**Being ‘in-there’ not ‘out-there’:**

**Urban planning and Aboriginal peoples**

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**Abstract:** An Australian myth is that Aboriginals reside only in the far reaches of Northern Territory, Queensland and Western Australia. Such is far from the truth.

2016 Australian Bureau of Statistics census data evidences an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of approximately 649,171, or 2.8% of Australia’s total population, and projects that this population will increase to between 907,800 and 945,600 people by 2026 (ABS 2011). The largest population concentrations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are in New South Wales (208,500) and Queensland (189,000), and they comprise 25.5% of the total population of Northern Territory (ABS 2016). More significantly, 35% of this Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population live in Australia’s major cities and 20% in regional cities; 50.4% of Victoria’s Indigenous population live in metropolitan Melbourne. These statistics confound this myth, and deceptively hide ‘*Country’* of kin associations under generic ‘Aboriginal’ or ‘Torres Strait Islander’ categories, thereby not depicting real population profiles about Indigenous Australians. More importantly, the statistics raise questions about the sustainment, capacity and practice of Aboriginal relationships and engagement with their ‘home’ *Country* as distinct from their adopted or transitionary ‘*Country’* of residence.

This presentation will summarise and analyse this statistical data, historical settlement patterns, population structure and the cultural dynamics of Aboriginal populations focusing in particular upon the urban footprints of Melbourne and South East Queensland (SEQ). Further examination of these two urban centres suggests the need for a framework towards the development of contemporary protocols to support Traditional Owners, urban Aboriginal populations, planning professionals and governments.

**Key words:** *Country;* Aboriginal peoples; urban populations; Brisbane; South East Queensland; Melbourne

**Introduction**

In 2017, Indigenous community planning across Australia continues to have limited scope and application in Australia’s major urban and peri urban areas in terms of Aboriginal Traditional Owner (TO) identity, cultural well-being and relationships to *‘Country’*. This issue is further compounded by contemporary approaches to official data collection programs that provide an incomplete picture of the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their intergenerational distrust of Governments. This is despite the younger urban Aboriginal cohort not living under previous colonial policies and mainstream cohesion for assimilation to a white Australia.

Also in 2017, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples celebrated four important milestones; the 50th anniversary of the 1967 Referendum, 25 years since the historic Mabo Australian High Court decision, the ‘Uluru Statement from the Heart’ and “Our Languages Matter” (the theme for the annual National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) event). Each of these events reinforces the importance, resilience and richness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and cultures in modern Australia. The evident diversity at these events is also characteristic of the diverse identities, relationships to *‘Country’*, settlement patterns and populations structure of Aboriginal Peoples. However, it is not yet reflected in data collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (Biddle 2014).

This diversity is more evident in the urban and peri-urban footprints of South East Queensland (SEQ) and Melbourne. These regions were selected as part of an Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage project entitled ‘Being *‘On Country, Off Country’* (LP150100379)’ as they are in proximity to 2 peri urban Aboriginal communities that have achieved successful Native Title determinations; the Quandamooka Peoples and the Gunditjmara Peoples.

In contemporary urban and peri-urban Australia, Aboriginal Peoples’ identify with each other through geographic variables based on traditional cultural kinship systems. As an example, developed from various sources of non-ABS data, a basic level understanding of the Quandamooka Peoples of SEQ and the Gunditjmara Peoples of south western Victoria is tabulated in Table 1. It is clear in Table 1 that urban and peri-urban Aboriginal Peoples identify through an ordered system of contemporary geographical and traditional variables of identity data. As a collective, Aboriginal Peoples truly are a diverse mob.

**Table 1: Basic level population data variables of the Quandamooka Peoples and the Gunditjmara Peoples**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Colonial variables** | **Pre-colonial data variables – geography and kinship system** | | |
| **Level 1 - State geographical based name** | **Level 2 – *Country / TO(TO) group* / Language group** | **Level 3 - Peoples / TO sub-groups / Place names associated to specific tracts of land** | **Level 4 - Family** |
| QLD **–** *Murri* | *Quandamooka Country /*  *Quandamooka Peoples /*  *Jandai, Yuggera language* | *Nughi (Mulgumpin)*  *Gorenpul (Minjerribah)*  *Nunukul (Minjerribah)* | *Nuclear and extended family* |
| < Mob - wholly or at each level > | | | |
| VIC – *Koorie*  *(38 TO groups)* | *Gunditjmara Country /*  *Gunditjmara Peoples /*  *10 language groups:*  *Dhauwurd Wurrung, Koornkopanoot, Bi:gwurrung, Wulluwurrung, Gundara, Oykangand, Gugu Dhaw, Ngandi, Gundungerre, Kurtjar* | *According to the literature there are as many as* ***59 TO sub groups*** *of the Gunditjmara People. It was decided for this tables that the*  *59 were too numerous to list.* | *Nuclear and extended* |

(Source: Austlang, 2017; Australian Government, 1995; Creative Spirits, 2017; QYAC, 2017).

However, not all the above mentioned variables are reflected in the data collection categories on Aboriginal peoples that are managed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). In 2017, the official ABS (2016) census data collections comprised only two relevant categories, which are the standard classification of “Indigenous Status” that are structured by 2 criteria levels and 4 categories represented in Table 2.

**Table 2 – Australian Bureau of Statistics data for the “Indigenous Status” category**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Level** | | **Categories** |
| 1 | Indigenous | Aboriginal but not Torres Strait Islander Origin  Torres Strait Islander but not Aboriginal Origin  Both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Origin |
| 2 | Non-Indigenous | Neither Aboriginal nor Torres Strait Islander Origin |

(Source: ABS, 2016)

The ABS (2016) standard classification for “Australian Indigenous Languages” is structured by a broad group, a narrow group and language. Table 3 lists the Australian Indigenous languages by broad group and narrow group and only the total number of languages are included, not by name.

**Table 3 – Australian Bureau of Statistics use of “Australian Indigenous Languages” structure by broad group and number of languages**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Australian Indigenous Language Spoken at home- by region** | **Number of languages** |
| Arnhem Land and Daly River Region Languages | 50 |
| Yolngu Matha | 56 |
| Cape York Peninsula Languages | 20 |
| Torres Strait Island Languages | 4 |
| Northern Desert Fringe Area Languages | 16 |
| Arandic | 12 |
| Western Desert Languages | 18 |
| Kimberley Area Languages | 15 |
| Other Australian Indigenous Languages | 53 |

(Source: ABS, 2016)

At the regional planning level, the known and accepted Traditional Owner groups within the footprint of Melbourne Indigenous Region is listed in Table 4 although only the Wurundjeri and Wadawurrung are recognised under the Victorian *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (Vic)* as ‘Recognised Aboriginal Parties’. In terms of the Traditional Owner groups of the Brisbane Indigenous Region, at the time of writing this paper, the available published sources recognised the groups listed in Table 4 however it is understood that more definitive research by the Queensland South Native Title Services will clarify and more closely define TO groups in the near future.

**Table 4 – South East Queensland and Melbourne Traditional Owner groups**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **South East Queensland** | **Melbourne** |
| Jagera | Wurundjeri |
| Quandamooka | Boonwurrung |
| Gubi Gubi | Wathaurong |
| Yugambeh |  |

(Note: ‘Wathaurong’ should now read ‘Wadawurrung’)

(Source: SEQTOLSMA 2008 and VACL, 2011)

Considering the scope and inconsistency of the data presented in Tables 1 to 4, through the ABS it remains difficult in urban and peri urban areas to determine qualitative data and the numbers of Aboriginal TOs according to language group, clan and the resident status of being *‘On Country’* or *‘Off Country’*. Biddle (2014) asserts a deficiency in ABS data according to specific geography, or *‘Country’* and the Aboriginal Peoples that belong to it and quality data that may assist the right planning concepts.

This paper seeks to highlight current limitations of data on Aboriginal Peoples that is counterproductive for determining Aboriginal identity and well-being, and to gain a deeper understanding of Aboriginal Peoples connections to *‘Country’*.

Through analysis of the recently released 2016 ABS census data and links to the four milestones, the overarching objective of the paper is to discuss ways to improve data about Aboriginal Peoples that will assist planning professionals and Aboriginal communities to consider formal processes, innovative strategies and beneficial Indigenous planning outcomes in urban and peri-urban areas.

**Methodology**

This research is part of an ARC Linkage project entitled ‘Being *‘On Country, Off Country’* (LP150100379)’, the overarching aim of this project is to validate and value the connection to *‘Country’* of unique urban and peri urban Aboriginal populations. This research has a regional level focus on Aboriginal Peoples residing in the urban and periurban footprints of South East Queensland (SEQ) and Melbourne, which both respectively mirror the footprints of the Brisbane and Melbourne Indigenous Regions. As case studies, quantitative ABS data associated with these two Indigenous Regions has been briefly analysed for its usefulness in identifying relationships to *‘Country’* and TO residency.

In comparison to rural Aboriginal populations, the SEQ and Melbourne regions are chosen as both have significant urban Aboriginal populations in terms of the rapid growth of Aboriginal diversity of Aboriginal residency. Both regions areas also border peri-urban Aboriginal communities with recognised Native Title determinations. As additional parts to the case studies, ABS data and community-controlled data held by the Registered Native Title Prescribed Body Corporate’s (RNTBC) for the Quandamooka People and the Gunditjmara People are briefly analysed for the same purpose.

Several services relating to the health, education, employment and housing needs of Aboriginal Peoples exist in urban areas and are informed by statistics which are collected through various ABS programs, including the Census of Population and Housing, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey and Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (Biddle 2014). These data sources are briefly critiqued for their usefulness in terms of land use planning and complete community profiling of urban and peri urban Aboriginal Peoples.

To argue the case for further improvements to official data collection programs on Aboriginal people, a brief review and analysis of literature from key contributing researchers is combined with the analysis of data and relationship to the four milestones. A brief discussion of results from the analysis leads to a set of recommendations and offers reasoning to suggest an improved framework for the development of modernised protocols to support traditional owners, urban Aboriginal populations, planning professionals and governments.

**Aboriginal Peoples and local community profiles**

27 May 2017 marked 50 years since the Australian 1967 Referendum on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples recognition and first official national count of Aboriginal Peoples by the then Bureau of Census and Statistics (BCS) for inclusion with the greater Australian population. Interestingly, the 1966 and 1971 censes’ excluded any full-blood Aboriginal people from their final reports, as required under the Australian Constitution (Smith 1980).

At the same time, the birth rate of mixed-race Aboriginal children continued to rise leading to human trafficking and migrations of Aboriginal people to urban areas. These events scaffolded mainstream myth building, that mixed-race and urban Aboriginal people were not authenticAboriginalsbecause it was perceived that they had abandoned their Aboriginal cultures, *‘Country’* and identity to become assimilated, ‘white’, or a *‘coconut’*. These early data and identity issues are a precursor for contemporary problems with ABS data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. This is despite Aboriginal Peoples continuing to identify amongst themselves using pre-existing traditional qualitative variables as exampled in Table 1.

The diversity of ABS census data is not conducive to the structure of urban and peri-urban Aboriginal societies and this is reflected through incomplete community profiling. This ultimately leads to misunderstandings of urban Aboriginal peoples, inaccurate assumptions about Indigenous hybridity and the ability for planning professionals to affect sustainable planning outcomes for urban Aboriginal peoples and their respective cultures.

Biddle (2014) states that, self-identity, ownership of accurate quantitative baseline data and low participation rates in small sample sizes for longitudinal research are major limitations for producing reasonable population projections of Aboriginal communities at the local level. Qualitative data also has a major role in Indigenous community planning, particularly for more accurate urban and peri urban Aboriginal community profiles to depict resident status being either *‘On Country’* or *‘Off Country’* or a mix of both, and their relationships to respective *‘Country’* and kin.

**The Uluru Statement and planning at the local level**

On 26 May 2017, the Australian Referendum Council for Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples released the ‘Uluru Statement from the Heart’. An excerpt from the Statement reads,

*“We seek a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history. In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard. We leave base camp and start our trek across this vast country. We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future*” (Referendum Commission, 2017, p1).

Firstly, the process of making agreements or ‘*Treaties*’ with First Nations should perhaps occur at the local level, then the regional level and national level. Otherwise, the Makarrata Commission, if it is established, may itself fail to recognise First Nations and dilute relationships to respective *‘Country’* for traditional owners. Perhaps it is a function for the Makarrata Commission to work with the ABS and local governments to development and manage a program of TO community profiles according to *‘Country’* and including resident status of being *‘On Country’* or *‘Off Country’*.

This means much higher levels of interest must be afforded to population demographics and the qualitative characteristics of First Nations peoples at the local planning level. In turn, this will assist in creating agreements that affects truth telling, improved consultations and positive Indigenous planning outcomes in local communities with distinct language groups. A copy of the Statement is in Appendix A.

**The Mabo decision and planning advocacy**

3 June 2017 marked the 25th anniversary of the Australian High Court Mabo decision (*Mabo and others v Queensland (No 2) (1992)*) and soon after the introduction of the Native Title system (*Native Title Act 1993 (Cwth)*), which has received mixed responses from some Aboriginal Peoples.

This is not surprising considering the current estimated 15 years back log of un-decided native title claims, which is exacerbated by the Western-informed legislative requirement that Aboriginal people must prove uninterrupted connection to their respective lands and waters that they are claiming native title status over (Creative Spirits 2017).

As stated by former Prime Minister, Paul Keating:

*“… this onerous burden of proof has placed an unjust burden on those native title claimants who have suffered the most severe dispossession and social disruption*” (Koori Mail 503, p16).

However, a negligent approach is not to be considered when proving connection to *‘Country’* (AIATSIS 2014). The success rate in procedurally proving native title that exists today is somewhat dependant on the economic capacity and organisational ability of each TO group to both substantiate and challenge positive or detrimental anthropological reports and remove any doubt of the High Court of Australia that the connection to *‘Country’* is uninterrupted (Host and Owen 2009). This matter is further exacerbated in areas were urbanisation and Freehold Title can automatically extinguish any Native Title. This builds on the myth that no real Aboriginal peoples reside in urban or peri urban areas which causes invisibility and ignorance in the planning system.

The concept of *Country* is important in this discussion, and it is relevant to define its scope and meaning. Rose (1996, p7) observes that *Country* not only a common noun but also a proper noun:

*People talk about country in the same way that they would talk about a person: they speak to country, sing to country, visit country, worry about country, feel sorry for country, and long for country. People say that country knows, hears, smells, takes notice, takes care, is sorry or happy*.

In this sense, *Country* is not an abstract place, or a specific three-dimensional place or series of places. Rather, country is four dimensional and a living entity that possesses a yesterday, today and tomorrow, a sense of purpose and consciousness, and an imperative of life that informs and validates human residency and care of a place. Within this scope, *Country* is multi-faceted, possesses richness, hosts home, and envelopes peace that includes nourishment for body, mind, and spirit.

As expressed in the ‘Uluru Statement from the Heart’, *Country* from an Aboriginal perspective is:

*Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tribes were the first sovereign Nations of the Australian continent and its adjacent islands, and possessed it under our own laws and customs. This our ancestors did, according to the reckoning of our culture, from the Creation, according to the common law from ‘time immemorial’, and according to science more than 60,000 years ago.*

*This sovereignty is* a spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land, or ‘mother nature’, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were born therefrom, remain attached thereto, and must one day return thither to be united with our ancestors. This link is the basis of the ownership of the soil, or better, of sovereignty. It has never been ceded or extinguished, and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown(Referendum Commission, 2017, p1).

Regardless of an unsuccessful claim for Native Title or existing Freehold Title, planning professionals must advocate that these connections to *‘Country’* continue for traditional owners living either *‘On Country’* or *‘Off Country’* in urban and peri urban areas. An inclusion of clearer structure of qualitative questions about relationships to *‘Country’* in official data collection program, including at the local government level, would complement existing quantitative data sets about Aboriginal peoples (Biddle 2014).

This enhanced understanding of Aboriginal peoples at the local level can assist interested planning professional and governments to achieve better Indigenous planning outcomes in urban and peri urban areas. It may also offer more weighting to the Planning Institute of Australia’s (PIA) *‘Good Planning’* policy statement (PIA 2013) and any future reinvestment of a PIA-led Reconciliation Action Plan for the discipline.

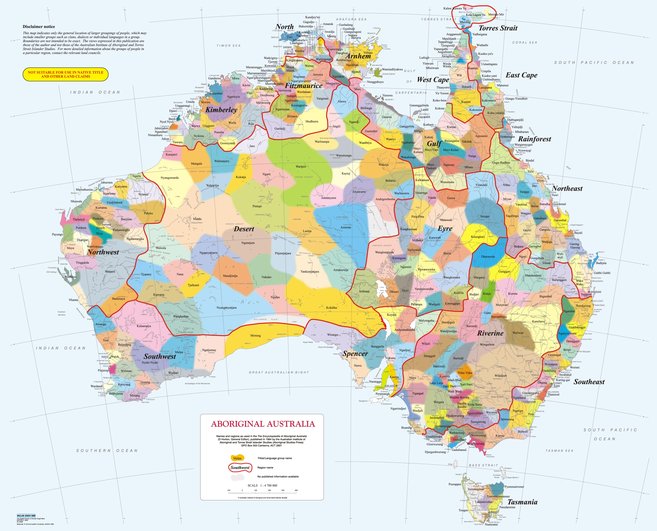
**Aboriginal language groups and collaborative planning**

The 2017 theme for NAIDOC is “Our Languages Matter” and emphasises the diversity in identity of Aboriginal people. Although, approximately 120 languages are still spoken, there are approximately 250 distinct language groups that relate to law, history, kin, culture and more importantly, *‘Country’* (National NAIDOC Secretariat 2017).

However, it is unclear at the local planning level for urban and peri-urban areas if an Aboriginal person is residing *‘On Country’* or *‘Off Country’* or a mix of both and the numbers and demographic cohorts do not accompany specific TO groups. Again, the addition of this local level data into official statistical programs may assist academics, planners, governments and more importantly, offer Aboriginal Peoples increased opportunities to organise themselves for political, economic, social and cultural enhancement (UNDRIP 2007).

Figure 4 offers a visual representation of the languages and associated *‘Country’*. The map identifies specific tracts of land which holds significant qualitative attributes in terms of Aboriginal identity. However, there is an unknown quantity of traditional owners according to respective *‘Country’* and the resident status is unknown in terms of being either *‘On Country’* or *Off Country’*. Again, these issues are further compounded in urban and peri urban areas which is where most Aboriginal Peoples reside.

**Figure 1 – Aboriginal languages and nations map (after Tindale, 1959)**



(Source: AIATSIS 2017)

**Case studies – results and discussion**

The Brisbane Indigenous Region and Melbourne Indigenous Region were chosen as research case studies. Figures 2 to 5 illustrate and offer comparison of the defined footprints for each Indigenous Region and their respective State Government Regional Planning footprints. It is clear when comparing Figures 2 and 3 that the footprints for the Brisbane Indigenous Region and the SEQ Regional Plan are identical. The footprint for the Melbourne Indigenous Region (Figure 4) and the footprint for Plan Melbourne regional map (Figure 5) are also identical.



**Figure 2 – Brisbane Indigenous region**

(Source: ABS 2007)



**Figure 3 – Footprint, SEQ Regional Plan**

(Source: SEQRP 2009)



**Figure 4 – Melbourne Indigenous Region**

(Source: ABS 2007)



**Figure 5 – Footprint, Plan Melbourne**

(Source: Plan Melbourne 2016)

However, of the two regional plans, Plan Melbourne (2016) does not include a regional map depicting the recognised Aboriginal TOs of the area, which are the Wurundjeri, Boonwurrung [also known as Bunerong] and Wadawurrung Peoples. This deficiency at the regional planning level dilutes the importance of Aboriginal peoples to the cultural fabric of Melbourne and fails to provide support for data matching of TOs according to their respective *‘Country’.*

An analysis of ABS data relating to each Indigenous region includes the categories of ‘Indigenous Status’ and ‘Australian Indigenous Languages’, which are obtained from ABS Quickstats (2016). For the purposes of this research, the ABS data relating to ‘Ancestry’ have been excluded because the responses are more focussed on non-Indigenous attributes. However, it is acknowledged that this data should be explored further for its possible merits in later research. The results and analysis of the census data for the Brisbane Indigenous Region and Melbourne Indigenous Region for the years 2016, 2011 and 2006 are summarised in Table 4.

**Table 4 – Census data, Brisbane Indigenous region and Melbourne Indigenous Region – quickstats 2016, 2011 and 2006**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Brisbane IREG - Indigenous Status** | **Census years** | | | | | |
| **2016** | | **2011** | | **2006** | |
| Aboriginal | 63,160 | | 46,880 | | 35,866 | |
| Torres Strait Islander | 4,042 | | 3,680 | | 3,361 | |
| Both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander | 3,533 | | 2,708 | | 2,142 | |
| **TOTAL** | **70,735** | | **53,268** | | **41,369** | |
| **Australian Indigenous language - top responses** | **2016** | | **2011** | | **2006** | |
| Yumplatok (Torres Strait Creole) | 170 | | 141 | | 132 | |
| Aboriginal English, so described | 86 | |  | | 43 | |
| Other Australian Indigenous Languages | 29 | | 45 | |  | |
| Kriol | 21 | | 29 | |  | |
| Wiradjuri | 19 | |  | |  | |
| Gamilaraay |  | | 16 | |  | |
| Kalaw Kawaw Ya/Kalaw Lagaw Ya |  | | 14 | | 17 | |
| Guugu Yimidhirr |  | |  | | 9 | |
| Wik Mungkan |  | |  | | 9 | |
| English only spoken at home | 66,787 | | 50,255 | | 38,652 | |
| **Melbourne IREG – Indigenous Status** | | **2016** | | **2011** | | **2006** | |
| Aboriginal | | 21,589 | | 15,876 | | 12,437 | |
| Torres Strait Islander | | 1,120 | | 1,226 | | 1,255 | |
| Both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander | | 598 | | 485 | | 439 | |
| **TOTAL** | | **23,307** | | **17,587** | | **14,131** | |
| **Australian Indigenous language - top responses** | | **2016** | | **2011** | | **2006** | |
| Aboriginal English, so described \* | | 17 | |  | | 8 | |
| Yorta Yorta \* | | 15 | | 10 | |  | |
| Wiradjuri \* | | 10 | |  | | 0 | |
| Wajarri | | 9 | |  | | 0 | |
| Luritja | |  | |  | | 8 | |
| Arrernte | |  | |  | | 8 | |
| Kunwinjku | |  | |  | | 5 | |
| Tiwi | |  | |  | | 5 | |
| Kriol | |  | | 16 | |  | |
| Ngarrindjeri | |  | | 10 | |  | |
| Djabwurrung | |  | | 10 | |  | |
| Bidjara | |  | | 6 | |  | |
| English only spoken at home | | 21,455 | | 16,164 | | 12,646 | |

(Source: ABS 2016)

In relation to Table 4, most Indigenous Peoples residing in the regions in each census period are of Aboriginal descent. In 2016, the Brisbane Indigenous Region recorded 63,160 persons with an Indigenous status of ‘Aboriginal’. Similarly, the Melbourne Indigenous Region recorded 21,589 persons with an Indigenous status of ‘Aboriginal’. A small number of the two regional Indigenous population are both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, with Brisbane recording 3533 persons and Melbourne 589 persons. The Indigenous populations in both regions has almost doubled between 2006 and 2016. It is abundantly clear that the same question about Indigenous status has continued over the three census periods (Biddle 2013), and this offers planning professionals and governments a very limited insight in to the lives of Aboriginal people living in urban and peri urban areas. There is no mechanism to identify specific TO groups or if they’re residing *‘On Country’* or *‘Off Country’*.

Interestingly, the data in Table 4 for the Brisbane Indigenous Region indicates the top numerical response for an Australian Indigenous Language as Yumplatok (Torres Strait Creole). Yumplatok also is the top recorded Indigenous language in SEQ for the 2011 (141) and 2006 (132) census periods. A list of 8 other Indigenous languages is listed and English is by far the top language spoken at home in the Brisbane Indigenous Region, recording 66,787 persons. However, none of the listed languages relate to the TO groups of SEQ and therefore provide no use for regional planning for SEQ TOs.

The top numerical response for Indigenous languages in the Melbourne Indigenous Region for 2016 (ABS) is Aboriginal English (17), followed closely by Yorta Yorta (15) [from the River Murray region], Wiradjuri (10) [from central New South Wales] and Wajarri (9) [from the Murchison area of Western Australia] as distinct from the Woiwurrung language of the Wurundjeri People. In comparison, more speakers of Wiradjuri language were recorded in the Brisbane Indigenous Region (19) in the 2016 census. English is also the top spoken language for Indigenous people residing in the Melbourne Indigenous Region. This data may not be consistent with several programs managed by the Victorian Aboriginal Languages Corporation (VACL), which relate to the Gunditjmara Peoples.

At the local level, data strictly relating to the Quandamooka Peoples and the Gunditjmara Peoples has been obtained from their respective RNTBC, which are the Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation (QYAC, 2017) and Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Corporation (Gunditj Mirring, 2017). Included is 2016 (ABS) census data on Aboriginal Peoples at the Level 3 Statistical Area and Local Government Areas (LGA) that affect current claims and determined areas of recognised Native Title for the Quandamooka Peoples and Gunditjmara Peoples.

**Table 5 – 2016 ABS census data for Aboriginal Peoples by Statistical Level 3**

**and LGA in relation to determined Native Title boundaries**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Census Year** |
| **Quandamooka Country, Aboriginal Peoples by ABS Statistical Level 3** | **2016** |
| Cleveland and North Stradbroke Island | 1,849 |
| Scarborough, Newport and Moreton Island | 200 |
| **TOTAL** | **2,049** |
| **Quandamooka Country, Aboriginal Peoples by LGA, ABS Community Profile** |  |
| Redland City Council | 3243 |
| Brisbane City Council (includes Moreton Island | 15807 |
| **TOTAL** | **19,050** |
| **Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation (RNTBC)** |  |
| Memberships - 30 June 2016 | 640 |
| **Gunditjmara Country, Aboriginal Peoples by ABS Statistical Level 3** | **2016** |
| Warrnambool | 734 |
| Glenelg - Southern Grampians | 715 |
| **TOTAL** | **1,449** |
| **Gunditjmara Country, Aboriginal Peoples by LGA, ABS Community Profile** |  |
| Moyne Shire Council | 183 |
| Southern Grampians Shire Council | 238 |
| **TOTAL** | **421** |
| **Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (RNTBC)** |  |
| Memberships - 30 June 2016 | 457 |

(Sources: ABS, 2016; LGAs various, 2016; Gunditj Mirring, 2017; QYAC, 2017).

As documented in Table 5, of the 640 registered QYAC memberships, using postcode data QYAC (2016) some 38% of Quandamooka People live *‘On Country’* either on Minjeriibah (22.5%) or elsewhere 15.8%). The remaining 62% reside *‘Off Country’*, either somewhere else in Queensland (48.6%), outside of Queensland but in Australia (12.9%), or overseas (1.5%). It must also be noted that under the *Native Title Act 1993* and subsequent regulations for RNTBCs, only traditional owners of a Native Title determination are entitled to membership (AIATSIS 2014). A similar analysis of the Gunditjmara has not yet been published. Although, it is possible for Gunditj Mirring RNTBC to complete the analysis using postcode data from its 457 memberships.

At the local planning level, the Quandamooka Peoples and Gunditjmara Peoples can determine the numbers of members and resident status of members living *‘On Country’* or *‘Off Country’*. However, in terms of identifying TOs that are not yet members, it is unclear if QYAC or Gunditj Mirring are able to identify TOs and residency through in-house corporate data collection programs or informal networks.

There is no way for QYAC or Gunditj Mirring to distinguish TO cohorts within the respective ABS Level 3 Statistical data or the LGA profiles and therefore it is not possible to determine if TOs are residing *‘On Country’* or *‘Off Country’*.

In terms of urban and regional planning, a more useful Aboriginal TO Community Profile would need to consider expanding each of the ABS data sets relating to Aboriginal Peoples to include TO relationships to *Country*, resident status of TOs being *‘On Country’* or *‘Off Country’* and language group identity. It should also consider RNTBC memberships and any Native Title claim areas or already determined areas where Native Title is recognised.

**Recommendations**

The following recommendations, based on the results of this research and transferrable overseas practices, offer avenues to obtain and strengthen information as to Aboriginal identity and relationship to Country to aid physical and social planning activities:

1. Promote investments for innovations update official data collection methods that will identify Aboriginal Traditional Owners relationships to *‘Country’* and the resident status of Traditional Owners being either *‘On Country’* or *‘Off Country’,* for the purposes of improving Aboriginal culture, identity and well-being.
2. In relation to Recommendation 1, promote innovation within the urban and regional planning discipline to better understand the possible societal structures, cultural needs and well-being through improved local Community Profiles on Aboriginal Peoples.
3. National and state and local government associations commence advocating, in close consultation with relevant stakeholders, for changes to the collection of ABS data on Aboriginal Peoples
4. The Planning Institute of Australia (PIA) revisits its Indigenous Reconciliation Action Plan to include a strategy that will support innovative changes to official data collection on Aboriginal Peoples that will support the cultural needs, well-being and identities of Aboriginal Peoples living in urban and peri urban areas of Australia.
5. The ABS and universities collaborate to recruit, educate and train Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to become statisticians or urban planners to support future data collection efforts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.
6. Any future Makarrata Commission promotes a policy for innovative improvements to data collections on Aboriginal Peoples that promotes the diversity of traditional identities and structures of urban and peri urban of Aboriginal societies, their unique relationships to *‘Country’* and for a permanent voice at the local government level to fill the void that the Native Title system has created.
7. The Victorian Government introduce a section within the Plan Melbourne (2016) regional planning framework, about the Aboriginal Traditional Owners of Melbourne, including a recognised Traditional Owner map and the need to recognise their unique position and cultural inputs to safeguard the cultural sustainability for the entire region and its residents.

**Conclusion**

The brief review of literature, analysis of official data sets and interpretations of the results clearly raises important issues about data on Aboriginal Peoples that reside in urban and peri urban areas.

Since the commencement of reporting official numbers of Aboriginal Peoples by the Commonwealth there has been consistent failure of that data to account for the uniqueness of the Aboriginal population in terms of diversity, Traditional Owner relationships to *‘Country’*, the resident status of Traditional Owners being *‘On Country’* or *‘Off Country’* and the cultural needs of Aboriginal Traditional Owners living in urban and peri-urban areas.

In the wake of the ‘Uluru Statement from the Heart’, there is scope for the suggested Makarrata Commission to include a policy for improved data sets that would identify Aboriginal Peoples according to their ancestral *‘Country’*. A more complete community profile has the potential to encourage increased levels of Aboriginal participation in land use planning activities, management of *‘Country’*, community cohesion, cultural well-being and Indigenous community planning at the local level rather than the pan approach that continues to place Aboriginal Peoples in to a single identity, particularly in urban and peri-urban areas.

Historically, the Mabo decision will continue as an annual event, as will future reforms to the Native Title system and dismissals by the Federal Court of Australia for claims for Native Title over urbanised areas. Therefore, perhaps it is time that Aboriginal Traditional Owners and *‘Off Country’* Aboriginal Peoples, governments, developers and the wider community collaborate towards for an alternative system that ensures acknowledgement of Aboriginal Peoples and inclusion of Aboriginal Peoples’ cultural needs and well-being as having a permanent place in the planning of urban and peri urban areas. A significant input into a system as such would mean resolving issues with data on Aboriginal Peoples and developing more robust community profiles to reflect the diversity of Aboriginal Traditional Owners residing *‘On Country’* or *‘Off Country’* in urban and peri urban areas.

Finally, if the Australian community is ever going to escape the issues born from colonial policies of racism and oppression directed at Aboriginal Peoples, then this community held value needs to include acknowledgement of the unique structure of traditional Aboriginal societies and a paradigm shift that considers the unique situations urban and peri-urban Aboriginal Peoples are experiencing. Aboriginal Peoples relationships to *‘Country’* is a major factor in urban and peri urban land use planning systems. Already, the Queensland Government has approved a clause within the *Planning Act 2016* *(Qld)* to promote, protect, and value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ knowledge, culture and traditions. As a step forward in the right direction, the challenge now is for urban and regional planning professionals to collaborate with Aboriginal Peoples and other relevant stakeholders to redesign the land use systems that regulates development in urban and peri urban areas. One mechanism that will support better outcomes for Indigenous Planning to improve data on Aboriginal Peoples and produce clearer and more meaningful Aboriginal community profiles.

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**Appendix A**

**Uluru Statement from the Heart**

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| **ULURU STATEMENT FROM THE HEART**  We, gathered at the 2017 National Constitutional Convention, coming from all points of the southern sky, make this statement from the heart:  Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tribes were the first sovereign Nations of the Australian continent and its adjacent islands, and possessed it under our own laws and customs. This our ancestors did, according to the reckoning of our culture, from the Creation, according to the common law from ‘time immemorial’, and according to science more than 60,000 years ago.  This sovereignty is *a spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land, or ‘mother nature’, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were born therefrom, remain attached thereto, and must one day return thither to be united with our ancestors. This link is the basis of the ownership of the soil, or better, of sovereignty.* It has never been ceded or extinguished, and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown.  How could it be otherwise? That peoples possessed a land for sixty millennia and this sacred link disappears from world history in merely the last two hundred years?  With substantive constitutional change and structural reform, we believe this ancient sovereignty can shine through as a fuller expression of Australia’s nationhood.  Proportionally, we are the most incarcerated people on the planet. We are not an innately criminal people. Our children are aliened from their families at unprecedented rates. This cannot be because we have no love for them. And our youth languish in detention in obscene numbers. They should be our hope for the future.  These dimensions of our crisis tell plainly the structural nature of our problem. This is *the torment of our powerlessness*.  We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people and take *a rightful place* in our own country. When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country.  We call for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution.  Makarrata is the culmination of our agenda: *the coming together after a struggle.* It captures our aspirations for a fair and truthful relationship with the people of Australia and a better future for our children based on justice and self-determination.  We seek a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history.  In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard. We leave base camp and start our trek across this vast country. We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future. |