

Use of the terms 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' and 'Indigenous peoples'

The Planning Institute of Australia recognises the diversity of cultures, languages, kinship structures and ways of life of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. There is no single cultural model that fits all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and the Planning Institute of Australia recognises they retain their distinctive cultural identities whether they live in urban, regional or remote areas of Australia.

The Planning Institute of Australia also acknowledges that there are differing usages of the terms 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander', 'Aboriginal' and 'Indigenous'.

The use of the term 'Indigenous' has evolved through international law and acknowledges a particular relationship of Aboriginal people to the territory from which they originate. The term 'Indigenous' is therefore, best used in international settings, recognising the international diversity of Indigenous peoples around the World.

Within Australia, it is most appropriate to use terms that further specify identity. In Australia at the national level it has long been appropriate to specify that we have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island nations and peoples, recognising that there is a collective dimension to their livelihoods.

At the regional and community level it is appropriate to use regionally or locally specific terms of identity. For example, the Ngunnawal People in the case of the Aboriginal people in the Canberra and surrounding district, or the Wiradjuri Nation in the case of Aboriginal People from central southern New South Wales.

When referring to a specific government document or policy, the Institute respectfully maintains the government's language to ensure consistency.

PIA members work with Indigenous peoples in other contexts and not only within Australia. For example, in the Pacific Island nations, Papua New Guinea and East Timor, as well as with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and nations within Australia.

Use of the term 'Indigenous' on this website therefore includes Indigenous peoples from around the World and not just those within Australia. (The Planning Institute of Australia acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner's commentary in the Commissioner's annual Social Justice Reports and Native Title Reports as the primary source of guidance on these matters.)