

DETERMINING APPROPRIATE FIRST NATIONS NAMES IN ABC CONTENT

As part of its Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), the ABC aims to increase the use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nation names in our content, including commissioned content.¹ All content makers have a responsibility towards this RAP commitment. There are many ways content makers can achieve this aim. Common methods include the use of nation names in scripts, graphics, and end cards.

The ABC does not determine cultural heritage boundaries or title claims. Generally, any ABC acknowledgements of country should reflect official reference (e.g. a determination through native title or a similar mechanism, or governmental usage). Where constraints permit, all relevant groups for an area should be listed.

Some general principles for determining which nation name to use for a given area, listed in order:

1. Follow state reference
2. Consider context
3. Seek advice

Follow official reference

Several mechanisms currently operate to formally recognise an area's traditional owners, and many local governments have already done the work for you. The ABC should follow such official reference wherever possible. Several tools exist to make your search easier. These include:

- Local land councils
- [The National Native Title Tribunal](#) (National)
- [Cultural heritage body boundaries](#) (QLD)
- [Registered Aboriginal Parties map](#) (VIC)
- Government websites (e.g. [this ACT government disclaimer](#))

Consider context

Many areas do not have an official (i.e. state-determined) language or nation group. Where an “unofficial” name has widespread use, such as *Gadigal country* for inner Sydney, using that is ordinarily low-risk. When an area has “official” nation group, and there is no unofficial name in widespread use, find the appropriate local nation or language group name. The [Gambay map](#) and [Austlang database](#) are good starting points for this work, as are local land councils. **Do not use the 1996 AIATSIS map for the purposes of determining cultural boundaries.**

Be aware: there may be contention between different peoples, or between revitalised and historical traditions. In many cases there will be variation in spelling for the same name. In rare cases, the difference in spelling will be material (i.e. indicating two different groups or rival spelling systems). Always check with community if unsure. It is usually better to not list a nation or language group than to list one in error.

¹ While “nation names” is the wording used in the RAP document, in practice this also encompasses language names and place names.



Seek advice

Much work has already been done towards this RAP commitment internally. If, after the above, you do not have a clear idea of the appropriate group to acknowledge – or you have any further questions – contact [the Editorial Policies team](#) for further advice.

