Indigenous Terminology

# Appropriate Terminology when speaking/writing about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians

## Appropriate Terminology

Aborigine an Australian Aborigine; it must be written with an upper case ‘A’; but it is not a term preferred by Aboriginal people

Aboriginal adjective, e.g. an Australian Aboriginal person; always use an upper case ‘A’

Torres Strait Islander refers to a Torres Strait Islander person who may or may not live on an Island in the Torres Strait, but who has Torres Strait Islander heritage; always use upper case ‘T’, ‘S’ and ‘I’. The term ‘Islander’ is not appropriate, as it does not indicate the specific location and cultures of Torres Strait Islander groups.

indigenous the first people of any country, e.g. there are more than one hundred indigenous groups in the Phillipines

Indigenous Australian Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people

Indigenous Australians refers specifically to Australian Indigenous people

Koori colloquial word – some Aboriginal people in parts of New South Wales

Koorie some Aboriginal people in parts of Victoria

Nunga some Aboriginal people in parts of South Australia

Nyoongah some Aboriginal people in parts of Western Australia

Murri some Aboriginal people in parts of New South Wales and Queensland

Pallawah some Aboriginal people in parts of Tasmania

Yolngu some Aboriginal people in parts of the Northern Territory

## Inappropriate Technology

Full blood, half-caste, These are racist terms that are found to be offensive; they were   
 quarter-caste, native, terms used in colonial times and are now obsolete  
 part Aborigine, 1/16

Primitive This term implies an inferior culture

Tribe Aboriginal Language Groups did not and do not have a hierarchical structure as per European standards

Walkabout, nomadic These Western terms indicate a lack of organisation and   
 nomads connotations of aimless wandering. Use of these terms shows a lack of understanding of Aboriginal cultures and philosophies

Dreamtime Dreamtime is not an Aboriginal term

Myth, legend, These terms relate to cultures no associated with Aboriginal  
 dreamtime stories cultures. They suggest that the stories are untrue, like that of a fairy tale. Preferred terms include Creation or Teaching stories from the Dreaming, stories and oral histories

Blacks This is considered an offensive term. Preferred terms include Indigenous Australians, Aboriginal people, Torres Strait Islander people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. (Using the term ‘Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders’ does not lend dignity to Torres Strait Islander people)

Using one Language Generally, people prefer to be identified by Language Group,  
 name to refer to all e.g. Ngunnawal, Gamilroi, Adnyamathanha, Arrente, Eora, or,  
 Aboriginal people relevant group, Koori and so on

ATSI Using the acronym ATSI when referring to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is offensive as is the acronym TSI

Stolen Generation Using the singular is factually incorrect, there are many Stolen Generations

## Note

Adapted by Kaye Price, University of Southern Queensland (2011) from Australian Catholic University (2006) *Teaching Indigenous learners: a resource for pre-service teachers.* Brisbane: Author.