



# NATIONAL SORRY DAY

26 MAY

## RECONCILIATION WEEK

27 MAY - 3 JUNE



**BE  
BRAVE!  
MAKE  
CHANGE.**

**2022**

*The NSW SES acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands where we work and live. We celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures, and recognise their continuing connection to lands and waters. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging, and acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who contributed to the development of this resource.*

National Sorry Day and National Reconciliation Week are important dates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The information on the following pages is provided to assist NSW SES members to mark Sorry Day and Reconciliation Week, and to raise awareness among NSW SES members of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, history and connection to Country.

This is an important starting point for improving cultural capability and strengthening Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander inclusion at the NSW SES.

We all have a role to play when it comes to reconciliation. Together, we collectively build relationships and communities that value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, histories and cultures.

### **Diversity and Inclusion is part of our Mission and Vision**

To achieve our mission of saving lives and creating safer communities, we need to reach groups at risk of marginalisation, including Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples. We need to connect effectively with our diverse community members before, during and after emergency events.

To deliver our vision of being a trusted volunteer-based emergency service, working together to deliver excellence in community preparedness and emergency response, we need to harness the diverse knowledge, skills and lived experience that every member brings to the Service and ensure that every member – regardless of background - feels valued and enjoys a sense of belonging.

## **National Sorry Day 26 May**

National Sorry Day on 26th May marks the anniversary of the *Bringing Them Home* report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families (tabled in Federal Parliament on 26th May 1997).

National Sorry Day acknowledges and raises awareness of the history and continued effect of the forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, communities and culture between 1910 - 1970.

On National Sorry Day we recognise the grief, trauma and loss suffered by the Stolen Generations.

**To learn more about the Stolen Generations, visit:**

- **The Healing Foundation**  
[www.healingfoundation.org.au/stolengenerations](http://www.healingfoundation.org.au/stolengenerations)
- **Stolen Generations Testimonies**  
[www.stolengenerationstestimonies.com](http://www.stolengenerationstestimonies.com)

## **National Reconciliation Week 27 May - 3 June**

National Reconciliation Week starts on 27th May and runs through to 3rd June every year. These dates commemorate two significant milestones in the reconciliation journey — the successful 1967 referendum, and the High Court Mabo decision respectively.

Reconciliation Week is a time for all Australians to learn about our shared histories, cultures, and achievements, and to explore how each of us can contribute to achieving respectful relationships between the wider Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Reconciliation is a journey for all Australians – as individuals, families, communities, organisations, and as a nation. We strive towards a more just, equitable nation by championing unity and mutual respect as we come together and connect with one another.

**The theme for Reconciliation Week changes every year. Find out about this year's theme on the Reconciliation Australia website:**

- <https://reconciliation.org.au/national-reconciliation-week>

## Marking Reconciliation Week at the NSW SES

To mark Reconciliation Week, NSW SES members are encouraged to:

Include an Acknowledgement of Country (see guidance on page 6-7) at the beginning of your local musters, meetings or training sessions to pay respect to the traditional owners of the land on which you meet. Consider including this as a standard practice at every muster or formal meeting.

Raise the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Flags, where appropriate and possible (see guidance on page 8).

Take time to learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, history and ways to build respectful relationships:

- Complete Reconciliation Australia's online journey 'Share Our Pride'  
– <http://www.shareourpride.org.au>;
- Listen to Diversity Council Australia's podcasts:  
– <https://www.dca.org.au/podcasts/unfinished-business>  
– <https://www.dca.org.au/podcasts/sorry-business>
- View the ABC Indigenous portal to access the latest Indigenous stories and features from ABC Radio, News & Current Affairs, TV and iView:  
– <https://www.abc.net.au/events/walking-together>  
– <https://www.abc.net.au/indigenous>
- Watch SBS NITV's Reconciliation Film Club  
<https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/reconciliationfilmclub> or tune in to NITV <https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/> to tune into a diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander focused programs.
- Check out the curated resources at:  
– <https://www.commonground.org.au/learn>

Build your capacity to use respectful and inclusive language by familiarising yourself with words to use and words to avoid:

- <https://www.uow.edu.au/content/groups/public/@web/@wic/documents/doc/uow257281.pdf>

Connect with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, groups and organisations to see how you can support local reconciliation activities.

Share the story of Wiradjuri men, Yarri and Jacky Jacky, heroic emergency responders who rescued more than 60 Gundagai residents from the floodwaters of the Murrumbidgee River in 1852.

- <https://indigenousx.com.au/the-heroes-of-gundagai>
- <https://theriverina.com.au/listings/the-great-rescue-of-1852/>

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# BE BRAVE. MAKE CHANGE.

As part of our commitment to building cultural capability and strengthening Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Inclusion, the NSW SES will work with Reconciliation Australia to develop a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

The NSW SES will start this journey by establishing a dedicated sub-committee representing Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples. Expressions of interest for an opportunity to participate in this regard will be released shortly. The sub-committee will draft and implement a Reflect RAP, to lay the foundations and prepare us for future reconciliation initiatives.

We will work in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, volunteers, communities, organisations and leaders, to reflect on the following questions and take action to respond to them:

- What can the NSW SES do differently to build better relationships with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples?
- What can the NSW SES do differently to show respect for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples, history, culture and connection to country?
- What can the NSW SES do to create opportunities for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples?



**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the original owners of the land and it is important that this unique position is recognised and incorporated into official protocol for events and ceremonies.**

**As a NSW Government agency, the NSW SES recommends incorporating Aboriginal Cultural Protocols into practice at official events and ceremonies to recognise and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage and cultures, and contribute to promoting respect in the wider community.**

**NSW SES members are encouraged to consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff/ volunteers, community members and local organisations when planning local events or ceremonies.**

Relevant organisations include:

- The Local Aboriginal Land Council (see <https://alc.org.au>)
- Traditional owners, groups, representative bodies or other regional Aboriginal advisory structures in your local area
- Local Aboriginal Elders/Elders Groups
- Recognised local Aboriginal organisations such as an Aboriginal Medical Service

Consultations with any of the above may be about:

- Appropriate performances according to the event purpose and audience
- Who should be included in the event
- Appropriate remuneration for any participation
- Ensuring that mutual respect will be promoted throughout any proceedings.

## WELCOME TO COUNTRY

A Welcome to Country is a specific Aboriginal cultural protocol that allows for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Elder to welcome all of the participants at the event to the country of their people and their ancestors. This practice is an official welcome, and allows for the wider community to reflect on the connection that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have with country and the importance of country to their existence, past and present.

A Welcome to Country should be commissioned at both NSW government sector official events and events where the NSW Government sector are a major sponsor.

The content of a Welcome to Country should be negotiated with the appropriate local Aboriginal organisation, their representative or the Elder/ Elders Group. The Welcome to Country itself should be undertaken by a recognised member of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community who is from the country upon which you meet.

A Welcome to Country may involve (but is not limited to):

- A welcome introduction that may or may not be in the relevant Aboriginal language
- The individual/group being dressed in cultural attire
- Involvement from the participants at the event
- Sharing of information such as local history or culture
- Recognition of other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and peoples
- Reciprocated respect
- Best wishes for a successful event.

Generally, after the Welcome to Country is delivered it is important that the facilitator demonstrates gratitude for the welcome and thanks the delegate. A gift may be provided to the delegate if this is deemed appropriate.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

An Acknowledgement of Country is a practice that allows for any individual to pay their respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples whilst acknowledging their ongoing connection to country. An Acknowledgement of Country can be done by anyone, from any cultural background. For example, an Acknowledgement of Country can be delivered by each person who has an official task at an event such as the facilitator, keynote speakers, special guests and other presenters.

When you are doing an Acknowledgment of Country, if you are unsure of the name of the traditional owners, or in circumstances where your particular location may be represented by two or more traditional owners, you can acknowledge the owners without being specific.

Example 1 - Acknowledgement of Country, using appropriate name:

***"I acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of the land on which we meet, [insert appropriate name here – e.g. the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation). I celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures, and recognise their continuing connection to lands and waters. I pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging,***



***and acknowledge any Aboriginal people who are present here today."***

Example 2 - Acknowledgement of Country, where you are unsure of the traditional owners:

***"I acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of the land on which we meet. I celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures, and recognise their continuing connection to lands and waters. I pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging, and acknowledge any Aboriginal people who are present here today."***





## DELIVERING AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY ONLINE

With an increase in employees working flexibly and participating in online meetings from various locations, it is important to continue to acknowledge Country. The examples provided below can be used when communicating online at the beginning of a meeting, speech or formal event.

Example 1 - If you know the traditional owners of the land on which you are hosting the meeting or recording the webinar:

***"I acknowledge that I am hosting/ recording this meeting/webinar from the lands of the (insert name e.g. Wodi Wodi people of the Dharawal Nation). I also acknowledge the traditional custodians of the various lands from which you are joining us today.***

***We celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures, and recognise their continuing connection to lands and waters. I pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging, and acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people participating in this meeting/ webinar."***



Example 2 - If you do not know the traditional owners of the land on which you are hosting/ recording the meeting/webinar:

***"I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the various lands on which we meet and work today. We celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures, and recognise their continuing connection to lands and waters. I pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging, and acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people participating in this meeting/ webinar."***





## FLYING THE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER FLAGS

Flying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flags on National Sorry Day (26th May) and throughout National Reconciliation Week recognises the significance of these events for all Australians and is a sign of respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and culture. From 27 May to 3 June the Australian Aboriginal Flag and the Torres Strait Islander Flag should be flown on additional flagpoles, where available, next to or near the Australian National Flag on Australian Government buildings and establishments. Other organisations are encouraged to follow this protocol.

If there is only one flagpole available at a flag station the Australian Aboriginal Flag or the

Torres Strait Islander Flag should not replace the Australian National Flag. If two flagpoles are available, it is at the discretion of the authority concerned to determine which of the two flags is flown with the Australian National Flag. The Australian Aboriginal Flag and the Torres Strait Islander Flag have equal status and may be flown in any order after the Australian National Flag. For further information, see:

<https://www.pmc.gov.au/government/australian-national-flag/australian-national-flag-protocols>



## NSW SES INDIGENOUS DIVERSITY PIN

The NSW SES has designed an Indigenous Diversity Pin which can be worn on uniform on National Sorry Day (26 May) and during Reconciliation Week (27 May - 3rd June), and on NSW SES branded corporate or casual attire, or personal clothing, at any time.



*If you would like an Indigenous Diversity pin, please contact [diversityandinclusion@ses.nsw.gov.au](mailto:diversityandinclusion@ses.nsw.gov.au) to request one, along with the guidance protocol for wearing it.*

## REFERENCES AND USEFUL RESOURCES

- **Reconciliation Australia**  
<https://www.reconciliation.org.au>
- **NSW Aboriginal Land Council**  
<https://alc.org.au>
- **Aboriginal Affairs NSW**  
<https://www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au>
- **NSW Public Service Commission**  
<https://www.psc.nsw.gov.au/culture-and-inclusion/aboriginal-workforce>
- **Reconciliation NSW**  
<https://reconciliationnsw.org.au>
- **Diversity Council Australia – Indigenous** <https://www.dca.org.au/topics/indigenous>
- **Sorry Day**  
[https://www.reconciliation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/19\\_5\\_20-lets-talk\\_sorry-day.pdf](https://www.reconciliation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/19_5_20-lets-talk_sorry-day.pdf)
- **The Healing Foundation**  
<https://healingfoundation.org.au>

*The NSW SES strives to create and maintain a culture of diversity and inclusion that provides an environment for staff and volunteers to feel safe bringing their whole selves to work, and is a living expression of our values.*