

Position statement: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander collections and services in NSLA libraries

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National and State Libraries Australia (NSLA) acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples – Australia’s First Nations peoples - as the traditional owners and custodians of Australia. We recognise that dispossession of First Nations¹ peoples 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 disconnection of generations of families from their traditional homelands, languages and culture.

The collections of the library and information sector reflect our shared past and provide resources to strengthen our future. NSLA commits to working in accordance with nationally and internationally recognised protocols to ensure that member libraries provide culturally safe public spaces for all First Nations peoples, whether they are visitors or staff, and that we commit to making our collections and services accessible, appropriate and responsive to the needs and perspectives of First Nations peoples. This commitment requires multiple and ongoing actions to build awareness, respect and understanding of the significance of First Nations culture, history and languages.

National and international protocols

NSLA endorses the following national and international protocols, policy frameworks and principles:

- [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) (2007)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library, Information and Resource Network (ATSILIRN) [Protocols for Libraries, Archives and Information Services](#) (2012)
- [NSLA Guidelines for Working with Community](#) (2013)
- [NSLA Indigenous Cultural Competency Principles](#) (2019)
- [NSLA Position Statement Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property](#) (2021)

Sector leadership

NSLA member libraries will practice and promote standards of excellence across the library and information sector, with a focus on the following areas:

- The right of First Nations peoples to be informed about collections relating to themselves, their culture, language and heritage.
- The right of First Nations peoples to determine use and access provisions for heritage materials reflecting their history, culture, language and perspectives.
- The right to be consulted and the ‘right of reply’ for First Nations peoples in relation to the ways in which collections have been described and catalogued.
- The acknowledgement of Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property rights, including provision of clear statements within collection metadata.

¹ The use of ‘First Nations’ throughout this document refers to Australia’s First Nations peoples and communities.

- The right of First Nations peoples to actively participate and lead decision-making processes, at all levels, to ensure informed and appropriate management of First Nations collections.
- The implementation of strategies to provide a culturally safe environment that supports increased employment and retention of First Nations peoples working in the library and information sector.

Collaborative commitment

Together, NSLA libraries commit to continuing work in the following areas:

- Discoverability of identified materials and resources through use of shared descriptors and upgraded bibliographic metadata in local and shared catalogues.
- Digitisation of published and unpublished First Nations language materials, to be made accessible through individual NSLA catalogues and Trove if culturally appropriate.
- Collection of born digital language materials produced by and for First Nations peoples.
- Collaboration with First Nations organisations or representatives to engage and support First Nations peoples in creating, collecting and raising awareness about language materials and other collections pertaining to First Nations people.
- The implementation of strategies to strengthen cultural competency across our entire workforce, including knowledge and awareness of issues for First Nations peoples who visit or work at our libraries.
- The development and implementation of strategies to return usable copies of collection material to cultural owners to support cultural and language maintenance and revitalisation.
- Regular tracking and transparent reporting of progress against our stated aims.



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