

## Terminology Guide: for the use of 'First Nations' and 'Aboriginal' and 'Torres Strait Islander' peoples references

This information sheet provides a guide for Queensland Health staff on using the terms 'First Nations' people and 'Aboriginal' and 'Torres Strait Islander' peoples.

### First Nations people

Queensland Health recognises and respects both Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as the First Nations people in Queensland.

Queensland Health's preference is to use 'First Nations' people and in respect of both cultural groups, still recognises 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' peoples as acceptable terms that can be used when referring to, writing with, for or about First Nations people. However, the local environment and operating context will determine your preferred choice.

### Definition of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person

According to s51 (25) of the High Court of Australia (1983): 'An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person is a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (person) and is accepted as such by the community in which he or she lives.'

### Collective names used to describe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

The collective names used to describe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are commonly used in reference to the distinct and diverse nations and peoples of the First Australians. The term 'Aboriginal' is not inclusive of Torres Strait Islander peoples as the term 'Torres Strait Islander' is not inclusive of Aboriginal peoples.

- ✓ **First Nations peoples**
- ✓ **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples**
- ✓ **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders**

The lowercase word 'aboriginal' refers to an indigenous person from any part of the world and does not necessarily refer to an Aboriginal Australian. Queensland Health's preference is that 'Aboriginal' always be capitalised when referring to Aboriginal Australians.

- ✓ **Aboriginal**
- ✗ *aboriginal*

Ensure that the use of the term 'Australian' does not infer exclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

- ✓ **The median age of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is 21 years compared to the median age of Australians of other descent at 37 years.**

- ✗ *The median age of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is 21 years compared to the median age of Australians at 37 years.*

### Abbreviations

When forming part of an acronym to describe such entities as organisations, abbreviations are used extensively. The abbreviation 'ATSI' when used to describe people may cause offense and should not be used in internal or external documents or in conversation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

- ✓ **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person/peoples**
- ✓ **A&TSI (written form only)**
- ✗ *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders*
- ✗ *ATSI*
- ✗ *1st Nations*

### Correct use of 'Aboriginal' person

Although it is grammatically correct, the term 'Aborigine(s)' has negative connotations and should be avoided. 'Aboriginal' should be used as an adjective, not as a noun.

- ✓ **Aboriginal person/people**
- ✗ *an Aboriginal/Aboriginals*
- ✓ **Many Aboriginal people came to the health clinic**
- ✗ *Many Aborigines came to the health clinic*

### Correct use of 'Torres Strait Islander' person

A Torres Strait Islander person is a descendant from one of the Torres Strait Islands located to the north of mainland Queensland. 'Torres Strait Islander' should be used as an adjective, not as a noun.

- ✓ **Many Torres Strait Islander people came to the health clinic**
- ✗ *Many Torres Strait Islanders came to the health clinic*

'Torres Strait Islander' must always be capitalised and should never be abbreviated, as to do so may cause offense.

- ✓ **Torres Strait Islander person/people**
- ✗ *torres strait islander*
- ✗ *TSI*
- ✗ *Islander/s*

### Correct use of 'Indigenous' person

As 'indigenous' is not specific, some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples feel the term diminishes their identity and should be avoided; however, in certain circumstances 'Indigenous' with capitalisation is acceptable.

- ✓ **First Nations person/people**
- ✓ **Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Queensland**
- ✓ **Indigenous Queensland (acceptable)**