

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Identification

The purpose of this information sheet is to assist Hospital and Health Service staff to improve the identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people so that they can:

- plan, improve, fund, monitor and deliver services towards closing the gaps in health inequality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- meet the requirements of the [Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's National Best Practice Guidelines for collecting Indigenous status in health data sets](#).

### What is the question?

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare recommends the exact wording for asking this question, consistent across Australia. The question is,

**“Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?”**

If the patient or client is a child under the age of 15 years or a person who is too ill to respond, instead ask following question of the parent, guardian, carer, or responsible accompanying adult:

**“Is (person's name) of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?”**

The response should be later verified if and when the patient/client is able to answer the question themselves.

If you are collecting and recording perinatal data about a neonate, ask the following question of the baby's mother:

**“Is (neonate's name) of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?”**

### Who should be asked the question?

The question must be asked of all patients and clients irrespective of their appearance, country of birth and main language spoken. Please ask the question in a respectful and confidential manner, just as you would any other question.

When a patient/client does not speak or read or write English, use an interpreter, a staff member or an accompanying person who can interpret to elicit an accurate response to the Indigenous status question.

Never ask for proof of descent, ancestry or community acceptance to validate a response.

### Who needs to ask the question?

It is the responsibility of all administration staff in clinical areas to accurately identify and record Indigenous identification. When this has not happened at first contact with the health system, for example in an emergency, the question should be asked by the administration staff or clinical staff at the first opportunity.

### When is the question to be asked?

The question is to be asked, or presented in writing, to all patients and clients attending a healthcare service at the following times:

- at the initial registration for a single treatment or course of treatment
- if this information has not previously been documented (e.g. if the HBCIS screen shows 'unknown') or has not been updated within the previous 3 months
- if there is discrepancy between different data sources.

Record the response in hospital data collection systems and appropriately in patient information so that it is clearly available to clinical staff.

### Why do I need to ask the question?

When clinicians and administrative staff know that a patient, client or consumer identifies as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin, they can ensure the services they provide are both clinically and culturally responsive. This may include:

- referrals to internal services (for example to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Hospital Liaison Services or Health Worker)
- person-centred health care that is culturally capable, safe and responsive
- additional immunisations
- screening and health checks at a younger age
- referrals and linkages to external services specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community support organisations; and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical services located in the local community).

### Does this help with funding?

Yes, accurate identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enables hospital and health services to receive funding adjustment of:

- 4% for admitted acute, emergency or non-admitted Indigenous patients
- 17% for sub-acute Indigenous patients.

## What about forms and information systems that record Indigenous status?

If you are responsible for developing or updating forms, please ensure the following Indigenous status question, with this exact wording, is present on the relevant forms:

**“Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?”**

(For persons of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin, mark both ‘yes’ boxes).

- No
- Yes, Aboriginal
- Yes, Torres Strait Islander

In addition, the following fourth response category may be included if suited to the data collection practices of the service:

- Yes, both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

If you are responsible for developing or updating information systems (e.g. databases) containing patient/client demographic information, please also ensure the Indigenous status question is accurately represented in the information system.

## What else happens with this information?

The accurate recording of Indigenous identification status enables:

- improved monitoring and evaluation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health outcomes, and the effectiveness of initiatives, services, programs and funding
- improved future health outcomes through service planning and funding based on understanding of service usage.

## Can I access support and/or resources?

The Queensland Health Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability Team is hosted by Children’s Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service (CHQHHS). The team has developed resources including posters, brochures and a [guide for improving identification](#).

These resources are available from the team or electronically at: <http://qheps.health.qld.gov.au/atsihb/html/origin.htm>.

A DVD may be viewed at: [Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?](#)



Brochures: Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?

The Cultural Capability Team welcomes the opportunity to provide advice, support, and help with developing resources. The team also delivers the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Practice Program along with targeted in-service training and assistance to staff within CHQHHS and the Department of Health.

Hospital and health service staff are encouraged to participate in your local program. An on-line and blended face-to-face program may be available in the near future. To enrol in the program, please contact your local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Practice Program Coordinator.

## Contact us

The Cultural Capability Team is located on:

Level 9, Centre for Children’s Health Research (CCHR),  
62 Graham Street (corner Raymond Terrace),  
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General enquires: [cultural\\_pp@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:cultural_pp@health.qld.gov.au)

## Further reading

- National best practice guidelines for collecting Indigenous status in health data sets  
<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=6442468342>
- Queensland Health Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability Framework 2010-2033  
<http://qheps.health.qld.gov.au/atsihb/html/framework.htm>
- Department of Health Performance Indicators in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health  
[http://qheps.health.qld.gov.au/hic/ghpi\\_at.htm](http://qheps.health.qld.gov.au/hic/ghpi_at.htm)
- Cultural Capability resources  
<http://qheps.health.qld.gov.au/atsihb/html/cultural-guide.htm>