

**United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
Questionnaire to Governments
Australia**

1. Briefly state what recommendations from the Fifteenth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) or recommendations from previous sessions (not included in your previous reports) have been addressed by your Government.

The Australian Government is continuing to address the recommendations of the report of the fifteenth session of the UNPFII.

Australia's responses to the questionnaires for the thirteenth and the fourteenth session provided comprehensive information on measures to support recommendations in the relevant reports and the six mandates areas of the Permanent Forum. In relation to the recommendations of the report of the fifteenth session, Australia has previously provided information on the support for indigenous languages, indigenous peoples representative institutions, indigenous youth, violence against indigenous women and girls, leadership and political participation of indigenous women, indigenous land rights, repatriation and health.

2. What are the main challenges your country faces in implementing the recommendations of the Permanent Forum? Describe any measures taken or contemplated to address these challenges?

Australia takes the recommendations of the Permanent Forum under serious consideration, and is committed to achieving the ends of both the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People and the Outcome Document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples.

Indigenous Australian peoples and communities face complex disadvantage, including those issues raised by the Permanent Forum, which requires a systemic approach.

3. What are the main factors that facilitate your Government's implementation of the recommendations of the Permanent Forum?

Australian governments at all levels are committed to addressing the disadvantage faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and to ensuring equality of opportunity. This commitment is strengthened by partnerships between governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on many different levels, particularly in regard to the development of community-based approaches.

4. What are the main achievements of your country in strengthening the rights of indigenous peoples? Please provide details to support this assessment.

Australia has implemented a diverse range of policies and programmes that support the cultural, social, political and economic rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Closing the Gap targets, a shared priority for all Australian governments, aim for improvement over the long term. Progress is very slow on some targets relating to health, education and employment. However, some improvements are being made in the following areas:

- Child mortality rates are declining
- Secondary education attainment rates are steadily increasing
- Reducing mortality from chronic diseases

Australia continues the commitment to a referendum on the Constitutional Recognition Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples outlined in previous questionnaires. A national consultation and engagement process, including a series of Indigenous designed and led consultations, to ensure the views of Australians are considered in drafting of advice to both the current Australian Government and the Opposition is being undertaken. Australia's Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition have reaffirmed bipartisan commitment to constitutional recognition and to putting the issue to a referendum as soon as practicable.

5. Describe any measures taken or planned in terms of policies and mechanisms to maintain and build on these gains.

The Closing the Gap targets continue as a shared priority for all Australian governments. At the December 2016 Council of Australian Governments meeting, the federal, state and territory governments committed to work together and with Indigenous leaders, organisations and communities to refresh the Closing the Gap agenda with renewed emphasis on collaborative effort, evaluation and building on what works in each jurisdiction.

The collection and use of data is one way in which Australia maintains and builds on these gains. Further information on data collection in Australia is provided later in the questionnaire.

Australia's peak national human rights body plays a key role in advocating for, and reporting on, the status of the human rights of Indigenous peoples in Australia. The Government funded Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) has an appointed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner to focus on Indigenous rights. The AHRC publishes the annual Social Justice and Native Title Report, and annual shadow reports against the Australian Government's Closing the Gap report – the 'Close the Gap – Progress and Priorities report'.

6. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted in 2007. To mark the ten year anniversary, and assess gains and achievements, the theme of the Permanent Forum's annual session in 2017 will be: Tenth anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: measures taken to implement the Declaration. Please provide further information on the following:

a) What are the main constitutional, legislative and/or legal developments taken or planned to promote and/or implement the UN Declaration?

Australia's alignment with the Declaration occurs through legislation, regulations, strategies and plans, among other policy instruments, in domestic priority areas such as combating violence against Indigenous women and children; the economic empowerment of Indigenous communities through access to capital based on their rights and interests in land; building capacity for Indigenous enterprises,

businesses and access to export promotion opportunities; improving employment, education and training; and improving health outcomes.

Has your Government involved indigenous peoples in implementing the UN Declaration, and if so, how?

The Australian Government is addressing the need to broaden and deepen awareness of how policies and programmes in Australia relate to the Declaration. This is occurring through engagement with peak Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and representative bodies, and the Australian Human Rights Commission, on the Declaration. As part of this process, Australia is undertaking an analysis of all government policies and initiatives against the articles of the Declaration.

The engagement of the Australian Government with Indigenous peoples through the Redfern Alliance and through the Government's own Regional Network are in line with the aims of the Declaration. For example, the Minister for Indigenous Affairs is participating in a series of workshops with Indigenous Australian leaders, the Redfern Alliance, to discuss their priorities. These include engagement, health, disability, justice, preventing violence, out of home care and early childhood issues. The Redfern Alliance includes the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples and 18 lead organisations.

The Australian Government has also put the Regional Network in place to facilitate collaborative relationships between government and Indigenous organisations, and support community led solutions.

b) What is the approximate total amount or percentage of the national budget allocated to actions that specifically target indigenous peoples?

Details of all Australian governments' expenditure specifically in regard of Indigenous peoples since 2013 will be published in the next Indigenous Expenditure Report, which is in development. The 2014 Indigenous Expenditure Report (IER), the most recent available, estimates that in 2012-13 total Commonwealth, State and Territory government Indigenous expenditure was \$30.3 billion or 6.1 per cent of total direct government expenditure.

The report found that the vast majority of government services for Indigenous Australians are provided through programs that also provide support to non-Indigenous Australians. In 2012-13, mainstream services accounted for \$24.7 billion (81%) of Indigenous expenditure, with the remaining \$5.6 billion (19%) provided through Indigenous specific (targeted) services. The report also found that more than half of total government Indigenous funding in 2012-13 (53%) came from state/territory governments (\$16.2 billion). In comparison, the Commonwealth contributed 47 per cent in direct expenditure on services / assistance to Indigenous Australians (\$14.1 billion).

c) Are there any action/programme/project by the Government, a local authority, an international or regional organization, an NGO or a civil society organization that benefits indigenous peoples in your country and can be identified as a best practice?

Under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy, the Australian Government provides over \$250 million annually to address the drivers of violence in Indigenous communities, including activities that aim to reduce levels of substance misuse and harm, violence and contact with the criminal justice system, as well as providing support to victims of violence.

The “Building Better Lives for Ourselves” project exemplifies a community led initiative. The Australian Government Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet explored ways to restore the authority and confidence of senior Indigenous women to address family violence, abuse and neglect, in Indigenous communities. This project aimed to tackle the factors underlying ongoing violence and abuse of women and children by combining: community driven development to build community ownership; use of a trauma based approach to leadership training; and building confidence, responsibility and personal empowerment to develop women’s leadership. The Government and Indigenous communities are co-designing the next phase of this project, including to enhance sustainability and provide more robust evidence to support evaluations of impact.

7. At its 2017 session, the Permanent Forum will review its recommendations on:

(a) empowerment of indigenous women; and (b) indigenous youth.

Please provide information on actions taken to address the situation of indigenous women (recommendation 39 of the PFII report) and indigenous youth (recommendations 32 and 34).

(a) empowerment of indigenous women

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women face higher levels of disadvantage of discrimination than non-Indigenous Australians, barriers to employment and economic empowerment, poor educational attainment, poorer health, and the impact of community and domestic violence. Australia has a broad range of initiatives that contribute to the empowerment of Indigenous women, as well as supporting related benefits for their families and the wider community, with ongoing positive impacts on children.

For example, there are a number of targeted employment initiatives to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and men to participate fully in the economy. Approximately 43 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander job seekers are women. The initiatives target the underlying issues that cause barriers to obtaining and retaining employment, and can involve individualised support. These initiatives work through targets, and through partnerships between governments, the private sector, and with communities and individuals. Measures include the Indigenous employment target for the Commonwealth public sector, the Community Development Programme, the Employer Parity initiative and Vocational Training and Employment Centres.

Violence and abuse are some of the major barriers to the empowerment of Indigenous Australian women. Australia has previously provided information on related initiatives such as the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022*, implemented through the *Third Action Plan 2016-19*. The Action plan places a priority on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children and outlines what governments, communities, businesses and individuals can do to reduce violence against women and their children. Practical measures include:

- providing community-driven, trauma informed supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children;
- Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to develop an Indigenous resource to sit alongside ‘Change the Story: a shared framework for the primary prevention of violence.’
- Co-designing and developing primary prevention activities with, and for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men;
- Trialling new treatment services to better support perpetrators to change their behaviours;

- Conducting a study in remote, regional and urban communities to improve our understanding of how to reduce domestic, family and sexual violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

(b) Indigenous Youth

Australia has previously provided information to the Permanent Forum on measures to address youth self-harm and suicide.

Other measures to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people include support for education, training and employment. The Australian Government has committed to ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people can access high-quality education and successfully transition to employment or further education and training, and includes rates of Year 12 or equivalent attainment as one of the Closing the Gap targets.

The Australian Government works collaboratively with the states and territories and the non-government sector, local organisations and families to ensure that schools and curricula; workplaces; and supporting systems enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to reach their potential.

The Government also funds activities which aim to nurture and educate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and youth to improve pathways to prosperity and wellbeing. These include family and parenting support and youth engagement and transition support.

Australia's National Indigenous Youth Parliament (NIYP) is an event that supports the political engagement of Indigenous Australian youth and provides an opportunity for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to meet Australia's leaders, learn about democracy and have their say on important issues. The NIYP was held in 2012 and 2014. In 2017 fifty young Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people will be selected to come to the capital for the program.

8. Regarding indicators of progress and data collection:

a) Has your Government developed national indicators for monitoring progress on indigenous peoples 'issues?

As stated in the response to question 4, Australia has put in place a set of long term targets regarding outcomes for Indigenous Australians. The Prime Minister delivers an annual Closing the Gap statement and report on progress, the most recent was announced on 14 February 2017.

b) Which specific Department or Government organization is responsible for the national census and data collection?

Australia's national statistics agency, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is responsible for national census data. Other Government departments collect sector specific data, such as employment and education.

c) Does the national census or other official surveys include a question that identifies indigenous peoples? If so, please give more details on the question used?

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census of Population and Housing includes the ABS Standard Indigenous Question (SIQ). This SIQ is used in all ABS data collections, and is also used across a wide range of government agencies and Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations. A person's Indigenous status is gathered by their response to the ABS Standard Indigenous Question: "Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?"

For more information, see Indigenous Status Standard, 2014, Version 1.5 (*ABS cat. no. 1200.0.55.008*) <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/1200.0.55.008Main+Features12014,%20Version%201.5?OpenDocument>

The ABS also conducts national surveys specific to Indigenous Australians. These surveys include the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS) and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSISHS). Results from the most recent 2014-15 can be found here: <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mf/4714.0>

The ABS also collects a range of other data on social and economic indicators, including through the national Census of Population and Housing, and publishes information disaggregated by Indigenous status when the data is of sufficient quality to publish. The data from these collections can be accessed via the ABS website (www.abs.gov.au).

The Australian Institute of Health Welfare (AIHW) is a national agency that provides information and statistics on Australia's health and welfare, including a range of data sources and reports disaggregated by Indigenous status. The information the AIHW collects, analyses and reports is drawn chiefly from hospitals, health services, community services and housing assistance services. This information can be found on the AIHW website (www.aihw.gov.au).

The Australian Government supports a range of national reporting mechanisms that include data and analysis disaggregated by Indigenous status, drawing on these data sources from the ABS and AIHW and other sources. One such example is the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework (HPF) biennial report series (since 2006) which has been developed to inform policy and planning in Indigenous health. The HPF report presents a high level summary of data, research and policy analysis for 68 performance measures across three tiers:

- health status and outcomes;
- determinants of health including socioeconomic and behavioural factors; and
- health system performance.

The HPF draws on over 60 existing national datasets including Census, surveys, and administrative datasets including hospital and mortality data. The HPF also synthesises the research literature from over 400 articles and reports. The policy implications of this evidence is then analysed and summarised. THE HPF 2014 report can be accessed here: <http://www.dpmpc.gov.au/indigenous->

[affairs/publication/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-health-performance-framework-2014-report](#)

The Australian Government's Productivity Commission also produces a number of regular reports that collate information relating to Indigenous Australians. These reports include the Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage (OID) report, the Indigenous Expenditure report and the Report on Government Services. These and other reports relating to Indigenous Australians can be found on the Productivity Commission website (www.pc.gov.au). The most recent 2016 OID report is disseminated here <http://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/overcoming-indigenous-disadvantage/2016>

d) What is the official number of persons identifying themselves as indigenous living in your country?

The estimated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population as of 30 June, 2011 was 669,881, based on the ABS 2011 Census of Population and Housing and the Post Enumeration Survey to adjust for Census net undercount. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population counts from the ABS 2016 Census of Population and Housing will be available from 11 April 2017.

Projections estimate the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population at 30 June 2017 to reach 761,300 (based on Series B projections).

9. The outcome document of the 2014 World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (A/RES/69/2) invites the UN system to support the implementation, upon request, of national action plans, strategies or other measures to achieve the ends of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (paragraph 32).

a) Has your country adopted a national action plan, strategy or other measures to achieve the ends of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples? Please describe.

Refer to responses to questions 4, 6(a) and 6(b).

b) How did indigenous peoples participate in the process to prepare a national action or strategy or any other implementing measure?

Refer to responses to question 6(b).

c) Please provide information on how the UN system (at all levels) could best support your Government's efforts to achieve the ends of the UN Declaration.

The UN system could better support the Australian Government to achieve the ends of the UN Declaration through supporting practical, case based exchanges of comparative experiences worldwide for improving outcomes for indigenous peoples, and how self-determination and free, prior and informed consent are applied in other states.

10. The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues will continue to address indigenous issues in the follow up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Please provide information on the following:

a) Has your country submitted a voluntary national review to the UN High Level Political Forum in 2016? Did this include information on indigenous peoples?

Australia did not submit a Voluntary National Review to the High Level Political Forum in 2016. Australia participated in an event on ‘Securing the Rights and Contributions of indigenous peoples in the 2030 Agenda’ hosted by the Permanent Forum on the sidelines of the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in July 2016.

Through whole-of-Government processes, Australia is considering the most suitable timing for Australia’s first Voluntary National Review. This is to ensure Australia’s first Voluntary National Review is inclusive and consultative, capturing the perspectives of relevant stakeholders.

The Australian Government is coordinating efforts to give effect to the 2030 Agenda, including reporting arrangements.

b) Does it plan to do so in 2017? How does the voluntary national review /plan to address indigenous issues?

See response to 10 a).

c) Does your government disaggregate data to capture progress on indigenous peoples?

See response to question 8.

d) The table below refers to some Sustainable Development Indicators that are also pertinent for the implementation of the UN Declaration. Please provide the following data for both the total population and indigenous peoples in your country.

Australia supports the initial set of 230 indicators developed by the Inter-agency Expert Group on the Sustainable Development Goals indicators (IAEG-SDGs) – of which Australia has observer status through the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Australia recognises it provides a ‘practical starting point’ to assist countries with their reporting against the agenda and that the IAEG-SDGs will continue to refine the indicators over the lifespan of the 2030 Agenda.

Reporting on the 2030 Agenda is a country-led process, where nations will determine how they report against the global indicators, according to their national priorities and data collection capabilities. Australia is currently undertaking a comprehensive whole-of-government process to determine how we best report on our domestic and international progress to advance the 2030 Agenda.

In line with this process, rather than complete the table provided, we refer the Permanent Forum to the sources listed in the response to 10c) for information on indigenous population data in Australia.