

Reconciliation Action

The Parliamentary Service Strategic Plan identifies our purpose to *“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. The formal recognition of reconciliation action in our Strategic Plan 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.

Since 1998, significant reconciliation milestones and activities include:

- An Indigenous Welcome 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 Indigenous 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 Dandiiir rooms)
- Establishment of 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 acknowledgment of traditional owners of the land prior to each parliamentary sitting week (2007)
- Appointment of Australia’s first (and currently only) Parliamentary Indigenous Liaison Officer role (2008)
- Hosting of the first Indigenous Youth Parliament (2009) (since renamed Eric Deeral Indigenous Youth Parliament in 2012)
- Cultural awareness training for Parliamentary Service staff (2009-2010)
- Promoting engagement and dialogue with indigenous communities through parliamentary committee public hearings in regional locations throughout Queensland
- Conducting regional education and training activities through Queensland including programs for indigenous students
- Hosting the annual Indigenous Schools Constitutional Convention onsite, and
- Providing complimentary use of facilities onsite to Reconciliation Queensland for regular meetings.

Moving ahead

Over the course of the current Strategic Plan, the Parliamentary Service aims to formalise its past reconciliation activities into a plan endorsed by Reconciliation Australia across four key themes:

1. Relationships
2. Respect
3. Opportunities
4. Tracking progress and reporting

	Action	Timeline	Measurement
RELATIONSHIPS	Engage with Indigenous Queenslanders regarding specific issues through inquiries undertaken by parliamentary committees	Ongoing	<p>Number of parliamentary committee hearings and inquiries assisted with Indigenous liaison activities.</p> <p>The Indigenous Liaison Officer assisted parliamentary committees during 2017-18, in particular, providing Indigenous liaison advice to five different inquiries.</p>
	Improve and assist relationship building and engagement between Members of Parliament and Indigenous communities	Ongoing	<p>Number of instances where Indigenous protocol advice provided to Members and parliamentary staff.</p> <p>Following requests from both Members and staff, the Indigenous Liaison Officer provided advice on Indigenous protocol 12 times during 2017-18.</p>
RESPECT	Provide opportunities for staff identifying with Indigenous heritage to engage with their culture and communities (e.g. by celebrating NAIDOC Week)	June 2018	<p>Review HR policies and procedures to ascertain any barriers to staff participation, and if barriers apply, identify strategies to address.</p> <p>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.</p>
	Appropriately acknowledge significant Indigenous Anniversaries	Ongoing	<p>Participation and representation in programs and events to appropriately acknowledge major indigenous anniversaries.</p> <p>The Indigenous Liaison Officer participated in NAIDOC events at Government House and Alexandra Hills State High School.</p>

	Action	Timeline	Measurement
RESPECT	Ensure that significant parliamentary occasions include an appropriate acknowledgment to Traditional Custodians and a Welcome to Country ceremony	Ongoing	<p>It is a standard practice that each Opening of Parliament ceremony include 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.</p> <p>All Parliamentary Service functions also include an Acknowledgement.</p>
OPPORTUNITIES	Provide opportunities for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students to engage together in parliamentary education activities with focus on democracy and participation	Ongoing	<p>Number of school educational activities conducted with Indigenous liaison focus.</p> <p>Parliamentary education activities were conducted at 12 schools and other events during 2017-18. A list of these schools and events is below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tagai College • Mossman High School • Ingham State High School • Innisfail State High School • Indigenous Zone Constitutional Convention Brisbane • two Indigenous Zone Constitutional Conventions in Townsville • Ayr State High School • Burdekin Catholic School • Abergowrie College • St Patrick's College Townsville • Mackay State High School
	Investigate opportunities to improve employment outcomes within our workplace for Indigenous persons	June 2018	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.