

CANA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander solidarity commitments

These commitments have been formed from the bottom up, initiated and guided through discussions between Climate Action Network Australia members and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We especially appreciate guidance from Amelia Telford and Lidia Thorpe¹, Brooke Prentis and Aimee Mehan. Previous versions of this document have been shared with all CANA member groups and more than 30 groups contributed to the development of these commitments.

Climate Action Network Australia (CANA) is a network of about 100 civil society organisations taking actions to protect people from climate change, to safeguard our natural environment, and to build a fair, clean, healthy Australia for everyone.

Our network commits to building relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and engaging and working respectfully with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples² to uphold climate justice.

This process is part of a journey towards genuine relationships of solidarity that require transformative organisational and personal change. This is the responsibility of non-Indigenous Australians who live on stolen land and benefit from the dispossession of lands and waters from their traditional owners. We have a responsibility for decolonisation and remedying the harms of the past including systemic racism, injustice and discrimination. We need to do this work both as individuals and in all dimensions of our organisations.

This process, and the actions identified below need to be accompanied by deep and genuine relationships that endure beyond specific campaigns. Solidarity must be core business.

We all stand on the shoulders of the leadership of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and campaigners including those within the climate movement. As Brooke Prentis points out, “Aboriginal peoples have been fighting for a safe climate for all for over 250 years.”

CANA members may demonstrate their solidarity in many ways, beyond the commitments outlined here, with action plans that reflect their unique relationships and circumstances. Many member groups have detailed action plans. For other organisations, these commitments will require further resources, and be implemented over time. Implementing these actions across the network will require larger, better resourced climate groups to share resources with and support smaller groups.

We commit to continuing and deepening our work of solidarity with Indigenous communities and to addressing the impacts of colonisation. We learn by doing. This process and these commitments will evolve and strengthen through action.

The climate movement commits to solidarity with and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We invite all CANA members to endorse and implement the following commitments:

¹ In particular, Lidia Thorpe’s report, ‘What First Nations People Want from the Climate Movement’

² These commitments relate primarily to relationships between the civil society organisations that are members of CANA and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Whilst “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples” has primarily been used it should also be interchangeable with “Indigenous peoples” and “First Nations peoples” and the best use of language should be based on relationship. We also acknowledge that priority for Aboriginal peoples should be to specific names for country, nation, clan, or people group where relevant and for Torres Strait Islander peoples should be to specific island names.

[Member commitment]

Our commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander solidarity

In solidarity with and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, our organisation commits to building relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and engaging and working respectfully with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples³ to uphold climate justice.

The following actions are the next steps in our journey towards solidarity We commit to undertake these actions in good faith, allocating time and resource to progress work towards these outcomes.

1. Principles for working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

We recognise that relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is core business. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples campaigns, rights and interests don't silo climate and nature issues.

- a. **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples:** We will be guided by, uphold, and not contravene the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#).
- b. **Nothing about us without us:** We will apply the principles of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) to any campaign planning decision affecting the protection or management of Country or its natural values and resources.

Note: FPIC is a principle protected by international human rights standards that state, "All peoples have the right to self-determination" and "all peoples have the right to freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development." We will prioritise training to build understanding and capacity within our organisations and network to implement FPIC principles and practices.

- c. **Principles of respectful engagement:** We will respectfully engage with all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. When engaging on specific country or Aboriginal nation or specific island in the Torres Strait, we will establish relationships with those with cultural authority and community authority such as Traditional Owners, Elders, and Leaders. In some areas there may be more than one Traditional Owner group, Elder, or Leader. It is recommended that principles of respectful engagement are complemented by specific principles of engagement in a Memorandum of Understanding or another guiding mutual agreement⁴ and agreed upon with those with cultural authority and community authority. There will be times when climate groups and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will have different and potentially contrary priorities and perspectives. In these situations, we will maintain respectful relationships.

³ These commitments relate primarily to relationships between the civil society organisations that are members of CANA and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Whilst "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples" has primarily been used it should also be interchangeable with "Indigenous peoples" and "First Nations peoples" and the best use of language should be based on relationship. We also acknowledge that priority for Aboriginal peoples should be to specific names for country, nation, clan, or people group where relevant and for Torres Strait Islander peoples should be to specific island names.

⁴ E.g. Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory Partnership Principles <http://www.amsant.org.au/apont/our-work/non-government-organisations/apo-nt-ngo-principles/>

- d. **Appropriate compensation for work:** we will remunerate and recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who have provided services, knowledge, expertise and/or time.

2. Sovereign Hub

- a. **Sovereign Spaces:** We will consider establishing or supporting Sovereign Spaces. This could include support for the establishment of campaign hubs in our state, region or major city to provide the space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples working for climate justice and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led organisations and campaigns to work in a self-determined way, providing the opportunity to connect with the climate/ environment movement, to mutually learn, skill-share and grow solidarity.

Note: ACF are working with indigenous campaigners in Victoria to create a sovereign hub at the 60L Green Building in Melbourne as recommended in Lidia Thorpe's report to decolonise the environment movement. The hub will be resourced as a centre for First Nations-led campaigning. Other CANA member groups have expressed interest in establishing sovereign hubs in Sydney and Brisbane. This will include creating virtual/online spaces for campaigns led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Climate groups will share resources such as our Zoom accounts and online campaign tools and platforms.

3. Resourcing

We will give at least 1% of annual income to campaigns led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and peoples. This is recognition of stolen land and Indigenous sovereignty. This can be through establishment of a Sovereign Space, through mechanisms such as 'pay the rent' and Voice, Treaty, Truth, directly giving to organisations and campaigns, or to Traditional Owners and Traditional Owner groups.

- a. **Pay-The-Rent: We will consider paying the rent to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples around Australia,** to recognise and make reparations for the cost of stolen land, to recognise sovereignty, and to respect and support self-determination.
- b. **Identify and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander campaign(s) that align with our purpose.** When we share information about campaigns led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, we will do it with consent, ethically and in relationship to prevent cultural appropriation.
- c. **Contribute to help fund** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led organisations taking climate action including Traditional Owners, community organisations, grassroots groups, families, land councils and non-profit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations. Ideally, this would be an annual commitment rather than a one-off.
- d. **Connect our donors and supporters with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and people and help cultivate these relationships.** This may include directing our supporters to the donate pages and online petitions and actions of campaigns and organisations led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Note: As not-for-profit organisations, CANA members are bound by legal and privacy obligations and safeguards. In particular, charitable organisations are regulated by the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission to ensure funds are directed toward charitable purposes defined by the Charities Act 2013.

Note: Sharing donors and supporters may include member groups providing details of campaigns and organisations led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with our donors and members, encouraging them to donate and support.

4. Reforming our organisations

- a. **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and board members:** We will employ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We will elect or appoint Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Board members, and give consideration to expense reimbursement and remuneration even if a volunteer board. We will ensure appropriate support for employees, cultural safety within our organisations (see 4d below), and be mindful to avoid tokenism (e.g. a single person).
- b. **Allocated budget:** We will dedicate budget line to ensure our own engagement and solidarity with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations and their campaigns.
- c. **Commit funding for internal training:** We will ensure staff, Board members, volunteers and other people active in our organisation receive cultural awareness training and anti-racism training led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups and organisations, where possible with cultural authority for the nations on whose land we are working.
- d. **Make our organisation (physical and virtual) culturally safe:** Cultural safety means creating environments where people feel safe – where there’s no challenge to their identity, and where their needs can be met. Assessments about how culturally safe an organisation is, should be made by one or more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Cultural safety must be embedded in our policies and practices. One way to maintain momentum and accountability around cultural safety in our organisations is to convene a working group or committee with staff and board representation.
- e. **Lead by example in the environment movement:** We, along with the 100 community groups in CANA are just part of the climate movement which is part of a broader environment movement. We will share our commitments and what we learn about working in solidarity with the broader climate/environment sector to encourage a deepening of solidarity across the wider movement.

CANA Network Support Team commitments and actions:

We recognise the power of this work is not simply in the commitments adopted and implemented, but also in the process of continuous improvement, support for one another as we take action towards these commitments, and in the shared learning that furthers our collective work towards solidarity.

In addition to the above, the CANA Network Support Team commit to the following:

- CANA CEO and Leaders meetings will incorporate candid discussion on progress with these actions as a standing agenda item. Agendas will allocate time to seeking input and advice from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander CEOs, ensuring an Indigenous assessment of our progress in implementing these commitments.
- CANA’s Network Support Team will coordinate 4 forums each year such as “Brown Bag Lunches” for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the CANA network to lead topics and discussions of their choice.
- CANA’s Network Support Team will also coordinate forums such as “Brown Bag Lunches” to showcase progress made by member organisations to implement these commitments and facilitate networking opportunities.
- CANA can advise the sector of available training in cultural awareness, anti-racism and decolonisation. Our network will work to ensure training is available to members regardless of size, budget and geography.

Next steps

To ensure we learn from our actions, these commitments will be a standing item in the agenda of CANA Leaders meetings. These discussions will include:

- Ongoing dialogue between CANA members and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations about these commitments and how we implement them.
- The proposal to establish a CANA working group to support members as we honour and implement these commitments and to further strengthen the commitments.
- Creating sovereign hubs in Sydney and Brisbane and sharing infrastructure with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander campaigners beyond capital cities.
- Sharing resources between CANA members.
- Developing a strengthened and shared understanding about Free, Prior and Informed Consent and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; what these mean in practice (e.g. through training)
- Many CANA members have endorsed the Statement from the Heart, Change the Date, Black Lives Matter and other campaigns. Involvement in these should be made in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations with whom members have relationships.

Recommended resources

- CANA will maintain a directory of recommended cultural competency and anti-racism trainers. Please help us expand this directory by sharing details of recommended trainers. Email james@cana.net.au
- Building Bridges, 'Working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, their families and communities' <https://www.buildingbridgesproject.info/recommendations>
- CSIRO, 'Our Knowledge Our Way in caring for Country: Indigenous-led approaches to strengthening and sharing our knowledge for land and sea management' <https://www.csiro.au/en/Research/LWF/Areas/Pathways/Sustainable-Indigenous/Our-Knowledge-Our-Way>
- Human Rights Commission, 'Cultural safety and security: Tools to address lateral violence' <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/chapter-4-cultural-safety-and-security-tools-address-lateral-violence-social-justice>
- Lane Sainty, 23/1/19, 'These Aboriginal Australians Want You To Consider "Paying The Rent" To Traditional Owners' BuzzFeed, <https://www.buzzfeed.com/lanesainty/pay-the-rent-aboriginal-australia>
- Uluru Statement <https://ulurustatement.org>
- United Nations manual on Free, Prior and Informed Consent: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/publications/2016/10/free-prior-and-informed-consent-an-indigenous-peoples-right-and-a-good-practice-for-local-communities-fao/>
- United Nations advice on Free, Prior and Informed Consent <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/publications/2016/10/free-prior-and-informed-consent-an-indigenous-peoples-right-and-a-good-practice-for-local-communities-fao/>
- Victorian Government, Department of Health, Human and Community Services, 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Safety Framework: Part 1' <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/publications/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-cultural-safety-framework>
- Several CANA members have offered to share their solidarity action plans, including Tipping Point and ACF.