



EDMUND RICE EDUCATION
AUSTRALIA

CULTURAL PRACTICE

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EDUCATION



EREA acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of Australia as the Traditional Owners of the Country/s on which our schools and offices are placed.

We are inspired and nurtured by the wisdoms, spiritualities and experiences of First Nations Peoples. Together we work actively for reconciliation, justice, equity and healing.

Preface: The Reconciliation Journey

Edmund Rice Education Australia (EREA) is committed to the task of reconciliation. To assist the EREA community on this journey, this Cultural Practice tool has been developed. It provides guidelines for all in the EREA community, including those in offices and schools, in how they respectfully engage/work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

RECONCILIATION:

Our vision for reconciliation is for everyone to walk together for mutual liberation.

EREA is committed to the achievement of authentic reconciliation, justice, equity and healing through the acknowledgement and practice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowing. Through the lenses of Respect, Relationships and Opportunities, EREA strives to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff members, build cultural safety across the organisation and respectfully embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives into our practice.

It is the goal of the EREA Innovate RAP, as an overarching plan, to determine actions to be carried out by the National Office of EREA. It will also lead and encourage schools in our network to promote and engage with reconciliation through the Narragunnawali RAP process. Reconciliation is everyone's business and everyone's right, so as to create a better Australia for all.

To make this journey, we need to be proactive in the continuous education and training of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and staff members, as well as the formation of all staff in appropriate cultural practice.

Many resources are available on the EREA website to support this journey through the lenses of Respect, Relationships and Opportunities.

<http://www.erea.edu.au/about-us/aboriginal-torres-strait-islander-education>

Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country:

An Acknowledgement of Country is a way of showing respect for the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which learning is taking place or a meeting or event is being held. An Acknowledgement of Country is different from a Welcome to Country, which is a formal welcome onto land and can only be conducted by Traditional Owners or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have been given permission from Traditional Owners to welcome visitors to their Country.

The acts of being welcomed to and acknowledging Country are a continuation of protocols that have been practiced for thousands of years. For non-Indigenous Australians, Acknowledgement of Country is a symbolic act of reconciliation as it recognises the continuing connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to Country.

Reference: <https://www.narragunnawali.org.au/rap/actions/1/acknowledgement-of-country>

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Boundaries:

Boundaries as we now know them have been allocated by non-Indigenous surveyors, linguists, administrators and anthropologists from early colonialist times. The concept of 'Boundaries' are different for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Contact your local community to talk about the boundaries as they know them. Do not rely on maps that have originated from early periods of time and that have been created and identified as above.

Cultural Practice?

Cultural Practice, in the context of this document, engages ethical principles which guide people's behavior in a western structural setting. These practices are designed to protect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural and intellectual property rights. These practices provide support

in the establishment and development of working relationships between EREA, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to improve educational outcomes and journey towards reconciliation.

A Guide to Using Respectful and Inclusive Language and Terminology:

Using respectful and inclusive language and terminology is an essential component of reconciliation and strengthening relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and other Australians. The way in which we speak about reconciliation is just as important as the way in

which we act; language, in and of itself, can be active, impacting on people's attitudes, understandings and relationships in a very real sense.

(adapted from Reconciliation Australia website)

Acknowledging Diversity:

Given the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and identities across Australia, we should always seek advice from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of the Country on which our office, school or early learning community is based, regarding preferences and protocols around the appropriate use of terminology.

While guidelines only, below are some recommendations for using respectful and inclusive language and terminology. Please consider these guidelines, alongside guidance from your local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community when preparing written statements such as your Vision for Reconciliation, as well as in everyday communication.

Referring to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples:

It is often best practice to use 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' when referring generally to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. 'Aboriginal' (and less commonly accepted variants such as 'Aboriginals' or 'Aborigines') alone is not inclusive of the diversity of cultures and identities across Australia, for which reason it should be accompanied by 'Peoples' in the plural. Similarly, as a stand-alone term, 'Aboriginal' is not inclusive of Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and reference to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples must be spelt out where necessary.

Pluralised reference terms such as 'First Nations' or 'First Peoples' are acceptable language, and respectfully encompass the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and identities. Correspondingly, pluralisation should extend to generalised references to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 'histories,' 'perspectives,' 'ways of being,' 'contributions,' and so forth.

In respecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identities, it is important not to abbreviate 'Aboriginal' or 'Torres Strait Islander,' or to use the acronym 'ATSI.'

It is important to acknowledge that Indigenous Peoples of the Torres Strait Islands have separate linguistic and cultural identities to Aboriginal Peoples. The preferred name is 'Torres Strait Islanders' as a collective description of the various Torres Strait Islander groups. When referring to a specific individual or group, use the terminology of identity, for example 'Meriam woman/man/people'. Abbreviations such as 'Islander' or 'TSI' should not be used.

Assimilationist terms such as 'full-blood,' 'half-caste' and 'quarter-caste' are extremely offensive and should never be used when referring to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

It is important to recognise that, in some parts of the country, the term 'Indigenous' can be considered offensive. That is, it has scientific connotations which have been used historically to describe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as part of the 'flora/fauna' rather than the human population of Australia and can be seen as a problematically universalising or homogenising label for what are, in reality, highly diverse identities. An exception for the term 'Indigenous' is considered in some situations, for example:

- If an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person prefers and/or has approved the word 'Indigenous' to be used;
- If an organisation has appropriately referred to a program or job title (e.g. "Indigenous Programs Unit" or "Indigenous Programs Manager");
- If the word 'Indigenous' has been appropriately embedded into an organisational i.e. Federal Government, State Government and Local Government—policy;
- If referring to Non-Indigenous (Non-Aboriginal or Non-Torres Strait Islander) Australians. Terms such as 'other Australians' or 'the wider community' may also be acceptable in this regard.

Other terms may be appropriate to use when referring to local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities such as:

- If the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community choose to use their nation name: for example, Darkinjung or Awabakal;
- If the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community uses a more generic term like Koori in Victoria or NSW, Murri in Queensland, NSW etc.

Capitalisation:

As capitalisation demonstrates respect, 'Aboriginal' and 'Torres Strait Islander' should always be capitalised. Capitalisation conventions are often also considered appropriate to extend to terms such as:

- Dreaming and Dreamtime
- Indigenous (used only as appropriate, see page 5)
- First Peoples/Nations/Australians
- Elders
- Traditional Owners/Custodians
- Country (and corresponding terms such as 'Land,' when it is used in place of 'Country'), as well as the names of particular Language Groups or geo-cultural communities;
- Acknowledgement of Country, Welcome to Country, and the names of other cultural practices (particularly if the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander meanings or perspectives behind the words used to describe the practices – such as 'acknowledge' or 'welcome' – may be distinct to their English definitions or connotations).

Note that it is not necessary to capitalise the term 'reconciliation,' unless making reference to the name of Reconciliation Australia as an organisation, or the name of a formal program or document such as your Reconciliation Action Plan.

Avoiding Deficit and Dichotomous Language:

Acknowledging and addressing the historical – and often intergenerational – injustices and inequities experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples since colonisation, is a critical component of reconciliation. It is simultaneously imperative to acknowledge the strengths and resilience shown by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, cultures and communities in the face of discrimination, and to celebrate the continued significance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contributions in shaping a shared sense of national unity and identity.

It is important to draw on empowering, strengths-

based language, and to be careful not to perpetuate patronising or paternalistic rhetoric. Consider, for example, the difference between more deficit discourses such as "helping disadvantaged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students," and a more strengths-based alternative such as "providing meaningful opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to achieve at their full potential."

Remember that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and cultures have survived across the Australian continent for tens of thousands of years

and, as such, are not 'in need' of being 'rescued' or 'saved.' Reconciliation is about working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and their strengths, not doing things for them or to them. In this context don't use terms like 'our' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Correspondingly, reconciliation processes and aspirations should

not be described through dichotomous 'us' and 'them' language and should instead concentrate on promoting mutually respectful and genuine two-way relationships of shared significance.

Glossary of Acronyms and Concepts:

Acronym & Concepts	Meanings
Aboriginal	The Oxford Living Dictionaries 2019 defines 'Aboriginal' as inhabiting or existing in a land from the earliest times or from before the arrival of colonists". * "Oxford Living Dictionaries 2019, Oxford University Press, Viewed 24 January 2019, < https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/aboriginal >" However, the concept 'Aboriginal' is more complex than this definition. Do not use dictionary definitions alone.
AIATSIS	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
ATSILIP	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Initiatives Program
CATSI Act	Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006
Country	"Country/Countrys is the term we have chosen to use to describe Aboriginal Countrys, spaces and places. It is capitalised and pluralised to give respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander diversities. The term Country embodies ecological systems so much a part of Indigenous Knowings; it is not just limited to geographical space and place. We choose to spell the plural differently to embrace the distinctiveness of concepts." (Blair .N. 2015. p.xvi)
FaHCSIA	Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
IAC	Indigenous Advisory Committee
ICC	Indigenous Coordination Centre
ILC	Indigenous Land Corporation
ILUA	Indigenous Land Use Agreement

Acronym & Concepts	Meaning
IMA	Indigenous Management Agreement
IPA	Indigenous Protected Area
IPO	Indigenous Peoples Organisation
IPP	Indigenous Partnerships Programme
IWPG	Indigenous Water Policy Group
NAIDOC	National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee
NATSICC	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council
NICC	National Indigenous Climate Change
NNTT	National Native Title Tribunal
NTA	Native Title Act 1993
NTRB	Native Title Representative Body
ORIC	Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination
PBC	Prescribed Body Corporate
Torres Strait Islander	<p>The Torres Strait Islands are a group of over 200 small islands in the Torres Strait off the Australian mainland's northern most point. There are seventeen inhabited islands and two communities located at the tip of Cape York that are classified as a part of the Torres Strait. The Torres Strait is the waterway that separates Australia and Papua New Guinea.</p> <p>From the waters of the Strait, where the Coral and Arafura Seas meet in one of the most fragile and intricate waterways in the world, rise hundreds of islands, islets, cays, reefs and sandbanks. All these are traditionally named, owned and used. No two islands are identical, each being shaped by its unique landscape, stories and history.</p> <p>The Torres Strait Islander peoples along with Aboriginal peoples are the Indigenous peoples of Australia, two very distinct cultural groups. (AIATSIS website)</p>
TSRA	Torres Strait Regional Authority
WIPCE	World Indigenous People Conference on Education
Young People (YP)	Young People is described as student of EREA Schools

Acronym & Concepts	Meaning	
Aboriginal Flag Symbolic Meaning	Black: Represents the Aboriginal people of Australia. Red: Represents the red earth, the red ochre used in ceremonies and Aboriginal people's spiritual relation to the land. Yellow: Represents the Sun, the giver of life and protector.	
Torres Strait Islander Flag Symbolic Meaning	Green: Represents the land. Blue: Represents the sea. White: Represents peace. Black: Represents the Torres Strait Peoples of Australia.	The dhari (dancer's headdress) represents Torres Strait Island Peoples 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.



A Final Reminder:

Again, remember that the above is a guide only, and should not replace the advice from your local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. If, upon consulting with your local Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander community, you find that the preferred terminology is different from the recommendations above, then follow that advice.

(Adapted from Reconciliation Australia website)



Relationships:

We will develop relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities and commit to building knowledge and understanding of the deep histories and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of Australia. We are committed to empowering our organization to build sustainable relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.



Respect:

Respect is fundamental to our reconciliation pathways and is a key factor to developing positive relationships and opportunities with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. We will ensure that we build awareness, understanding and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and Peoples by embracing the histories, knowledge and lessons they share.



Opportunities:

Fostering equal and equitable opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples is essential to realising reconciliation. Our aim is to create opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People through employment, community engagement and building business capability.

References:

AIATSIS Australian Institute Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies: <https://aiatsis.gov.au/>

Blair N. (2015) p. xvi Privileging Australian Indigenous Knowledge. Sweet Potatoes, Spiders, Waterlilies and Brick Walls.

Defining Aboriginality in Australia – Parliament of Australia https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary...Library/.../03Cib10

Legal definitions of Aboriginality | ALRC

<https://www.alrc.gov.au/publications/36-kinship-and.../legal-definitions-aboriginality>

Oxford Living Dictionaries 2019, Oxford University Press, Viewed 24 January 2019, <<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/aboriginal>>

Reconciliation Australia website: <https://www.reconciliation.org.au>

The problem with defining Aboriginal | NITV - SBS <https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/2016/11/30/problem-defining-aboriginal>

A School Review Checklist: Indicators of a successful Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Education Program”, Dare to Lead, www.daretolead.edu.au

Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Checklist”, Western Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children, www.rapworkers.com

List of RAP Actions”, Narragunnawali Reconciliation for Schools and Early Learning, www.narragunnawali.org.au



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