TSRA Cultural Protocols Guide

for **TSRA** Staff, February 2011

Australian Government

TSRA
www.tsra.gov.au

TORRES STRAIT REGIONAL AUTHORITY

Empowering our people, in our decision, in our culture, for our future

The Torres Strait Regional Authority **(TSRA)** Cultural Protocols has been developed to assist **TSRA** staff when engaging with all the communities of the Torres Strait region on all types of business. Each of the 20 communities in the Torres Strait region (See Attachment 1) is unique in their history and culture.

The **TSRA** is committed to providing services to the region that both respect the unique qualities of the culture and that are accessible to all. The **TSRA** Cultural Protocols aim to introduce a regional and general set of protocols that will assist all **TSRA** staff to provide a consistent level of support and service to each community.

TSRA Cultural Policy

Prior to the development of these cultural protocols, the **TSRA** went through an extensive process to develop the Torres Strait Regional Authority **(TSRA)** Cultural Policy. This policy has been developed to assist the organisation to achieve its vision statement.

Empowering our people, in our decision, in our culture, for our future.

TSRA Development Plan 2009-2013

To realise this vision, the **TSRA** Cultural Policy aims to promote understanding of the cultures of Torres Strait Islanders, Kaurareg people and Aboriginal people in the Torres Strait region including Bamaga and Seisia on the Northern Peninsula Area (NPA) and provide a guide for **TSRA** staff. The policy has been developed within a cultural policy framework, strengthened with guiding principles and will be used in conjunction with **TSRA** Cultural Policy Procedures and **TSRA** Cultural Protocols.

Cultural Protocols

What is a Cultural Protocol?

Protocol noun

- [mass noun] The official procedure or system of rules governing affairs of state or diplomatic occasions
- The accepted or established code of procedure or behaviour in any group, organisation, or situation
  Oxford Dictionary 2010

When referring to cultural protocols this relates specifically to the:

Agreed set of cultural protocols that the organisation and the community believe are standard for all official government and community dealings. This includes minor matters such as basic communication to major matters such as negotiating partnership arrangements for economic development activities.

Why Do We Need Cultural Protocols?

Most Torres Strait Islanders, Kaurareg people and Aboriginal people in the Torres Strait region including Bamaga and Seisia on the Northern Peninsula Area (NPA);

- Do not speak English as a first language and in some cases, English is a second or third language,
- May not be always be familiar with government terminology, procedures or processes, and
- Have a complex relationship and history with government.

The **TSRA** Cultural Protocols will assist staff to provide a consistent standard approach to each community to;

- Reduce unnecessary misunderstandings and communication barriers,
- Mend, build and strengthen current and future relationships,
- Demonstrate a new awareness and respect for the culture and lifestyles of our client groups, and
- Consider, respect and allow for culture to be part of how we do business as a means to 'Closing the Gap' in Indigenous Disadvantage in the Torres Strait region.

What is a TSRA Cultural Protocol?

The **TSRA** Cultural Protocols are a distinct set of protocols that provide a general guide to all **TSRA** staff as an introduction to the complexities that should be respected and considered when establishing, maintaining and developing partnerships and relationships with all the Torres Strait communities in the region.

In this case, the **TSRA** Cultural Protocols refers to:

An agreed system of rules and behaviours that all **TSRA** staff will follow in all dealings with Torres Strait Islanders, Kaurareg people and Aboriginal people in the Torres Strait region including Bamaga and Seisia on the Northern Peninsula Area (NPA) as part of their everyday work.

Examples of Engagement Activities and Relevant Bodies

When engaging with a community for work it is important that both the Torres Strait Island Regional Council (TSIRC) and the local Prescribed Bodies Corporate (PBC) are contacted. Communities are contacted on a range of matters and the order of contact can vary for the activity type. For activities that relate to service delivery the local TSIRC would be the first point of contact. For matters relating to Ailan Kastom and Customary Lore, the PBC as the official group that represents the traditional owners of an area in native title matters, would be the first point of contact. It is important to note that all matters that could affect the native rights of traditional owners to their land and sea areas require permission to be granted by the PBC. Below are some examples to assist with this process.

Engagement Activities	Local Governance	Traditional Owners
Community visit	TSIRC/NPARC	PBC
Official visits	TSIRC/NPARC	PBC
Research project	TSIRC/NPARC COMMUNITY ENDORSEMENT	PBC
Community celebrations	TSIRC/NPARC	PBC
Service provision	TSIRC/NPARC	PBC
Housing	TSIRC/NPARC	Community
Health	TSIRC/NPARC	Local Health Centre
Infrastructure	TSIRC/NPARC	PBC/Community
Cultural heritage	TSIRC/NPARC	PBC
Business opportunities	TSIRC/NPARC	PBC
Filming and photographing on the island	TSIRC/NPARC	PBC
Future acts	TSIRC/NPARC	PBC/NTRB
Dance performances	TSIRC/NPARC	PBC
Access to historical sites	TSIRC/NPARC	PBC
Access to sacred sites	TSIRC/NPARC/PBC	Community/PBC
Language information	TSIRC/NPARC	PBC
Cultural Lore or Ailan Kastom including cultural protocols	TSIRC/NPARC	PBC
Locating someone	TSIRC/NPARC	Community/PBC

TSRA Cultural Protocols

Torres Strait region is a unique part of Australia and as such requires the need for all visitors and residents to follow cultural protocols to ensure social cohesion and understanding. When a person enters the region either by road, plane or boat it is important to understand the following:

- Torres Strait has native title over the majority of land and sea. This means that there are traditional owners over nearly all areas of the region except for those areas that are held privately under freehold title or are designated government facilities or spaces.

- Torres Strait is a unique part of Australia and has a number of governance arrangements in place and these should be considered when engaging with communities.

- The implementation of these protocols in planning and conducting your visit is a positive step towards reconciliation and 'Closing the Gap' of Indigenous Disadvantage in the region.

Communication

Verbal

Verbal communication is an important part of our everyday work and it is important to understand that there has and continues to be a number of barriers that can influence an interaction between **TSRA** staff and Community members in the Torres Strait. It is recommended that before continuing onwards that all staff read **Attachment One, Issues affecting inter-cultural communication** on page 16.

In addition to the above:

- Never swear in front of or to a client, as this is inexcusable.

- Always use basic English and not complicated jargon that may confuse the client. For example using such terms as 'Key Performance Indicators' could be "the main things you want to achieve", 'Strategic Planning' could be "What do you want to do, when and how".

- Always be courteous, cooperative, tactful, diplomatic and sensitive to clients and staff.

Telephone

It is important to have the right approach when talking to someone on the telephone, as they cannot see you.

- Apply the same courtesy you would to anyone (see above verbal communication), always use good manners in a positive tone and appear to be helpful. If you do not have the answers suggest someone who may know.

- Address people by their correct title - Mr, Mrs, Fr, Bishop, Dr and so on.

- Do not make confused statements that you think may be funny as the other person may not get the joke.

- All dealings must be professional.

Face to Face

Facial expressions and body language may communicate either positive or negative non-verbal messages to the recipient if you are not aware of it. Make sure both your facial expressions and body language are presented in a positive way, keeping yourself open to the interaction.

Good facial expressions and body language:

- Smile when first meeting someone and keep facial expressions appropriate to the type of discussion.

Bad facial expressions and body language:

- Appearing distracted by something on your mind.

- Folding arms.

- Unnecessarily touching someone.

- Looking away as someone is speaking to you.

- Direct eye contact should be kept to a minimum, however enough to keep the other party aware that you are still paying attention.

- Doodling on paper or playing with something in a disinterested way.

Individual

When speaking to another person it is important that it is done the correct way:

- Do not huddle in secrecy.

- Do not stand in a dark or secluded area.

- Do not appear over familiar or touch the other person.

- Stand upright and communicate in a formal way.

Why? So all other parties can see that nothing untoward is taking place and the interaction will be seen in a positive way. Any negative perceptions that can occur from interactions between two people, especially between different genders, could be very damaging and will determine how you are seen during that visit and for any other future visits.

Group

When addressing a group follow these basic steps:

1. If you initiate the meeting, ask the group how they would like to sit - all together at a table, in a circle or in some cases, on a mat under a tree. If you wish to communicate to a group it is best to find this out first.

2. When approaching the group, look to your main contact person who will gesture to the best place for you to sit. If sitting on the ground, it is best to sit in a way that you are not facing only one person and try not to have your back towards anyone.

3. Wait for the signal for you to commence speaking to address the group. For example, they call your name, or a chairperson or facilitator of the group indicates it is your turn to talk.

When addressing the group always;

- Thank them for allowing you to speak to them, and

- Show your appreciation through a small gift or statement of appreciation. For example, "I feel very privileged to be here on your island and be given this opportunity to speak with you ... I appreciate the time you have taken to meet with me and I thank you all for being here to allow me to give you all an introduction to... project."

Gender Requirements

When addressing a group of people do not single out one person but address the group as a whole. Try not to give too much unnecessary attention to people of the opposite gender as this could offend. When addressing a couple ensure that both are given equal attention and preferably focus more on the person who is of the same gender as you.

Written

Letters/Emails/Faxes

Should be written according to **TSRA** standard, style and format (use **TSRA** templates) however it should also include the following:

- Introduction of who you are and where you are from if it is the first form of communication.

- If phone contact has already been made, refer to the conversation and thank them for their time, and then follow-up with your original request.

- If sending out copies of your reports or project information, provide a covering letter that uses the same wording that is used as part of your normal conversations.

- Do not use too many abbreviations or acronyms.

- Do not use complicated terminology and always use plain basic English terms.

- Always encourage people to seek further clarification about your message.

Community Notices

Once your visit has been approved, community notices should;

- Be sent in advance of your visit,

- Specify meeting details – time, place/venue, topic,

- Use basic English to describe the purpose of the visit, and

- Ideally include a photograph of the visiting officers so people will recognise you when you arrive.

Reports

Always provide follow-up reports, minutes and so on from your meeting to the community for their information. If possible, provide a plain English summarised version and a technical version.

Community Visits

Always contact the local TSIRC/NPARC to request permission to visit a community whether for work or personal reasons. All islands are considered private domains and are not open to general traffic. Islands that are engaged in tourism activities welcome visitors at various times throughout the year. It is always best to check with the local TSIRC/NPARC office. As part of your discussions, and once the formalities have been completed, ask if a key contact person could be provided so all follow-up can be relayed to one person. In many cases, **TSRA** already has key contact people on the ground who are involved in projects such as Rangers, Art Centre managers and directors, Cultural officers, Sport and Recreation officers and so on.

Always inform the local PBC of your visit as well for their information. Most communities have native title over the land and the sea and it is important that the PBC is informed of all dealings relating to this area.

If the purpose of your visit is to discuss matters relating to a native title area, it is important to seek authorisation from the PBC first.

Appropriate clothing should always be worn when visiting a community. The **TSRA** logo T-shirts, for instance, would be a good choice. Otherwise smart casual is appropriate.

Times of Bereavement

In most cases when someone has passed away in a community, the community as a whole are involved in this process. It is not a good time to visit this community for work purposes and it would be best that the proposed visit be postponed to a later date. If you are already in a community when the "sad news" has been announced, it is best to cancel any proposed meetings and return back to your community. Always seek advice from your key contact person who can assist with finalising or rescheduling your plans.

Community Engagement

Once permission is granted to visit a community you will need to hold meetings. The following steps will assist with these meetings.

Meetings

See Mina Mir Lo Ailan Mun for appropriate communication and negotiation techniques. Please see summary of key points in Attachment One.

Community Meetings

If you attend and present at a community meeting it is appropriate to:

- Thank the community for taking the time and allowing you to meet with them.

- Acknowledge the traditional owners of the surrounding land and sea.

This should be done at all meetings including those listed below.

If you are organising a meeting with a community;

- Liaise with key contact people on the best way to organise the meeting,

- Ensure that the meeting can be opened in prayer,

- Ensure that someone is available to bless the food at each meal time,

- Organise catering from a local provider, and

- Provide the agenda to your key contact people to get input on the items to be discussed and format.

If you are organising a meeting in a community that includes representative from other places:

- Liaise with the local PBC for a "Welcome to Country". In some communities be prepared to pay a fee for this service.

- Follow all steps listed above.

Research in a Community

All requests to do research must be made to the local TSIRC/NPARC councillor to be brought up at the next community meeting for community endorsement. The following steps should be taken:

- Call the local councillor and PBC Chair to discuss the idea.

If they agree:

- Formalise in a letter requesting permission to visit the community and present at a public meeting.

- Be prepared to explain your project in basic English and if need be, request assistance of an interpreter.

- Be prepared to outline the benefits to the community as a whole.

- Be prepared to cover the costs of people's time to assist with your project including additional costs such as fuel and vehicle hire.

- Consider the possibility of hiring local people to assist with your work and provide them with some basic training.

- Provide community education sessions for the community and the local schools.

Working in a Community

When working in a community, it is important that you present a positive and professional image at all times. Cultural protocols should be followed during the whole time you are working in a community including after work hours.

Present a positive and professional image at all times.

Staying in a Community

Accommodation

Most islands have accommodation, where some are guest houses and others are motels. When booking your accommodation, some questions that could be asked are;

- Always check for room availability,

- Check if meals are provided,

- Check that you have adequate security, and

- Check about after-hours access.

Do not invite people back to your accommodation as this may create a negative perception in the community. Always agree to meet people in a public space in work hours.

Food

Food is available for purchase from the local IBIS store. Most communities do not provide meals to your accommodation and takeaways cannot be purchased. It is best that staff bring out their own food supply and ensure that cooking facilities are available as part of booking your accommodation.

Community Feasting

If invited to a community feasting which usually accompanies a community celebration, feel free to try all the foods on offer. When a feasting is being held, there is always some formalities such as a welcoming speech and the blessing of the food. Elders and key people are usually asked to eat first and then the rest of the gathering. Key community members will indicate a good time to go and start serving yourself food. Please note turtle and dugong are traditional foods and are always included in community feastings.

Water

Most islands have limited water supply and in the dry season (May to December) they may place water restrictions. If drinking local water supply, it is always best to boil before consumption. If concerned, bring or buy bottled water as part of your visit.

Alcohol

Some islands have canteens and others are considered "dry" communities. This means alcohol is not sold on the island, and if brought into the island, it should be consumed privately.

As **TSRA** employees it is important that you uphold a positive image of the organisation and it is preferred that alcohol not be consumed as part of a work visit, including after hours. What you do in your personal time once your visit is completed is your private business.

Transport

As part of your visit to a community you may be required to use the local transport. Before visiting a community ask the local TSIRC office the following;

- Is there any transport on the island, such as a community taxi/bus service?
- How will you get from airport and back?
- Are you able to go for a drive around the island?

Dinghy - Work Purposes

In some cases, workers may need to travel in a dinghy to visit places relevant to your work that are only accessible by sea such as neighbouring islands. Before embarking on any sea travel by dinghy check the following with your key contact person;

- Vessel is registered and equipped with all safety gear such as life-jackets, EPIRB, flares and so on,
- Vessel has enough fuel for the journey, and
- Driver is experienced.

Ensure details of your journey including day of travel and approximate times of departure and return arrival have been forwarded to relevant parties such as the Local TSIRC office and **TSRA** Supervisor.

If travel is required as part of your work, it is important that the fuel and oil required for the journey be covered by the **TSRA**. If you are staying for a long period on the island and require numerous trips, payment to the driver should also be organised as well as the fuel costs. If the work is considered part of a partnerships arrangement this should be negotiated at the beginning of the partnership.

On the day of travel, it is always important to let someone know when you expect to leave and return. This is to ensure if anything does happen, either an accident or a breakdown, someone will raise the alarm and people will come to your aid.

When travelling, it is important when passing other travellers to wave and indicate you are okay. This keeps communication open just in case you require or could provide some assistance.

Dinghy - Personal Purposes

Before visiting a community, ask the local TSIRC office or your key contact person for the following;

- Is it safe to go out in a dinghy?

- Is it a good time of year to go boating?

- Is it possible to go for a dinghy ride?

Please note any dinghy travel for personal reasons is not covered by the **TSRA** and is the sole responsibility of the individual.

Places

Public

Once you have been granted permission to visit a community, obtain confirmation from the council for places appropriate to go to when walking around a community. The local council office, health centre, schools, roads, airstrips are considered public spaces and are usually okay to visit in normal work hours.

Native Title Areas

The local PBC should be contacted for all visits, interactions or discussions relating to native title areas. For more information speak to the local PBC.

Private

This includes houses, yards, fruit trees, gardens, stone fish traps, dinghies, cars, sheds, tombstones. Seek advice from a key contact person or the local PBC. Permission must be obtained before entering or interacting with these private domains.

Sacred and Significant Places

Ceremonial sites, significant landmarks, stone sculptures, kwod sites are considered sacred and significant sites and are usually restricted to everyone including the local inhabitants. Speak to the local PBC for all requests associated with these places.

Swimming

Torres Strait is known for its dangerous waters and it is always important to check the following:

- Is it okay to swim in general?

- Where is a good place to swim?

- Is it a good time to swim? It is not a good time to swim during these times - jellyfish season, turtles being cut up on a beach, morning, midday, evening.

- Is there anything I should be aware of when swimming?

Appropriate swimwear such as t-shirt and shorts should be worn when swimming. Conventional swimwear is not considered appropriate.

Fishing

Fishing is a favourite past time for many people however in the Torres Strait there are some questions you must ask first:

- Is it okay to go fishing in general?

- Where is a good place to go fishing?

- Is it a good time to go fishing? High tide, low tide and so on.

- Is there anything I should be aware of when fishing?

- What am I allowed to catch and what size?

- What is good to eat?
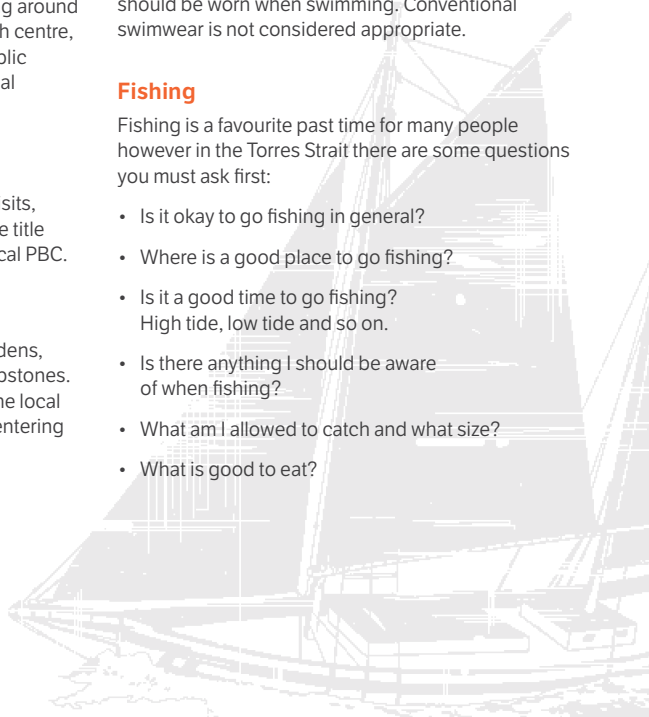
You must be mindful that once you catch the fish you must be either able to cook or freeze the fish. Fish should always be caught as a source of food and not for fun.

Interacting with Community People

Before you commence walking around a community unaccompanied, make sure you have been informed either by the local PBC or by your key contact person of all the information you need when staying in a community.

Passing people

It is good to acknowledge everyone you pass as you walk around in a community to reinforce a positive image of yourself and your organisation. This starts from when you make first contact, to jumping off the plane, the formal community meetings, who you talk with at morning tea to how you greet people when you walk down the street.

Always smile, wave and if within earshot, greet them with good morning, hello, or good night.

Approaching people

Most community people are friendly and once you have completed your formal business you will find that most people are aware of you and the purpose of your visit.

It is best to wait for people to signal or gesture for you to approach them when they feel ready to talk with you. This can be done mainly with a hand sign or approaches such as:

- Calling out your name, sometimes 'hey you', or even sending a young person over to get your attention.
- Confirming they are speaking to you by pointing at you.
- Gesturing with their hands for you to approach.

If you feel you need to approach someone, do the following;

- Greet them, say hello and introduce yourself.
- Gauge if they can speak English and if yes, continue with your request.
- If they do not speak English you can simply say the key word of what you are requesting such as 'food', the person's name that you are looking for, or place that you want to go.

Conversations with People

- Always talk about your visit in a positive way.
- Always talk about the people you have met in a positive way. Why? Because everyone is related and so to make a negative comment, agree to a negative comment or dispute a negative comment, is not your place and can taint how the whole community can perceive you during the remainder of your stay on the island and any future dealings with that community.
- Do not go 'over the top' in your praise or compare their island to other places as this will be perceived as a false response and will encourage distrust in you and your opinions.
- If signalled to come over, approach the requester and be open to an impromptu explanation or 'promotion' of your project. Most people would want to share their opinion or provide some history to the project, sometimes its failings as well. Always be open to this information and ensure the name, source and topic of the information is recorded in your field trip report.

Visiting People's Homes

Most **TSRA** staff will not be required to visit a person or family's home as this is considered a private domain. All **TSRA** work should be conducted in a formal way in the community and one family should not be seen to be given special treatment or access to yourself or **TSRA** information over the rest of the community.

If you are invited to visit someone's house, whether to view something relating to your work, an artwork for an exhibition, remains of a recently caught dugong that was being monitored, or if you are lucky enough to be invited to dinner, it is best to follow these steps;

- Wait to be invited before entering a person/family's yard or house,

- Always take your shoes off and leave at the door,

- Always ask if you can bring something along such as drinks or something for the children of the house,

- Always bring some basic information relating to your visit, information you can provide about your work - but only reveal if brought up in conversation,

- Depending on the distance from your accommodation, ask if it is okay to walk home. In most cases if it is late you may either be dropped back by vehicle or accompanied by the family for the walk home,

- Please note that if a staff member is visiting a community member's house of the opposite gender it is always helpful to be accompanied by someone. It is not appropriate for a staff member to be alone with a community member of the opposite gender in a private dwelling, and

- Dress appropriately at all times – smart casual.

Children

Most children are friendly and will say hello and ask questions if they have seen you around. If possible limit any interaction with any children especially when there is no parent or supervising adults around. Most **TSRA** business is with adults and any engagement with children should be done in the presence of adult. In these cases all staff members should have a 'Blue Suitability Card' issued by the Commission for Children and Young People.

Dogs

All staff should be aware of dogs when visiting a community. Most dogs have an owner, however each dog in each community may be looked after in different ways. Whether a dog is wandering freely or restrained somewhere it is best that **TSRA** staff do not attempt to either be friendly or hostile to any animal. Any dogs being a nuisance at public meetings or gatherings will be addressed by community members. When walking around a community especially at night please take care.

Sibuwanay/Tar Digri - Giving of the Gift

Sibuwanay in Kala Lagaw Ya and Tar Digri in Meriam Mir are similar in meaning and describe the generosity of individuals, families and communities in showing their appreciation for the visit and its purpose. Individuals and communities select objects which best represent their community, and present in an official way to individuals and/or groups.

Giving gifts is an important part of Torres Strait Islander culture and is a highly respected practice. The value is not on the gift itself, but on the time, effort and spirit exchanged between the parties. The recipient is under no obligation to reciprocate the action.

If you are a recipient at a meeting or event where this cultural practice is taking place, you should;

- Receive the gift with a humbled gesture, and

- Thank the community or individual for the gift.

It is important to note the gift given is not intended as a subtle form of influence to create a favourable impression or to gain preferential treatment. It is not supposed to create, or give rise to a conflict of interest.

However, it is recognised that acceptance of a gift might create a sense of obligation that may compromise impartial and honest decision making. Therefore the gift must be disclosed to **TSRA** Corporate Services.

Recommended Reading

TSRA Cultural Policy February 2011

Mina Mir Lo Ailan Mun, Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy Development
http://www.atsip.qld.gov.au/everybodys-business/protocols-torres-strait-islander/documents/minamir.pdf

Please note: this guide was written in the late 1990s and is to be updated during 2011.

Industry specific protocols and standards

Visual arts: protocols for producing Indigenous Australian visual arts, Australia Council, 2008
http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/resources/reports_and_publications/artforms/visual_arts/visual_arts_protocols_for_producing_indigenous_australian_visual_arts

Performing arts: protocols for producing Indigenous Australian performing arts, Australia Council, 2008
http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/resources/reports_and_publications/artforms/dance/performing_arts_protocols_for_producing_indigenous_australian_performing_arts

Media Arts: Protocols for producing Indigenous Australian media arts, Australia Council, 2008
http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/resources/reports_and_publications/artforms/indigenous_arts/media_arts_protocols_for_producing_indigenous_australian_media_arts

Music: protocols for producing Indigenous Australian music, Australia Council, 2008
http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/resources/reports_and_publications/artforms/music/music_protocols_for_producing_indigenous_australian_music

Writing: protocols for producing Indigenous Australian writing, Australia Council, 2008
http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/resources/reports_and_publications/artforms/literature/writing_protocols_for_producing_indigenous_australian_writing

Guidelines for ethical and effective communication for researchers working in the Torres Strait, CRC Reef Research Centre
http://www.rrrc.org.au/publications/downloads/T51-Report-Final.pdf

Values and Ethics - Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research, NHMRC
http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/e52syn.htm

Keeping research on track: a guide for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples about health research ethics, NHMRC
http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/e65syn.htm

Guidelines for Ethical Research in Indigenous Studies, AIATSIS
http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/research/ethical.html

Attachment One

Taken from Mina
Mir Lo Ailan Mun

Issues affecting inter-cultural communication

Communicating with those unfamiliar to us does not come easily. The more distant and unacquainted the cultures, the greater the challenge. Therefore, good communication requires the parties to truly understand each others' social systems.

It is important outsiders understand the behavioural ground rules of the Torres Strait, because if the latter are broken people become offended and communication breaks down.

Islanders' views and meaning systems vary from that of other cultures, although in some aspects there will be similarities. In cross-cultural communication there is always a risk that ideas will be misinterpreted and this can lead to considerable confusion, misunderstanding, disappointment and even resentment.

There is also the problem of dissimilar concepts of social process. In traditional Islander society, both the spiritual and the secular were interwoven, and this is still evident today. However, in European society the two are usually separated.

Compounding these differences are past policies of segregation, paternalism, neglect and isolation which have not been erased from Islanders' minds. Similarly, contemporary policies, considered to be progressive and enlightened by some, do not necessarily enjoy widespread support among the Island communities. For instance, land rights legislation introduced by the Queensland Government in the early 1990s was rejected by many Islanders. In addition, bureaucratic procedures often do not sit comfortably with the Island way of doing things.

All of these factors are barriers to effective communication and will need to be overcome if inter-cultural dialogue is to be more productive. Fortunately, there are ways and means of improving communication with Islanders.

Interpersonal Skills

The cornerstones of sound communication are interpersonal skills.

Most people will not care to deal with you unless you can demonstrate you are sincere, trustworthy, open and honest. Torres Strait Islanders are no different in this way.

It does help to have a reasonable knowledge and appreciation of Torres Strait Islander custom and history. If you have this knowledge you will be better able to empathise with people and issues.

Taking a genuine interest in people - without being intrusive - helps foster ongoing relationships. Being helpful and friendly is particularly appreciated. Torres Strait Islanders place a good deal of emphasis on courtesy and kindness. This is known locally as 'Good Pasin', meaning good fashion or behaving with a degree of sophistication and charm. Failure in this area can be irreparable.

It is also absolutely essential to tell the truth at all times, no matter how unpopular this can be. Failure to do so destroys credibility which is unlikely to be regained. Above all treat people the way they want to be treated, instead of the way you think they should be.

> Genuine respect for their beliefs, opinions and lifestyle is essential.

Communication Techniques

There are a number of techniques that can be used that will help with your dealings with Torres Strait Islanders. To be successful, these will obviously need to be used in a sincere, rather than a manipulative way. They also need to be practised regularly.

Listening

Listening is most important. This means listening without interrupting, without being selective and assuming that you know what people are going to say and actually listening - not just pretending to listen. Islanders will want to fully explain their position to you and this often takes time.

> Being attentive and patient while they are informing you will be appreciated. It will also help establish a good relationship.

In situations where communication is sensitive or tense it often helps to be empathetic and to paraphrase. After Islanders have finished talking, you can summarise and repeat what they have told you. By doing this, you signal that you are serious about their views and you have a clear understanding of them.

When introducing an idea, carefully observe the response to it. If the idea has little or no support this will generally be conveyed by silence. Sometimes it is difficult not to interrupt and not to finish partially completed sentences. This is partly because some cultures are uncomfortable with silent pauses. It may also be that we are in a hurry to obtain an answer and complete the task. We need to become more comfortable with silences.

Allow time for people to think about the idea and for them to discuss it informally among themselves.

Questioning

It is often impolite to ask too many questions. Direct questioning may cause offence and consequently be ineffective. Nevertheless, it is quite important to seek input, but listen carefully to replies to see whether your questions were already answered in the earlier responses given.

It is also important to provide time for answers to be thought about and even talked about. This can take weeks in some consultation contexts.

Language

Whilst English is often not people's first language it is nonetheless widely understood.

As most Islanders have a good understanding of English, you would talk with them in much the same way as you would with your friends and colleagues. It pays to quickly make your own judgement on the individual's level of English and adjust accordingly.

Where English is not so strong, you need to consider the choice of vocabulary, rate of delivery, clarity and logical ordering of ideas. The style needs to be understandable, free of jargon and appealing. Do not speak loudly or in a patronising manner.

Occasionally it may be beneficial to use interpreters. In these instances you need to be confident that what you are saying is understood and translated correctly.

These principles also apply to written communication.

Finally, sign language and gestures are frequently used to express points of view in the Torres Strait. This usually occurs between Islanders themselves; however, this can be extended to others as relationships grow and improve.

Consultation and Negotiation Strategies

With regard to consultation, it is crucial to keep in mind it is a process, and the process is as important as the outcomes. It is therefore a good idea to adopt a systematic approach. Anyone conducting a consultation would therefore need to;

- Be conscious of the dissimilarities between the two cultures' ways of viewing the world,

- Be committed to the process and prepared to devote time and resources to it,

- Understand that the consultation process needs to be open, equitable and flexible. For a consultation to be successful, the people and organisations being consulted need to believe their participation is valued and respected. These people and organisations would need to be confident their ideas and input will be taken into account. Failure to do so will generate considerable resentment and cynicism,

- Have a thorough understanding of the nature and origin of the issue, program or problem they wish to discuss,

- Determine who are the appropriate people, organisations and government agencies to contact and the likely ways they will interact. Have a good knowledge of the organisational, social and political context. Who will participate? Who will support? Who will resist? Who will oppose? Who will cooperate?

- Provide the people, organisations and government agencies with sufficient information to make the consultation meaningful, valuable and productive,

- Determine what type or combination of types of consultation is appropriate,

- Expect Islanders to be indifferent or hostile to ideas and proposals that are incompatible with their ways of thinking and lifestyle,

- Anticipate questions and issues that are likely to arise during discussions among participants, and outline options for dealing with those issues, and

- Continually monitor and evaluate the consultation process in order to improve methods and communication.

When actually discussing an issue, allow the community leaders to pace and manage the meeting. Islanders often prefer to discuss matters in their own language. Be relaxed about this. **The outsider has a participatory role, not a controlling role.** Furthermore, do not expect to resolve issues in one meeting and do not push for an instant decision. If you push hard you might be able to get a decision - but it will be one which community leaders and residents may not regard as binding.

Other general rules to keep in mind are:

- Always be open, honest and sincere.

- Never make any promises you cannot deliver. Explain carefully the constraints within which you work which may mean recommendations are not automatically accepted even when you fully support them.

- Try not to refuse proposals outright. Advise communities about other opportunities to achieve their objectives and assist them to establish relations with the appropriate funding body.

- Always seek cooperation from the Community Council before going to a community.

- Familiarise yourself with behavioural protocols in Island communities. This will develop over time with patience, good observation skills, and perhaps guidance from a competent person who is familiar with the process.

- Respect religious protocols such as grace before meals and the practice of opening and closing meetings with prayers.

- Respect 'Ailan Kastom' (Island Custom) such as Island adoptions. These have legitimacy in the Torres Strait

- Avoid intruding on significant cultural events such as funerals and tombstone openings

- Understand 'Ailan Time' (Island time) - meetings may not start when scheduled

- Do not cause anyone to suffer the loss of personal dignity

- Avoid direct criticisms of particular individuals

- Be careful with the use of humour; it may be misunderstood

- Be patient, tactful and discreet

- Avoid talking excessively, particularly in the company of elders

- Stick to formal addresses when talking to chairpersons and councillors until given permission to do otherwise

- Do not be submissive; be organised, professional, confident and helpful

- Never underestimate the breadth and depth of knowledge in the community and the technical skills available

- Dress appropriately because poor dress standards may offend

- Be aware that there are distinct boundaries between males and females and practice appropriate behaviour at all times

- If in doubt about protocols, ask and find out

Consultation and negotiation is not a time-specific process. It needs to be recognised as an ongoing and essential component of the policy making process in Islander affairs. It also needs to be seen as a process founded on networks of relationships that require continual development and nurturing. It is important to remember that discussions in informal settings 'after hours' may be of as much, if not more, assistance than formal meetings.

It goes without saying that if relationships are to last they need to be based on trust and mutual benefits.

However, maintaining relationships in the policy process is not easy; they are often chaotic and explosive. There are also entrenched negative attitudes both of and towards those in public sector positions which compound the problem.

The key to successful consultation is relationship building. The latter can only be achieved by officers developing an empathy with, and understanding of, the socio-cultural dynamics of Islander communities. If officers make themselves accessible and accountable to people and organisations in Islander communities, they will enhance their credibility and help build positive attitudes.

MINA MIR LO AILAN MUN
Please note: this guide was written in the late 1990s and is to be updated during 2011.

Attachment Two
Torres Strait Communities

Inner Islands

Island/place	People	Practices	Governance
Port Kennedy (Thursday Island -Waibene)	**Traditional Owners** Kaurareg **Community Members** Kaurareg, families from all the outer island communities Non-Torres Strait Islanders	**Language** English / Torres Strait Islander (TSI) Creole	Originally an Colonial outpost which is now the region's main administration centre **Local Government** Torres Shire Council **Commonwealth** TSRA Board Representation **Land** Mainly Freehold with some areas are under Native Title
Trawq (Thursday Island - Waibene)	**Traditional Owners** Kaurareg **Community Members** Kaurareg and families from all the outer island communities, some non-Indigenous people	**Language** TSI Creole	Established to house outer island families and previously classified as an Aboriginal Reserve **Local Government** Torres Shire Council **Commonwealth** TSRA Board Representation **Land** Mainly Freehold leases, DOGIT and some Native Title areas
Horn Island (Ngurapai) and Prince of Wales Island (Muralag)	**Traditional Owners** Kaurareg **Community Members** Kaurareg and families from all the outer island communities, some non-Indigenous people	**Language** Kala Lagaw Ya (Kaurareg dialect)	**Local Government** Torres Shire Council **Commonwealth** TSRA Board Representation **Land** Some Freehold leases with majority under Native Title
Hammond Island (Kiriri)	**Traditional Owners** Kaurareg **Community Members** Kaurareg descendants and families from all the outer island communities	**Language** TSI Creole / English	Previously a Catholic Mission and despite close proximity to Thursday Island it is considered an "Island Community" as majority or residents are Torres Strait Islanders **Local Government** Torres Strait Island Regional Council **Commonwealth** TSRA Board Representation **Land** DOGIT, a Native Title claim may be submitted in the near future

Near Western Islands

Island/place	People	Practices	Governance
Badu Island (Mulgrave Island)	**Traditional Owners** Mura Badulgal **Community Members** Mura Badulgal and some PNG Nationals		**Local Government** Torres Strait Island Regional Council **Commonwealth** TSRA Board Representation **Land** DOGIT and Native Title area
Mabuiag (Jervis Island)	**Traditional Owners** Goemulgal	**Language** Kala Lagaw Ya (Mabuyag dialect)	**Local Government** Torres Strait Island Regional Council **Commonwealth** TSRA Board Representation **Land** DOGIT and Native Title area
Kubin Community Moa Island (Mua)	**Traditional Owners** Mualgal	**Language** Kala Lagaw Ya	**Local Government** Torres Strait Island Regional Council **Commonwealth** TSRA Board Representation **Land** DOGIT and Native Title area **Sea** Native Title area
St Pauls Community Moa Island (Mua)	**Traditional Owners** Mualgal **Community Members** Families with mixed Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander heritage	**Language** TSI Creole	**Local Government** Torres Strait Island Regional Council **Commonwealth** TSRA Board Representation **Land** DOGIT

Top Western Islands

Island/place	People	Practices	Governance
Saibai Island	**Traditional Owners** Saibai Mura Buai **Community Members** Saibai Mura Buai and some PNG nationals	**Language** Kala Lagaw Ya (Kala Kawaw Ya dialect)	**Local Government** Torres Strait Island Regional Council **Commonwealth** TSRA Board Representation **Land** DOGIT and Native Title area
Boigu Island	**Traditional Owners** Malu Kiai **Community Members** Malu Kiai and some PNG nationals	**Language** Kala Lagaw Ya (Kala Kawaw Ya dialect)	**Local Government** Torres Strait Island Regional Council **Commonwealth** TSRA Board Representation **Land** Mainly Freehold leases, DOGIT and some Native Title areas
Dauan Island	**Traditional Owners** Dauanalgaw	**Language** Kala Lagaw Ya (Kala Kawaw Ya dialect)	**Local Government** Torres Strait Island Regional Council **Commonwealth** TSRA Board Representation **Land** DOGIT and Native Title area

Central Islands

Island/place	People	Practices	Governance
Warraber Island (Sue Island)	**Traditional Owners** Warraberalgal (Part of the larger Kulkalgal nation)	**Language** Kala Lagaw Ya (Kulkalgaw Ya dialect)	**Local Government** Torres Strait Island Regional Council **Commonwealth** TSRA Board Representation **Land** DOGIT and Native Title area
Poruma Island (Coconut Island)	**Traditional Owners** Porumalgal (Part of the larger Kulkalgal nation)	**Language** Kala Lagaw Ya (Kulkalgaw Ya dialect)	**Local Government** Torres Strait Island Regional Council **Commonwealth** TSRA Board Representation **Land** DOGIT and Native Title area
Iama Island (Yam Island)	**Traditional Owners** Iamalgal (Part of the larger Kulkalgal nation)	**Language** (Kulkalgaw Ya dialect)	**Local Government** Torres Strait Island Regional Council **Commonwealth** TSRA Board Representation **Land** DOGIT and Native Title area
Masig Island (Yorke Island)	**Traditional Owners** Masigalgal (Part of the larger Kulkalgal nation)	**Language** Kala Lagaw Ya (Kulkalgaw Ya dialect)	**Local Government** Torres Strait Island Regional Council **Commonwealth** TSRA Board Representation **Land** DOGIT and Native Title area

Eastern Islands

Island/place	People	Practices	Governance
Ugar Island (Stephen Island)	**Traditional Owners** Ugaram Le	**Language** Meriam Mir	**Local Government** Torres Strait Island Regional Council **Commonwealth** TSRA Board Representation **Land** DOGIT and Native Title area
Erub (Darnley Island)	**Traditional Owners** Erubam Le	**Language** Meriam Mir	**Local Government** Torres Strait Island Regional Council **Commonwealth** TSRA Board Representation **Land** DOGIT and Native Title area
Mer (One of three Murray Islands, remaining two are Waier and Dauar)	**Traditional Owners** Meriam Le	**Language** Meriam Mir	Has eight (8) tribes who all have equal say in community matters **Local Government** Torres Strait Island Regional Council **Commonwealth** TSRA Board Representation **Land** Native Title area

Northern Peninsula area

Island/place	People	Practices	Governance
Bamaga	**Traditional Owners** **Community Members** Mixed Torres Strait Island and Aboriginal heritage	**Language** TSI Creole	Historic Torres Strait community established on Aboriginal Land **Local Government** Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council **Commonwealth** TSRA Board Representation **Land** DOGIT and Native Title area
Seisia	**Traditional Owners** **Community Members** Mixed Torres Strait Island and Aboriginal heritage	**Language** TSI Creole	Historic Torres Strait community established on Aboriginal Land **Local Government** Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council **Commonwealth** TSRA Board Representation **Land** DOGIT and Native Title area

Attachement Three

Torres Strait Prescribed Bodies Corporate

Badu Ar Mua Migi Lagal (TSI) Corporation RNTBC (Islands between Badu and Moa- uninhabited)

Chair Maluwap Nona
Ph 0447 185 917
Email maluwap.ali.nona@gmail.com

Dauanlalgaw (TSI) Corporation RNTBC (Dauan Island)

Chair Thomas Mooka
Ph 0447 797 317
Fax (07) 40694257

Secretary Sam Maka
Ph 0407 577 962
Email dauanalgawcorporation_pbc@y7mail.com
Email sam.maka@yahoo.com.au

Erubam Le Traditional Sea & Land Owners (TSI) Corporation RNTBC (Erub Island)

Chair Elia Doolah
Ph (07) 4069 4001
Fax (07) 4069 4000

Secretary Walter Lui
Ph (07) 40694271 / (07) 4090 0839
Fax (07) 4069 4000
Email walterjim.lui@gmail.com

Contact Person Torres Webb
Ph (07) 4069 4001 / (07) 4090 0570
Email torreswebb@live.com.au

Garboi (TSI) Corporation RNTBC (Garboi – uninhabited island)

Chair Lota Warria
Ph 0488 102 879
Email ephraim.warria@yahoo.com

Gebaralgal (TSI) Corporation RNTBC (Gabba Island – uninhabited)

Chair Fred Peters
Ph (07) 4069 4215
Fax (07) 4069 4310
Email fpete13@eq.edu.au

Goemulgaw (TSI) Corporation RNTBC (Mabuiag Island)

Chair Terrence Whap
Ph (07)4069 4184
Fax (070 4069 4111
Email terrence.whap@tsirc.qld.gov.au

Secretary Sophie Luffman
Ph (07) 4069 4580

Kaurareg Aboriginal Native Title Corporation RNTBC (Inner Islands)

Chair Garagu Kanai
Email kntac.chairperson@hotmail.com

Secretary Isaac Makaku
Ph 0488 639 558
Fax (07) 4090 3263
Email kntac.secretary@hotmail.com

Kulkalgal (TSI) Corporation RNTBC (Aureed – uninhabited island)

Chair Dan Mosby
Ph 0429 137 857
Fax (07) 4069 4351

Maluilgal (TSI) Corporation RNTBC (Warul Kawa and Buru Islands)

Chair Maluwap Nona,
Ph 0447 185 917
Email maluwap.ali.nona@gmail.com

Magani Lagaugal (Yam Island)

Chair Ned David
Ph 0428 774 255
Email ndavi148@eq.edu.au

Contact Person Aggie Hankin
Ph (07) 4090 0014
Email dawitaccaggie@yahoo.com.au

Malu Ki'ai (TSI) Corporation RNTBC (Boigu)

Chair Keith Pabai
Ph (07) 4090 1333
Email kpaba1@eq.edu.au

Masigalgal (TSI) Corporation RNTBC (Masig Island)

Chair Francis Nai
Ph 0458 411 843
Fax (07) 4069 4135

Contact Person Fraser Nai
Ph 0427 727 366

Mer Gedkem Le (TSI) Corporation RNTBC (Mer, Waier and Dauar Islands)

Chair Doug Passi
Ph 0407 056 157
Email mer_gedkem_le@y7mail.com

Contact Person Aven Noah
Ph 0427 656 239
Email aven@tsima4mw.org.au

Mualgal (TSI) Corporation RNTBC (Moa Island)

Chair Cyril Manas
Ph 0488 150 443
Email Kbn_rep89@hotmail.com

Secretary Loiuse Manas
Ph (07) 4069 4295
Fax (07) 4069 4272
Email Louise.Manas@TSIRC.qld.gov.au

Mura Badulgal (TSI) Corporation RNTBC (Badu Island)

Chair Peo Ahmat
C/ Peter Gadsby
Ph (07) 4069 4778
Ph 0487 297 030

Porumalgal (TSI) Corporation RNTBC (Poruma Island)

Chair Frank Fauid
Ph (07) 4090 0790
Fax (07) 4090 0790

Deputy Chair Pastor Jack Billy
Ph (07) 4090 3625
Fax (07) 4069 4280

Secretary Eldridge Mosby
Ph (07) 4069 4209
Fax (07) 4069 4316
Email emosby1@eq.edu.au

Saibai Mura Buway (TSI) Corporation RNTBC (Saibai Islands)

Chair Eddie Sam
Deputy Chair Herbert Warusam
Ph 0458 796 695
Email hpatrick7@gmail.com
Fax (07) 4069 4245

Ugar Ged Kem Le Zeuber Er Kep Le (TSI) Corporation RNTBC (Ugar Island)

Chair Seriako Stephen
Ph 0448 498 457
Email seriako_stephen@health.qld.gov.au

Wakeyama (TSI) Corporation RNTBC (Sassie – uninhabited island)

Chair David Ned David
Ph 0448 867 410
Email ned.david@tsirc.qld.gov.au

Warraberalgal (TSI) Corporation RNTBC (Warrber Island)

Chair Sam Tamu
Ph (07) 4069 4168
Fax (07) 4069 4103

Torres Strait Sea Native Title Area
Please contact **TSRA** Native Title Office on
Ph (07) 4069 0700

The **TSRA** Vision

Ngalpun yangu kaaba woeydhay, a ngalpun muruygaw
danalagan mabaygal kunakan palayk, bathayngaka
(KALA LAGAW YA)

Buaigiz kelar obaiswerare, merbi mir apuge mena obakedi,
muige merbi areribi tonarge, ko merbi keub kerkerem
(MERIAM MIR)

Ngalpan moebaygal thoepoeriwoeyamoeyn, ngalpan ya
kuduthoeraynu, ngalpan igililmaypa, sepa setha wara
goeygil sey boey wagel
(KALA KAWAW YA)

Empowering our people, in our decision,
in our culture, for our future

Torres Strait Regional Authority
PO Box 261, Thursday Island,
Queensland 4875

Telephone 07 40 690 700   **Fax** 07 40 691 879
Free Call 1800 079 093   **Email** info@tsra.gov.au

Australian Government

TSRA
www.tsra.gov.au