

- To prioritise the employment of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders in a range of roles across the sector;
- To strive for levels of employment that reflect national figures on the proportion of Indigenous to non-Indigenous Australians; and
- To make employment commitments from within core budget areas.

5. Education and ongoing professional development in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander information issues are important development areas for the library profession generally and new scholarship on libraries and Indigenous knowledge particularly.

The library and information sector is encouraged to acknowledge in their plans to develop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander library services and collections that education and professional development are vital areas for the continued development of the library profession:

- Advocacy of consistent inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues into pre-service professional programs;
- Advocacy of cultural training programs in professional preparation and/or in organisations; and
- Provisions for ongoing professional development of staff within organisations and/or across the sector via internal activities, and/or professional conferences, forums, publications, and the dissemination of innovative practices.

6. Australian Indigenous knowledge, intellectual and cultural property rights, and protocols are components fundamental to developing collections and services that are respectful of the public and private dimensions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander materials.

The library and information sector is encouraged in its development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander library services and collections to pay particular attention to the emerging scholarship on the dimensions and complexities of Indigenous issues and libraries as public institutions:

- That Indigenous knowledge does not equate to Indigenous information but is an important aspect of it;
- The importance of Indigenous knowledge restoration and maintenance to Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders, and its implications for systems of documentation, storage, retrieval, and access;
- The complex space between Indigenous knowledge systems and Western knowledge, and its implications for the library and information sector;
- Traditional library and information management systems and practices will need to adapt, if they are to be meaningful to Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders; and
- Understanding of Indigenous knowledge and information complexities will involve developing progressive responses to the different Indigenous/libraries requirements in the above key areas contemporaneously.

7. Monitoring, reporting and sharing progress against policy objectives are essential if progressive measures are to be achieved across the library and information sector.

The library and information sector is encouraged to adopt progressive agendas in its planning, development and reporting processes:

- Report progress against key priority areas in annual reports;
- Share innovative practices at annual library profession forum; and
- Review policies, strategies and approaches regularly to ensure ongoing relevance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander library services and collections.

The Way Forward

In setting the framework around the seven areas outlined above, National and State Libraries Australasia set out to achieve a cooperative, shared and co-ordinated approach to the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander library services and collections across the nation.



National and State Libraries Australasia

National Policy Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library Services and Collections

Acknowledgement

National and State Libraries Australasia acknowledges Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders as Traditional Owners and custodians of Australia and its Territories, and that dispossession from their lands, the dispersal and relocation of communities, the erosion of traditional customs and languages, and the removal of children from their families have resulted in the dislocation of generations of families from their traditional homelands. The library and information sector is a vital access point for Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders to their past as well as their future.

Preface

This policy framework is to guide progressive action across National, State and Territory library institutions in their plans and approaches to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander library services and collections.

The framework is philosophically-based, reasserts values and principles of library institutions as guides for decision-making, and encourages collaborative approaches between institutions. It holds Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders, their interests, needs and perspectives central to any development of policy or practice.

The framework encourages development in seven key areas to progress best practice standards in the delivery of services and collection practices relating to a unique aspect of the Australia's heritage.

A National Agenda for the Development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library Services and Collections

The National, State and Territory libraries in Australia have a major responsibility to collect the documentary heritage of the country and to provide services to assist with access to the collections.

The peak representative body, National and State Libraries Australasia, provides the point for coordination of state and public library networks and the formulation of common plans, policies, and programs for the library sector.

National and State Libraries Australasia also provides leadership in promoting standards of excellence in the development of services and collections, and recognises the right of every individual to access information, free speech, justice and equality as elements fundamental to a fair and democratic society.

Developing library services and collections which reflect the cultures, histories and experiences of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders is an important agenda for National and State Libraries Australasia.

Foundation Principles to the Policy Framework

To fulfill legislative requirements to collect the documentary heritage of the country and to provide services to assist with access to the collections, the National, State and Territory libraries must acknowledge Australia's diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage as a fundamental part of the nation's heritage, and as core business of state and public library and information services.

To achieve consistent policy development across the state and public library services, National and State Libraries Australasia encourages the adoption of three key principles to guide its progress:

- Relevance
- Legitimacy
- Currency

The key criteria for success in meeting the legislative responsibilities will be measured on these same principles:

- Relevance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' needs and interests;

- Currency with the information needs of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders; and
- Legitimacy with Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders.

Policy Framework

To progress and achieve best practices in developing and managing information services and collections responsive to Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders, their cultures and communities, library institutions need to assert at the level of policy a common position that recognises the following:

- 1. Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders are the first people and Traditional Owners of Australia.**
- 2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander library services and collections are a fundamental part of core business.**
- 3. Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders need to be involved in the decision-making processes, at all levels, to achieve informed and appropriate directions and agendas across the library and information sector.**
- 4. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment and training across the library and information sector are vital elements to achieve services of relevance to Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders.**
- 5. Education and ongoing professional development in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander information issues are important development areas for the library profession generally and new scholarship on libraries and Indigenous knowledge particularly.**
- 6. Australian Indigenous knowledge, intellectual and cultural property rights, and protocols are components fundamental to developing collections and services that are respectful of the public and private dimensions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander materials.**
- 7. Monitoring, reporting and sharing progress against policy objectives are essential if progressive measures are to be achieved across the library and information sector.**

the way forward
... a cooperative, shared and co-ordinated approach to the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander library services and collections across the nation.

Key Areas for Policy Development

1. Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders are the first people and Traditional Owners of Australia

The library and information sector is encouraged to acknowledge the status of Australia's Indigenous people in its plans to develop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander library services and collections:

- Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders are recognised as the Traditional Owners and custodians of Australia;
- Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders are traditionally diverse groups of people with many different cultures and languages; and
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural practices are not static but dynamic and always evolving.

2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander library services and collections are a fundamental part of core business.

The library and information sector is encouraged to assert in its plans that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander library services and collections are a fundamental part of core business:

- **Services:** Services to be designed and delivered in consultation with and involvement of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders; services which are responsive to the needs of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders; high standards in the delivery of services; stated commitments to the development and delivery of services from core budget areas;
- **Collections:** Continued identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander material within existing collections; strategies/priorities to achieve the most comprehensive Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander collections as possible as a nation, including the gaps left by the exclusion of Australia's Indigenous perspectives; strategies to promote the preservation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and to ensure they are supported by and reflected in collections; commitment to the proper treatment of the material

within collections according to established Protocols; recognition of different issues that characterise the retrospective, contemporary and evolving information domain; and

- **Access:** Ensure the implementation of strategies for access to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander collections and information that adhere to established Protocols but support the broadest access principles; ensure strategies for access that are responsive to historical, geographical, cultural, linguistic and educational dimensions, including attention to the specificities of local contexts, models for sustainable electronic access by remote communities, models for filtering access according to cultural protocols, attention to information literacy needs; and ensure consistent classification, storage and retrieval systems.

3. Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders need to be involved in the decision-making processes, at all levels, to achieve informed and appropriate directions and agendas across the library and information sector.

The library and information sector is encouraged to incorporate into its plans:

- The involvement of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders at all levels in the decision-making processes;
- The involvement of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders on library boards, steering/advisory/reference committees, and/or special interest groups;
- Broader consultations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities; and
- Input from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Libraries and Information Resource Network (ATSILIRN).

4. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment and training across the library and information sector are vital elements to achieve services of relevance to Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders.

The library and information sector is encouraged in its implementation plans:

Talking Circle, *kuril dhagun*

The artworks on this brochure are from *kuril dhagun*, the new Indigenous Knowledge Centre at the State Library of Queensland. The carvings were created by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art students, and feature on the northern face of the Talking Circle.