



Inclusive and culturally safe governance

The flipbook guides have been designed as supplementary supports for the learning modules. The guides include key messages and insights for your continued reflection.

Disclaimer: The new Aged Care Act 2024 (the Act) starts on 1 November 2025. The Act replaces existing aged care legislation. The Aged Care Rules (the Rules) are expected to be finalised before the Act starts. The Rules give more information about how the new Act will work. This resource is in draft. We will update it when both the Act and the Rules come into force.

Need to know: Culturally safe governance

Provision of culturally safe care is not only a requirement for aged care providers but is essential to ensuring consumers preferences, requirements and values are at the centre of care and service delivery.

Culturally safe care recognises that consumers are all unique with different lived experiences. This can include social, cultural, linguistic, religious, spiritual, psychological and medical needs that can vastly affect the care, support and services they need.

Governing bodies and executives need to be aware of their role in promoting and driving a culture of culturally safe care within their organisation. When a provider effectively delivers culturally safe care, it can:



Enable consumers to retain connections to their culture and traditions, including connection to land, family, law, ceremony and language.



Demonstrate expected behaviours and values.



Reduce social isolation and loneliness and feelings of marginalisation.



Fulfil its legislative and regulatory requirements.



Provide effective leadership and engender trust in the organisation's ability to provide safe care for consumers from diverse backgrounds, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



Increase mutual respect and enhanced relationships with the workforce and community.



Empower consumers to make informed decisions and be active participants in their care.



Demonstrate to workers that their diversity is valued and engaged within the service.

Need to know: Culturally safe governance (continued)

When a provider does not deliver inclusive and culturally safe care it can result in

Consumer's experiencing:

- racism
- discrimination
- marginalisation
- ongoing trauma
- disconnection from own culture and connection to place.

Providers:

- creating unconscious bias within the organisation
- reinforcing negative stereotypes
- embedding discriminatory practices
- displaying tokenistic behaviour
- reinforcing cultural misconceptions and assumptions.

It is up to governing bodies and executives to ensure that their provider's strategy aligns with culturally safe governance best practice.



Obligations for providing culturally safe care

The aged care reforms are designed to deliver aged care services in which all Australians can have confidence in. A large element of this is access to and the delivery of culturally safe care. Under the *Aged Care Act 2024* and subordinate legislation, governing bodies and executives have a range of obligations and accountabilities provision of culturally safe care to all consumers.

01

***Aged Care
Act 2024***

02

**Aged Care
Quality
Standards**

03

**Statement
of Rights**

04

**Other
relevant
legislation**

05

**Relevant
international
treaties**

Obligations for providing culturally safe care (continued)

01 Aged Care Act 2024

The Aged Care Act 2024 identifies the importance of care services that are accessible, culturally safe, culturally appropriate, trauma aware and healing informed based on the needs of the individual including:

- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander persons
- veterans or war widows
- people from culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- people who may be financially or socially disadvantaged
- people who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing homelessness
- parents and children who are separated by forced adoption or removal
- adult survivors of institutional child sexual abuse
- people who are care leavers
- people who are LGBTQIA+, other sexual orientations or gender diverse
- people with disability or mental ill health
- people who are neurodivergent
- people are deaf, deafblind, vision impaired or hard of hearing
- people who live in rural or remote areas.

02 Strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards

Strong person-centred care is a foundation of the strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards. Providers are required to demonstrate how consumers cultural preferences inform the planning, delivery and review of their care and services under the Standards.

To find out more, please review the strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards resource.

Obligations for providing culturally safe care (continued)

03 Statement of Rights

The new Aged Care Act will include a Statement of Rights, outlining new rights for consumers accessing aged care services. This will ensure that consumers and their needs remain at the centre of the new aged care system.

Providers will have to ensure that their actions are consistent with the Statement of Rights.

To find out more, please review the Statement of Rights resource.

04 Other relevant legislation

Outside of the aged care specific legislation described above, providers are held to the following relevant anti-discrimination legislation, which makes it unlawful to discriminate or treat someone less favourably because of their race, skin colour, sex and disability.

View the following legislation documents for more information:

- ***Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)***
- ***Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)***
- ***Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)***

Obligations for providing culturally safe care (continued)

05 Relevant international treaties

The following treaties have been adopted by Australia. To read more about these treaties, links are provided on the last page.

- ***United Nations Principles for Older Persons 1991: Section 16*** – older persons should have access to the educational, cultural, spiritual and recreational resources of society promoting self-fulfillment and participation.
- ***United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People: Article 22*** – Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and develop their political, economic and social systems or institutions, to be secure in the enjoyment of their own means of subsistence and development, and to engage freely in all their traditional and other economic activities
- ***United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: Article 15*** – The State Parties recognise the right of everyone: to take part in cultural life.
- ***Uluru Statement from the Heart***: Aged Care providers should endorse the Uluru Statement from the Heart to develop a better understanding of how to deliver culturally safe care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Specifically, how to ensure the right to self-determination and 'power over our destiny' is met.

Tips for fostering culturally safe care

There is a range of things governing bodies and executives of aged care providers can do to help establish and drive culturally safe governance.

Embed the voice of consumers in governing body meetings

- Establish effective partnerships with consumers and key stakeholders to co-design a diversity and inclusion statement, frameworks, strategies and plan.
- Invite consumers that represent multicultural communities to governing body meetings to discuss key issues and barriers in preventing culturally safe governance.
- Invite consumers to establish a consumer advisory body.
- Circulate a summary of meeting outcomes to all consumers who receive care and services, and representative groups.

Engage with consumers of diverse backgrounds

- Ask questions and obtain assurance from management as to how consumers from diverse backgrounds are being engaged and whether this is in line with culturally safe best practice.
- Understand how management currently engages with consumers and where changes may be needed.
- Ask consumers receiving care and services, supporters and representatives if they believe your organisation provides culturally safe care?
- Determine how management involves all consumers in the co-design development, planning and delivery of care services.

Tips for fostering culturally safe care (continued)

Establish and maintain a culturally safe workforce strategy

- Develop and establish a workforce strategy that includes recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce with the right language skills and lived experience to support consumers from diverse backgrounds.
- Ask questions and obtain assurance from management as to whether there are effective systems and processes in place to support your organisation's culturally safe workforce strategy.
- Maintain oversight that regular training in cultural safety, trauma aware and healing informed care and interacting with people living with dementia is provided to staff and can demonstrate their competency.
- Ensure priorities, strategic direction and cultural expectations are communicated effectively to the workforce by management.
- Continue to build the capacity of the workforce to improve service provision for consumers from diverse backgrounds.
- Identify key skills required for management and staff to be able to fulfil their responsibilities in implementing inclusive services.
- Ensure the budget supports the development and implementation of inclusive service provisions (e.g. interpreter services, translators, training and targeted media campaigns).

Tips for fostering culturally safe care (continued)

Promote a culturally safe workplace culture

Be a role model for inclusive leadership by:

- Undertaking ongoing learning opportunities.
- Ensuring cultural days are integrated as part of the provider's cultural program.
- Being involved/attending cultural celebrations (i.e. Diwali, Ramadan, Passover, Reconciliation Week, Pride Month, and Refugee Week).
- Recognising and celebrating historical events of significance (i.e. Close the Gap, Mabo Day etc.)
- Inviting members of cultural communities, religious ministers and other key leaders to periodically visit the facility.
- Recognise the need for service variability between different Indigenous communities (i.e. different mobs and clan groups) to ensure that 'one size doesn't fit all'.
- Prioritise the appointment of diverse governing body members and executives or ensure a regular standing item that allows consumers from diverse backgrounds the opportunity to provide feedback.
- Prioritise consumer's preferences and needs to deliver quality services inclusive of consumers from diverse backgrounds and different levels of cognitive ability.
- Support a learning mindset and culture to drive innovation and change to meet the needs of current and future consumers receiving care and services.

Tips for fostering culturally safe care (continued)

Establish quality and continuous improvement processes

- Undertake an analysis of strengths, gaps, capabilities and readiness to implement and maintain an inclusive approach to service delivery.
- Ask questions and obtain assurance from management as to how the services and care provided in the organisation are aligned with the needs and preferences of consumers.
- Actively review trends in relation to feedback, complaints and experiences from consumers. Use this information to inform decision making and make improvements to how care and services are delivered.
- Prioritise and respond to current and emerging community needs to support positive outcomes for consumers of diverse backgrounds.
- Receive, action and respond to all reports presented to the governing body by the Consumer and Quality Care Advisory bodies.



Frameworks, tools and resources to support culturally safe care

Governing bodies are responsible for setting an aged care provider's strategic direction and priorities. A high-performing organisation is supported by systems, policies and processes that align to its strategic direction and priorities. When it comes to the delivery of culturally safe care to consumers, aged care providers can utilise the following frameworks, tools and resources.

Read about the frameworks, tools and resources on the following pages to learn about how your governing body can support culturally safe care.



Aged Care Diversity Framework



Aged Care Diversity Framework provider action plans



Inclusive Service Standards



Reconciliation Action Plan



National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Program

Frameworks, tools and resources to support culturally safe care (continued)

Aged Care Diversity Framework

The Aged Care Diversity Framework provides guidance on how to embed diversity in the design and delivery of aged care services by:

- recognising human rights
- considering diversity when designing and providing aged care
- supporting aged care providers to improve care and remove barriers
- encouraging consumers to be partners in the design of aged care services
- recognising that consumers have diverse characteristics and life experiences and may need different approaches to the care and services they receive.

Aged Care Diversity Framework provider action plans

The Aged Care Diversity Framework provider action plans provide guidance on how to support consumers with diverse needs. For example, the Actions to Support Older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island People action plan:

- addresses the challenges experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in accessing the aged care system.
- provides a guide for assessing current performance, identifying gaps and designing pathways to improve inclusive service provision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Frameworks, tools and resources to support culturally safe care (continued)

Inclusive Service Standards

The Inclusive Service Standards (2023) provide a framework for providers to improve their services and organisational practices to make them safe and accessible.

- **Standard 1 – Commitment to inclusive services:** The organisation clearly articulates its commitment to building an environment which responds to consumer's diversity and embeds inclusive service provision across all its systems.
- **Standard 2 – Developing systems that support inclusive services:** The organisation designs and implements services based on evidence derived from organisational reviews and consultation with stakeholders.
- **Standard 3 – Capacity building for inclusive services:** The organisation's management and staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and resources required to plan and deliver inclusive services.

View the Inclusive Service Standards for the key performance measures and suggested actions and strategies for each Standard.

Reconciliation Action Plan

Service providers should adopt a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) to help them provide aged care services that are more accessible and inclusive for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander older people. This plan should have the aims of:

- building relationships and opportunities for meaningful engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, organisations and individuals.
- embedding an organisational culture that is welcoming and respectful to all individuals.

View the Reconciliation Australia website for more information about RAPs.

Frameworks, tools and resources to support culturally safe care (continued)

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Program

- The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care (NATSIFAC) Program is funded by the Australian Government to help aged care providers:
 - deliver a range of services to meet the changing aged care needs of the community
 - provide aged care services to older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples close to home and community
 - improve access to aged care services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
 - improve the quality of culturally appropriate aged care services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
 - develop financially viable, cost-effective and coordinated services outside of the existing mainstream programs.
- To give culturally appropriate care, providers should:
 - have buildings suited to cultural activities, ceremonies and family visits that consider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander customs
 - provide access to a comfortable environment and surroundings (e.g. access to bushland gardens and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artefacts).
 - employ or engage Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people to provide care
 - include the local community in planning and providing aged care planning
 - respect cultural traditions (e.g. men's and women's business).

Cultural awareness checklist

1. Establish clear communication

Make sure you know your consumers preferred method of communicating and arrange professional interpretation if needed.

2. Be aware of non-verbal cues without jumping to conclusions

Non-verbal communication conveys a lot of critical information – but it may differ dramatically across cultures. Don't make any assumptions without knowing the person's customs.

3. Ask openly about potentially relevant traditions and customs

This includes exploring potential spiritual/religious practices, dietary considerations, and cultural norms that may be particularly important to the older person's clinical, spiritual and psychological well-being.

4. Use normalising statements

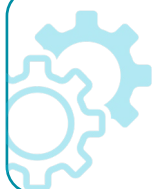
A respectful way to ask about sensitive issues like cultural or religious customs is to first explain that they are very common. (e.g. "A lot of the consumers I care for have customs or practises that are important for me to know about so I can make sure to give you the best possible care.")

5. Examine your own biases

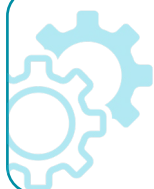
We all have unconscious biases and prejudices that impact our relationships with patients. Identifying and understanding these biases helps to control them and is essential to achieving cultural awareness.



Additional resources



Aged Care Act 2024



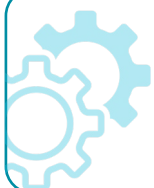
Strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards



Statement of Rights



Racial Discrimination Act 1975



Disability Discrimination Act 1992



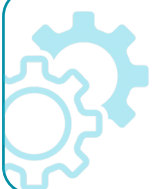
United Nations Principles for Older Persons 1991



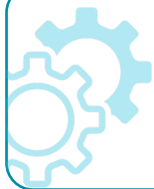
Sex Discrimination Act 1984



UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples



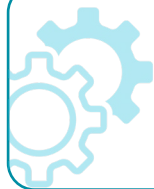
UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights



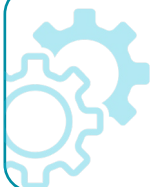
Aged Care Diversity Framework



Aged Care Diversity Framework action plans



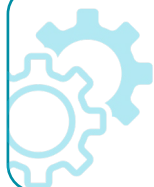
Inclusive Service Standards



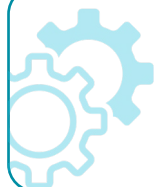
NATSIFAC Program



NATSIFAC Program Manual



The importance of cultural humility and cultural safety in health care



Reconciliation Australia



Cultural Awareness in Healthcare Checklist



Uluru Statement from the Heart



Cultural safety in health care for Indigenous Australians: monitoring framework



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