

Cultural safety and immersion

At AAG we believe everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and feel respected. This means we all have an obligation to ensure that we provide an environment which is culturally safe and is responsive to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Through our work in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ageing Advisory Group it is clear that making a commitment to cultural safety needs to be a key competence across staff members and service providers. Furthermore, the AAG is working to ensure we are supportive of culturally appropriate and respectful modes of operation in all of our activities and encourage others do the same.

Cross-cultural learning is one way the AAG is moving towards more equitable working relationship with members, stakeholders and groups who identify as being Aboriginal and / or Torres Strait Islander. The AAG remains cognizant of the “ongoing impacts of colonisation and racism upon the health and culture of Indigenous peoples” (Hart et al 2015 p. 246). Furthermore, the AAG asks those individuals and groups working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to heed advice from those embedded in the field and reflect on their own interactions and expectations. Research stresses the need to establish dialogue and ask Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners, mentors and stakeholders to help identify culturally safe and unsafe ways of operating with in order to review and revise current policies and practices (see McDermott, 2019, and Taylor & Guerin 2010).

Going further the AAG is committed to learning and being respectful about the customs, practices, and expectations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. The process of cultural immersion works under the principle of “full engagement” (Smith et al 2015 p.3) with cultures that are not one someone has been raised in. For an organisation such as AAG this may mean representatives spending time working with and listening to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, undertaking ongoing cultural training programs and traveling to different communities around Australia to be embedded in experiential learning programs. These forms of cultural immersion have the potential to increase workforce capacity in cross-cultural settings (O’Sullivan et al 2018) as well as form the basis of lasting relationships and practices which extend beyond the initial immersion experience (Trackrah & Thompson 2010).

References:

- Hart, B., Cavanagh, M., & Douglas, D. (2015). The "Strengthening Nursing Culture Project" - an exploratory evaluation study of nursing students' placements within Aboriginal Medical Services. *Contemporary Nurse*, 51(2-3), 245-256.
- McDermott, D. (2019). "Big Sister" Wisdom: How might non-Indigenous speech-language pathologists genuinely, and effectively, engage with Indigenous Australia? *International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology: 2018 Speech Pathology Australia Conference Issue*, 21(3), 252-262.
- O’Sullivan, B.G., McGrail, M.R., Russell, D. *et al.* A review of characteristics and outcomes of Australia’s undergraduate medical education rural immersion programs. *Hum Resour Health* 16, 8 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12960-018-0271-2>
- Sherwood, Juanita. (2013). Colonisation - It's bad for your health: The context of Aboriginal health. *Contemporary Nurse: A Journal for the Australian Nursing Profession*, 46(1), 28-40.



Smith, J., Wolfe, C., Springer, S., Martin, M., Togno, J., Bramstedt, K., . . . Murphy, B. (2015). Using cultural immersion as the platform for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health in an undergraduate medical curriculum. *Rural and Remote Health, 15*(3), 3144.

Taylor, K., & Guerin, P. (2010). *Health care and Indigenous Australians : Cultural safety in practice* (1st ed.). South Yarra, Vic.: Palgrave Macmillan.

Thackrah, R. & Sandra C. Thompson. (2019). Learning from follow-up of student placements in a remote community: A small qualitative study highlights personal and workforce benefits and opportunities. *BMC Medical Education, 19*(1), 1-9.

Health and wellbeing programs that may be of helpful to your organisation

Social and Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Services in Aboriginal Australia
<http://www.sewbmh.org.au/about-us>

A Brief Introduction to Enabling Culturally Safe Health Care
Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives (CATSINaM), ACT

Are you looking for cultural awareness & training providers?

Bandaar Walaaybaa Community Hub Aboriginal Corporation, Inverell NSW

Djirri Djirri Cultural Services, Hampton Park Vic

MTL Consulting Services, Holden Hill SA

Tribal Link, Pty Ltd, Mapleton Qld

ATSIAGG resources and workshop reports:

<https://www.aag.asn.au/about-us/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-ageing-advisory-group-atsiaag/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-ageing-advisory-group-atsiaag>

Some good guides & resources

Culturally Safe Workforce Models for Rural and Remote Indigenous Organisations, South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute
https://www.sahmriresearch.org/user_assets/2fbfa9fdb1e1ee7c4ea2d0636eb537db5c6f6356/cultural_safety_for_older_aboriginal_people_summary.pdf

Actions to Support Older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People: A Guide for Aged Care Providers, Australian Government Department of Health
<https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2019/12/actions-to-support-older-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-people-a-guide-for-aged-care-providers.pdf>

AH&MRC Ethical Guidelines: Key Principles (2020) V2.0

<https://mk0ahmrchvhy3q0clf.kinstacdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/V2.0-Key-principles-Updated.pdf>