Aboriginal Engagement Strategies
Aboriginal Engagement Strategies

As part of the South West Sydney Keep Them Safe Community Action Plan, services and agencies felt that they could work more effectively with Aboriginal children, families and communities if existing engagement strategies were made more readily available.

This summary is a starting point to provide insight into the strategies that may assist services and agencies in working more effectively with Aboriginal children, families, communities and services. It provides a brief overview of a range of strategies that are used by jurisdictions and agencies across Australia.

These have been sourced through a review of each State, Territory and Commonwealth Government department along with public Universities, Research Centres and other organisations. It only includes publicly available strategies that have been found on websites and as such it is not an exhaustive list.

While some documents have been produced for use in specific contexts or with specific target groups, they may provide useful guiding principals for engagement.

This summary does not endorse the use of any particular strategy and recognises that local approaches are often the most effective.

All documents summarised can be downloaded for use from http://www.hsnet.nsw.gov.au/group_home.aspx?grpID=803 or from the original website listed against each summary. HSNet is a NSW government website that is free to join.
Guidelines for Ethical Research in Indigenous Studies

Provides the principles used by AIATSIS in conducting social research with Aboriginal Communities and people. Whilst it is specifically focused on research it provides practical examples of engaging with Aboriginal people including principles of ethical research such as consultation, negotiation, mutual understanding and respect for Aboriginal people and communities.

18 Pages

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS)
www.aiatsis.gov.au

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) is a leading institution for information and research about the cultures and lifestyles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, past and present.

The Community Game: Aboriginal Self Definition at the Local Level

Research paper that may assist in developing an understanding of the concept of community and differentiate it from the concept of Aboriginal culture. This paper highlights the need to engage with Aboriginal people as individuals rather than considering all Aboriginal people as representatives of a particular community.

22 Pages

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS)
www.aiatsis.gov.au

An AIATSIS research discussion paper by Frances Peters-Little. The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) is a leading institution for information and research about the cultures and lifestyles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, past and present.

Providing Culturally Appropriate Palliative Care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

Practice guidelines developed for palliative care providers underpinned by a cultural safety framework. These guidelines may assist in developing an understanding of the impact of policies that are developed outside of an Aboriginal cultural context and highlight the importance of Aboriginal peoples’ connection to their land. Whilst the guidelines are specifically developed for palliative care providers, the principles can be applied to other service providers.

82 Pages

The National Palliative Care Program

A Commonwealth coordinated program, the National Palliative Care Program aims to improve access to and quality of palliative care.
Community development approaches to safety and wellbeing of Indigenous children

Resource document that focuses on the principles of community development and culturally competent practices for Indigenous communities. It provides some good practice strategies and approaches to working with Aboriginal children who have experienced abuse or neglect

14 Pages

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare – Closing the Gap Clearinghouse


The Closing the Gap Clearinghouse provides access to a collection of information that provides evidence for strategies in overcoming Aboriginal disadvantage.

Early childhood and education services for Indigenous children prior to starting school

Resource document that focuses on the principles of early intervention and prevention through early childhood and education services for Aboriginal children and families. It provides some good practice strategies for working holistically with Aboriginal children and families before commencing school

16 Pages

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare – Closing the Gap Clearinghouse


The Closing the Gap Clearinghouse provides access to a collection of information that provides evidence for strategies in overcoming Aboriginal disadvantage.

Lessons learnt about strengthening Indigenous families and communities

Paper that provides an overview of some of the social considerations service providers and government agencies should consider or be aware of when working with Aboriginal families and communities. It should be noted that the intent of the paper is not to provide practice examples.

128 Pages

Australian Government – Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

www.fahcsia.gov.au

Commonwealth Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
Tool Kit for Indigenous Services Provision

Tool kit developed by FaHCSIA specifically to assist funded services in engaging with Aboriginal people in developing and refining service delivery through consultation. The kit provides practical examples and advice on engaging Aboriginal families and communities and can assist organisations to review current practices, deliver, implement and evaluate services and build knowledge and relationships.

15 Pages

Australian Government – Closing the Gap

Part of the Commonwealth governments social inclusion agenda, the Closing the Gap strategy aims to reduce Indigenous disadvantage with respect to life expectancy, child mortality, access to early childhood education, educational achievement and employment outcomes.

What Works to Overcome Indigenous Disadvantage

Summary paper on a range of different programs and strategies that provides an overview of the high level principles that most often result in successful programs aimed at overcoming disadvantage in and for Aboriginal people, families and communities. Provides links to resources that may be useful including community development, health and early childhood & education. Relatively high level principles are outlined but may provide a sound background for strategic work.

55 Pages

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare – Closing the Gap Clearinghouse

The Closing the Gap Clearinghouse provides access to a collection of information that provides evidence for strategies in overcoming Aboriginal disadvantage.

A Best Practice Model for Health Promotion Programs in Aboriginal Communities

Short brochure on developing best practice health promotion programs. Based on a community development model of engagement the principles can be broadly applied to a range of services. It provides a number of principles and examples to assist managers and program staff in developing Aboriginal programs.

2 Pages

Department of Health, Western Australia
www.health.wa.gov.au
State Health Department of Western Australia.
Aboriginal Children and Young People speak out about Families

Discussion paper as a result of longitutdinal studies with Aboriginal children and families. Provides insight into the importance of families in Aboriginal communities and the impact that families may have on outcomes for children and young people.

5 Pages
Commissioner for Children and Young People – Western Australia
www.ccyp.wa.gov.au
State Commissioner’s Office for Children and Young People in Western Australia.

Consulting Citizens Engaging with Aboriginal Western Australians

Comprehensive strategy on engaging Aboriginal people in social policy and program delivery in a wholistic manner from a government service delivery context. A resource developed by the WA Government which provides detailed information on principles of engagement and best practice examples.

36 Pages
Department of Premier and Cabinet – Citizens and Civics Unit
www.dpc.wa.gov.au
Former unit within the Western Australian Department of Premier and Cabinet.

Countering Racism Tool

Framework for assessing the impact of systemic racism within existing policies and practices. Developed for schools but applicable to any service that has clients that are subject to service policies and procedures.

36 Pages
Department of Education – Western Australia
www.det.wa.edu.au
Western Australian Department of Education.
Aboriginal Cultural Respect – Implementation Framework

High level strategic framework that outlines how the department will work to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal people, families and communities. Focuses on overcoming systemic barriers to engagement and developing culturally responsive policies.

6 Pages
Department of Health, Western Australia
www.health.wa.gov.au
State Health Department of Western Australia.

Aboriginal Cultural Security – A Discussion Paper

Researched discussion paper focusing on cultural security as a crux for health service delivery to Aboriginal people, families and communities. May be useful in developing a knowledge of cultural security and its impacts upon the policy and implementation process as well as its impact on Aboriginal families and communities.

18 Pages
Department of Health, Western Australia
www.health.wa.gov.au
State Health Department of Western Australia.

Aboriginal Cultural Security

Strategic document discussing Aboriginal cultural security within a health and community services context. May be useful in assisting services to identify policy or practice areas for improvement or development in order to implement culturally secure practices.

41 Pages
Department of Health and Community Services – Northern Territory
www.nt.gov.au/health
Northern Territory Department of Health and Community Services.
Supporting Indigenous Researchers: A Practical Guide for Supervisors

A practical guide developed for use in supervising Aboriginal researchers and those looking to begin work in research fields. May be useful in improving workplace development practices particularly for staff undertaking research or higher studies.

196 Pages

Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health
www.crcah.org.au
A Research Center within the Lowitja Insititue, Australia’s National Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research

Appropriate Terminology Use in Reconciliation Groups

A brief fact sheet outlining some terms or words that are preferred to use in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Please note that this is a document from Queensland in 2008 and as such some terms may be specific to that location and/or time.

2 Pages

Reconciliation Queensland Incorporated
www.rqi.org.au
Community organisation advocating for the recognition of a shared past and respect for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first Australians

Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives in schools

A tool developed for schools to use in focussing staff on professional reflection, planning and developing practices that consider Aboriginal perspectives with the aim of meaningful community engagement.

74 Pages

Department of Education and Training – Queensland
www.deta.qld.gov.au
Queensland Department of Education and Training
Proper Communication with Torres Strait Islander People
A guide for engagement with Torres Strait Islander people. It provides specific context, history and understanding of Torres Strait Islander communities and the impact this may have on service delivery.
23 Pages
Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Development – Queensland
www.atsip.qld.gov.au
Former Queensland Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Development now incorporated into the Department for Communities

Protocols for Consultation and negotiation with Aboriginal people
A guide developed for Government agencies to improve engagement with Aboriginal people. It focuses on communication, consultation and engagement with communities in the context of program and policy development and implementation. The guide provides specific examples of protocols for engagement. Please note that this is a document from Queensland in 1998 and as such some protocol may be specific to that location and/or time.
38 Pages
Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Development – Queensland
www.atsip.qld.gov.au
Former Queensland Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Development now incorporated into the Department for Communities

Student Engagement Matrix and Guidelines
A matrix or tool developed for assessing engagement of students in classrooms. Information about levels of engagement may be able to be used to plan intervention and support programs for young people.
5 Pages
Department of Education and Childrens Services
www.decs.sa.gov.au
South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services
Countering Racism Policy and Guidelines

Policy and guideline developed for schools that provides a framework for identifying and addressing racism across all working and learning environments. It includes a self assessment tool for use in a range of policy areas. May be useful for services as well as schools.

28 Pages

Department of Education and Childrens Services

www.decs.sa.gov.au

South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services

Cultural Respect Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health

A high level framework that provides guidance for health services on the delivery of culturally respectful services and engaging Aboriginal people in the delivery of services. May provide background for other services as well as key guiding principles for culturally respectful policy, service development and delivery.

26 Pages

Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council’s Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Working Party

www.ahmac.gov.au

Committee reporting to the Australian Health Ministers’ Advisory Council, which is comprised of the Chief Executives of Commonwealth, State and Territory health authorities

A Cultural Inclusion Framework for South Australia

A three part inclusion and engagement package which includes a guide, a cultural competence self assessment tool and a cultural inclusion check list. Provides a sound base to assess the impact of service delivery or policy on the lives of Aboriginal people and communities. The package provides easy to use practical approaches to identifying and improving potentially problematic service delivery or policy development.

36 Pages, 36 Pages, 12 Pages

Department of Premier and Cabinet – South Australia

www.dpc.sa.gov.au

South Australian Department of Premier and Cabinet
Engaging South Australians

A guide that provides an indepth overview of community engagement approaches and techniques including case studies. The guide utilises the engagement continuum and provides a range of techniques for each stage of the model. Not specifically focused on engaging Aboriginal people, however provides a range of possible examples to use.

118 Pages
Department for Families and Communities – South Australia
www.dfc.sa.gov.au
South Australian Department for Families and Communities

Community Engagement Directions Statement

High level strategic direction that provides the framework for the “Engaging South Australians” Guide. It outlines community engagement principles and the engagement continuum. The document is not specifically focused on Aboriginal people, however it may be useful in outlining why engagement practices need to be utilised or changed in service delivery or development.

20 Pages
Department for Families and Communities – South Australia
www.dfc.sa.gov.au
South Australian Department for Families and Communities

The Selection Criteria for the Evaluation of Aboriginal Studies and Torres Strait Islander Studies

Selection matrix for use in evaluating how useful and appropriate literature and other resources are for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies. It provides an easy to use set of questions to ensure that resources are current and culturally appropriate.

8 Pages
Department of Education and Childrens Services
www.decs.sa.gov.au
South Australian Department of Education and Children’s Services
Enhancing the Planning and Delivery of Services to Aboriginal people in Western Australia

A guide published by the WA Department for Child Protection for funded NGO services. The guide provides practical ways of planning and evaluating services, involving Aboriginal people in overseeing and guiding service delivery, developing culturally appropriate information for Aboriginal people and engaging Aboriginal people in services.

16 Pages

Department for Child Protection – Western Australia
www.dcp.wa.gov.au
Western Australian Department for Child Protection

Involving Children and Young People – Participation Guidelines

Guidelines for effectively engaging children and young people in services designed to cater to their needs. Provides good examples and case studies of effective engagement as well as practical tips and other resources for services to use in engaging children and young people.

30 Pages

Commissioner for Children and Young People – Western Australia
www.ccyp.wa.gov.au
State Commissioner’s office for Children and Young People in Western Australia

Services to Discrete Indigenous Communities in Western Australia

Systemic level discussion paper reviewing the structural issues with entrenched disadvantage within Aboriginal communities and the impact of Government policy and program delivery cycles. May be a useful background paper.

34 Pages

Department of Indigenous Affairs Western Australia
www.dia.wa.gov.au
Western Australian Department of Indigenous Affairs
Building Better Partnerships Communications Guide

A guide developed by the Victorian Department of Human Services to provide practical communication advice in working with Aboriginal communities and organisations. This includes identifying appropriate terminology and effective communication strategies for conducting business with Aboriginal organisations and communities. It may also be useful in developing culturally appropriate information for Aboriginal audiences.

60 Pages

Department of Human Services Victoria
www.dhs.vic.gov.au
Human Services Department of Victoria

Aboriginal Child Placement Principle – Guide

A guide developed by the Victorian Department of Human Services to assist child and family services to provide culturally appropriate and effective response to Aboriginal children and young people who need to be placed in out of home care.

20 Pages

Department of Human Services Victoria
www.dhs.vic.gov.au
Human Services Department of Victoria

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Support Plan Guide

Cultural support Guide developed by Department of Human Services Victoria to assist child and family services develop cultural support plans for Aboriginal children and young people who need to be placed in out of home care. This aims to ensure continued connection to culture and family.

20 Pages

Department of Human Services Victoria
www.dhs.vic.gov.au
Human Services Department of Victoria
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Support Plan Form

Blank cultural support form developed by Department of Human Services Victoria to assist child and family services develop cultural support plans for Aboriginal children and young people who need to be placed in out of home care. It also provides practical support for developing a genogram which provides detailed information on family connections and context.

21 Pages

Department of Human Services Victoria

www.dhs.vic.gov.au

Human Services Department of Victoria

Aboriginal Cultural Competence Framework

A framework intended to guide community services organisations in the development of management strategies, policies and practices that will provide better outcomes for Aboriginal children and families. It provides both the contextual background as well as case studies to highlight implementation.

58 Pages

Department of Human Services Victoria

www.dhs.vic.gov.au

Human Services Department of Victoria

Working and Walking Together

A guide developed by SNAICC primarily to assist Family Relationship Centres working with Aboriginal families. This guide provides insight into Aboriginal perspectives on families and their various aspects. It provides historical information and practical advice on issues that are likely to be of significance to Aboriginal families or parents and ways to ensure cultural competence when responding to these issues.

180 Pages

Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC)

www.snaicc.asn.au

Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) is the national peak body in Australia representing the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families
Community Protocols for Indigenous Language Projects

Guide that explores protocols when using Aboriginal Language commercially. It should be used as a guideline for producing Aboriginal language materials at a local level. May be useful for services in working with Aboriginal communities in a community development context.

32 Pages

Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Corporation (FATSILC)

www.fatsilc.org.au

FATSILC is the national peak body for community based Indigenous language programs in Australia.

Aboriginal Cultural Protocols and Practices Policy

Government guiding policy that provides guidelines on appropriate Aboriginal protocols to use at official functions. Also provides a minimum benchmark for fees for the provision of cultural services.

4 Pages

Department of Education and Communities – Aboriginal Affairs

www.daa.nsw.gov.au

NSW Office of Aboriginal Affairs

Communicating positively: A guide to appropriate Aboriginal terminology

A guide that provides background information and guidance on appropriate word usage when working with Aboriginal people and communities

36 Pages

NSW Health

www.health.nsw.gov.au

The NSW Health Department
Aboriginal Health Impact Statement Guidelines, Declaration and Checklist

Guidelines, a declaration and checklist that accompanies all new policies to ensure that all policy development includes considerations for Aboriginal children, families and communities. Other NSW departments have similar processes. This may be a useful process for services to use to assess the impact of policies and procedures on Aboriginal families and people.

4 Pages

NSW Health
www.health.nsw.gov.au
The NSW Health Department

Engaging with Aboriginal children and families

A fact sheet for engaging with Aboriginal families, children and services. Produced for Brighter Futures services but may be useful background information for any service working with Aboriginal communities.

2 Pages

Department of Family and Community Services – Community Services
www.facs.nsw.gov.au
Community Services NSW

Budyari Ngalaya – First peoples’ business partnerships

Document that provides examples and strategies for engaging Aboriginal people and communities in business opportunities and ventures.

18 Pages

NSW Government and NSW Reconciliation Council
www.nswreconciliation.org.au
New South Wales Reconciliation Council (NSWRC) is the peak representative body for reconciliation in NSW.
Portrait of Campbelltown Region – A Partnership Community

A community profile of the Aboriginal population in the Campbelltown LGA based on the 2006 census data. It provides comparative analysis of the local Aboriginal population with the broader Campbelltown population and the NSW Aboriginal population. Please note that these profiles have been completed for Two Ways Together Partnership Communities.

31 Pages

Department of Education and Communities – Aboriginal Affairs
www.daa.nsw.gov.au
NSW Office of Aboriginal Affairs

Working with Aboriginal People and Communities A Practice Resource

A resource developed by the NSW Department of Community Services to provide practical advice in working with Aboriginal communities and organisations. This includes practical tips, historical context and communication and engagement strategies for working with Aboriginal organisations and communities. It may also be useful in developing culturally appropriate information for Aboriginal audiences.

51 Pages

Department of Family and Community Services – Community Services
www.facs.nsw.gov.au
Community Services NSW