



## Wardliparingga Aboriginal Health Equity

South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI)  
Adelaide, South Australia

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Cultural Safety in Aged Care Funded by the Australian Government through the Dementia and Aged Care Services Fund

## Cultural protocols– Acknowledgement of Country

It is important that appropriate protocols are adhered too. Therefore, recognising local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their connection to Country is extremely important. When meetings or important events are held, acknowledgement of the traditional custodians of the place is a very significant and important part of formal recognition of Aboriginal people. An Acknowledgement of Country is an opportunity for staff to show respect for the traditional custodians and continuing connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to Country (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocols Document SAHMRI, 2017).

Appropriate and respectful acknowledgment of Country, Elders past, present and future as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people presenting and attending the presentation(s) must be undertaken prior to starting.

**Note:** When presenting this content, we encourage the presenter to acknowledge the local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people of the geographical area. The following example can be used and/or adapted to suit the local area and acknowledgement of relevant traditional custodians.

“We acknowledge and respect the traditional custodians whose ancestral lands we are meeting upon here today, the \_\_\_\_\_ people. We acknowledge the deep feelings of attachment and relationship of the \_\_\_\_\_ to their Country. We also pay respects to the cultural authority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people visiting/attending from other areas of \_\_\_\_\_ present here”

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies have developed an online interactive tool which can assist with the identification of different language groups across Australia. It is available at:

<https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/articles/aiatsis-map-indigenous-australia>

## 1. Making use of the Presenter Guide

The presenter guide is intended to assist you with presenting the information provided in the accompanying powerpoint slides. You can use the notes included in this guide to:

1. Outline the main information provided in the accompanying powerpoint slides.
2. Provide examples of suggested strategies described in the slides.
3. Assist with generating discussion with participants – see included questions throughout the guide.

**Note:** Please remind participants to use the accompanying workbook to note any thoughts and questions relating to content. The questions in the presentation slides are included in the workbook to record participants' notes and responses.

## 2. Presenter Introduction

1. Presenter introduce yourself
2. Invitation to participants to introduce
  - themselves, their work roles etc
  - their organisation affiliations (where appropriate)
  - their reason for attending the Cultural Safety in Aged Care Training and
  - what they want to get out of the course, i.e. what would they like to learn about cultural safety in aged care?



# Cultural Safety in Aged Care

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Aboriginal Research

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**Principle 1. Respecting Aboriginal Life, Traditions and Living Culture**

## Presenter Notes **Title Slide**

In this presentation, we will describe key concepts relating to Principle 1. “Respecting Aboriginal Life, Traditions and Living Culture” and consider:

1. What did we learn from Aboriginal Elders about their cultural safety needs in aged care?
2. What are the benefits to aged care organisations?
3. What are the opportunities for aged care organisations?
4. What can an aged care organisation do?

**Note:** Remind participants that they can use the accompanying workbook to note any thoughts or questions relating to this principle. The questions in the presentation slides are also included in the workbook to record participants’ response.



## Acknowledgement of Country

*We would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet and pay our particular respects to the Elders past and present, as well as acknowledging the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the room.*

### Presenter Notes Acknowledgement of Country

Appropriate and respectful acknowledgment of Country, Elders past, present and future as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait people presenting and attending the presentation(s) must be undertaken prior to starting.

**Note:** We encourage the presenter to acknowledge the local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people of the geographical area. The example in this slide can be used or adapted to suit the local area and acknowledgement of relevant traditional custodians.



**Principle 1. Respecting Aboriginal Life**

**Principle 1**  
Respecting Aboriginal Life, Traditions and Living Culture

### Presenter Notes Introduction to Principle 1.

1. Principle 1. Respecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life, traditions and living culture is grounded in the expectation that respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and traditions should underpin how aged care services are designed and delivered. It is strongly encouraged and highly important that aged care organisations understand this principle and commit to working with older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in ways that respect their cultures.
2. One of the key reasons why it is important for aged care organisations to do so stems from the recent introduction of the new aged care standards, the Single Quality Framework (July 2019), that requires aged care organisations to demonstrate that they actively plan and cater for the unique cultural needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in a comprehensive way.

### Reference

Australian Government Department of Health. 2018. Ageing and Aged Care, Single Quality Framework <https://agedcare.health.gov.au/quality/single-quality-framework-focus-on-consumers>

**Principle 1. Respecting Aboriginal Life**

The **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples** affirms the principle of Indigenous self-determination, recognises and respects the contribution of Indigenous knowledge systems, cultures and traditions to contemporary life.

Indigenous peoples have the right to practice their cultural traditions, and importantly have a right to maintain and protect the past, present and future of their cultures.

Source: United Nations, 2007

### Presenter Notes The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Presenter points to follow:




1. This statement provides further context on the rights of Indigenous peoples, not only within Australia, but worldwide.
2. Recognition and respect for Indigenous cultures is a key attribute of a culturally safe environment. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is a significant development in the protection and promotion of Indigenous human rights at an international level. It was adopted by the Human Rights Council in 2006 and the General Assembly on 13 September 2007.
3. The Declaration demonstrates a commitment by member states towards the rights of Indigenous peoples around the world. The Declaration outlines individual and collective rights of Indigenous peoples, including the rights to culture, identity, language, and prohibits discrimination. It sets out the principles of partnership and mutual respect that should guide the relationship between states and Indigenous peoples and provides tools to measure the way states are respecting and implementing the rights of Indigenous peoples.

**Note:** Australia initially voted against the resolution with concerns about the right to self-determination (Articles 3 and 4) and references to Indigenous customary law. However, in 2009 Australia moved to endorse the resolution.

#### Questions for participants

- How does the United Nations Declaration apply for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in aged care?
- How does the United Nations Declaration apply to organisations and carers of older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in aged care?

## Principle 1. Respecting Aboriginal Life

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples may live in urban, rural or remote settings, in urbanised, traditional or other lifestyles, and may move between these ways of living.

Although cultures and language are diverse across the country, four concepts are found consistently in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

- The religious interpretation
- The system of extended kinship
- Country to which people belong
- Kanyini – which is to have, to hold, to care

Franks C, Curr, B. Keeping company: an inter-cultural conversation. Wollongong: Centre for Indigenous Development Education and Research, University of Wollongong; 1996.

### Presenter Notes Principle 1. Respecting Aboriginal Life

#### Presenter points to follow:

Cultural identity and cultural connection are key to the emotional, physical and spiritual health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Although Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and language vary across Australia, four core concepts are found consistently among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities:

1. The spiritual interpretations of the profound bonding of people to one another, to their Country and to the species of animals and plants inhabiting it. It is continually renewed by its expression in song, dance, verbal narratives of creation stories (referred to as the Dreaming) and re-enacted continually in ceremonial journeys and is passed down through the generations. Note: Spiritual interpretations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are as significant and as important as religious beliefs within Western cultures.
2. Kinship is an integral part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and may impact on the way services are utilised. In Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies the family structures, obligations and expectations underlying them are extended to the whole society. The concept of family for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples contrasts with many Western cultures. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are collective in nature. It often includes a much wider extended family, where there are mutual obligations and sharing within the extended family (kinship system). It is important to understand the concept of kinship and offer a service that addresses the family obligations that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples experience.
3. Country refers to places which people belong; which they may live on or visit; and will always be subject to the obligations of looking after and caring for their place.
4. Kanyini is a word from Central Desert which relates to the principle of connectedness through caring and responsibility that underpins Aboriginal life. Kanyini is nurtured through caring and practicing responsibility for all things and is relevant for many Aboriginal language groups which would have their unique terms to describe this concept.

**Note:** You may choose to read the following extract, explaining kinship by Franks C & Curr B (1996)

*“Kinship relationships can be likened to the most intricate tapestry you can imagine...The sharing of the responsibilities and obligations ensures that functional Aboriginal culture survives; that it is successful is demonstrated in the fact that it has survived and functioned for tens of thousands of years...Each person is supported and guided throughout every aspect of life, from birth to death and in turn guides and supports others in accordance to their particular kinship role... (page 37)*

*Aboriginal society has no hierarchical structure; it can be thought of an intricate, interconnected system of relationship, with each person having responsibility and obligation for someone else within this system. In an essentially oral tradition this ensured that cultural values and tradition were passed on throughout the generations with minimal variation. The viability is maintained by a system of checks and balances. Each person within the kinship network has a specific role of guardianship and supervision for another designated person within the system” (page 40)*

**Reference** Franks C, Curr, B. Keeping company: an inter-cultural conversation. Wollongong: Centre for Indigenous Development Education and Research, University of Wollongong; 1996.



## Principle 1. Respecting Aboriginal Life

What did we learn from Aboriginal Elders about their cultural safety needs in aged care?



Source: An Elder's Aged Care Story

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### Presenter Notes What did we learn from Aboriginal Elders about their cultural safety needs in aged care?

#### Presenter points to follow:

The following slides present quotes from older Aboriginal people who were interviewed about aged care. They highlight the importance of and desire to maintain connection to culture, when they are receiving aged care services

1. The picture in this slide was drawn by an Elder in a remote community. It is important to note the significance of this Elder's aged care story, as he was speaking with authority and on behalf of his community.
2. He illustrates his vision of aged care by drawing it in the sand with a spear, explaining how the Elders in his community want to feel safe and at peace in aged care.
3. It is important to note when caring for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that, despite the location, English is still a foreign language to many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

#### Questions for participants

- How does your organisation support the communication styles of older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people? (story telling, drawing)



## Principle 1. Respecting Aboriginal Life



### Maintaining Culture

"I tell the kids, I was talking to my granddaughter and my daughter, I say this is your culture hold on to it, my culture, later I'll be finished. I won't understand any more. I won't understand when I'm in aged care. This is very important for them."

"When we close our eyes or if we get sick inside... we'll go into aged care and for the kids, this is their story to hold onto themselves tight and to understand and remember and think "Oh this is what our grandmothers taught us our grandfathers told us. Our story." Yes, we've told it and now it's theirs. And they can keep it and remember that their grandmothers told it to keep it strong before they went into aged care."


### Presenter Notes Maintaining Culture

#### Presenter points to follow:

1. These quotes represent the significance of culture and keeping traditions alive. Passing on culture is a significant obligation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. These quotes highlight the importance of passing on culture to younger generations while able to, and a sense of urgency as the Elders understand they may not have that long (time) to pass on and share stories, language and cultural identity before they are unable to as they age.
2. It is also important to understand the significance of these words within the context of historical trauma and the continued loss of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures since colonisation.

#### Suggested discussion

- Participants should be encouraged to either discuss their own experiences/observations of older people in care and desire to converse in language, share stories and practice culture.
- How often do people in your care do this?
- What types of activities does your service offer for people to practice culture?



**Principle 1. Respecting Aboriginal Life**

**Food**

“That’s why kangaroo tail in the waru (fire). They used to cook kangaroo tail but they don’t now.”

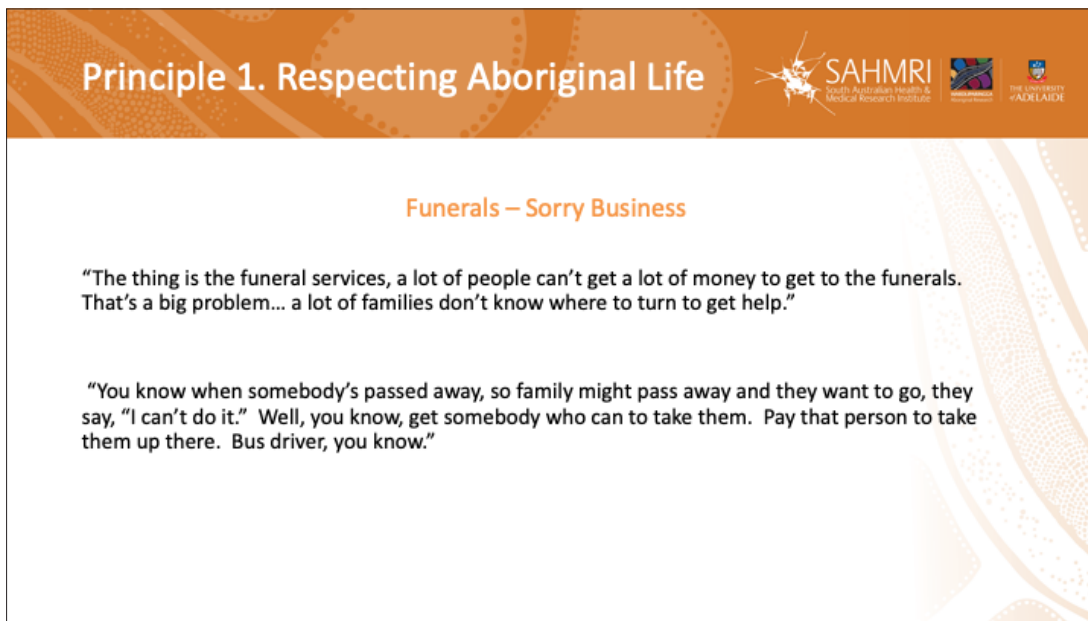
“Yeah. We have it cooked. That’s in the oven. They want it cooked on the ground, you know. The malu tails in the soup or whatever, they want it from the ground. Cooked in the ground, you know.”

### Presenter Notes **Food**

In this slide an Elder expresses the desire to eat food prepared in traditional ways.

#### Suggested discussion

- Participants should be encouraged to discuss their own experiences/observations of older people in care and their desire to access, prepare and eat traditional foods. (eg kangaroo).
- How often do people in your care do this?
- How does your aged care service cater for these needs? (for example, through menu, allowing foods to be brought in by visitors or through celebration of significant events).



## Principle 1. Respecting Aboriginal Life

### Funerals – Sorry Business

“The thing is the funeral services, a lot of people can’t get a lot of money to get to the funerals. That’s a big problem... a lot of families don’t know where to turn to get help.”

“You know when somebody’s passed away, so family might pass away and they want to go, they say, “I can’t do it.” Well, you know, get somebody who can to take them. Pay that person to take them up there. Bus driver, you know.”

### Presenter Notes Funerals– Sorry Business

**Presenter points to follow:**

1. In Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, there are significant cultural practices and protocols associated with death, including Sorry Business and ceremonies around the bereavement and funerals for a deceased person.
2. Sorry Business is an important time of mourning involving responsibilities and obligations to attend funerals and participate in other cultural activities or ceremonies with the community. This is part of a community and cultural tradition that is highly important for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have clear cultural obligations to be involved in Sorry Business relating to the death or loss of immediate family members, as well as extended family and people with kinship or community ties.
3. In this slide an older Aboriginal person in aged care describes not being able to attend funerals and requiring support for travel. Lack of transport and ability to attend funerals is a major concern and stressor for Elders.

**Note:** Aged care services should consider how they can support people to return to Country for Sorry Business. By doing so, the service is respecting and upholding the significant cultural obligations that communities are required to meet. When they are not able to fulfil this requirement, it is likely that people in care will feel distressed.

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What are the benefits for Aged Care Organisations?



### Presenter Notes What are the benefits for Aged Care Organisations?

#### Presenter points to follow:

1. Research has demonstrated that opportunities for expression of cultural identities can have beneficial effects for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and are associated with measurable improvements in health. Activities such as practising and learning Indigenous languages, connecting to Country and expressing cultural identity through art and performance have known physical, social and emotional wellbeing benefits.
2. For organisations working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations there are numerous benefits to investing time and resources to deliver care in ways that are respectful of culture.

#### References

MacLean S, Ritte R, Thorpe A, Ewen A, and Arabena K. 2017. 'Health and Wellbeing Outcomes of Programs for Indigenous Australians That Include Strategies to Enable the Expression of Cultural Identities: A Systematic Review'. 23(4) Australian Journal of Primary Health 309. <https://www.publish.csiro.au/PY/PY16061>

Davy C, Kite E, Aitken G, Dodd G, Rigney J, Hayes J, Van Emden J. 2016. "What keeps you strong? A systematic review identifying how primary health-care and aged-care services can support the well-being of older Indigenous peoples." <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/ajag.12311>



## Principle 1. Respecting Aboriginal Life

### Benefits for Aged Care Organisations

- Strengthened relationships between workers and clients
- Supporting Elders' cultural obligations
- Improved satisfaction with services

### Presenter Notes Benefits for Aged Care Organisations

#### Presenter points to follow:

1. Ensuring that clients are supported to maintain cultural connection, practice culture through services/ activities provided by aged care organisations will have clear benefits to organisations.
2. Providing opportunities to maintain cultural connection through service provision is beneficial to aged care organisations in various ways.
  - Relationships that lead to better understanding of the specific needs of the community, connection and rapport with care providers and clients,
  - Greater ability to meet the needs through access to appropriate services, and
  - Demonstrates compliance with aged care standards.



## Principle 1. Respecting Aboriginal Life

What are the opportunities for aged care organisations?

- Understand traditional practices and protocols of diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures
- Understand the concept of Elders in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and respect the roles and responsibilities they hold in the community
- Ensure opportunities for Elders to maintain culture through cultural events, activities and excursions to bush or Country
- Staff training

### Presenter Notes What are the opportunities for aged care organisations?

Developing a culturally safe and respectful organisation, where clients, their families and community can feel comfortable requires organisations to establish supportive environments and clear processes for workers to respect and respond to the cultural needs of older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

#### Presenter points to follow:

1. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are complex and extremely diverse, and accepted protocols vary across communities. Identify the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities within your organisation and the relevant cultural protocols to guide relationship building. Consider partnering with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to assist with relationship building at community level or seek cultural mentorship.
2. Older people are an integral part of the social fabric of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. They hold cultural knowledge and wisdom which is passed down to generations.
3. Communicate with clients to understand the types of events and activities they would prefer.
4. Provide professional development and training opportunities for staff with regards to understanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and the needs of people they are caring for.

**Principle 1. Respecting Aboriginal Life**

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What can aged care organisations do?

- Dedicate time and resources to ensure that their Elders can engage in traditional cultural practices
- Ensure gender sensitivity in personal care practices
- Connect with local community members and organisations

### Presenter Notes What can Aged Care organisations do?

#### Presenter points to follow:

1. Communicate with clients to understand their preferences for activities such as art, music, story-telling and excursions to Country.
2. Understand and adhere to cultural protocols, for example considerations of gender in personal care.
3. Know the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, organisations and appropriate representatives. Connect with individuals to identify opportunities and needs within communities.

#### Suggested discussion

- Encourage participants to discuss what other ways they or their organisation support cultural practices.



## Discussion



Presenter Guide

- How does your organisation support Elders to maintain cultural identity?
- How could your organisation improve on the way services are delivered?

Slide 14

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health

### Reports and Resources

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. 2018. Closing the Gap – Prime Ministers Report. <https://www.antar.org.au/sites/default/files/ctg-report-2018.pdf>

Australian Government Department of Health. 2013. National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, 2013-2023. [https://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/B92E980680486C3BCA257BF0001BAF01/\\$File/health-plan.pdf](https://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/B92E980680486C3BCA257BF0001BAF01/$File/health-plan.pdf)

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Assuring equity of access and quality of access and quality outcomes for Older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. What needs to be Done. <https://apo.org.au/node/182156>

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### Further Readings

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Radford K, Mack H, Draper B, Chalkley S, Daylight G, Cumming R, Bennett H, Delbaere K, Broe G., 11. 2015. Prevalence of dementia in urban and regional Aboriginal Australians Alzheimer's & Dementia 271-279

Lo Giudice D, Smith K, Fenner S, Hyde Z, Atkinson D, Skeaf L, Malay R, Flicker L. 2016. Incidence and predictors of cognitive impairment and dementia in Aboriginal Australians: A follow-up study of 5 years Alzheimer's & Dementia 12 252-261

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aged Care

### Reports and Resources

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### Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

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### Other

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