



Reconciliation Action Plan



For more information, please contact

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Message from the Australian Statistician

I am pleased to present the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Reconciliation Action Plan.

Last year was the 40th anniversary of the 1967 Referendum where more than 90% of Australians voted to give the Australian Government the power to legislate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and to include all Indigenous Australians in official estimates of the Australian population.

It is significant that the referendum included a statistical issue. The availability of high quality statistical information is essential for improving the well-being of Indigenous Australians. The Reconciliation Action Plan builds on the ABS' commitment to a leadership and coordination role for national statistical activity involving, and relating to, Indigenous Australians.

The ABS Reconciliation Action Plan also covers the ABS' commitment to recognising and promoting the awareness of Indigenous culture, and to improving the recruitment and retention of Indigenous Australians in the ABS.

In following through the actions set out here, I am confident that the ABS will make an important contribution to reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Brian Pink
Australian Statistician
July 2008



Our business

The ABS is Australia's official national statistical agency. It was established as the Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, with the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*. The agency became the Australian Bureau of Statistics in 1975 with the passing of the *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975*. This Act also established the role of the Australian Statistician, and defined the functions of the ABS.

The role of the ABS

The ABS provides statistics on a wide range of economic, social, and environmental matters, covering government, business and the community. It also has an important coordination function with respect to the statistical activities of other official bodies, both in Australia and overseas.

The mission of the ABS

We assist and encourage informed decision making, research and discussion within governments and the community, by leading a high quality, objective and responsive national statistical service.



ABS Reconciliation Initiatives

In line with the ABS mission, the ABS assists and encourages informed decision making, research and discussion among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their communities and organisations, and within governments and the wider community. It does this by leading and coordinating statistical activity involving and relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

This Reconciliation Action Plan sets out specific actions the ABS will take to:

- improve its recruitment and retention of Indigenous Australians in the ABS;
- promote cultural awareness within the ABS and wider community;
- build statistical literacy among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;
- increase the relevance and quality of statistical information relating to Indigenous Australians; and
- enhance its engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

These actions are described in more detail in ABS corporate strategies, such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Recruitment and Retention Plan 2007-2010, Cultural Protocols for ABS staff working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the Indigenous Community Engagement Strategy (ICES).

Monitoring and reporting

Achievements will be monitored and reported every year to the ABS' executive management team. An update will be prepared every May/June, to be included in the ABS' annual report, available on the ABS website. A report will also be provided to Reconciliation Australia. Indigenous input into this process will be provided through consultation with our Indigenous staff network, as well as feedback from our Indigenous Engagement Managers and representatives on advisory groups.

The ABS Reconciliation Action Plan will be updated annually, and comprehensively reviewed every three years.





How we developed our Reconciliation Action Plan

The ABS Reconciliation Action Plan was developed in 2007 and 2008 by a cross divisional working group within the ABS. This group included representatives from the National Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics, ABS Northern Territory office, ABS Policy and Legislation section, and Indigenous Engagement Managers. The group was guided by a number of other agency plans and reviewed a variety of relevant intra-governmental reports and programs, together with ABS corporate policy documents.

Comments on a draft Plan were obtained and incorporated from senior ABS executive, ABS consultative fora, state offices, the Indigenous staff network and Indigenous Engagement Managers.

The resulting ABS Reconciliation Action Plan presented in this document articulates ABS' reconciliation aspirations, many of which align with the high level objectives of existing ABS programs and policies. These are accompanied by a target or 'measure' to assist our evaluation of the Plan.

Overview of the ABS Reconciliation Action Plan

The ABS Reconciliation Action Plan consists of two broad themes, under which there are four outcomes, as shown below.

A number of actions have been identified under each of the outcomes, and progress against these will be measured at least annually.

Structure of the ABS Reconciliation Action Plan – actions and measures

Themes	Outcomes
Organisational commitment	Recruitment and retention Cultural recognition and awareness
Community action	Statistical literacy, access and capacity building Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics Program

In developing the themes and outcomes, ABS was mindful of the three elements of a good Reconciliation Action Plan. The following table shows how the actions that ABS will undertake relate to the themes of relationships, respect and opportunities:

<p>Relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous-led solutions • Sharing information • Professional, social and cultural networks 	<p>The ABS will seek to foster positive relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through its Indigenous Community Engagement Strategy (action 6), and through including Indigenous representatives on consultative and advisory bodies (action 12).</p>
<p>Respect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous cultural education & development • Cultural protocols 	<p>The ABS will act with respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through activities to promote cultural recognition and awareness amongst ABS staff (actions 3, 4, 5), including developing standard protocols for contact with discrete Indigenous communities (action 9).</p>
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous recruitment & retention • Professional & career development • Partnerships for success • Meeting needs of Indigenous customers 	<p>The ABS will provide opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through facilitating recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (actions 1, 2), producing statistical material that is accessible to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (action 7), promoting statistical literacy among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (action 8), and working to improve the range and quality of statistics available on Indigenous Australians (actions 10, 11).</p>



Organisational commitment

Recruitment and retention

Outcome: The ABS is an employer of choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Action	Timeline	Measure
<p>1. Provide employment pathways in the ABS for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • greater participation in APSC initiatives such as Indigenous Entry Level Pilot Program for trainees, the Indigenous Graduate Recruitment Program, and the National Indigenous Cadetship Project • promotion of ABS employment opportunities in Indigenous media • monitoring and reviewing the ABS' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Recruitment and Retention Plan. 	<p>2010</p> <p>Review annually #</p>	<p>ABS increases representation of Indigenous employees by 30% on that reported in the State of the Service Report 2005-06.*</p> <p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff numbers included in HR accountability reporting, branch reports and the annual report.</p>
<p>2. Encourage the retention of existing and future Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in the ABS, including through mechanisms such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous staff network • mentors for Indigenous staff. 	<p>2010</p> <p>Review annually #</p>	<p>Retention of ABS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees that is comparable to, or higher than, the APS average.</p> <p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff are supported to participate in ABS and APSC Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff network meetings and events.</p>

* The State of the Service 2005-2006 report related that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up 2% of the APS workforce (compared to the broader Australian workforce, in which 1.4% of the Australian labour force identified themselves as Indigenous). Of the 21 agencies recorded as having over 1,000 ongoing employees, the ABS is ranked 15th as an employer of Indigenous people (with less than 1% of staff identifying as Indigenous). Large agencies with above average Indigenous representation are DEST (9.4%), DEWR (4.5%), Centrelink (3.6%), DEH (3.0%) and Health (2.7%).

The annual review will take place in May/June. For more information, see the Monitoring and reporting section on page 3.

Cultural recognition and awareness

Outcome: All staff work sensitively and effectively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, communities and organisations.

Action	Timeline	Measure
3. Promote and support the celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural events.	Review annually #	Regular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander feature in ABS News, which is published every four months.
	Ongoing, May and July each year	All ABS staff encouraged to participate in internal Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week activities, through internal promotion of these events
	2010	ABS participation in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural events increases beyond levels in 2007.
4. Enhance ABS staff understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and issues.	2010	ABS staff induction training modified to include a cultural awareness component.
	2009	ABS managers have tools available to support and develop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in their workplace.
	Review annually #	All ABS staff conducting business in Indigenous communities attend cultural awareness training.
	Review annually #	ABS cultural protocols and procedures applied by ABS staff undertaking work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
5. ABS acknowledges traditional owners.	2008	Traditional owners are acknowledged in the meeting rooms through appropriate displays.
	Review annually #	Acknowledge traditional owners and/or include welcome to country ceremonies at official ABS events.

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Community action

Statistical literacy, access and capacity building

Outcome: Facilitate, encourage and assist informed and increased use of statistics among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Action	Timeline	Measure
6. Maintain and expand the Indigenous Community Engagement Strategy (ICES).	Review annually #	Seven Indigenous Engagement Managers are employed to implement the ICES, one in each state and the Northern Territory.
7. ABS outputs will be produced in a manner that is accessible to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.	Review annually #	Tailored products and output developed with the input of our network of Indigenous Engagement Managers and made accessible to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
	Review annually #	ABS will continue production of material in formats accessible for those in low technology environments.
8. Promote statistical literacy among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through initiatives such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CensusAtSchool* • development and delivery of statistical training packages for Indigenous communities • continued roll out of the Information Skills Program. 	Review annually #	CensusAtSchool* materials are available to, and used by, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander schools and communities.
	Review annually #	Indigenous Engagement Managers to provide statistical training to 30 or more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities or organisations throughout Australia each year.
9. Develop and implement standard protocols for ABS contact with discrete Indigenous communities.	Protocols to be finalised in 2008	Standard procedures and protocols are available to, and used by, ABS staff in contact with Indigenous communities. Training on the use of protocols is delivered to relevant ABS staff.

* see www.abs.gov.au – Education – CensusAtSchool for more information

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics Program

Outcome: Continuous improvements in the range, quality and availability of statistics on Indigenous Australians, which will support and inform national efforts to improve Indigenous life outcomes.

Action	Timeline	Measure
10. Extend and improve the collection and accuracy of data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.	Work program produced 5-yearly	Strategic directions for ABS Indigenous statistics are determined in consultation with key stakeholders, in addition to relevant government and non-government agencies.*
11. Provide leadership in Indigenous data collection and analysis.	Review annually #	Annual reports on the ABS Indigenous work program provided to the Advisory Group on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics.
	Review annually #	Implement measures to reduce respondent burden among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and report measures to the Advisory Group on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics.
12. Indigenous representation consultative and advisory bodies.	Review annually #	All ABS consultative bodies with significant implications for Indigenous Australians ensure the opportunity for Indigenous representation.

* Reference: ABS Directions in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics, June 2007 (cat. no. 4700.0)

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