



## Cultural Capability Framework

This Framework sets out how the Network builds, maintains and strengthens cultural capability across staff, volunteers and leadership. It reflects the Network's role as a consumer-led peak body, focused on systemic advocacy, representation and engagement.

This framework operationalises the values and recommendations contained in the 2015 report *Engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Culturally Responsive Ways*.

### Purpose

The purpose of this framework is to ensure that all staff and volunteers of the Network:

- build cultural knowledge, skills and behaviours relevant to their roles
- engage respectfully and safely with diverse communities, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- uphold human rights, social justice and lived experience perspectives in all advocacy and engagement activities

### Scope

This framework applies to:

- all staff
- all volunteers
- the Board
- contractors or representatives acting on behalf of the Network

### Guiding Principles

The Network's approach to cultural capability is guided by the following principles:

- respect for lived experience as expertise
- recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of Australia
- commitment to social justice, equity and human rights
- cultural humility and ongoing learning
- relationship-based and strengths-focused engagement
- shared responsibility for culturally safe practice

### **Cultural Capability Expectations**

All staff and volunteers are expected to:

- demonstrate respect for cultural identities, histories and perspectives
- reflect on their own values, assumptions and power in advocacy and engagement work
- use inclusive and culturally appropriate language
- seek guidance where cultural knowledge or understanding is limited
- engage with communities in ways that are respectful, informed and non-tokenistic

### **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Safety**

The Network recognises the ongoing impacts of colonisation, racism and intergenerational trauma on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The Network adopts the social and emotional wellbeing framework outlined in the 2015 engagement report and commits to culturally safe and responsive advocacy.

In practice this means:

- prioritising relationship-building over transactional engagement
- recognising family, community and culture as central to wellbeing
- avoiding deficit-based narratives and inappropriate use of 'mental illness' language
- seeking advice from Aboriginal organisations and leaders when developing policy and advocacy
- respecting local protocols and community authority

### **Cultural Advice and Mentoring**

The Network seeks cultural advice through:

- engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations
- consultation with community leaders and cultural knowledge holders
- partnerships with sector bodies

Cultural advice informs policy, advocacy, engagement approaches and staff learning.

### **Cultural Awareness and Capability Training**

All staff and volunteers must complete cultural awareness training as part of induction.

Training includes Aboriginal histories, social and emotional wellbeing, and reflective practice.

Refresher training is undertaken periodically or when roles change.

### **Leadership and Supervision**

Supervisors are expected to model culturally responsive leadership and support culturally safe workplaces.

### **Performance and Development**

Cultural capability is recognised as part of professional conduct and may be discussed in performance conversations.

### **Monitoring and Review**

The Executive is responsible for implementation and review of this framework.

The framework is reviewed at least every three years.