

FROM SYMBOLS TO SYSTEMS

Strengthening Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander cultural
security in mainstream organisations
Cultural Security Templates



Inner North West
PRIMARY CARE PARTNERSHIP





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Inner North West Primary Care Partnership acknowledges the peoples of the Kulin Nations as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which our work in the community takes place. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

Inner North West Primary Care Partnership and The Long Walk (2019) From Symbols to Systems: Strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural security in mainstream organisations.



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The publication of *From Symbols to Systems* is the culmination of a significant body of work over many years. From 2012-2016 under the Closing the Health Gap and Koolin Balit initiatives, the Inner North West Primary Care Partnership (INW PCP) supported partner organisations to embed culturally responsive practices in order to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Through this work, the challenges that Aboriginal people face whilst working in Government and mainstream organisations were identified and in response, the *Working in Two Worlds* initiative was established in partnership with The Long Walk in 2017. This ultimately led to the development of the *From Symbols to Systems* resource, which aims to support mainstream organisations to become more accessible, culturally safe and appropriate for Aboriginal people.

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We are all very proud of this culturally relevant and culturally appropriate framework document. Graphic design and layout by Bayila Creative.

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FOREWORD

In March 2017, a Working in Two Worlds Forum was held on the lands of the Kulin Nation in Melbourne, Victoria with over 60 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people employed in mainstream organisations attending. The participants generously shared their thoughts, concerns and ideas about how mainstream health and community service sector work impacts them and how employers can more effectively support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers.

This feedback, as well as an examination of current policy frameworks, helped to inform the first iteration of *From Symbols to Systems: Strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Security in Mainstream Organisations*, which was published in 2017. The framework presented cultural security templates to guide mainstream service delivery organisations, government departments and service commissioning agencies seeking to address culturally based hazards and improve cultural security.

In 2018, Inner North West Primary Care Partnership (INW PCP) commissioned Garralak Consulting to provide support on the From Symbols to Systems (FS2S) Framework Pilot Project. The aim of this project was to test the accessibility and usability of the cultural security templates and support organisations to use the FS2S Framework to improve cultural security in their organisation. An expression of interest (EOI) was opened to INW PCP partner agencies, which required organisations to demonstrate that cultural security was a core focus for their organisation and that they had capacity to undertake all pilot activities. Garralak Consulting's role involved supporting the EOI process, developing a self-assessment tool using the FS2S Framework, providing intensive support to agencies to help them apply the FS2S Framework, and conducting an evaluation of the FS2S Framework's usability and accessibility. The two successful applicants to participate in the pilot were Merri Health and Diabetes Victoria.

The FS2S Framework Pilot Project Evaluation identified that while many participants found it useful to participate in the self-assessment process, the framework's language and complexity was challenging. The key recommendations were to simplify the template and develop documents to support agencies to use the FS2S Framework. Garralak Consulting was commissioned to refine the framework and develop these documents. This involved reducing duplication across the domains, simplifying the terms, and providing actionable suggestions that organisations can implement.

This process has led to version two of the FS2S Framework, which is contained in this document. The templates provided can assist in the development and successful implementation of a whole-of-organisation response that is appropriate to your clients, your employees and your organisation's needs and which is underpinned by:

- consultation with clients, staff, communities and other key stakeholders
- reviews of organisational practice and action to modify practice when required
- monitoring to ensure ongoing compliance with your organisation's cultural security standards and practice
- evaluation of outcomes.

As no two organisations are the same, the templates do not offer a single 'magic formula' for a successful cultural security program. Rather, the templates should be used in conjunction with Aboriginal Employment Strategies, Reconciliation Action Plans and other internal policies.

GLOSSARY

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people	In recognition that many Torres Strait Islander people prefer to be identified as a separate people, this document uses the term <i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people</i> rather than Aboriginal people. This term acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first peoples, original custodians and current Traditional Owners of Australia and recognises the great diversity of Aboriginal nations within Australia. It recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a great diversity of cultures, histories and values.
Aboriginal health	<p>The National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation Constitution defines Aboriginal Health as “<i>not just the physical well-being of an individual but...the social, emotional and cultural well-being of the whole Community in which each individual is able to achieve their full potential as a human being, thereby bringing about the total wellbeing of their Community. It is a whole-of-life view and includes the cyclical concept of life-death-life</i>”.¹</p> <p>The Northern Territory Health <i>Cultural Security Framework 2016–26</i>² describes Aboriginal health as: “<i>a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing is recognised as both a fundamental human right and an important worldwide social goal...In addition, health and wellbeing for Aboriginal people is often linked to spirituality, connection with land and the harmony of interrelating factors. Health for Aboriginal people is also about determining all aspects of one’s life, including control over physical environment, of community self-esteem, of dignity, and of justice. It is not merely a matter of the provision of doctors, hospitals, medicines or the absence of disease and incapacity</i>”.</p>
Aboriginal identity	Aboriginal identity is diverse, complex and entwined with culture. Central to this are the way that people are connected to each other and with country, which extends beyond an idea of ‘place’ and connects all aspects of life including family, community, spirituality and self. ³ Despite colonisation and attempts to define and destroy Aboriginal identity, family and community relationships have ensured the transmission and survival of Aboriginal cultures. ⁴
Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation	An Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) is an incorporated Aboriginal organisation that is initiated by, based in and governed by a local Aboriginal community to deliver holistic, culturally appropriate services to the community that controls it. ⁵

¹ National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, NACCHO Constitution: Definitions, p. 5.

² *Aboriginal Cultural Security Framework 2016–2026*. Northern Territory Health, 2016, p. 6

³ A. Kwaymullina, Seeing the light: Aboriginal law, learning and sustainable living in country. *Indigenous Law Bulletin*, Vol. 6, No. 11, May–June 2005, p.12.

⁴ P. Dudgeon, H. Milroy & R. Walker, *Working Together: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health and Wellbeing Principles and Practice*, 2014, p. 413.

⁵ National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, *Definitions*, < <https://www.naccho.org.au/about/aboriginal-health/definitions/>>.

Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation	An Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (ACCHO) is an organisation initiated by and based in a local Aboriginal community that is governed by an Aboriginal body elected by the local community. They work to deliver culturally appropriate health services to the community that controls it. ⁶
Clients	In this resource, <i>clients</i> refers to people receiving care and support from health and community services and justice agencies.
Culture	The Victorian Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People described culture as: <i>“For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, culture is about family networks, Elders and ancestors. It’s about relationships, languages, dance, ceremony and heritage. Culture is about spiritual connection to our lands and waters. It is the way we pass on stories and knowledge to our babies and children; it is how we greet each other and look for connection. It is about all the parts that bind us together”</i> . ⁷
Cultural awareness	This demonstrates a basic understanding of relevant cultural issues or practices at the individual level. Workplace cultural awareness training is oriented towards changing individual behaviours and attitudes to other people in the workplace and clients.
Cultural competency	Cultural competence is usually described as behaviours, attitudes and policies that enable a system, agency or professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations. Usage of this term in the context of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing is diminishing, however, due to an <i>“absence of a coherent approach to its inclusion or teaching and a lack of national standards for the provision of culturally competent health services”</i> . ⁸
Cultural load	Cultural load refers to the additional responsibilities that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees of mainstream organisations have in supporting their community. This includes being regularly consulted outside of work hours, during weekends, and at community and sporting events about services. ⁹ It also refers to the accumulation of trauma that builds over time which cause stress to daily living and work. ¹⁰ This arises from frequent experiences of sad through to traumatic events including family bereavements, incarceration of relatives and community members and acts of violence and racism and discrimination, each adding to the ‘load’ carried into the workplace and increasing susceptibility to stress, anger, and burnout. ¹¹

⁶ National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, *Definitions*, < <https://www.naccho.org.au/about/aboriginal-health/definitions/> >.

⁷ A. Jackomos, International Human Rights Day Oration: Linking our past to our future: How cultural rights can help shape identity and build resilience in Koori kids, *Indigenous Law Bulletin*, Volume 8, Issue 17, 2015, p. 20.

⁸ *Cultural competency in the delivery of health services for Indigenous people*, Closing the Gap Clearinghouse Issues paper no. 13, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2015.

⁹ *From Symbols to Systems: Strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural security in mainstream organisations*, Inner North West Primary Care Partnership and The Long Walk, 2017, p. 12.

¹⁰ Social Compass, 2014, cited in *Healing Informed Organisations*, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation, 2015, p.8.

¹¹ *Healing Informed Organisations*, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation, 2015, p.8.

Cultural respect	The recognition, protection and continued advancement of the inherent rights, cultures and traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Cultural respect is achieved when the health system is accessible, responsive and safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and cultural values, strengths and differences are respected. ¹²
Cultural responsiveness	<p>Cultural responsiveness describes the capacity to respond to service needs and to provide client-centred care (taking into account cultural, linguistic, spiritual and socio-economic background). It requires knowledge and capacity to develop systemic, organisational, professional and individual responses. The term is often used to refer to services that are respectful of, and relevant to, the beliefs, practices, culture and linguistic needs of diverse client populations and communities. It requires knowledge and capacity at different levels of intervention: government, systemic, organisational, professional and individual.¹³ As Indigenous Allied Health Australia notes cultural responsiveness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>holds culture as central to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing</i> • <i>involves ongoing reflective practice and life-long learning</i> • <i>is relationship focused</i> • <i>is person and community centred</i> • <i>appreciates diversity between groups, families and communities</i> • <i>requires access to knowledge about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, peoples and cultures.</i>¹⁴
Cultural safety	Cultural safety is defined by a person's personal service experience. Cultural safety is not defined by service providers or by the professional and other staff working for them. A culturally safe environment is spiritually, socially and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for people; where there is no assault, challenge or denial of identity, of who people are, and what they need. In a health setting, it is defined by the health consumer's experience of the care given, and by their ability to access services and to raise concerns. ¹⁵ Cultural safety is an outcome of cultural security.

¹² See for example National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers Association (NATSIHWA), *Cultural Respect Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health 2016–2026*, 2016.

¹³ *Cultural Responsiveness Framework Guidelines for Victorian Health Services*, Victorian Department of Health, 2009.

¹⁴ *Cultural Responsiveness in Action: An IAHA Framework*, Indigenous Allied Health Australia, 2015, p. 7.

¹⁵ R. Williams, Cultural safety: What does it mean for our work practice? *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 2008, 23(2): 213–214.

Cultural security	<p>Cultural security is used in this report as a shorthand term for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural security. Cultural security is a prerequisite for cultural safety. A culturally secure working environment reflects commitment to the principle that the design and delivery of services offered by an organisation will not compromise the cultural rights, values and expectations of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working in that workplace. Cultural security is achieved by developing accessible and effective systems based on acknowledgement of the right to self-determination and empowerment of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working in the service organisation.¹⁶ Cultural security can increase Aboriginal people's access to health care, increase the effectiveness of care that is received and reduce disparities in health and wellbeing outcomes. Cultural security is also a way for individuals and systems to work together to support the self-determination, rights and participation of Aboriginal people. Cultural security underpins achievement of better health outcomes for Aboriginal people.¹⁷</p>
Culturally based hazard	<p>A culturally based hazard refers to behaviours or practices that expose people to risks and can impact their health and wellbeing in similar ways to workplace bullying, sexism, racism, unconscious bias, and other health and safety hazards.</p>
Equity	<p>Equity aims to address unequal health and other socially determined factors that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience. It requires consideration of need, and how/where services and resources are provided and distributed and of the way in which those services and resources are provided.</p>
Framework	<p>A set of principles and long-term goals that form the basis of guidelines and overall direction to planning and development.</p>

¹⁶ *WA Health Aboriginal Cultural Respect – Implementation Framework*, Western Australia Department of Health, 2005, p. 3, cited in the *Aboriginal Cultural Security Framework 2016–2026*, Northern Territory Department of Health, 2016.

¹⁷ *Northern Territory Health Aboriginal Cultural Security Framework 2016–2026*, Northern Territory Department of Health 2016.

Self- determination

The Victorian Government is committed to self-determination as the guiding principle in Aboriginal policy,¹⁸ which is underpinned by the following principles; human rights; cultural integrity; commitment; Aboriginal expertise, partnership; decision-making; empowerment; cultural safety; investment; equity; accountability.¹⁹ Self-determination is vital for improving Aboriginal people's health and wellbeing. It involves Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people making their own decisions on matters such as governance, natural resource management, economic development, health care and social service provision. It is about empowering Aboriginal communities and creating a new relationship between the Aboriginal community, government and the wider Victorian community to achieve long-term generational change and improved outcomes. Treaty talks are part of the Victorian Government's broader commitment to self-determination.²⁰

White privilege

White privilege is the invisible, unearned and often denied advantages, entitlements, benefits and choices that people receive because they are white.²¹ These privileges are generally experienced unconsciously, manifest both at a personal level and an organisational level, and perpetuate racial hierarchies.²²

¹⁸ Korin Korin Balit-Djak. *Aboriginal health, wellbeing and safety strategic plan 2017-2027*. State of Victoria, Australia, Department of Health and Human Services, August 2017.

¹⁹ *Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018-2023*, State of Victoria, Australia, Department of Health and Human Services, 2018.

²⁰ <http://www.vic.gov.au/aboriginalvictoria/policy/self-determination.html>

²¹ *Identifying and Addressing Organisational White Privilege*, Bendigo Reconciliation Committee, 2018, p. 2.

²² *Identifying and Addressing Organisational White Privilege*, Bendigo Reconciliation Committee, 2018, p. 2.



INTRODUCTION

The importance of effective partnerships between Aboriginal and mainstream²³ organisations, for the delivery of effective, efficient and equitable health, community and justice services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people cannot be overstated. Recognising this, governments at all levels have made significant investments in an effort to make mainstream health, community and justice service systems more accessible, culturally safe and appropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. There has also been significant investment in training to improve the cultural responsiveness of government departments and mainstream organisations and the cultural awareness of non-Indigenous people working in them.

Despite improvements gained through these efforts, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have reported that mainstream employment continues to be highly stressful and that mainstream workplaces are culturally unsafe, disempowering, socially isolating and culturally conflicting.²⁴ The culturally based hazards encountered impact their ability to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients, thus creating barriers to people accessing services, adversely impacting a client's health and wellbeing and, more broadly, undermining Closing the Gap targets and outcomes.^{25,26}

²³ A service or organisation that is not an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation is often referred to as a 'mainstream' organisation.

²⁴ *From Symbols to Systems: Strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural security in mainstream organisations*, Inner North West Primary Care Partnership and The Long Walk, 2017, p. 12.

²⁵ *Racism in Australia's health system*, Australian Indigenous Doctors Association (AIDA) Policy Statement, 2016.

²⁶ *Koolin Balit: Victorian Government strategic directions for Aboriginal health 2012–2022*, Department of Health, 2012.

WHY IS ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CULTURAL SECURITY SO IMPORTANT?

There is a direct connection between the cultural security of mainstream services provided for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their health and wellbeing outcomes.²⁷ This is because cultural security is essential for creating and maintaining the culturally safe environment an organisation needs to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients effectively and to minimise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employee exposure to culturally based hazards. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural security is also necessary for mainstream health, community services and justice services to forge strong strategic partnerships with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and communities. Improving cultural security in mainstream organisations is increasingly being recognised as a critical part of Australia's efforts to achieve national Closing the Gap outcomes targets.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working in mainstream community liaison and other roles are often critical gatekeepers for the mainstream health, community service and justice systems. Their unique skills, knowledge and experience are often essential to the delivery of high-quality, culturally responsive support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. They carry a cultural load, where they are often '24/7' in the sense that the worker is regularly consulted outside of work hours, during weekends, at community and sporting events. Their interventions can directly influence whether Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members will access and make effective use of those services. In short, because they directly impact client access and service effectiveness, experiences that undermines cultural security dilute both an organisation's ability to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander client health and wellbeing and its contribution to national Closing the Gap outcomes.

The action areas in this document, summarised in Figure 1 on page 16, are based on current frameworks and on the advice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working in mainstream organisations in Victoria. They enable whole-of-organisation-wide protocols and strategies that place culturally informed values at the centre of service development and delivery, and should be implemented with respect to what are now commonly accepted core principles for effective Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, community and justice service delivery. These principles are summarised in Figure 2 on page 17.

The action areas also identify strategies to support mainstream organisations to provide services that meet the needs of their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and minimise the impact of culturally based hazards on their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

²⁷ *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework 2017 Report*, Commonwealth of Australia, 2017.

FIGURE 1. KEY ACTIONS FOR IMPROVING CULTURAL SECURITY IN MAINSTREAM ORGANISATIONS

Key actions for improving cultural security in your organisation and increasing the probability that your organisation will positively impact Closing the Gap outcomes include:

- acknowledging the ongoing impacts of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- acknowledging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's right to self-determination, as a core principle for guiding change to more effective service delivery, workforce development and community engagement
- encouraging understanding and responsiveness to the cultural views, beliefs and knowledge systems of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working in your organisation and using its services
- creating effective partnerships with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations
- addressing structural barriers to recruitment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and to their career development
- creating opportunities for new knowledge gained through cultural awareness training, focusing on changing individual attitudes and behaviours of non-Indigenous staff consistently across an organisation to realise greater potential of your non-Indigenous staff working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients
- mandating accountability through more effective and systematic monitoring and evaluation of the cultural responsiveness of your organisation's systems, strategies and programs and clinical and administrative practices
- pro-actively creating opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices to be heard in organisational planning, policy development, and service delivery and other day-to-day activities
- improving your understanding of client perceptions of the cultural safety of your service or organisation.

FIGURE 2. SOME CORE PRINCIPLES FOR MAINSTREAM HEALTH, COMMUNITY AND JUSTICE SERVICES

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health is: *“not just the physical well-being of an individual but refers to the social, emotional and cultural wellbeing of the whole Community in which each individual is able to achieve their full potential as a human being, thereby bringing about the total wellbeing of their Community. It is a whole-of-life view and includes the cyclical concept of life-death-life”*. (National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, NACCHO Constitution: Definitions, page 5)
- Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations have a critical role in the delivery of primary health care and community and justice services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- In spite of the increased focus on cultural responsiveness, some mainstream health, community and justice systems are still not accessible or user-friendly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people due to interpersonal and institutional racism.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, families and communities play a critical role in the design and delivery of mainstream services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people need to be employed in front-line and executive roles in mainstream organisations.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation on mainstream Boards of Management and other advisory and governance groups needs to increase.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and their families and communities need to have a greater say in the design and delivery of health, community, justice and other services.

Further reading

The templates in this document are based on current best-practice cultural security frameworks and policies, the views of 60 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working in mainstream roles who discussed cultural security and related issues at a Working in Two Worlds forum held in Melbourne in March 2017, and findings from the FS2S Framework Pilot Project.

For more information on the Working in Two Worlds forum discussions, see *From Symbols to Systems: Strengthening Cultural Security in Mainstream Organisations*, Inner North West Primary Care Partnership and The Long Walk, Melbourne, 2017.

For more information on the FS2S Framework Pilot Project, see Evaluation Report of the From Symbols to Systems Framework Self-Assessment Tool, Garralak Consulting, 2018.

The templates in this resource can also be used in conjunction with other resources in The Building Blocks to Organisational Cultural Responsiveness Toolkit.²⁸

²⁸ See <http://inwpcp.org.au/resources/closing-the-health-gap-for-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-people/>

‘HOW TO’ GUIDE FOR SERVICE ORGANISATIONS

Step 1:

Before starting to use the From Symbols to Systems Cultural Security Self-Assessment Templates it is critical to have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people involved. You can either:

- engage an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander consultant
- work with an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation
- utilise your Reconciliation Action Plan working group (if you have one)

Step 2:

Take an organisation-wide base-line audit using the self-assessments provided. Involve as many leaders and staff as possible.

There are two different self-assessments:

- one for your Board and Senior Leaders – Commitments
- one for use across your entire organisation – Actions

Step 3:

Collate your audit results using the spreadsheet provided. Inputs should include as many people as possible and should be anonymously collated.

Step 4:

Use audited results to identify priority action areas for the organisation.

Step 5:

Embed priority actions into your organisation plans. Make sure you include who is responsible and a time-line.

Step 6:

Monitor and review plans regularly. Recommended this is done monthly or quarterly to maintain progress.

Step 7:

Retake audit annually. Repeat steps 1-6.



CULTURAL SECURITY TEMPLATE FOR MAINSTREAM ORGANISATIONS

Domain 1. *Whole-of-organisation approach*

A systemic whole-of-organisation approach will ensure that cultural security is embedded across the organisation and commitment to action is underpinned by accountability measures, governance systems and evaluation.

Commitment	Suggested actions
1.1 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are acknowledged as the traditional owners and custodians of the land and have a right to self-determination	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The organisation acknowledges and promotes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples right to self-determination• Acknowledgement of Country is displayed at all service sites, on websites and emails• Acknowledgement of Country precedes meetings• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags are visibly displayed at all sites• Reconciliation Action Plan with Reconciliation Australia is developed/implemented• Welcome to Country is included at all public events• The organisation provides a platform for the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to influence change
1.2 Cultural security principles are embedded in strategic and operational policies and practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strategic documents acknowledge the importance of cultural security and cultural safety• Operational policies support culturally safe practices• Culturally based hazards are identified and responded to• There is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment strategy• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural leave provisions are provided and supported



1.3 The organisation has the knowledge and skills to work in a culturally safe way with Aboriginal and Torres Strait people

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are engaged as mentors to support leaders to increase knowledge and understanding of cultural security and cultural safety
- All staff engage in regular cultural awareness training developed and delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- All Board members engage in regular cultural awareness training developed and delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

1.4 Financial resources to improve cultural security are allocated in annual budgets

- Board approves resources to ensure cultural security
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness training is adequately resourced
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consultants are engaged
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community events or groups are sponsored
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community advisors/consumer groups are remunerated

1.5 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are on governance structures

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are on the Board
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are on Steering Committees/Reference Groups
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are involved in decision-making processes



Domain 2. Leadership

Leaders are critical to achieving cultural security. All leaders will understand, ensure and promote cultural security across the organisation and in all activities.

Commitment	Suggested actions
2.1 Leaders drive the organisation's commitment to cultural security	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All leaders (Board and Senior staff) have cultural security and cultural safety accountabilities• Board members ensure the organisation measures and monitors cultural security• Senior staff are able to measure and monitor cultural security• Leaders develop and maintain strong relationships with leaders of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations
2.2 Board members demonstrate their commitment to cultural security and cultural safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All Board meetings start with Acknowledgement of Country• Board meetings to have cultural security as a standing agenda item• Board members to attend at least two (2) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community events annually• Board members have the knowledge and skills to ensure the organisation provides cultural security for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples• Board members conduct annual cultural security audit
2.3 Senior staff demonstrate their commitment to cultural security and cultural safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cultural security is a standing item on senior leadership team agendas• Senior staff have the knowledge and skills to ensure the organisation provides cultural security for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples• Senior staff attend at least two (2) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community events annually• Senior leaders participate in annual cultural security audits



Domain 3. *Consumer and community participation*

Clients and other service users and local community are engaged as active partners with service providers to provide feedback that supports culturally secure service planning, implementation and evaluation.

Commitment	Suggested actions
3.1 All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients receive culturally safe service provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All clients are asked if they identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander• Data on how many clients identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander is recorded• Aboriginal-specific services are offered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples• Kinship networks are identified, acknowledged, understood and responded to• Practice is informed by an understanding of the inter-generational trauma and ongoing impacts of colonisation experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
3.2 All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients receive information and resources that are culturally safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accessible information is provided in a culturally appropriate and respectful way to support clients and families to make informed decisions• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are involved in the development of culturally safe and appropriate information and resources• Pamphlets of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations are displayed and accessible to clients
3.3 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients' experiences of services informs the development of cultural security and cultural safety practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have appropriate mechanisms to provide feedback on cultural security and cultural safety• Feedback about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander client experiences of cultural safety are incorporated into cultural security systems• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients are encouraged to participate in annual cultural security audit processes



3.4 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are engaged as key stakeholders in planning and development processes

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations are engaged in strategic and operational planning processes
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are involved in the development of culturally safe service design and redesign
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people participate in evaluation planning and activities
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation is established on networks, working groups, advisory bodies

3.5 Partnerships are established with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations

- Board members have established relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and people
- Staff members have established relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and people
- Leaders participate on local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander networks
- Staff participate on local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander networks
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community events are supported and attended
- Joint initiatives with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations are identified



Domain 4. *Workforce*

Cultural safety is provided for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are employed in key roles and are actively supported.

Commitment	Suggested actions
4.1 Specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment strategies are used	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Position descriptions recognise and value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural knowledge and experience as a key skill• All position descriptions encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to apply• Identified positions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are created• Vacancies are advertised in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific media and community networks• Applicants are asked if they identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are included in the selection processes including short-listing and interview panels• Employment pathways are flexible and recognise cultural security and cultural safety as a priority• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are represented in Senior / Executive positions
4.2 Cultural security practices are embedded within induction process and practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All new staff are asked if they identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander• Data on how many staff identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander is recorded• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff are involved in the induction of new staff• Information about key Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders is included in all staff induction• Strategic documents and policies supporting cultural security and cultural safety are included in the induction of all staff



4.3 Specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander retention strategies are used

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff are provided with supported secondments and opportunities to experience different roles and program areas
- Partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations encourage cross-agency co-locations of staff
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff are provided with culturally safe performance development plans/ work plans
- On-the-job mentoring and support from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is available for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, including opportunities for cultural load debriefing
- Career progression pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff are developed



Domain 5. *Communication*

Effective communication is integral to embedding cultural security processes in organisations.

Commitment	Suggested actions
5.1 The organisation's commitment to cultural security and cultural safety is regularly communicated across the organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organisational commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander cultural security and cultural safety is visibly displayed in the workplace• Strategic and operational policies and practices that support cultural security are widely promoted• Annual reports and newsletters highlight cultural security and cultural safety commitments
5.2 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture is visibly celebrated through culturally safe signage, local resources and materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art work is displayed• Books and children's toys used in the organisation are representative and culturally safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people• Posters positively representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and people are displayed• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community events and days of significance are promoted
5.3 Examples of best practice and innovative cultural security initiatives are promoted and highlighted	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Best practice culturally safe resources and materials are shared across the organisation• Research outcomes, information on innovations and successful cultural security programs are shared across the organisation



Domain 6. *Quality improvement, planning, research and evaluation*

Quality improvement, planning, research and evaluation underpin learning and reflection on how to address cultural security. Learnings inform ongoing planning.

Commitment	Suggested actions
6.1 Cultural security processes and practices are regularly monitored, evaluated and reviewed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Data requirements for measuring and monitoring cultural security are identified• Cultural safety audits are conducted annually• Cultural security templates are used to identify progress to achieving commitments to cultural security and cultural safety• Evidence is collected to capture staff members act in culturally safe ways• Evidence is collected to demonstrate Board members act in a culturally safe way• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff experience of cultural security and cultural safety are measured and monitored• Feedback about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff experiences of cultural safety are incorporated into cultural security systems• Feedback on cultural security is incorporated in organisation development plans
6.2 The organisation is committed to continuous improvements in cultural security for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Research is conducted to support improvements in cultural security for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people• Key performance indicators (KPIs) for enhancing cultural security are identified• Performance against culturally security KPIs are reviewed regularly



SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL: COMMITMENTS

For each of the following statements, place a tick [✓] in the box you think best reflects your organisation's current situation.

Domain 1. *Whole of Organisation approach*

A systemic whole-of-organisation approach will ensure that cultural security is embedded across the organisation and commitment to action is underpinned by accountability measures, governance systems and evaluation.

Does your organisation ensure...	Yes	No	Not sure	Kind of
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are acknowledged as the traditional owners and custodians of the land and have a right to self-determination				
Cultural security principles are embedded in strategic and operational policies and practice				
The organisation has the knowledge and skills to work in a culturally safe way with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people				
Financial resources to improve cultural security are allocated in annual budgets				
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are on governance structures				



Domain 2. *Leadership*

Leaders are critical to achieving cultural security. All leaders will understand, ensure and promote cultural security across the organisation and in all activities.

Does your organisation ensure...	Yes	No	Not sure	Kind of
Leaders drive the organisation's commitment to cultural security				
Board members demonstrate their commitment to cultural security and cultural safety				
Senior staff demonstrate their commitment to cultural security and cultural safety				

Domain 3. *Consumer and community participation*

Clients and other service users and local community are engaged as active partners with service providers to provide feedback that supports culturally secure service planning, implementation and evaluation.

Does your organisation ensure...	Yes	No	Not sure	Kind of
All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients receive culturally safe service provision				
All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients receive information and resources that are culturally safe				
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients' experiences of service informs the development of cultural security and cultural safety practices				
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are engaged as key stakeholders in planning and development processes				
Partnerships are established with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations				



Domain 4. *Workforce*

Cultural safety is provided for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are employed in key roles and actively supported.

Does your organisation ensure...	Yes	No	Not sure	Kind of
Specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment strategies are used				
Cultural security practices are embedded within induction process and practices				
Specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander retention strategies are used				

Domain 5. *Communication*

Effective communication is integral to embedding cultural security processes in organisations.

Does your organisation ensure...	Yes	No	Not sure	Kind of
The organisation's commitment to cultural security is regularly communicated across the organisation				
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture is visibly celebrated through culturally safe signage, local resources and material				
Examples of best practice and innovative cultural security initiatives are promoted and highlighted				



Domain 6. *Quality improvement, planning, research and evaluation*

Quality improvement, planning, research and evaluation underpin learning and reflection on how to address cultural security. Learnings inform ongoing planning.

Does your organisation ensure...	Yes	No	Not sure	Kind of
Cultural security processes and practices are regularly monitored, evaluated and reviewed				
The organisation is committed to improvements in cultural security for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people				



SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL: ACTIONS

For each of the following statements, place a tick [✓] in the box you think best reflects your organisation's current situation.

Domain 1. *Whole of Organisation approach*

A systemic whole-of-organisation approach will ensure that cultural security is embedded across the organisation and commitment to action is underpinned by accountability measures, governance systems and evaluation.

Does your organisation ensure...	Yes	No	Not sure	Kind of
The organisation acknowledges and promotes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples right to self-determination				
Acknowledgement of Country is displayed at all service sites, on websites and emails				
Acknowledgement of Country precedes meetings				
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags are visibly displayed at all sites				
Reconciliation Action Plan with Reconciliation Australia is developed/implemented				
Welcome to Country is included at all public events				
The organisation provides a platform for the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to influence change				
Strategic documents acknowledge the importance of cultural security and cultural safety				
Culturally based hazards are identified and responded to				
There is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment strategy				
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural leave provisions are provided and supported				



Does your organisation ensure...	Yes	No	Not sure	Kind of
Strategic documents acknowledge the importance of cultural security and cultural safety				
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are engaged as mentors to support leaders to increase knowledge and understanding of cultural security and cultural safety				
All staff engage in regular cultural awareness training developed and delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people				
All Board members engage in regular cultural awareness training developed and delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people				
All staff have professional development opportunities to enhance their culturally safe practices				
Board approves resources to ensure cultural security				
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness training is adequately resourced				
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consultants are engaged				
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community advisors/ consumer groups are remunerated				
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are on the Board				
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are on Steering Committees/ Reference Groups				
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are involved in decision-making processes				



Domain 2. *Leadership*

Leaders are critical to achieving cultural security. All leaders will understand, ensure and promote cultural security across the organisation and in all activities.

Does your organisation ensure...	Yes	No	Not sure	Kind of
All leaders (Board and Senior staff) have cultural security and cultural safety accountabilities				
Board members ensure the organisation measures and monitors cultural security				
Senior staff are able to measure and monitor cultural security				
Leaders develop and maintain strong relationships with leaders of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations				
All Board meetings start with Acknowledgement of Country				
Board meetings have cultural security as a standing agenda item				
Board members to attend at least two (2) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community events annually				
Board members have the knowledge and skills to ensure the organisation provides cultural security for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff				
Board members conduct annual cultural security audit				
Cultural security is a standing item on senior leadership team agendas				
Senior staff have the knowledge and skills to ensure the organisation provides cultural security for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples				
Senior staff attend at least two (2) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community events annually				



Domain 3. *Consumer and community participation*

Clients and other service users and local community are engaged as active partners with service providers to provide feedback that supports culturally secure service planning, implementation and evaluation.

Does your organisation ensure...	Yes	No	Not sure	Kind of
All clients are asked if they identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander				
Data on how many clients identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander is recorded				
Aboriginal-specific services are offered to Aboriginal and Torres Islander people				
Kinship networks are identified, acknowledged, understood and responded to				
Practice is informed by an understanding of the ongoing impacts of colonisation and the inter-generational trauma experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples				
Accessible information is provided in a culturally appropriate and respectful way to support clients and families to make informed decisions				
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are involved in the development of culturally safe and appropriate information resources				
Pamphlets of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations are displayed and accessible to clients				
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have appropriate mechanisms to provide feedback on cultural security and cultural safety				
Feedback about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander client experiences of cultural safety are incorporated into cultural security systems				
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients are encouraged to participate in annual cultural security audit processes				



Does your organisation ensure...	Yes	No	Not sure	Kind of
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations are engaged in strategic and operational planning processes				
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are involved in the development of culturally safe service design and redesign				
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people participate in evaluation planning and activities				
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation is established on networks, working groups, advisory bodies				
Board members have established relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and people				
Staff members have established relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and people				
Leaders participate on local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander networks				
Staff participate on local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander networks				
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community events are supported and attended				
Joint initiatives with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations are identified				



Domain 4. *Workforce*

Cultural safety is provided for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are employed in key roles and actively supported.

Does your organisation ensure...	Yes	No	Not sure	Kind of
Position descriptions recognise and value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural knowledge and experience as a key skill				
All position descriptions encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to apply				
Identified positions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are created				
Vacancies are advertised in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific media and community networks				
Applicants are asked if they identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander				
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are included in the selection processes including short-listing and interview panels				
Employment pathways are flexible and recognise cultural security and cultural safety as a priority				
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are represented in Senior / Executive positions				
All new staff are asked if they identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander				
Data on how many staff identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander is recorded				
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff are involved in the induction of new staff				
Information about key Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders is included in all staff induction				



Does your organisation ensure...	Yes	No	Not sure	Kind of
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff are provided with supported secondments and opportunities to experience different roles and program areas				
Partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations encourage cross-agency co-locations of staff				
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff are provided with culturally safe performance development plans/ work plans				
On-the-job mentoring and support from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is available for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, including opportunities for cultural load debriefing				
Career progression pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff are developed				

Domain 5. *Communication*

Effective communication is integral to embedding cultural security processes in organisations.

Does your organisation ensure...	Yes	No	Not sure	Kind of
Organisational commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural security and cultural safety is visibly displayed in the workplace				
Strategic and operational policies and practices that support cultural security are widely promoted				
Annual reports and newsletters highlight cultural security and cultural safety commitments				
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art work is displayed				
Books and children's toys used in the organisation are representative and culturally safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people				
Posters positively representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and people are displayed				



Does your organisation ensure...	Yes	No	Not sure	Kind of
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community events and days of significance are promoted				
Best practice culturally safe resources and materials are shared across the organisation				
Research outcomes, information on innovations and successful cultural security programs are shared across the organisation				

Domain 6. *Quality improvement, planning, research and evaluation*

Quality improvement, planning, research and evaluation underpin learning and reflection on how to address cultural security. Learnings inform ongoing planning.

Does your organisation ensure...	Yes	No	Not sure	Kind of
Data requirements for measuring and monitoring cultural security are identified				
Cultural safety audits are conducted annually				
Cultural security templates are used to identify progress to achieving commitments to cultural security and cultural safety				
Evidence is collected to capture staff members act in culturally safe ways				
Evidence is collected to demonstrate Board members act in a culturally safe way				
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff experiences of cultural security and cultural safety are measured and monitored				
Feedback about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff experiences of cultural safety are incorporated into cultural security systems				
Feedback on cultural security is incorporated in organisation development plans				
Research is conducted to support improvements in cultural security for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people				
Key performance indicators (KPI's) for enhancing cultural security are identified				



CASE STUDY 1 - MARRABINYA MODEL OF CARE

.....

Marrabinya (Wiradjuri ‘hand outstretched’) ^{29,30}

Purpose

To create a stronger platform for the delivery of Aboriginal primary healthcare services in Western New South Wales.

Key principles

Marrabinya’s key principles are:

- solutions driven through Aboriginal-owned General Practice clinics and services
- the spread of integrated health, social and cultural capacity across mainstream General Practice and primary care networks
- transformation to cultural safety, involving three major steps: Cultural Awareness; Cultural Sensitivity; and Cultural Safety
- cultural awareness training on its own is not enough
- it cannot be assumed that a program that is successful in one context will work in another; developing and implementing cultural competence programs must be tailored in partnership with and drawing on input from local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Expected outcomes

To have all contracted providers, including mainstream providers of services to Aboriginal people, working towards meeting the requirements set out in the Western NSW Aboriginal Health Council Cultural Safety Framework. Initially, contracted providers will show their commitment to transforming towards cultural safety and will subsequently work to meet the six Cultural Safety Framework Standards over the following three to five years.

Core document

Western NSW Aboriginal Health Council Cultural Safety Framework. The framework sets out a continuum for primary healthcare service providers and progress is achieved across six standards:

- **Standard 1. Culturally safe and responsive clinical culture**

This requires evidence that clinical practice is culturally responsive and supported by culturally based clinical supervision aimed at the continuous improvement and adaptation of clinical practice in services provided to Aboriginal people.

- **Standard 2. Culturally responsive models of care**

Demonstration that all models of care have been culturally validated and promote a culturally safe service planning and delivery framework for services to Aboriginal people.

²⁹ *What works in partnering to deliver effective Aboriginal health services: The Western NSW Primary Health Network experience*, Deeble Institute, Evidence Brief No. 15, Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association, August 2017.

³⁰ *Western NSW Primary Health Network shows what works in delivering effective Aboriginal health services*, media release, Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association and Western NSW Primary Health Network, 23 August 2017

- **Standard 3. Culturally safe workplace**

This requires evidence that workplace practices and workplace design create an environment that supports and responds to the cultural safety of Aboriginal people receiving services, and where all service providers can develop and deliver culturally responsive services.

- **Standard 4. Policy and procedure cultural audit**

This requires evidence of a continual cultural audit of and cultural adaptation in the use of all policies and procedures where these policies or procedures affect the delivery of primary healthcare services to Aboriginal people.

- **Standard 5. Cultural community engagement**

This requires evidence that the appropriate Aboriginal communities are actively involved in consultation, service design and service delivery planning. In addition, evidence of continual proactive dialogue with the appropriate local Aboriginal communities will be required as it relates to the delivery of individual clinical interventions.

- **Standard 6. Cultural workforce planning and management**

This requires evidence that affirmative action workforce planning and implementation strategies are in place to support and foster the increased participation of Aboriginal people in the health workforce. This includes culturally adaptive supervision twice a year and workplace performance appraisals.

CASE STUDY 2 - WOMEN'S HEALTH WEST RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN³¹

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***“The process doesn’t stop. The journey is still ongoing;
we are looking forward to raising the bar.”***

Background

Women’s Health West (WHW) was established in 1987 and expanded significantly in 1994 to deliver a range of family violence services for women and children, including crisis outreach and court support, housing establishment and crisis accommodation options, counselling and group work programs. WHW currently delivers services across seven local government areas in western metropolitan Melbourne, and is an active participant in regional and statewide reforms.

WHW recently launched its whole-of-organisation Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). The RAP is intended to ensure that WHW works closely with the local Aboriginal community to close the gap in health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait women, children and their communities in Melbourne’s west. Work on the RAP began in November 2014 with an initial plan aimed at laying the foundations for respectful, reciprocal relationships with the local Aboriginal communities. The RAP commits WHW to contributing to a future in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience health, safety and wellbeing in the community, which will in turn positively impact broader Aboriginal communities.

In 2013 the WHW staff put a proposal to the WHW Board to develop a Reconciliation Action Plan (a Foundation Plan). The proposal was endorsed by the Board, and the Policy and Development Coordinator was given responsibility for driving the change within the organisation.

***“The RAP was the pivotal policy framework that provided us with
a systematic approach to move forward.”***

In the initial stages, the Policy and Development Coordinator sought advice and support from Reconciliation Australia, the Wurundjeri Council, Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) and Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA). The Coordinator also began attending the North West Metropolitan Region (NWMR) Koolin Balit Wellbeing Partnership meetings and sourced information, resources and tools from the Building Blocks to Organisational Cultural Responsiveness Toolkit (see inwpcp.org.au/toolkit-main-page/).

To support the work required, two groups were established:

- an internal Working Group (WHW managers and staff), chaired by an executive manager. This group was responsible for developing the RAP and leading change across the organisation
- an Aboriginal Advisory Group (8 women and Elders from Aboriginal groups across the west) chaired by the CEO. This group was established to provide cultural advice to WHW and guidance on how to progress reconciliation.

As part of the process of developing the Foundation Plan, WHW completed a Cultural Audit using a tool supplied by the INW PCP. The audit highlighted a range of improvements that WHW needed to make to improve its culture responsiveness and realise its reconciliation goals.

As a result of the audit, WHW:

- implemented changes to make its building more culturally welcoming. The Cultural Audit Checklist: Creating a welcoming environment from the toolkit was used to inform changes to the building, including the waiting area
- introduced 'public recognition' of the Aboriginal communities in the west, in all its publications, on its website, and at meetings and events
- encourages staff to attend and participate in community events, and has established formal mechanisms for ongoing engagement with Elders and community members
- provided cross-cultural training for all staff in 2015 and 2016
- actively built and strengthened its partnerships with Traditional Owners, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, Elders and community leaders.

Importantly, WHW began to actively talk about reconciliation internally and externally, and to establish its vision for reconciliation...“To lay the foundations for respectful, reciprocal relationships with our Aboriginal communities, generating the conditions and self-reflection required within our organisation and our internal processes to work towards reconciliation.”

WHW's Foundation Plan was completed in August 2015. The process of developing the plan highlighted the importance of adequately resourcing the next stages of the reconciliation journey. The organisation was fortunate to secure a grant from the Helen McPherson Trust to progress its Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan and community engagement activities.

In August 2015, WHW began work on its Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan. The grant was used to employ a full-time Project Worker whose role was focused on “working in the Aboriginal community”, and to roll out two community engagement projects:

- Nan, Aunt, Mum “you are a treasure to our family” – the project was designed to identify barriers facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in accessing breast screening services in Melbourne’s west and to find solutions to overcome those barriers. The project was coordinated and delivered by Ngahina Waretini.
- Koori Health Days in the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre – a 12-week health program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre delivered in partnership with Aunt Lynn Killeen.

WHW’s Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan was completed in October 2016 and sets out:

- the organisation’s RAP vision, which is “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s right to self-determination, land, cultures and histories are respected and celebrated across Australia”
- three focus areas:
 - build strong partnerships
 - promote cultural safety
 - enhance opportunities.

The detailed Action Plan sets out a range of actions and deliverables that WHW will implement by December 2018. These include:

- organising at least one event for National Reconciliation Week annually
- building relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, women and children of the Kulin Nation, and partnerships with the Wuundjeri Council, Boonwurrung and Wathaurong Elders, cultural heritage councils and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations
- developing a Community Engagement Plan to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, women and children
- including the RAP as a standing agenda item on each team meeting agenda
- consulting with Traditional Owners on what would make WHW’s building culturally welcoming to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients, community women, partners and staff
- developing health promotion programs that are guided by, and delivered to, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and young people in a culturally sensitive way
- staff attending cultural awareness training biannually
- reviewing training manuals and other resources to ensure the inclusion of culturally appropriate and inclusive language and imagery
- reviewing human resource policies and procedures to ensure there are no barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and future applicants participating in our workplace
- developing and implementing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment and Retention Strategy
- developing one commercial relationship with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consultant and/or business.

In mid 2016, WHW identified that it needed to improve its recruitment processes. While it was hearing that there was interest from the Aboriginal community in two vacant positions, despite advertising the positions twice, they were unsuccessful in recruiting Aboriginal people to fill them. The issue was raised at the Aboriginal Advisory Group. Feedback from the group indicated that the position descriptions and the recruitment process itself, were barriers. Around this time, a number of senior staff from WHW attended the VACCHO training Managing Aboriginal Staff and Programs organised and promoted through the Wellbeing Partnership.

Using the feedback from the Aboriginal Advisory Group and the learnings from the VACCHO training, WHW reviewed and redeveloped its recruitment policies and procedures. The position descriptions were shortened and the selection criteria reduced and changed. The recruitment process was streamlined into an Expression of Interest and panel interview, and applicants were offered the option of bringing along a support person to the interview.

After attending the training, WHW recognised that it had an obligation to build workforce capacity and not to undervalue culture and connection in 'selection criteria'. It also identified gaps in organisational knowledge, including how to support staff effectively during sorry business. The processes of reflection led WHW to determine that it needed to develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment and Retention Strategy. A key focus of the strategy will be on stripping away the barriers to employment, exploring how all things HR can be improved, and how WHW can move beyond 'dedicated positions' to increase employment of Aboriginal people across the entire organisation, including front and back-of-house positions.

When WHW staff were asked to reflect on the learnings so far they said:

"Community engagement is central to making good decisions."

"To create change you need buy-in from all parts of the organisation, from the Board, senior managers and all departments."

"It is critical to show the community you're (WHW) committed through the delivery of joint projects and activities, by participating in community events, and through the employment of Aboriginal staff."

NOTES

[illegible]



FROM SYMBOLS TO SYSTEMS

Strengthening Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander cultural
security in mainstream organisations

Cultural Security Templates



Inner North West
PRIMARY CARE PARTNERSHIP

