



16 October 2014

Indigenous Knowledge Consultation

National and State Libraries Australasia (NSLA) acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as traditional owners and custodians of Australia. NSLA also acknowledges that the dispossession of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 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, has resulted in the disconnection of generations of families from their traditional homelands, languages and culture.

The library and information sector is a vital access point for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to access material reflecting their past as well as resources to strengthen their future.

NSLA libraries are guided by nationally and internationally recognised protocols to ensure that collections and services are accessible, appropriate and responsive to the needs and perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. These include the United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*; the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library, Information and Resource Network (ATSILIRN) *Protocols for Libraries, Archives and Information Services*; and our own [NSLA Guidelines for Working with Community](#).

NSLA recognises that adequate legal mechanisms have not yet been developed to manage the intersection between customary laws and Western intellectual property regimes, and to protect Indigenous Knowledge.

The NSLA [Position Statement on Indigenous Intellectual Property and Ownership](#) (2010) sets out some of the differences arising in the expression of Indigenous intellectual property. In consideration of this, our [National Position Statement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library Services and Collections](#) (2014) outlines a commitment to:

- The right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to be informed about collections that exist relating to them, their culture, language and heritage.
- The right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to determine use and access provisions for heritage materials which reflect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, culture, language and perspectives.
- The inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in decision making processes, at all levels, to achieve informed and appropriate directions and agendas across the library and information sector.
- The development of strategies to increase employment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff within the library and information sector.
- The development of strategies to strengthen cultural competency across our workforce, including knowledge and awareness of issues for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander library users.

- The development of strategies to return usable copies of collection material to cultural owners to support cultural and language maintenance or revitalisation.

This commitment to the preservation and accessibility of Indigenous language materials within our collections, for the benefit of their communities of origin, is expanded in a further statement: [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Language Services and Collections in NSLA Libraries](#) (2014).

NSLA supports this review and its aspiration to protect the culture and knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; and to improve the lives of Indigenous Australians.

Yours sincerely



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About NSLA

National & State Libraries Australasia (NSLA) represents the State, Territory and National Libraries of Australia and New Zealand. These ten major public research libraries work together to enable people to access, use and share local and global knowledge and ideas.

During the 2012-2013 financial year:

11.7 million people	visited our library buildings
171 million pages	were viewed on our websites
2,884 terabytes	of digital collections were stored
\$38 million	was the total spend on collections
\$5.2 billion	was the asset value of our collections
\$1.07 billion	was the asset value of our buildings/sites

Please note: Each of the ten NSLA member libraries works within different government jurisdictions. The National Library of New Zealand is part of the Department of Internal Affairs, a New Zealand government department. The views expressed in this letter should not be taken to reflect the views of the National Library of New Zealand nor of the New Zealand Government.