
Protocols for the practice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in public spaces

In 2015 Councillors of the City of Sydney resolved to create a Reconciliation Action Plan that would complement and progress the work that the City does with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The Innovate RAP approach is focused on working with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders to trial new approaches for building relationships, showing respect and improving opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It also includes a focus on raising internal awareness about our organisation's commitment to reconciliation by providing opportunities for our staff to engage in reconciliation activities.

The City has an extensive history working with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and we are excited about the opportunity to pilot new approaches.

Purpose

The City of Sydney acknowledges the practice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures is testament to the resilience, fortitude and continuation of these living cultures. The City of Sydney respects and celebrates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' right and responsibility to practise and maintain their cultural heritage. The City recognises that the practice of culture is vital to maintaining cultural identity and connection to place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This intrinsic right to practise culture is respected and valued by the City of Sydney and viewed as a vital conduit to sharing cultural knowledge with the wider community and visitors to Sydney.

The practice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, outdoors and in public spaces, is the practice of an inherent cultural right as articulated in Article 11 of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

The City of Sydney, in consultation with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel and community, has an understanding and expectation that the following protocols will be observed and honoured when the practice of cultures takes place in public spaces.

Respect

The Gadigal people of the Eora Nation are the traditional custodians of the place we now call Sydney. Practitioners of any Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Heritage are welcome and valued in Sydney, however the Gadigal people should be afforded appropriate acknowledgement and local cultural protocols should be observed and respected.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Control and Self-Determination

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have the right to determine how their cultural and intellectual property is used and the right to maintain control over its depiction, practice and dissemination including involvement in the practice of aspects of their cultures by other people or organisations.

Interpretation, integrity and authenticity

The City has an understanding and expectation that the practice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in public spaces will be an informed, authentic representation of the cultural intellectual property depicted and will be undertaken with the endorsement of the sitting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander panel and communities. As a guide, the Cultural practitioners and the cultural intellectual property they practise and share in public should meet the following definitions.

- **Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person**
A person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the community in which he or she lives.
- **Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Heritage**
The intangible and tangible aspects of the whole body of cultural practices, resources and knowledge systems developed, nurtured and refined by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and passed on by them as part of expressing their cultural identity. This heritage is a living one, it continues to develop, and includes items which may be created in the future.
- **Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Cultural Practitioner**
An Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person expressing Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage, including knowledge and cultural expression such as songs, stories, dances, performing arts and creating artistic works.

Continuing cultures

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have inherent rights and responsibilities to ensure the survival, practice and transmission of their cultures continues into the future. This may include new and emerging styles of performance and expression, and these protocols also apply to any new, contemporary expression of culture as defined by them.