

Terminology Guide

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples



Good Practice Inclusive Language

Be conscious of the unique, diverse and distinct identities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and understand the use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is as a collective name.

Acknowledge individual, family and community strengths in surviving the historical and ongoing context of colonisation including present systemic barriers faced by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Always use capitals when referring to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, i.e. 'First Peoples', 'First Australians', 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' peoples, 'Torres Strait Islander' communities or 'Indigenous Australian' peoples or 'Aboriginal' person.

Where possible, consult with local Traditional Owner groups to ensure that the language and practices are reflective of the community.

Refer to an Aboriginal person by their connections to Country/ Countries and peoples of a specific Country/ Countries if it is known and the person prefers, for example 'Turrbal woman' rather than 'an Aboriginal woman'.

Be aware of the three-part definition of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person according to s51 (25) of the High Court of Australia (1983) is paraphrased as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person is a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted by the community in which they live.



Language and Practices to Avoid

Always use Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in full and never abbreviate to 'ATSI'. Similarly, always use Torres Strait Islander people in full and never abbreviate to "TSI" or "islanders".

'Aboriginal' and 'Torres Strait Islander' shouldn't be used as a noun, e.g., the aboriginal. The word 'aborigine' should be avoided when referring to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as it is a generic term for the original inhabitants of any country.

Don't isolate or exclude Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, for example stating that 'all Australians have access to quality medical care' excludes the lived experience of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Don't trivialise or misrepresent important cultural beliefs and practices such as referring to the Dreaming as myths or legends.

Don't make assumptions about someone's ancestry based on their physical features. Blood-quotum terms such as 'half-caste', 'full-blood' and 'part Aboriginal' should never be used.

As 'indigenous' is a general term for original inhabitants of an area, some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people feel the term devalues their identity and should be avoided; however, in some circumstances capitalised 'Indigenous' is acceptable.

Never use the collective name "Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander" peoples as it misrepresents the identity of Torres Strait Islander peoples as not being the original inhabitants of islands in the Torres Strait.

Good Practice Tip

Watch *Summer May Finlay Talking Terminology for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People*



[youtube.com/
watch?v=zOOhNNdHOYI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zOOhNNdHOYI)
(4 minutes)

