



*“These are things that I didn’t know and by knowing now what has been taught, I can use these knowledge and skills to try and make a change for my people to live harmoniously and peacefully with their rightful lands and to be recognised once again.”*

## **Program Report**

**Thursday Island,  
Torres Strait**

**August 26-30, 2013**

***Indigenous Peoples,  
Human Rights and Advocacy  
Training Program***



## Executive Summary

The Program *'Indigenous Peoples, Human Rights and Advocacy Training'*, was held on Thursday Island, the Torres Strait, August 26 -30 2013. This program was developed in partnership with The Fred Hollows Foundation.

Although DTP has been working with Indigenous Australian advocates since it was established in 1989, this was the first training program to be delivered in the Torres Strait. In 2011, while developing and facilitating a program in Townsville, Queensland with Amnesty International Australia DTP became aware of the strong interest in the Torres Strait in the training. A request was made for DTP to bring a program to the region. In 2012 The Fred Hollows Foundation acknowledged the importance of making the training accessible to Torres Strait Islanders and agreed to partner the DTP in delivering this in 2013. The participants noted that it was the first human rights training to be delivered in the region and that they were very appreciative of the support from The Fred Hollows Foundation in enabling this.

The program brought together representatives from a number of the Torres Strait Islands - Darnley, Mabuiag, Moa, Badu, Saibai, Horn and Murray Island and each of the four regions of the Torres Strait was represented. There were also participants from Bamaga on the Queensland northern peninsula and from mainland Northern Queensland. The participants were all actively involved in working to protect the rights of Torres Strait Islanders and Aboriginal Peoples, and protecting culture and traditional tribal structures and sovereignty were unifying concerns.

*"I enjoyed all parts of the course – everyone brought their own personal experience and knowledge to the groups and felt comfortable to share it with us."*

In the course of the training, the participants engaged in discussions about their issues of concern and worked with these topics in a number of practical advocacy and campaigning exercises. In this way the training afforded the group an opportunity to raise their concerns, to identify the possibilities of utilising human rights standards and mechanisms to seek just outcomes and to develop action plans for concerted lobbying and campaigning on their concerns. The program was evaluated positively by all participants and hopes were expressed that there would be future opportunities for the training to be delivered in the Torres Strait.

The Diplomacy Training Program and The Fred Hollows Foundation would like to express their gratitude to Mr Robert Sagigi (Uncle Bongo) for his advice and support with all aspects of program development and delivery.

DTP would also like to acknowledge the team of trainers and resource people who were generous in donating their time and expertise. A Welcome to Country was provided by Mr Eliza Wasaga, an Elder and traditional owner of the Kaurareg Nation. Uncle Bongo and Phillip Mills (OA) provided cultural context for the training content throughout the program. Dr Sarah Pritchard (SC) delivered the training on human rights, the United Nations and international law and the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Bill Barker, a former Australia diplomat specialising in human rights and Indigenous affairs shared his knowledge and experience of lobbying and advocacy. The team from National Congress of Australia's First Peoples facilitated a day of dialogue

on the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Sandra Creamer was available to support participants through the training.

Finally DTP would like to thank The Fred Hollows Foundation, particularly Tania McLeod from the Foundation and also the participants whose generous sharing of experiences, insights, knowledge and support inspired and encouraged each other and the trainers and facilitators.

## Participant's Evaluation

The Torres Strait program was evaluated very favourably by the participants. The feedback was that the training was interesting, empowering and useful. Participants noted that the greater understanding of their rights which resulted from the training had increased their confidence to engage with governments, councils and NGOs in order to speak up on their issues of concern.

When asked what were **the best parts or sessions of the program**, the majority of participants told us that they found all sessions valuable.

*All parts .... I really enjoyed all session, eye opener, very interesting and empowering. I enjoyed the whole workshop, theory and practical aspects of it. Challenging and inspirational.*

A number of participants acknowledged the other participants, they noted both the breadth of experience in the program and the shared commitment to autonomy.

*Meeting people from everywhere around Torres Strait and Australia. And also the program and how it was facilitated. How it will benefit us back in our communities.*

*Views and concerns delivered from cultural regions. Focus was one – identifying true autonomy.*

Given the opportunity to provide feed back on **the least useful sessions** participants consistently reported that none of the sessions could be nominated and where there was some dissatisfaction with a session it was due to insufficient time to thoroughly discuss the content.

*All sessions of the program were interesting. We only need more time to be spent in the training.*

*Self-determination, property right – It's interesting I want to learn more about it, session was too short.*

Many participants expressed their enthusiasm to share the content of the training with family and community.

*I will be able to share it with my colleagues and my family and friends – especially when they feel that their human rights have been violated in some way.*

*...motivates me to advocate for my people and for me to encourage and educate my people to exercise their individual Human Right.*

A number of participants had plans for practical implementation of the training, including assisting Elders with a current legal case, negotiating with agencies for services , advocating for improved government accountability for service delivery and,

*To help me battle the issue the community/ (I) am facing more legally and non-violently.*

*It will assist the people in my community to further their knowledge in progressing and improving the injustices of paternal colonisation that is still happening, e.g to improve better housing facilities and improving essential services like reduction in alcohol consumption, drugs intake, to support our people become more aware of what/how human rights can help indigenous peoples.*

The **length** of the program, **degree of difficulty** and usefulness of the **training materials** were all positively evaluated by the majority of participants.

A number of participants reported that they would be using the materials to pass on the knowledge.

*Very useful. It will be useful for future workshops on educating my people on human rights. (Reading materials are very useful tools.)*

*All the materials provided will be very useful to me in the future, implementing it in the workplace, and my position as a secretary of the Tribal Council on my island.*

The following is a tabulation of the ratings given by participants assessing the objectives of the program:

Program Objective	1 (Very poor)	2 (Poor)	3 (Average)	4 (Good)	5 (Very Good)
To build knowledge of Human Rights and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and how this applies to Indigenous Peoples.			1	5	10
To look at the international Human Rights framework and the obligations of the Australian government to respect, protect and fulfil Human Rights and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.			1	3	12

To explore how Human Rights can be used to hold government accountable at the state, national and international level.			1	4	10
To develop practical lobbying and advocacy skills.			1	6	9
To provide opportunities for participants to share and learn from each others' experiences and to develop support networks.				6	10

\*A funeral on the final day prevented some participants from completing their evaluations

We received some advice that the sessions could have been longer and covered in more detail. Some participants would have liked the program to span over a two week period to achieve these aims. Participants commented that they would have liked to have seen information on native title, culture and heritage and financial management.

Overall the participants evaluated the program favourably and thanked the trainers for their time.