

# **Protocols for Staff Working with Indigenous People**

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Version 1

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# Introduction

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## **Purpose**

These protocols are intended to assist and guide State Records staff when working with Indigenous people and in handling State records that document Indigenous people or have Indigenous content.

## **Context of the protocols within NSW Government**

The protocols and guidelines should be observed in conjunction with the Premier's Circular 2004 – 39:

[http://www.dpc.nsw.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0016/781/Indigenous\\_Ceremony.pdf](http://www.dpc.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/781/Indigenous_Ceremony.pdf) and the policies and procedures of the NSW Department of Commerce including Aboriginal Cultural protocols and practices policy available at: <http://commercenet.commerce.nsw.gov.au/Policy+and+Procedures/Index/Index.htm>

## **Consultation process in developing the protocols**

The protocols were subject to a broad consultation process within the NSW Government with special reference to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the Department of Commerce. They were finalised after public exposure and consultation with Link Up NSW.

The protocols are consistent with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library and Information Resource Network (ATSILIRN) *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocols for Libraries, Archives and Information Services*.

## **Review of protocols**

The protocols are dynamic and will incorporate change and address new issues over time.

# 1. Principles

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The protocols are based on the following principles:

<b>Respect</b>
Indigenous people and their cultures are respected
<b>Cultural Diversity</b>
Indigenous cultures and people are diverse, vital, living and changing
<b>Communication and Consultation</b>
Indigenous people and communities are informed of records held by government and consulted on and contribute to policies and services
<b>Accessibility</b>
Indigenous people have access to records that affect them
<b>Preservation</b>
Records created by government relating to Indigenous culture and individual experience are preserved and protected for future generations

## 2. Protocols

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### **Respect**

*Indigenous people and cultures are respected*

#### **Respect for Indigenous communities**

Relationships with Indigenous communities should be based on mutual respect and understanding.

#### **Respect for Indigenous users of State archives**

Culturally appropriate and sensitive assistance and support should be provided to Indigenous people conducting research using the State's archives.

#### **Respect when representing Indigenous people**

Indigenous culture and people should be represented in a way that is sensitive, accurate and respectful.

### **Cultural Diversity**

*Indigenous cultures and people are diverse, vital, living and changing*

#### **Understanding of Indigenous people, culture and issues**

Products and services should be developed with an understanding of Indigenous people and issues and provided in a culturally appropriate manner.

Procedures for providing access to the State archives should be informed by an understanding of the history of Indigenous affairs and contemporary Indigenous issues.

Indigenous people should feel welcomed and supported when using the State's archives.

### **Communication and Consultation**

*Indigenous people and communities are informed of records held by government and consulted on and contribute to policies and services*

#### **Building relationships**

Meaningful and ongoing relationships with Indigenous communities should be established and sustained.

#### **Communicating what is held as State archives**

Indigenous communities are informed about the records that document their lives and cultural heritage.

Information about State records is provided in diverse, accessible and understandable forms.

### **Consultation on the use of State archives**

Indigenous people should be involved in decisions about how State Records stores, uses or displays Indigenous cultural information whether for exhibition, publication or educational purposes.

### **Consultation on services and accessibility**

Development and implementation of services and access procedures should be done in consultation with Indigenous communities.

## **Accessibility**

*Indigenous people have access to records that affect them*

### **Information about State archives**

Information about State archives should be made widely available to Indigenous communities in diverse, accessible and understandable forms.

The promotion of services to Indigenous people should include information on how to access the State Archives.

### **Protection of sensitive information from public access**

Policies and procedures for accessing State archives should ensure the protection of personal and culturally sensitive information.

### **Assistance for remote users**

Interstate, rural and remote communities should be assisted to locate information.

## **Preservation**

*Records created by government relating to Indigenous culture and individual experience should be preserved and protected for future generations*

### **Retaining and preserving State records**

Records of significance relating to Aboriginal people in NSW should be preserved for future generations based on the requirements set out in the *State Records Act 1998*.



## 3. Guidelines

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These guidelines provide guidance and advice on practical ways that State Records staff can implement the protocols for working with Indigenous people and handling State archives documenting Indigenous peoples and cultures.

### 3.1 Definition of Indigenous people

An Indigenous person is a person of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent, who identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person and is accepted as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person in the community which he or she lives or comes from.

### 3.2 Speaking or writing about Indigenous people

#### 3.2.1 How to refer to Indigenous people

Most Aboriginal people prefer to be identified as an Aboriginal person or peoples.

When using 'Indigenous' and 'Aboriginal' always use a capital I or A. Aboriginal and Indigenous are classified as a people, and therefore qualify using capitals. This applies only to Australian Indigenous people.

The written abbreviation of Aboriginal is Abl. and Torres Strait Islander TSI.

#### 3.2.2 How not to refer to Indigenous people

Most Aboriginal people prefer not to be called an Aborigine.

Staff should not use acronyms to refer to Indigenous people e.g. 'ATSIs', 'Tis' etc..

It is offensive to refer to the 'amount' of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander blood an Indigenous person has. The labels "half-caste", "Quarter-caste", "full-blood", "octoroon" are offensive, racist and unacceptable. For a definition of Aboriginality see 3.1 Definition of section Indigenous person.

The term 'Blacks', 'Gins' and 'Abos' are offensive, racist and unacceptable.

#### 3.2.3 How to refer to offensive and unacceptable language used in records

In publishing or writing about State archives relating to Indigenous people it may be necessary to use the offensive terms to place the records in their historical context. In this case a note should always be provided stating:

Editorial note: this is the language as used in the record.
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### 3.3 Dealing with records containing sensitive personal information

#### 3.3.1 Where sensitive personal information is likely to be found

Some records relating to Indigenous people held as NSW State archives are closed to public access due to the sensitive personal information they contain.

Examples of agencies which may have sensitive records relating to Aboriginal people which are closed to public access:

- Department of Aboriginal Affairs
- NSW Police Service
- Department of Housing
- Court records
- Department of Community Services
- Juvenile Justice
- Corrective Services

### **3.3.2 Providing access to sensitive records closed to public access**

Many of the requests to access records closed to public access come from the people the records document. Both the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commissions Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal children from their families Report *Bringing Them Home*, made recommendations on the rights and importance of access to records by Indigenous people, especially to records relating to themselves, family and community. In addition all individuals have a right to information about themselves under the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*.

People can request permission to access records otherwise closed to public access by contacting the public access contact of the responsible agency in either BOS or the referral guide. Staff should be as clear as possible in explaining the reasons the records are closed and how to gain permission.

### **3.3.3 Providing information about sensitive and offensive material**

Staff should have an understanding of content that may offend Indigenous people and ensure that adequate information concerning offensive or sensitive material is provided. (Examples of offensive material can be found under 3.2.2 How not to refer to Indigenous people).

### **3.3.4 How we provide information on offensive or sensitive material**

State Records provides information on offensive and sensitive material through:

- special care notices to accompany records and entry on the website (see 3.6 Special care notices), and
- assistance from the Archivist Aboriginal Liaison by meeting and talking with clients
- explanatory material – such as *Archives in Brief*

### **3.3.5 Staff use and handling of sensitive personal information**

Staff should ensure that sensitive personal information or material closed to public access is treated with care and respect.

Staff should not view material unless instructed to or a specific task requires them to do so. Staff should not access records closed to public access for personal use. This includes use of indexes closed to public access.

## **3.4 Dealing with records containing secret and sacred material**

### **3.4.1 What is secret and sacred material?**

'Secret and sacred' refers to information or material that, under Indigenous customary law, is:

- made available only to particular community members
- used for a particular purpose
- used at a particular time, and
- only to be seen and heard by particular community members (such as only men, only women or people with certain knowledge).

### **3.4.2 What material could be considered as secret or sacred at State Records**

The following are examples of material that may be considered secret or sacred:

- photographs or descriptions of **ceremonies** – for example burials
- rock carvings or drawings
- photographs of art works featuring **sacred stories**, and
- photographs or descriptions of Indigenous **ceremonial objects**.

### **3.4.3 What to do if you identify possible secret and sacred material**

If staff identify material that might be considered as secret or sacred they should alert the Archivist, Aboriginal Liaison or Manager, Public Access.

Consultation may then need to take place with the relevant community group named or photographed to discuss appropriate care.

### **3.4.4 Caring for secret and sacred material**

Rules apply in Indigenous communities for access to and use of secret and sacred material. State Records should respect and acknowledge these rules in accordance with the relevant community's wishes.

Appropriate care must be taken with secret and sacred material held as State archives. Consideration must be made to appropriate signage and storage of material. Access may also be closed to the item if appropriate.

## **3.5 Using records containing Indigenous content**

### **3.5.1 Planning of projects using Indigenous content**

Projects involving records relating to Indigenous people should be discussed in the early planning stages to ensure appropriate use and possible need for external consultation. See 3.5.3 for appropriate people to contact in the planning stage.

### **3.5.2 Issues to consider when planning a project**

When planning a project that involves the use of records relating to Indigenous people the following issues should be considered in the initial discussions:

- would the material be considered as being secret or sacred by Indigenous communities?
- would the material be considered as being offensive or sensitive by Indigenous communities?
- is the material appropriate for use in the reading room but not on the State Records website?
- do I need approval from any other government agencies or community groups before using the material?, and
- how will the project assist in improving services for Indigenous people?

### **3.5.3 Who to seek advice from**

Advice concerning the appropriate use of records can be sought from:

- Archivist, Aboriginal Liaison
- Other government agencies, and
- Community groups and representatives.

See 3.8.3 Who to consult? for more details.

### **3.5.6 Inappropriate display, description and use of Indigenous content**

The use or display of records relating to Indigenous people containing sensitive or offensive material may cause distress to Indigenous people and communities.

Offensive or sensitive information should not be used or displayed without consultation.

### **3.5.7 Material that may be considered as offensive for public display**

In addition to material identified in 3.2.2 How not to refer to Indigenous people and 3.4.2 What material may be considered as secret or sacred, the following material may also be considered as offensive for public display:

- photographs of Aboriginal people – such as those created by Corrective Services and the Aboriginal Welfare Board
- records documenting conflict, death, massacre and burial, and
- records documenting particular sensitive men's or women's business.

### **3.5.8 Using records depicting deceased people**

Sometimes it may be offensive to show an image of, or mention a deceased person. Certain phrases and terms, or discussing an incident can also cause offence.

Protocols should be observed in relation to periods of mourning after a person has died. 'Sorry Business', for example, may require not mentioning the name of a

deceased Indigenous person or showing images unless agreed to by the relevant family.

### **3.5.9 Use of secret and sacred material**

Contact should be made with local community groups to discuss the use of secret and sacred material. Where appropriate, special care notices should be used to accompany material identified as being secret and sacred. See 3.6 Special care notices

## **3.6 Special care notices**

Where possible, clients should be made aware of the likelihood of sensitive or derogatory language or material. Signage or special care notices can be used to warn people that the material they are about to view may contain sensitive or offensive information.

### **3.6.1 When to provide a special care notice to clients**

Special care notices should be provided when:

- individual files are known to contain sensitive information
- records are identified as containing secret or sacred material
- people are accessing records closed to public access (for example AWB records) – this can be provided with the first file
- Indigenous material is used in public displays or publication, and
- Entering parts of the State Records website containing Indigenous names or images.

### **3.6.2 Examples of wording for special care notices**

The following are examples of special care notice that can be used or adapted for use by State Records.

#### **General notice**

Some of the information contained within the records may be viewed as being offensive to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people because of the context in which they were created. Often the language and opinions expressed in the records may be considered as highly offensive.

#### **Notice for sensitive cultural and personal information**

Some of the information contained within these records may be viewed as being offensive to some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities because of the context in which they were created.

Many of the records were created in response to government policies and legislation that had a major impact on Aboriginal families and communities and may be seen as being offensive.

State Records would like to express regret for any pain or distress this may cause persons, family or community members.

### **Notice for photographs**

The following photographs may contain the names or images of people who are now deceased.

Some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities may be distressed by seeing the name, or image of a community member who has passed away.

### **Notices for information on the website**

This site may contain words, descriptions and images which may sadden and distress some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

This site may contain the names, images and descriptions of people who have passed away and which may sadden and distress some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

This site may contain language and terms used by an author that reflect an inappropriate attitude due to the historical context in which the records were created.

## **3.7 Providing services to Indigenous people**

### **3.7.1 Creating a welcoming and supportive environment**

Many Indigenous people visiting State Records have not had previous experience with accessing information services. It is important that State Records create positive experiences for Indigenous researchers and accommodate special needs where possible.

Staff should be conversant with the guide "Dos and Don'ts – working with Aboriginal people" issued by the Department of Commerce Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Network at <http://commercenet.commerce.nsw.gov.au/Employee+Resources/Aboriginal+people+and+Torres+Strait+Islanders/Do%27s+and+Don%27ts+-+working+with+Aboriginal+people.htm>

### **3.7.2 Need for time when dealing with Indigenous clients**

In some cases an Indigenous person may need to spend time, one on one, to discuss their research needs. Staff should be aware of these cultural differences and make steps to accommodate them as much as possible.

### **3.7.3 Need for privacy when conducting research**

If it is known that a person is accessing closed records or sensitive material staff should give the reader the option to view the material outside of the manuscript area in a more private place. State Records' WSRC reading room has facilitates for private viewing of records.

### **3.7.4 Responding to requests for confirmation of Aboriginality**

State Records does not provide confirmation or proof of Aboriginality. Guidelines for confirming or proving Aboriginality vary from place to place.

Clients should be directed to their Local Aboriginal Land Council. A list of Land Councils can be found on the NSW Aboriginal Land Council website at <http://www.alc.org.au>.

### **3.7.5 Common questions when assisting people to access records closed to public access**

When staff explain the need for permission to access sensitive records as set out in 3.3.2 'Providing access to sensitive records closed to public access' staff should be prepared to answer the following questions:

- why do I need permission to access my own files?
- how do I get permission?
- can it be done now?, and
- is there someone who can help me contact the agency?

### **3.7.6 Counselling and support services for Indigenous clients**

If an Indigenous client becomes distressed staff should contact the Archivist, Aboriginal Liaison for advice. Or alternatively, seek advice from a professional, for example, Link Up NSW or other community support services. Staff should avoid taking on a counselling role with Indigenous clients.

If counselling services are required contacts for the NSW DAA, Link Up NSW and other organisations are available in the Indigenous issues assembly in the contacts section of BOS or the referrals guide.

### **3.7.7 Assisting Indigenous clients on the telephone**

Take time when talking to Indigenous people on the telephone and listen carefully for the reasons they are calling. It may be a difficult or emotional task for some Indigenous people to call to find out about how to access information.

Where possible, staff can assist by obtaining contact information from the caller to send out information on how to access records relating to Aboriginal people. The Archivist – Aboriginal Liaison can send out an information package (Indigenous folder and Archives in Brief) to clients by request.

Staff can also direct callers to speak to the Archivist, Aboriginal Liaison if the caller prefers to speak to an Indigenous person.

### **3.7.8 Assisting remote Indigenous clients**

In some cases it is not possible for a person to visit the reading room to conduct research. Assistance should be provided where possible to interstate clients and people who are unable to visit the reading room.

The Family Records Unit at DAA can assist clients to access records of the former AWB. If a client needs additional assistance contact the Manager, Public Access or the Archivist, Aboriginal Liaison.

### **3.7.9 Remote clients accessing records of the AWB**

Remote clients wishing to access material from the former AWB should be referred to the Family Records Unit at DAA to discuss their research needs.

### **3.7.10 Referring clients to other Government archives**

Where appropriate, staff should provide clients with information on how to access records held by other Government archive services.

The Council of Australasian Archives and Records Authorities (CAARA) has issued a statement of principle for referring inquiries between member institutions. The principle gives priority for referrals for Indigenous people needing access to records due to past government separation policies. The statement is available on their website at: <http://www.caara.org.au/Policy/policy14.htm>

Contacts for referrals for Indigenous clients in member institutions can be found in BOS and the referrals guide.

### **3.7.11 Referral to other information services**

Where appropriate, clients should be referred to other organisations which hold records that could be of assistance for Indigenous family history. Organisations which may be of assistance include:

- The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS)
- The State Library of NSW, Indigenous Services Librarians
- The United Aborigines Mission (UAM) for records of the former Bomaderry Children's Home
- Tranby Aboriginal College Glebe, and
- Church archives.

The Cultural Ministers Council publication Records of National Cultural Significance: Indigenous Australians contains details and descriptions of records in more than fifty-five institutions Australia-wide. Available at

<http://www.archivenet.gov.au/Resources/records.pdf>

[http://www.archivenet.gov.au/Resources/indigenous\\_aust.htm](http://www.archivenet.gov.au/Resources/indigenous_aust.htm)

## **3.8 Consulting with Indigenous communities**

### **3.8.1 Why consult?**

#### **To build meaningful relationships**

Consultation is essential to build meaningful relationships with communities. Relationships with Indigenous communities need to be based on mutual respect and understanding.

#### **To make better decisions**

Indigenous people need to be involved in decisions about how State Records stores, researches, uses, cares for or displays Aboriginal information whether for exhibition, publication or educational purposes.



### **To improve access**

Ongoing consultation helps to ensure community guidance on increasing accessibility to records in a way that is culturally appropriate and respectful to Indigenous people. Consultation also assists with the development of Indigenous services at State Records to ensure that they continue to be meaningful and relevant to the community.

### **3.8.2 When to consult internally**

Staff should consult with the Archivist, Aboriginal Liaison on projects using Indigenous cultural material.

### **3.8.2 When to consult externally**

As a general rule, consultation should be sought from Indigenous people on:

- Indigenous services at State Records, for example outreach programs
- use or display of material, and
- care and access to sensitive cultural material.

### **3.8.3 Who to consult?**

Staff should first consult with the Archivist, Aboriginal Liaison and any published reference material. Where formal relationships are established, for example, with relevant government agencies, staff should consult with the appropriate staff contacts found in BOS or as advised by the Archivist, Aboriginal Liaison. Where a community is identified consultation should be made at a local level

Consultation may include contacting:

- State Records exhibition advisory group
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander Library and information Resources Network
- Australian Society of Archivists – Indigenous Issues Special Interest Group
- Government agencies – for example the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs, and
- Community representatives, for example, Elders groups and Local Aboriginal Land Councils.

## **3.9 Contacting a community**

### **3.9.1 First contact**

It is important when contacting a community that you speak to the right person. Does the person have the authority to speak on behalf of the community or does the person accurately represent the community?

Where possible consult with the Archivist – Aboriginal Liaison or other relevant government agencies to locate appropriate contacts. It may be the case that networks are already established within particular communities.

When contacting a community staff should also be aware of the guide "Dos and Don'ts – working with Aboriginal people" issued by the Department of Commerce Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Network at <http://commercenet.commerce.nsw.gov.au/Employee+Resources/Aboriginal+people+and+Torres+Strait+Islanders/Do%27s+and+Don%27ts+-+working+with+Aboriginal+people.htm>

### **3.9.2 Useful contacts when consulting**

One of the most useful places to make first contact with a community is through their Local Aboriginal Land Council. A list of Land Councils and their contact details is available on the NSW Aboriginal Land Council website at <http://www.alc.org.au>.

The following groups, services and agencies can also assist in making contact with community representatives:

- the Department of Commerce Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Network
- Elders Groups
- Aboriginal Medical Services (AMS)
- Aboriginal Units within universities and TAFE
- Aboriginal Health Workers within NSW Health
- Aboriginal Corporations
- Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG)
- Police Liaison Officers
- Juvenile Justice Centres
- Department of Community Services, and
- Aboriginal Liaison Officers in government and non government agencies.

### **3.9.4 Differences between communities**

When making contact with Indigenous communities it is important to remember that each community has unique needs and different histories. The approach that a person may take consulting with a Sydney based organisation may be different from that taken in a regional or rural community in NSW.

### **3.9.5 Respect different time lines**

Have respect for different concepts of time and time frames for decision-making. It may take some time after the initial contact to hear back from a community.

### **3.9.6 Steps for contacting a community**

The following is a basic guide to making contact with a community:

1. Establish list of people and organisations to contact.

2. Telephone and introduce yourself and your intentions or reason for calling. Be prepared to spend some time with sharing personal background information and purpose of calling. Be patient when asking questions.
3. If a meeting is planned to take place discuss suitable times and places to meet.
4. If it is an event that is to be publicised ask for permission to advertise.
5. If appropriate consult as to whether any further community representatives should be involved in the discussion.
6. Send letter of confirmation for planned project, event or visit.

### **3.9.7 Visiting a community**

If visiting a community call to confirm event and see if plans are proceeding as intended. If appropriate, advise of travel plans and accommodation while in the area.

### **3.9.8 Consider local politics**

Consider local politics when planning an event. Make sure that you are not making the mistake of organising a function or event in a disputed location or with the incorrect representatives. Consult on appropriate content for the planned activities.

### **3.9.9 Building relationships – staying in contact**

It is important when building relationships with communities that effort is made to stay in contact. Communities are often sceptical of visits from government agencies that do not fulfil promises and break stated obligations.

Stay in contact with the community by informal networks. If action has resulted from a visit write a letter to inform the community of the results.

Where possible, State Records should try and give something back to communities, for example, copies of records of local significance.

## **3.10 Promoting State Records to Aboriginal communities**

### **3.10.1 Indigenous input into outreach activities**

Outreach activities should be based on community needs and suggestions should be sought from communities for developing workshops/seminars to promote State Records to Indigenous people. Indigenous input can be gained by:

- recording suggestions offered from communities
- contacting Indigenous organisations for suggestions or seek collaboration, and
- responding to public issues, for example in the media or historical/significant events.

### **3.10.2 Consultation about content and use of material**

It is important that staff consult with communities about the content of outreach activities. Discussing the content of the talk with community representatives will minimise the risk of using sensitive or offensive material. State Records staff should gain the consent from the relevant community or the approval of Archivist, Aboriginal Liaison before displaying or using Indigenous content in outreach activities.

Where important issues arise State Records should take a proactive role in organising outreach activities to resolve particular problems or concerns.

### **3.10.3 Community participation in outreach activities**

Where possible it is desirable to invite the local community to participate in outreach activities. Guest speakers should be invited to events to promote the dissemination of cultural heritage and to promote accessibility of records. Local community participation will go along way to ensure the success of a function.

#### **3.10.11 Thanking Aboriginal communities**

As a sign of appreciation for community participation, State Records should seek to give something back to the community. It does not have to be a physical gift or present – it could be that a talk or workshop is tailored around the community visited. If appropriate copies should be made of material open to public access that relates to the community.

## **3.11 Responding to requests for visits**

### **3.11.1 Onsite**

State Records invites Indigenous groups to visit State Records and to be involved in free talks and tours. Community groups are able to contact the Archivist, Aboriginal Liaison to make bookings for visits. This can be done both for individuals to provide extra assistance in the reading room and for large groups.

Many groups contacting State Records are on 'block' study programs at TAFE or university centres. Talks can be tailored to suit the specific needs of the students. Every opportunity to accommodate visitors should be taken.

### **3.11.2 Offsite**

State Records, where possible, responds favourably to requests for community visits to promote records relating to Indigenous people. If an invitation is made to visit a community group they should be incorporated into the outreach activities program or other programs.

## **3.12 Acknowledging traditional owners at events**

### **3.12.2 How to acknowledge traditional owners**

When planning an official event staff should observe Aboriginal protocols by providing an acknowledgement of traditional owners. The type of ceremony will depend on the nature and size of the event. Staff should consult with appropriate State Records staff, for example the Archivist, Aboriginal Liaison, and external representatives on organising an appropriate ceremony. Details of external

agencies that can assist can be found in the Premiers' Circular 2004-39, Recognising Aboriginal Cultural Protocols and Practices at:

[http://www.dpc.nsw.gov.au/publications/memos\\_and\\_circulars/circulars/2004/c2004-39](http://www.dpc.nsw.gov.au/publications/memos_and_circulars/circulars/2004/c2004-39).

### **3.12.2 Welcome to Country**

#### **What is *Welcome to Country*?**

While there is no set procedure for a *Welcome to Country* the provider of the welcome usually provides participants with local history and cultural information followed by a welcoming of the participants to the country. A *Welcome to country* is usually undertaken by Elders or locally recognised Aboriginal spokespersons.

#### **When is *Welcome to Country* appropriate?**

All major events where there are members of the public, representatives of other governments and/or the media present should include a *Welcome to Country* ceremony.

#### **What type of State Records events may require a *Welcome to Country*?**

Staff should consider a Welcome to Country at the following events:

- Aboriginal events at State Records such as NAIDOC week or seminars and workshops with Aboriginal content
- Special events – Smoking ceremonies, completion of projects/launches which have an Aboriginal focus, and
- Historical events – new buildings, open days, special ceremonies, opening of major forums or conferences hosted/organised by State Records.

#### **When does a *Welcome to Country* take place at an event?**

The *Welcome to Country* is held during the opening of the event. It is the first item on the agenda.

### **3.12.3 Acknowledging of Country/traditional owners**

#### **When is acknowledging traditional owners appropriate?**

It is respectful for speakers at public events to acknowledge the traditional owners.

Acknowledgements are usually undertaken as a part of the general introductions by the first speaker at the event and may be repeated by additional speakers if appropriate.

#### **When is it appropriate to acknowledge traditional owners?**

It is appropriate to acknowledge traditional owners at the following events:

- at public events which also require a *Welcome to Country*
- opening of exhibitions
- launches of products and services, and

- all events where Aboriginal representatives or community members are present.

### **When is it not appropriate to acknowledge traditional owners?**

It may not be appropriate to include an acknowledgement in State Records training sessions, regular business meetings or public access talks.

### **How do you acknowledge traditional owners?**

#### ***Where traditional owners are known***

An acceptable acknowledgment where traditional owners are known (for example, Eora people in the City, and Darug (or Durak) people, in Western Sydney) is:

'We acknowledge the Eora people as traditional owners of the land on which we meet'.

More emphasis can be added if necessary or appropriate with:

'I would also like to pay my respects to Elders past and present'.

#### ***Where traditional owners are not known***

If the traditional owners are not known it is acceptable to make a statement:

'I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which this event is taking place', or

We acknowledge that the Indigenous people were the first people of this land'.

## **3.13 Participation of Elders at events**

### **3.13.1 When to invite Aboriginal Elders to be part of events**

Aboriginal Elders are the most important resource for the community. Elders should be welcomed to take part in events held at State Records and their knowledge should be sought where possible to complement historical records held as State archives.

It is important to keep in contact with the Elder prior to the event to ensure that all parties know what is going on.

### **3.13.2 How to contact an Elder for an event**

See 3.9 Contacting a community.

### **3.13.3 How to acknowledge Elders at events**

If Elders are present it is a sign of respect to acknowledge their presence and contribution. An acknowledgement could include a statement such as:

'I would like to acknowledge community members and Elders present today and thank them for their time and contribution'.

### **3.13.4 Payment for Elders participation**

If an Elder or community representative is invited to join discussions or take part in events at State Records payment should be discussed. Fees for services and how they will be paid, for example, cash or cheque, should be negotiated prior to the event. Fees should be negotiated at the time of planning.

Advice on fees can be sought from agencies such as the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs or the NSW Aboriginal Land Council.

### **3.13.5 Transportation for Elders**

It is important to arrange transportation to and from the events. Care should be taken to ensure that Elders have transport and are not inconvenienced by their visit.

### **3.13.6 Seating for Elders**

Ensure that a group of seats is available for Elders to use at a function or event.

## **3.14 Care and protection of records relating to Indigenous people**

### **3.14.1 Retaining and preserving State records**

Records created by government agencies relating to Indigenous cultural heritage should be preserved for future generations.

### **3.14.2 Appraisal and disposal of records relating to Indigenous communities and cultural heritage**

Records relating to Indigenous communities and cultural heritage are to be appraised and preserved for future generations according to established State Records' policies, Retention and Disposal Authorities and procedures. For further information contact the Senior Project Officer, Disposal Regulation.

## **3.15 Staff training and awareness**

Staff should feel confident in and be able to deal with Indigenous clients and questions. Staff training and awareness can assist with the provision of appropriate Indigenous services.

State Records encourages staff to increase their understanding of Indigenous issues and cultural awareness by providing:

- briefing sessions with the introduction of these protocols
- reference to these protocols at induction
- access to these protocols and links to relevant sites and publications on State Records' intranet
- all new Public Access staff with an introduction to records relating to Aboriginal people and dealing with Aboriginal clients (provided by Archivist, Aboriginal Liaison)

- opportunities for staff to attend Indigenous related training organised and/or provided by the Department of Commerce, and
- access to external cross cultural training to staff whenever resources permit.



## 4 Resources and further reading

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### Protocol resources

Australian Broadcasting Corporation

<http://www.abc.net.au/message/proper/resources.htm>

Site has additional protocol resources and further web site links.

### Policy Statements

Australian Society of Archivists (ASA) Policy Statement on Archival Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

<http://www.archivists.org.au/pubs/positionpapers/atsi.html>

### Stolen Generation Issues

Bringing them Home – Report

<http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/special/rsjproject/rsjlibrary/hreoc/stolen/>

Bringing them Home Report – Access to records

<http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/special/rsjproject/rsjlibrary/hreoc/stolen/stolen41.html>

Bringing them home – The History: New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory

[http://www.hreoc.gov.au/bth/text\\_versions/map/history/nsw.html](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/bth/text_versions/map/history/nsw.html)

Australian Society of Archivists – Submission to the Stolen Generation Inquiry

<http://www.archivists.org.au/council/subs/stolengen.html>

### Aboriginal History

Barani: Indigenous History of Sydney City

<http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/barani/themes/theme6.htm>

Virtual Sourcebook: Aboriginal Studies in the Hunter Region

<http://www.newcastle.edu.au/services/library/collections/archives/int/abori.html>

### Family History resources

Archives of Australia – Resources: Indigenous Australians

[http://www.archivenet.gov.au/Resources/indigenous\\_aust.htm](http://www.archivenet.gov.au/Resources/indigenous_aust.htm)

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS)

<http://www.aiatsis.gov.au>

State Library of NSW – Info Koori (Indigenous Australian Name Index)

<http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/infokoori/about.cfm>

## **Intellectual Property Issues**

Report on Australian Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights

<http://www.icip.lawnet.com.au/>