

# Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Guide to terminology

The purpose of this document is to provide PHAA staff and other representatives with guidance on appropriate word usage referring to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities. It is important that the PHAA has a singular public image and how we refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will inform that public image.

This document is to be used for all internal and external communications including but not limited to reports, policy and consensus statements, media releases and social media. Any questions regarding this guide should be directed to PHAA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander SIG Convenors (contact details below).

## Positive framing intention

It is important that when writing about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that the tone and framing is not deficit focused. Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people face disadvantage however there are many strengths within communities. It is important to reflect those strengths in the language we use.

## Terminology and when to use it

### Aboriginal:

Is used if referring to the original inhabitants of mainland Australia or Tasmania.

**Social media:** An appropriate term for social media (eg. Twitter, Instagram, Facebook etc)

*Note style guide: "Aboriginal" must always start with a capital "A". The word Aboriginal should not be used as a noun – but only as an adjective.*

### Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation:

Preferred term to describe organisations which provides holistic Primary Health Care and are run *by* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people *for* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. To be considered an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (ACCHO) the organisation's Board must only have people who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. To be used when referring to organisations which meet the above definition. The acronym can be used after it has been spelt out in full in the document, as in above text.

**Acronym:** ACCHO (The acronym can be used after it has been spelt out in full in the document)

**Social media:** The acronym ACCHO can be used on social media where space is a concern.

*Note style guide: all words in this term must start with a capital letter.*

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander:

Is the preferred term for all documentation when referring to the original habitant of all the lands now known as Australia.

*Individuals:* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

*Nations:* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

*Note style guide:* all words in this term must start with a capital letter. Abbreviation is not appropriate, see *Indigenous* for special circumstance for multiple use.

## Aboriginal Medical Services:

Is used to describe all Primary Health Care Services for which primarily funding is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific. This includes Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations and those with other governance arrangements such as those with non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on the Board.

To be used when referring to organisations which meet the above definition.

**Acronym:** AMS (The acronym can be used after it has been spelt out in full in the document)

**Social media:** The acronym AMS can be used on social media where space is a concern.

*Note style guide:* all words in this term must start with a capital letter.

## First Nations:

Refers to the collective of individual Nations in Australia. This is to be used when referring to all or some of the Indigenous Nations in Australia.

**Social media:** An appropriate term for social media

*Note style guide:* all words in this term must start with a capital letter and is always a plural.

## First Peoples:

Refers to the collective of individual Nations in Australia and acknowledges those who may not know which nation they are from. This can be used when referring to all or some of the Indigenous Nations in Australia. This term can be used instead of Indigenous.

**Social media:** An appropriate term for social media

*Note style guide:* all words in this term must start with a capital letter and is always a plural.

## Indigenous:

Is used only when it is in the name of a title or a direct quote and cannot be changed or when referring to First Peoples in an international context. The term Indigenous is not preferred however where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander is used repeatedly within a shorter document Indigenous can be used.

**Social media:** Can be used on social media where space is a concern.

*Note style guide:* "Indigenous" must always start with a capital "I".

## Language group or Peoples

When referring to a specific language group or peoples always use that term, e.g. Worimi, Yorta Yorta, Ngarrindjeri, Bardi etc.

**Social media:** An appropriate term for social media

*Note style guide: all words in this term must start with a capital letter.*

## Torres Strait Islander:

Is used when referring only to the original inhabitants of the Torres Strait.

*Note style guide: all words in this term must start with a capital letter. Abbreviation is not appropriate.*

## Non-Indigenous people:

Is used when referring to people who are not Indigenous to Australia, i.e. are not Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

*Note style guide: all words in this term must start with a capital letter. Abbreviation is not appropriate.*

## Terms not to be used

The following terminology is inappropriate or dated and should not be used in any PHAA context including social media:

- Aborigine
- ATSI
- Native
- Mixed blood
- Half-caste
- Quarter-caste
- Full-blood
- Part-Aboriginal
- 25%, 50% Aboriginal<sup>1</sup>

## Contact

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<sup>1</sup> NSW Health, 2004. Communicating Positively: A guide to appropriate Aboriginal Terminology.