

AUSTRALIANS
TOGETHER

Language and Terminology Guide

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Introduction

IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE

How we use language matters. It's important to always remember that we're not just using terms to refer to historical events or abstract groups, we're talking about real people. Listening to a person's preferences when it comes to how they're referred to is an essential part of respecting that person.

COMPLEXITY

There's no rulebook when it comes to using appropriate terminology regarding Indigenous Australians. This is because Indigenous people across Australia are diverse; there are many different experiences and opinions regarding appropriate terminology and it's difficult to identify terminology that's acceptable to all groups¹. The following guidelines only generally represent Indigenous people's preferences. It's good to ask local groups to advise on the most appropriate terminology for their region.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Terms regarding Indigenous people are layered with a history of dominating, discriminating against, misunderstanding and misrepresenting Indigenous people and culture². Throughout our colonial history, some of the names used to refer to Indigenous Australians reflected the common belief that Indigenous people were inferior to white people, or even less than human. Consequently, many of these terms have negative connotations and should be replaced with words that are more respectful and less hurtful towards Indigenous people. It's important to be sensitive to the meanings and historic context of certain words. This also applies to language used to refer to non-Indigenous Australians.

LIVING DOCUMENT

Appropriate terminology is continually changing as more voices are listened to, and enter into, a national conversation regarding Indigenous matters. We need to continually listen to Indigenous people and adopt preferred terminology as the conversations evolve³.

¹Queensland Studies Authority, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Handbook 2010*, https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/downloads/senior/snr_ati_10_handbook.pdf

²Queensland Studies Authority, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Handbook 2010*, https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/downloads/senior/snr_ati_10_handbook.pdf

³Queensland Studies Authority, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Handbook 2010*, https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/downloads/senior/snr_ati_10_handbook.pdf

Introduction

PROCESS

Australians Together developed these guidelines through a process of listening to Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and learning from existing work. We recognised that language is a concern for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. It can be painful and time-consuming for Indigenous people to repeatedly explain why certain language is hurtful. Meanwhile, non-Indigenous Australians are often confused by terminology and can be afraid of joining conversations for fear of unintentionally using offensive or inappropriate language.

With this in mind, we began to research existing guidelines produced by a range of government departments, educational institutions and non-government organisations. We used this as a starting point to develop our own guidelines. We then undertook paid consultations with Indigenous Elders and leaders from South Australia, Victoria, Australian Capital Territory and Queensland, who reviewed the guidelines and gave recommendations.

Whilst it's not possible to achieve consensus on all terms, we've sought to respectfully acknowledge the various points of view expressed throughout the consultation process. We continue to invite feedback so that these guidelines can evolve. Contact contact@australianstogether.org.au

SECTION 1

Specific Australians Together language

Our challenge

Talking about ‘the problem’ may imply that Indigenous people are the problem, or that non-Indigenous people can ‘fix’ the problem.

Australians Together does (technically) exist to address a problem, but the language we use is of great importance, and is highly sensitive. For instance, even mentioning the word ‘problem’ can make people feel uncomfortable because of the way this term has been applied to Indigenous Australians in the past. We acknowledge this point of view and prefer to use the term ‘our challenge’ as we seek to promote a message of mutual responsibility, capacity and reciprocity.

As an organisation we avoid perpetuating the ‘deficit discourse’ regarding Indigenous Australians. That is, discussions regarding Indigenous people (in the media, research, politics, health and education) overwhelmingly represent Indigenous identity in a narrative of negativity, deficiency and disempowerment.

Using the term ‘problem’ reinforces this deficit discourse. Australians Together rejects this dominant discourse, instead seeking to engage in a more positive, creative and honest conversation about Indigenous Australia, without denying or trivialising the real and complex impacts of colonisation on Indigenous people.

We’ve discerned a challenge stemming from a lack of understanding, value and respect between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, resulting in injustice and disadvantage for many Indigenous people. This challenge is shared by all Australians.

Our challenge

GUIDELINE

- Don't use the word problem in relation to Indigenous injustice or the lack of relationship and connection between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.
- Don't refer to an 'Indigenous problem'.
- Don't state or imply that Indigenous people are the problem.
- Don't state or imply that non-Indigenous Australians are going to 'fix' the problem.

EXAMPLES - We don't use the word problem

- x** = Together, we can fix the Indigenous problem.
- x** = Indigenous communities in Australia are a problem.
- x** = Non-Indigenous Australians need to listen and learn in order to fix the problems facing Indigenous people.

ALTERNATIVES - Instead of 'What's the problem?'

- √ = What's wrong?
- √ = What's our shared issue?
- √ = What's our challenge as Australians?

SECTION 2

Preferred options for terminology

Indigenous, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

In much of our content we use the term 'Indigenous people/s' when referring to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people/s. We recognise it's appropriate to use different words in different situations, but for ease of communication we've chosen to refer to 'Indigenous people/s' using a term that's succinct. We acknowledge that the word 'Indigenous' can be contentious and that some Indigenous people prefer other terms. Where possible, it's best to adopt the preferred terminology of Indigenous people living in your local context.

We acknowledge the diversity among Indigenous people living in Australia. Therefore, we avoid phrases such as 'all Indigenous people'. Instead we prefer to refer to 'many' or 'some' Indigenous people.

For many of our audiences, in particular the education sector, the term 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people/s' is preferred to 'Indigenous people/s'. This aligns with ACARA (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority), Narragunnawali and language used in the Australian Curriculum, for example the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures cross-curriculum priority.

When using 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people/s' it's appropriate to refer to 'other Australians' or 'non-Indigenous Australians' as a comparison.

'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' is used to refer to the entire population. Other acceptable terms are:

- 'Aboriginal peoples' or 'Torres Strait Islander peoples' when referring to the entirety of either Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities
- 'Aboriginal person/people' and 'Torres Strait Islander person/people' when referring to one or several members of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities⁴

When referring to things such as Indigenous spirituality, Indigenous knowledge, Indigenous site etc. it's appropriate to use 'Indigenous'. In education resources, both 'Indigenous' and 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' are acceptable in this context.

Resources created to support the Australian Curriculum need to use language that's consistent with that used in the Australian Curriculum.

⁴ACARA, *Guiding principles for promoting and implementing the Australian Curriculum cross-curriculum priority*, 2017, <https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/media/1536/guiding-principles.pdf>

Indigenous, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

GUIDELINE

- Use 'Indigenous people/s' or 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people/s'.
- Always capitalise the words 'Indigenous' and 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander', including when referring to non-Indigenous people. Don't capitalise 'people/s'
- Avoid blanket phrases such as 'all Indigenous people', or 'Indigenous people believe that...'
- Don't abbreviate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander to ATSI or A&TSI

EXAMPLE

x = All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience disadvantage.

✓ = Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in Australia experience disadvantage.

Reconciliation

Reconciliation refers to the restoration of an existing relationship. Because we believe that a healthy relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people was not generally established in the first place, we prefer to speak in terms of conciliation.

However, when producing curriculum resources, the term 'reconciliation' is used to be consistent with the Content Descriptions and Elaborations within the Australian Curriculum.

GUIDELINE

- Consider carefully before applying the word 'reconciliation' to our organisation
- Only capitalise 'reconciliation' when it's used as proper noun e.g. National Reconciliation Week, Reconciliation Australia

EXAMPLE

x = We're all about reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

✓ = Reconciliation efforts in Australia are important.

Empower/ment

'Empowerment' means to give someone power and authority, particularly with regard to control of their own life. However, in some contexts the word 'empowerment' can actually be disempowering if it's understood to mean the giving of power by the powerful to the powerless. When understood this way, the word 'empowerment' can actually reinforce power inequalities.

GUIDELINE

- Avoid using the words 'empower' and 'empowerment'.
- Preferred language includes phrases like 'walk alongside', 'work together', etc.

EXAMPLE

x = Non-Indigenous Australians need to empower Indigenous Australians to improve their own future.

✓ = Indigenous communities are empowering themselves to overcome challenges.

✓ = Non-Indigenous Australians can walk alongside Indigenous people to achieve a better shared future.

Help

Like the word 'empowerment', when used in some contexts, the word 'help' can reinforce power inequalities. This is because 'help' can imply that one party has greater resources and capacity than the other party, or knows best. Even when used with good intentions, the word 'help' can be condescending, paternalistic and disempowering in some contexts.

GUIDELINE

- Don't say that Australians Together 'helps' Indigenous people.
- Don't say that non-Indigenous Australians need to 'help' Indigenous people.
- 'Help' can be used if it's being applied to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.
- 'Help' can be used if it's applied mutually, i.e. 'help each other'.

EXAMPLE

x = We exist to help Indigenous people living in Australia.

x = It's important to help Indigenous Australians overcome poverty.

✓ = Respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people can help ensure a better future for all Australians.

Country

The term 'Country' is often used to describe a culturally defined area of land associated with a particular, culturally distinct group of people, clan or nation. Country can also refer to more than a physical place - it indicates cultural relationships and responsibilities associated with caring for land.

GUIDELINE

- Use 'Country' to refer to a particular, culturally defined area of land.
- Always capitalise Country

EXAMPLE

x = Adelaide is located on Kurna country.

✓ = Adelaide is located on Kurna Country.

Nation

The word 'nation' can be used to refer to a culturally distinct group of Indigenous Australian people. It's important to note that nation is a modern term. The word nation as it's commonly used and understood today doesn't necessarily represent how Indigenous groups would have thought of themselves prior to colonisation. However, nation is generally accepted by Indigenous people as a useful word to describe culturally distinct Indigenous groups. Other potential appropriate terms include language groups, tribes and people groups. Family groups, kinship groups and clans usually refer to sub-groups within a nation.

GUIDELINE

- Use 'nation' to refer to a culturally distinct Indigenous group of people.
- Always capitalise the name of the nation, but don't capitalise the word 'nation'.

EXAMPLE

- x** = She's a member of the Ngunnawal group.
- ✓** = She's a member of the Ngunnawal nation.

Mob

'Mob' is a term identifying a group of Indigenous people associated with a particular place or Country. 'Mob' is generally used by Indigenous people to identify themselves (e.g. 'my mob') or refer to a language group (e.g. 'the Wiradjuri mob'). It can be invasive for non-Indigenous people to take and use the word 'mob' unless invited to by Indigenous people. It's recommended to ask permission before using this term.

GUIDELINE

- At a corporate level, we've chosen not to use the term 'mob'.
- It might be acceptable to use the term 'mob' verbally in-house when referring to people/communities we have relationship with (verbal communication only).

EXAMPLE

- x** = You should get in touch with the Wurundjeri mob around Melbourne.
- ✓** = You should get in touch with The Wurundjeri Tribe Land and Compensation Cultural Heritage Council in Melbourne.

Area-specific names

Terms such as Goori, Koori, Murri, Noongar are names used by Indigenous people in specific areas when referring to themselves. These names are derived from local Indigenous languages. It can be invasive for non-Indigenous people to take and use these terms unless invited to by Indigenous people. It's recommended to ask permission before using these terms.

Language is area-specific, so if you pick up terms from one area don't assume that the same terms apply to another area. Certain words have different meanings in different Indigenous languages, and a word from one language in one part of the continent may mean something different in another community. Consequently, navigating appropriate language can be challenging even for Indigenous people. Being aware of the challenges this entails can help avoid awkward situations.

GUIDELINE

- We've chosen not to use area-specific names at a corporate level.
- Please note that area-specific names are not the same as Indigenous nation names. We encourage the use of Indigenous nation names.

EXAMPLE

- x** = There are many Murri players in the NRL.
- ✓ = Many Indigenous NRL players have connections to Queensland and north-west New South Wales.

Blackfella/whitefella

Many Indigenous people use the term 'blackfella' to refer to themselves. The term 'black' has both positive and negative connotations. It can signify unity and political activism, however, it has also been used to devalue and discriminate against people on the basis of their skin colour. It can be invasive for non-Indigenous people to take and use these terms unless invited to by Indigenous people. It's recommended that non-Indigenous people don't use these terms.

GUIDELINE

- We don't use the words 'blackfella' and 'whitefella' at a corporate level.
- Individual team members may use these terms in verbal communication where they have longstanding relationship with the community/person they are speaking with and know it to be acceptable and appropriate.

EXAMPLE

- x** = More Blackfellas live in this community than whitefellas.
- ✓ = There are more Indigenous people living in this community than non-Indigenous people.

Culture

Misunderstandings about Indigenous culture can reinforce harmful stereotypes and misperceptions about Indigenous people. It's important that the language we use to speak about Indigenous culture doesn't perpetuate these myths and misperceptions. Here are some things to be aware of when speaking or writing about Indigenous culture:

'LOST' VERSUS 'STOLEN'

It's often said that Indigenous culture has been 'lost' due to colonisation. In this context, the word 'lost' is a euphemism which obscures the harsh reality that colonising policies and practices actually devastated many elements of Indigenous culture, often intentionally. The word 'lost' erases the role of the colonisers in the destruction of culture, at worst implying that Indigenous people are responsible for the disintegration of their culture. In the context of cultural breakdown, the word 'stolen' is less appropriate than 'devastated' because it implies colonisers took Indigenous culture for themselves, when the reality is that colonisers rejected, suppressed and even eradicated culture in many places. It's also important to acknowledge that, despite the impact of colonisation, Indigenous culture is never lost or completely destroyed but is always ready to be rediscovered and revived.

In reference to colonial acquisition of land, the removal of children and taking of wages owed to Indigenous people, the word 'stolen' is more appropriate than 'lost'. In these contexts, colonisers did in fact take and keep land, children and wages. However, be aware that using the word 'stolen' can elicit a strong, defensive or even aggressive response from some people.

Culture

GUIDELINE

- Where colonisation has disintegrated culture, avoid using the term 'lost'. Instead use words like '(partially) destroyed'.
- When referring to children removed from their families under assimilation policies, the word 'stolen' or 'removed' should be used rather than 'lost'.
- When referring to colonial occupation of Indigenous lands, use the words 'taken' or 'stolen' and avoid the word 'lost'.
- Use the term 'stolen wages' to refer to income denied to Indigenous employees during the assimilation era.

EXAMPLE

- x** = Indigenous Australian culture has been lost.
- x** = Many Indigenous groups have lost their traditional lands as a result of colonisation.
- x** = Many Indigenous families lost children as a result of assimilation policies.
- ✓ = Colonisation devastated many elements of Indigenous culture.
- ✓ = Melbourne is built on land taken from Wurundjeri and Bunurong people.
- ✓ = Children removed from their families under the government's assimilation policies are known as the Stolen Generations.

Culture

'EXTINCT' VERSUS 'ALIVE'

It's a common myth that colonisation extinguished Indigenous culture, particularly in high density/urban areas such as the east coast of Australia. This misunderstanding disregards Indigenous people's efforts to sustain their culture, and implies that expressions of culture today are less authentic than pre-colonisation.

Despite the challenges presented by colonisation, Indigenous people have fought to protect and practise their cultures, and to integrate and adapt it to new experiences in ways that are culturally appropriate and acceptable. As such, Indigenous culture remains strong, relevant and present for Indigenous people⁵. It's important that our language reflects the dynamic, living and evolving nature of Indigenous culture.

GUIDELINE

- Avoid speaking of culture in the past tense
- Don't imply that culture is more or less authentic depending on whether it's more 'traditional', or takes place in an urban or remote setting
- Situate any discussion about culture in the context of colonisation and how it's affected cultural practise

EXAMPLE

x = Urban Indigenous Australians have lost their culture

✓ = "While there's been an historical decimation of culture, the irrepressible nature and resilience of local Indigenous peoples provide the connections for their culture to grow and evolve again in contemporary urban society."⁶

⁵http://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/files/assets/public/webdocuments/social-economic-development/community-development/the_urban_indigenous_community_research_paper.pdf

⁶http://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/files/assets/public/webdocuments/social-economic-development/community-development/the_urban_indigenous_community_research_paper.pdf

Urban/remote

The implication that 'urban' Indigenous people and culture are 'less Indigenous' than 'remote' people and culture is offensive. The idea that 'real' Aboriginal people live in Arnhem Land or the Central desert, and that only 'remote' Aboriginal people and cultures are 'really Aboriginal' is highly problematic and offensive.

GUIDELINE

- Only use terms such as 'remote' to refer to geographical location and access to services

EXAMPLE

x = Remote Indigenous Australians retain much traditional knowledge.

✓ = Access to goods and services in remote Indigenous communities is limited.

Traditional

The word 'traditional' to refer to cultural practices prior to colonisation can imply that modern cultural practices are less authentic, undermining and devaluing modern and particularly urban expressions of Indigenous culture.

GUIDELINE

- Care should be taken with the word 'traditional', preferable alternatives include 'ancestral practices' and 'pre-colonisation way of life'.
- Don't use the term 'traditional' to refer to people, particularly in contrast to 'urban' people.

EXAMPLE

x = There are more traditional Indigenous people living in Arnhem Land than in Redfern.

✓ = While some aspects of Indigenous culture more closely resemble pre-colonisation ways of life than other aspects, all of these cultural expressions are valid and represent the dynamic nature of culture.

Dreaming/Dreamtime

The terms 'Dreaming' and 'Dreamtime' have broadly come to refer to complex Indigenous ways of knowing and being or "an all-embracing (Indigenous) concept that provides rules for living, a moral code, as well as rules for interacting with the natural environment."⁷ The words 'Dreamtime' or 'Dreaming' have never been a direct translation of an Indigenous word as the English language doesn't have an equivalent to express the complex Indigenous concepts. The universal translation of the unique terms that exist within Indigenous languages into the single term is problematic. The terms 'Dreaming' and 'Dreamtime' carry significant historical colonial baggage and erase the complexities of the original concepts and the diversity across the many different Indigenous languages and cultures. The term 'Dreamtime' is particularly problematic, as it promotes the misunderstanding that Dreaming is something that occurred at the so-called "dawn of time". In fact, it embraces time past, present and future.

'Dreaming' is often used when broadly referring to the spirituality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia. Where appropriate, follow the term 'Dreaming' with an explanation of why the term is insufficient.

Indigenous Creation stories are a type of Dreaming story. In the context of curriculum resources, the term 'Creation' is used from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural perspective; not a biblical perspective. We acknowledge that other worldviews or faiths may define this term differently.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages contain a lot of words for spirituality and beliefs, such as

- *tjurkurrpa* (Pitjantjatjara people, north-western South Australia),
- *altjeringa* (Arrernte people, central Australia),
- *ungud* (Ngarinyin people, north-Western Australia),
- *wongar* (north eastern Arnhem Land),
- *bugari* (Broome, north-Western Australia)⁸

⁷<http://theconversation.com/dreamtime-and-the-dreaming-an-introduction-20833>

⁸Creative Spirits, "What is the Dreamtime or the Dreaming?", accessed from: <https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/spirituality/what-is-the-dreamtime-or-the-dreaming#ixzz4csW9lBY9>

Dreaming/Dreamtime

GUIDELINE

- Don't use the term 'Dreamtime'
- Where possible use the original terminology from Indigenous languages, but in other circumstances use the term 'Dreaming'.
- Always capitalise 'Dreaming'
- Always capitalise 'Creation'
- Don't use words such as 'myth' or 'legend' that give the impression that information and beliefs surrounding Dreaming are untrue

EXAMPLE

- x** = Every aspect of Pitjantjatjara life reflects the Dreamtime.
- ✓ = Every aspect of Pitjantjatjara life reflects the Tjukurrpa.
- ✓ = The Dreaming impacts every aspect of life. (The word Dreaming is an approximation of complex Indigenous ways of knowing and being).
- ✓ = Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spirituality encompasses Dreaming stories, law, lore and Country.

Invasion/discovery/settlement/colonisation

The word 'settlement' wrongly implies that Australia was settled peacefully. It ignores the reality of Indigenous peoples' lands being stolen from them on the basis of the legal fiction of terra nullius. It also denies Indigenous peoples' resistance. Many non-Indigenous Australians prefer the term 'settlers' as it depicts colonisers in a more positive light, however using this term perpetuates the myth that European occupation of Australia was peaceful. It's worth noting that words like 'invasion' can be divisive and prompt a strong defensive or aggressive response from non-Indigenous Australians.

The words 'settlement' and 'settlers' are used in the Australian Curriculum. When writing text related to this it's appropriate to match the terminology to the Australian Curriculum. This provides an opportunity to explain that settlement wasn't a peaceful process that happened without Indigenous resistance.

GUIDELINE

- Where possible avoid the words 'settlement' and 'settlers'.
- Use 'colonisation' and 'colonisers' or 'occupation' and 'occupiers'.
- Don't say that Australia was 'discovered' by Europeans.

EXAMPLE

x = Captain Cook discovered Australia

✓ = Captain Cook was the first Englishman to map the east coast of "New Holland"

x = Australia was settled in 1788

✓ = In 1788 Britain colonised the land now known today as Australia

SECTION 3

Using names and titles

Traditional Owner

It's common to hear the term 'Traditional Owner' used to refer to an Indigenous person who's directly descended from the original Indigenous occupants of a culturally defined area, and is culturally connected to their Country.⁹

Some people prefer the term 'Custodian' over 'Owner', as it's more reflective of the role of Indigenous people in caring for the land rather than 'owning' it in the western sense.¹⁰

It's important to acknowledge that this can be a sensitive topic, as gaining or being denied recognition as a Traditional Owner/Custodian can cause tension within and between Indigenous groups and families.

The term Traditional Owner seeks to fit Indigenous systems (of landcare, kinship and governance) into a framework that's more easily recognised and understood by non-Indigenous people, i.e. land ownership.

Whilst these terms are widely used, understood and accepted, a preferable alternative is to replace the word 'Traditional' with the name of the relevant specific people group, such as 'Wurundjeri Custodian'.

GUIDELINE

- Only use Traditional Owner/Custodian to refer to someone who you know is directly descended from the original inhabitants of their Country and is recognised by that community.
- Always capitalise Traditional Owner(s)/Custodian(s).
- Where possible, use the name of the specific relevant people group in place of Traditional.
- Where possible, use the term 'Custodian' rather than 'Owner'.

EXAMPLE

x = For significant events in Adelaide, you should engage the services of a traditional owner to conduct a Welcome to Country.

√ = For significant events in Adelaide, you should engage the services of a Kurna Custodian to conduct a Welcome to Country.

⁹Indigenous people who have been displaced from their traditional lands by colonisation and have lived on the traditional lands of other groups for many decades are sometimes referred to as 'historic people'. Some of these people have been adopted into traditional families and are prominent leaders within communities. Although historic people might feel a connection to the land they live on, they don't carry the traditional stories and knowledge of that land.

¹⁰ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body Protocol Guidelines

Elder

An Indigenous Elder is someone recognised within their community as a custodian of cultural knowledge and law. A recognised Indigenous community leader could also gain Elder status within their community. In some instances, Indigenous people above a certain age will refer to themselves as Elders. However, age isn't a prerequisite, and doesn't automatically make someone an Elder. The important thing is that the community recognises the individual as an Elder.

GUIDELINE

- Make sure you're certain someone is an Elder before referring to them as such. The best way to find out is to ask that person politely, or learn from members of the Elder's Indigenous community.
- Always capitalise Elder.

Uncle & Aunty

Some Indigenous Elders are given the title Uncle or Aunty. This title is generally bestowed on someone by their community. Some Elders may choose to use the title publicly, others might reserve the title for those they have a personal connection with. It's best practice to ask an Elder if they wish to be referred to as Uncle or Aunty before adopting these titles.

GUIDELINE

- Always ask someone if they'd like to be referred to as Uncle or Aunty. Consider whether use of the title might change depending on the context - face-to-face conversations, formal introductions, references in web resources, etc.
- If you hear an Indigenous person refer to someone as an Uncle or Aunty, don't automatically assume you should also use the title.
- Always capitalise Uncle and Aunty.
- Always spell Aunty with a 'y', not an 'ie'

EXAMPLE

x = Auntie Janet is an elder in Melbourne.

✓ = Aunty Janet is an Elder within the Indigenous community in Melbourne.

The best way to find out if someone is a Traditional Owner, an Elder, Uncle or Aunty is to ask politely.

Names

Some Indigenous people have several names, including Western sounding names, skin names, 'bush' names and more.

GUIDELINE

- If you don't have a relationship with the individual, use their full name.
- Ask an individual what their preferred name is if you know that it's culturally appropriate to ask that question.

SECTION 4

**Words and phrases
not to use**

ATSI, Aborigine, Aboriginals, natives

Throughout our colonial history, many names have been used to refer to Indigenous Australians. Many of these terms have developed negative connotations and are considered offensive by some Indigenous people. Even when used without malicious intent, these words can be harmful. It's important to be sensitive to the meanings and historic context of certain words and avoid those that could cause offence.

GUIDELINE

- Don't abbreviate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander to ATSI or A&TSI.
- Don't refer to Indigenous people as Aborigines, Aboriginals or natives.
- You can use the word Aboriginal as an adjective, but don't use it as a noun.
- Don't preface 'Aboriginal' or 'Indigenous' with 'the' ('the' can objectify people and often results in generalised and non-specific comments).

EXAMPLE

- x** = Australian Aborigines are a diverse group of people.
- x** = Many Aboriginals live in and around Melbourne.
- x** = A report about ATSI health was released today.
- x** = It's important to listen to the Indigenous people in Australia.
- ✓ = There's a lot of diversity amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- ✓ = Indigenous cultures differ from place to place.
- ✓ = It's important to listen to Indigenous people in Australia.

Them/those people/you people

Referring to Indigenous and non-Indigenous people as 'us' and 'them' can be divisive. It can create a split mentality and impede efforts to create a sense of unity/togetherness/solidarity. Using the term 'them' or 'they' to refer to each other can also objectify the people you're referring to and lends itself to generalised statements.

GUIDELINE

- Avoid 'us' and 'them' language, regardless of whether the 'us' refers to Indigenous or non-Indigenous people.
- Never refer to Indigenous people as 'they', 'them', 'those people' or 'you people' as it's divisive and objectifying.

EXAMPLE

x = It's important to involve them in policy making decisions.

✓ = It's important to involve members of the Indigenous community in policy making decisions.

x = We're inviting those people to attend the meeting

✓ = We're inviting members of the Indigenous community to attend the meeting

x = if you people need...

✓ = If members of your community need...

Part-Aboriginal/Indigenous, mixed blood, full-blood, half-caste, quarter-caste

Referring to someone as part/half/a percentage Aboriginal/Indigenous can be offensive. For many Indigenous people, being Indigenous is about more than just a bloodline - it's about that person's entire sense of self and the way they understand and experience the world. For many Indigenous people, culture and connection to Country is so fundamental to identity that to imply it's just 'part' of that person's identity undermines its significance. It's important to respect how people choose to define themselves.

GUIDELINE

- Never quantify to what degree a person is Indigenous based on their bloodline or skin colour.
- Where possible, specify what nation a person identifies with.

EXAMPLE

- x** = She's part-Indigenous.
- x** = He's a full-blood Ngarrindjeri man.
- ✓ = She identifies as an Indigenous person.
- ✓ = He's a Ngarrindjeri man.

Racism/racist

The words 'racism' and 'racist' can be inflammatory, provoking a strong reaction from audiences and deterring people from engaging with content. Subsequently, we avoid these words in initial communication with our audience. However, we're open to sharing third party content that uses the words 'racism' and 'racist', and we use these words ourselves in more advanced pieces of communication where our audience has chosen to engage with our content at a deeper level.

GUIDELINE

- Avoid the words 'racism' and 'racist' in top-level communication (where audiences are first introduced to and engage with Australians Together and our content)
- Don't edit out the words 'racism' or 'racist' from third party content we wish to share with our audience.
- Only use the words 'racism' and 'racist' in advanced communications (where our audience has prior experience engaging with us/our content).

White guilt

Many non-Indigenous people can get defensive when they hear about past and present injustices experienced by Indigenous people. There's a tendency for non-Indigenous people to feel they're being held responsible for things that happened in the past or things that they have no control over. Others might not feel defensive, although they could feel guilty when they learn about Indigenous disadvantage and injustice.

GUIDELINE

- Avoid language that places blame or elicits guilt.
- Never imply that someone's responsible for things that happened in the past - instead, talk about how our words and actions in the present can contribute to a better future.

EXAMPLE

- x** = It's vital that non-Indigenous Australians make amends for our past.
- √** = None of us is responsible for what happened in Australia's past, but we can all be part of creating a better future together.

'We're all Australian'

It's true that we're all Australian, but we need to acknowledge that we come from different backgrounds. And while some Indigenous people might feel comfortable being called Australian, others feel it's an imposed term which denies their Indigenous identity. For example, a member of the Ngunnawal nation might feel that being called 'Australian' ignores and even erases their identity as a Ngunnawal person.

GUIDELINE

- Always acknowledge diversity, both among Indigenous people and the wider Australian community.
- It's ok to talk about bringing Australians together, but don't imply that togetherness means sameness.
- Avoid phrases like "We're all Australian".

Note: we use the term 'Australian' as an overarching descriptor of those that live in, and are citizens of, the nation called Australia. We don't intend to offend anyone by our use of the term 'Australian/s', but rather to use a term that's consistent and succinct for ease of communication. We acknowledge that some people are uncomfortable identifying as 'Australian' and prefer to be referred to by their distinct cultural identity, e.g. their clan or nation.

EXAMPLE

x = Regardless of whether you're Indigenous or non-Indigenous, we're all Australian.

√ = Although we might have different cultures and beliefs, we all live on this land called Australia.

SECTION 5

Use of statistics

Use of statistics

Statistics can be an effective way to communicate the big picture or the severity of an issue. They also risk dehumanising issues by reducing actual people to facts and figures. Careful consideration should be given to how we use and present statistical data.

GUIDELINE

- When using statistics, always seek to accompany with a story, face or quote to humanise the data.
- Don't substitute people with numbers.

EXAMPLE

x = The population declined from 150 to just 20.

✓ = The population declined from 150 people to just 20 people.

x = In Indigenous communities, 1 in 5 live below the poverty line.

✓ = In Indigenous communities, 1 in 5 people live below the poverty line.

✓ = It's estimated that \$500 million is owed to Indigenous people in Queensland, people like Iris who worked as a domestic helper for years and received just a fraction of the earnings due to her.

At a glance

WORDS AND PHRASES WE ENCOURAGE	WORDS AND PHRASES WE DISCOURAGE	WORDS AND PHRASES WE ENCOURAGE	WORDS AND PHRASES WE DISCOURAGE
Challenge	Problem	Culture is alive and evolving	Culture is extinct
Indigenous people/s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people/s Aboriginal people/s Torres Strait Islander people/s	Aborigines Aboriginals Natives ATSI / A&TSI	Pre-colonisation way of life	Traditional (culture and people)
		-	Urban / Remote *See guidelines
Conciliation Coming together	Reconciliation	Complex Indigenous ways of knowing and being Dreaming	Dreamtime
Walk alongside	Empowerment	Invasion Colonisation Occupation	Discovery (of Australia) Settlement
Help all Australians	Help Indigenous people	Traditional Custodian Traditional Owner	-
Country	-	Elder Aunty Uncle	-
Nation	-	-	Them Those people
-	Mob* See guidelines	-	Part Aboriginal Mixed blood Half caste Full blood
-	Area-specific names (Goori, Murri, Noongar etc.)	-	We're all Australian
-	Blackfella / Whitefella	-	Racism / Racist *See guidelines
-	Lost (culture and land) * See guidelines		
Removed (people) Stolen (land)	-		

Consultants

CONSULTANTS ON THIS PROJECT INCLUDED:

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