



Consulting with Aboriginal communities and organisations

The following principles should underpin all community consultation processes involving the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities:

- ✓ **DO** recognise the traditional owners of the land, including the community's right to self-determination.
- ✓ **DO** respect cultural protocols and practices and seek advice from community leaders before any consultation process.
- ✓ **DO** gain community Elder's/respected leaders' approval and support of a policy or project from the outset - They are central to all negotiations.
- ✓ **DO** research and identify community leaders and organisations, as well as the best method for communicating with them.
- ✓ **DO** offer choices in communication and consultation methods.
- ✓ **DO** provide a comfortable environment to undertake the consultation; e.g. at a nominated venue, café or office.
- ✓ **DO** consult widely, inviting participation from all the key Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.
- ✓ **DO** conduct consultations professionally and treat all participants with respect and dignity.
- ✓ **DO** explain the purpose of the consultation and clearly define all issues to be discussed and what needs to be achieved.
- ✓ **DO** use decision-making approaches that are culturally appropriate e.g. speak to the right people, such as the CEO or other staff member.
- ✓ **DO** allow enough time for traditional decision-making processes and working with the community.
- ✓ **DO** take the time to build long-term relationships with each community. These relationships must be based on trust, respect and honesty.
- ✓ **DO** honour any commitments made to the community.
- ✓ **DO** use appropriate terms, phrases or acronyms in records of consultations.



General communication tips

- Refrain from using the abbreviation 'ATSI' or the term 'Indigenous'.
- Always use a capital 'A' when spelling 'Aboriginal'.
- You can make requests privately to avoid shaming in a group situation.
- People may use storytelling to answer questions.
- Silences are okay.
- Non-verbal communication is often used as eye contact can be difficult.
- Humour is very highly valued.
- People may feel shame or embarrassment if singled out (both positively and negatively).
- Families are extended – family/kinship relatives or non-blood related people may be referred to in the same way (e.g. Aunty, Uncle, Sis, Tidda, Bruz, Cuz).
- It's always good to sit and have a cuppa and a 'yarn'.