

Aboriginal Cultural Security Framework

Acknowledgements

Anglicare NT acknowledges and celebrates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Custodians and Owners of this country. We recognise their continuing connection to the lands and seas and pay our respect to Elders past and present.

This Framework is made possible due to the Anglicare NT Board and senior management's commitment to self-determination and through the strong participation of Anglicare NT staff and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people we work with, internal and external to our organisation.

This Framework is prepared within the context of understanding of Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory (NT). Its application beyond this context is in no way implied or assumed.

Language statement

Throughout this document we may use different terms for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We acknowledge that the terms 'Aboriginal' and 'Indigenous' do not capture the diversity and complexity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and cultures. Our intent is always to use terms that are respectful, inclusive and accurate. The use of the words 'our', 'them', 'their' and 'we' throughout this document are used to reflect the voices of the many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people we work with.

Where 'Aboriginal' is used it refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Indigenous is retained when it is part of the title of a report, program or quotation.

About the artist and artwork

Tyrah Raymond is a young Larrakia artist who has spent her whole life in Darwin. Growing up she watched her family members creating artworks, inspiring her to create artworks of her own.



"This artwork is about the path that Aboriginal people in Australia walk every day.

We struggle when we have to face different challenges, but when we walk the path together, we can get through these challenges."

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Background

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the oldest living cultures in the world, enduring for over 65,000 years.

European settlement and colonisation resulted in inequity, racism and the disruption of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social, economic and cultural systems across Australia. It led to the continuing displacement, segregation and marginalisation of Aboriginal people, causing generational suffering, grief and loss.

Colonisation has had a devastating and ongoing effect on Aboriginal culture and people.

Despite the continuing impacts of colonisation, Aboriginal culture is enduring and resilient, and kept alive by:

- Passing on knowledge through arts, ceremonies and stories from one generation to another.
- Speaking and teaching languages.
- Protecting cultural materials, sacred and significant sites and artefacts.
- Fostering cooperative relationships where Aboriginal community control and holistic concepts of health and well-being are respected.

What is Aboriginal Cultural Security?

To be 'culturally secure' describes a guiding principle that ensures respect for cultural difference.

Cultural security can be defined as a distinct, but cumulative relationship between:

- Cultural awareness (knowing)
- Cultural sensitivity (being)
- Cultural competence (doing)
- Cultural proficiency (embedding as organisational practice)

Aboriginal cultural security embeds Aboriginal cultural values and rights at critical points in service design, policy and practice. It goes further than shifting or changing attitudes and behaviours of individuals. Cultural security includes organisational change through addressing structural inequalities.

Aboriginal cultural security commits an organisation to design and deliver services that honour the legitimate cultural rights, values and expectations of Aboriginal people through:

- Providing a safe environment where Aboriginal people are empowered to make decisions that affect their lives without fear of judgement or discrimination.
- Ensuring cultural security is central in the development and delivery of programs, services, policies and strategies. Aboriginal leadership, community consultation and involvement form an essential part of this process.
- Integrating the cultural rights, values and expectations of Aboriginal people and communities at critical points in an organisation's service design, systems, policies and practices.¹



The intent of an Aboriginal Cultural Security Framework

This Framework lays the foundations for how Anglicare NT can strengthen and transform its work and continue to be open and willing to learn from Aboriginal people.

For Anglicare NT to truly engage in genuine partnerships with Aboriginal communities and people, culture must be recognised, celebrated, respected and drawn upon.

Aboriginal staff are central to achieving cultural security, and this **Aboriginal Cultural Security Framework** (Framework) recognises their leadership, knowledge, experience and connections.

The Framework also provides a basis on which to consult, collaborate and work with Aboriginal people and communities, aware of and responsive to their culture, history, needs and aspirations.

Who does the Framework apply to?

The Framework applies to the Anglicare NT Board, management and to all staff and volunteers.

It directly influences and informs our strategic and business planning, policy development, communication and our relationships and partnerships with Aboriginal people, communities and organisations.

It informs our decisions when working with Aboriginal people and communities and provides a basis for design and delivery of all services.

This Framework affirms adherence to cultural protocols and expectations of our senior leaders, policy, practice and governance structures.

What does Aboriginal Cultural Security look like?

We will know our agency is culturally secure and responsive when:

- Aboriginal people and communities who work with Anglicare NT are shaping decisions and solutions;
- Aboriginal people and communities seek to engage or contact Anglicare NT;
- Aboriginal people want to work for Anglicare NT and encourage other Aboriginal people to do so;
- Aboriginal organisations actively provide advice and guidance to Anglicare NT and drive partnerships; and
- Our staff embody deep listening and compassion and contribute their ideas and time to achieve Aboriginal cultural security.²

The Framework

The Framework aligns and integrates Aboriginal cultural rights, views and values in our services, systems and governance. It includes tools that will shape our commitment and support our journey towards Aboriginal cultural security.

Our Aboriginal Cultural Security Vision

Anglicare NT is responsive and safe for Aboriginal people and is an organisation where cultural values, strengths and differences are integrated into the governance, management, design and delivery of services.

Our focus areas

We have identified five focus areas that must grow for us to provide a culturally safe and responsive environment for Aboriginal people, communities and organisations we work with.

These focus areas apply across the organisation and if we embed real and meaningful change in these areas, we will achieve real and meaningful change across Anglicare NT.



These are not linear or sequential. As one focus area is strengthened, others will continue to develop and grow.

Our commitment

This Framework is our commitment to achieve cultural proficiency across all facets of the organisation, underpinned by our vision of 'a full life and social justice for all' and our commitments set out in our **Strategic Plan** and **Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)**.

Our RAP sustains our commitment to strengthen our accountability with Aboriginal people and communities we work with.

At Anglicare NT we recognise that Aboriginal cultural security, healing, dignity and respect are all elements needed for Aboriginal people and communities to:

- Be fully self-determining.
- Lead with cultural authority.
- Improve and strengthen our relationships with Aboriginal people and communities.

Therefore, we:

1. Acknowledge that **Aboriginal people should lead work** with and for Aboriginal people and communities.
2. Recognise that **Aboriginal people's culture is a strength** that must continue to be acknowledged and celebrated.
3. Continue to **build genuine and meaningful relationships** and partnerships with Aboriginal people, communities and organisations we work with and recognise Aboriginal self-determination, authority and independence as fundamental to change and healing.

This Framework enables strong adherence to cultural protocols to achieve cultural competency throughout our organisation (across workforce, services and governance arrangements).

Anglicare NT's commitment to Aboriginal Cultural Security

Aboriginal people remain connected to culture, family, language, country and community

Aboriginal people experience culturally safe, trauma aware and healing centred engagement and training

Services are delivered by or in partnership with Aboriginal Controlled Organisations

Anglicare NT is responsive and safe for Aboriginal people and is an organisation where cultural values, strengths and differences are integrated into the governance, management, design and delivery of services

Differences in Aboriginal people, communities and languages are acknowledged, celebrated and respected

Aboriginal people are valued and thrive as leaders

Aboriginal people and communities self-determine wellbeing and safety

How we achieve Aboriginal Cultural Security

Achieving Aboriginal cultural security will take time and critical, ongoing reflection.

It requires:

1. Whole-of-organisation approach and commitment
2. Communication
3. Participation and engagement
4. Partnerships and collaboration
5. Data, planning, research and evaluation.

To ensure Anglicare NT is culturally safe, we will:

- Actively embed culturally safe and responsive service design practices and delivery across Anglicare NT, throughout our services, systems and governance arrangements.
- Deliver ethical, safe and high-quality services underpinned by honest, transparent and collaborative communication with Aboriginal people.
- Ensure Aboriginal people and communities are engaged as lead decision makers as a fundamental human right.
- Support Aboriginal people and communities to be strong and respected as the knowledge experts in their lives and elevate Aboriginal culture, identity and history.

- Maintain organisational environments that inspire others to grow and work together to achieve Aboriginal cultural security.
- Build and maintain genuine and meaningful relationships with Aboriginal organisations, cultural authorities and community groups and representatives, based on respect and trust for cultural differences and a deep commitment to listening, learning and walking together.
- Partner with Aboriginal communities and organisations to ensure self-determination is realised in their communities.
- Monitor and evaluate implementation of the Aboriginal Cultural Security Framework across the organisation.

Our leaders will champion and embrace growing our cultural security. It is the responsibility of everybody in the organisation.

We accept we must ask the following question at an individual, team, divisional and organisational level...

'how can I / we influence a change in behaviour, or structure, practice or methods to support cultural competence in ... ?'

Principles for strengthening Cultural Security at Anglicare NT

To strengthen cultural security³ at Anglicare NT, we:

- Acknowledge the ongoing impacts of colonisation on Aboriginal people.
- Acknowledge Aboriginal people's right to self-determination, as a core principle of guiding change for more effective service delivery, workforce development and community engagement.
- Encourage understanding of, and responsiveness to, the diverse cultural views, beliefs and knowledge systems of the Aboriginal people we work with.⁴
- Create genuine and meaningful partnerships with Aboriginal Controlled Organisations based on trust and respect and in line with **Anglicare NT's Partnership Principles**.
- Recognise that culturally safe services can only be achieved by developing working environments based on acknowledgement of the importance of empowering Aboriginal people.^{5,6}
- Actively address barriers to recruitment and retention of Aboriginal employees, through:
 - Creating and growing opportunities for continuing to gain new knowledge through cultural training.
 - Focusing on changing individual attitudes and behaviours of non-Aboriginal staff across our organisation to realise more of the potential of our non-Aboriginal staff working with Aboriginal people.
 - Improving understanding of Aboriginal people's perceptions of the cultural safety of our services and organisation.
 - Not imposing our views or compromising the legitimate cultural rights, values and expectations of Aboriginal people we work with.
- Acknowledge that cultural security arising out of embedded structures, policies and protocols enables Aboriginal people we work with to be culturally safe.
- Understand that cultural security plays an integral role in developing accessible, effective and responsive services.

Aboriginal Cultural Security Action Plan

Anglicare NT will create an **Aboriginal Cultural Security Action Plan** to be approved by the Board and measured and monitored.

We will report on the outcomes of our Aboriginal Cultural Security Action Plan in our Strategic and Annual Reports.

Our Aboriginal Cultural Security Action Plan will measure our success in the following areas:

1. **Skilled people** - maximising performance through skilled and qualified people.
2. **Job satisfaction** - getting the environment right to get the best out of people.
3. **Disseminating information** - high quality available information.

4. **Stakeholder relationships** - connecting and engaging genuinely and meaningfully, including in partnership with Aboriginal organisations.

5. **Building knowledge and relationships** - contributing to improved cultural competence understanding.

6. **Culturally inclusive governance** - representative practices and processes.

Through this process our staff, Aboriginal communities and organisations, funders and those we work with will be able to hold us to account and trust us to do what we say we will do.

Our supporting tools

Together with our commitments and supporting tools, the Framework articulates a unified approach to achieving cultural proficiency across our organisation.

Aboriginal Cultural Security Action Plan

The Framework is underpinned by the Aboriginal Cultural Security Action Plan. Each division and regional office will identify key priority actions to be recorded in the plan.

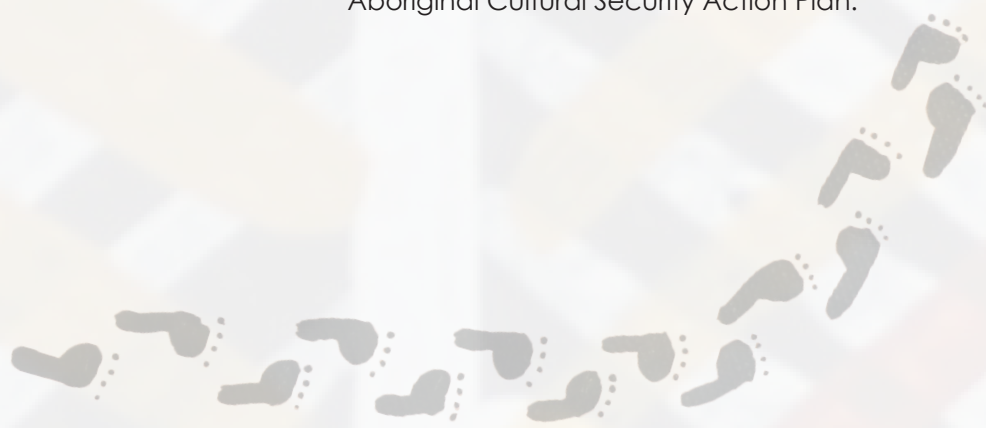
The Aboriginal Cultural Security Action Plan is informed by practical assessments that help us to understand where we are in our journey towards Aboriginal Cultural Security.

Aboriginal Cultural Security Individual Assessment Tool

The Aboriginal Cultural Security Individual Assessment Tool will be used by all staff to identify their level of cultural competency, and further contribute to the collective effort for change.

Aboriginal Cultural Security Organisational Assessment Tool

The Aboriginal Cultural Security Organisational Assessment Tool will be used by the Anglicare NT Executive Team and Leadership Team to conduct a cultural competency audit to further support the development of our Aboriginal Cultural Security Action Plan.



Governance and monitoring

The Executive Team will oversee and lead the implementation and ongoing delivery of the Aboriginal Cultural Security Framework.

Strong Aboriginal governance is necessary to achieving a culturally safe and responsive organisation.

The Anglicare NT CEO will report annually to the Board on the implementation and monitoring of the Framework.

Advice and monitoring of the Framework will be provided by:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Network
- The Aboriginal Reference Group
- The Reconciliation Committee
- Executive Manager Cultural Safety and Partnerships
- The Executive Team will support the CEO to formally monitor the implementation of the Framework and provide advice and guidance to divisions and program areas on how to achieve Aboriginal cultural security.

Appendix - Definitions

The following definitions explain how terms are used in this document and aims to provide clarity on the meaning attributed to them in the Framework, as well as in a broader context.

Community

There are many kinds of Aboriginal 'communities'. These may be in rural, remote or urban areas, often existing within an extended network of relationships. Some communities are defined by geographical location; others are communities of identity and interest that are physically dispersed across different locations. Family ties and relationships to 'country' lie at the heart of Aboriginal communities and identity.

Communities of Aboriginal people have their own cultural boundaries, which generally bear no relationship to government administrative or jurisdictional boundaries. Aboriginal communities are often complex mixes of residents with different cultural and historical ties. In some locations, where people have historically been relocated, the mix of people is extremely complex with multiple communities of identity present. While diverse, there are collective elements of Aboriginal peoples' experience - a shared history and ancestry in over 200 language groups, and a shared history of discrimination, dispossession and colonisation.⁷

In Aboriginal culture, a community is about country, family ties and shared experience. Community is about inter-relatedness and belonging and is central to Aboriginality. An Aboriginal person may belong to more than one community. For example, where they come from, where their family is and where they live or work.

Remote Aboriginal communities vary in size, from small with populations under 100 people, to larger communities with over 1,000 people.

The location of a community could have been determined in the past by a number of reasons, for example being near a cattle or sheep station, originally established as a mission, or it was just a convenient location for the non-Aboriginal bosses or managers.

Some parts of the land around and within the communities are restricted and there will be 'women's' and 'men's' areas. Visitors to Aboriginal communities should always ask advice about where they can and cannot walk or drive.⁸

Defining geographical boundaries of a community in an urban area can be a challenge.

Culture

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and people are rich and diverse. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture is not homogeneous and continues to evolve and adapt.

While there are some common threads and beliefs shared amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people today, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture is enduring.

Cultural competence

Cultural competence is the ability to understand, communicate and operate (interact) across cultures.

Developing cultural competence is an ongoing process of improving attributes, skills, knowledge, policies and strategies which work together to enhance the ability to communicate across cultures.

It has commonly been described as '...a set of congruent behaviours, attitudes and policies that come together in a system, agency or among professionals and enable that system, agency or those professions to work effectively in cross-cultural situations.'⁹

However, this definition is limiting as it assumes people respond with the same lens, views, beliefs or attitudes; that cultural competence is similar and does not acknowledge differences in culture and peoples.¹⁰

Cultural competence through the lens of an Aboriginal person is an ongoing process, 'a distinct, but cumulative relationship between cultural awareness (knowing), cultural sensitivity (appreciating), cultural competence (practice, demonstrating) and cultural proficiency (embedding as organisational practice)' and is attained, applied and demonstrated at the individual, professional, organisational and systemic level.¹¹

At both an individual or organisational level, cultural competence includes developing the knowledge, skills, understandings, attitudes, values and attributes that are culturally respectful and responsive in diverse cross-cultural settings.

For individuals, developing cultural competence requires the ability to identify, acknowledge and challenge one's own cultural assumptions, biases, values and beliefs. It involves understanding that culture shapes worldview, and that individuals view the world differently based on their cultural background and related experiences.

It requires far more than becoming culturally aware or practising tolerance.

It is about looking at one's privilege, looking at the world through another's eyes, through a different cultural lens.

Cultural competence includes **cultural respect, cultural awareness and cultural safety.**

Knowing

- **Cultural Knowledge** is a gaining of knowledge of other cultural group's characteristics such as history, values, beliefs, customs and behaviours. This includes acquiring knowledge of past and present interactions of other cultural groups with oneself (individual), an organisation or system/s.
- **Cultural Awareness** is the gaining of awareness of the differences between oneself and other cultural groups, especially the values, beliefs, customs and attitudes. Understanding that these differences may require a change or adaption of attitudes, behaviours and practices to be able to build respectful and trusting relationships with people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Being

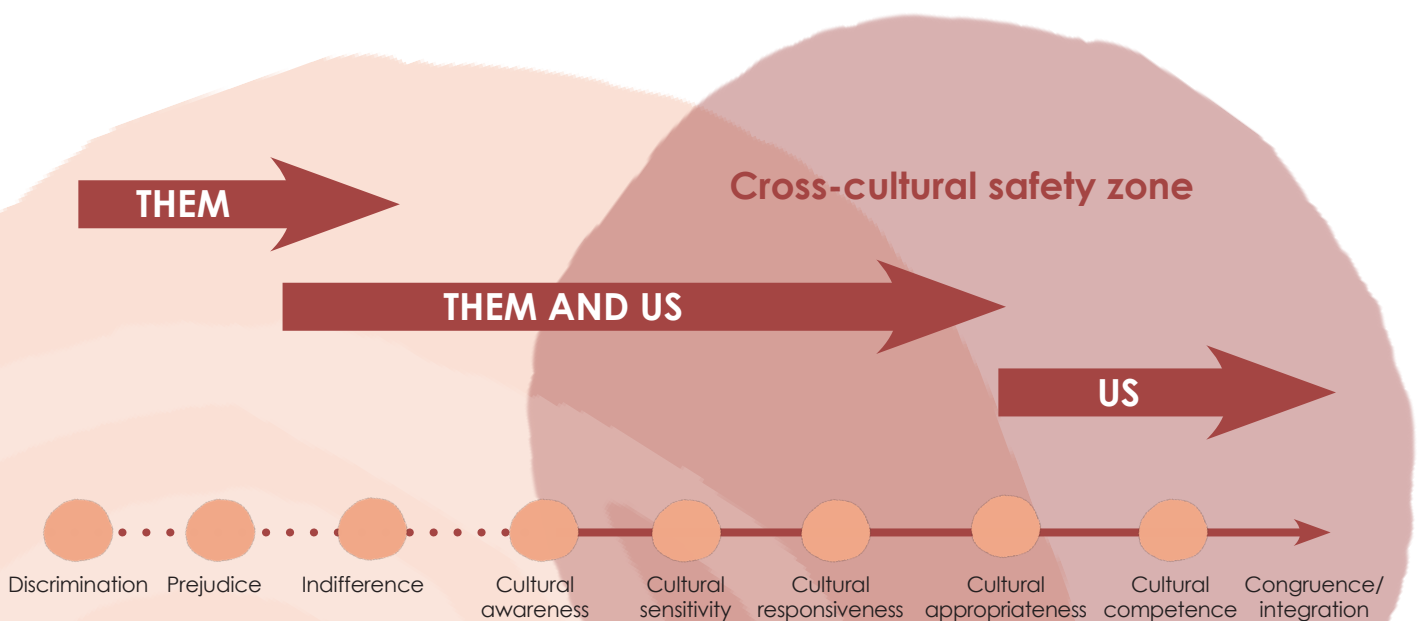
- **Cultural Sensitivity** is an awareness of one's own culture, cultural differences and similarities among and between different cultures including the awareness of race, power and privilege and the impacts this has on other cultural groups. It is about knowing that differences exist between cultures and not assigning a value to the differences (good or bad). It is then operating within this knowledge in a sensitive and respectful manner. It is closely linked to cultural humility.
- **Cultural Humility** is a lifelong learning, self-reflection on assumptions, beliefs, knowledge and recognition of power imbalances. In doing so, having the ability to maintain an interpersonal relationship that is other-orientated (open to the other) respecting the cultural characteristics that are important to the other person.

Doing

- **Cultural Safety** is concerned with whether or not Aboriginal people engaged in the service system feel 'safe' within their cultural identity. It reflects Aboriginal families' experiences of services and processes and is achieved when Aboriginal people feel safe to be themselves.

The below diagram depicts cultural safety where practitioners, and those they work with, see each other less as 'them' and more as 'us'.

Model of cross-cultural safety (based on Walker et al, 2009:16¹²)



Cultural protocols

While protocols are ethical principles which guide behaviour in a particular situation, cultural protocols are standards of behaviour used by people to show respect to one another. Cultural protocols refers to the customs, lore and codes of behaviour of a particular cultural group and a way of conducting business.¹³

Cultural and intellectual property rights include the right for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to:

- Own and control their cultural and intellectual property
- Ensure that any means of protecting their cultural and intellectual property is based on the principle of self-determination
- Be recognised as the primary guardians and interpreters of their cultures and so regulate how stories and information are presented
- Authorise or refuse the use of their cultural and intellectual property according to customary law
- Maintain the secrecy of their knowledge and other cultural practices
- Be given full and proper attribution for sharing their heritage
- Control the recording of cultural customs and expressions, the language which may be intrinsic to cultural identity, knowledge, skill and teaching of culture.¹⁴

Cultural proficiency

Cultural proficiency occurs when knowledge, behaviours, attitudes and strategies are embedded in practice, systems, policies, and across an organisation at all levels. Where self-determination of Aboriginal people is advanced and supported and the unique values and cultural needs of Aboriginal people are met, whilst building cultural competency of individuals.

Healing

Healing enables people to address distress, overcome trauma and restore wellbeing.

Ways to support healing include reconnecting with culture, strengthening identity, restoring safe and enduring relationships and supporting communities to understand the impact that their experiences have had on their behaviour and create change.

Healing occurs at a community, family and individual level. Healing continues throughout a person's lifetime and across generations.

International best practice in healing involves combining traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural healing practices with western methodologies.¹⁵

The concept of healing for Aboriginal people is itself specific to the experiences of Aboriginal people and differs considerably from many Western worldviews of healing as individual treatment modes.

Reconciliation

Reconciliation is about strengthening relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous peoples, for the benefit of all Australians.¹⁶

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