

## Organising a Sea of Hands installation in your community, school, organisation or business

Hands Up! is ANTaR's program for community engagement with the Sea of Hands. Since our very first installation 24 years ago, community groups have been booking the Sea of Hands to visit and create a colourful, vivid, artistic display to help people engage with learning about the significance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and contributions, and the national journey towards reconciliation.

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## 24 years ago the Sea of Hands first appeared as a powerful statement of solidarity with Australia's First Peoples

This was an era that saw:

- The Government stubbornly refuse to [apologise to the Stolen Generations](#)
- The Howard Government's amendments to [Native Title rights](#) born out of the historic [High Court Mabo case in 1992](#) .
- Failure of Government to respond to and address the findings of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, and the Bringing Them Home report.

At a time when our country's leaders were refusing to acknowledge the most fundamental rights of First Peoples and the calls for fairness, decency and respect. But many Australians had a more positive vision for our nation and a powerful people's movement was born in ANTaR's Sea of Hands.

The movement materialised in earnest in November, 1997. Over 2 hours, 500 volunteers planted 120,000 hands in the colours of the Aboriginal and the Torres Strait Islander flags directly in front of our national parliament in Canberra.

This was the largest public installation for reconciliation and rights of First Peoples that our nation had ever seen. There have been some important steps forward since that time as the movement gathered momentum - the Bridge Walks for Reconciliation, the National Apology to the Stolen Generations, the commitment to Close the Gap in Health Equality, and the improvements in the awareness of the broader community about the shared history of this nation, but there is much still to do.



National Reconciliation Week 2016.



Sydney Botanical Gardens(1998 National Tour).

## Suggestions for your Sea of Hands Event

### Reflection Cards from ANTaR

- Participants attach a reflection card (for drawings and their name to be included) onto their Hand before planting.
- We provide the template found at the end of this guide so you can produce special cards for participants to write on.
- **Please do not apply adhesive labels to the hands**

### Other ideas that may incur additional costs

- Invite a local Elder or Traditional Owner to do a Welcome to Country. [Visit Narragunnawali for more on Welcome to Country.](#)
- Display the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages map in your venue, which maps the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language groups across Australia. The poster is available at [www.antar.org.au/shop](http://www.antar.org.au/shop)
- Display an Acknowledgment of Country plaque at your venue, available at [www.antar.org.au/shop](http://www.antar.org.au/shop)

## Creating the Installation

### Considerations

- Use and apply the risk management matrix located at the end of this guide before, during, and after your installation.
- Consider using a soft/watered ground to reduce damage to the hands and metal posts.
- The hands typically need to be pierced into the ground by 5-8cm to be sturdy. ○ Using ground spray chalk (available from most hardware stores) mark out the design on a grassed area. Below are some basic ideas and the method for marking out the design on the grassed area, then simply fill with the Hands.
- Have a planting station set up and organise the Hands by colour so you can coordinate the hand planting for your chosen design. Participants affix their 'Reflection Card' (if applicable) at this station before planting as directed. **It's always a good idea to plant from the inside out.**

## Choosing a design

The hands are loaned to groups in boxes of 200. Mixed boxes with the Aboriginal flag colours (Red, Yellow, Black) or the Torres Strait Islander Flag colours (White, Blue and Green). Metal posts for planting the hands into the ground are to be attached before planting.

For an installation to appear at its best we suggest 16-20 hands per square metre. Meaning an 800 hand installation would be 40sq metres ie. 6.33 m X 6.33m. Ideally there should be 8-15cm between each hand.

## Recommended designs

### The Aboriginal Flag

The meanings of the three colours in the flag, as stated by Harold Thomas in 1971, are:

- **Black** – represents the Aboriginal people of Australia
- **Yellow circle** – represents the Sun, the giver of life and protector
- **Red** – represents the red earth, the red ochre used in ceremonies and Aboriginal peoples' spiritual relation to the land



### Steps:

1. Mark out the rectangle of the correct size (see below) with ground chalk and mark out the centre point and centre line at the same time.
2. With string or rope held at the centre point, measure the radius, then rotate the taut string, spraying the ground chalk as you go.

### Dimensions of Aboriginal Flag:

Quantity of Hands	Length (metres)	Width (metres)	Radius of Yellow Circle (metres)
200	3.57	2.80	0.71
400	5.05	3.96	1
600	6.18	4.85	1.23
800	7.14	5.60	1.42
1000	7.98	6.27	1.58

### The Torres Strait Islander Flag:

The meaning of the Torres Strait Islander Flag, as stated by Bernard Namok its designer in 1992.

- The flag features a white Dhari (traditional



headdress), with a five-pointed white star beneath it.

- **The Dhari** - A symbol of Torres Strait Islander people and is used in cultural ceremonies and dance.
- **The white five-pointed star** - Symbolises peace, and the navigational importance of stars to the seafaring people of the Torres Strait. It also represents the five distinct language and cultural groups of the region.
- **The deep green stripe** - Represents the land, the black stripe is for the people, and the blue is the colour of our seas.

**Steps:**

1. Mark out the rectangle of the correct size (see below) with the ground chalk.

Quantity of Hands	Length (metres)	Width (metres)
200	3.27	3.18
400	4.63	4.50
600	5.67	5.51
800	6.55	6.37
1000	7.32	7.12

2. Next make identical interval marks along the left and right sides. Use rope or string to get a straight line between the intervals, spray the ground chalk to mark out the various horizontal lines. From top to bottom these are the intervals (width) in metres :

Quantity of hands	Green height from top (metres)	Black height from green	Blue height from bottom of black	Black height from blue	Green height from black
200	0.63	0.27	1.38	0.27	0.63
400	0.88	0.39	1.96	0.39	0.88
600	1.08	0.48	2.4	0.48	1.08
800	1.25	0.55	2.77	0.55	1.25
1000	1.4	0.61	3.1	0.61	1.4

3. Before continuing, make sure you have marked out the centre point of the rectangle as a reference point.

4. To mark out the Dahri (which is a traditional Torres Strait Islander headdress) and the central FIVE pointed star. You have two options:
- OPTION 1: With a careful hand mark the outline of the shapes, starting with the FIVE pointed star, then the Dahri around it. Tip. Make use of your own further reference marks to help make it look as authentic as possible.
  - OPTION 2: Using butcher paper, create a real size stencil of the shapes first. Ensure it is as authentic as you can make it, cut out the shapes and spray the ground chalk around it.
  - Whichever option you choose, the Dahri should fit a centred square of the following dimensions based on the number of Hands you have to work with.

Quantity of Hands	Width

200	155 X 155
400	310 X 310
600	467 X 467
800	620 X 620
1000	351 X 351

## Ribbons

Simple rectangles with wavy ribbons of the available colours are simple yet appealing.

1. Start with marking out the rectangle of a suitable size (see below as a guide) with the ground chalk.

- The rectangle can be whatever dimensions suit the area you have to workwith.

The guide shows the approximate total area, if it were square. Alternatively, you could use the dimensions for the Aboriginal flag for an easy rectangle.

Qty of Hands	Length (cm)	Width (cm)
200	316	316
400	447	447
600	547	547
800	632	632
1000	700	700

2. Next make identical interval marks along the left and right sides. Use rope or string to get a straight line between the intervals, spray the ground chalk along the string, oscillating either side of the string to create a wave in the ribbons of colour.
3. It looks best if the waves match each other, but they can be thin or thick, you can be creative with this design.

**BELOW:** Wavy ribbons in an ANTaR installation in November 2017



### **Source an original design.**

You may wish to consider sourcing an original design from Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students, their families, communities or local artists.

This can take some time to organise when you factor in identifying your artist and then their individual artistic process.

In our experience the artists may provide an illustration or painting that will need to be interpreted for the Installation. For example, identify key reference points, ratios for scale, dimensions e.t.c. so that you can plan for replicating their artwork authentically on the grassed area.

## **Safety**

We strongly recommend

- Close supervision
- Don't leave the installation unattended, especially overnight.
- Plant from the inside out and advise participants not to enter the hands already planted.
- Consider roping off the installation for the time between completion and de-planting.
- Conduct your own risk assessment, noting and mitigating identified risks. We have included a template risk assessment matrix we use as a starting point on installations, you can find it at the end of this guide.

## **Further information**

### **Reflection Card Template**

Cut out templates and allow participants to write their name/decorate the card.

#### To affix to a hand:

- Start with the Hand and Spikes separated (at an assembly station works best).
- Participants then fold the card backwards along the dotted line. Pierce the short flap with the short / top end of the spike, ensuring the card is above the kink in the wire. The plastic hand is then slotted over the spike and holds the card in place.

[antar.org.au/sea\\_of\\_hands](http://antar.org.au/sea_of_hands)

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## Risk Matrix

Below are example risk matrices that we use when planning Sea of Hands installations and public events. These give you an idea of what to consider and how we might resolve them but every installation is different and you are responsible for completing the risk assessment and treatment plan.

Your organisation may already have its own policies about managing risk. Either way it is very important you understand and take action where possible to mitigate risks.

Also ensure you make sure the event is covered by a public liability insurance.

## SAMPLE RISK MANAGEMENT MATRIX

**Table 1: Risk register (to be read in conjunction with Table 2: Risk treatment schedule and plan)**

What and how it can happen	Consequences	Likelihood	Existing controls	Consequence rating	Likelihood rating	Risk rating
Trip hazards	Injury, property damage	Moderate	N/A	2	C	Moderate
Injury from spikes and/or wires during set-up. Or once installed	Injury	Moderate	Eg. Teachers to ensure responsible use of hands.	4	C	Extreme
Sunburn	Minor injury	Likely	Eg. Stay in shaded areas, apply sunscreen	2	B	High
Theft of Hands	Loss of property	Unlikely	Eg. Do not leave hands unattended for extended periods of time	2	D	Low
Wind dislodging plastic Hands	Loss of property, creation of litter	Unlikely	N/A	2	C	Moderate
Wetness over event area	Injury from slipping	Moderate	N/A	3	C	Moderate
Wires damaging irrigation system	Property damage, inconvenience	Moderate	Eg. Know where irrigation systems are and avoid them	3	C	High

**Table 2: Risk treatment schedule and plan**

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Treatment (Preventative measures)</b>	<b>Risk before treatment</b>	<b>Risk after treatment</b>	<b>Management, Accept/Reject</b>
Trip hazards	Eg. Safety briefing to students. Path and lawns kept clear. Bollards and 'police' tape surrounding the Installations. Continuous student supervision.	2C = Mod	2D = Low	
Injury from spikes and/or wires during set-up or once installed	Eg. Teachers to ensure responsible use of hands. - Signage warning not to walk/run through the Hands & asking parents / teachers not to allow children between the Hands, keeping the pathways clear, regular inspection, experienced supervision during installation	4C = Extreme	4E = high	
Sunburn	Information to volunteers and schools to bring hats, provision of sunscreen onsite	1B = Mod	1C = Mod	
Theft of Hands and other assets	Eg. Periodic inspections by school staff. Overnight security.	2D = Low	2E = Low	
Wind dislodging plastic Hands	Eg. Written instructions and supervision on correct installation by teachers and other staff members. Frequent collection of any loose hands.	2D = Low	2E = Low	
Wires damaging irrigation system	Eg. Groundskeeper to provide plan showing where irrigation pipes are; schools to avoid those areas when installing Hands. students to be properly briefed by coordinators	3C = High	3D = Moderate	
Wetness over event area	Eg. Closely monitor the water on grass, consider add temporary floor surfaces, restricting hand plant activity, using staff marshals to control movement around areas presenting risks.	3C = High	3D = Moderate	

**Table 3: Risk matrix - Guide to ratings**

	<b>Consequences</b>				
<b>Likelihood</b>	<b>1 Insignificant</b>	<b>2 Minor</b>	<b>3 Moderate</b>	<b>4 Major</b>	<b>5 Catastrophic</b>
<b>A - Almost Certain</b>	High	High	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme
<b>B - Likely</b>	Moderate	High	High	Extreme	Extreme
<b>C - Moderate</b>	Low	Moderate	High	Extreme	Extreme
<b>D - Unlikely</b>	Low	Low	Moderate	High	High
<b>E - Rare</b>	Low	Low	Moderate	High	High