



The United Nations Declaration  
on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples  
(UNDRIP)



## What is the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)?

- The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) is a non-binding document adopted by the United Nations on September 13 2007.
- In recognising the “urgent need to respect and promote the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples,” the UNDRIP acts to enshrine rights that “constitute the minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the Indigenous peoples of the world.”
- The Declaration provides a framework for countries with different histories and circumstances to help reduce levels of disadvantage and discrimination experienced by many of the world’s 370 million Indigenous peoples.
- The Declaration draws existing rights from other international laws and conventions such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and explains how these apply to Indigenous peoples. These include rights to culture, identity, language, land, employment, education, and health.
- Once enacted, each of the 46 articles listed in UNDRIP provide clear guidance to advancing reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider Australian community.

## What is Australia’s current status in relation to the UNDRIP?

- When UNDRIP was first conceived in September 2007, Australia was among only four countries to vote against its adoption.
- On 3 April 2009, following a change of government, Australia then shifted its position in support of UNDRIP.
- In adopting UNDRIP, “Australia takes another important step in re-setting the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and moving forward towards a new future,” explained then-Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Jenny Macklin.
- Although UNDRIP is non-binding, Australia accepted UNDRIP as a framework for better recognising and protecting the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.
- In November 2015, the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) held its twenty-third session. The UPR is a process which involves a review of the human rights records of all 193 UN Member States. On 9 November 2015, this included a review of Australia.

- Recommendations from the 104 countries that made statements during the UPR included adherence to and/or implementation of the Declaration.
- A number of concerns were raised in relation to Australia's treatment of Indigenous peoples. These included reports of high-levels of discrimination against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Japan), and that greater efforts were needed to ensure to enact and protect the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. (New Zealand). Disproportionately high rates of Indigenous incarceration were also raised as a significant concern (Norway).
- In response to the recommendations of UPR, in March 2016, Australia reaffirmed a number of its commitments to improving the lives of Australia's Indigenous peoples. This included measures to further implement its [Indigenous Peoples Strategy 2015-2019](#), to better assist Indigenous women who were victims of family violence, and to develop a number of disability-inclusive strategies.
- Yet in Australia today, unacceptable gaps across a number of areas – health, life expectancy, education, justice, and the right to be free of racism and discrimination, among them – continue to exist for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

### **How can Australia better implement the UNDRIP to bring about better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians?**

- The reconciliation movement is about recognising and healing the past and committing to a better future - a future in which we value First Australians and provide justice and equity for all.
- To realise a shared vision for a reconciled future, we must do more to 'close the gap' in a range of outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians.
- Despite the challenges that lie ahead, there is an underlying desire for a more unified nation. Reconciliation Australia encourages governments at all levels to take action to progress the aspirations of the UNDRIP.
- To achieve this, Reconciliation Australia encourages the next Federal Government, and indeed all governments, to work in genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their representative bodies.
- We must continue to harness the goodwill and aspirations of the Australian people and fuel the national conversation for the next 25 years. Only by maintaining this momentum do we have hope of achieving a just, equitable and reconciled Australia.