

National Association of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners (NAATSIHWP) Preferred Terminology

The National Association of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners (NAATSIHWP) is the health professional association and peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers, including Health Practitioners. Our purpose is to promote, support and gain recognition for the vital role NAATSIHWP members play in providing professional, effective and culturally respectful and responsive health services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, families and communities across Australia.

This document outlines NAATSIHWP's preferred terminology when writing about the members of our organisation or the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities they provide care for.

It is provided as a resource and reference guide:

- It recognises that **Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples** have a deep and rich sense of identity associated with their kinship, country and culture.
- This document seeks to help in preparing material that is both practical and respectful.

As a national association NAATSIHWP prefers to use the full terminology which includes Aboriginal people, Torres Strait Islander people and people who identify as both Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

<u>More Appropriate</u>	<u>Less or not Appropriate as a national reference*</u>
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Worker	Aboriginal Health Worker Indigenous Health Worker
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner	Aboriginal Health Practitioner Indigenous Health Practitioner

***Note:** In some parts of Australia people may prefer to use more specific terms like "Aboriginal Health Worker", "Aboriginal Health Practitioner", "Torres Strait Islander Health Worker" or "Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner" to reflect the local culture, community and country ties.

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander should be used only as an adjective always followed by "people", "person", "community" etc not used as a noun.

Abbreviations

It is often convenient and appropriate to use acronyms when writing about organisations, a community, professional or other group. It is important, however, when using acronyms (or other abbreviations) that:

- The correct title be spelt out in full when it is first mentioned
- The preferred acronym be used; and
- Is only to be used with explanation (acronym is referring to role and not people)

The following acronyms are considered the only appropriate way to shorten the professional title when describing the role of NAATSIHWP's Full members. If unable to explain with consideration for documents using the Acronym verses publications being spelt in full:

✓ **A&/orTSI Health Worker** (Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Worker)

✓ **A&/orTSI Health Practitioner** (Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner)

The abbreviation to 'ATSI' when used to describe people may cause offense. It should not be used in NAATSIHWP internal or external documents or in conversation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. (✗ ATSI).

Acceptable alternatives include:

✓ **Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander**

In addition, it may also be appropriate and respectful to acknowledge **traditional language, community and nation groups**, especially if meeting on traditional lands.

Appropriate – examples**
Bama - <i>far north Queensland</i>
Murri - <i>Qld, north west NSW</i>
Noongar - <i>south-west Western Australia</i>
Koori - <i>NSW</i>
Goori - <i>north coast NSW</i>
Koorie - <i>Victoria</i>
Yolngu - <i>Arnhem Land</i>
Anangu - <i>Central Australia</i>
Palawa - <i>Tasmania</i>
Pijatjantjara - <i>South Australia</i>
Torres Strait Island Peoples
Murray Island Peoples
Mer Island Peoples
not appropriate – examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous (although <i>Indigenous Australians</i> may be acceptable in some cases) • Aborigines or Aboriginals • The Aboriginals • The Torres Strait Islanders • <i>Blacks, Coloured, Yellafellas, Whites</i> • <i>"Full-blood", "half-caste", "quarter caste", "part-Aboriginal", "those people" and terms such as tribe, nomadic etc.</i>
** Use of some terms may be restricted to particular community and language members. It is advisable to check acceptability before using such terms.

History and meaning our flags

The Aboriginal flag

The Aboriginal flag was designed by Harold Thomas, a Luritja man from Central Australia. It was created as a symbol of unity and national identity for Aboriginal people during the land rights movement of the early 1970s. Gary Foley took the flag to the East Coast where it was promoted and eventually recognised as the official flag of the Australian Aboriginal people. The flag was first flown at Victoria Square in Adelaide on National Aborigines Day, 12 July 1971. In 1995, the Australian Government proclaimed the flag as an official 'Flag of Australia' under section 5 of the *Flags Act 1953* (Cth).

The symbolic meaning of the flag colours (as stated by Harold Thomas) are:

- Black:** represents the Aboriginal people of Australia
- Red:** represents the red earth, the red ochre and a spiritual relation to the land
- Yellow:** represents the sun, the giver of life and protector.



The Torres Strait Islander flag

The Torres Strait Islander flag was created as a symbol of unity and identity for Torres Strait Islander people, designed by the late Bernard Namok, then a 15-year-old school student from Thursday Island. It was the winning entry from a design competition held as part of a Cultural Revival Workshop, organised by The Islands Coordinating Council in January 1992. It was recognised by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission in June 1992 and given equal prominence with the Aboriginal flag. In July 1995, it was recognised by the Australian Government as an official 'Flag of Australia' under section 5 of the *Flags Act 1953* (Cth).

Each part of the flag is designed to represent something about Torres Strait Islander culture:

- Green:** represents the land
- Blue:** represents the sea
- White:** represents peace
- Black:** represents the Indigenous peoples.

The **dhari** (headdress) represents Torres Strait Island people and the **five pointed star** represents the 5 major Island groups. The star also represents navigation, as a symbol of the seafaring culture of the Torres Strait.



Autonomous nations and language groups

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples share the experience and impact of Australia's post-invasion history. As Australia's First Peoples they have faced and still face similar challenges: associated with dispossession, traumatic family and community dislocation and continuing disadvantage in accessing many of the opportunities and advantages available to other Australians. This situation helps to underline the importance of building a health workforce that has a deep understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their needs. The members of that workforce, like the people they care for, belong to many different communities and nations, and many countries across Australia. How we communicate and engage with them should reflect an appreciation of both the challenges they share and of the diversity represented in hundreds of unique peoples and cultures.