# Affirming Cultural Recognition at the Australian Catholic University

## **Terminology Guide**

Using the appropriate terminology whilst teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Knowing's and Perspectives will contribute towards positive relationships thus building up the established reconciliation advances developed. This 'guide' assists the use of appropriate terminology by listing the preferred words for common expressions and terms. The use of positive and appropriate terminology will ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, staff and community feel more included across the activities across the university.

When using language, it is extremely important to understand the context in which it has originated, how it continues to be used and the ways in which it informs discourses of power. It is not just about 'correct' and 'incorrect' language, it is also about knowing the power of language within a predominantly non-Indigenous teaching context. Graduates of the university will complete their studies with a more comprehensive understanding of Australia's First Peoples cultures and histories whilst developing the most appropriate strategies to work more inclusively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

The recognition and appropriate representation of Indigenous Australia is fundamental in addressing disadvantage and to 'Close the Gap' – not to mention tackling fundamental 'social justice' needs. The continual use of terms which stereotype and normalise difference and disadvantage fails to recognise the social, linguistic and cultural diversity and contribution of Indigenous Australia – the First peoples of these Lands. The use of more appropriate terms can go a long way to healing the divide between those Australians who may feel marginalised.

True Reconciliation amongst all Australians can occur by fully understanding each of our histories, through creative and inclusive teaching practices and through the use of 'appropriate terminology', 'positive language' and 'correct and up-to-date Indigenous content' within the curriculum. These Catholic 'Social Justice' teachings are reflected in the Australian Catholic University 'Mission' of the pursuit of knowledge, the dignity of the human person and the common good.

## World Indigenous peoples:

The United Nations estimates that there are some 370 million Indigenous peoples within 70 countries across the world that identify themselves as original inhabitants of those lands. An Indigenous person is 'inherent to, original, first people or aboriginal' and belonging to a particular traditional owner group(s)<sup>1</sup>.

Many Indigenous peoples are the holders of unique languages, knowledge systems and beliefs, and possess invaluable traditional knowledge for the sustainable management of natural resources and have a special relation to and use of their traditional land, waters or territories. Ancestral lands, waters and territories are of fundamental importance for their physical and cultural survival as First Peoples. In considering the diversity of Indigenous peoples, an official definition of 'indigenous' has not been adopted by any United Nations body or committee.

#### The Australian context:

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) developed a working definition to describe the First Peoples of Australia. This explanation was endorsed by the High Court of Australia in 1983 and has since been adopted by the Australian Government.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/5session\_factsheet1.pdf

An Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person is:

- 1. A person who has Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander ancestry; who also
- 2. Identifies as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person; and
- 3. Is accepted or known as such by an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community in which they currently live or have lived<sup>2</sup>.

First Peoples encompass a diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations, each with their own languages and traditions and have historically lived on mainland Australia, Tasmania or on many of the continent's offshore islands, including the islands of the Torres Strait.

Australia's First peoples and cultures most likely represent the oldest surviving cultures on the planet. Within Australia there are two biologically different peoples/traditional owner groups generally referred to as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. Aboriginal Australians make up some 600 language groups and have occupied mainland Australia, Tasmania and the surrounding islands whose connection to this country can be dated back to the Dreaming. There are several hundred language groups who occupied specific areas or Countries and within each people lived in clan or family groups defined by numerous forms and protocols within strict kinship systems. According to the 2016 census data there are 590 000 individuals within Australia who identity with their Aboriginal ancestry.

Torres Strait Islander peoples come from the islands of the Torres Strait, between the tip of Cape York in Queensland and Papua New Guinea. Torres Strait Islanders share their own distinct identity, history and cultural traditions. Today more Torres Strait Islanders live on mainland Australia but still identify with their ancestry and maintain their culture and languages accordingly. The 2016 Australian Bureau of Statistics data highlights that 32 000 Australians identify as Torres Strait Islander and a further 27 000 acknowledge both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestry.

Aboriginal people may use a non-derogatory generic term to define who they are e.g. they may call themselves a Murri, Koori, Nyoongar, Palawah/Pakana, Wangai or Yamatji depending upon which part of Australia they belong to. Aboriginal identities can also directly link to their language groups and traditional Country such as Kamilaroi or Wiradjuri. For example, the Gunditjamara people are the traditional owners of western Victoria, the Gadigal people are from Sydney, and the Yawuru people are the traditional custodians of Broome in Western Australia.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people might refer to themselves according to their traditional geographic lands or environments e.g. a saltwater person comes from the coast or they might identify as belonging to the 'freshwater', 'rainforest', 'desert' or 'spinifex' mob for those who originate or live in that ecological environment.

Torres Strait Islander people, however, prefer to use the name of their home Island to identify themselves to outsiders, for example a Saibai man or woman is from Saibai, or a Meriam person is from Mer or the Murray Island group. Torres Strait Islanders advocate the use of their Indigenous name when referring to that Island e.g. the language name for Hammond Island is Keriri and Puruma is the traditional name for Coconut Island. Most Torres Strait Islanders born and/or raised on mainland Australia still identify themselves according to their Island of origin. Like mainland Aboriginal people, Torres Strait Islanders can have mixed ancestry. Theirs is likely to also be South Sea Islander, Samoan, Chinese, Japanese, Pilipino and/or mainland Aboriginal.

Given that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (particularly children) were forcibly removed from their families and traditional lands this has had a negative impact on their identity. These 'stolen' children were raised in institutions or were fostered or adopted out. In most cases they were completely cut off from any contact with their families, home communities and these events impacted dramatically and negatively upon their language, culture and identity. Due to such some First Peoples are unable to nominate or identify with any particular language group(s) - hence the term 'Stolen'. Since the tabling of the 'Bringing them Home' report in 1997 'Link-up' services have been established to assist people to find the language group that they belong to or can now identify with.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> http://www.aboriginalculture.com.au/introduction.html

## The AIATSIS map of Aboriginal Australia:

The Aboriginal Language Map attempts to represent all First Nations language groups (including the Torres Strait Islands) which best represents Indigenous peoples of Australia. It indicates general locations of larger groupings of people which may include smaller groups such as clans, dialects or individual languages in a group. David R Horton is the creator of the Indigenous Language Map. This map is based on language data gathered by Aboriginal Studies Press, AIATSIS and Auslig/Sinclair, Knight, Merz, (1996) and incorporates the research of Norman B Tindale in the 1920's and 30's<sup>3</sup>.

## **Welcome or Acknowledgement to Country**

Ceremonies and the protocols associated with cultural events have been a fundamental part of First Nations cultures since 'The Dreaming' or 'Before Time'. Prior to 1788 permission was requested to allow safe passage to enter the traditional lands or islands of another group. Today 'Traditional Owners' welcome us to their Country or we acknowledge the language group from that particular geographical area. These events are commonly known as 'Welcome to Country' or 'Acknowledgment of Traditional Owners' as it shows respect to the First Peoples of the local area.

## **Welcome to Country:**

A Welcome to Country generally occurs at significant events and is given by a local Elder (or representative) who belongs to that particular Traditional Owner group. A Welcome to Country is a ceremony that is delivered or in some instances performed by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples to welcome visitors to their traditional lands. It can take many forms, depending on the particular culture of the traditional owners, and can include singing, dancing, smoking/water ceremonies or a speech which usually includes local traditional language(s).

### **Acknowledgment of Country:**

An acknowledgment of Country pays respect to the traditional owners of that particular geographic area upon which campus the event is taking place. This can be performed by anyone present at the time and examples include:

## Option 1:

It is our custom at ACU to give an Acknowledgement of Country. On behalf of us gathered here today I would like to commence the meeting by acknowledging the First Peoples, the traditional custodians of the countries on which ACU campuses are currently located.

We respectfully acknowledge:

The Turrabul and Jagera peoples in Brisbane

The Wurundjeri people in Melbourne

The Wathaurong people of Ballarat

The Dharug/Dharruk people from Strathfield

The Gurringai people in North Sydney

The Ngunnawal people from Canberra

The Kaurna people from Adelaide

Each of these nations has faithfully cared for country over thousands of years. I would also like to respectfully acknowledge our Elders both past and present and remember that they have passed on their wisdom to us in various ways. Let us hold this in trust as we work and serve our community.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> http://www.abc.net.au/cm/lb/9688614/data/language-map-image-data.png

#### Option 2:

In continuing ACU's commitment to Reconciliation and in line with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tradition, it is customary to acknowledge country as we pass through. Today we acknowledge and pay our respects to the First Peoples, traditional custodians of the lands and waterways (see traditional owner list above) and thank them for their continued hospitality. We acknowledge and celebrate the continuation of a living culture that has a unique role in this region. We also acknowledge Elders past and present as well as our emerging leaders of tomorrow and thank them for their wisdom and guidance as we walk in their footsteps.

## **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flags:**

The symbolic meaning of the **Aboriginal** flag as designed by Harold Thomas is as follows: Black – represents the Aboriginal people of Australia. Yellow circle – represents the Sun, the giver of life and protector. Red – represents the red earth, the red ochre used in ceremonies and Aboriginal peoples' spiritual relation to the land<sup>4</sup>.

The **Torres Strait Islander Flag** designed by the late Bernard Namok was recognised by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission in June 1992. The green panels at the top and the bottom of the flag symbolise the land (islands), while the blue panel in the centre represents the waters of the Torres Strait. The thin black stripes between the green and blue panels signify the Torres Strait Islanders themselves. The white five-pointed star at the centre of the flag represents the five major island groups, and the white *dhari* (dancer's headdress) symbolises the cultures of the Torres Strait Islands peoples. White symbolises peace, while the star is a symbol for navigation<sup>5</sup>.

A proclamation was made by the Governor-General on 14 July 1995 recognising the flag described in the Schedule as the flag of the Aboriginal peoples of Australia and a flag of significance to the Australian nation generally, and appointing the flag under section 5 of the *Flags Act 1953* as the flag of the Aboriginal peoples of Australia and to be known as the Australian Aboriginal Flag.

## The History of the Australian Catholic University

Australian Catholic University (ACU) was opened on 1 January 1991 following the amalgamation of four Catholic tertiary institutions along eastern Australia:

- Catholic College of Education Sydney in New South Wales
- Institute of Catholic Education in Victoria
- McAuley College of Queensland
- Signadou College of Education in the Australian Capital Territory.

These institutions had their origins in the mid-1800s, when religious orders and institutes became involved in preparing teachers for Catholic schools and, later, nurses for Catholic hospitals. Through a series of amalgamations, relocations, transfers of responsibilities and diocesan initiatives, more than 20 historical entities have contributed to the creation of the University.

The University is a member of the publicly-funded national system of Australian universities, the Association of Commonwealth Universities and the International Federation of Catholic Universities. The University's Vice-Chancellor is a member of Universities Australia.

## The Australian Catholic University's Commitment to Reconciliation

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian\_Aboriginal\_Flag

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torres\_Strait\_Islander\_Flag

The Australian Catholic University in making this Statement of Commitment to Reconciliation draws its inspiration from the historic message of Pope John Paul II to the Indigenous peoples and the Australian Catholic Church in Alice Springs on 29 November 1986.

To Indigenous peoples, he said: 'You are part of Australia and Australia is part of you. And the Church herself in Australia will not be fully the Church that Jesus wants her to be until you have made your contribution to her life and until that contribution has been joyfully received by others'<sup>6</sup>.

ACU makes a commitment to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 'peoples' and 'perspectives' are integral to the community and included within the curriculum of the University<sup>7</sup>.

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Support Units at ACU:

There are four Indigenous Higher Education Units across the seven ACU campuses, these are:

CAMPUS	INDIGENOUS UNIT	TRADITIONAL OWNERS
Signadou - Canberra	Dhara Daramoolen (Earth, Spirit)	Ngunnawal people
Aquinas - Ballarat	Jim-baa-yer (To Learn - To Teach)	Wathaurong people
St Patrick's - Melbourne	Jim-baa-yer (To Learn - To Teach)	Wurundjeri people
McAuley - Brisbane	Weemala (Distant View)	Turrabul and Jaggera people
MacKillop - North Sydney	Yalbalinga (Place of Learning)	Gurringai People
Strathfield - Mount Saint Mary	Yalbalinga (Place of Learning)	Dharug People
Adelaide - Theological College		Kaurna people

# **Further Useful Terminology**

INADDDODDIATE TEDMINOLOGY

APPROPRIATE TERMINOLOGY	INAPPROPRIATE TERMINOLOGY
In Queensland Aboriginal peoples use a generic term such as Murri: Northern New South Wales	Aborigine, Aboriginals, ATSI and A&TSI, Part-
	aborigine, full-blood, half-caste, quarter-cast,
use either 'Murri or Goori'. The remainder of	hybrid. Primitive, native, nomadic, Chiefs, Kings
New South Wales, Victoria and the Australian	and Queens, myths, folklore, legends,
Capital Territory the term 'Koori' is generally	Dreamtime, tribes. It is untrue to state that the
used.	Tasmanian Aboriginals died out. Using a small
First Nations peoples in Southern South	'a' in Aborigines and a small 'i' in Indigenous.
Australia refer to themselves as 'Nunga'.	Avoiding deficit and dichotomous language.
In Tasmania Indigenous peoples call	
themselves 'Tasmanian Aboriginals' or	
Palawah/Pakana. Around Perth people use	
Noongar and the term Yolngu is current within	
Arnhem Land.	
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Peoples will use	
their language group names e.g. Kamilaroi,	
Wiradjuri	
Torres Strait Islanders will identify with the	
Island from which they originate. It is imperative	
that you ask an Indigenous person the term they	
use to describe themselves and their	
family/community.	
First Peoples, Aboriginal peoples, Torres Strait	Aborigine, ATSI, A&TSI, TSI, nomad, tribe.
Islander peoples, Complex and diverse	-
societies.	
300101103.	

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> http://www.natsicc.org.au/liturgy-resources.html

ADDDODDIATE TEDMINOLOGY

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> https://www.acu.edu.au/\_\_data/.../Statement\_of\_Commitment\_to\_Reconciliation.pdf

'Abl' should be used to reference Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander books in a library using the Dewey Decimal system.  Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' spiritual beliefs determine that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have existed since the beginning of time. Aboriginal peoples	The Library should not use the first three letters for Aboriginal as this will be shortened to 'Abo' and this term should be avoided at all costs.  Statements that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have lived in Australia for thousands of years are based on non-Indigenous knowledge systems. These types of
generally use the 'Dreaming' and Torres Strait Islanders refer to 'Before Time' or 'Before, Before Time'.	scientific theory quantifying time are in opposition to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowing's, knowledges and beliefs.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples occupied Australia before Captain Cook, Captain Arthur Philip and Luis Vaz de Torres landed here.	Captain Cook discovered Australia.
Invasion, Colonisation, Occupation, Massacres.	Settlement, Skirmish, Encounter, Killing
Seasonal Hunters and Gatherers, Rotational or cyclical occupation, Caring for Country, Efficient resource managers.	Nomadic, nomads, nomadism
Creation or Dreaming Stories, Legends (Torres Strait Islander people only)	Myths, Folklore, Legends, Story, Stories
Elders, Spiritual Leader, Songman, Cleverman. Every language group had their own language name for such: The Arrernte language of central Australia used the term Kaditcha. Many of us today refer to our elders as 'Aunty' or 'Uncle'.	Chiefs, Kings, Queens
Kata Tjuta, Uluru	The Olgas, Ayres Rock
Mob, language group, Country	
Sorry Business, Tomb Stone opening	Death, dying, walkabout
Discrete Community	Reserve, Mission

## **Protocols Regarding the Death of First Nations Peoples**

Aboriginal People generally refer to the death of a family member as 'Sorry Business' whereas Torres Strait Islanders call this 'Sad News'.

Many Aboriginal language groups believe that as a person dies their body returns back to spirit world. In more traditional communities the name of the deceased is not mentioned for a period of time, from some months and up to a few years. A smoking ceremony might be conducted including their belongings or the house where they live will be smoked. Be guided by local First Nations staff, local community members or elders in regards to ceremonies conducted within the local area. Some communities may give the deceased person a traditional name during this time of mourning. Note that the media will warn viewers that they might see images of people who may have passed away thus displaying cultural respect to the family and community.

When a member of the Torres Strait Islander community passes family members gather together to mourn. The day before the funeral selected family members (of the same gender) generally dress the deceased person in preparation for burial. The deceased person will be clothed in an outfit of cultural significance or of sentimental value. As the coffin is lowered into the ground immediate family will throw soil over the coffin as a symbol of the body returning to dust. A number of years later (up to five) and once the family have saved enough money, a headstone or tombstone is erected onto the gravesite. As part of ceremony the headstone is unveiled to the community for the first time thus releasing the spirit. The unveiling of the tombstone is the responsibility of the 'Marigeth' and this signifies the end of grieving period and it is now time for celebrating the life of the deceased person.

## Significant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Events

#### Survival/Invasion Day - 26th January

On the Australia Day public holiday, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities celebrate survival of cultures, languages, histories and longevity as First Nations peoples.

## Anniversary of Apology – 13th February

On this day in 2008, the then Prime Minister of Australia, Kevin Rudd, offered a broad apology to all First Nations peoples, in particular the Stolen Generations for their 'profound grief, suffering and loss'.

#### Harmony Day - 21st March

Harmony day encourages tolerance and cultural interaction between all Australians, regardless of heritage or cultural background.

## National 'Close the Gap' Day - March

In 2006, Indigenous and non-Indigenous health peak bodies and human rights advocacy groups came together to form the Close the Gap campaign, followed in 2007 by the Council of Australian Government's commitment to adopt the target to Closing the Gap in life expectancy within a generation; that is, by the year 2030. This day is celebrated annually on the third Thursday in March.

### National Sorry Day - 26th May

This day marks the anniversary of the tabling in the Australian parliament of the 1997 'Bringing Them Home' report by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. The report was the findings of a National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their families.

#### Recognition Day - 27th May

On this day in 1967, 90.77% of Australian voters recorded the largest ever 'Yes' vote in a referendum to alter the Australian constitution. This referendum finally enabled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to be counted on the national census and to be subject to Commonwealth laws, rather than state laws. Many Aboriginal people considered that changing sections of the Federal Constitution was essential in gaining formal recognition of existence as peoples in their own country.

## National Reconciliation Week - 27th May to 3rd June

Beginning with Recognition Day (27th May), this week is celebrated with activities across Australia, the week ends with Mabo Day. (3rd June). National Reconciliation Week (NRW) is a time for all Australians to learn about our shared histories, cultures, and achievements, and to explore how each of us can contribute to achieving 'reconciliation' in Australia.

#### Mabo Day - 3rd June

This day commemorates the 1992 High Court decision that recognised the existence of native title rights for the Meriam Mir peoples of the Torres Strait and overturns the myth that 'Terra Nullius' existed within Australia in 1788.

#### Coming of the Light - 1st July

The day Torres Strait Islanders (both in the Torres Strait and on mainland Australia) commemorate, with religious and cultural ceremonies, it is the 1871 anniversary when the London Missionary Society first arrived in the Torres Strait.

### **NAIDOC Week - July**

NAIDOC stands for National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee; this is a week that celebrates Aboriginal and Islander people and culture. It was established as National Aborigines Day but has since grown to a week-long event. The week is marked with different local, state and national activities; each year it has a different theme. These celebrations are celebrated during the first full week of July each year starting on the first Sunday of the month.

## National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day – 4th August

First observed in 1988 each year, this day is marked with a special theme. This day is an opportunity for each of us to support in the growth and development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children - the next generation. They are the future holders of our languages, beliefs and traditions.

## International Day of the World's Indigenous People – 9th August

A day marked to recognise Indigenous history, culture, languages, rights and aspirations throughout the world. It is celebrated with activities highlighting Indigenous Peoples and their culture with the aim of promoting and protecting the rights of the world's Indigenous populations.

#### **Torres Strait Cultural Festival**

The Torres Strait Cultural Festival occurs once every 2 years during the month of September on Thursday Island. The festival showcases the Torres Strait Islands' rich cultural diversity. Over four spectacular the Festival supports the practice, preservation, maintenance and revitalisation of traditional dance, song, art and ceremony.

#### **Laura Dance Festival**

The Laura Aboriginal Dance Festival is the celebration of Aboriginal culture in Cape York. This biennial event showcases the culture of the Aboriginal people of Cape York Peninsula through song, dance ceremony and performance.

#### **Barunga Festival**

Now in its 33<sup>rd</sup> year, the Barunga festival is one of the most important and longest-running community events in regional Australia; it is held annually on the Queen's birthday long weekend. This iconic event celebrates the best of remote Indigenous Australia. The event attracts peoples from all around the world to take part in a program of music, sport, traditional arts and cultural activities.

#### **Tent Embassy – Canberra**

In response to the Northern Territory Supreme Court decision in April 1971 to allow a mining company to have access to traditional Aboriginal lands. Aboriginal people travelled to Canberra on Australia Day 1972 to establish a tent embassy to protest the decision. The embassy is still active today and is situated on the lawns of the Old Parliament House.

## **Further Reading**

## Appropriate terminology:

https://www.ipswich.qld.gov.au/\_\_data/assets/pdf\_file/0008/10043/appropriate\_indigenous\_terminoloy .pdf

https://teaching.unsw.edu.au/indigenous-terminology

http://www.flinders.edu.au/staff-development-

files/CDIP%20documents/CDIP%20Toolkit%202015/2\_%20Appropriate%20Terminology,%20Indigen ous%20Australians.pdf

http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/aboriginal/Publications/pub-terminology.pdf

https://www.actcoss.org.au/sites/default/files/public/publications/gulanga-good-practice-guide-preferences-terminology-referring-to-aboriginal-torres-strait-islander-peoples.pdf

https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/media/appropriate-terminology-for-aboriginal-topics#toc1

https://australianmuseum.net.au/glossary-indigenous-australia-terms

http://www.cofc.com.au/Media/Aboriginal\_and\_Torres\_Strait\_Islander\_Cultural\_Capability\_Respectful \_Language\_Guide.pdf

## **Cultural protocols:**

https://www.pmc.gov.au/government/australian-national-symbols/australian-flags

https://www.oxfam.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/2015-74-atsi-cultural-protocols-update\_web.pdf

http://www.supportingcarers.snaicc.org.au/connecting-to-culture/cultural-protocols/

https://www.racgp.org.au/yourracgp/faculties/aboriginal/guides/cultural-protocols/

http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/funding/indigenous-cultural-protocols-and-the-arts/

https://www.datsip.qld.gov.au/people-communities/protocols-consultation

https://www.usq.edu.au/-/media/USQ/About-USQ/...culture/.../Cultural-protocols.ashx