CatholicCare
DIOCESE OF BROKEN BAY

Agency Cultural Competency Policy

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Introduction

CatholicCare Diocese of Broken Bay (CatholicCare) recognises that significant disparities exist between the outcomes experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as well as people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds and is committed to overcoming those disparities.

Cultural competence refers to the ability to meet the social, cultural, and linguistic needs of clients and interact effectively with people from different cultures. It has four components:

1. Awareness of one's own cultural worldview (assumptions, biases).
2. A positive attitude towards cultural differences.
3. Knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews.
4. Cross-cultural communication skills.

Possible differences in world views and beliefs and different types of behaviours and language communication patterns can be culturally based.

Any child or young person separated from their birth parents and placed in a new care environment can experience a difficult transitional process, but this can be amplified for Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and CALD children if they do not have their cultural needs met. It is important that the children in care grow up with opportunities and are supported to be proud of their heritage and cultural identity.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff, authorised carers, contractors, volunteers, and students.

Policy statement

CatholicCare recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first peoples of this continent and the islands of the Torres Strait. We acknowledge our shared history; recognise the right to self-determination and the importance of connection to and access to country. We acknowledge and respect distinct Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural differences, beliefs, values, and languages.

In addition, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Australians are not a single, uniform group, there is significant diversity within this diversity that must be acknowledged and respected. Throughout our agency, supporting a person's identity and culture means recognising and responding to their unique needs and preferences. This includes providing care that is culturally safe and sensitive to their social, cultural, linguistic, religious, spiritual, psychological, health, and other individual needs.

CatholicCare is committed to:

- Meeting the needs of our clients in all their diversity. Wherever possible, children and young people; and in particular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, will remain within their community and maintain their cultural connections.
- Assisting and supporting children and young people, who cannot currently safely live with their family, to maintain their identity, language, cultural and religious connections.

- Cultural safety and building cultural competence, at both an organisational and individual level, through embedding culturally competent practices in all its domains.

CatholicCare views cultural competency as an ongoing process and an ideal to strive towards. Other terms associated with cultural competence include ‘cultural responsiveness’, ‘cultural awareness’ and ‘cultural sensitivity’.

Guiding Principles

CatholicCare will enhance its cultural competence by:

- Acknowledging and promoting the importance of cultural respect and recognising the strength and diversity of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander peoples and CALD communities.
- Recruiting culturally competent staff and carers with appropriate skills, knowledge, and attitudes to embrace and support diversity.
- Ensuring that training and induction practices expand staff and carer’s awareness of how their own cultural values, norms and experiences influence their work with clients from other cultures.
- Encouraging staff to be aware of local demographics of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities including CALD and their local initiatives and priorities.
- Educating staff and carers on diverse cultural perspectives and experiences and how they influence communication and behaviour; with the aim for staff to develop more open attitudes, increased awareness, more effective advocacy, and a better understanding of issues.
- Ensuring that staff and carers can see each client as an individual and not a stereotype.
- Incorporating cultural protocols such as Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country at the opening of organisational gatherings and official functions.
- Sourcing relevant networks and establishing relationships with specialist services.
- Partnering with Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and CALD services and communities to provide culturally responsive services.
- Acknowledging and promoting the benefits of mutual learning and capacity building.
- Gathering client information to identify and understand their individual relationship to their culture and their cultural needs.
- Following the *Aboriginal Case Management Policy* principles, rules and practices for Aboriginal children and young people in our Permanency Support Program, as developed by AbSec on behalf of Department of Communities and Justice.
- Providing cultural support planning, and age-appropriate cultural support activities for children and young people from Aboriginal, Torres Strait Island and CALD backgrounds in our care through effective consultation and relevant community partnership.
- Encouraging feedback from clients, children and young people, families, and identified communities, to evaluate our approaches and build on continuous improvement.
- Supporting and encouraging staff and carers to constantly improve their skills and increase their knowledge.
- Assisting staff and carers to learn ways to integrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or CALD culture into regular day to day practices.
- Continuing our work toward reconciliation through our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Engagement Strategy.
- Developing external stakeholder engagement plans to facilitate meeting the cultural needs of our clients such as through co-design of service provision.

- Promoting itself as a culturally competent organisation by designing policies, procedures, and collaborative practices to ensure access for all clients we assist.

Related documents

- *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Support Plan*
- *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Dates of Significance*
- *DCJ: Aboriginal Case Management Policy*
- *Cultural & Linguistically Diverse Support Plan*
- *Children's Services Inclusion and Equity Policy*
- *PSP Developing Cultural Support Plans for Aboriginal and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Children and Young People Practice Guidelines*
- *DF & Seniors Cultural Safety & Awareness Practice Guidelines*
- *First Nations Employment Strategy*
- *First Nations Engagement Strategy*
- *Inclusion & Diversity Policy*
- *Respectful Language when referring to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples*

Legislation

- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)*
- *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*
- *Multicultural NSW Act 2000*

Glossary

CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse)

CALD is a broad and inclusive descriptor for communities with diverse language, ethnic background, nationality, dress, traditions, food, societal structures, and art and religion characteristics. CALD people are generally defined as those people born overseas, in countries other than those classified by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) as "main English-speaking countries".

Sign off and review

This policy remains valid until it is either superseded by a new version or officially revoked.

CatholicCare values your input and welcomes feedback on this policy. Your suggestions help us improve and better support your work. Please send any feedback to policy.updates@catholiccaredbb.org.au.

Version	Authorised by	Approved date	Review cycle	Review due
1.0	CatholicCare Executive	27 July 2020	2 years	July 2022
2.0	Executive Manager People and Culture/Manager Culture & Capability	17 July 2023	Review date adjusted to align with new review schedule	September 2025
3.0	Executive Manager People & Culture	6 January 2026	14 Months	March 2027

Revision history

Version	Description	Author	Amendment date
1.0	Policy	Manager Culture & Capability	22 June 2020
2.0	Policy	HR Advisor/Aboriginal Community Engagement Manager	17 July 2023
3.0	Expanded Policy Statement, minor changes	Policy Specialist/Senior HR Business Partner	6 January 2026
3.1	Updated Related Document name and link	Policy Specialist	6 May 2026