


We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this country and recognise their connection to land, wind, water and community.

We pay our respect to them, their cultures, and to the Elders both past and present.

Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety



Valuing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' knowledge lens



User Guide

Updated March 2025

As an organisation, we aim to become more attuned to the effectiveness and sophistication of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wisdoms and knowledge.

We must learn to hear, understand, value and reflect these wisdoms into our work to make our services and systems more effective, responsive, innovative and holistic, not only for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, but for all Queenslanders.

Michael Hogan

Former Director-General

Former Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women

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Message from the Director-General

This User Guide has been created to assist you to apply the Valuing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' knowledge lens to your work.

Valuing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' knowledge is necessary in ALL of our policies, programs, projects, procurement and practice. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage stems from causes that are often multiple, complex, interconnected and deeply entrenched. Consequently, it is imperative our services are more culturally responsive and appropriate in all areas.

There is no template or specific form you need to complete, however in every piece of work decision makers must be able to clearly see that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders have had meaningful influence, authority and where possible, given responsibility for the options and decisions being presented. This User Guide will provide you with some key points to consider, case studies, activities and quotes to assist you to apply the lens comprehensively.

I look forward to seeing evidence of the lens being applied in all of the department's work.

Director General

The 'Accountability stop sign'

The lens is designed to be applied flexibly. Depending on the nature of the work, not all lens questions will be relevant for every activity, however throughout the

document you will see the 'Accountability Stop Sign.'



This sign is used to point out some particular areas where approvers and decision makers will look for specific evidence and demonstrations of application of the

lens in work including, but not limited to, Memorandums for Approval, board submissions and Work Package and project documentation.

A message from the Cultural Capability Enablers Network

We thank you for your commitment to working with our communities. We're hopeful the lens encourages greater conversation, understanding, sharing and collaboration.

This is complex work and there are no easy or simple solutions. There are often multiple, complex, and interconnected factors that contribute to the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in multiple areas of vulnerability. Additionally, we, as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, are complex. There is a multiplicity of different Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, family and community structures and experiences. This complex foundation, coupled with a history of trauma, the existence of lateral violence, low numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in government, and the pervasive fear of offending anyone or getting it wrong should not be viewed as barriers, but rather as opportunities for the development of cultural capability and more responsive services, systems and practices.

An ability to accept the complexity, be open-minded and self-reflective, understand the historical context of the disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and maintain a desire to learn and understand are essential qualities for every person working in every area of government.

The lens is part of the cultural capability journey and it will mature in response to feedback, challenges, opportunities and lessons learnt.

Cultural Capability Enablers Network (CCEN)

The CCEN was a group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff from the former Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services. They came together from across the state to provide advice, referral and guidance regarding cultural inclusions in reform activities, program strategy, project development and/or workplace initiatives. CCEN members also provided consultation and advice on a range of initiatives that impact upon Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients, staff and communities.

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1. Reflect

Humans are cultural beings

As humans, we communicate and understand our world through the context of our beliefs and values, which we learn from our family behaviours, traditions and ultimately our personal experiences. Together these form what can be called our 'cultural lens' and we all have one!

As we do our work, we are always making decisions and our cultural lens may unconsciously influence those decisions, particularly if we are a member of a non-Aboriginal or non-Torres Strait Islander culture. Our cultural lens can limit our understanding and appreciation of the values and behaviours of others, as we may unconsciously compare them to our own norms, ways of thinking and what we think is important in the world.

Taking the time to reflect and become aware of this helps us to include diversity and cultural capability in our daily decision making, which can ultimately influence the design and delivery of departmental policies, programs, projects, procurement, and practices.

This section of the User Guide aims to help you commence a process of reflection on your cultural lens, including aspects of privilege, unconscious bias and understanding racism.

These topics can make us feel uncomfortable, but they are necessary to consider. There is no judgement intended, only encouragement to recognise and be open to new ideas, beliefs, practices and priorities, particularly those that we learn from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' knowledge.

Starting the Journey

If you haven't already done it or if it's been a while – complete the department's foundational Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability training program. This training provides insight into interpreting your own culture as well as the lived experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Queensland.

Reflection and feedback

Using the lens both begins and ends with reflection. At the conclusion of your piece of work, take time to reflect on the ways in which you were open to new ideas, and how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' knowledge shaped our views and final decisions.

2. Connect

Nothing about us, without us.

Co-design partners

To genuinely value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' knowledge, we must have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander co-design partners from the earliest stages of commencing a piece of work.

Effective partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples has long been recognised as critical to the development of effective and culturally responsive services and systems.

The starting point of every piece of work is to research what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are already doing. Then look for ways for the work to be led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals or organisations.

Having key Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander co-design partners should not be confused with the process of consultation and engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations and communities. Key Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners will guide us as we design consultation and engagement processes.

Case Study: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Wellbeing Service

QATSICPP are the department's co-design partners for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Wellbeing Service. QATSICPP worked closely with the department to design a consultation and engagement process that included:

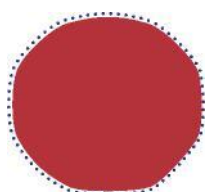
11 focus groups across the state with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and service providers.

Knowledge Circles conducted in partnership with the Healing Foundation, to capture the views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, children and carers, and their feedback about how the programs could best be integrated, and

An interactive two-day Strategic Design Workshop with more than 50 senior decision makers from across government and nongovernment agencies.

Including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives cannot be an afterthought. We need to do this as a forethought – every time, with every piece of work.

Who are our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander co-design partners and have they been engaged from the earliest stages of commencing the work?





Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships

Who are the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander co-design partners and critical friends for this piece of work?

Think about which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders are most knowledgeable or affected by the topic and with whom we have strategic partnerships.

Some ideas are provided in the tables, but if your team is unsure of who the right Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners might be, just ask! Check in with the Cultural Capability Enablers Network or the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Families Team.

This is an essential step for all policies, programs, projects, procurement and practice, not just those targeted for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities, and organisations.

Resources and demands on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Organisations

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations were initially established for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices to be heard and were founded largely as a reflection of the aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for self-determination.

There are many demands placed on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations, which, in addition to their 'core business,' also have objectives that include cultural advancement, community development and whatever other supports their particular Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community needs. This can also be the case with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, who are regularly called on to provide advice and cultural perspectives in addition to their usual roles.

Not all requests for partnership can be met, not from a lack of commitment, but because of capacity. Look for opportunities to provide support to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to work with you and be prepared to actively participate in the process.

State Wide

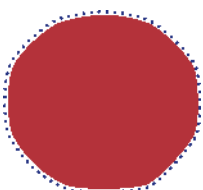
- Department of Women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships and Multiculturalism ([DWATSIPM](#))
- Peak bodies
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics, experts, and researchers
- National, state, and regional bodies
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suppliers
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics, experts, and researchers
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff

Place Based

- Elders and Traditional Owner groups
- Women's and Men's Groups
- Local Community Groups
- Community members

Before you engage, check in with other departmental areas to identify opportunities to coordinate engagement, consultation and negotiation processes

Relationships are key - when we have strong relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders several opportunities for positive change will present themselves.



Have we looked for opportunities to reduce the burden of over-consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and considered how we are adequately resourcing them to participate?

3. Apply

Respectful communication and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders

Respectful communication and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders should underpin and inform every aspect and stage of applying the lens.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the experts in their own lives and have deep cultural wisdoms and knowledges that can lead to more effective, responsive, innovative, and holistic services and systems, not only for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, but for all Queenslanders.

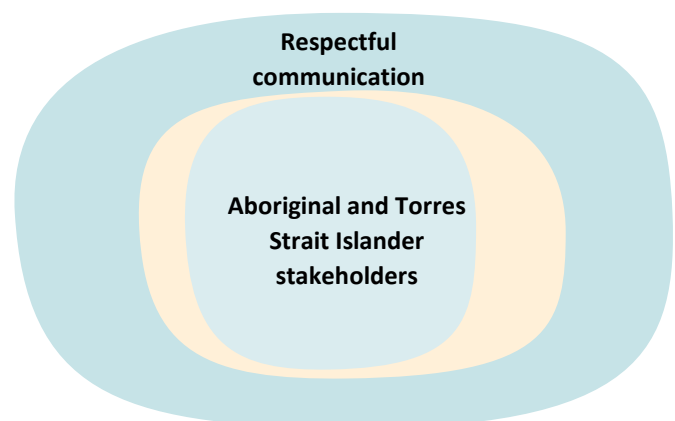
The questions in the lens are designed to guide the process of exploring and infusing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and perspectives in policies, programs, projects, procurement and practice, so our services and systems are more responsive to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders.

The best way for us to learn from and understand the unique strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, and what that means for our work, is through genuine and respectful negotiation, engagement, consultation, and partnership with, and leadership by, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.

Our key Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander co-design partnership/s should have already been identified. However, as you move through the rest of the lens, it is likely to be necessary and important to seek out other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' knowledge and perspectives that are reflective of the richness and diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

To build genuine, trusting, and equitable relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders, we need to be culturally respectful in how we consult, negotiate, and engage as well as maintaining transparent, open and regular communication.

The capacity to build and maintain strong working relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, communities and organisations is fundamental to our ability to work effectively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders. By enhancing awareness of culture, staff are likely to be in a better position to learn about issues encountered by the local community, and to realise the strengths, experiences, aspirations and insights of community-led solutions and innovations.





Who are the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders we are partnering, negotiating, and consulting with at all stages and how are we doing this in a way that is respectful and effective?

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples fear, distrust and are angry at the actions of government and those of previous authorities. The Queensland government is committed to changing the prevalence and effects of that dynamic. It's important to consider how best to overcome any barriers to the government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples having open, respectful, and effective communication.

The options for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners to lead the consultation and engagement process (where they are adequately resourced to do so) should be the first consideration. If the department does need to lead the process, then the planned process should be developed and endorsed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners.

Seek advice from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander co-design partners as to whether external facilitation is recommended. Further advice can be sought from DWATSIPM.

Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners are best placed to help us determine who are the right range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and if the planned process is respectful and culturally responsive.

Western philosophy is based on, 'I think therefore I am.' Aboriginal philosophy is based on, 'I am related, therefore, I am.'
Not one of those is better than the other. It's just why Aboriginal people situate themselves differently.

Dr Gregory Phillips

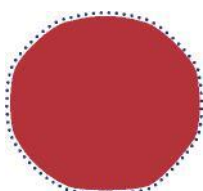
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Diversity

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures and communities are rich and diverse. Australia's first peoples are two distinct peoples that are culturally very different—Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Within these two distinct cultures exist a diversity of unique and distinct communities, cultural and language groups, spiritual connections to land, environmental influences, families and kinship networks and life experiences.

There is no one single Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 'perspective' and when planning a consultation process, it is acknowledged that it is not possible to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who represent every aspect of this diversity.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stakeholder diversities to consider:

- Aboriginal peoples
- Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Traditional Owners
- Urban, regional, and remote entities and organisations
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- Men's and Women's groups
- Elders
- Youth
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with academic and research knowledge
- Peoples of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage, with relevant lived experience.



How do we know that we are engaging and consulting with the right range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders?



Engagement, consultation, and negotiation

The United Nations (UN) Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples calls on states to obtain free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous people through their representative institutions before adopting legislative or administrative measures that would affect Indigenous peoples; it provides an international framework of best practice for engagement.

Effective engagement is a sustained process that provides Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with the opportunity to actively participate in decision making from the earliest stage of defining the subject through to the development and implementation of policies, programs, projects, procurement, and practice — and the evaluation of outcomes.

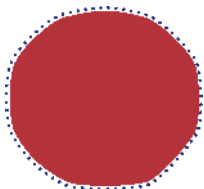
Engagement requires a relationship built on trust and integrity. It is a sustained relationship between groups of people working towards shared goals. On the spectrum of engagement, a high level of participation (such as co-ownership) works better than lower levels (such as consultation) where subjects are complex.

To be both effective and genuinely respectful, it is essential that both consultation and negotiation occurs. Too often Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples feel that only token consultation is carried out by government and that ‘consultation’ occurred merely to ‘rubber stamp’ pre-determined conclusions.

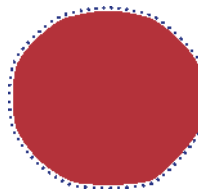
However, when negotiation occurs, a more equal relationship develops. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have often felt consultation left them powerless to affect government decision making. Negotiation is a more equal relationship where parties work through any differences, find areas of agreement, and agree to disagree if areas of difference cannot be resolved.

Additional information can be found on the [DATSIP website](#) and the [Queensland Cultural Capability Portal](#).

Additional information on the historical impacts on Queensland’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and [general consultation protocol](#) information is available from DATSIP.



Have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners led or endorsed the engagement and consultation process?



Have we engaged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders in the right capacity to meet the complexity of the issue?

Tips for respectful and effective engagement, consultation and negotiation:

- High levels of participation works better than lower levels (such as consultation) where differences are complex.
- Be open about why, how and how much influence the consultation will have over decisions being made.
- Ensure there aren’t any pre-determined solutions or expected outcomes.
- Allow for sufficient time frames to ensure robust and rich feedback.
- Take steps to remove barriers to full participation, including adequate resourcing, making the environment welcoming and setting the preparation, pace, format, and language to accommodate everyone, including participants who are least likely to speak up.
- Engaging existing networks and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders who have already been considering the topic can provide rich, considered and community informed perspectives.
- Have a culturally respectful process in place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders to raise any concerns and/or provide feedback on the process



Respectful Communication

How are we being transparent, authentic, and regular in our communications with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders?

Effective, respectful, and accessible communication and information sharing is a key element of building trusting sustainable relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders. We know the importance of partnership, consultation, and engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders, but our relationships can't begin and end there. Trust is built when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members are able to assess whether their views have been understood and accurately recorded.

Being transparent, authentic, and regular in our communications and information sharing goes a small way to equalising power imbalances with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.

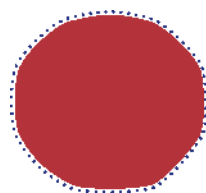
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander audiences comprise a wide range of people with different communication needs, information preferences, and expectations of government. These different needs are influenced by factors including location, level of literacy, age, cultural considerations, and access and ability to use technologies. Check with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners, and with individual communities, to determine what communication mechanism and protocols might be most effective to share information.

Respectful Language

Concepts and terms that government staff use in everyday communications may be quite foreign to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. In all locations, translating 'government speak' to enable community members to fully understand its meaning and implications is important to avoid confusion and misunderstanding and to ensure that communication is effective.

Consider the critical importance of the language and phrasing in communications materials, respect diversity, and use inclusive and strengths-based language.

Refer to the Respectful Language Guide for more information.



stakeholders?

Have we been transparent in sharing the outcomes of consultation, engagement, and negotiations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

In most instances our communications with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders will be 'targeted' to peoples, organisations and communities we are partnering, consulting and negotiating with, however if supplementary, broader communications are required, [The Australian Government's Indigenous Audience Research](#) has been conducted to help inform communication strategies.

Exploration & evidence gathering

What does the qualitative and quantitative data tell us about this topic for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders?

This lens question is designed to prompt a greater understanding of the scale of how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations are represented in the topic.

During information gathering for policies, programs, projects, procurement, or practice, ask for ALL data sets to be disaggregated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status – this data may present some unexpected information.

Considering the available data is a first step towards gaining a better understanding of how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are represented in the topic, how the department can be more responsive and/or identify strengths or opportunities.

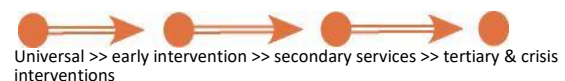
Representation

Look at the comparison between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and broader community statistics and demographics to understand if there is an over or under-representation and to what extent.

- **Disproportionate representation – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people consistently make up over 45% of children in out-of-home care state-wide, however account for only 8% of the population (0-18 years).**
- **Under-representation – ABS data indicates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are more than three times as likely to have an intellectual disability, more than twice as likely to have a long-term condition or disability for which they require support meeting self-care, communication or mobility needs and are more than twice as likely to have a psychological disability. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, however, access departmental disability support services significantly lower rates than other Queenslanders.**

Systemic barriers

Considering what 'the data' looks like for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples along the intervention access continuum assists in improving understanding of possible systemic barriers and inequities. For example:



Representation in Disability Services Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples access department delivered and funded disability support services at the following rates:

7.5%

Receiving a DFSDSCS disability service

60%*

Forensic disability service

* based on an 'average' day

If this is a mainstream piece of work, have you considered if the data indicates a requirement for a supplementary approach or delivery strategy to more effectively respond to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?



‘Ground-truthing’

Determining the ‘significance’ of data analysis results is not always a straightforward process. People will interpret the same information in different ways.

It’s important to ‘ground truth’ the data analysis with what the community is experiencing. Check with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners or communities about the data, the measures and any conclusions being drawn.

Additionally, paying attention to qualitative information from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders can increase our understanding of the nature and characteristics of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s representation in the topic, not just the ‘numbers’.

Indigenous Data Sovereignty

The guiding principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples adopted by the General Assembly on 13 September 2007 establishes a universal framework of minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the Indigenous peoples of the world and it elaborates on existing human rights standards and fundamental freedoms as they apply to Indigenous peoples.

The Declaration is particularly significant because Indigenous peoples, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, were involved in its drafting.

Particularly relevant are:

Article 3: Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.

Article 4: Indigenous people, in exercising their right to self-determination, have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs, as well as way and means for financing their autonomous functions.

Article 13: Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to

designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons.

With digitization occurring at ever increasing rates, data is the new currency of knowledge. Data have a tangible value. They are a resource. Yet, Indigenous peoples, in Australia and elsewhere, remain largely alienated from the collection, use and application of data about us, our lands and cultures. Indigenous Data Sovereignty responds to the poor data practices of governments, agencies, researchers, and institutions which have a) misused data to frame Indigenous peoples as the problem and b) controlled/restricted access to data needed for Indigenous nation rebuilding

Indigenous Data Sovereignty is the right of Indigenous peoples to govern the collection, ownership, and application of data about Indigenous communities, peoples, lands, and resources. Its enactment mechanism Indigenous data governance is built around two central premises: the rights of Indigenous nations over data about them, regardless of where it is held and by whom; and the right to the data Indigenous peoples require to support nation rebuilding. Indigenous Data Sovereignty is now a global movement, with activities expanding from raising awareness within Indigenous nations and nation state data entities to the instituting of Indigenous data governance principles and protocols.

Indigenous rights over data are supported in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Indigenous Data Governance serves as the mechanism for realising Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles and operates through two interconnected modes:

1. Indigenous Governance of Data; and
2. Indigenous Data for Governance.
 - Indigenous data refers to information or knowledge, in any format, inclusive of statistics, that is about Indigenous people and that impacts Indigenous lives at the collective and/or individual level.
 - Indigenous Intellectual and Cultural Property (ICIP) has often been done without respect for Indigenous cultures, without consent or Indigenous legal authorisation, and without benefit sharing with Indigenous communities. This is leading to the gradual erosion of Indigenous cultural heritage. Indigenous people call for adequate protection.



What do Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics, researchers, evaluators, and commentary say about the topic?

Often, we draw on the available ‘literature’ to commence the process of exploring a topic and potential solutions. It’s important to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ knowledge informs our thinking from this very early stage, to provide a strong foundation for understanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives throughout the whole process.

The diverse ways of thinking, understanding and interpretations that will arise from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics, researchers, evaluators and commentators can lead to innovation and consideration of a different range of potential solutions to benefit all Queenslanders.

Become vigilant to how your culture (particularly if you are from a non-Aboriginal or “non-Torres Strait Islander culture), shapes the interpretation of what gets to count as evidence when considering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other First Peoples Literature Criteria

To inform your responses to this lens question, resources, and literature you reference should meet at least one of the following criteria:

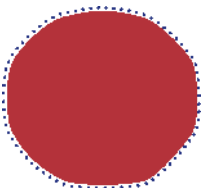
- Authored, produced, or published by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples or organisations.
- Authored, produced, or published by other First Peoples or organisations from other jurisdictions.
- The research/consultation methodology is led by or in close partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.
- The research/consultation methodology is led by or in close partnership with other First Peoples or communities from other jurisdictions.

A collection of resources that meet the criteria should be collated and made available on the department’s intranet.

Media and commentary

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and alternative mainstream media can also provide significant insight into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and interpretations of matters.

Look for articles and commentary from sources such as the Koori Mail and The Conversation to challenge your thinking as you shape your understanding.



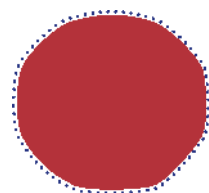
Were there any key points of difference in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and First Peoples literature and how did that shape and challenge our understanding of the topic?



How do Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people define success in relation to this topic?

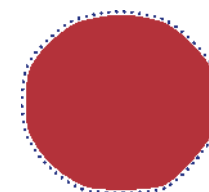
Cultural values shape our ways of knowing, being and doing. For many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, this means their own aspirations, and those for their families and communities, may not align with those of non-Aboriginal or non-Torres Strait Islander cultures.

We must listen to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders in order to work towards solutions that take proper account of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aspirations, ideas of wellbeing, and social contexts. They will advise us what constitutes success or good outcomes for the policies, programs, projects, procurement and practice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders.



How did we work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for them to lead in defining the criteria for success?

At the Senior Leaders Forum in May 2016, Associate Professor, Gregory Phillips presented a session [Leadership for Cultural Safety and Cultural Capability](#) that explores many of the concepts raised in the lens. Watching the session will help you gain a greater understanding of these concepts and their application to your work.



What are the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led solutions and initiatives relevant to this topic. Have we considered options to support the community to build on them, rather than designing a departmentally led response?

What opportunities are we exploring for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders to lead and own this work with support from the department?

One of the fundamental rights of First Peoples across the globe is the right to self-determination — that is, the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to have control over their lives and future including their economic, social, and cultural development.

This question encourages us to look for opportunities to entrust Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to find and lead the development of solutions, in partnership with the department.

The most effective, evidence-based approach to improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is to empower and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-led and driven initiatives and services that respond to community need.

The department is committed to re-thinking the ways we work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and is looking to the strategic directions being put forward by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders.

Empowerment, in our meaning, has two aspects. It means Indigenous people empowering ourselves by taking all appropriate and necessary powers and responsibilities for our own lives and futures. It also means Commonwealth, state and territory governments sharing, and in some cases relinquishing, certain powers and responsibilities, and supporting Indigenous people with resources and capability building.

[Empowered Communities Report](#)

Planning and Design

How are we checking for unintended consequences for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders?

When designing policies, programs, projects, procurement, and practice to respond to a specific issue, we need to pay careful attention not just to the consequences we are intending to achieve, but also the unintended ones, which are most often the negative result of a seemingly well intended solution.

Case Study: COAG Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Report

Our report for COAG, Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage, is littered with examples of unintended consequences. One of the first field trips that I did, as part of establishing that process, was to Alice Springs, where I learnt of one instance of an unintended consequence which would be amusing if the issues weren't so serious. It involved children taking up petrol sniffing so they could qualify for the various benefits and give-aways in a programme designed to eradicate it. That this might happen no doubt would not have occurred to any of us in Canberra, but it may well have occurred to some of the Elders in the community if they had been asked.

Gary Banks AO former Productivity Commissioner

[Productivity Commission's Better Indigenous Policies: The Role of Evaluation Roundtable Proceedings paper.](#)

The Australian Government Productivity Commission provides an example of how unintended consequences may have been avoided by checking with the community.

Differential impacts

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' access many of the department's services, including those that are 'mainstream' and so we need to be particularly vigilant to check if any changes, policies, programs, projects, procurement, and practices affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in a different way to other Queenslanders.

How are we checking?

This question is asking how 'are we' working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners, stakeholders, and communities to lead the development of solutions which take into consideration the risks of unintended consequences.

How does the planned implementation approach allow for local responsiveness and opportunity to build on community strengths?

Regardless of their location, Queenslanders right across the state needing the services of the department face many of the same issues and experiences of disadvantage and vulnerability. However, there are almost always locational factors that add 'another layer' of challenges that are unique to a community. This is particularly the case for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The disadvantage experienced by remote Aboriginal communities, for example, differs vastly from the experience of young people in an urban area.

The evidence base tells us that local and region-specific programs that are tailored to the needs of particular communities are the most effective in meeting the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We know that 'one size fits all' approaches that ignore local diversity do not work.

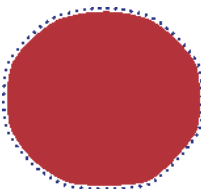
This tells us there are many elements of policy, program, project, procurement, and practice design that are common, but which also need to have the flexibility to be responsive to local community need. The responses to this question will link closely to the next lens question that asks us to consider our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander implementation partnerships.



Community development

A Community development approach is primarily based on the notion that people are capable of finding solutions to their concerns, priorities, needs and solutions.

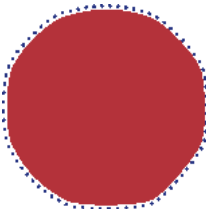
The Child Protection Commission of Inquiry notes the particularly strong evidence that a community development approach directly contributes to improvements in life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at the local level.



Does this piece of work contribute to investment in the longer-term strengthening of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities at a local level to decide, manage and lead their own solutions?

How does the planned solution coordinate with other services to build holistic and accessible responses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, families and communities often experience multiple needs and interrelated concerns that have an impact on their wellbeing and need access to multiple services. Improving the coordination between services contributes to accessibility, responsiveness, and improved outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders.



Is there a clear articulation of how this response links and coordinates with other relevant policies, programs, projects, and procurement and practice initiatives?

There may be a mix of services that are multi-layered, possibly fragmented, provided by Commonwealth, state/territory, or local governments, as well as non-government and community agencies. Additionally, services may be delivered by targeted and mainstream programs.

Research suggests that coordinating services can reduce complexity, enhance service quality, and provide a foundation to deliver achievable outcomes to users.

A sustained, multi-systemic approach is required to tackle this issue. We need all “community members, service providers and government to be on the same path moving toward the same goal.

Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership

Coordinated responses also reduce the burden of duplication and red tape on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations.

This lens question asks us to consider the confusing nature of the service system for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individual, family, or community group with complex needs.

Implementation and Delivery

How is this being implemented by, or in genuine partnership with, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders?

It is imperative we consider how departmental policies, programs, projects, procurement, and practices will be implemented in a way that best meets the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations and communities.

There is much evidence highlighting the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities maintaining control of services, to ensure they are 'community-based' and address the priorities and holistic needs of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Even if they do not receive funding for a program or service, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services are often called on to be the interface with the community, assist informally with delivery or provide advice on cultural matters. Options to transition to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community control of services include setting up a joint steering committee, with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation taking the lead on delivery. Providing capacity building to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, in accordance with their identified needs, can assist them to develop the ability to deliver the service, or a greater range of services.

If a mainstream organisation is implementing or delivering services that are accessed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders, we should be considering if there are opportunities for partnerships and improved cultural capability and that access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is a key implementation and delivery priority.

Case Study: Family and Child Connect

Family and Child Connect and Intensive Family Support services are being delivered through a partnership of Kurbingui Youth Development (KYD), Indigenous Family and Child Support

Service (IFACSS) and Mercy Community Services (MCS), and include Indigenous specific

Family and Child Connect and Intensive Family Support services.

Family and Child Connect aims to create social infrastructure which enables families under stress to access the support they need as early as possible, without recourse to the statutory child protection system.

In a culturally appropriate setting, the Indigenous Family and Child Connect (led by KYD) provides information, assessment, advice and/or referral for support needs identification, specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

If we do not have an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander delivery and implementation partnership, have we clearly articulated how we know the planned approach will meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities, and organisations?

Evaluation & Review

How are we measuring outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities, and organisations within the evaluation?

It is important to check if any initiative, reform, policy, program, project, procurement, and practice is achieving the desired results for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as well as the broader Queensland community.

To do this effectively, the evaluation methodologies used should include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' expectations, perspectives, and participation.

For additional information, see the [Productivity Commission's Better Indigenous Policies: The Role of Evaluation Roundtable Proceedings paper](#).

Evaluation frameworks must be culturally and contextually appropriate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Consider what methodological practices have been found to be most effective in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

For additional information, see the [Productivity Commissions Indigenous Evaluation Strategy 2020](#).

Ask for ALL evaluation data and feedback you receive to be disaggregated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status – this may present some unexpected information.

The time for doing what we have always done is over – we must be bold and rethink our approaches.

Cathy Taylor, former Deputy Director-General, Child, Family and Community Services, DCCSDS



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For Indigenous peoples to participate in Australian society as equals requires that we be able to live our lives free from assumptions by others about what is best for us.

It requires recognition of our values, culture, and traditions so that they can co-exist with those of mainstream society.

It requires respecting our difference and celebrating it within the diversity of the nation.

Dr William Jonas
(former) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner