



# Achieving authentic workplace inclusion for Aboriginal people



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# Disrupting HR policies and practices – going outside the norm

## How history has contributed to work barriers for Aboriginal People

**Missions** - Government policies placed many Aboriginal people on communities separate to where everyone else lived.

**Past government policies limited access to education** - This made it difficult for many Aboriginal people to gain basic literacy and numeracy skills. It also limited their prospects and capacity to apply for 'skilled' jobs.

**Social Attitudes** - Many employers would not consider an Aboriginal person as a potential employee because they were Aboriginal.

**Poverty** - High school completion rates for Aboriginal people were low as many parents could not afford to keep their children at school.

**Higher Education** - Gaining access to a tertiary education is dependent on having good Year 12 scores and having sufficient funds to pay course fees and other expenses.

**Competition for jobs** – It has always been a highly competitive job market and Aboriginal people have not had the required skills or demonstrated work experience to compete at the same level as other job applicants.



# Actions that can be taken

- More flexible employment including part-time work and job sharing.
- Work environments are culturally safe, foster respect for, collaboration with and empowerment of Aboriginal staff, acknowledging the unique and special place they hold as Australia's First peoples
- To develop systems to combat racism and discrimination within the workplace.
- To review current recruitment practices and improve them to demonstrate your commitment to increasing Aboriginal employment across all positions at all levels
- Employment policies and initiatives are underpinned by cultural safe principles



# Culturally safe employment

- Respect for the cultural/social and religious practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians including the need for cultural and ceremonial leave;
- Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge as a significant contributor to other bodies of knowledge;
- Recognition of scholarship that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff bring to the agency;
- Recognition for the need for staff networks, employment pathways, mentoring and scholarships;
- Recognition and protection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander intellectual property and knowledges; and
- Recognition of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ceremonial and community activities, cultural practices and identity.
- See <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/employcond/Pages/cultural.aspx>



# What can we do?

## Development Programs

- Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Training
- Professional Development and Career Planning via the performance management system
- Open Program participation, Higher duties, secondment opportunities & explore Aboriginal and mainstream Leadership Programs.
- Develop and implement Reconciliation Action Plans and Cultural Safety Action Plans.

## Promotion of Aboriginal Heritage and Culture

- Promote the Aboriginal Cultural Awareness & Competency Training.
- Aboriginal Guest Speakers (lunch box yarning up sessions and at key events).
- Develop and adopt Aboriginal cultural protocols in the organisation.
- Include Aboriginal cultural elements in a workplace tour and/or induction.

## Embrace Aboriginal perspectives

- Have mentors drawn from the Aboriginal and non- Aboriginal community.
- Aboriginal staff networks.
- Induction Kit.
- Aboriginal peer support.
- Dial an Aunty/Uncle for support.
- Adopt flexible workplace arrangements:
  - **Sorry Business/Funeral Leave**
  - **Cultural and Ceremonial leave**
- Develop and have alliances with: Local Aboriginal Communities, networks and groups, Industry, Government, Training bodies, Peak Bodies, Networks
- Participate in broader cultural celebrations and significant events – such as NAIDOC Week, Reconciliation Week, etc.



# What can we do?

## Data

Capture Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians data on employment forms – identify a culturally appropriate mechanism /approach for this and get agreement

## Active Marketing

- Establish networks with Aboriginal recruitment agencies and community organisations
- Link the employment website to the Aboriginal Employment Strategy
- Develop Aboriginal Australians candidate database
- Include Aboriginal Employment Strategy in employment advertisements
- Advertise in the Aboriginal community – Koori Mail, Indigenous Times, Facebook, Twitter and other places of interest to the community.

## Consultative Networks and Mechanisms

- Have Aboriginal representatives on and participation in internal decision-making mechanisms and planning processes.

## Develop Career Paths

- Identify appropriate roles: full & part time; casual; graduate; trainee; shared roles
- Tap into current student populations to assess desired career paths
- Research Aboriginal Australian Alumni career pathways (Aboriginal specific Associations)

## Interview Process

- **Keep the Job Advert to a minimum.**
- **Include cultural symbols that support and encourage Aboriginal people to apply for the roles.**
- Sometimes it helps to have an Aboriginal person as the key contact on the job ad – particularly if it is for a specific role or you are doing a large talent drive.
- **Make the process less formal and intimidating. For example, have an informal chat over the telephone to begin with or meet in a less formal location.**
- **Don't use the standard interview pro-forma. You will find out more through an informal chat.**
- **Have an Aboriginal person on your selection committee. This can provide you with a different style of questioning.**
- **Tease out how their experience relates to the job. You might find people saying that they haven't done this or that, but when you talk more about what they have done, they often have transferable skills.**
- **Have group interviews with applicants to encourage open communication – particularly with young people.**
- **Conduct a training course or seminar prior to the beginning of the selection process and observe the candidates in action.**



# Disrupting HR policies and practices – going outside the norm

- Recognising race privilege
- Hierarchical distance also reflects social distance
- Colour vs. Colour vs. Colour
- Don't leave your ethics at the door of work – tackle discrimination and racism
- Value the knowledge and experience Aboriginal people bring to the workplace.



# What is Cultural Safety?

The term '**Cultural safety**' was first defined by the Maori nursing fraternity in New Zealand and is expressed as:

*An environment that is safe for people: where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience, of learning, living and working together with dignity and truly listening. (Williams, 2008).*

## Culturally safe places:

- hold culture in high esteem
- Recognise Country and its people
- Look like individuals belong
- Provide spaces for Belonging, Being and Becoming together
- Reflect everyone's culture
- Involve people and things that are important to individuals
- Are welcoming
- Connect to supports.

Kidsmatter – did ya know



# Cultural Safety – What it means

- ▶ Working towards a protective circle of friends, family and community.
- ▶ Creating an environment that nurtures people and encourages positive cultural identity, self-esteem, passing on of knowledge, skills through family and Elders without fear of put downs or ridicule.
- ▶ Cultural Safety is about relationships and environments, meaning and identity; it has a spiritual dimension;
- ▶ What is safe in relationships and environments is a web of interrelating factors and everyday experiences (being on country, belonging, access, home, identity, culture, role models, etc);
- ▶ Underlying these everyday experiences of safety/non safety in relationship & environment is a matrix of power relations that connect us; and
- ▶ Aboriginal lore/law weaves everything together providing a spiritual, physical, emotional and social foundation and sense of identity and meaning for daily existence.

***“Less people are participating in cultural activities because they don’t feel culturally safe”***



# Cultural Safety – What it means

## It should also mean:

- ▶ Indigenous peoples have the right to promote, develop and maintain their institutional structures and their distinctive judicial customs, traditions, procedures and practices in accordance with internationally recognised human rights standards (from Draft Declaration – United Nations – Article 33)
- ▶ Essentially that all staff feel comfortable and emotionally safe in the work environment, that the organisational structure and processes are inclusive and give confidence that people's different needs are understood and supported wherever possible in the broader context of our work, funding requirements and so on. This should apply to all staff, but perhaps with particular regard to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.
- ▶ Cultural safety means people are able to practice their culture without discrimination, ridicule or criticism. Colleagues, managers and supervisors behave in culturally sensitive and appropriate ways and that respect is always shown in relation to staff carrying out cultural obligations and requirements.



# Cultural Safety – What it means - Community

- I also think that cultural safety has an emotional/psychological base; that perhaps after 8-10 generations of oppression and marginalisation, being unsafe is built into the psyche of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and that therefore sensitivities are often acute.
- This then begs the question of how we in the organisation are to undo this history, to enable people to feel safe, especially given that the prejudices of the last 200 years often continue to prevail in the everyday lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (and yes, also for many other excluded and/or marginalised peoples).
- Ultimately, this boils down to attitudes, feelings and perceptions on all sides. But the challenge is how in the face of the 'realities' built on prejudice, we can create an environment that is strong enough to create the desired sense of security.



# Cultural Safety – What it means - NACCHO

- The lived experience of cultural safety and cultural respect depends on Aboriginal Peoples not being subjected to and experiencing racism, where Aboriginal Peoples define whether racism has occurred. This includes individual racism - when individual health workers practise racial prejudice and racial discrimination, and institutional racism - when organisational policies and practices do not consider or make room for Aboriginal people's cultural values, meanings and protocols.
- The presence of cultural safety can only be defined by those who receive health care; they will determine if their cultural identity and meanings are being respected, and they are not being subjected to discrimination.
- The demonstration of cultural respect creates cultural safety for Aboriginal Peoples – a service and space where culture is acknowledged, welcomed and drawn upon as an integral part of health care services. While physical surroundings are important, it is how health care workers operate at the individual and health system level that results in Aboriginal Peoples perceiving and experiencing cultural respect and safety.



# Cultural Safety and Respect - VACCHO

## Cultural Safety

- Is being acceptable to difference, having the ability to analyse power imbalances, institutional discrimination, colonisation and relationships with settlers.
- **Cultural safety is about providing quality health care that fits with the familiar cultural values and norms of the person accessing the service, that may differ from your own and/or the dominant culture.**

## Cultural Respect

- Cultural respect is an obligation that does not compromise the cultural rights, practices, values and expectations of Aboriginal and people of diverse backgrounds.



# Outcomes of breaching Cultural Safety

Loss of funding opportunities

Loss of jobs,  
destroy careers  
& Reputation

Increased alcohol &  
substance abuse

Loss of traditional  
ways

All of this  
Undermines cultural safety

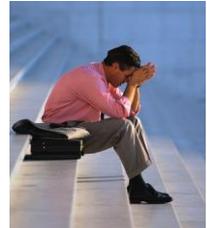
Ruins relationships,  
Marriages, breakdown in  
families and wrecks the  
home

Cause Paranoia,  
Create Alienation  
& isolation

Cause physical violence  
between families, family  
members, communities and  
organisations

Suicide

Family,  
community and  
tribal division



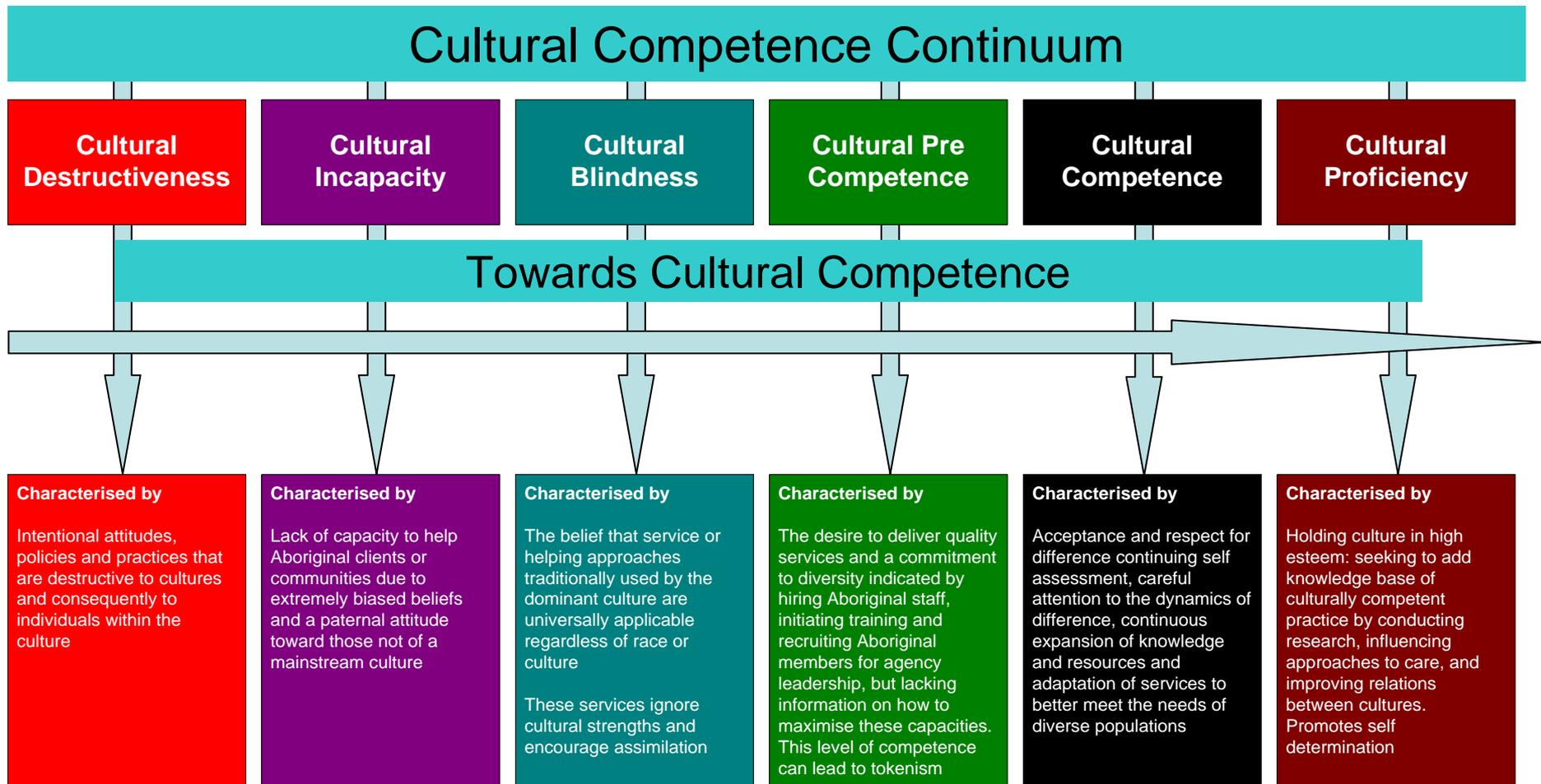
# Key Message about Aboriginal Cultural Competence

## Things that are fundamental to Aboriginal cultural competence:

- ❖ **Cultural Awareness** – Understanding the role cultural difference and diversity plays
- ❖ **Commitment** to Aboriginal self-determination and building respectful partnerships
- ❖ **Cultural Respect** – Valuing Aboriginal people and their cultures
- ❖ **Cultural Responsiveness** – Having the ability and skills to assist people of a different culture
- ❖ **Cultural Safety** – Creating a service environment that is safe and welcoming for Aboriginal people
- ❖ **Cross-Cultural Practice and Care** – Being able to relate and provide services to Aboriginal people
- ❖ **Self-Reflection** – Being able to see how your culture and dominant culture generally impacts on Aboriginal people



# Providing Cultural Competent Programs



# Good Practice – Walk with Us

## Inner North West PCP Koolin Balit Toolkit

<http://inwpcp.org.au/resources/closing-the-health-gap-for-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-people/supporting-aboriginal-workers/>

<http://inwpcp.org.au/toolkit-main-page/> for related resources



# Aboriginal Inclusion

Any legitimate and effective inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs requires a commitment to consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The most effective way to develop respect for and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their cultures is to experience positive and direct interaction.

