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# Queensland Public Library Standards and Guidelines

**Library Services Standard for  
Aboriginal people and Torres Strait  
Islanders**

April 2010

## 10.5 Library Services Standard for Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders

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### 10.5.1 Objective and Framework

To provide standards and guidelines for public libraries, including Indigenous Knowledge Centres (IKCs), for the delivery of library services for Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders. These services should maximise opportunities for formal and informal learning and leisure activities. The standards and guidelines have been developed utilising benchmarking against best practice both nationally and internationally.

Indigenous Knowledge Centres (IKCs) are not only conventional community libraries which operate in partnership with Local Government to provide traditional public library services (including access to information and communication technologies) but also serve as community hubs, repositories for community knowledge, places where knowledge can grow, and forums for two-way cultural learning. IKCs are located mainly in remote Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities.

This standard is intended to apply to both Queensland public libraries and IKCs as their shared aim is to ensure that services for Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders are available and relevant to the communities that they serve. It is important to note that IKCs have largely been designed to serve a single distinct Indigenous community whereas Indigenous clients of most public libraries represent smaller segments of larger communities. Often investigation may be required to identify Indigenous communities in the local area.

### 10.5.2 Library Services Standard for Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders

#### 10.5.2.1 Standard for community profiling

Regular analysis of statistics released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and other relevant data should be undertaken to ensure current knowledge of the number of residents identifying as being Aboriginal or a Torres Strait Islander in the local government area. This information should help inform the planning and budgeting of library services for Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders.

#### 10.5.2.2 Standard for staffing composition

As far as possible, the library and IKC should aim to reflect the composition of the community population in its staffing profile and take affirmative action to recruit and promote at least an appropriate ratio of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders. In addition, appropriate employment and promotional pathways should be actively identified and developed. Ideally key local Indigenous communities will be represented either in the library's staff, on Council's staff or in volunteer groups.

When recruiting Aboriginal people or Torres Strait Islanders, the value of prior learning and/or qualifications in other fields should be recognised. Appointed staff members should be suitably trained and, where possible, supported with mentoring.

Through the development and implementation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific cultural awareness programs, all staff should have an awareness of cultural

sensitivity and be able to respond to the needs of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders, including staff members who identify with these groups. These steps will help to encourage the use of the library by all communities within the local government area. For more detail on staffing for library services refer to the Public Library Staffing Standard, <http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/info/publib/policy/guidelines>, Section 2.3.5.

### **10.5.3 Guidelines**

#### **10.5.3.1 Guidelines for collections and resources**

Libraries and IKCs hold a wide range of information about Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders. These collections and resources should be developed in a wide variety of formats that serve the varying needs of the local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community. Collections should include: items written by, or about Aboriginal people or Torres Strait Islanders; items that have high Australian content; resources that are highly illustrative or in AV formats; and material that is technology based. Many of the records, books, images and other materials held by libraries include depictions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, culture and experiences presented from a variety of perspectives and may include sensitive material which needs to be handled with special care.

In order to respond appropriately to the information needs of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders, public libraries and IKCs should consider the following strategies:

- Consult in an appropriate and ongoing manner with relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities with regard to the development and management of the collections;
- Promote the existence and availability of collections and provide clients with an explanation for any conditions governing access;
- Facilitate appropriate access to information resources by Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders;
- Recognise the moral rights of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders as owners of their knowledge.

More examples of guidelines for collections are provided in Culturally Responsive Guidelines for Alaska Public Libraries. <http://www.akla.org/culturally-responsive.html>.

#### **10.5.3.2 Guidelines for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander intellectual property and issues**

The interests of the authors and publishers of records, books and other documentary material are protected by copyright law but the interests of those whose culture is described are not.

The primary rights of the owners of a culture should be recognised and considered through the following strategies:

- Become aware of the issues surrounding cultural documentation and the need for cultural awareness training;
- Develop an understanding of the primary cultural and intellectual property rights of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders and consult with members of the community on their application, if appropriate;
- Develop ways, including the recognition of moral rights, to protect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural and intellectual property.

More detailed information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander intellectual property may be found at the Australian Library and Information Association's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocols for Library and Information Services. 1995. <http://www.alia.org.au/policies/atsi.protocols.html> and at State Library of Queensland's Protocols for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Collections 2007. [http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/64599/SLQ\\_-\\_Protocols\\_for\\_Indigenous\\_Collections.pdf](http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/64599/SLQ_-_Protocols_for_Indigenous_Collections.pdf)

For more information on consultation, please refer to 10.5.3.5.

### **10.5.3.3 Guidelines for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secret or sacred materials**

Some of the materials in libraries and IKCs are of a confidential or sensitive nature which may require certain restrictions on access for regulatory, commercial, security or community reasons. In relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content, these sensitivities have greatest impact when items hold secret and/or sacred information which may have been recorded with or without permission.

Secret or sacred/sensitive information should not be confused with material that may be considered offensive to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Guidance on the handling of potentially offensive material is provided in 10.5.3.4

A working definition of secret or sacred material must include consultation i.e. an item is secret or sacred if it contains information which is considered to be secret or sacred by the community to which it pertains. Suitable management practices will depend on both the materials and the communities served.

In implementing the processes through which such materials are managed, libraries and IKCs should:

- Consult in the identification of such materials both recently acquired and retrospectively, and develop suitable management practices with the most appropriate representatives of the particular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities involved and establish reference groups consisting of senior library staff and Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander representatives;
- Provide suitable storage and viewing facilities with limited access as may be required;
- Ensure that any conditions on access are understood by staff and users and are fully implemented.

### **10.5.3.4 Guidelines for offensive materials**

The management of and access to offensive materials has the potential to be highly complex and sensitive. It should be recognised that collections may contain materials that may be racist, sexist, derogatory, abusive or incorrect and are therefore offensive to the community. Many examples are of an historical nature, for example referring to Aboriginal people as "savages", but some are contemporary. Public libraries and IKCs have a responsibility to preserve and make accessible the documentary record but must also respond appropriately to the existence of offensive materials. In determining what is an appropriate response, public libraries and IKCs could consider:

- Developing inclusive consultation strategies with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in relation to materials which are considered offensive;
- Developing strategies to ensure that staff members are confident in dealing appropriately with offensive materials.

### **10.5.3.5 Guidelines for community engagement and consultation**

Effective community engagement and consultation on the needs of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders can provide valuable input into the planning of targeted library services and programs. For IKCs and public libraries where staff members are from the local Indigenous community, this can be achieved through direct contact with their clients and advisory groups such as friends of the IKC. For all other libraries, a reference group for the library should be created to assist library staff where specific local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander input is required. This group should include members from local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities as well as key library staff and Indigenous officers already working in the council or local services.

The *Everybody's Business* pages of the Queensland Government website provides good advice about consulting with Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders.

<http://www.atsip.qld.gov.au/everybodys%2Dbusiness/>. Many other sources also discuss effective consultation techniques. See 10.5.5.2.

#### **10.5.3.6 Guidelines for programs and services**

A wide range of services and programs should be offered to encourage and enhance library usage by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of the community, celebrate the cultures that are represented in the local area, and contribute to social cohesion. All library and IKC programs and services should be inclusive of and reflect the interests and needs of all of the community served.

For more information on creating programs and services see the *Welcoming Places* publication at: <http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/about/pub/publib#welcoming>.

These may include:

- Celebrations for relevant key events such as NAIDOC week, National Sorry Day, Mabo Day, Coming of the Light, National Reconciliation Week;
- Popular library celebrations eg Children's Book Week, Seniors Week could include an elders morning tea;
- Aboriginal and Torres Islander author talks as part of general reader advisory service;
- Engaging local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander storytellers or speakers to run story time or information sessions;
- Library welcome sessions providing information on how to access resources in the library for different groups in the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander local communities eg. mothers and children, Elders, TAFE students;
- Family history research;
- Recording oral histories / recollections, digitising stories and promoting Indigenous languages.

#### **10.5.3.7 Guidelines for promotion and marketing**

Best practice in library services for Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders highlights the need for libraries to enhance the welcoming environment of the library by creating a visible Indigenous presence. For IKCs in particular, which are part of the local Indigenous community, emphasis should be placed on promoting services as relevant to users and non-library users in the community.

To raise awareness and encourage usage of library services, a variety of promotional techniques can be used, including:

- Displaying the Australian flag, the Aboriginal flag and the Torres Strait Islander flag prominently within the library;
- Involving the local Indigenous community to help choose material for the library that responds to known interests of the local population;
- Ensuring that major events like NAIDOC are reflected in library displays;
- Encouraging the use of the organisation's facilities as meeting places and a resource centre for Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders ;
- Promoting public libraries and IKC services directly in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations;
- Encouraging council to promote library and IKC services through media releases, community newsletters, and by placing notices or advertisements in local newspapers;
- Mounting displays or information stands outside the library and at community events.

For more ideas on promotion please see the American Library Association toolkit: Guide to Building Support for your Tribal Library [www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/olos/toolkits/tribal\\_toolkit.pdf](http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/olos/toolkits/tribal_toolkit.pdf) and Staying Connected: Chapter 11 Reach Non-Traditional Library Users published by the Gates Foundation [http://www.webjunction.org/c/document\\_library/get\\_file?folderId=431696&name=DLFE-10183.pdf](http://www.webjunction.org/c/document_library/get_file?folderId=431696&name=DLFE-10183.pdf)

#### 10.5.4 Performance Indicators

- Consultation with Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders to ensure relevant collections and services
- Ongoing training for staff in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific cultural awareness
- Regular analysis of statistical and demographic data to inform planning and budgeting of services
- Number of targeted programs and participation in them

#### 10.5.5 Definitions and References

##### 10.5.5.1 Definitions

**Apology Day:** On the 13<sup>th</sup> of February 2008 the Prime Minister of Australia tabled a motion in parliament apologising to Australia's Indigenous peoples for laws and policies that had inflicted suffering in the past. This date is now acknowledged each year.

**Coming of the Light Festival:** The 1<sup>st</sup> of July marks the day in 1871, when the London Missionary Society landed on Erub Island in the Torres Strait bringing Christianity to the region. Today, Torres Strait Islanders from all denominations and locations come together to honour this anniversary.

**Elder:** Key person, respected in the community and keeper of a variety of knowledge within Indigenous communities. Does not necessarily depend on age.

**Indigenous Knowledge Centre (IKC):** A library and keeping place established in partnership with an Indigenous Shire Council, with shelf ready resources, and with training and support provided by the State Library of Queensland.

**Intellectual property:** Non-material assets such as forms of cultural expression that belong to a particular individual or community.

**Mabo Day:** Commemorates the High Court decision delivered on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of July 1992, in favour of Eddie Koiki Mabo and co-plaintiffs, which states in law that Indigenous Australians have by prior occupation, ownership of land where Native Title has not been extinguished.

**NAIDOC:** A week of celebration in July commemorating the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders.

**National Reconciliation Week:** In 1993 faith communities of Australia started the Week of Prayer for Reconciliation. Following its success, the week was expanded in 1996 to become National Reconciliation Week and it coincides with two significant dates: May 27 marks the anniversary of the 1967 Referendum (<http://www.reconciliation.org.au/home/reconciliation-resources/1967-referendum>) in which more than 90 per cent of Australians voted to remove clauses from the Australian Constitution which discriminated against Indigenous Australians and June 3 which marks the anniversary of the High Court's judgment in the 1992 Mabo case.

**National Sorry Day:** held each year on the 26<sup>th</sup> of March, this day commemorates the release of the "Bringing them home" report in 1998, which was the result of the National Inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families. The purpose of Sorry Day is to publically acknowledge the pain suffered by many Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders as a result of the practices of removal.

**Sacred information:** Materials that are generally understood to relate to spiritual, religious and/or ancestral beliefs and practices in Aboriginal tradition and/or Island custom.

**Secret information:** Materials that are generally understood to be, under customary law, made available only to the initiated; or information that can only be seen by men or women or particular people within the cultural group

### 10.5.5.2 References

Alaska Library Association. Culturally Responsive Guidelines for Alaska Public Libraries. 2009 <http://www.akla.org/culturally-responsive.html>

American Library Association, Guide to Building Support for your Tribal Library. 2008 [www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/olos/toolkits/tribal\\_toolkit.pdf](http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/olos/toolkits/tribal_toolkit.pdf)

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Canadian Library Association, Aboriginal Services Resolution. 2002. [http://www.cla.ca/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Library\\_and\\_Information\\_Needs\\_of\\_Native\\_People&Template=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=3568](http://www.cla.ca/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Library_and_Information_Needs_of_Native_People&Template=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=3568)

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