



## 2.3 Torres Strait Islanders

The Torres Strait Islanders are Australia's other Indigenous people.

Their homeland is the islands between Cape York, Queensland, and Papua New Guinea. There are 100 islands in the Torres Strait, in four main groups. Around 17 islands are inhabited.

Traditional Torres Strait culture was strongly influenced by the Melanesian cultures of New Guinea and the Pacific, and to a lesser extent Aboriginal culture to the south.

Torres Strait Islanders were both hunter-gatherers and, on some islands, gardeners. Unlike Aboriginal people, they grew crops.

The islanders were also fishers and seafarers. In the Torres Strait the sea was an important source of food and means of travel and communication—and remains so today.

A number of 'culture heroes' or religious figures were worshipped. Ritual objects were made including magnificent turtle-shell masks used in dances and other ceremonies.

Two main languages were spoken: Kalaw Lagaw Ya (related to Aboriginal languages) in the western, northern and central islands, and Meriam Mir (related to New Guinea languages) on the eastern islands.