

# First Nations Guide



First Nations Inclusion  
Internal Protocols



## First Nations Inclusion

### Internal Protocol for the Endeavour Foundation Group

*The Endeavour Foundation Group acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises the continuing connection to lands, waters and communities. We pay our respect to Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.*

#### About our Guides

This guide has been developed to provide an overview of introductory respectful language and protocols in creating cultural safety at the Endeavour Foundation Group. This guide is not to replace consultation with traditional owners, local Elders and community. Consultation is essential and actions will depend on the preferences and respect of the peoples involved.

#### First Nations Engagement

We are committed to reconciliation and to ensuring that our services are inclusive and respectful of the cultures and perspectives of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We advocate for working together towards a better future where individuals, families and communities have the disability supports they need to make their possibilities a reality.

“Around 35% (274,400) of First Nations people under 65 have a disability. This is nearly three times the percentage of people with disability in the general population (12%).” – Listening to First Nations people with disability – Disability Royal Commission

The Royal Commission acknowledges that ‘disability’ is a new conversation in many First Nations communities. [The First Peoples Disability Network Australia](#) has been developing that conversation with First Nations communities over the past two decades.

At the Endeavour Foundation Group we acknowledge that each Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community is diverse with unique characteristics and cultures, which provide a rich context for support of people with disability.

#### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

First Nations peoples have lived on the country’s vast lands for tens of thousands of years and are the world’s oldest living culture. There are two distinct groups of First Nations peoples of which there is significant diversity, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It’s important to acknowledge the many wrongs and ongoing injustices that stem from our shared history. And it’s not about ignoring issues. But it is just as important to acknowledge the strength of those First Australians whose cultures survive and thrive today.

#### Aboriginal Peoples

Aboriginal peoples have historically lived on mainland Australia, Tasmania and many of the continent’s offshore islands. Aboriginal peoples comprise of diverse Aboriginal nations, each with their own language and traditions. Aboriginal Australians have the oldest living culture in the world.



### Torres Strait Islanders

Torres Strait Islanders come from the islands of the Torres Strait, between the tip of Cape York in Queensland and Pappa New Guinea. Torres Strait Islanders are of Melanesian origin and have their own identity, history and cultural traditions distinct from Aboriginal peoples. Many Torres Strait Islanders live on mainland Australia.

### How to be an inclusive workplace

While supporting in principle is nice, those who are not visible or active do not contribute to an inclusive culture or give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander a sense of overall inclusivity in the same way. By having visible representation in our workplaces of inclusion we create an atmosphere of belonging for our clients and teams from the moment they enter our premises or engage with our services.

### Inclusive Language

Language has the power to shape the world around us. At Endeavour Foundation Group, we acknowledge that the words we all use at work every day while writing, communicating verbally, or presenting shape our workplace culture.

Using inclusive language accurately and respectfully reflects people's reality and does not erase or marginalise people based on assumptions and stereotypes. Creating a culture of belonging is imperative to provide equitable and inclusive outcomes for our people, clients partnerships and communities.

There is a long-standing history of recounting the past without Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices or perspectives. Consultation is key when considering what is appropriate protocol for communication, language and using correct terminology. There is significant diversity amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' languages, protocols and cultures. Ensure you avoid inaccuracies by not applying broad terms, assumptions, and generalisations.

Organisations can create inclusive workplaces that respect, value, and celebrate the contributions of First Nations peoples in Australia. Through a commitment to cultural awareness, representation, partnership, and continuous improvement, workplaces can become spaces where Indigenous employees feel respected, supported, and empowered to thrive. With a long-term commitment to reconciliation and social justice, the Endeavour Foundation Group actively supports initiatives that address systemic barriers and promote Indigenous rights, equity, and self-determination.



## Using Inclusive language

- Use specific terms when possible (e.g. Acknowledgement of Country – try using a specific one acknowledging the land on which you are and the Traditional Owners of the land)
- Use the terms Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in their entirety, without abbreviation. You can also use First Nations.
- Capitalise terms such as First Nations, Acknowledgement of Country, Welcome to Country as a way to show respect.
- Understand the difference between Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country and two distinctly different practices with different meanings.
- Refer to the First Nations peoples' cultures as continuing and surviving cultures in a meaningful way. Using past tense maintains the historic erasure of First Nations peoples.
- It can be hurtful and diminishing to First Nations peoples' spirituality to use terms like 'myth' and 'legend' when referring to religious or spiritual beliefs.
- It is offensive to ask what 'percentage' Indigenous someone is and especially painful with Australia's history of forced assimilation and colonisation.
- Always ask an individual how they would like to be referred to. Correctly identify and use an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person's Nation/s.
- When referring to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children, students, staff, or wider community members, avoid using possessive language such as 'our.' References such as 'our First Nations students' or 'our First Nations community' risk implying ownership over people. Such references can be reframed to 'First Nations students within our school community' or 'the local First Nations community'.

## Useful resources

[FPDN Home - Network for Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders with disabilities  
https://www.narragunnawali.org.au/about/terminology-guide](https://www.narragunnawali.org.au/about/terminology-guide)

