

ABORIGINAL CULTURAL SECURITY FRAMEWORK



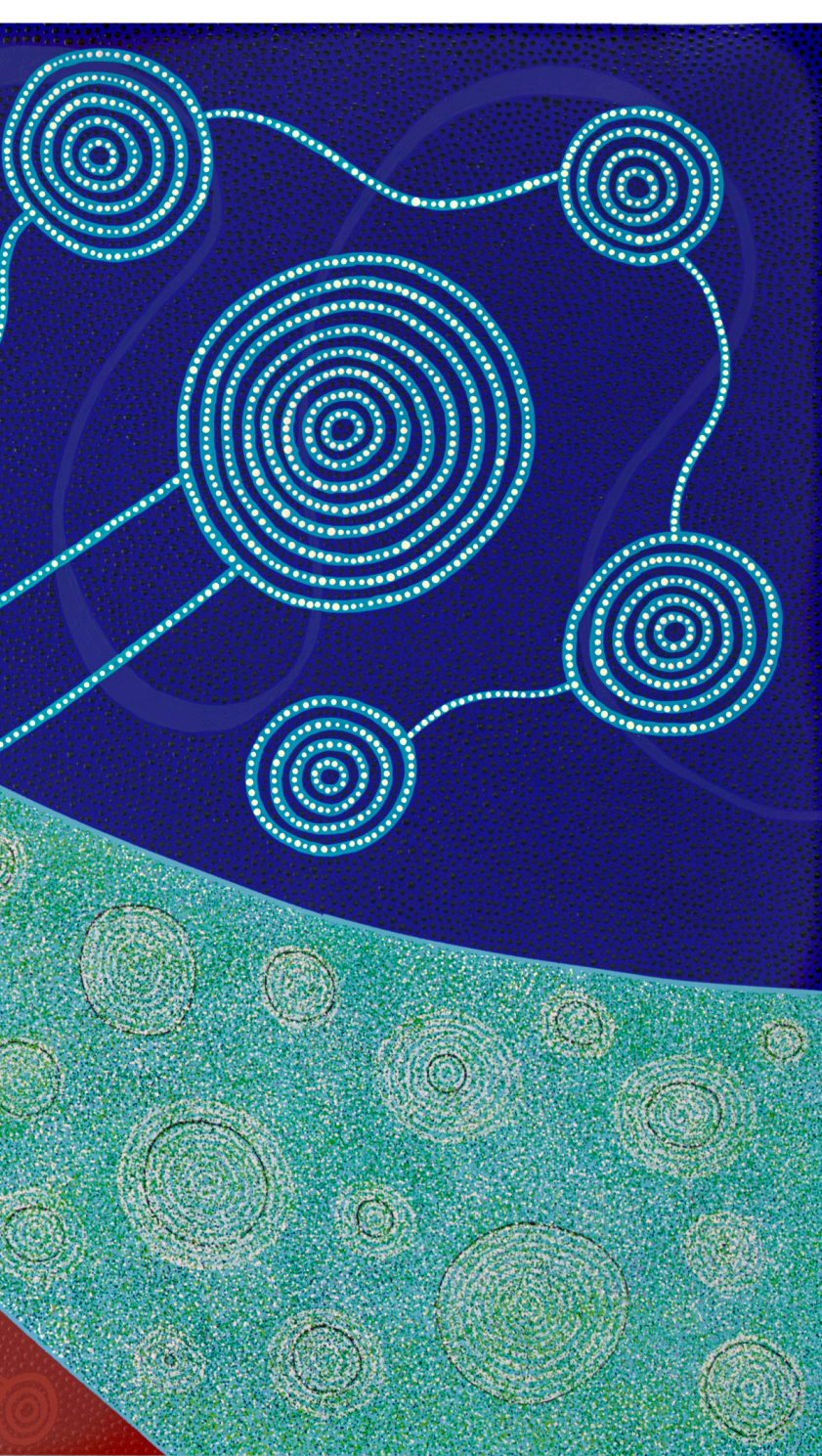


The story: 'Moving in the right direction'

"Moving in the right direction" tells a multi-layered story of healing through connection to mother earth, elders, ancestors, family and community, and organisational transformation that embeds Aboriginal culture, knowledge and self-determination throughout Territory Families, Housing and Communities.

The ochre story tells the story of community through wisdom, empathy, and direction. The large centric circle represents the heart of community – elders and cultural authority. The other smaller centric circles are the gathering of community members and non-Indigenous people engaging in proper two-way learning. The inner light blue circle symbolises new energy and the importance of listening and working together properly to ensure children's safety and best interests.

The middle story represented in green with white and black centric circles depict children and communities who are misunderstood, removed, lost and forgotten within the system. The black represents their DNA, and white shows their innocence. The light blue energy can be seen in the background trying to push through layers of negative attitudes, discriminatory practice and racism.



The artist: Raymond Walters Penangk

Raymond Walters Penangk was born in Alice Springs in November 1975. Raymond's grandfather's country is Ngarleyekwerlang of Yuelumu (Mt Allan) and his grandmother's country is Alhalkerre Atnangkerre (a Boundary Bore of Utopia).

Both his grandparents come from the Anmatyerre language group. He also has extended family members from Arrente, Western Aranda, Alywarre, Warlpiri and Kaytetye language groups.

Raymond feels that art allows him to share the richness of Anmatyerre traditional cultural and customary law, which has been passed down through ceremonies and everyday interactive learning by grandparents and extended family members.

The dark blue story represents the foundations for healing and outlines Territory Families, Housing and Communities responsibility to engage in right feeling, thinking and doing to fulfil the vision for organisational cultural proficiency and transformational healing and social justice.

The blue centric circles symbolise the diversity of Aboriginal communities and the importance of building proper relationships through Aboriginal self-determination. Where Aboriginal families are empowered to showcase their strengths and feel supported to share their story and experience without judgement, ridicule or criticism.

The journey line is a constant reminder that Aboriginal Cultural Security is a critical long-term investment which will require leadership, personal and organisational reflection, empathy and compassion through equal and strong relationships.

Key principles

This Framework recognises first and foremost that Aboriginal culture is a strength that must be acknowledged and celebrated. It states clearly that we need to build real and genuine relationships and partnerships with Aboriginal people, communities and organisations.

Aboriginal people of Australia represent the oldest living culture in the world. Aboriginal communities have long celebrated culture, language and country as powerful sources and instruments of authority, identity, strength, spirituality and healing.

Colonisation and early settlement of Australia saw the destruction and destabilisation of the social, economic and political fabric of Aboriginal peoples across Australia. It resulted in the segregation and marginalisation of Aboriginal peoples within the broader society. Public institutions and systems were largely shaped without the equal participation of Aboriginal peoples and communities.

It is because of this history, and its continued impacts on Aboriginal people that Territory Families, Housing and Communities as the agency responsible for supporting families, and protecting and caring for children, is committed to achieving social justice and resourcing healing in everything we do.

We recognise that Aboriginal Cultural Security, self-determination, healing, dignity and respect are all fundamental elements needed for Aboriginal people and communities to lead with cultural authority. We will support Aboriginal families and communities to be strong and respected as the experts in their lives, and elevate Aboriginal culture, identity and history.

We want Aboriginal people to be proud of their culture and be able to fulfil their true potential as this nation's First Peoples.

We will partner with Aboriginal children, young people, families, communities and organisations to support them to become the lead decision makers for their future. We will embed culturally safe and responsive service design and delivery across our systems and all governance structures to bridge the gap.

This Aboriginal Cultural Security Framework outlines our commitment to transformational change. This Framework has a clearly defined vision and strict cultural protocols for us to adhere to in order to achieve cultural proficiency across our workforce, services and governance.

The Framework is underpinned by an enduring commitment to accountability with Aboriginal children, young people, families and communities. We will do what we say we will do. This is a journey we proudly embrace, driven by strong leadership and our collective goal to achieve social justice and better outcomes for Aboriginal children, young people and communities.



What is Aboriginal Cultural Security?

Aboriginal Cultural Security commits an organisation to design and deliver services that honour the legitimate cultural rights, values and expectations of Aboriginal people. It provides a safe environment where Aboriginal people are empowered to make decisions that affect their lives without fear of judgement or discrimination.

Aboriginal Cultural Security is achieved by integrating the cultural rights, values and expectations of Aboriginal children, families and communities at critical points in an organisation's service design, systems, policies, and practices.

Aboriginal Cultural Security goes beyond attitude and behaviour changes by individuals and encapsulates organisational change through addressing structural inequalities. Aboriginal Cultural Security embeds Aboriginal cultural values and rights at critical points of intervention in service design, policy and practice¹.

Why an Aboriginal Cultural Security Framework?

Aboriginal Culture must be embraced and celebrated. For Territory Families, Housing and Communities to truly engage in genuine partnerships with Aboriginal communities to make decisions about their families, culture must be recognised, respected and drawn upon. Aboriginal culture is a strength that government must harness.

The Aboriginal Cultural Security Framework is the starting point for embracing the positive power of Aboriginal culture. It sets the roadmap for how we can transform every part of our business to create environments that are open and willing to learn from Aboriginal people.

It will help us remove the fear of judgement and discrimination and the structural and institutional racism that exists across our system.

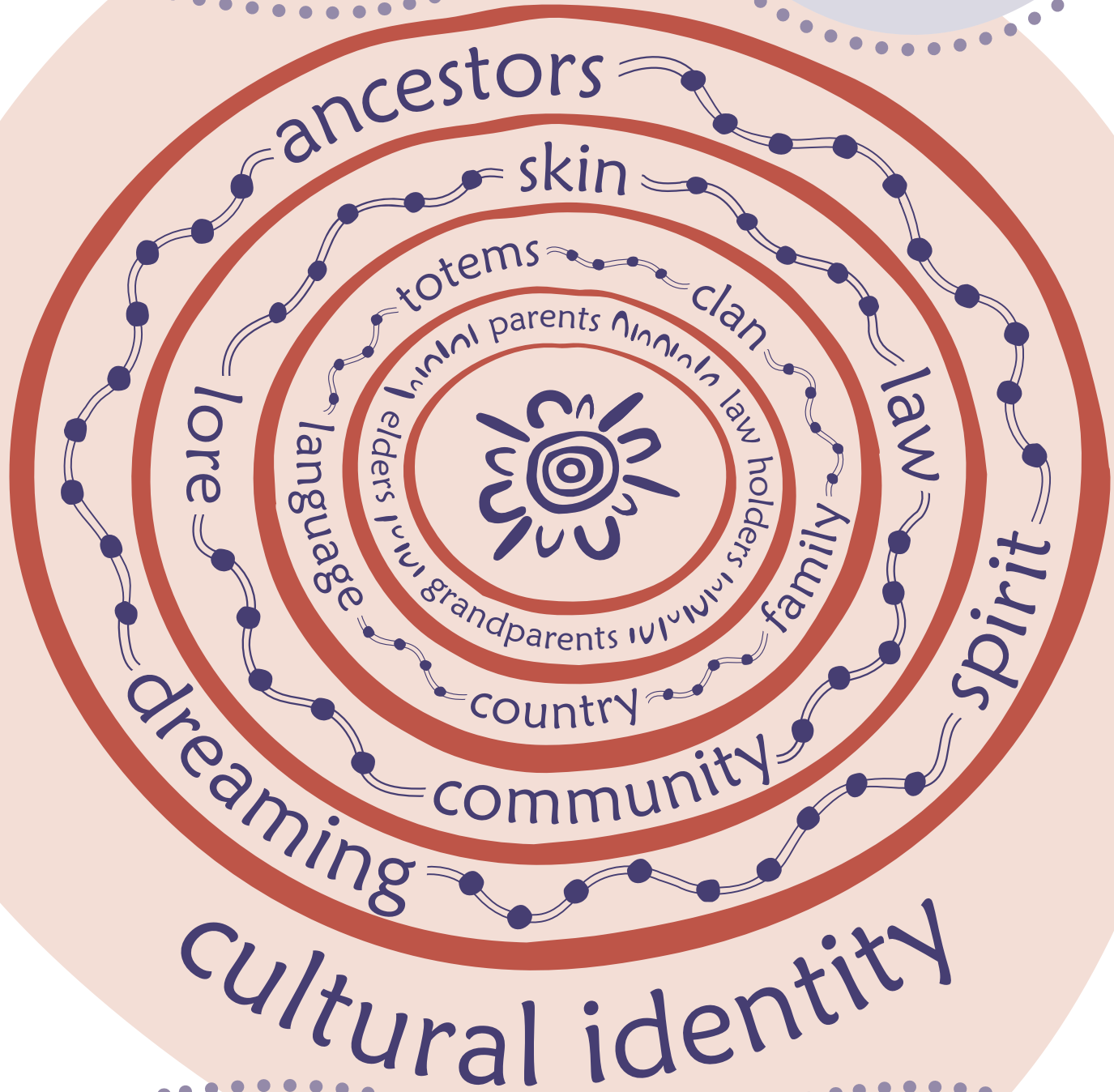
It demonstrates how Aboriginal staff are central to achieving cultural security, and places them as leaders of this agency for their knowledge, experience and connections.

Aboriginal Cultural Security also provides a basis on which to consult, collaborate and work with Aboriginal people and communities, not just as a government but as a true partner, aware of and responsive to their culture, history, needs and aspirations.

1 Northern Territory Health (2016). Aboriginal Cultural Security Framework 2016-2026. <http://hdl.handle.net/10137/730>

Interconnecting relationships with parents, grandparents, elders, law holders, clan, family, totem, country, skin, law, community, lore, ancestors, spirit and dreaming are fundamental for building resilience, a strong concept of self and cultural identity.

Inner symbol represents the children and young people at the centre, supported by parents, grandparents, law holders and elders.



The family sense of connection and belonging is underpinned by the clan, family, language, totem, country, lore, and law as represented by the concentric circles.

The dotted lines within each concentric circle represents the interconnection of Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing and extension of self.

What is self-concept and cultural identity?

Culture is a living process and when there is strong cultural continuity, people become imbued with a sense of identity, wellbeing and life purpose ².

Our sense of self-concept is based on our experience of intergenerational learned and lived history that exists across the context of inflicted political, social and economic impacts on our communities.

Our self-concept is built on cultural, personal and social identities. We often rely upon our cultural worldviews and references as the main source of our identity and self-concept.

Cultural identity supports the development of our sense of self, by giving us meaning and purpose in our life. A strong cultural identity is essential for emotional and social wellbeing and gives a sense of belonging and security. It provides access to social and community relationships with shared values and aspirations. Further, it builds resilience and pride in heritage in the face of discrimination, racism, disadvantage and hardship.

Deep-listening and empathy are the building blocks of respectful and trusting relationships, which provide a strong foundation for culturally congruent practice. To get along well with others, we must have respect for and understand cultural differences and constantly imagine being in the other person's shoes.

The practice and process of critical reflection and consciousness, including being aware and challenging wilful blindness, is a lifelong journey that examines our personal, interpersonal, and cultural worldviews, and the ways that power and privilege are maintained and passed through generations. This should be continually challenged in our personal and professional lives. When we engage in our own 'personal work' to explore history, culture and identity, we are more likely to appreciate this dimension with others.

Related to the need for critical reflection is the concept of cultural humility as an important mindset or stance from which to approach social position, privilege and cultural identity with others. Cultural humility involves developing relationships and mutual partnerships that redress power imbalances and create mutually beneficial and non-paternalistic practice and advocacy partnerships. Embodying an attitude of cultural curiosity will seek knowledge about a person's unique histories, experiences, cultural values, needs and general way of being³.

² Atkinson, J. (2002). Trauma Trails Recreating Songlines: The transgenerational effects of trauma in Indigenous Australia: p 204. Spinifex Press: North Melbourne.

³ Hook, J., Davis, D., Owen, J., Worthington, E. & Utsey, S. (2013). Measuring openness to culturally diverse clients. Journal of Counselling Psychology, 60(3), May 2013. DOI: 10.1037/a0032595

What is healing and why is it important?

Culture, spirit and identity are linked across time and place to country and kin. Healing occurs when these reconnections begin to be made⁴.

A healing journey requires the integration of the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects of our selves to achieve holistic wellbeing. Healing requires the examination of our conscious and unconscious thoughts, feelings and patterns of behaviours in relationships with others and ourselves.

For Aboriginal peoples, their sense of self, cultural identity and healing is inextricably linked. In order to process the individual and collective trauma of colonisation and genocide, healing must occur within the broader social, economic, and political contexts that Aboriginal people have lived through and continue to experience today⁵.

Healing requires organisational cultural competency and the development of a culturally safe environment for the exploration of cultural identity and trauma narratives. Restoring pride in cultural identity, connection to country and involvement in the broader community are critical elements required for healing. This can be facilitated through Aboriginal healers, language, traditions, art, dance, stories, traditional food and medicines.

Aboriginal self-determination and cultural authority are crucial in supporting resilience and healing. Supporting Aboriginal peoples to have greater control and authority over their own lives and to participate in the decisions impacting them enhances social and emotional health and wellbeing⁶.



4 Atkinson, J. (2002). Trauma Trails Recreating Songlines: The transgenerational effects of trauma in Indigenous Australia; p204. Spinifex Press: North Melbourne.

5 The Healing Foundation (2016). Restoring our spirits - reshaping our futures. Canberra: The Healing Foundation.

6 McKendrick, J., Brooks, R., Hudson, J., Thorpe, M., Bennett, P. (2013). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healing programs: a literature review. Canberra: The Healing Foundation.

Who does the Framework apply to?

This Framework applies to all Territory Families, Housing and Communities staff, from frontline to corporate. It informs all of our decisions, from working with Aboriginal children, young people, families and communities, to how and when we fund and deliver services. It directly influences and informs our strategic and business planning, policy development and communication, and our relationships and partnerships with Aboriginal peoples, communities and organisations. It provides a basis for all service design, project delivery and reform agendas.

It sets cultural protocols and expectations of our leadership group, policy, practice and governance structures and provides a policy platform and expectation for other service providers and agencies to set their own path towards Aboriginal Cultural Security.

What does Aboriginal Cultural Security look like?

We will know our agency is culturally secure and responsive for Aboriginal people when:

- Aboriginal children, young people, families and communities who are involved with Territory Families, Housing and Communities are driving decisions and solutions
- Aboriginal families who make contact with Territory Families, Housing and Communities receive the support needed and can then move on without further involvement by us
- Aboriginal staff feel comfortable and confident in the workplace and are recognised and respected for the cultural competency they bring to the agency
- Aboriginal people want to work for Territory Families, Housing and Communities and encourage other Aboriginal people to do so
- Aboriginal organisations actively provide advice and guidance to Territory Families, Housing and Communities and drive partnership
- Our staff align their practice to the five core elements off the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle and Closing the Gap targets
- Our staff embody deep listening and compassion, and contribute their ideas and time to achieve Aboriginal Cultural Security.

Our Vision

Territory Families, Housing and Communities is responsive and safe for Aboriginal people where cultural values, strengths and differences are integrated into the governance, management, design and delivery of services.

Leadership

Our leaders are role models and create team environments that inspire others to grow and work together to achieve Aboriginal Cultural Security.

Communication

We deliver ethical, safe and high-quality services underpinned by honest, transparent and collaborative communication with Aboriginal people and communities. Through truth telling, deep listening and empathy, trust will be built.

Partnerships

Meaningful partnerships with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, cultural authorities, and community groups and representatives will be forged and maintained.

Aboriginal children and young people remain connected to family, culture, language, community and country

Differences in Aboriginal cultures, languages and communities are respected and celebrated

Aboriginal families and communities self-determine wellbeing and safety

Our Cultural Protocols

Aboriginal people experience culturally safe, trauma aware and healing centred engagement

Our Focus Areas

Self Determination

Aboriginal children, young people, families and communities are engaged as lead decision makers for their future as a fundamental human right.

Aboriginal people are valued and flourish as leaders

Services are delivered by or in-partnership with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations

Relationships

Relationships with Aboriginal people will be based on respect for cultural differences, cultural humility, and the ability to engage in culturally safe and responsive services.

The Framework

The Aboriginal Cultural Security Framework aligns and integrates Aboriginal cultural rights, views and values in our services, systems and governance. It includes a range of parts and tools that will shape our commitment, and support our journey towards Aboriginal Cultural Security.

Our cultural protocols

In achieving this vision, Territory Families, Housing and Communities has committed to six cultural protocols that will drive and measure our journey towards Aboriginal Cultural Security.

The cultural protocols apply to every day work processes and practices, and provide us with the minimum standards we must reflect on and embed to achieve Aboriginal Cultural Security across our agency.

Our focus areas

We have identified five focus areas that articulate the key elements of our organisation that must grow for us to provide a culturally safe and responsive environment for Aboriginal people, communities and organisations.

They apply across the whole of our organisation and if we embed real and meaningful change in these areas, we will achieve real and meaningful change across our agency.

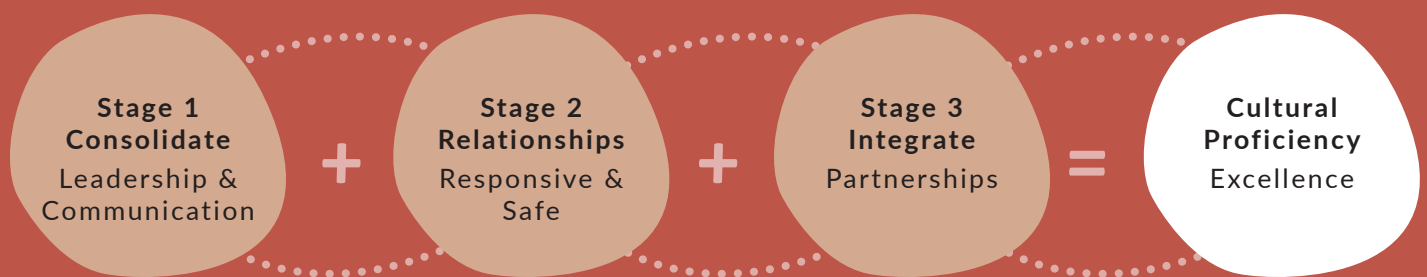
Our focus areas are not sequential or linear. Rather, they are interdependent – as one focus area is strengthened, the rest will continue to develop and grow.

As our leadership empowers our people, we will forge and grow partnerships with Aboriginal communities, which will lead to genuine Aboriginal self-determination.

It will be underpinned by open and transparent communication with Aboriginal people, in the ways communities wish to be engaged.

Our approach to embedding Aboriginal Cultural Security

Achieving Aboriginal Cultural Security will take time, ongoing reflection and hard work. To support the proper embedding of the Framework, implementation activities will be staged, with each stage focusing on a desired outcome. The diagram below shows the planned stages to achieve Aboriginal Cultural Security, and the interconnecting journey of reflection and learning.



Together, each stage directs our efforts across time and place in a series of interconnecting and focused activities that each builds upon the next.

Through these stages, we have proudly committed to embed Aboriginal cultural proficiency and excellence across our services, systems and governance.

Fundamental to each stage is Aboriginal self-determination, cultural authority and relationships, where we partner together to transform and lead social justice, change and healing.

Our supporting tools

The Framework is supported by tools for our staff and partners.

The Framework is underpinned by the Aboriginal Cultural Security Action Plan, which will state what each division, office and area of the agency will do to achieve Aboriginal Cultural Security.

Action plans are informed by practical assessments that help us to understand where we are in our journey towards Aboriginal Cultural Security. The Aboriginal Cultural Security Personal Assessment Tool will be used by all staff to identify their level of cultural competency and support further contribution to the collective effort for change.

The Aboriginal Cultural Security Organisational Assessment Tool will be used by each team and division to conduct a cultural competency audit to support the development of action plans.

Aboriginal Cultural Security materials such as 'what can we do' and 'key concepts and terms' have also been developed to help individuals and teams further their knowledge about Aboriginal culture and identity and provide practical ideas for how we can all contribute.

Together with our commitments and supporting tools, the Framework articulates a unified approach to achieving cultural proficiency across our agency.

Achieving Aboriginal Cultural Security

Our commitment

The Aboriginal Cultural Security Framework is our commitment to achieve cultural proficiency across our organisational workforce, services and governance. It begins with all Territory Families, Housing and Communities staff engaging in and embedding the Conversations, Coaching and Capability Framework, to ensure all staff feel safe and supported.

We will partner with Aboriginal communities and organisations and recognise Aboriginal self-determination, authority and autonomy as fundamental to change and healing. We will develop true and enduring relationships with Aboriginal children, young people, families and communities.

Whole-of-organisation approach

We will take a whole-of-organisation approach by engaging in strong relationships, local and place-based approaches, so that our service activities, projects and communication remain connected to community.

“ Together, we make the difference”

The cultural protocols and focus areas will be used to define measures and document our whole-of-organisational journey to achieving Aboriginal Cultural Security. We will continually ask whether:

- We are truly involving Aboriginal people and communities in decisions
- Our leaders' commitment is strong and sustained
- We are honestly discussing progress, challenges and celebrating success with Aboriginal people and communities
- Our relationships are growing towards understanding and respect for cultural differences and capitalising on culture as a strength
- We are building meaningful partnerships with Aboriginal communities and organisations.

We will transparently report on the outcomes of our consolidated agency-wide Aboriginal Cultural Security Action Plan in our strategic and annual plans.

Through this process our staff, Aboriginal communities and organisations, other government agencies and all Territorians will be able to hold us to account and begin to trust us to do what we will say we will do.

Accountability

We are committed to measuring how we are tracking towards achieving Aboriginal Cultural Security and better outcomes for Aboriginal children, young people, families and communities.

Through our annual reporting, performance reporting and strategic planning reporting, we will assess and report on the following measures to understand our progress:

- Aboriginal participation and decision making
- Aboriginal workforce and career development
- Child Protection, Housing, Youth Justice, Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse, and program outcomes data for Aboriginal children and families
- Funding and partnerships with Aboriginal community controlled organisations.

“It’s about doing what we say we will do”

We will draw upon the advice, assessment and guidance of Aboriginal peoples, community organisations and other external bodies to better understand the way our services interact with Aboriginal cultural rights, values and expectations, including social justice through Aboriginal self-determination and autonomy.

Governance

Strong Aboriginal governance is pivotal to achieving a culturally safe and responsive organisation. Our committed and experienced Aboriginal workforce are best placed to hold our agency to account and provide a genuine Aboriginal perspective on our work, agency, behaviour and services.

The Aboriginal Cultural Security Framework Advisory Committee will oversee and lead the implementation and ongoing delivery of the Aboriginal Cultural Security Framework.

The Aboriginal Cultural Security Framework Advisory Committee will monitor our agency’s performance and provide advice to business units and divisions on how to achieve Aboriginal Cultural Security.

Action Plans

All Territory Families, Housing and Communities business units will conduct an Aboriginal Cultural Security personal and organisational assessment and audit. The results will be compiled and used as the foundation for business unit Action Plans that lead to the development and delivery of divisional goals and objectives to achieve Aboriginal Cultural Security. Each business unit and divisional plan will clearly state:

- What we will do to embed Aboriginal Cultural Security
- Who will be responsible for what we do
- How we will monitor, report on and be accountable for achieving Aboriginal Cultural Security.

Together, the delivery of the Framework’s commitments and the action plans will be pivotal in our journey towards Aboriginal Cultural Security. Our agency will commit to a series of staged action plans that focus on specific areas for further growth and development across all areas of the agency. This will start with a consolidation of what is already happening across our organisation supported by strong leadership and communication.



Acknowledgements

“In every moment loving relationships are key, deep listening is healing, and presence remains across time.”

Territory Families, Housing and Communities acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Northern Territory whose lands ground us in our work and provide the foundation to grow and nurture relationships with our self and others.

We would like to acknowledge our ancestors for their strength and guidance on our journey to design a service system that is culturally safe and responsive to the cultural needs and aspirations of Aboriginal peoples and communities in the Northern Territory.

We deeply appreciate and extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who shared their time, energy and vision in the creation of the Aboriginal Cultural Security Framework. Thank you to the many others who have walked this path before us and created this narrative for change.

