

## Being an Ally to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

Anglicare NT staff commit to the values of respect, fairness, integrity, kindness, and hope. We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the custodians of the land and commit to their self-determination.

Because of that foundation, Anglicare NT staff are committed to being strong 'allies' for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

An ally is someone who recognises their privilege and actively promotes individuals and communities whose voices, instead of speaking for them. To be an ally takes skill, as well as intent and a good heart. It is so easy to blur the role of an ally when we move from 'good intention' to paternalism, when we stumble into 'doing for' instead of 'doing with' or 'standing behind'.

There are no easy models or formulas for how to be a good ally. Good intentions are often not enough. Every relationship built needs a different approach. Here are some suggestions that will help you to get started.

### 1. Amplify of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's voice

Do not speak on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. A big part of being an ally is to support the amplification the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, allowing them to lead on matters relating to them. Do not promote stories about yourself. Where possible, directly share the words of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in their words without alteration.

Take the time to listen

### 2. Listen to and follow the community

Find out who the Traditional Owners and Elders are of the land you are on. In working to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights, build strong relationships within the community and make sure everything is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander -led.

### 3. Learn the historical and cultural context

Knowing the history and being culturally competent is vital. The issues Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people face come from hundreds of years of ongoing trauma and discrimination. It is not the responsibility of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to educate you.

### 4. Always seek consent and permission

Consent is a continuous process, not a one-time request. Seek permission before taking part in community events, particularly around cultural and spiritual events. They'll usually be labelled something like 'all community and allies welcome'.

### 5. Be responsible for yourself

Be aware of what resources you're taking away from communities and families through your presence. Ensure you've given back to the community and people you work with more than you've taken away.

### 6. Know when to step back

Be aware of what space you are taking up. There will be times when the community and families need to act alone: respect their boundaries. True self-determination means supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, working together, and not speaking on the subjects that affect our lives.

### 7. Saviours are not needed, solidarity is

Solidarity is standing shoulder to shoulder with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people when it counts. It takes an active interest and is only meaningful if it is substantive and not merely tokenistic or performative. Show up and keep showing up. Standing with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, means all the time. It is not about YOU and not just the bits you like!

### 8. Be mindful of Aboriginal people's cultural load

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people often must be advocates on a wide range of issues that affect them, their family, and community. They don't have the choice to switch off from being involved and can be spread thin in many directions.

**9. Be respectful and open to learning**

Step back and provide people with a safe space to speak freely for themselves about the subjects that are affecting our lives, people and community. When you do this, you will start to gain respect from us and you'll learn a lot more, too.

**10. Be OK with not always being part of the conversation**

At times, discussions or yarns may be off-limits to non-Aboriginal people. Be okay with not being included in everything and accept some decisions must be made by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Don't question the outcome of these conversations

**11. Say something when you hear someone say inappropriate things about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people**

If you hear someone say something racist, reinforcing stereotypes or being dismissive about Aboriginal people and culture — say something. Not saying something means condoning their attitudes.

**12. Don't take it personally when people don't agree with you**

Understand that a good ally can sometimes be wrong on issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. You need to be resilient. Pick yourself up, dust yourself off and go back to the position of an ally.

**13. Understand that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are not all the same**

Appreciate and value the variety of perspectives Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander bring to public debate. Allow people to air various opinions without being upset or surprised that we don't agree. No two experiences are the same, unless you have experiences of injustice and inequality, it is very hard to understand the experiences of those who have.

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**(Adapted from** 10 ways to be a genuine ally to First Nations communities (amnesty.org.au) (online July 2022)

How to be an ally to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by Alice Currie | ReachOut Australia (online August 22)