

Reconciliation Action Statement

The Parliamentary Service Strategic Plan identifies our purpose to "serve, support, promote and strengthen the Legislative Assembly to enable it to fulfil its various functions which are fundamental to Queensland's democratic system of government".

In supporting the work of the Legislative Assembly, the Parliamentary Service aspires to uphold the principles of democracy and promote inclusion of all Queenslanders in the democratic process.

These aspirations include supporting and promoting reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Queenslanders.

As custodians of the symbolic home of democracy in Queensland, the Legislative Assembly and the Parliamentary Service are uniquely placed to take both a symbolic and practical lead in reconciliation efforts.

The Parliamentary Service has been a leader among Australian parliamentary jurisdictions in promoting reconciliation over many years. Reconciliation action was formally recognised in our Strategic Plan for the first time in 2017-18 and further embeds our ongoing commitment across all aspects of the Parliamentary Service.

Our journey so far

The Queensland Parliament and the Parliamentary Service that supports it have been on the reconciliation journey for some time. On 26 May 1999 the Queensland Parliament acknowledged the past policies under which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were forcibly separated from their families, and expressed deep sorrow and regret at the hurt and distress this caused.

Significant reconciliation milestones and activities for the Parliamentary Service include:

- A Welcome to Country has been part of the official proceedings at each Opening of Parliament since 1998
- Parliamentary Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee Hands on Parliament Report following an inquiry into First Nations peoples' participation in our system of democracy (2003)
- Renaming of function venues in the parliamentary complex in 2004 to recognise local Indigenous language groups (Undumbi and Dandiir rooms)
- Establishment of the Reconciliation Gallery in the parliamentary complex honouring our first Indigenous Member of Parliament, Uncle Eric Deeral
- Display of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags alongside the Australian and Queensland flags in the Parliamentary Chamber and outside Parliament House (2007)
- Commissioning of the Parliamentary Wind Yarn (Didgeridoo) for display in the precinct as a symbol of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Queenslanders
- Formal acknowledgement of Traditional Owners of the land prior to each parliamentary sitting week (2007)
- Appointment of Australia's first Parliamentary Indigenous Liaison Officer role (2008)
- Hosting of the first Indigenous Youth Parliament (2009) (since renamed Eric Deeral Indigenous Youth Parliament in 2012)
- A face-to-face cultural awareness seminar for Parliamentary Service staff (2009-2010)
- Hosting a ceremony in 2011 showcasing a performance of the national anthem sung in the Yugambeh language
- Promoting engagement and dialogue with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through parliamentary committee public hearings in regional locations throughout Queensland
- Conducting regional education and training activities throughout Queensland including programs for First Nations students
- Hosting the annual Indigenous Schools Constitutional Convention onsite, and participating when held at other Queensland locations
- Hosting Queensland Reconciliation Awards and providing complimentary use of facilities onsite to Reconciliation Queensland for regular meetings
- Conducting Indigenous Youth Parliaments in Regional Queensland since 2018, and
- Renaming Level 6 committee rooms in honour of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Moving ahead

Over the course of the Strategic Plan, the Parliamentary Service commits to reconciliation activities across four key themes of relationships, respect, opportunities and tracking progress and reporting.

	ACTION	TIMELINE	MEASUREMENT
Relationships	Engage with Indigenous Queenslanders regarding specific issues through inquiries undertaken by parliamentary committees	Ongoing	Number of parliamentary committee hearings and inquiries assisted with Indigenous liaison activities. The Indigenous Liaison Officer assisted parliamentary committee during 2019-20, in particular, providing Indigenous liaison advice to four different Bills/inquiries.
	Improve and assist relationship building and engagement between Members of Parliament and Indigenous communities	Ongoing	Number of instances where Indigenous protocol advice provided to Members and parliamentary staff.
Respect	Provide opportunities for staff identifying with Indigenous heritage to engage with their culture and communities (e.g. by celebrating NAIDOC Week)	June 2020	Review HR policies and procedures to ascertain any barriers to staff participation, and if barriers apply, identify strategies to address. There are provisions within the leave framework that are supportive of staff identifying with Indigenous heritage to engage with their culture and communities. For example, cultural leave is provided for in the <i>Industrial Relations Act</i> , bereavement leave provisions allow for cultural reasons to be considered and special leave provisions are sufficiently flexible to support a variety of circumstances.
	Appropriately acknowledge significant Indigenous Anniversaries	Ongoing	Participation and representation in programs and events to appropriately acknowledge major Indigenous anniversaries. 2019 NAIDOC celebrations will fall into the next financial year and 2020 NAIDOC celebrations have been postponed until November 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions.
	Ensure that significant parliamentary occasions include an appropriate acknowledgment to Traditional Custodians and a Welcome to Country ceremony	Ongoing	It is standard practice that each Opening of Parliament ceremony includes a Welcome to Country from an Indigenous Elder. For the 56th Parliament, the Speaker, Hon. Curtis Pitt MP, has extended the acknowledgment of the Traditional Custodians to each sitting day. All Parliamentary Service functions also include an Acknowledgement.
Opportunities	Provide opportunities for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students to engage together in parliamentary education activities with a focus on democracy and participation	Ongoing	Number of school educational activities conducted with Indigenous liaison focus. A list of these schools and events is below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The annual hosting of the Eric Deeral Indigenous Youth Parliament was held in the 2019-20 financial year on 4 July 2019 • Humba Yumba school visits 4th and 7th of February 2020, and • Indigenous constitutional convention Townsville 14 June 2019.
	Investigate opportunities to improve employment outcomes within our workplace for Indigenous persons	June 2020	A survey was conducted of Parliamentary Service staff including electorate office staff, to identify a baseline assessment of staff identifying themselves as of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent, and to allow issues to be identified and strategies to be developed.

Looking Ahead

The Parliamentary Service launched its first Reconciliation Action Plan in September 2020. This supersedes the annual Reconciliation Action Statement which appears for the last time in the 2019-20 Annual Report.