Health Directorate Guide

Engaging and Consulting with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities in the ACT
Aboriginal Flag

The Aboriginal flag was designed by Harold Thomas, a Luritja man from Central Australia. It was created as a symbol of unity and national identity for Aboriginal people during the land rights movement of the early 1970s.

In 1995, the Australian Government proclaimed the flag as an official 'Flag of Australia' under section 5 of the Flags Act 1953. In 1997, Harold Thomas was recognised as the author of the artistic work under the Copyright Act 1968.

Symbolic Meaning
The symbolic meaning of the flag colours (as stated by Mr Harold Thomas) are:
- Black: Represents the Aboriginal people of Australia
- Red: Represents the red earth, the red ochre and a spiritual relation to the land
- Yellow: Represents the Sun, the giver of life and protector

Torres Strait Islander Flag

The Torres Strait Islander Flag was created as a symbol of unity and identity for Torres Strait Islander peoples, designed by the late Bernard Namok from Thursday Island. The flag was recognised by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission in June 1992 and given equal prominence with the Aboriginal flag.

In July 1995, the flag was recognised by the Australian Government as an official 'Flag of Australia' under the Flags Act 1953.

Symbolic Meaning
Each part of the flag is designed to represent something about Torres Strait Islander culture.
- Green: Represents the land
- Blue: Represents the sea
- White: Represents peace
- Black: Represents the Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal people

The dhari (headdress) represents Torres Strait Island people and the five pointed star represents the 5 major Island groups. The star also represents navigation, as a symbol of the seafaring culture of the Torres Strait.
| 1. INTRODUCTION | 2 |
| 2. HEALTH DIRECTORATE COMMITMENT TO ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HEALTH | 3 |
| 3. PROFILE OF THE ACT ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMUNITIES | 4 |
| 4. ACT GOVERNMENT PROTOCOLS | 6 |
| 5. HEALTH DIRECTORATE POLICY ON PREFERRED TERMINOLOGY | 8 |
| 6. ENGAGING AND CONSULTING WITH ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMUNITIES | 9 |
| 7. HELPFUL CONTACTS | 12 |
| 8. ACT ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS | 14 |
| 9. ACT ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER SIGNIFICANT EVENTS CALENDAR | 15 |
| 10. RESEARCH INFORMATION AND RESOURCES | 16 |
| 11. ATTACHMENT A – ACT PUBLIC SERVICE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER NETWORK TERMINOLOGY | 18 |

Access more information by clicking on the Bogong moth on the Health Directorate intranet/internet.

www.ihealthportal.act.gov.au

The Bogong Moth (agrotis infusa) is a temperate species of night flying moth notable for appearing in large numbers around major public buildings in Canberra, during spring (late September to November) as it migrates to the High Plains.
1. INTRODUCTION

*The Engagement Protocols for Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities* has been developed to provide Health Directorate staff with a basic overview of culturally appropriate communication, language and behaviour to assist in building positive relationships with the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and individuals.

The Engagement Protocols have been designed to also assist staff with completing the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Impact Statement* (AHIS), a requirement (Policy Management Framework – Policy Advisory Group) for the development of all new draft policy (or related SOPs), program and strategies documents prior to presentation to the Executive Director’s Council for endorsement.

Having a good understanding of the social, cultural, economic and historical circumstances of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is particularly important for staff required to develop policy, or deliver programs and services, either directly or through organisations on behalf of the department. A good understanding is important to any initial planning process.

Approaching or engaging with the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities requires sensitivity and consideration of the need to use culturally appropriate communication, language and behaviour.

The Engagement Protocols is an update of the former *Guidelines for Consulting with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community, August 2005*. Information from a range of protocols and consultation guides including ACT Government’s ‘Indigenous Protocols’ 2009 and the ACT Public Service Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Network’s (ACTPSIN) ‘Terminology’ Paper 2009 have been used in the development of this document.

**Cultural Awareness Training**

In addition, a cultural awareness training and development program that includes: staff orientation; an e-learning module; and a face to face workshop is expected to commence in 2011. The program aims to increase Health Directorate staff knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and specific health issues. Please contact the Manager, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Unit (ATSIHU) for further information or visit the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Portal at [ihealthportal@act.gov.au](mailto:ihealthportal@act.gov.au)
2. **HEALTH DIRECTORATE COMMITMENT TO ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HEALTH**

The Health Directorate has made a commitment to achieving measurable change in the health and family wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the ACT and surrounding region and this is reflected in key policies including:

- **A New Way: The ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Family Wellbeing Plan 2006-2011;**

  The Health Directorate’s contribution to the whole-of-government vision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs is defined by the following Mission Statement contained in A New Way:

  *‘To engage the health and health-related sectors in collaborative action to measurably improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the ACT and surrounding region’.*

- **The Council of Australian Government’s (COAG) National Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes: ACT Implementation Plan;**

- **COAG National Partnership on Indigenous Early Childhood Development, ACT Implementation Plan;**

- **ACT Government Commitment under signing the Close the Gap Statement of Intent;** and

- **Health Directorate Reconciliation Action Plan 2011-2012 that expresses the following vision statement:**

  *‘The Health Directorate’s vision for Reconciliation is for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in the ACT and surrounding region to enjoy a quality of life, life expectancy and health status equal to all Canberrans’.*
3. PROFILE OF THE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMUNITY IN THE ACT

a) Communities

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities of the ACT, include the traditional custodians, the Ngunnawal people and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who have relocated to Canberra and the region for employment, family or other reasons. Some significant/key bodies/organisations include the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body and the United Ngunnawal Elders Council.

The ACT is the only state/territory that has an elected body that reports directly to the Chief Minister on the views and concerns of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body is a representative body, established in 2008 to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to have a strong democratically elected voice. Seven people represent the interests and aspirations of the local communities.

The United Ngunnawal Elders Council is made up of representatives of the Ngunnawal family groups. The Council meets up to four times each year in Canberra at various locations. The purpose of the Council is to provide advice to ACT Government in matters relating to heritage and land matters for the Ngunnawal people.

The ACT Torres Strait Islanders Corporation is representative of the Torres Strait Islander community in the ACT and region and aims to promote and encourage Torres Strait Islander heritage and culture to its members as well as maintaining the objectives of the Corporation through economic, social and educational activities.

Two key community controlled organisations that provide health and health care related programs and services include: Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service located in Narrabundah that has been providing primary health care services for over 20 years and Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation located in Erindale that focuses on providing youth services.

Contact details are provided in the community organisation section of this document.

b) Population

The estimated resident Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in the ACT in 2001 was 3,900, accounting for 1.2% of the total ACT population. By June 2006 the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population was estimated at 4,282, of whom 65% were under 30 years of age. In addition, there were approximately 3,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the surrounding region who may access Health Directorate services.

Data referred to in the Chief Health Officer’s Report 2010, reflecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, by age, shows that the ACT population has a younger age structure and lower socio-economic status, as measured by a range of indices compared to the non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population¹.

¹ ABS 2006 Census data
c) Health Status

The Chief Health Officer’s Report 2010 notes that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience significantly more ill health than other Australians and typically have a lower life expectancy and experience poorer health across a range of indicators, compared to other Australians.

Data relating to the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that is presented in the Chief Health Officer’s Report 2010 refers:

- Survey results in 2004 – 2005 reported, long term health conditions by 82.3% of ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, with the age-standardised rates being similar for males and females.
- The most frequently reported long-term health conditions were eye or sight problems (37.9%), asthma (18.0%) and ear and hearing problems (14.5%).
- Survey results from 2007 – 2008 reported, 36.2% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people reported being a current smoker compared to 18.6% in the general population.
- Just over half (52.9%) of ACT resident Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who gave birth during 2007 reported that they smoked during pregnancy, compared to 12.1% of the general population.

Previous survey results indicate that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were equally likely to be overweight or obese as non-Aboriginal people, equally likely to report risky/high risk alcohol use and equally likely to consume less than the recommended number of serves of fruit and vegetables each day.

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3 Ibid
5 Ibid
4. ACT GOVERNMENT PROTOCOLS

Traditional Custodians

The ACT Government’s ‘Indigenous Protocols’ policy, developed by the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services (DHCS) recognises the Ngungawal people as the traditional custodians of the ACT and surrounding region. The policy covers ‘Welcome to Country’, ‘ACT Government programs’ and ‘Boards and Committees’ and includes:

a) Welcome to Country Protocols

Acknowledgement
The ACT Government’s policy is that all public speeches by representatives of the ACT Government include an acknowledgement of the traditional custodians. Further, depending on the availability of an Aboriginal community elder, and the significance of the event, a formal Welcome to Country may be offered.

United Ngungawal Elders Council
When planning an official event, agencies should consult with the United Ngungawal Elders Council as the advisory body to the ACT Government on Aboriginal heritage, and ‘connection to country’ matters. Contact details can be obtained from the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs on 620 – 70555.

If you cannot arrange for a Ngungawal elder to attend your event, or if your event is considered too small to warrant a formal Welcome to Country you can make the following acknowledgement:

‘I/We wish to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on, the Ngungawal people. I/We wish to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region. I/We would also like to acknowledge and welcome other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may be attending today’s event.’

b) ACT Government Programs

As the ACT Government policy position acknowledges the Ngungawal family groups as the traditional custodians of the land that the Australian Capital Territory is located on, it is appropriate that this position is clearly reflected in all ACT Government programs, services, legislation and activities.

c) Boards and Committees

All ACT Boards and Committees should seek to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander membership if appropriate. Where there is particular need to provide advice to the ACT Government in relation to culture, heritage and ‘connection to land’ matters, representation from the Ngungawal Aboriginal community will need to be included on the respective board or committee. The representative will need to publicly acknowledge traditional custodianship of the ACT and must be accepted by the Ngungawal community.
The United Ngunnawal Elders Council can be of assistance and can recommend suitable candidates for these appointments when requested. Contact details can be obtained from the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs on 6207 0555.

Where the board or committee needs general Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation in the ACT, a representative from the wider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community should be sought. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body may be consulted to assist with wider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation. Contact details can be obtained from the Office of Aboriginal Affairs on 6207 0555.

For further information on Welcome to Country Protocols, appropriate events and fees, please contact the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs on 6207 0555.
5. HEALTH DIRECTORATE POLICY ON THE PREFERRED TERMINOLOGY TO BE USED WHEN REFERRING TO ‘ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES’

Director-General’s News Bulletin Issue No: 201 – Tuesday, 25 May 2010
Health Directorate acknowledges the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, languages, kinship structures and ways of life including the distinct cultural identities retained by the people irrelevant of whether they live in urban, regional or remote areas of Australia. It is important that this respect for culture is reflected in the way we communicate. Although the term ‘Indigenous’ is often used to refer to both groups, it is **Health Directorate policy** that the correct terminology to be used is ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’.

**Appropriate terminology**

‘**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander**’ – Meaning: when referring to both races of peoples. Usage: to be used when referring to both peoples.

‘**Aboriginal**’ – Meaning: of the Aboriginal race of Australia. Usage: to be used when specifically identifying one of the two races.

Use of Capitals – Usage: Terms such as ‘Aboriginal’ and ‘Torres Strait Islander’ should always be written beginning with capitals.

‘**Ngunnawal**’ - Meaning: Historically identified as the traditional custodians, or original people of the ACT and surrounding region.

**Inappropriate terminology** that must not be used

‘**Indigenous**’ – Meaning: this term has evolved through international law and has been identified as inappropriate when referring to the domestic Australian context.

‘**ATSI**, **TSI**' abbreviations are not to be used.

‘**Aborigine**’ – Meaning: generic term for the original inhabitant of any country. Usage: not to be used because of its negative connotations.

For further information on appropriate terminology please refer to the ACT Public Service Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Network terminology at [Attachment A](#) of this guide.
6. ENGAGING AND CONSULTING WITH THE ACT ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMUNITIES

Undertaking cultural awareness training will help to develop an understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities, cultures and issues which will assist in the preparation of an engaging and consulting process. The following information covers a range of areas that are useful in engaging and consulting.

a) Consultation

It is important to understand that there are two distinct groups of Indigenous Australians - the Aboriginal people and the Torres Strait Islander people. There are community elders and leaders in the Aboriginal community and there are community elders and leaders in the Torres Strait Islander community. Therefore it is important to ensure that there is engagement and consultation undertaken with representatives from both communities as needs and views are different.

It is also important to understand that there will often be a diversity of views on any particular issue within a community and that political structures and relationship dynamics can evolve and change over time.

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been consulted by governments over many years. This has not always been conducted appropriately and in some instances has led to feelings of mistrust towards government and government employees. In these situations people may feel apprehensive and/or cynical about ‘yet another’ engagement and staff should be sensitive and flexible in their approach.

The ACT Government Indigenous Protocols provide the policy on Welcome to Country Protocols, ACT Government Programs and Boards and Committees. The Protocols are at point 4, page 6 of this document.

b) Identity

The identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is determined only by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the community in which they live. The official criteria used by Australian Government and most State/Territory Governments are:

- A person must be of Aboriginal and / or Torres Strait Islander descent;
- A person must identify as an Aboriginal and / or Torres Strait Islander person; and
- A person must be accepted as an Aboriginal and / or Torres Strait Islander person by the community in which they live.

d) Planning an engagement/consultation visit

When planning to engage with a community or individuals staff must be clear about the purpose of the visit. Is the purpose to:
• Provide information;
• Consult with and ask for feedback on a particular issue;
• Involve individuals or the community in a policy, project or program; and/or
• Work in collaboration on a project (an example may include discussions around performance of a funding agreement).

Make sure you have a clear understanding of your role and be honest about your purpose.

Identify who the Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people are that you wish to consult with:
• Whose business is it? Who are the correct people/organisation to contact and what is the correct way to contact them?
• What positions do these people hold?
• Are they formal elected representatives?
• What is the relationship between those people you wish to consult and other members of the community (eg elected representatives or community elders)?
• Does the engagement include all the major leadership groups (e.g. elder’s, women’s group, Torres Strait Islanders)?
• Should the community as a whole be given an opportunity to be involved?

What information can you contribute and share as a part of the engagement process?

Those being consulted may not have the same background information as you. Sending relevant information in advance can help the process. Information should not be overly complex.

Prior to the visit, think through what potential barriers there may be to specific strategies. Can they be discussed in the negotiation process?

Cultural responses to concepts of time may be different. Other priorities on the day may impact on your arrangements. For example: a death, a funeral or a period of mourning. Be prepared to be flexible.

**e) Providing feedback**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities/individuals should receive feedback during the engagement and after any decision making processes.

The feedback should include:
- A report on the proceedings;
- Information about the scope of the engagement and diversity of opinions obtained;
- Opportunity for further input (if possible);
- Impact of the engagement (where possible); and
- Next steps and the final decision.
f) Useful hints

Seek advice before entering community and engagement.

- **Introductions are important.** Be prepared to spend time sharing personal background information about yourself and the purpose of your visit. For instance, let people know where you and your family are from. It can also be good to share information about your background about how you came to be involved in your current work.

- **Be patient when asking questions.** Look, listen, and learn! It may take time for some community people to become involved. Before giving their opinion about a ‘specific’ topic, some people may talk about other issues or stories.

- **Use plain English.** Avoid jargon. Do not use acronyms.

- **Not all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will share the same opinions and feelings.** All opinions should be acknowledged and valued.

- **The use of direct eye contact differs from community to community, and from individual to individual.** In some communities, direct eye contact may be expected and accepted. In other communities, it may be considered offensive.

- **The use of silence should not be misunderstood.** Silence may mean that people do not want to express an opinion at that point in time. It may also mean they are listening and reflecting about what has been said. It is important that this silence is respected and not interrupted unnecessarily. Silence is not a chance to take a break or leave the room. It is an opportunity to consider what is being spoken about.

- **Immediate and extended family obligations will always take first priority.** Family obligations and funerals affect many people in the community and may impact on your visit.

- **Consult on the local protocols regarding speaking the name of a person who has passed away, or showing their photograph.** Written consent must be obtained to take photos and/or distribute photos.

**Consult with a variety of community people and organisations as required.** Be aware that there can be family factions in a community. Liaising with only one family group may further divide the community.
7. HELPFUL CONTACTS FOR ADVICE AND SUPPORT

Within the Health Directorate there are several areas that have direct responsibility for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and healthcare and can provide and support on matters relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and the ACT communities.

a) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Unit
Policy and Government Relations
The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Unit is located in the Policy and Government Relations Branch, Health Directorate. The role of the unit is to manage, coordinate and contribute to a range of health policies and projects that have an impact on the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

b) Hospital Liaison Officer

The Canberra Hospital
Canberra Hospital's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Liaison Service ensures that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from the ACT and Regional NSW can access mainstream healthcare services. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Liaison Service can provide:

- Emotional, social and cultural support to patients and their families;
- Liaison services for patients and their families; and
- Information about hospital services and the linkage between the Hospital and other Indigenous Community resources.

The Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Liaison Officers work in collaboration with social workers to undertake these services. This service is available Monday to Friday during business hours.

Calvary Hospital

The role of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Liaison Officer, located at Calvary Health Care ACT is to:

- Provide a support and liaison service to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients and their families;
- Coordinate formal and informal cultural awareness sessions to educate staff on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and health care issues;
- Consult with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities within the ACT and region (including Yass and Queanbeyan) to form relationships/required need;
- Work within the values of the Little Company of Mary-Healing, Hospitality, Respect and Stewardship;
- Contribute to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Artist in Residence Program at Calvary; and
- Coordinate the development and review of guidelines for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Liaison Officer positions.
c) Mental Health Liaison Officer

Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation
The Mental Health Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Liaison Officer provides consultation and liaison services to all other mental health teams, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services, youth and adult medical services and other stakeholders as required, to assist in the delivery of services that are sensitive to the social and cultural beliefs, values and practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumers, the consumer's family, and their community in the ACT.

d) Alcohol and Other Drug Liaison Officer

Alcohol and Drug Program
The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Alcohol and Other Drug Liaison Officer role aims to divert people apprehended for drug use or drug related offences from the judicial system into the health system. The liaison officer provides an outreach and crime prevention role, assessment, referrals, assistance and support, follow up, liaison with other agencies, advice and support and works alongside the Winnungah Nimmitjah Aboriginal Health Service doctor in a weekly health clinic.
8. ACT ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER REPRESENTATIVE BODIES AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

a) ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body was established in 2008 to report to the Chief Minister on the views and aspirations of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Contact details: Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, GPO Box 158 CANBERRA ACT 2601 or phone: 02 6205 2551. Email: electedbody@act.gov.au

b) ACT Torres Strait Islanders Corporation

The ACT Torres Strait Islanders Corporation was founded on 17 December 1996. Its aims and objectives are to:

- Promote and encourage the Torres Strait Islander heritage and culture to the members of the Corporation; and
- Maintain the objects of the Corporation through economic, social and educational activities.

The Corporation organises annual Mabo Day (3 June) festivities and has strong links with the Zenadh Kes Mari, Torres Strait Islander dance group also Canberra based.

Contact details: 36 Chippindale Circuit, THEODORE ACT 2905

b) Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation

Provides drop in, program activities, community-based projects, case management and sector development with a specific focus on young people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds. Contact details: Grattan Court, WANNIASSA ACT 2903 or phone 02 6231 9555 website www.gugan-gulwan.com.au/

c) United Ngunnawal Elders Council (UNEC)

The purpose of the Council is to provide advice to ACT Government in relation to heritage and land matters for the Ngunnawal people.

Contact details: Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, GPO Box 158 CANBERRA ACT 2601 or ph: 02 6205 2551

d) Winnunga Nimmytijah Aboriginal Health Service

Provides a holistic health service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in the ACT. Clinic hours are 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday.

63 Boolimba Crescent, Narrabundah Ph: 02 6284 6222 – website www.winnunga.org.au
9. **ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER SIGNIFICANT EVENTS**

ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities celebrate significant events throughout the year and it is important to know that they may be unavailable during these times. These dates include:

a) **26 May – National Sorry Day**

National Sorry Day offers the community the opportunity to acknowledge the impact of the policies of forcible removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families. The first National Sorry Day was held on 26 May 1998 following the 1997 report ‘Bringing Them Home’ which recommended that a national day of observance be declared.

b) **27 May to 3 June – National Reconciliation Week**

National Reconciliation week was initiated in 1996 to provide a special focus for nationwide activities. The week is a time to reflect on achievements so far and the things which need to be done to achieve reconciliation.

c) **3 June – Mabo Day**

Mabo Day marks the anniversary of the High Court of Australia’s judgement in 1992 on the Mabo case. This is a particular day of significance for Torres Strait Islander people.

The High Court, in an historical judgement, accepted the claim by Eddie Mabo and the other claimants that their people (the Meriam people) had occupied the islands of Mer for hundreds of years before the arrival of the British.

d) **1 July – Coming of the Light**

This is a particular day of significance for Torres Strait Islander Australians. It marks the day the London Missionary Society first arrived in the Torres Strait bringing Christianity to the people of the Torres Strait.

e) **1st Sunday to 2nd Sunday in July – National NAIDOC Week**

NAIDOC (National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee) is an awareness committee and the name of the week set aside to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, culture and achievements. More information can be found at [www.naidoc.org.au](http://www.naidoc.org.au)
10. RESEARCH INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

a) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Portal, Health Directorate

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health portal aims to assist your search for information on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health issues, health organisations, policies and research including cultural events of significance.  [www.ihealthportal.act.gov.au](http://www.ihealthportal.act.gov.au)

b) Australian Indigenous Doctor’s Association

AIDA advocates for improvements in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health in Australia and encourages Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to work in medicine by supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and doctors. [http://www.aida.org.au/](http://www.aida.org.au/)

c) Australian Indigenous HealthinfoNet

A 'one-stop info-shop' that aims to contribute to 'closing the gap' in health between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians by informing practice and policy in Indigenous health by making research and other knowledge readily accessible. [http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/](http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/)

d) Australian Indigenous Psychologists Association

AIPA aims to achieve equitable participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within psychology. [http://www.indigenouspsychology.com.au/](http://www.indigenouspsychology.com.au/)

e) Australian Institute of Health and Welfare – Indigenous Health

Information discussed on the site includes: Access to health services; Alcohol and other Drug Treatment Services; Expenditure; Health risk factors; Hospitalisation; ill-health conditions; Mental Health; Mortality; Mothers and Babies; Socio economic context of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health. [http://www.aihw.gov.au/indigenous/index.cfm](http://www.aihw.gov.au/indigenous/index.cfm)


‘Close the Gap’ calls on all levels of Australian government to put in place firm targets, funding and timeframes to address health inequalities, including providing equal access to primary health care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians within 10 years. [http://www.hreoc.gov.au/social_justice/health/index.html](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/social_justice/health/index.html)
g) Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses

CATSIN’s main function is to increase the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in nursing and midwifery and to promote education of non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives in history, health and culture. 

h) Indigenous Allied Health Australia

The Indigenous Allied Health Australia Inc, the peak allied health body for Indigenous people in Australia, was incorporated in June 2009, with a Committee of Management of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander allied health professionals. The vision of IAHA is to achieve the same quality of health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. 

i) Indigenous Dentists’ Association of Australia

The Indigenous Dentists’ Association of Australia was founded in 2004. It’s principal objective is the promotion of good oral health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. The Association promotes communication between members and aims to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dentists and dental students. http://www.idaa.com.au/IDAA/Home.html

j) The Lowitja Institute – Australia’s National Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research

The Lowitja Institute is an innovative research body that brings together Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, academic institutions and government agencies to facilitate collaborative, evidence-based research into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health. 
**APPROPRIATE TERMINOLOGY**

The ACT Public Service Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Network (ACTPSATSIN) recognises the diversity of cultures, languages, kinship structures and ways of life of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and has endorsed the following terminology to be used across the ACT Public Service when referring to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Usage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal</td>
<td>Means of the Aboriginal race of Australia.</td>
<td>To be used to identify one of the two Indigenous races of Australia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal person/Aboriginal Australia</td>
<td>Means a person, or descendant, of the Aboriginal race of Australia.</td>
<td>To identify a particular person in the singular.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torres Strait Islander</td>
<td>Means of the Torres Strait Islander race of Australia (or an indigenous inhabitant of the Torres Strait Islands of Australia).</td>
<td>To be used to identify one of the two Indigenous races of Australia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torres Strait Islander person / Torres Strait Islander Australian</td>
<td>Means a person of the Torres Strait Islander race of Australia.</td>
<td>To identify a particular person in the singular.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander</td>
<td>When referring to both races of peoples.</td>
<td>To be used when referring to both cultures / to be used when referring to both peoples.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal people</td>
<td>This recognises that Aboriginal people have a collective, rather than purely individual, dimension to their livelihoods.</td>
<td>Add ‘s’ if preferred, or if observing international practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal descent</td>
<td>Acknowledgement as having Aboriginal ancestry.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torres Strait Islander descent</td>
<td>Acknowledgement as having Torres Strait Islander ancestry.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent</td>
<td>Acknowledgement as having both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestry.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous</td>
<td>The use of the term ‘Indigenous’ has evolved through international law. It acknowledges a particular relationship of aboriginal people to the territory from which they originate.</td>
<td>A national workshop held in Adelaide on 11-13 March 2009 and hosted by the Australian Human Rights Commission. While accepting the international context for the term ‘Indigenous’, participants in the workshop expressed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
strong preference for the phrase ‘Indigenous peoples’ not to be the primary descriptor used in the domestic Australian context.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use of Capitals</th>
<th>Terms such as ‘Aboriginal’, ‘Torres Strait Islander’ and ‘Indigenous’ should always be written with a capital, just like any other cultural term, such as Vietnamese or American.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ngunnawal</td>
<td>Historically identified as traditional custodians, or original people, of the ACT and surrounding region.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Terms to avoid using

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Usage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aborigine (s)</td>
<td>This is a generic term for the original inhabitant of any country.</td>
<td>Do not use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The majority of Aboriginal people today associate this term as having negative connotations for inferiority.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional owners</td>
<td></td>
<td>Do not use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Use ‘Traditional Custodians’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Aboriginal people do not ‘own’ the land; but rather, the land ‘owns’ them and their role is to care for, and to look after the land.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATSI</td>
<td>Abbreviation of ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander’</td>
<td>Do not use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSI</td>
<td>Abbreviation for ‘Torres Strait Islander’</td>
<td>Do not use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Uncle’ / ‘Aunty’</td>
<td>Form of respect for older leaders in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community that you are not lawfully related to.</td>
<td>Do not use unless invited to do so.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackfella</td>
<td>Anglicised version of ‘black fellow’</td>
<td>Do not use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>This is a term of self-reference used by Aboriginal Australians and other Indigenous cultures and may be perceived as derogatory if utilised by non-Indigenous persons.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>