



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Awareness Self-Assessment Toolkit

Good practice standards
for culturally appropriate
community services



Gulanga
Program





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Good practice standards for culturally appropriate community services



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About ACTCOSS

ACTCOSS acknowledges Canberra has been built on the land of the Ngunnawal people. We pay respects to their Elders and recognise the strength and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and ongoing contributions to the ACT community.

The ACT Council of Social Service Inc. (ACTCOSS) is the peak representative body for not-for-profit community organisations, people living with disadvantage and low-income citizens of the Territory.

ACTCOSS is a member of the nationwide COSS network, made up of each of the state and territory Councils and the national body, the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS).

ACTCOSS' vision is to live in a fair and equitable community that respects and values diversity, human rights and sustainability and promotes justice, equity, reconciliation and social inclusion.

The membership of the Council includes the majority of community based service providers in the social welfare area, a range of community associations and networks, self-help and consumer groups and interested individuals.

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This tool was first developed as part of the Indigenous Project, funded through the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP), which was jointly funded by the ACT and Australian Government.

This tool is modelled on the *Raising the Standard* framework.

Cover Artwork by Dale R. Huddleston

Beginning the Journey, 2009.

Dale is Ngandi (Roper River, NT) and Wiradjuri (Western NSW). The painting shows two crocodiles starting their journey from their egg to the billabong.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Awareness Self-Assessment Toolkit

A practical guide to assist your organisation to:

- Document your knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures
- Assess your practice in assisting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Plan to develop your service to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

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About CASAT

The *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Awareness Self-Assessment Toolkit (CASAT)* is a set of good practice standards developed to assist community service organisations improve the quality of their services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and communities, and to improve knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

CASAT was developed in 2008/2009 in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and workers. The toolkit was piloted with three community organisations. It was reviewed and updated in 2011 and 2013. The CASAT is a practical guide to assist your organisation to:

- Document organisational knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures
- Assess practice in assisting/supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Develop a plan to improve service provision and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

The good practice standards are intended to be generic and relevant to a wide range of organisations and service types in the ACT. It should be noted some of the features of good practice may not be relevant to every organisation.

Content of CASAT

The format of the toolkit closely follows that of the *Raising the Standard* manual which was designed to guide quality improvement in ACT community service organisations. The CASAT includes six good practice standards:

- Standard 1: Respect and Commitment
- Standard 2: Staff Knowledge and Development
- Standard 3: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment
- Standard 4: Culturally Appropriate Service Delivery
- Standard 5: Engagement with Communities
- Standard 6: Service Development and Evaluation

Each standard includes four to seven features of good practice.

Within each standard, there are three parts for documenting:

1. Current evidence of good practice
2. Areas identified for improvement
3. Priority actions to improve against standard

In 2011 ACTCOSS developed the *Examples of Good Practice / Areas for Improvement* document, which you can find at the end of the CASAT toolkit. It gives some practical examples which you may like to implement within your organisation. The examples given are not the only way the standards may be implemented and should be treated as a guide only.

Before you begin

The process is intended to be self-managed, however, ACTCOSS can offer assistance in understanding the standards or process if required. We can provide consulting advice, staff training and service mentoring, depending on your organisation's needs and preferences.

Organisations should be clear about why they are undertaking the self-assessment process and what they are aiming to achieve.

Management and staff need to understand the self-assessment process and why it is being introduced. Gaining whole-of-organisation commitment to the process will assist in better outcomes. Ideally, it is recommended all staff be involved with the CASAT journey.

Organisations should agree on a timeline for completion of the CASAT. Staff should be given the opportunity to discuss the impact and expectations within their workplace. Implementation of the standards will involve change and take time to embed in team roles and organisation development. Some suggestions are:

- Allocate ten minutes (or more) at each staff meeting to working on a feature of good practice under a particular standard
- Complete one (1) standard per month as a team
- Meet in groups to discuss a standard and record what has been discussed

We suggest organisations nominate a staff member(s) or working group to oversee the CASAT process.

ACTCOSS is interested to know when organisations are commencing CASAT implementation. This will assist in future ACTCOSS evaluation and reporting processes. Please find our contact details at the end of this section under 'Further information'.

Getting started

Where practical, we suggest organisations hold a team activity to raise awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, such as:

- Attend cultural awareness training
- View a DVD together
- Visit a local attraction such as the National Museum, Botanical Gardens, Namadgi National Park
- Ask staff to research one thing they would like to know more about, and share this with all staff in a team meeting, e.g. a sportsperson, a current issue, historical event, native title
- Ask staff to identify one thing they think their organisation is doing well, or provide some feedback from an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander client or staff member on the work carried out by the organisation

CASAT is available online in PDF and Word format. The Word version can be edited to record your discussions.

Gather relevant documentation from within your organisation. You may need clarification on content, such as:

- Policies and procedures
- Annual Report / Strategic Plan
- Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)
- Human resource documents
- Brochures / forms

There are many resources available on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to assist staff in the CASAT process. For example, your local government may have resources on the traditional peoples of your area and the areas you work in.

During your discussions here are a few questions to consider as a group:

- Where possible, are changes needed and can they be embedded into policy, procedures and documents?
- How can we obtain feedback from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, clients and stakeholders and the wider community on what they think we are doing well, and suggestions for improvement?
- How can we share our knowledge of good practice and not so good practice with other staff and organisations?

Ensure the document is accessible to all staff, current and future.

Completion of the toolkit

Once your organisation has completed the toolkit, we encourage management and staff to use the results as a springboard for further action on ways to improve service delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Many of the areas for improvement identified within the toolkit can be included as targets within a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). We encourage organisations to contact Reconciliation Australia if they would like to develop a RAP: www.reconciliation.org.au.

Feedback

ACTCOSS is able to provide support and guidance at any stage as you work through developing your CASAT. We welcome feedback from organisations, such as:

- A positive outcome within your organisation
- Your greatest challenge
- Any difficulties with the process

We would also appreciate if you could email the completed version of your CASAT to ACTCOSS. This will be treated in confidence. Please see 'Further information' below for contact details.

Further information

If you would like further information please email actcoss@actcoss.org.au, telephone 02 6202 7200, or visit the ACTCOSS website at www.actcoss.org.au.



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Standard 1: Respect and Commitment

The organisation respects the traditions and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, understands their historical dispossession, and actively works to eliminate racism and improve the status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the community.

Features of good practice	Current evidence of good practice	Areas identified for improvement
1.1 There is a strong and enforceable anti-racism or anti-discrimination policy.		
1.2 The organisation actively works to understand, confront and eliminate racism and prejudice against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.		
1.3 There is a specific vision statement or reconciliation statement that documents the organisation's commitment to improving the status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.		

<p>1.4 There are established policies for acknowledging traditional owners and the use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural symbols and items.</p>		
<p>1.5 The organisation fosters a culture of learning from and with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and views reconciliation and cross-cultural learning as a dynamic and continuous process.</p>		
<p>Priority actions to improve against standard</p>		

Standard 2: Staff Knowledge and Development

People working in the organisation have the knowledge, attitude, and access to training and resources to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in a culturally appropriate manner.

Features of good practice	Current evidence of good practice	Areas identified for improvement
2.1 Staff members know about and can access resources on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, heritage and cultures.		
2.2 Staff members understand the difference between Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the wide diversity within these groups and between individuals.		
2.3 Staff members know the strategies used by the organisation to welcome, communicate, engage, assess and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.		

<p>2.4 Staff members are encouraged to attend training and professional development opportunities to improve their understanding and provide effective services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.</p>		
<p>2.5 The organisation's orientation or induction process includes information and training on cultural awareness and service delivery for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.</p>		
<p>Priority actions to improve against standard</p>		

Standard 3: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment

The organisation employs Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, values their expertise and provides them with culturally appropriate support.

Features of good practice	Current evidence of good practice	Areas identified for improvement
<p>3.1 There is an employment or human resources policy that explicitly encourages employing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers.</p>		
<p>3.2 Job vacancies are advertised through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community channels and media, including word-of-mouth, and explicitly encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants.</p>		
<p>3.3 The organisation seeks and encourages the involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in recruitment and selection processes.</p>		

<p>3.4 The organisation is sensitive to the cultural and community responsibilities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers, and includes specific management practices, support and employment entitlements to allow these responsibilities to be met.</p>		
<p>3.5 The organisation values the skills, experience and perspectives of Aboriginal and/Torres Strait Islander workers and recognises their contribution to the quality of service delivery, while understanding that an individual cannot represent a whole community or know all aspects of culture and tradition.</p>		
<p>Priority actions to improve against standard</p>		

Standard 4: Culturally Appropriate Service Delivery

The organisation makes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples feel welcome and included, and provides them with services in a culturally appropriate manner.

Features of good practice	Current evidence of good practice	Areas identified for improvement
<p>4.1 There are appropriate images displayed and information provided to make Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples feel welcome, including material visible from the street, in waiting areas and in service delivery areas.</p>		
<p>4.2 There is a current directory of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and services, and this is used for referrals and to provide information to service users.</p>		
<p>4.3 Information about the service, equality of access, and the rights of service users is provided in plain English through a variety of methods, including verbally.</p>		

<p>4.4 Any forms used by the organisation are written using plain English, and assistance is always offered if a service user is required to fill out a form.</p>		
<p>4.5 Assessment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service users includes an assessment of cultural needs.</p>		
<p>4.6 The organisation has alternative methods of providing services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including out-posting workers to appropriate locations, outreach services or home visits.</p>		
<p>4.7 Workers demonstrate a desire to support, advocate for and learn from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.</p>		
<p>Priority actions to improve against standard</p>		

Standard 5: Engagement with Communities

The organisation has relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, and collaborates with them to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Features of good practice	Current evidence of good practice	Areas identified for improvement
<p>5.1 Signage and advertising welcomes people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and are distributed to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and locations where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples may see them.</p>		
<p>5.2 The organisation is aware of dates and events of significance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and encourages participation in and recognition of them.</p>		

<p>5.3 The organisation has established policies and processes to establish and maintain linkages with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and services, and actively pursues consultation and networking with them.</p>		
<p>5.4 With the consent of service users, workers seek to involve other agencies in a collaborative and holistic response to a service user's needs, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and workers.</p>		
<p>Priority actions to improve against standard</p>		

Standard 6: Service Development and Evaluation

The organisation includes the perspectives and needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the design, planning, evaluation and improvement of its services.

Features of good practice	Current evidence of good practice	Areas identified for improvement
<p>6.1 The organisation specifically considers the requirements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in internal design, evaluation and planning processes.</p>		
<p>6.2 The organisation has access to and utilises current statistics and information on local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations in developing and improving its services.</p>		
<p>6.3 There is a feedback and complaints process of which all service users are made aware, including verbally, and feedback received from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is used to evaluate and improve services.</p>		

<p>6.4 The organisation's budget includes specific resources to ensure that workers are able to attend appropriate training on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues, and to provide resources for appropriate consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.</p>		
<p>6.5 The organisation is able to disaggregate its internal data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service users, where appropriate, and use it to evaluate the outcomes and requirements of these users.</p>		
<p>6.6 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are involved in decision-making processes at all levels.</p>		
<p>Priority actions to improve against standard</p>		

Notes



A series of 20 horizontal lines for writing notes, starting from the top of the main content area and extending to the bottom of the page.



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Examples 1: Respect and Commitment

The organisation respects the traditions and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, understands their historical dispossession, and actively works to eliminate racism and improve the status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the community.

Features of good practice	Suggestions for good practice / Areas for improvement
<p>1.1 There is a strong and enforceable anti-racism or anti-discrimination policy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute policy to current staff for their information. • Situate policy in a common area for staff reference. • Include policy as part of your staff induction package. • If your organisation has an anti-discrimination policy, look at options for developing a separate anti-racism policy to further strengthen your organisational commitment to anti-racism within the workplace. • Review or develop your current policy by researching online examples or liaising with similar services to see if their current policy can be adapted to suit your organisation.
<p>1.2 The organisation actively works to understand, confront and eliminate racism and prejudice against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign a workplace contact/harassment officer, and recommend all staff attend a community education workshop conducted by the ACT Human Rights Commission on discrimination, harassment and workplace bullying. • Include brochures/fact sheets/posters on racism in common areas. • Include a statement on racism in the organisation's code of conduct for employees, tenants and consumers, and display in a common area. • Encourage staff to share with other staff good practice, and not so good practice, on racism and prejudice when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service users. • Allocate time for all staff to watch a DVD or view online, e.g. <i>The Stolen Eye</i> by Jane Elliott, and discuss issues such as racism, white privilege and stereotypes.

<p>1.3 There is a specific vision statement or reconciliation statement that documents the organisation's commitment to improving the status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research online examples of vision statements, reconciliation commitment statements and pledges. • Develop a specific statement or review the current statement to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content. • Collaborate with a similar service to develop a joint statement. • Display your statement in a common area. • Include the statement in your staff induction package.
<p>1.4 There are established policies for acknowledging traditional owners and the use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural symbols and items.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Download ACTCOSS' <i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Resource for Community Sector Workers</i> for more information. • Establish policies and include as part of your staff induction package. • Ensure all staff begin internal and external meetings with an acknowledgement of country. • Compile a contact list of traditional owners and land councils within the region and distribute to staff. • Ensure any items displayed or purchased are not considered offensive to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Ensure all artwork displayed acknowledges the artist and the meaning of the artwork.
<p>1.5 The organisation fosters a culture of learning from and with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and views reconciliation and cross-cultural learning as a dynamic and continuous process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). • As an organisation, actively support awareness campaigns such as Close the Gap, RECOGNISE, and 'Racism. It Stops With Me'. • Share fact sheets or current issues on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with staff members. Fact sheets can be obtained online from organisations such as Reconciliation Australia and the Human Rights Commission. • Include Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander speakers/performers in your events. • Support staff to attend seminars, events, forums, workshops and training that are facilitated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Examples 2: Staff Knowledge and Development

People working in the organisation have the knowledge, attitude, and access to training and resources to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in a culturally appropriate manner.

Features of good practice	Suggestions for good practice / Areas for improvement
<p>2.1 Staff members know about and can access resources on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, heritage and cultures.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocate funds to purchase resources such as books, journals, DVDs, pamphlets, newspapers, flags and the <i>Map of Aboriginal Australia</i>. • Purchase the DVD <i>First Australians</i> and loan to staff to take home or view together in a team meeting. • Purchase <i>The Little Red Yellow Black Book</i> published by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, and discuss a subject from the book at your staff meetings. • Subscribe to national newspapers such as the Koori Mail and National Indigenous Times. Circulate to all staff and place in a common area for service users. • Develop a folder with useful resources for staff to access.
<p>2.2 Staff members understand the difference between Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the wide diversity within these groups and between individuals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review terminology used by your organisation when referring to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Consult with service users, staff and organisations on preferred terminology. • Raise staff awareness of cultural differences between Aboriginal peoples as descendants of the original inhabitants of mainland Australia and its islands and Torres Strait Islanders as descendants of the original inhabitants of the Torres Strait Islands. • Raise staff awareness of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples' history and cultures in local and surrounding regions. • Organise a staff excursion to places such as the First Australians Tour at the National Museum of Australia. • Place the <i>Map of Aboriginal Australia</i> in a common area. Staff and service users will see the many nations within Australia.

<p>2.3 Staff members know the strategies used by the organisation to welcome, communicate, engage, assess and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form a working group to explore strategies and actively seek good practice with similar services. • Discuss good practice and possible barriers experienced with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff or colleagues. • Form a working group to develop protocols for staff. • It is important staff recognise that strategies will be determined by the cultural and geographical diversity of each service user. Feedback from service users should be valued and taken into consideration. • There are many resources online which departments/NGOs have developed specifically for engaging and communicating with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Identify a resource(s) best suited to your organisation.
<p>2.4 Staff members are encouraged to attend training and professional development opportunities to improve their understanding and provide effective services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform all staff that cultural awareness training is highly recommended and if possible, provide them with a date for the next training. Alternatively, provide in-house training for all staff or share training with another organisation. • Allocate funding to nominate a staff member to attend a conference or an event with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content or focus. Reconciliation Australia, the Koori Mail and National Indigenous Times include events calendars in their publications. • Allocate funding to present an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander guest speaker at an organisational event such as an annual general meeting and International Women's Day. • Staff to identify areas for training and development as part of their supervision. • Informal training can be implemented by encouraging staff to share their experiences or discuss real case studies with colleagues.
<p>2.5 The organisation's orientation or induction process includes information and training on cultural awareness and service delivery for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommend that all new staff attend cultural awareness training. If possible, provide them with a date for the next training. Alternatively, provide in-house training for all staff or share training with another organisation. • Download ACTCOSS' <i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Resource for Community Sector Workers</i> and provide to new workers as part of their induction package. • Inform new staff of current policies and practices affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. • Inform new staff of resources available and them to actively access these. • Develop or adopt procedures on good practice service delivery.

Examples 3: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment

The organisation employs Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, values their expertise and provides them with culturally appropriate support.

Features of good practice	Suggestions for good practice / Areas for improvement
<p>3.1 There is an employment or human resources policy that explicitly encourages employing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers.</p>	<p>Your organisation's human resources policy might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Including in all your job descriptions and advertisements a statement such as your commitment to achieve a diverse workforce and you strongly encourage applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people from culturally diverse backgrounds and people with disability. • Work experience and trainee opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, ex service users or long term unemployed. • Active promotion in job advertisements of incentives to work with your organisation, such as study leave, salary sacrificing, flexible work hours, home/life balance, cultural leave entitlements, life experience is a genuine qualification, and training and development opportunities. • The ability to implement informal recruitment procedures such as expressions of interest, informal interview processes, submitting resumes instead of full applications, and use of more verbal communication rather than relying heavily on written material. • Provision of appropriate remuneration for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, official visitors and performers that provide a service and expertise to your organisation.
<p>3.2 Job vacancies are advertised through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community channels and media, including word-of-mouth, and explicitly encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop links with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, their staff and communities to circulate vacancies. • Advertise in newspapers such as the Koori Mail, National Indigenous Times and email groups. • Identify job networks that provide specific services for Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander peoples. • Identify successful channels used by other services. • Advertise flexible and casual positions within educational institutions that provide student services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

<p>3.3 The organisation seeks and encourages the involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in recruitment and selection processes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to participate on your selection panel, particularly if Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates are being interviewed. • Encourage and assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff / board members to participate in recruitment and selection processes. • Consult Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to provide feedback on recruitment and selection processes on areas such as language and communication techniques. • Form an advisory group to develop recruitment processes for positions that provide specific services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. • Engage an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander trainer to provide training on good practice recruitment and retention processes.
<p>3.4 The organisation is sensitive to the cultural and community responsibilities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers, and includes specific management practices, support and employment entitlements to allow these responsibilities to be met.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers in the community sector may be asked to assist community members out of work hours and this is acknowledged as a contribution to the organisation's service delivery. • Provide flexible work practices to allow workers to meet responsibilities such as extended bereavement leave, carers leave for extended family members, and ability to work from home. • Management to provide new and existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff members with information on cultural or ceremonial leave entitlements and encourage these to be accessed if required. • Where possible, provide a family friendly workplace. As well as supporting your worker, you will also be developing connections with the community. • Recognition that staff attendance at community events will benefit not only your staff member, but potentially lift the profile of your organisation within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. This can also improve your organisation's outreach capacity.
<p>3.5 The organisation values the skills, experience and perspectives of Aboriginal and/Torres Strait Islander workers and recognises their contribution to the quality of service delivery, while understanding that an individual cannot represent a whole community or know all aspects of culture and tradition.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect a worker's decision to share their experience and perspectives. Their decision not to share should also be respected. • Management to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff who have been asked to participate on advisory groups and committees to provide their experience and expertise. • Support and encourage workers to access mentoring, cultural supervision and peer support networks. • Staff recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers should not be expected to represent the views of the community or know all aspects of culture. • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff should not be expected to provide sole service delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service users.

Examples 4: Culturally Appropriate Service Delivery

The organisation makes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples feel welcome and included, and provides them with services in a culturally appropriate manner.

Features of good practice	Suggestions for good practice / Areas for improvement
<p>4.1 There are appropriate images displayed and information provided to make Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples feel welcome, including material visible from the street, in waiting areas and in service delivery areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags in your foyer. • Obtain posters from various sources such as NAIDOC, AIATSIS, National Museum of Australia, National Gallery, and Reconciliation Australia. • Provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's books, jigsaw puzzles, etc. in waiting rooms and play areas. • Collect relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pamphlets/guides for display in your waiting room. • Display articles/posters/books of female and male role models such as youth, artists, sportspeople, local identities, politicians, women, people with disability and actors.
<p>4.2 There is a current directory of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and services, and this is used for referrals and to provide information to service users.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Download ACTCOSS' <i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Resource for Community Sector Workers</i> for workers and people accessing your service to use. • Develop your own directory for referrals. • Share contacts you have made within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities with other staff members. • Include links to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services on your website. • Develop a folder of resources such as business cards, pamphlets and newspaper articles collected from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, departments and other relevant services for staff reference.

<p>4.3 Information about the service, equality of access, and the rights of service users is provided in plain English through a variety of methods, including verbally.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review current documentation to ensure they are written in plain English and include visual content. • Include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in your service charter and place it in communal areas. • Include a statement in your service charter that your organisation respects the cultural values of all people accessing your service. • Develop a simple user rights information sheet, with reference to a contact person, and display it in common areas. • Inform, explain and encourage service users to utilise your organisation’s feedback and complaints system.
<p>4.4 Any forms used by the organisation are written using plain English, and assistance is always offered if a service user is required to fill out a form.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review current forms to ensure they are not wordy, and avoid using acronyms and jargon. • Provide service users with a verbal explanation of why each form is required and who will have access to the information. • Offer verbal and written assistance to complete forms. • Provide service users with an approximate time that it will take to complete the forms required. • In some circumstances, it may be necessary to defer filling in forms until the service user is more comfortable, such as after the children have been looked after and are feeling a little more settled, or waiting until the service user has had something to eat or drink.
<p>4.5 Assessment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service users includes an assessment of cultural needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage appropriate interpreting/mentoring services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within the community such as health workers, counsellors, Elders, consultancies or colleagues, if required. • Ensure workers understand cultural needs will vary and hence be determined by each individual. • Staff to acquire an understanding of the impact of past history, since colonisation, that affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today, including dispossession of land, removal of children, and discrimination. • Develop a good practice procedure for assessing cultural needs as part of your assessment/arrival process when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service users. • Staff to respect and value the service user for sharing their cultural knowledge.

Features of good practice	Suggestions for good practice / Areas for improvement
<p>4.6 The organisation has alternative methods of providing services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including out-posting workers to appropriate locations, outreach services or home visits.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When possible, provide transport to and from your service. • Wherever possible, meet in a suitable location that is easily accessible to the service user, particularly when providing outreach support. • Inform service users of your organisation’s capabilities in relation to home visits, alternative meeting spaces, and outreach practices. • If providing outreach services, collaborate with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs and their workers—once permission has been provided by the service user to do this. • Review policies and procedures for home visits to include an assessment of the service user’s cultural and individual preferences.
<p>4.7 Workers demonstrate a desire to support, advocate for and learn from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support all staff to attend seminars and workshops presented by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. • Staff meetings might include a standing agenda item on current issues impacting on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, or issues identified through service delivery. Do not forget to underpin your discussion within a strength based framework. • Staff could set some achievable outcomes in relation to this feature of good practice. • Organise a staff activity during NAIDOC Week, Reconciliation Week or other important calendar events. • Develop a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) with advice from Reconciliation Australia.

Examples 5: Engagement with Communities

The organisation has relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, and collaborates with them to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Features of good practice	Suggestions for good practice / Areas for improvement
<p>5.1 Signage and advertising welcomes people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and are distributed to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and locations where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples may see them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags in your signage. • Include a statement in your pamphlets and promotional material indicating your organisation welcomes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. • With permission, include photos of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, or artwork in your website, publications, annual report, posters and pamphlets. • Email signatures could include a statement of acknowledgement of the traditional peoples. • Call waiting—play Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander music.
<p>5.2 The organisation is aware of dates and events of significance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and encourages participation in and recognition of them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Download ACTCOSS' <i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Resource for Community Sector Workers</i> or develop your own calendar. • Incorporate dates into your calendar or purchase a calendar that includes these dates. • Allocate funds to conduct an activity or attend events such as National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day, NAIDOC Week Awards Night and Reconciliation Week. • Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to coordinate an activity in the workplace to recognise a significant event, with assistance from other staff members and service users. • Email fact sheets to all staff and members of your organisation in the lead up to significant dates and events. Fact sheets or information on most dates can be found online.

Features of good practice	Suggestions for good practice / Areas for improvement
<p>5.3 The organisation has established policies and processes to establish and maintain linkages with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and services, and actively pursues consultation and networking with them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisational policy to include seeking advice from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consultative/ advisory groups/community members, where appropriate. If possible, provide reimbursement for their time and expertise. • Staff processes to include providing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service users with information on relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services. • Continue to build relationships by inviting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and services to networking opportunities, launches, training, and informal events. • Management to support and encourage staff to attend local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community events. Ensure name badges are worn in recognition of your organisation's attendance at the event. • Include links to relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and services on your organisation's website, for staff and service users to access.
<p>5.4 With the consent of service users, workers seek to involve other agencies in a collaborative and holistic response to a service user's needs, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and workers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff processes to include, in the first instance, whether a service user consents to linking in with any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and services. • Staff to acknowledge service users may choose to not work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and organisations. This may be for many reasons including confidentiality, past experience or family relationships. • Develop a quick, easy to use contact list of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and services, their contact numbers, services they deliver, and provide to service users for their information. • Service users may assist you to identify successful relationships with other agencies including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and their staff. • Make provision for service users to have a support person present if they would like to.

Examples 6: Service Development and Evaluation

The organisation includes the perspectives and needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the design, planning, evaluation and improvement of its services.

Features of good practice	Suggestions for good practice / Areas for improvement
<p>6.1 The organisation specifically considers the requirements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in internal design, evaluation and planning processes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of CASAT and using the CASAT as a tool for continuous improvement monitoring, and implementation of good practice policies/procedures. • Engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers, service users and/or community members in design, planning and evaluation processes as a part of a reference/steering group. This may require appropriate remuneration. • Review programs or develop a new program to be inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. • Include clear objectives in your strategic plan and policies to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. • Planning days could include an evaluation of current outcomes and to plan outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service users.
<p>6.2 The organisation has access to and utilises current statistics and information on local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations in developing and improving its services.</p>	<p>When collecting data relevant to your organisation, possibilities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data collected about current and previous programs delivered by your organisation. • Australian Bureau of Statistics—Indigenous Statistical Releases, e.g. <i>National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey & Population Characteristics of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders</i>. • Australian Human Rights Commission—<i>Social Justice and Native Title Report</i>. • Australian Institute of Health and Welfare—Indigenous Publications. • Examine policy articles in Australian Policy Online website: www.apo.org.au.

Features of good practice	Suggestions for good practice / Areas for improvement
<p>6.3 There is a feedback and complaints process of which all service users are made aware, including verbally, and feedback received from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is used to evaluate and improve services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure service users are informed on your feedback and complaints process. • Include an optional question for service users to identify if they are of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent on all relevant forms. • Always offer service users the option to provide verbal or written feedback. • Offer assistance to the service user if they wish to provide written feedback, e.g. use of a computer, pen and paper, someone to scribe, a quiet area to write. • Ensure the person understands your complaint/feedback procedures and is comfortable with this process.
<p>6.4 The organisation's budget includes specific resources to ensure that workers are able to attend appropriate training on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues, and to provide resources for appropriate consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify training opportunities that include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content. • Allocate funding to provide in-house training to all staff on a given issue. • Allocate funding for staff to attend a workshop, conference, or cultural event. • Collaborate with other agencies to organise training and share expenses. • Collect and catalogue relevant reports and papers which have been developed in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for staff reference.
<p>6.5 The organisation is able to disaggregate its internal data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service users, where appropriate, and use it to evaluate the outcomes and requirements of these users.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete CASAT and implement the identified areas for improvement. • Internal data collection to include ways of measuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service use. • Where possible, identify internal and relevant external services Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' access. • Discuss possible gaps/barriers if Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are not accessing services within your organisation. • Prepare a case study on an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander service user and have a discussion on how staff could improve outcomes.

<p>6.6 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are involved in decision-making processes at all levels.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Invite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to nominate for positions on your organisation’s board or governance committee.• Become aware of national and local issues in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs, that may affect the way you plan your service.• Involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in consultative or advisory roles, e.g. selection panels, RAP working groups.• Invite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to networking events, forums and annual general meetings.• Encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to participate in consumer networks and forums working on specific issues of concern.
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Notes





Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Awareness Self-Assessment Toolkit



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