to consultation prematurely.

Engagement

Engagement in this context is not an end in itself, but a means of informing Council's judgement in a way that is credible, respectful and fit for purpose. Comparative experience demonstrates that engagement processes that are poorly sequenced, overly broad at the outset, or inattentive to cultural protocols can amplify risk rather than resolve it. Open-ended or premature public consultation may entrench polarised positions, create unrealistic expectations about outcomes, or give rise to perceptions that the institution lacks clarity of purpose. These risks are heightened where issues intersect with Indigenous recognition, historical legacy and public identity, and where stakeholders bring differing assumptions about authority, responsibility and voice.

This principle therefore supports an approach in which any engagement is carefully calibrated to its objectives. Early stages, if initiated, should prioritise informed guidance from those with cultural authority, historical expertise and lived experience, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and scholars. Such engagement helps ensure that the framing of any broader consultation is culturally informed, methodologically sound and respectful, rather than

reactive or symbolic. Broader stakeholder engagement - involving students, staff, alumni, partners and the wider community - could follow once Council has articulated the scope, parameters and decision points clearly.

For Council, this principle reinforces that consultation is a discretionary governance tool, not a default obligation. It provides a basis for deciding not only *whether* to engage, but *when, with whom, and for what purpose*. By embedding proportionality and cultural legitimacy into the design of any future engagement, Council can reduce reputational and relational risk, maintain confidence across diverse stakeholder groups, and ensure that participation contributes meaningfully to decision-making rather than undermining it.

6. Non-predetermination and outcome neutrality

Any process contemplated by Council must be explicitly neutral as to outcome. The possibility of retaining the current name, retaining it with contextualisation, or changing it must all remain open until Council determines otherwise.

Rationale: Perceptions of pre-determination are a primary driver of mistrust, reputational damage and politicisation in comparable cases. Clear separation between preparatory work, consultation and decision-making is essential to maintain confidence among stakeholders, including government, Indigenous communities, alumni and staff.

What neutrality means for Council

Maintaining neutrality on outcome means that the full range of possible positions - retaining the current name without modification, retaining it with enhanced contextualisation, or pursuing a change - must remain genuinely open until Council has considered the evidence and advice before it. Outcome neutrality is not a procedural formality; it is a substantive condition of legitimacy for any deliberation of this kind.

Comparative experience demonstrates that perceptions of pre-determination are among the most significant risks in institutional naming debates. Where stakeholders believe that consultation has been initiated to validate a preferred outcome, confidence in the process rapidly erodes, and engagement becomes adversarial rather than constructive. This effect is particularly pronounced where issues intersect with Indigenous recognition, historical legacy, and public identity, and where government, alumni and staff are attentive to signals of institutional intent. In such contexts, even well-designed consultation can be undermined if neutrality is not clearly established and maintained from the outset.

For Council, this principle underscores the importance of clear sequencing and role delineation. Preparatory analysis, consultation (if any), and decision-making must be understood as distinct stages, each with its own purpose and authority. Maintaining this separation protects Council's discretion, reduces the risk of politicisation, and ensures that any decision ultimately reached - whether to retain, contextualise or change the name - is seen as the product of careful consideration of various alternatives on their merits.. Outcome neutrality therefore functions not as indecision, but as disciplined governance in the face of complexity.

7. Procedural rigour, transparency and accountability

Any process endorsed by Council should be governed by clear criteria, documented decision-making, and defined accountabilities, with Council retaining authority at key decision points and providing reasons for its decisions.

Rationale: Across jurisdictions, institutional credibility has been strengthened where governing bodies articulate clear frameworks, retain oversight, and explain their decisions openly. This

principle ensures that Council's role is visible, defensible and consistent with good governance, regardless of outcome.

Rigorous and documented decision making

Any process endorsed by Council in relation to the University's name should be governed by clear criteria, documented decision-making and defined accountabilities, with Council retaining authority at key decision points and providing reasons for its decisions. Given the sensitivity, visibility and potential consequences of naming matters, procedural integrity is not ancillary; it is central to institutional legitimacy.

Comparative experience across jurisdictions demonstrates that institutional credibility is strengthened where governing bodies articulate their frameworks in advance, maintain oversight throughout the process, and communicate decisions clearly and openly. Conversely, ambiguity around roles, decision rights or evaluative criteria has been a common source of criticism and mistrust, particularly where stakeholders perceive decisions to have been made informally, inconsistently or without adequate justification. This risk exists irrespective of whether the ultimate decision is to retain or change a name.

For Council, this principle underscores the importance of establishing and adhering to a disciplined governance architecture. This includes clarity about the purpose and scope of any preparatory work, the advisory status of committees or consultation processes, and the points at which Council consideration and resolution are required. It also requires that the evidentiary basis for decisions - including how competing considerations were weighed - is capable of being explained in a coherent and defensible way.

Transparency in this context does not require disclosure of every deliberative detail, but it does require that Council's reasoning is accessible and intelligible to stakeholders and government. Providing clear explanations for decisions, grounded in the endorsed principles, helps to maintain trust, reduce speculation and demonstrate that outcomes reflect considered judgement rather than expediency.

This principle therefore ensures that, regardless of outcome, Council's role is visible, accountable and consistent with the highest standards of public university governance.

Summary

These seven principles provide a framework to guide decision-making on naming and renaming, ensuring alignment with institutional purpose, values, governance requirements and community expectations.

1. *Identity-first framing*: Ensures that any consideration of naming or renaming is grounded in a clearly articulated institutional purpose that captures the University's understanding of its place in the world.
2. *Alignment with University mission, values and lived experience*: Ensures that decisions reflect the University's mission, values and lived experience, including integrity, respect and commitment to truth-telling.
3. *Truth-telling and Historical Acknowledgement*: Ensures that assessments are informed by credible historical inquiry and relevant evidence.
4. *Respect for heritage and continuity*: Ensures that consideration is given to the broader institutional, reputational and practical implications of any change, including alternatives such as contextualisation.
5. *Proportionate, informed and culturally legitimate engagement*: Ensures that appropriate and meaningful engagement is undertaken, recognising the diversity of perspectives.

6. *Non-predetermination and outcome neutrality*: Ensures that processes are planned and conducted without a predetermined outcome and are clear, proportionate and capable of withstanding external scrutiny.
7. *Procedural rigour, transparency and accountability*: Ensures that decisions are consistent with legislative requirements, governance frameworks and any external approval thresholds.

G. Next steps and decision pathway for Council

The guiding principles set out above are intended to support Council in any future determination whether consideration of the University's name is warranted, and, if so, how such consideration could be structured to ensure legitimacy, proportionality and accountability. In doing so, Council would be expected to have regard not only to institutional considerations, but also to broader external environment including governance, stakeholder and policy settings, and whether these are conducive to a considered and consultative process at that time.

Should a future Council determine that it is appropriate to further explore the University's name, the Committee emphasises that such a decision would not initiate a name change, but rather would mark the commencement of a carefully governed exploratory process.

The purpose of outlining the steps below is to demonstrate how any future consideration could be structured to ensure legitimacy, neutrality and accountability. Progression beyond each stage would require an explicit Council decision, and Council would retain discretion at all points to defer, pause or discontinue the process, including where external conditions are not considered appropriate to support further consideration.

- a. **Council Decision to Proceed:** The first step would be a formal Council decision on whether the matter warrants progression to consultation. This threshold decision is critical. Council may determine that, at this time, no further action is required and that the University's name should remain unchanged, with the principles articulated in this report held in reserve should circumstances change in the future. Alternatively, Council may determine that while a name change is not to be pursued, there is value in expanding other forms of recognition, such as the increased visibility of Indigenous place names, symbols, truth-telling initiatives or educational programs, to further reflect the University's identity and commitments – its people and place. Only if Council resolves to explore consultation on the University's name would subsequent stages be triggered.
- b. **Establishment of a “Name Review Committee” or similar:** If Council were to make such a determination, we envisage that it would then establish a Name Review Committee to manage the next phase of work. This body would be constituted with a clear mandate, Terms of Reference and reporting line to Council. Its role would not be to decide outcomes, but to design and oversee consultation and analysis in accordance with the principles endorsed by Council. Membership would be determined by Council and would be expected to include appropriate expertise and representation, including Indigenous leadership, governance experience, and knowledge of higher education, community engagement, and legal or branding considerations.
- c. **Development of a Consultation Plan:** It is envisaged that once established, the Name Review Committee would develop a comprehensive consultation and engagement plan for Council's approval. This plan would articulate the scope and purpose of consultation, the principles guiding engagement, and the methods to be used to gather input. It would also make explicit the neutral, non-predetermined nature of the process, to avoid any perception that a decision had already been made. The plan would identify how different stakeholder groups - including, students, staff, alumni, government, Indigenous

communities and partners - would be engaged in a proportionate and culturally appropriate manner, and how feedback would be documented and reported.

- d. **Stakeholder Consultation Phase:** The Name Review Committee would undertake the consultation over a defined period. This phase would be focused on listening and information-gathering rather than advocacy or decision-making. It would typically include the provision of factual and educational material about the University's history and identity, opportunities for stakeholders to express views, concerns and aspirations, and structured mechanisms to capture the strength and diversity of sentiment. While discussion of alternatives may arise, the emphasis at this stage would be on understanding perspectives rather than on selecting or promoting specific options.
- e. **Analysis of Feedback and Deliberation:** After consultations, the Name Review Committee would analyse the feedback received and deliberate against the principles endorsed by Council. This would involve assessing whether a compelling case exists for any change, retention or alternative action, having regard to evidence, stakeholder perspectives, institutional mission and potential consequences. Importantly, this deliberation would be guided by the understanding that no outcome is assumed, and that the Committee's role is to provide Council with a balanced and well-reasoned assessment.
- f. **Report and Recommendation of the Name Review Committee:** The Name Review Committee would then prepare a report for Council setting out the consultation process, key themes and findings, and its recommendations. Those recommendations might range from retaining the current name with enhanced contextualisation and educational measures, through to proposing further steps toward a name change, or identifying alternative forms of recognition consistent with the University's identity and values. The report would explicitly demonstrate how the recommendations align with the guiding principles and the evidence gathered through consultation.
- g. **Council Decision on University Name:** Council would remain the sole decision-maker on whether to change the University's name. In considering the Name Review Committee's report, Council would determine the appropriate course of action and provide clear reasons for its decision. If Council decided not to pursue a name change, the process would conclude, potentially accompanied by other actions to reflect the issues raised. If Council decided to proceed toward a name change, further steps would be required, including consideration of legislative and regulatory requirements.
- h. **Legislative and Regulatory Steps:** Any change to the University's legal name would necessitate engagement with government and regulatory bodies, including amendments to the University's establishing legislation and coordination with relevant authorities. These requirements underscore the importance of early and ongoing engagement with government should Council ever contemplate such a course. The regulatory Pathways for a name change in both Australia and Singapore are described in further detail at Appendix D.

Finally, if all approvals were obtained, the University would move to implementation. This would involve a carefully managed transition, including branding, communications, regulatory updates and stakeholder assurance. While implementation sits beyond the scope of the present report, acknowledging these considerations at an early stage ensures that Council is fully informed of the scale and implications of any decision.

Taken together, this staged approach reflects comparative best practice and provides Council with a clear, disciplined pathway that preserves discretion, manages risk, and ensures that any

future consideration of the University's name is conducted in a manner consistent with good governance.

While precise timing would depend entirely on whether and when Council chose to progress beyond the current stage, the Committee considers it important to acknowledge that any substantive consideration of the University's name would necessarily unfold over an extended period. Comparative experience indicates that even where institutions ultimately decide not to change their name, a principled and well-governed process typically spans several years rather than months.

Were Council to determine that consultation should be explored, time would be required to establish appropriate governance arrangements, develop and approve a consultation plan, undertake staged engagement with stakeholders, analyse feedback, and return recommendations to Council. Any subsequent decision by Council would then be followed, if relevant, by legislative and regulatory processes and a carefully managed implementation phase.

The purpose of noting indicative sequencing is not to prescribe a timetable, but to underscore that no aspect of this work should be rushed or predetermined. Rather, the scale and sensitivity of the issue demand deliberation, due diligence and patience. Conversely, if Council were to decide not to proceed, the sequencing outlined would not commence, and the principles developed through this work would simply remain available should circumstances change in the future.

H. Operational considerations and cost implications

In considering whether any further steps should be taken in relation to the University's name, the Committee identified a range of operational, legislative and financial considerations that would require careful assessment should Council ever determine that consultation or implementation was warranted. These considerations underscore that a university name change is a significant institutional undertaking, with implications extending well beyond symbolism or branding.

At the outset, it is important to distinguish between the costs associated with exploration and consultation, and the substantially larger costs that would arise only if Council were to approve pursuit of a legal name change and the associated consultation processes, approvals and rebranding. The Reference Committee's role has been to ensure that Council has sight of both dimensions, without presuming that either would be triggered.

Consultation-related resourcing and costs

Even prior to any decision on a name change, a robust and credible consultation process would carry material resourcing implications. Comparative experience indicates that consultation of this sensitivity and scale cannot be absorbed solely within existing workloads without risk to quality, timeliness or integrity.

The Committee considers it realistic that any substantive consultation process would require a dedicated project team, likely comprising a small multidisciplinary group supporting governance, engagement, logistics, communications and analysis. Depending on scope and duration, this could equate to a team of approximately five staff across Higher Education Worker Levels 5–8, supported by specialist advice as required (for example, facilitation, communications or cultural expertise). Whether these roles were filled through temporary internal secondments or additional fixed-term appointments would be a matter for Council and management, but in either case would divert resources from other institutional endeavours.

In addition to staffing, consultation would involve direct expenditure associated with engagement activities, such as facilitation of workshops, stakeholder travel and hosting, development of materials, analysis of submissions, and reporting. While the scale of cost would depend on

whether consultation was limited and targeted or broader and public, indicative benchmarking suggests that consultation expenditure alone could be substantial and would need to be planned and approved as part of any future process. Importantly, these costs would be incurred regardless of whether a name change ultimately proceeded.

This analysis of indicative resourcing requirements is preliminary and based on internal scoping assumptions rather than a formal business case. It assumes a staged consultation process of several months' duration, structured governance oversight, dedicated coordination capacity, and appropriate cultural and communications expertise. The estimate reflects the Committee's judgement that a process of this sensitivity and scale could not reasonably be absorbed within existing roles without compromising either delivery or business-as-usual operations.

Should Council determine that consultation is warranted, a more detailed project plan and costed business case would be required. This would need to model staffing costs, engagement design, facilitation, travel, communications materials, and analytical support, as well as the potential costs of contextualisation initiatives even where no name change was pursued. The Committee's intent at this stage is not to fix a budget, but to signal that the process would carry material and unavoidable resource implications requiring explicit approval.

Regulatory and operational implementation considerations

Should Council ever determine to pursue a legal name change, additional layers of operational complexity would arise. As JCU is a statutory university, any change to the University's legal name would require amendment to its establishing legislation and engagement with government. This places aspects of the process beyond the authority of Council alone and introduces dependencies on external decision-makers and timelines.

Beyond legislation, implementation would involve extensive rebranding and system changes across the University's domestic and international operations. The marketing and rebranding report at appendix D outlines indicative cost ranges and categories, including brand identity development, digital systems, physical signage, academic materials, communications campaigns and technology updates. These costs are significant and would need to be staged and managed carefully to mitigate disruption to students, staff, partners and regulators.

The Committee notes that these operational considerations are not arguments for or against a name change. Rather, they are relevant contextual factors that Council would need to weigh alongside symbolic, cultural and reputational considerations in determining whether further work is justified.

Alternatives and complementary measures

The Committee also considered that meaningful progress toward reconciliation and inclusive institutional identity is not limited to the question of the University's legal name. A range of alternative or complementary measures could be pursued independently of any name change decision. These include further recognition of Indigenous history through campus and building naming, scholarships, public education initiatives, expanded use of Indigenous languages in University branding, and continued investment in Indigenous governance, participation and outcomes.

Notably, James Cook University has already taken significant steps in this regard, including the conferral of Indigenous campus names and the renaming of key facilities. These actions demonstrate that the University's commitment to reconciliation and regional identity can be advanced through multiple pathways, whether or not Council ever determines that a name change should be explored.

Governance context

By identifying these operational and cost considerations, the Committee has sought to support good governance practice by ensuring that Council is fully informed of the implications of any future decision. The intent is not to recommend a course of action, but to provide a sound and realistic basis for Council - and, if relevant, government - to assess feasibility, risk and proportionality alongside values-based considerations.

I. If Council determines not to pursue a name change

The Committee also considered the implications where Council in any future consideration might determine that the University's name should remain unchanged. Comparative experience indicates that, in such circumstances, the credibility of the decision rests not on the outcome itself, but on whether it is understood to have been reached through principled and transparent consideration, and whether it is accompanied by tangible and sustained actions that give effect to the University's stated values and commitments.

In this context, the Committee emphasises that a decision not to change the University's name should not be framed as inaction. Rather, it may be accompanied by alternative or complementary measures that meaningfully advance reconciliation, inclusivity and institutional identity, and that respond to issues raised through discussion or consultation.

One such pathway is the further elevation and formalisation of Indigenous identity across the University. James Cook University has already taken important steps in this regard, including the conferral of Indigenous names on its campuses. Council may wish to consider how these place names - such as Bebegu Yumba and Nguma-bada - are more consistently and visibly embedded within the University's branding, signage, digital presence and official communications, reinforcing the centrality of Country, language and community to the institution's identity.

The Committee also noted that symbols and visual identity form part of how the University represents itself publicly. Without presuming any particular outcome, Council could consider whether elements such as the University's crest, logo or other visual markers continue to reflect its regional role, contemporary mission and reconciliation commitments, or whether further contextualisation or adaptation would be appropriate.

Educational and interpretive initiatives were identified as another important avenue. This could include the development of public-facing resources, exhibitions or digital materials that present a fuller account of James Cook's voyages and their impacts, incorporating Indigenous perspectives and scholarship. Such initiatives align closely with the University's role as an educator and knowledge institution, and with national truth-telling efforts, regardless of naming outcomes.

Further opportunities also exist to recognise and honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership through commemorative naming of facilities, scholarships, programs or professorial positions, building on precedents such as the Eddie Koiki Mabo Library and The Yeinie Building. These actions provide enduring, visible recognition and can be directly linked to the University's core activities in education and research.

Finally, the Committee notes the importance of public communication in any scenario. If Council were to decide *not* to pursue a name change, it would be critical to articulate clearly the reasons for that decision and to situate it within a broader narrative of institutional identity, reconciliation and future direction. As demonstrated in other universities' experience, pairing a decision to retain a name with concrete commitments and actions can help ensure the outcome is understood as thoughtful and constructive, rather than dismissive or static.

By outlining these alternatives, the Committee seeks to make clear that Council retains a range of meaningful options through which the University can continue to strengthen its identity and relationships with the communities it serves. Retaining the current name, if that were Council's decision, need not preclude progress; equally, it underscores that reconciliation and inclusivity are expressed through sustained action as much as through symbolism.

J. Conclusion and Next Steps

This report marks the conclusion of the University Name Reference Committee's work. Consistent with its remit from Council, the Committee has not taken a position on whether the University's name should be changed, nor has it proposed alternative names. Its purpose has been to provide Council with a principle-led, well-governed framework guiding how consideration of the University's name could be approached, should Council determine that it is appropriate to do so at some point in the future.

At its core, this report affirms that questions of institutional naming cannot be separated from deeper considerations of identity, purpose and place. James Cook University's contemporary identity as a civic, place-based and internationally engaged university serving northern Australia provides the essential lens through which any future consideration must be assessed.

In fulfilling its Terms of Reference, the Committee has examined the historical context of the University's name, contemporary expectations around institutional identity and reconciliation, comparative experience across Australian and international universities, stakeholder perceptions, governance considerations, and the operational and legislative implications associated with naming decisions. From this analysis, the Committee has developed a set of guiding principles and a staged decision pathway designed to uphold neutrality, cultural legitimacy, transparency and accountability, while preserving Council's discretion at every point.

The Committee recommends that Council consider adopting the guiding principles and process set out in this report as the University's reference framework for any future consideration of naming matters. Adoption of the framework does not commit Council to consultation or to any substantive change. Rather, it establishes a shared understanding that, should the issue arise, it will be addressed in a disciplined, evidence-based and respectful manner, consistent with the University's values, statutory responsibilities and commitment to reconciliation.

In terms of immediate next steps, Council may determine that no further action is required at this time. In that case, the framework and principles articulated in this report would remain available to inform future deliberations, should circumstances change or related issues arise.

Alternatively, if Council were to determine that the question of the University's name warrants further exploration, the next step would be a separate and explicit decision to initiate the exploratory phase outlined in the report, including the establishment of a new Name Review Committee to undertake consultation and analysis in accordance with Council-endorsed principles.

In either scenario, the work of the Reference Committee concludes with the delivery of this report. By articulating a clear, principled and proportionate approach to one of the most sensitive questions an institution can face, the Committee has sought to strengthen the University's governance capability and ensure that any future consideration of naming is approached with care, integrity and respect for the communities the University serves.

The Committee's work concludes not with a recommendation, but with a governance capability: a structured, principled and evidence-informed roadmap available to Council should it ever choose to activate it.

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Reference Committee - Terms of Reference

Reconciliation

JCU's [Reconciliation Statement](#) commits the University to working towards the achievement of genuine and sustainable reconciliation between Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider community, and that the ongoing process of reconciliation is vital to the attainment of a better future for all Australians and all members of the JCU community.

JCU commits to create a university environment where Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and members of the wider campus community, work, study and live together with mutual respect and understanding, feel safe and valued, and to recognise and value cultural diversity as an asset which enriches the life of the university community.

1. Background

- 1.1 James Cook University has a distinctive mission: to serve the peoples of northern Queensland. The geography it occupies is no less distinct. With campuses and facilities stretching from Mackay to the Torres Strait, and as far west as Mount Isa, the University provides education and research on the lands of diverse First Nations peoples. The intensification of European settlement in this region was characterised by brutality and violence – involving the forced concentration of Indigenous peoples into missions for protection and the civilising effects of religion. And so, proximate to the University's major campuses are a series of settlements that are enduring reminders of this history. Mona Mona, Yarrabah, Palm Island are major Indigenous communities and, further afield but still within the University's catchment, are others: Doomadgee, Aurukun, Kowanyama among them. How might the University reconcile its statutory mission with this history of colonial violence and settlement? What are the implications for the University's role in the region of bearing the name of the harbinger of colonial violence and dislocation?
- 1.2 The University's leadership has been sensitive to critical commentary from Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander peoples about the name of the institution for some time. And, in the past two decades, University has undertaken a number of steps to recognise First Nations peoples and attend to the challenge of reconciliation. These include: in 2008 re-naming the library building on the Townsville campus after Eddie Koiki Mabo and launching JCU's Reconciliation Statement; developing the inaugural Reconciliation Action Plan in 2014; and accepting the gifting of local language names for our campuses from the Traditional Owners during the University's 50th Anniversary year in 2020. In 2021, the University elevated its most senior Indigenous academic position to the level of Deputy Vice Chancellor Indigenous Education and Strategy, and in 2023, JCU's Council elected its first Indigenous Chancellor, indeed, the first in Queensland.
- 1.3 Meaningful reconciliation can't occur without truth telling, and fact finding and truth seeking need to precede any truth telling⁷. Wrestling with Queensland's colonial history and the legacy of the name the University bears is a complex and contested challenge, requiring more than a little intellectual circumspection and effort. To this end, the University Council has determined that a learned Reference Committee will be established to undertake this work and offer advice on the rationale, principles, implications and process that should be considered if a change of name was feasible and desirable.

⁷ Evans, R (2024, February 23). Friday essay: neither a monster nor a saint ... Sir Samuel Griffith, Queensland's violent frontier and the rigours of truth-telling. The Conversation. <https://theconversation.com/friday-essay-neither-a-monster-nor-a-saint-sir-samuel-griffith-queenslands-violent-frontier-and-the-rigours-of-truth-telling-222262>

- 1.4 The purpose of this Terms of Reference document is to outline the mandate, responsibilities, and principles to be followed by the learned Reference Committee.

2. Establishment

- 2.1 There shall be a Reference Committee established by Council to deliver on the purpose and objectives.

3. Membership

- 3.1 The Committee shall be established by the Chancellor in consultation with the Vice Chancellor and comprise:

- Professor Tom Calma AO (Chair)
- Emeritus Professor Sandra Harding AO (Deputy Chair)
- Professor Henry Reynolds
- Mr Bill Tweddell AM

4. Purpose

- 4.1 The Reference Committee is tasked with conducting a careful and critical review enabling it to advise on the rationale, implications, and process for changing the University's name if this was to be pursued by the Council of JCU. The Committee will explore the historical context, societal implications, stakeholder perspectives, legislative and logistical considerations associated with a potential name change.
- 4.2 The Committee is not tasked to recommend that the University change its name, nor with developing proposals for a new name, as this would be the task of a Name Review Committee established with a different purpose, membership and set of objectives.

5. Responsibilities and Objectives

- 5.1 The Committee is tasked to:
- a. conduct a critical review to assess the rationale, considerations, principles, implications, and process for changing a university's name, including examples from other institutions;
 - b. evaluate the historical context and significance of the current university name, including our namesake's beliefs and actions, the colonial connotations, and relevance in the contemporary political and societal expectations context;
 - c. identify and recommend the principles that JCU would adopt to undertake meaningful consideration and engagement, referencing established frameworks such as those developed by Yale and Harvard University; and
 - d. propose a process for consultation with internal and external stakeholders; and
 - e. explore the legislative and logistical considerations associated with any University name change.
- 5.2 And consider the following:
- a. naming conventions and processes of universities (traditionally place or location, or people of historic significance);
 - b. what changes might be needed in addition or as an alternative to re-naming (e.g., within the learning and teaching portfolio, engagement, pathways, iconography);
 - c. the University's values - authenticity, integrity, excellence and respect – as articulated in the Corporate Strategy; and

- d. the legislative, logistical, financial, and operational implications of a name change, including branding, marketing, legal considerations, and administrative processes.

- 5.3 The Reference Committee is to develop a report outlining the findings, recommendations, and proposed timeline for consultation processes if the Council were to consider it feasible and desirable to establish a Name Review Committee to consider the University's name.

6. Proceedings

- 6.1 The Reference Committee will meet as required to achieve the purpose and objectives, usually via Teams or Zoom. Notes of the meetings will be kept and circulated to the Committee for confirmation and recording of actions.

7. Administrative support

- 7.1 The Office of the Chief of Staff will provide administrative and secretariat support to the Reference Committee, including coordination of travel and meeting logistics as needed.

8. Reporting

- 8.1 The University Name Reference Committee shall provide an update on progress to Council's workshop in May 2026, and report its findings, recommendations, and proposed consultation plan to the University Council at the October Workshop in 2026.

9. Confidentiality

- 9.1 All sensitive information discussed within the Committee must be kept confidential and not disclosed to unauthorised parties.

10. Amendments

- 10.1 This Terms of Reference document shall serve as a guiding framework for the University Name Reference Committee, ensuring a thorough, transparent, and inclusive review process aligned with the University's values and aspirations.

Attachment:

- 1. Biographies of Committee members

Artwork:

Savage, K. (2014). 'Coming together and respecting difference'. [Acrylic on linen]. JCU, Townsville

JCU acquired the artwork as part of its commitment to implement the Reconciliation Action Plan.



Professor Tom Calma AO

FANZSOG FAA FASSA FAHA

Senior Australian of the Year 2023

Prof Calma is an Aboriginal Elder from the Kungarakan (Koong ara kan) tribal group and a member of the Iwaidja (Ee wad ja) tribal group whose traditional lands are south west of Darwin and on the Cobourg Peninsula in the Northern Territory of Australia, respectively. He has been involved in Indigenous affairs at a local, community, state, national and international level and worked in the public sector for over 50 years and is currently on a number of boards and committees

focusing on rural and remote Australia, health, mental health, suicide prevention, all levels of education, ageing and aged care, culture and language, justice reinvestment, research, reconciliation and economic development. After a distinguished career of 38 years in the Australian Public Service Professor Calma retired in 2010.

From 2004 to 2010 Prof Calma was *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner* and *Race Discrimination Commissioner* (2004-09) at the Australian Human Rights Commission. He represented Australia's education and training interests as a senior diplomat in India and Vietnam from 1995 to 2002 and was a member and co-chair of Reconciliation Australia from 2011 - 2024.

In 2007 Prof Calma was named by the Bulletin Magazine as the *Most Influential Indigenous Person in Australia*; in 2008 GQ Magazine's *2008 Man of Inspiration* and in 2010 Australian Doctor Magazine as *one of the 50 Most Influential People in medicine in Australia* and in July 2023 was recognised as one of 52 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples changing the World. Since March 2010 Prof Calma has been the *National Coordinator, Tackling Indigenous Smoking* to lead the fight against tobacco and vaping use by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. On 1 January 2014, after serving six years as a member of Council and Deputy Chancellor, Prof Calma became the *6th Chancellor of the University of Canberra* and the first Indigenous male Chancellor of an Australian university. His term concluded on 31 December 2023.

Prof Calma was awarded *honorary doctorate appointments* from Charles Darwin University (2010), Curtin University (2011), Flinders University (2014), the University of South Australia (2023), University of Canberra (2023), The University of Sydney (2024) and Deakin University in 2026. In 2012 Prof Calma was awarded an *Order of Australia; Officer of the General Division (AO)*, in 2013 *ACT Australian of the Year*, and in 2015 bestowed one of four *Inaugural University of South Australia Alumni Awards* and the Public Health Association of Australia's pre-eminent *Sidney Sax Public Health Medal*. On 30 June 2016 in Canberra The Honourable John Berry, Ambassador of the United States of American to Australia, presented Professor Calma with a US Flag that was flown over the *Martin Luther King Jr Memorial* in Washington DC in recognition of his "leadership in promoting equality, social tolerance and youth advancement." In September 2019 Professor Calma was appointed a *Fellow* of the Australian and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG) and *Patron* of the Winston Churchill Scholarship Trust.

On 9 November 2022 Professor Calma was announced ACT Senior Australian of the Year 2023 and on 25 January 2023 was announce the National Senior Australian of the Year 2023. In February 2024 Professor Calma was appointed a Professor Emeritus and awarded an Honorary Doctorate by the University of Canberra Council. In June 2024 Professor Calma was appointed a Fellow of The University of Sydney Senate and in July 2024 was appointed Chair of the ARC Centre of Excellence for Indigenous Futures Advisory Board. Since 2015 he has held the post of Professor of Practice at the Faculty of Medicine and Health at the University of Sydney. Professor Calma has Honorary academic appointments at ANU, University of Queensland and Macquarie University was a member of the Higher Education Accord Implementation Advisory Committee 2024-2025 and in 2026 appointed as the Acting First Nations Commissioner with the Interim Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC).

He is a Fellow of the Academies of Science, Social Science and Humanities.



Emeritus Professor Sandra Harding AO

BSc (Hons) *ANU*, MPubAdmin *UQ*, PhD *NCSU*, *DUniv* *QUT*, HonDoc *JIU*, FAICD, GSMC, FQA

Emeritus Professor Sandra Harding AO is an experienced university leader, non-executive director and economic sociologist who has made significant contributions to higher education governance, public policy and regional development in Australia and internationally.

Prof Harding served as Vice-Chancellor and President of James Cook University (JCU) from January 2007 to February 2022, providing strategic leadership across its Townsville, Cairns and Singapore campuses and strengthening the institution's national and global engagement.

Prior to joining JCU, Professor Harding held senior executive roles at Queensland University of Technology from 1997, including Deputy Vice-Chancellor (International and Development) and Executive Dean of the Faculty of Business. She played an influential role in sector policy and collaboration, serving on the Board of Universities Australia from 2009 to 2015 and as Chair from 2013 to 2015. She also chaired the Innovative Research Universities group and was the inaugural Chair of the Queensland Vice-Chancellors Committee from 2020 to 2021.

Her extensive governance experience spans business, research, government and community organisations. Appointments have included Chair of the University Sector Review Panel (WA), Director of the North Queensland Cowboys NRL club, Council Member of the Australian Institute of Marine Science, and Chair of the Census Statistical Independent Assurance Panels for the 2016 and 2021 Australian Population Censuses. She has also contributed to national bodies such as the Australian Research Council Advisory Committee and the Australian Statistics Advisory Council, and internationally as Commissioner for the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research and Australia's representative to the University Grants Commission for the University of the South Pacific.

A Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and Graduate of the Advanced Trustee Directorship Course (Super Members Council), Professor Harding currently serves as Director of UniSuper, Chair of North Queensland Airport Group, Director of the Regional Australia Institute and the University of Notre Dame Australia, and a member of the Board of Governors of the Queensland Community Foundation.

Professor Harding was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia in 2019 for services to Australian higher education and to the Queensland community.



Emeritus Professor Henry Reynolds

MA *UTas*, PhD *JCU*, Hon DLitt *UTAS*, Hon DLitt *JCU*

FASSA FAHA

2015 Tasmanian Senior Australian of the Year

Emeritus Professor Henry Reynolds was born in Hobart in 1938. His father, John Reynolds, was a journalist and the first biographer of Edmund Barton. He attended a school in Hobart, gained a Masters degree from the University of Tasmania and a doctorate from James Cook University.

Prof Reynolds taught in secondary schools in Australia and England. He joined the staff of Townsville University College (later James Cook University) in 1966. He was Associate Professor of History and Politics at the University from 1982 until his retirement in 1998. In 2000 he took up a professorial fellowship at the University of Tasmania.

A pioneering historian, Henry Reynolds is considered one of the nation's leading authorities on the history of Australia's Indigenous people. Henry's seminal book, *The Other Side of the Frontier*, published in 1981, was the first to see history from an Aboriginal perspective. An outspoken public intellectual, Henry was the first academic historian to champion Aboriginal land rights, fighting for reconciliation at a time when it was not popular.

Henry's oral history project in the 1970s connected him with Eddie Mabo and greatly contributed to the High Court's recognition of land rights. Henry's 20-plus books have not only won a string of awards, including the Queensland Premier's and Prime Minister's Literary Awards, they have encouraged young historians to embrace Aboriginal history, have enriched the nation's understanding of our past and have pointed the way to a better future. His latest titled "Looking from the North – Australian History from the Top Down" is a concise general history of Australia above the Tropic of Capricorn.



William (Bill) Tweddell AM

BA BEc JCU

Bill Tweddell AM served as Chancellor of James Cook University from March 2016 until April 2023. He was JCU's fifth Chancellor, and the first JCU graduate elected to the role. In 2010, Mr Tweddell was recognised as one of JCU's Outstanding Alumni.

Mr Tweddell had earlier enjoyed a distinguished career in Australia's diplomatic service spanning four decades (1976-2016). Immediately before becoming Chancellor, he was Australia's Ambassador to the Philippines (2012-16).

He had also served as Head of the Americas and Africa Division and in other senior positions in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Canberra, and as Ambassador to Vietnam, Deputy High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, Consul-General to Hong Kong and Macau, High Commissioner to Sri Lanka and the Maldives, and Deputy High Commissioner to India, with earlier postings in Greece and Bangladesh. He was also Chief of Staff and Principal Adviser to the former Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer.

He grew up in Townsville, attending Central State School, Townsville Grammar School and JCU, where he obtained degrees in English Language and Literature and in Economics. He also began his working life at JCU. In 2021, Townsville Grammar School's annual Tweddell Leadership Dinner was named in his honour.

Mr Tweddell is a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, the Australian Institute of International Affairs and the National Press Club and Life Member and Board Member of the Foundation for Australian Literary Studies.

He is Patron of the Great Barrier Reef Orchestra, Life Member of the National Trust of Australia, former Deputy Chair of the Council of John Flynn College, a member of the Northern Queensland Committee of the charitable trust Queensland Gives, a former Chair of the Steering Committee for a Centre for Brain Health in the Tropics, the work of which culminated in the establishment of the Margaret Roderick Centre for Mental Health Research, and a former member of the Executive Committee of the University Chancellors Council.

In 2016, the President of the Philippines awarded Mr Tweddell with the rank of Grand Cross, Gold Distinction, under the Order of the Sikatuna, for his services to relations between the Philippines and Australia.

In June 2025, Mr Tweddell was honoured as a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) "for significant service to international relations, to education, and to the community".

Comparative Review: Naming and Renaming in Universities (United States, United Kingdom, New Zealand, Australia)

Purpose and scope

This appendix provides comparative reference material on how universities in Australia and comparable jurisdictions have approached questions of naming and renaming. It is intended to inform Council’s understanding of common principles, process design choices, and associated risks. The material is illustrative rather than exhaustive and does not advocate for any particular outcome or approach.

	Representative sources used	Core principles articulated	Process design features	Consultation & engagement	Outcomes / examples	Risks & operational considerations
United States	<p>Yale CEPR principles (mandate to set principles only; non-erasure, alignment with mission; exceptional” threshold)</p> <p>Harvard Principles (scope, denaming concept; school vs university-level pathways)</p> <p>UNC Policy (exceptionality, documentary evidence; staged governance)</p> <p>George Washington (GWU) Framework (guiding principles; petitioning; Board authority)</p>	<p>Alignment with mission/values; avoid honouring legacies that materially impede mission.</p> <p>Renaming is “exceptional”; presumptions against change, but sometimes warranted.</p> <p>Non-erasure & contextualisation obligations whether changing or retaining.</p>	<p>Structured intake (petition or Chancellor/President initiation).</p> <p>Independent committee with scholarly expertise; written report; clear criteria (centrality of harmful conduct, strength of evidence).</p> <p>Final decision at governing board level; record reasons.</p>	<p>Broad invitations for comment (students, alumni, staff, heirs).</p> <p>Deliberate modelling of transparent process to build legitimacy.</p>	<p>Principles-first frameworks (Yale, Harvard) used widely as templates.</p> <p>Policy adoption followed by case handling (UNC, GWU).</p>	<p>Reputational exposure if process appears predetermined or opaque (Yale’s early episode prompted creation of principles).</p> <p>Resource/time for archival research; communications planning for contested media climates.</p>
United Kingdom	<p>University of Edinburgh renamed David Hume Tower to 40 George Square</p> <p>University of Liverpool decision to rename Gladstone Hall</p> <p>University of Bristol: Legacies of Slavery report and public consultation on building names</p> <p>Oriel College, Oxford: Independent Commission on Rhodes.</p> <p>Churchill College, Cambridge: “Churchill, Race & Empire” debates and reactions.</p>	<p>Mission/values alignment & non-erasure: UK cases frame change as exceptional but sometimes necessary; strong emphasis on contextualisation when retaining. (Edinburgh, Bristol, Oriel.)</p>	<p>Commission/panel model (Oriel) with evidence review and recommendations.</p> <p>Executive/board decisions with recorded rationale (Edinburgh/ Liverpool).</p> <p>Policy-led consultations (Bristol).</p>	<p>Mixed-mode engagement: open submissions, public forums, stakeholder briefings (Bristol);</p> <p>Sensitivity to heritage/planning law (Oriel);</p> <p>Media-facing FAQs to manage expectations (Edinburgh/Bristol).</p>	<p>Rename implemented: Hume Tower → 40 George Square; Gladstone Hall renamed.</p> <p>Retain with contextualisation: Oriel keeps Rhodes statue; invests in contextual measures</p>	<p>Heritage/planning constraints & costs (Oriel)</p> <p>Media polarisation and “culture war” framing (Churchill/Oriel)</p> <p>Need to pair retention with visible truth-telling to avoid reputational drift (Bristol).</p>

	Representative sources used	Core principles articulated	Process design features	Consultation & engagement	Outcomes / examples	Risks & operational considerations
New Zealand	<p>University of Otago Tuakiritaka rebrand: new Māori name and tohu; legal name retained; costed roll-out and consultation record. RNZ coverage of \$1.3m cost and rationale;</p> <p>Victoria University of Wellington: Minister declined legal name change in 2018; subsequent legislative process change requires Parliamentary approval.</p>	<p>Treaty-led framing and mana whenua partnership in brand/naming decisions (Otago).</p> <p>Retention with change: dual-track (new Māori name/tohu while legal name remains).</p>	<p>Policy/legislative overlay: NZ now requires Parliamentary approval for legal university name changes; heightens threshold.</p>	<p>Extensive consultation evidenced (Otago staff, students, alumni; mana whenua).</p> <p>Government stakeholders play a determinative role (VUW case).</p>	<p>Dual-naming/brand refresh implemented (Otago) with staged roll-out and declared costs.</p> <p>Legal name change rejected (VUW).</p>	<p>Financial scrutiny (media focus on rebrand costs).</p> <p>Political risk where changes are framed in “culture war” terms; mitigate with clear rationale and evidence of support.</p>
Australia	<p>University of Melbourne: Places Naming policy update (principles; Indigenous naming enduring; review/rename triggers; non-erasure);</p> <p>Deakin reporting on decision not to pursue name change (public debate context);</p> <p>Griffith discussion volume on “re-imagining” the university (ideas-led rather than procedural);</p> <p>Federation University an institutional amalgamation (University of Ballarat + Monash University Gippsland campus);</p> <p>Lady Cilento Children’s Hospital (2018) – Staff petition (~900) and public survey (38 000; 62 % in favour); values and reputation concerns; ministerial decision; ≈ \$0.5 m cost; media and family opposition; change implemented and accepted.</p>	<p>Principles embedded in policy, including recognition of Country and Traditional Owners; enduring Indigenous names; routine reviews (e.g., 25-year cycles).</p> <p>Non-erasure, contextual acknowledgement when renaming.</p> <p>Demonstrates trigger events beyond institutional policy: reputational, ethical, and public clarity grounds; aligns with broader principle of mission and values coherence, including community trust and inclusion.</p> <p>Institutional evolution; multi-campus identity; strategic positioning</p>	<p>Case triggers: demolition/ redevelopment; end of commercial terms; inconsistency with values; merger.</p> <p>Consultation built into policy development (Traditional Owners and internal governance bodies).</p> <p>Illustrates dual-level decision-making: petition and survey → ministerial decision. Transparent if politically charged. Highlights importance of credible consultation design (to counter “fake consultation” claims).</p>	<p>Emphasis on co-design with Indigenous governance in policy formation.</p> <p>Public discourse (e.g., Deakin) highlights reputational sensitivities even absent a formal renaming.</p> <p>Public engagement and stakeholder tension. Highlights challenges in evidencing legitimate representation.</p>	<p>Policy modernisation (Melbourne) to future-proof naming/renaming;</p> <p>Ideas-led dialogues (Griffith).</p> <p>Renaming implemented; costs absorbed by state department; media controversy but enduring adoption. Family relationship managed via offer of alternative recognition.</p> <p>Strategic repositioning to avoid being defined exclusively by one place</p>	<p>Need to plan for alumni records, signage, digital assets, and accreditation labels if names change; manage brand continuity nationally and offshore (relevant for JCU Singapore).</p> <p>(Operational risk noted in Committee discussion; align with Melbourne’s non-erasure guidance.)</p> <p>Illustrates political and reputational sensitivity, cost, and accusations of “culture war” framing. Need for transparent rationale, consistent communications, and recorded decision logic to maintain legitimacy; understanding the need for change.</p>

Australian university naming conventions

In the Australian context, university names have generally followed three broad conventions often reflecting colonial-era naming practices:

1. Place-based naming: anchoring identity to a city, region or state (e.g. University of Sydney, University of Queensland, University of Wollongong);
2. Honorific naming: commemorating individuals, many of whom are associated with colonial governance or exploration (e.g. James Cook, Macquarie, Griffith, Flinders); and
3. Abstract or federated naming: emphasising concepts such as nationhood, collaboration or regional collectivity rather than a specific place or person (e.g. Federation University, Southern Cross University).

Movement between these conventions has been rare and typically reflects significant institutional change. Where it has occurred, it has been driven by considerations of identity, scale and mission rather than a response to concerns about historical legacy. Most Australian name changes or adjustments have occurred at the margin (brand refreshes, Indigenous dual naming, campus-level changes), or as a result of mergers and amalgamations as mentioned earlier. Federation University Australia represents an Australian example of legal university renaming driven by institutional amalgamation and strategic identity realignment, rather than values-based reassessment or reputational controversy.

Importantly, no convention is inherently neutral; each carries different symbolic, historical and community implications, which reinforces the need for an identity-first and principles-led approach.

Cross-cutting features

Across jurisdictions, several cross-cutting features emerge that JCU can adapt as a coherent and neutral framework.

First, the guiding principles. Decisions are anchored to institutional mission and values, with the decisive test being whether retention or removal advances the University's purpose in teaching, research and inclusion. Renaming is treated as an exceptional act, but one that may be warranted where clear and evidenced dissonance exists between institutional mission and symbolic representation. Whether changing or retaining a name, institutions uphold contextual integrity and non-erasure, explaining history transparently through plaques, statements, archives, and a documented rationale. In Australia and New Zealand, recognition of Country or *mana whenua* and enduring Indigenous naming are embedded from the outset, with co-design principles forming part of the governance framework.

Secondly, the process architecture is strikingly consistent. Most institutions adopt a structured pathway comprising: an intake or scoping step (through petition or institutional initiation); independent review by a committee with scholarly expertise; criteria-based evaluation centred on mission impact, evidentiary strength, and centrality of conduct; and a governing-body determination with reasons published. Pathways are distinguished between symbolic or brand adjustments - such as dual-naming - and formal legal name changes, noting that some jurisdictions (e.g. New Zealand and Australia) require Parliamentary approval. The Lady Cilento/Queensland Children's Hospital example, while from a different sector, illustrates similar principles of legitimacy, transparency and reputational alignment.

Across jurisdictions, cases that attracted sustained criticism or reputational damage were less often those where a particular decision was taken, and more often those where the process was perceived as opaque, predetermined, or inadequately evidenced. Institutions that failed to clearly articulate rationale, publish criteria, or distinguish between consultation and decision-making were more vulnerable to claims of politicisation or tokenism, regardless of the outcome reached.

Thirdly, engagement norms emphasise both breadth and depth. Universities typically invite submissions from students, staff, alumni and, where appropriate, heirs or descendants, while also convening targeted dialogues with experts and community leaders so that the process itself functions as a civic learning exercise. Indigenous partnership is an early and continuing element, not a procedural afterthought, with protocols embedded from initiation through to decision and communication.

Finally, operational and brand considerations for Council’s awareness include the scope and scale of implementation - signage, digital assets, seals and arms, stationery, certificates, and alumni records - as well as accreditation listings and implications for CRICOS and international approvals (including Singapore). Examples from New Zealand and Australia underscore the importance of explicit costing, phasing and communications planning to maintain narrative coherence and public trust. Throughout, institutions that manage this well publish clear criteria, a process map and a plain-language rationale to reinforce legitimacy and transparency.

Conclusion

Across the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand, institutions that have successfully navigated naming or renaming have done so by grounding decisions in mission, evidence, and public legitimacy. While contexts differ, effective processes share six core elements, They:

1. begin with self-reflection and mission alignment, clarifying why the issue is being considered and how it connects to institutional purpose, values and identity;
2. establish a principled and transparent process architecture, using clear criteria, independent assessment and published reasoning to ensure legitimacy and trust;
3. uphold contextual integrity and non-erasure, recognising that historical interpretation, not deletion, is the foundation of credibility;
4. embed inclusive and credible engagement, ensuring that consultation is genuine, wide-ranging and respectful, with Indigenous partnership treated as an enduring relationship rather than a procedural requirement;
5. plan for operational and brand coherence, recognising that implementation - communications, signage, accreditation, digital assets and cost management - is integral to institutional continuity; and
6. maintain ongoing accountability and learning, revisiting principles and decisions over time to ensure they remain relevant and reflective of evolving social and scholarly understandings.

The Lady Cilento/Queensland Children’s Hospital case adds a uniquely Australian public-sector perspective, illustrating how ethical concerns, community sentiment, and clarity of public purpose can converge to prompt change, and how perceptions of “tokenism” or “politicisation” can undermine legitimacy if process design is weak.

These lessons suggest that JCU’s framework should begin with identity and purpose, embed transparent criteria and cultural partnership throughout, and maintain coherence across communication, governance, and implementation. Taken together, these six features form a balanced framework for JCU. They support an approach grounded in reflection, evidence and authenticity - one that acknowledges history without erasure, aligns with mission and values, and ensures that any naming decision strengthens rather than fragments institutional identity.

Risk and Mitigations Register

The following register outlines key risks associated with any potential naming consultation or change, with proposed mitigations and early indicators to support Council’s oversight.

Risk	How it could manifest	Likelihood / Impact	Primary owner	Mitigations (preventive & responsive)	Early indicators
Perception of pre-determination	Stakeholders believe outcome is fixed; disengagement; media narrative of “foregone conclusion”	Med / High	NRC Chair*; Comms	Publish principles, criteria and process map upfront; independent secretariat; balanced messaging; publish “what we heard” summaries; transparent reasons at each gate	Skewed media tone; low participation from key groups; repetitive claims of bias
Alumni backlash	Petitions; donor pauses; reputational criticism about erasing history or devaluing degrees	Med / High	Alumni Relations; Media	Dedicated alumni track; clear credential FAQs (no devaluation; reissue pathways if needed); option sets including contextualisation/dual naming; targeted briefings to key donors	Negative alumni open-rates; donation/pipeline softening; high opt-outs
Indigenous distrust	Process seen as extractive or symbolic; lack of cultural safety	Low–Med / High	NRC; Indigenous Engagement, IERC	Co-design protocols; early engagement with Traditional Owners; yarning circles led by Indigenous facilitators; resourcing for participation; visible commitments regardless of outcome	Low Indigenous participation; feedback about rushed/tick-box engagement
Indigenous diversity of views	Divergent perspectives among Indigenous stakeholders (Traditional Owners, alumni, staff) leading to perceptions of division or lack of cultural safety.	Med / High	NRC, Indigenous Engagement, IERC	Acknowledge and accommodate pluralism in Indigenous perspectives; convene representative reference group; engage Elders and emerging leaders separately; adopt “many voices” narrative; provide cultural mediation support.	Conflicting feedback across regions; public commentary highlighting exclusion or tokenism.
Internal stakeholder reactions (staff and students)	Internal polarisation; reduced engagement or trust in leadership; reputational spillover through social channels or unions/representatives.	Med / Med–High	VC Office; HR; Student Life; Comms; Media	Early staff and student briefings; internal Q&A hub; facilitate open forums and anonymous feedback; link process to institutional values and respect principles; align messaging across internal communications.	Negative sentiment in internal channels; staff survey decline; student association statements or petitions.
Regulatory/legislative complexity	Underestimation of steps to amend the Act; CRICOS/TEQSA or JCU Singapore delays	Med / Med–High	Legal; International	Early legal pathway memo; regulator prenotifications; parallel workstreams; staged “brand then legal” sequencing if needed	Regulator queries; timeline slippage on approvals
Operational cost & scope creep	Rebrand over-runs; undercounted asset changes; IT/legal artefacts missed	Med / Med	Finance	Asset register; phased rollout; change-freeze windows; contingency (10–20%); benefits tracking; executive steering	Variance vs budget; late discovery of legacy assets
Global reputation and brand recognition	Reduced international recognition or confusion following any name change;	Med / High	VC Office; Global	Develop a global transition plan; retain legacy search and citation links; communicate continuity in “formerly known as” messaging for	International media or partner confusion; drop in global web search traffic; lower external

	brand dilution affecting research visibility, rankings, or partner confidence.		Partnerships; Marketing	rankings and citations; synchronise with CRICOS and Singapore regulators; align with QS/Times Higher protocols.	citation indexing under new name.
Accreditation & partner misalignment	Professional bodies, partners or agents not updated; confusion in markets (esp. Singapore)	Low-Med / Med	DVC Education; Partnerships; International	Partner notification plan; agent briefings; test collateral in target markets; maintain brand continuity messaging	Partner queries; offer conversion dip; agent misinformation
Media polarisation	“Culture war” framing; reputational hits	Med / Med-High	Media; VC Office	Proactive briefings; trusted third-party voices; consistent narrative (values, mission, transparency); rapid-response Q&A	Spikes in negative coverage; social sentiment swings
Legal challenge / complaints	Procedural fairness challenges; privacy complaints about submissions	Low / Med	Legal; Secretariat	Clear policy basis; privacy notice; accessible complaints channel; independent review option	Formal complaints; FOI spikes
Community fatigue	Long processes reduce engagement quality	Med / Med	NRC; Secretariat	Time-boxed phases; visible milestones; feedback loops (“you said, we did”); concise materials	Declining participation; low survey completion
If no name change pursued: credibility gap	Perception of inaction unless alternatives visible	Med / Med	Council; Media	Package visible measures (dual naming; symbolism review; truth-telling program) with timelines and owners	“Nothing has changed” narrative in feedback

* NRC: Name Review Committee (not Reference Committee)

Stakeholder Mapping

The Committee recognises that a structured approach to identifying and understanding stakeholder interests is essential to any future consultation on the University's name. While the Committee itself is not charged with undertaking engagement, it proposes the following high-level mapping to guide Council's awareness of who would need to be involved and why.

Internal Stakeholders

- **Current students:** Both domestic and international, undergraduate and postgraduate. Likely to be concerned with reputation, identity, and continuity of qualifications.
- **Current Staff:** Academic and professional staff perceptions influence internal culture and the University's ability to represent itself externally.
- **Alumni and donors:** A large and diverse group with long-term identification with the institution. They will be sensitive to legacy, brand recognition, and the symbolic meaning of the name.
- **Council and governance bodies:** The University Council and Academic Board, which hold statutory and strategic responsibilities.

External Stakeholders

- **Regulators, Commissions and professional bodies:** TEQSA, CRICOS, ATEC and professional accrediting bodies whose approvals may be impacted by a name change.
- **Government partners:** Queensland Government (as owner of the establishing Act), Commonwealth Government, and local councils. Their role is critical in enabling or supporting any legal or policy changes.
- **Industry and community partners:** Employers, placement partners, local businesses and civic organisations in Northern Queensland. Their perceptions influence JCU's social licence and partnerships.
- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities:** Traditional Owners of the lands where JCU operates, Indigenous alumni, Elders, and community leaders. Their perspectives are central given the cultural and historical implications of the University's name.
- **International partners and markets:** JCU Singapore, overseas students, and foreign regulators. International recognition and approvals would be directly affected by any change.
- **Media and public opinion leaders:** State and national media, as well as social media commentary, which will shape wider community perceptions of JCU's actions.

This mapping provides an indicative framework for identifying stakeholders whose perspectives would need to be considered by any future Name Committee. It is not exhaustive, but it demonstrates the breadth of groups whose interests intersect with the University's identity.

Regulatory Pathway for a University Name Change

Changing the name of James Cook University would require coordinated legal and regulatory action across both Australia and Singapore, given the University's dual jurisdictional footprint. In Australia, the University's legal name is established under the *James Cook University Act 1997 (Qld)*, meaning that any change must be given effect through an amendment to that Act. This process begins with a confidential decision-in-principle by the JCU Council, followed by early engagement with the responsible Minister and the Department. The Queensland Government would then prepare a Cabinet submission seeking approval to draft and introduce an amending Bill. Once endorsed, the Office of the Queensland Parliamentary Counsel would draft the legislation, which would then proceed through the standard parliamentary stages - including committee scrutiny - before passage and Royal Assent. Commencement may be aligned by proclamation to ensure operational readiness. Only when the amended Act takes effect does the new legal name formally exist.

Following the legislative amendment, JCU would need to complete a series of Commonwealth-level regulatory notifications. TEQSA requires notification of a material change within 14 days, supported by evidence of continuity of governance, identity verification, testamur integrity and any updated institutional documentation. CRICOS registrations, PRISMS entries, and international student visa information must be aligned with the new name, and national data reporting (TCSI, HEIMS) must be updated in coordination with the Department of Education. Other Commonwealth arrangements, including CGS and research block grant agreements, must also be amended. ATEC is not expected to have naming approval responsibilities, though courtesy notification will be appropriate.

For Singapore, any change would trigger a separate but interconnected process. JCU Singapore is incorporated as *James Cook University Pte Ltd* under the *Singapore Companies Act*, so its legal name would need to be changed through an ACRA application supported by a board resolution and constitutional amendments. Once ACRA approved the new name, the Singapore entity would then need to update all corporate records, contracts, banking arrangements and statutory disclosures. As a registered Private Education Institution (PEI), the campus must notify SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG) of any name change and provide updated governance documents, website information, and revised PEI-Standard Student Contracts. Under the EduTrust certification framework, a legal name change constitutes a material organisational change, requiring updated compliance documentation and assurance that quality and student protection measures remain unaffected. Immigration requirements would also need to be addressed, with updates to SOLAR+ and Student Pass templates to ensure visa continuity for international students.

Further notifications may be needed to the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Manpower, insurers, landlords, and other contracted parties, alongside a review of consumer protection obligations under Singapore law. Although JCU Singapore is referenced in the CSP-FTA between Australia and Singapore, the agreement does not regulate institutional naming and does not affect the regulatory pathway.

Taken together, these processes would require careful sequencing: legislative amendment and TEQSA/CRICOS notifications in Australia; corporate and regulatory updates through ACRA, SSG, EduTrust and ICA in Singapore; and a coordinated programme of communication to students, partners and stakeholders across both jurisdictions. With appropriate planning and confidentiality, the process is operationally feasible and could be completed without interruption to academic delivery, regulatory status or student experience.

Following is detailed procedural steps required for any potential name change in both Australia, and Singapore.

Attachments:

1. Guidance for Regulatory Change – Australia
2. Guidance for Regulatory Change – Singapore

Guidance for Regulatory Change - Australia

Changing the legal name of a public university in Australia requires a staged set of actions across State legislation, Commonwealth regulators, and internal governance. For James Cook University, constituted under the *James Cook University Act 1997 (Qld)*, the pathway centres on amendment of the Act by the Queensland Parliament, followed by material change notifications to TEQSA and other Commonwealth entities. The following outlines the full process, aligned to the University's likely sequencing and risk considerations.

1. Queensland Legislative Change Process

1.1. Legal Basis

James Cook University is established under Queensland legislation. The University's legal name is defined in the *James Cook University Act 1997 (Qld)*. Any change to the University's official name requires amendment of the Act, which only the Queensland Parliament can make. This is a formal legislative process governed by the *Legislative Standards Act 1992 (Qld)*, Cabinet procedural requirements, and Parliamentary practice.

1.2. Internal Decision and Direction

Before the Queensland Government will consider legislative amendment, it would ordinarily expect:

- A formal resolution from JCU Council endorsing the proposed name change;
- A supporting submission from the University to the responsible Minister (currently the Minister for Education or Minister for Higher Education, depending on portfolio arrangements);
- Evidence that the University has undertaken appropriate consultation with key stakeholders (although not necessarily broad public consultation at this stage); and
- Assurance that the change is institution-led, strategically justified, and has considered financial, operational, branding, and reputational implications.

1.3. Engagement with State Government

Following a Council decision, the University would:

1. Brief the Director-General of the responsible Department (typically the Department of Education), outlining the rationale and the governance process undertaken.
2. Provide a Ministerial Submission seeking Government support for legislative amendment.
3. Undertake confidential pre-briefings with the Premier's Office, Treasurer's Office (where public funding implications are relevant), and the Office of Parliamentary Counsel.
4. Ensure alignment with the Government's legislative program timetable.

Confidentiality at this stage is critical. Public communication should not occur until the Government has signalled support and agreed a path.

1.4. Queensland Cabinet Process

If the Minister supports the proposal, the following steps follow:

- Cabinet Submission prepared by the Department (with JCU input).
- Consideration by Central Agencies (Premier and Cabinet; Treasury).
- Cabinet approval for the introduction of an amending Bill.

1.5. Preparation of the Amendment Bill

The Department instructs the Office of the Queensland Parliamentary Counsel (OQPC) to draft the Bill. Likely amendments include:

- Revision of the University's name;
- Consequential amendments to references across the Act;
- Transitional arrangements (e.g., continuation of legal personality under the new name);

- Savings clauses ensuring that contracts, property titles, employment arrangements, awards and certificates, and legal proceedings continue uninterrupted.

1.6. Parliamentary Process

A standard legislative process applies:

1. First Reading (Bill introduced).
2. Committee Referral (usually to the Education, Employment and Training Committee).
3. Committee Inquiry (submissions, public briefing, hearing if deemed necessary).
4. Committee Report to Parliament (with or without recommendation for amendments).
5. Second Reading Debate (Parliament considers the Bill).
6. Consideration in Detail (clause-by-clause).
7. Third Reading and Passage.
8. Royal Assent (Act becomes law).
9. Commencement (can be fixed by proclamation to align with operational readiness).

Timeframe:

Typically 4–9 months depending on political priorities, legislative program congestion, and committee scheduling.

2. Commonwealth Regulatory Requirements

Following enactment of the Queensland amendments, a university must update its details with several Commonwealth regulators and government agencies.

The most significant obligations relate to TEQSA, CRICOS, and agencies associated with funding, reporting, and student visas.

2.1. TEQSA – Material Change Notification

Under the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011* and the Material Change Notification requirements, higher education providers must notify TEQSA of any material change that may affect:

- the provider’s compliance with the Higher Education Standards Framework;
- the provider’s capacity to meet ongoing registration conditions; or
- information published on the National Register.

A legal name change is explicitly recognised by TEQSA as a material change.

Notification Requirements

- Notification must occur within 14 days of the change taking effect.
- Evidence required:
 - Copy of the amended State Act;
 - Explanation of transitional arrangements;
 - Updated governance documents;
 - Updated brand, seal, and award templates (if relevant to quality or credential integrity);
 - Assurance that academic standards and identity verification processes remain secure.

TEQSA Considerations

TEQSA will focus on:

- Continuity of institutional identity and legal personality;
- Accuracy and security of testamurs, records, transcripts, and qualification titles;
- Impacts on students (communication, transitional arrangements);
- Risk of confusion, misrepresentation, or brand dilution affecting student protection;
- Implications for partnerships, third-party arrangements and offshore delivery.

No formal approval is required; rather, TEQSA records the change and may seek clarification.

2.2. CRICOS and International Student Regulatory Updates

A legal name change would require:

- Update of the University's CRICOS registration;
- Updated legal name across all CRICOS-registered courses;
- Notifications to the Department of Home Affairs (visa framework) and Department of Education (PRISMS system);
- Updates to international compliance statements and marketing materials to ensure consistency under the ESOS Act.

Offshore operations (e.g., JCU Singapore) require separate notifications (covered in the next section).

3. Funding, Reporting, and National Databases

Immediately following legislative enactment:

- HEIMS/HEPCAT data reporting identifiers must be updated;
- The University's name must be updated across national data collections (student load, completions, research reporting);
- Adjustments made to all Australian Government agreements (e.g., CGS funding agreement, research block grants);
- Updates to ABN-linked registrations and the Tertiary Collection of Student Information (TCSI).

These changes typically follow a structured transition window agreed with the Department of Education.

4. Regulatory Role of ATEC

The Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC) established with effect 29 April 2026 as part of the Commonwealth's Universities Accord reforms. Its role is proposed to include:

- Strategic funding allocation;
- System-wide planning and oversight;
- Performance reporting;
- Oversight of misconduct and integrity in the sector.

However, based on current publicly available draft proposals:

- ATEC is not expected to regulate naming,
- Nor to exercise approval rights over institutional legal identity,
- Nor to replace TEQSA's role in provider registration and material change oversight.

A name change would therefore not require ATEC approval, though the University would be expected to keep ATEC informed as part of its routine institutional reporting once operational.

5. Recommended Sequencing for JCU

For practical purposes, a prudent sequencing for JCU would be:

1. Confidential decision-in-principle by Council (subject to stakeholder engagement and cost modelling).
2. Confidential pre-briefings with the Queensland Government to test appetite and timing.
3. Engagement with TEQSA early (informal signal of proposed change).
4. Legislative amendment of the JCU Act (Queensland Parliament).
5. Post-Assent activation:
 - TEQSA material change notification;
 - CRICOS updates;
 - PRISMS and international regulatory updates;
 - Adjustments to Commonwealth funding agreements and databases.
6. Public communication only once State and Commonwealth stakeholders have been briefed and the legislative pathway is secure.

6. Summary

Changing the name of JCU is legally and procedurally straightforward in principle - requiring amendment of the *James Cook University Act* - but complex in terms of timing, sequencing, stakeholder sensitivity, and risk management. TEQSA does not “approve” the change but must be notified promptly, and all Commonwealth systems must be updated. ATEC has no approval function in this context.

The Australian pathway is therefore:

1. **State-level amendment** to create the new legal name;
2. **Commonwealth regulatory notifications** (TEQSA, CRICOS, PRISMS, data collections); and
3. **Institutional implementation** across awards, branding, governance instruments and systems.

Guidance for Regulatory Change - Singapore (JCU Singapore)

James Cook University's Singapore campus (JCU Singapore/JCUS) operates as a Wholly Owned Foreign Entity (WOFE) of James Cook University and is registered as a Private Education Institution (PEI) under Singapore law. A change to the legal name of the Australian parent university therefore triggers a sequence of regulatory, corporate, and compliance requirements under Singapore legislation. While not as procedurally complex as an Australian Act amendment, the implications must be managed carefully to protect EduTrust certification, student visas, and brand integrity in the Singapore market.

1. Corporate Name Change Under Singapore Law

1.1. Legal Structure

JCU Singapore is incorporated under the *Singapore Companies Act 1967* as James Cook University Pte Ltd. Any change to the legal name must follow the Companies Act requirements.

1.2. Process for Changing a Company Name

A name change would require:

1. Board Resolution – A formal resolution by the board of the Singapore entity approving the change of company name, including consequential amendments to the company constitution.
2. Name Application to ACRA – Submission of a name change application to the Accounting and Corporate Regulatory Authority (ACRA) via BizFile.
 - The new name must not conflict with restricted or prohibited names.
 - Evidence of the Australian legislative amendment may be requested.
3. ACRA Approval – Generally granted within 1–3 working days unless further checks are required.
4. Lodgement of the Change of Name – Filing the special resolution and constitutional amendments.
5. Issuance of the Notice of Change of Name – This becomes the primary legal evidence of the new Singapore corporate identity.

1.3. Consequential Corporate Updates

Following the change, JCUS must update:

- Its Constitution;
- Registered business profile with ACRA;
- Office signage;
- Contracts, leases, insurance policies;
- Banking arrangements;
- Data protection notices required under the *Personal Data Protection Act (PDPA)*;
- Tuition fee protection arrangements (Fee Protection Scheme providers).

2. SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG) Requirements

2.1. PEI Registration

Private Education Institutions must maintain registration under the *Private Education Act 2009*. A change of legal name is a notifiable change to Skill Future Singapore (SSG), previously the Council for Private Education (CPE).

2.2. Notification Requirements

Within required timeframes, JCUS must:

- Notify SSG's Private Education Division of the proposed name change;
- Provide supporting documentation (ACRA Notice of Name Change, Australian legislative documentation, updated Constitution);
- Update all required PEI documentation, including:
 - Student contracts (PEI-Standard Student Contract),

- Advertisements and prospectuses,
- Fee protection documentation,
- PEI website and disclosure statements,
- Dispute resolution information.

SSG does not approve the name change but must be satisfied that:

- Students are properly informed;
- Contractual rights are unaffected;
- Quality assurance and financial protection remain intact;
- There is no risk of misrepresentation or misleading advertising.

3. EduTrust Certification Implications

EduTrust certification is essential for JCUS to operate and recruit international students.

3.1. Material Change Under EduTrust

SSG treats a legal name change as a material organisational change, requiring:

- Notification through the EduTrust Portal;
- Updated governance and management documents;
- Revised policies, webpages, and student-facing materials;
- A risk assessment showing no impact on student welfare, complaint-handling, or academic quality.

No re-certification is triggered solely by a name change, but SSG may:

- Request updated self-assessment documentation;
- Examine whether the change affects management competence, financial viability, or corporate governance;
- Require an onsite review if impacts are significant.

3.2. Timing Considerations

Because EduTrust is cyclical, the name change must be synchronised with:

- Upcoming renewal windows;
- Any ongoing quality assurance monitoring;
- Peak recruitment periods (avoid April/October training cycles).

4. Immigration and Student Pass Requirements

JCUS must maintain compliance with the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (ICA) procedures governing Student Passes. A name change requires:

- Updating the school information in the SOLAR+ system;
- Ensuring all Letters of Offer, Student Contracts, and Student Pass letters carry the new entity name;
- Communicating the change to all enrolled international students, with reassurances that visa conditions are unaffected.

ICA does not “approve” the institutional name change, but mismatches in identity information can lead to delays in Student Pass issuance; higher scrutiny of new applications; and/or risk of administrative breaches.

5. Ministry of Education (MOE) and Other Agency Notifications

While MOE does not directly regulate PEIs, it maintains oversight of tertiary partnerships involving public policy sensitivities. For a foreign university operating a Singapore campus, the following steps are advisable:

- A confidential briefing to MOE’s Higher Education Policy Division explaining the legislative change in Australia and confirming continuity of academic governance.

- Update all arrangements where MOE is a signatory or reviewer (e.g., scholarships, teacher-training placements, data-sharing arrangements).
- Notification to the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) if any Employment Pass sponsorship documentation uses the old legal name.

6. Marketing, Consumer Protection, and Trade Practices Compliance

Under the *Private Education Regulations and the Consumer Protection (Fair Trading) Act*, JCUS must ensure:

- No misleading use of the previous name;
- Updated marketing collaterals in Singapore and the region;
- Clear student communications, especially for mid-course cohorts;
- Revised testamur templates aligned with both Australian and Singapore regulatory requirements.

Students must be explicitly informed that:

- The institution remains the same legal entity;
- Their awards will reflect the new name but retain full status and recognition;
- Existing rights and obligations are unchanged.

7. CPTPP / CSP-FTA Context

JCU Singapore is referenced within the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership – Free Trade Agreement (CSP-FTA) between Singapore and Australia. The current renegotiation of the CSP-FTA is not expected to affect the regulatory pathway for a name change, as:

- The CSP-FTA does not regulate institutional identity;
- It ensures market access and mutual recognition of qualification frameworks, not naming;
- The underlying legal entity remains the same (even with a different trading name).

A courtesy briefing to the Australian High Commission in Singapore is advisable but not mandatory.

8. Recommended Sequencing for JCU Singapore

The optimal sequence would be:

1. Australian legislative change (JCU Act amendment).
2. Internal resolution of the JCUS Board.
3. Confidential pre-briefs with SSG and MOE.
4. ACRA name change process and issuance of Notice of Change of Name.
5. SSG/EduTrust notifications, including updated PEI documentation.
6. ICA updates for Student Pass systems.
7. Contract, financial, and legal updates across JCUS operations.
8. Coordinated communication to students, partners, and agents.

This should be synchronised with the Australian TEQSA and CRICOS notifications to ensure global consistency.

9. Summary

A name change in Singapore is procedurally manageable but requires:

- Corporate legal steps through ACRA;
- Compliance updates with SSG (PEI registration) and EduTrust;
- Visa and student contract updates with ICA;
- Careful communication to avoid consumer protection risks;
- Synchronised branding and documentation changes aligned to the Australian legislative amendments.

The CSP-FTA does not constrain the process. The most sensitive risks relate to student confidence, EduTrust continuity, and ensuring consistent representation across both jurisdictions.

Approach to Budgeting and Impact Assessment - Costs

1. Purpose

To outline an initial framework for estimating the costs and impacts associated with a potential University name change, including likely consultation expenditure, rebranding cost categories, and an approach to assessing effects on brand recognition, student demand and reputation.

2. Context

Should the University ultimately consider a legal name change, a structured financial and impact assessment would be required to inform Council's decision-making. Rebranding at university scale is multifaceted, encompassing legislative compliance, marketing, system changes, signage, student materials, communications, and partner engagement. Costs will depend on sequencing (one-off vs staged), transition periods, and the extent of brand refresh or redesign.

Consistent with contemporary practice, the University's brand is not determined by its name alone, but reflects the cumulative expression of institutional purpose, mission and values, and the consistency with which these are demonstrated in strategy, behaviour and stakeholder experience. Any consideration of a name change would therefore need to be grounded in a clearly defined institutional objective and supported by sustained organisational alignment. The purpose of this appendix is not to present a detailed budget, but to identify the principal cost drivers, indicative ranges and key considerations that would inform future modelling, should Council request it.

3. Components of a Full Cost Assessment

3.1 Legislative and Regulatory Implementation Costs (Australia and Singapore)

These costs are generally modest but include:

- Updates to legal documentation, contracts and registers
- Corporate registry changes (ACRA, ASIC-equivalent functions)
- Re-issuance of governance instruments and statutory records
- Compliance updates for TEQSA, CRICOS, SSG, EduTrust, ICA, PRISMS, TCSI

Indicative range: AUD \$50,000–\$150,000 (internal labour plus external legal review where required).

3.2 Consultation and Engagement Costs

Consultation may take two forms: (1) confidential expert and stakeholder engagement prior to any decision, and (2) broader community or public consultation if Council determines this is required. Cost drivers include:

- Workshop facilitation, stakeholder travel and hosting
- Specialist communications support
- Consultation materials and design
- Analysis and reporting of feedback

Indicative future consultation cost (if triggered):

AUD \$150,000–\$400,000 depending on scale (localised vs national/international).

3.3 Brand Design and Visual Identity Development

While a change of name typically necessitates updates to visual identity, it does not in itself determine institutional brand or positioning, which are shaped more fundamentally by purpose, performance and stakeholder experience.

Activities include:

- Brand strategy and positioning
- Logo and visual identity development

- Updated brand guidelines (print, digital, video, social)
- Trademarking and IP registration

Indicative cost range:

AUD \$400,000–\$1m

(benchmark: typical university-scale visual identities fall between \$400k and \$1m depending on complexity).

3.4 Digital Ecosystem and Web Presence

A modern university operates across a large and complex digital environment.

Activities include:

- Website redesign or rebuild (homepage, templates, navigation)
- Updates to microsites, faculty sites, research centres, project pages
- CRM and campaign automation updates
- Student portals / MyJCU updates
- Systems identity changes (authentication, dashboards, staff intranet)

Indicative cost range:

AUD \$400,000–\$1.2m

(depending on whether a full rebuild or staged transition is chosen).

3.5 Physical Signage and Wayfinding

This is typically one of the largest cost centres.

Assets include:

- Campus entry signage (Townsville, Cairns, Brisbane, Singapore)
- Building fascias and totems
- Internal wayfinding, maps and campus directories
- Vehicle liveries
- Research stations, farms, institutes and signage in remote sites
- Plaques and ceremonial items

Indicative cost range:

AUD \$1.5m–\$3.5m

(for staged replacement across 12–24 months; accelerated replacements cost more).

3.6 Corporate Collateral and Academic Materials

These costs can be moderated through staged transition.

Assets include:

- Testamurs, transcripts, graduation programmes
- Templates, stationery and merchandise
- Academic robes, podium banners, branded lecterns and event materials
- Staff and student identification and internal documentation

Indicative cost range:

AUD \$200,000–\$500,000

(most savings occur by depleting existing stock before transition).

3.7 Marketing and Communications Campaigns

Communications activity in this context is not limited to launch and promotion, but represents a sustained transition in institutional positioning, requiring clear articulation of purpose and consistent reinforcement over time.

Activities include:

- Announcement and transition communications
- Advertising across digital, social, outdoor, and print
- Updated international materials for agents and partners
- Reputation management and media positioning
- Market research to test comprehension and sentiment

Indicative cost range:

AUD \$1.5m–\$4m over 18–24 months

(depending on depth of brand repositioning and whether international markets require dedicated campaigns).

3.8 Systems, Databases and Technology Transition

Updating identity across enterprise systems is resource intensive.

Systems include:

- Finance, HR, payroll
- Learning management systems
- Research management systems
- Identity management and authentication
- Contracts databases
- Student records and enrolment systems

Indicative internal cost (labour + external support):

AUD \$300,000–\$600,000.

3.9 Contingency and Indirect Costs

Large-scale transitions typically include:

- 10–20% contingency
- Additional capacity for communications, risk and legal teams
- Additional internal staffing for a 12–24 month transition

Indicative range:

AUD \$300,000–\$800,000.

4. Indicative Total Cost Framework

A conservative whole-of-institution estimate for a university of JCU’s scale, spread over 18–30 months.

Cost Category	Indicative Range (AUD)
Legislative/Regulatory Implementation	\$50k–\$150k
Consultation (if triggered)	\$150k–\$400k
Brand identity redesign	\$400k–\$1m
Digital presence/web	\$400k–\$1.2m
Physical signage & wayfinding	\$1.5m–\$3.5m
Corporate/academic materials	\$200k–\$500k
Marketing & launch campaigns	\$1.5m–\$4m
Systems & technology updates	\$300k–\$600k
Contingency & staffing	\$300k–\$800k
Estimated total	\$4.8m – \$12.15m

Note:

The above range of estimates align with comparable university transitions, depending on whether implementation is staged or accelerated.

5. Approach to Assessing Brand and Demand Effects

The following approach outlines how the potential impacts of a name change on brand, demand and reputation could be assessed. As a threshold matter, any such analysis should be grounded in a clearly defined institutional objective (for example, alignment with contemporary identity, stakeholder perception, or market positioning), and with consideration of whether alternative measures may achieve similar outcomes.

5.1 Market Research and Modelling

- Pre-decision research on market awareness and associations with JCU's current name
- Segmented research across domestic, international, alumni and industry audiences
- Modelling of potential neutral, positive, or negative scenarios
- Consultation with international agents and peak bodies

5.2 Metrics to Assess Impact

- First preferences and offer conversion rates
- International recruitment trends (especially in Singapore, PNG, India)
- Media sentiment analysis
- Brand tracking benchmarks before and after launch
- Partner and alumni feedback

5.3 Risk Considerations

Council should have regard to a range of potential risks associated with a name change, including:

- Short-term confusion or misattribution in domestic and international markets
- Erosion or dilution of existing brand equity, including impacts on rankings recognition and institutional visibility
- Sensitivity of narrative framing in politically or publicly contested contexts
- Misalignment between stated intent and institutional behaviour, which may be identified and amplified by stakeholders in a highly connected environment

5.4 Mitigation Measures

Should Council determine that further consideration is warranted, potential mitigation measures may include:

- Clear alignment of institutional strategy, decision-making and behaviour with the stated purpose of any name change, to ensure credibility and coherence over time
- Early, structured and well-sequenced engagement with key stakeholders, including State and Commonwealth governments
- A clear and consistent identity narrative articulating purpose, continuity and institutional intent
- High-quality and sustained communications to support transition and market understanding
- Transitional arrangements, including parallel use of existing and new identity where appropriate

Taken together, the above considerations highlight that the impacts of a potential name change extend beyond financial cost to encompass institutional positioning, stakeholder perception and organisational alignment over time. Any further analysis or modelling would therefore need to be grounded in a clearly articulated strategic objective and undertaken in a manner that is proportionate to the scale and complexity of the potential change.

6. Recommendations

That Council note the indicative cost and impact framework, and that any further detailed financial modelling or implementation planning be undertaken only if requested by Council, and where supported by a clearly articulated institutional objective, an appropriate external environment conducive to considered consultation, and a strategic rationale proportionate to the scale of investment and organisational change involved.

