3. Description and classification of materials and information

As a means of improving access to material and information of relevance to Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders, culturally appropriate and effective indexing terminology, subject headings, classification and information processing systems are required.

The State Library will encourage improved access standards, through the following:

- liaise widely with other institutions, both state and national, regarding appropriate information description and documentation
- provide relevant input to the Library of Congress subject headings to ensure the effectiveness and cultural sensitivity of the subject headings used
- liaise widely with other institutions, both state and national, regarding the development of classification systems that take account of geographic, language and cultural aspects
- consult widely and on an ongoing basis with Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders regarding the description, processing and classification of relevant material.

4. Secret or sacred material

Certain items, records, manuscripts or other material may be of a secret or sacred nature. The Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003 (Qld) and the Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Act 2003 (Qld) define ‘secret’ as being secret according to Aboriginal tradition and/or Island custom and ‘sacred’ as being sacred according to Aboriginal tradition and/or Island custom. Secret material is generally understood to be material that, under customary law, is made available only to the initiated, or information that can only be seen by men or women or particular people within the cultural group. Sacred material is generally understood to be material which relates to spiritual, religious and/or ancestral beliefs and practices.

It is important that this category of material or information is identified as a means of planning for its appropriate and effective storage, cataloguing, provision of access, and/or repatriation. Where guidance is required regarding material which may be sensitive, secret or sacred, the assistance of Indigenous Library Services staff should be sought.

Once material falling into the category of secret or sacred is identified, the State Library will:

- provide suitable storage for this material and facilitate access as negotiated on a case by case basis
- ensure that the negotiated and agreed storage and access conditions are widely disseminated amongst State Library staff and users
- seek to repatriate identified secret or sacred material to relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, family groups, or individuals
- adhere to legislative requirements as outlined in the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003 (Qld) and the Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Act 2003 (Qld).

5. Offensive materials and information

The State Library acknowledges that some material or information in its collections, particularly older material, may contain references to Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders that are now considered culturally inappropriate or offensive.

In view of this, the State Library will:

- develop and promote an awareness of the extent to which its collections may contain material or information which could be considered culturally inappropriate or offensive
- consult and liaise with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in relation to such material and information
- develop strategies to deal appropriately with such material and information.

6. Governance

To ensure the ongoing involvement and participation of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders in the planning and management of the State Library, the State Library will:

- encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation or membership on governing or advisory boards, councils and committees
- develop and implement cross-cultural awareness programs, ensuring that staff members are sensitive to cultural diversity.

7. Staffing

The State Library acknowledges the importance and benefit of including Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders within its organisational structure as a means of promoting positive changes in its organisational culture. In order to achieve this, the State Library will:

- encourage Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders to apply and compete for relevant State Library positions
- recognise the value of prior learning, life experience and qualifications in other fields when undertaking recruitment selection processes
- involve Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders in the selection of staff within recruitment selection processes
- facilitate the entry of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff into supervisory and management positions through the use of appropriate support strategies, including training and/or mentoring
- recognise and respond to the cultural needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff members
- develop and implement cross-cultural awareness programs, ensuring that staff members are sensitive to cultural diversity.

8. Professional practice

As a means of encouraging the entry of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders into the information professions, particularly librarianship and archival sciences, the State Library will:

- liaise with relevant educational institutions in regard to encouraging the entry of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders to courses
- support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in library and archive education and training through encouragement, mentoring as well as through access to existing leave provision.

9. Copying and repatriation of records to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

The State Library acknowledges that material, records and information of relevance to Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders are critical to the cultural identity and history of relevant communities. Also, it is acknowledged that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are developing libraries, resource centres and similar places which may be suitable for the storage of, and provision of, access to this material and information. As this process evolves, the State Library will:

- respond cooperatively to requests from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities for copies of material and information of relevance
- respond cooperatively to requests for repatriation of original material to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities where it can be demonstrated that there is a clear historic or cultural connection to the material
- assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in planning, developing and managing keeping places for repatriated material.

The State Library will also liaise closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives regarding the use of digitisation as an interim means of repatriation, through facsimiles or summaries of relevant cultural material to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Such digital content may be delivered via Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community websites.

Implementation

The State Library’s Protocols for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Collections will be implemented according to established procedures and guidelines. Implementation of the Procedures and Guidelines: Protocols for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Collections (draft) will be guided mainly by Heritage Collections staff, and where needed in consultation with Indigenous Library Services. The Indigenous Advisory Committee may provide guidance and advice to assist in this process.

For more information

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Introduction

The State Library of Queensland holds a range of material and information in its collections relating to Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders. A primary goal is to make this material and information as widely accessible as possible. The development of these protocols aims to ensure that the ongoing collection of, and provision of, access to this material and information, including through the medium of digitisation, is undertaken in a culturally sensitive, inclusive and appropriate manner.

As a means of providing a sound basis for these protocols, the State Library acknowledges or adheres to the following:

- the recognition of the moral, intellectual and cultural rights of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders as the owners of their knowledge
- to be guided by these protocols in the State Library’s interaction with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- to facilitate the ongoing development of Indigenous Knowledge Centres
- to promote the planning framework for delivering the State Library’s Reconciliation Strategy (2006) which is based on the principles of:
  - the need to seek the agreement of the relevant Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community, family or individual
  - the nature of the material or information to be accessed, in particular its cultural sensitivity
  - the nature of proposed usage
  - the need to seek the agreement of the relevant Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community, family or individual
  - the nature of the material or information to be accessed, in particular its cultural sensitivity
  - the nature of proposed usage
  - the need to seek the agreement of the relevant Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community, family or individual

2. Access and use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander material and information

It is important that the owners of cultural heritage and knowledge, are able to interact with the State Library and to make maximum use of the State Library’s collections and services.

As a means of facilitating this, the State Library will:

- provide appropriate cultural clearances for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- develop and strengthen positive partnerships between the State Library and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- encourage the use of the State Library’s collections, facilities and services through appropriate cross cultural training programs
- facilitate effective access to State Library facilities, collections and services through appropriate cross-cultural training programs.

The State Library is committed to providing equitable access to material and information contained within its collections. This material and information falls into two broad categories:

- published material;
- unpublished or original materials and information sources, including archival and manuscript material, photographic images, film and sound recordings.

When considering access requests, the following issues will be considered:

- the nature of the material or information to be accessed, in particular its cultural sensitivity
- the nature of proposed usage
- the need to seek the agreement of the relevant Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community, family or individual

The State Library commits to seek cultural clearances in regard to the reproduction, display or publication of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander photographic images and other cultural material held in its collections, for the State Library’s own operational purposes. This usage includes:

- dissemination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander photographic images and other cultural material via the State Library’s website
- display of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander photographic images and other cultural material within the State Library, or State Library partnered exhibitions
- display of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander photographic images and other cultural material within material resource material supporting the State Library’s public or educational programs
- dissemination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander photographic images or other cultural material within the State Library’s marketing and promotional material, with the material being used to raise public awareness of the State Library’s role, collections, and services.