



Walking together, Working together

YMCA COMMITMENT TO ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE

“Honesty, Caring, Respect and Responsibility”

The YMCA recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first peoples of this continent and the islands of the Torres Strait. In doing so, we acknowledge our shared history; recognise the right to self-determination and the importance of connection to and access to country. We acknowledge and respect distinct Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural differences, beliefs, values and languages.

Through walking together and working together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, the YMCA will seek to address systemic issues of political and social exclusion, economic disadvantage, and health inequality. We also support and recognise the strengths, skills and contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to the YMCA and to the Australian community.

Our commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will be achieved by our Member Associations through:

- **Achieving greater understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and culture**
Building knowledge, understanding and respect across the YMCA is fundamental to our commitment.
- **Advocating for the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people**
In particular, we are committed to upholding the rights of YMCA staff, volunteers and program participants of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent.
- **Enhancing opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to achieve social inclusion, economic participation and health equality**
The YMCA is well positioned to promote and facilitate these opportunities through our suite of programs, services, training and employment pathways.
- **Developing respectful and meaningful partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations**
Partnership development that is respectful and sustainable with long-term vision will be critical in meeting our commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

BACKGROUND

“A life of opportunity and dignity, free from discrimination and disadvantage, should not be an ideal. It is, in fact, a basic human right – one that we all share in common.”

(Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their communities continue to face systemic and structural disadvantage in Australia including significant political, social, economic and health inequalities.

Benefits gained by most Australians through significant improvements in health care and education, the advancement of a prosperous economy and a resilient labour market have not been shared by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

*“It is not credible to suggest that one of the wealthiest nations in the world cannot solve a health crisis **affecting less than three per cent of its citizens.**”*

(Tom Calma, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner)

In addition to implementing the Racial Discrimination Act 1975, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986, the Australian Government endorses the **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**, which states the right:

- to self-determination;
- to freely pursue one’s economic, social and cultural development;
- to maintain and develop one’s own political, religious, cultural and educational institutions;
- against genocide, acts of violence and forcible removal;
- against forced assimilation or destruction of one’s culture;
- to use and control lands, territories and other natural resources;
- to the protection of one’s cultural and intellectual property;
- to practice and revitalize one’s customs and spiritual, cultural, ceremonial and religious traditions;
- equal access to all social and health services (highest attainable standard of physical and mental health);
- to prior and informed consultation, participation and consent in activities of any kind that impact on indigenous peoples, their property or territories; and
- to equality and freedom from any kind of discrimination.

Making a commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their communities is important and essential for the YMCA, because:

- it is consistent with and an affirmation of our Mission;
- the issues facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are a matter of concern for all Australians;
- we have a responsibility through our mission and we also have the capacity through our broad suite of programs to provide a meaningful and sustainable response; and

- we have an opportunity to work respectfully and collaboratively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in relation to:
 - Health and wellness;
 - Children's and family services;
 - Youth development and leadership programs, including youth justice;
 - Training and employment pathways; and
 - Community capacity-building.

In undertaking this Commitment, the YMCA also recognises the value, contribution and leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations such as Reconciliation Australia, the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples and Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR).

We also recognise the leadership role of bodies such as the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.

AGREED ACTION

The YMCA Movement in Australia fully supports this commitment and with support from the YMCA Indigenous Advisory Group, will:

Achieving greater understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and culture

- Commit to a process of Movement-wide **cultural awareness training** that builds knowledge, understanding and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and culture;
- Support and actively engage with the process of developing a **Reconciliation Action Plan** that will provide a long-term framework for the YMCA Movement in translating our commitment into real and sustainable action¹;
- Promote the importance of and commit to seeking a **Welcome to Country** by traditional Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander owners of the land when holding a significant YMCA event;
- Promote the importance of and commit to offering an **Acknowledgement of Country** at the commencement of significant meetings and events to show awareness of and respect for the traditional Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander owners of the land;
- Recognise and where possible, **celebrate** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander events such as NAIDOC Week and National Reconciliation Week;

Advocating for the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

- Ensure that the **rights** of staff, volunteers and program participants of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent are promoted and upheld through anti-discrimination policies and practices;
- Provide opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, volunteers and program participants to **input into YMCA** policies and program development;
- Advocate for positive and **sustainable government policy** with regard to the rights of and building the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their communities;

Enhancing opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to achieve social inclusion, economic participation and health equality

- Commit to a focus on programs, services and initiatives that **enable communities and promote enhanced social inclusion** of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people such as leadership development programs, family support programs, drug and alcohol prevention and youth justice programs;

¹ The development of a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) will be undertaken in partnership and consultation with Reconciliation Australia as the recognised national body to provide recognition and registration of a YMCA RAP.

- Promote enhanced opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, with a particular **focus on young people** under the age of 25²;
- Commit as a Movement to **reducing health inequalities** faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a particular focus on the prevention of diabetes, obesity, and cardiovascular disease³;
- Support a research process to determine what **barriers to employment** currently exist for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within the YMCA;
- Commit to setting a minimum **target of 2.7% employment** of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the YMCA Movement by 2015⁴;
- Commit to achieving **greater Board diversity** including a focus on the recruitment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- Create an environment in which the YMCA is viewed as an **employer of choice** for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through the establishment of targeted training, employment and mentoring initiatives.

Developing respectful and meaningful partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations

- Commit to the development of a **community engagement** and partnership development framework that embeds accepted cultural protocols; and
- Commit to **working in collaboration** with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations in recognition of established relationships, community knowledge and understanding.

² More than half of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population (58 %) are under 25 years of age, compared to 35 % for the general population.

Australian Bureau of Statistics;

<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mediareleasesbytitle/DCB91FA5DAD5D5E0CA256BDA007CEBBC?OpenDocument>

³ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are 3 times more likely to develop diabetes than non-Indigenous people, 57% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are overweight or obese and deaths from cardiovascular disease occur at 3 times the rate of non-Indigenous Australians; <http://www.healthinonet.ecu.edu.au/health-facts/summary>

⁴ This is the target committed to by the Australian Government for employment across the Commonwealth Public Service, reflecting the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) National Partnership on Indigenous Economic Participation.

<http://www.deewr.gov.au/Indigenous/Employment/Pages/PublicSectorEmployment.aspx>