An Introduction to Cultural Capability for New Employees

Royal Flying Doctor Service (Queensland Section)
ACTION FOR RECONCILIATION TEAM

An Introduction to Cultural Capability for New Employees

A Toolkit for Team Leaders

An RFDS (Queensland Section)
Action for Reconciliation Team Document. Last reviewed 22.8.2011
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2. Purpose of the Tool Kit

In the *Policy for Employees Working in Indigenous Communities*, the Team Leaders are required to provide new employees with an introduction to cultural capability and explain why it is important at RFDSQ.

This tool kit is designed to help the team leader to:

- Provide the ‘introduction’ and
- Encourage new employees to continually extend their cultural capability.

The purpose of the Team Leader’s Introduction to Cultural Capability is to:

A. Let the new employee know that cultural capability is important when working alongside Indigenous people in health: see *Background Statements: 3 Principles*

B. Assist the new employee with information as outlined in the policy: see *Policy for Employees Working in Indigenous Communities*,

C. To briefly outline the FIVE important learning areas: see *the Five Significant Learning Directions*

D. Let the new employee know that they are expected to keep exploring and learning about the Five Significant Learning Directions

The ‘Introduction’ does not teach any particular aspect of cultural competence or cultural safety. It is the function of the new worker’s own self learning, and the role of any ongoing education programmes inside or outside the RFDS, to open the topics in depth.

**Assistance is Available!** Team Leaders do not have to do this on their own! The Action for Reconciliation Team at the RFDSQ can link you with individuals for advice and support.

Further to this, short training opportunities may be provided from time to time through the Human Resources department.
3. Process for New Employees

New employees are expected to undertake a number of tasks early on in their employment with the RFDSQ.

They are expected to:

1. Have a discussion with the team leader or line manager about cultural safety in the workplace and working in the indigenous health context referred to as The Team Leader’s Introduction to Cultural Capability.

2. Gain familiarity with the Policy for Employees Working in Indigenous Communities and undertake the associated tasks as appropriate for their position.

3. Participate in cultural capability training provided internally.

4. Engage in ongoing learning in the workplace community that:
   
   a. Creates reflective work practices toward better health outcomes for Indigenous people;

   b. Builds an increasingly complex understanding of local knowledge and issues related to working cross culturally.

4. History


"In 2008 the Australian Parliament and the Australian nation came together for an historic moment in our nation’s history, when we formally apologised to the Stolen Generations – those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who were forcibly removed from their families and their communities through the actions of past governments.

We said sorry for the laws and policies of successive parliaments and governments that inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on our fellow Australians, in particular the Stolen Generations – those who suffered the hurt, the humiliation, the cruelty and the sheer brutality of being taken away, often forever, from their mothers and their fathers, their families and their people.

The Apology was about acknowledging a dark chapter in our nation’s history. It was also about recognising past wrongdoings and in a modest way righting the wrongs of the past. The Apology is only the first step.

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If we are to move forward together as a nation, and build a stronger and fairer Australia in the twenty-first century, we must address the appalling gap between the life opportunities enjoyed by Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Throughout the history of European settlement, a baby born to an Indigenous family in Australia has had far more limited opportunities than a baby born to a non-Indigenous family. The Australian Government is resolutely determined to change this reality.

Closing the Gap is fundamentally important to building a fairer Australia. In the later decades of the twentieth century, our nation implemented the important legal reforms that recognised the equality of Indigenous Australians before the law. While legal rights are essential for overcoming entrenched disadvantage, rights alone cannot close the gap. They only establish a foundation for making progress.

The challenge we now confront is to work together to close the gap in real life outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. This is the objective to which the Australian Government is committed, but cannot achieve on its own. As a nation, we must come together around this vision and take substantive action – Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, Commonwealth, state and territory governments, business and the wider community.

The Australian Government is committed to this national effort in cooperation with other governments. In 2008, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to six ambitious targets relating to Indigenous life expectancy, health, education and employment.

We have already begun to put in place the measures that will help to achieve these six targets. The COAG commitment of $4.6 billion in 2008 provides a framework to mobilise investment in basic health, education and other services needed to put Indigenous Australians on an equal footing with other Australians. This is an historic agreement. It is the first time that a truly national commitment – encompassing all governments – has been made that aims to ensure that Indigenous Australians have an equitable share in the opportunities which our nation offers.

At the same time we must be realistic and acknowledge the size of the task ahead of us. Meeting our targets will not be easy, and at times may be controversial, but we must not be deflected from our goals.

This statement outlines the Australian Government’s approach to Closing the Gap. It describes progress in our first year, and sets out our priorities for the future. There is much to be done, and it will require patience, perseverance and a sustained national effort from every part of the Australian community. In the years ahead, we aim to report annually on the progress Australia is making towards this national objective”. Kevin Rudd, Prime Minister

An Introduction to Cultural Capability for New Employees

*From Voices from the Campfires: Establishing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation.* ISBN: 978-1-921647-03-1

This documents the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation Development Team’s findings from a national consultation process, conducted from May to August 2009, regarding healing and the establishment of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation.


“Whitefella sorry business way is not sorry business blackfella way” (Canberra workshop) [2009] David Cole


“This journey is a movement; Movements can only happen in unison, standing together, strong and united; The wisdom and culture of our ancestors has allowed for us to be here today; The strength, courage and resilience of our Elders have ensured the war trauma and genocide has not broken our will or our spirit; Our brothers and sisters struggle each day to find their place in this imposed artificial world; Our children cry out for they are lost, angry and confused, unaware of where this pain comes from and why they must feel it; The Warrior has been attacked and forgotten, left to suffer in the turmoil he has been oppressed into; The Mother carries the burden of caring for the children, absorbing the pain of the Warrior while she too tries to understand her pain; If we listen to our spirit, our ancestors will guide us; If we open our hearts and free our pain we will see our future more clearly; It is our journey, but all can walk with us because we all own the now and the future belongs to our actions of today; This land is our creator, the LORE is our way, disrupted it may be, but far from lost; The wisdom of our existence held in the hands of our traditional peoples; The stolen children given the tools of the oppressor we must use them; Together we must unite to remember the past and walk to the future; We have been handed this role as we lay the pathway for our children; Far too often poisons become the only escape of our pain, followed closely by death; Warriors have walked before us, we walk now to build Warriors for tomorrow; I remember our ancestors; I thank our Elders; I walk for our children; We must not fear failure, it is the failure not to act that we must fear; Our pain strengthens our spirit, our tears water the roots of our strength; Let’s walk strong; Let’s walk proud; Let’s walk together united as one on this healing journey; For this is the movement.”  *David Cole, 4 June 2009*
5. Team Leader's Introduction

Overview:

A. Principles
B. Policy
C. Five Significant Learning Directions
D. Final statement

A. Backgrounds Statements : 3 Principles

1. Cultural capability related to working with Indigenous people, is an organisational priority at the RFDSQ;
2. Understanding cultural issues is key to working successfully alongside Indigenous people and attaining positive health outcomes;
3. Ongoing learning and change around these issues over time is expected while working at the RFDSQ.

B. Policy:

Policy requires you, the Team Leader, to nominate a key person or persons, within RFDSQ, who the new employee should go to for information regarding relationships and contact with significant Indigenous people in the particular communities they are to be involved with. The policy gives suggestions about the sort of contact that might be made. The key person will also help with identifying the type of contact that might be appropriate.

C. Five Significant Learning Directions

The Action Reconciliation Team at the RFDSQ has identified FIVE significant learning directions that a new employee is expected to pay attention to and learn about:

1. Cultural competency and cultural safety;
2. History and policy;
3. Racism and confronting racism;
4. Power and knowledge in the health context;
5. The importance of learning from local people.

Some ideas are provided as a starting point. Please use your own experience to tailor the discussion for the particular employee.
### 1. Cultural Competency and Cultural Safety

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>This involves…</th>
<th>Understanding that there are interrelated topics such as:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- cultural awareness</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- cultural competency</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- cultural safety</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- cultural capabilities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- cultural proficiency</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Each has different meanings and there is complex literature about each.</td>
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</table>

It’s not just about doing something the “right” way [e.g. keeping your eyes averted] but about learning and reflecting on one’s own practice over a long period of time.

| This is important because… | Understanding cultural issues is key to working successfully alongside Indigenous people and attaining positive health outcomes. |

|------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
2. History and Policy

This involves…

Learning about the history of interaction between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Queensland and Australia.

Learning about the many different past and current government policies that have impacted on Indigenous people.

Some historical policies have had a major impact on keeping Indigenous people poor/disadvantaged.

This is important because…

History and government policies have had a huge impact on Indigenous people. Understanding these helps us understand that the health disparities did not occur because of Indigenous people’s individual faults or inadequacies.

If we are to help change government arrangements and get better health outcomes, we need to understand the dynamics of past and current arrangements particularly because current arrangements are frequently built upon or based upon past arrangements which were not helpful.

Resource:


### 3. Racism and Confronting Racism

<table>
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<th>This involves…</th>
<th>Understanding that racism is not simply about what one individual thinks about another individual.</th>
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<td></td>
<td>It might also include</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- a shared set of beliefs between a small group of people that exclude or diminish others; or beliefs or actions that make things uncomfortable for another group of people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- a set of organizational arrangements that stop a certain group from fully participating; or which prevent people being able to do things in a way that actually works for them.</td>
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</table>

Racism occurs within complex power relationships – where one group has more decision making ability or more influence over the ways that processes and structures and social interactions are arranged.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>This is important because…</th>
<th>When Indigenous people work in RFDSQ or when Indigenous people come to RFDSQ for a service, they need to feel comfortable enough to do their work in the best possible way; and comfortable enough to get the service they want/need.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Also it is important so that we organize at the RFDSQ in ways which help Indigenous people feel involved, and be involved.</td>
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</table>

Also, there is a lot of evidence that health outcomes will not be achieved until Indigenous people are fully involved in their own health.

|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
## 4. Power and Knowledge – especially in the health context

| This involves… | Understanding that … health services have traditionally been delivered in quite a hierarchical way. Health Professionals can sometimes be viewed as experts who know everything and are not able to be challenged; white people can be viewed like this too. It also involves remembering that Indigenous people have a lot of special knowledge. Helping people feel confident about their knowledge will help solve health problems. |
| This is important because… | Sometimes systems and processes aren’t actually working their best; and people’s needs aren’t actually being met [poor health outcomes]. But if we don’t address the perceived ‘power’ imbalances, people might not tell us what is not working. And therefore reducing power imbalances is key to working successfully alongside Indigenous people and attaining positive health outcomes - so that people become more involved. |

### Resource:


- Chapter 6: ‘Racism, discrimination and ‘whiteness’”;
- Chapter 7: ‘Models of Health’;
- Chapter 8 ‘Primary Health Care’

5. The importance of Learning from Local People

<table>
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<tr>
<th>This involves…</th>
<th>Understanding that local solutions are going to involve real relationships [sometimes called ‘partnerships’] with local people.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This is important because…</td>
<td>EVERY COMMUNITY IS DIFFERENT</td>
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Knowledge passes back and forth in relationships

Local Indigenous people have much to teach non-Indigenous service providers about the 5 important learning directions:
- cultural competency
- the impact of history and policy on their particular community
- racism and confronting racism
- about power and expertise and knowledge
- local people, local families and clans, particular events and dynamics that effect how local communities

As a provider of health services to Indigenous people, the RFDS must be considered part of the communities they serve.

Resources:
Some communities have online webpages that outline histories of the community: see for example:

For history of Lockhart River see: Lockhart River Council

For history of Aurukun see: Aurukun Shire Council

For history of Kowanyama see: Kowanyama Shire Council

For history of Pormpuraaw see:

For history of Laura see http://www.quinkancc.com.au/

Also see RFDS Indigenous Liaison Development Officers or local Indigenous Traditional Owner organisations, museums and cultural centre’s, land and sea offices or local councils/shires for access to current community profile information and historical information regarding local Indigenous groups.

For a list of council contacts:
[accessed 23-3-2011]
D. Final Statement

You can let the new worker know that they are not expected to get everything right away. But they are expected to keep exploring and learning about the “Five Significant Learning Areas”. A workshop regarding cultural capability and cultural competence will be offered by RFDSQ in the next period. They are expected to sign up.

But ... it is not just about attending a single workshop. It’s an ongoing process of reflection in their team, with their colleagues, their line manager, in consultation with Indigenous employees and in consultation with non-Indigenous employees [for example non-Indigenous members of the Action for Reconciliation Team].
7. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES and SIGNIFICANT ORGANISATIONS

- Language books: The RFDS has access to a Wik Language dictionary
- Stolen Generation Networks (Link Up)
- Queensland Aboriginal & Islander Health Council (QAIHC)
- Cape/Gulf Remote Area Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Child Care (RAATSICC) Network
- Far North Queensland Regional Aboriginal Organisations:
  - Cape York Land Council,
  - Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation
  - Cape York Institute
    - Apunipima: Cape York Health Council
    - Cape York Partnerships (http://www.capeyorkpartnerships.com )