

Feedback on the Draft National Framework for Health Services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Families

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For more information on the National Framework please go to
<https://consultations.health.gov.au/irhd/national-framework-for-health-services>

Feedback on the Draft National Framework for Health Services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Families

This feedback focuses on cultural competence training

The focus of this response is in relation to cultural competence training. The response is based on

- 1 *Unsettling White Noise* (Carnes, 2014) which recommends key indicators for monitoring and building respectful relationships and addressing racism at both systemic and individual levels
- 2 *Critical Indigenous pedagogy meets transformative education in a third space learning experience* (Carnes, 2015). This article considers provision of education/training to non-Indigenous university students in relation to increasing cultural self-awareness (cultural competence). While this unit was taught over a semester, it indicates the kind of process required for transformation (ie increased cultural self-awareness) to occur.

The feedback is structured in two parts;

- 1 **Big ticks** for things that stood out in your draft in relation to cultural competence training
- 2 **Recommendations** based on 3 semesters of teaching to a large cohort of non-Indigenous future professionals (as portrayed in the attached paper; Carnes, 2015).
- 3 **A potential framework for evaluation of policy in this area.**

Big ticks ✓

There are many 'big ticks' in this framework. The focus on the intergenerational trauma created and perpetuated by colonialism is particularly commendable and central to any success (Atkinson, 2012, Atkinson et al, 2010).

More big ticks for identifying/recommending;

- ✓ The need for culturally safe work practices. This is essential and we've known this for a long time. What hasn't often been addressed is it being delivered at all levels and to all roles (including policy makers, financial advisors, management), not only practitioners. This is essential if the focus and goals of the framework are to be achieved.
- ✓ The need for training that goes beyond short, one-off cultural awareness training.
- ✓ The need for ongoing self-reflexive practice.
- ✓ The need for relationship building at the heart of working.
- ✓ The need for genuine partnership based on building relationship, not merely MOU's and other business dealings.

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Recommendations for developing cultural self-awareness training for non-Indigenous professionals

When it comes to anti-racism or diversity training of any kind it is not true that something is better than nothing. If it is not done well Kowal, Franklin and Paradies (2011: 135) caution that it can actually heighten stereotyping and make oppression worse. In rolling out this framework it is essential that the spirit of it be followed through and there be a commitment to more than ticking a box of having 'done cultural competence training'.

Complete the picture

Mainstream education and organisational processes are built on a non-Indigenous framework. This leaves understanding lop-sided and incomplete. Aim to 'complete the picture' rather than create a binary of good/bad or right/wrong. To work from a space of respect for Indigenous perspectives prioritise Indigenous voices. This does not mean only Indigenous people can be involved in being guides. It is important to model relatedness of people working together. But don't 'go it alone' as a non-Indigenous person as this is not modelling development of strong relationship building. It also perpetuates the ongoing issues created by colonisation.

Provide the right 'guides'

"For such a journey to succeed appropriate guides are essential. ... What is vital is their hands-on journey alongside Aboriginal peoples, working with and learning from them.... strong relationships of their own with Indigenous peoples and community. They need to have undertaken their own journey to be equipped to guide others on it." (Carnes, 2015: 7)

Unlike much cultural awareness and sensitivity training, such cultural 'self-awareness' training can be undertaken at an organisational level. Being one step removed it steps outside the realm of individual guilt and is therefore potentially less threatening. The organisation can, as noted by Kowal, Franklin and Paradies (2011: 143) take a "reflexive stance towards [its] own attitudes, beliefs and behaviours as well as the reactions of others".

Understand the pedagogical underpinnings

There is a need for a sound pedagogical theoretical basis to provision of such important training. There is a need to get the right balance of challenge and acceptance to encourage growth while not disenfranchising so that people 'switch off'. Again, this requires skilled facilitators and managers who themselves are committed to their own ongoing growth and learning.

Recommended are the following theoretical bases

Critical Indigenous pedagogy – the 5 R's

A central purpose of cultural self-awareness training is building strong relationships. An ideal base is provided by the 5 R's of *Respect, Reciprocity, Relatedness, Rights and*

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Responsibilities (Atkinson, 2012). These five concepts provide a portable framework *in situ* when working with Indigenous clients and colleagues. They can consider how each is being exhibited in the current situation. (It is also a useful reflexive tool for working with a wide range of colleagues and clientele).

“We learn respect for all life - for who we are. We learn that being respected means we have rights – rights to clean water, healthy food and knowledge for life. From those two r’s we learn responsibility. We cannot be responsible if we have never enjoyed respectful entitlement of our most basic human rights. ... within the interaction between rights and responsibilities, in our search for information and understanding, we begin to learn and teach together ... We also learn reciprocity, (sharing and caring), from which grows relatedness. These are the essential principles of Indigenous teaching learning practice – an Indigenous critical pedagogy.” (Atkinson 2012: 1-2)

Transformative learning

Transformation is not a smooth, steady process but occurs in fits and starts, is likely to stall, particularly at the beginning of transformative learning “with its threat to a long-established sense of order, and later when awareness and insight call for a commitment to action that may seriously threaten important relationships” (Mezirow, 2000, p.xii). Transformative education then, is likely to mirror this stop, start process and face hurdles at similar stages in implementation. (Carnes, 2015: 4)

Be prepared for the ‘push-back’, the hurdles and stop/start nature of this kind of change. Have strategies for dealing with that or it can actually make things worse rather than better. Being open to our own growth, claims DeRosa (1999: 193), requires “learning how to push through ... defensiveness and denial....learning to let go of... defensiveness and self-righteousness is an ongoing challenge”.

Applied learning

Indigenous world views and ways of working place relationship at the centre, as explained by Carnes (2011: 176-177). Similarly, Freire (1972; 61) believes that dialogue and being in relationship are essential to transform the current reality of those who are oppressed, revealing his belief that “no one can say a true word alone – nor can he say it *for* another, in a prescriptive act which robs them of their words”. Dialogue and relationship with one another and the world of which we are a part are at the heart of both transformative education and Indigenous world views.

Therefore, moving outside of comfort to a place of discomfort is a part of applying the learning of developing cultural competency. Powis (2008: 82) describes this “place of discomfort” as where we engage in adaptive, transformative work. This is in contrast to ‘tick a box’ training portrayed by Maddison (2011: 9) as “applying a technical solution ... [so that] the problem appears to be taken care of.”

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Third space theory – we are equals in this, not an expert and a receptacle of wisdom.

It has been noted by Indigenous authors such as Little Bear (2000) that there is no purity in either Indigenous or non-Indigenous worldviews; that there has been a meshing of different views with each influencing the other. Similarly Dudgeon and Fielder (2006: 400) explain Bhabha's notion of a 'third space' as one that does not deify or rarify or claim as pure and innocent either a dominant group or an oppressed group.

Transformative education in such a third space ensures transformation not only of people traditionally oppressed but those with whom they work. It requires interaction and learning from (rather than saving) people whose worldview has been obscured by western hegemony. A third space creates a new way of working that incorporates and respects different world views.

Summary of Key Recommendations

Key recommendations in implementation of cultural competence training as referred to in the Draft National Framework:

1 The 'trainer' needs to

- a. Draw on Indigenous authors
- b. Have done and be on their own journey
- c. Does not have to be Indigenous – though needs to work alongside/draw on guests with specific expertise
- d. Be able to deal with strong emotions and reactions

2 The 'training' needs to

- a. Have a clear aim that transformation is an important goal.
- b. Go beyond text books
- c. Require application of what is learned. For example have people develop their own reconciliation action plan. This takes the learning away from the cerebral to the interpersonal.
- d. Focus on change in thinking not just learning some behaviours by rote
- e. Acknowledge that what is known now isn't wrong, it is just incomplete
- f. Be seen as immediately relevant to the person's work. Use examples from a wide range of disciplines such as business, management, accounting, law, etc etc

3 Evaluation needs to

- a. Go beyond self-reported changes. See the table of questions in Carnes (2015). *Who says/who decides?*
- b. Include Indigenous voice. This is a great indicator of how relationships are being developed – or not. This inclusion needs to be beyond tokenistic.

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- c. Be longer term – how has a service changed? Who says so? (See the table of questions in Carnes, 2015)

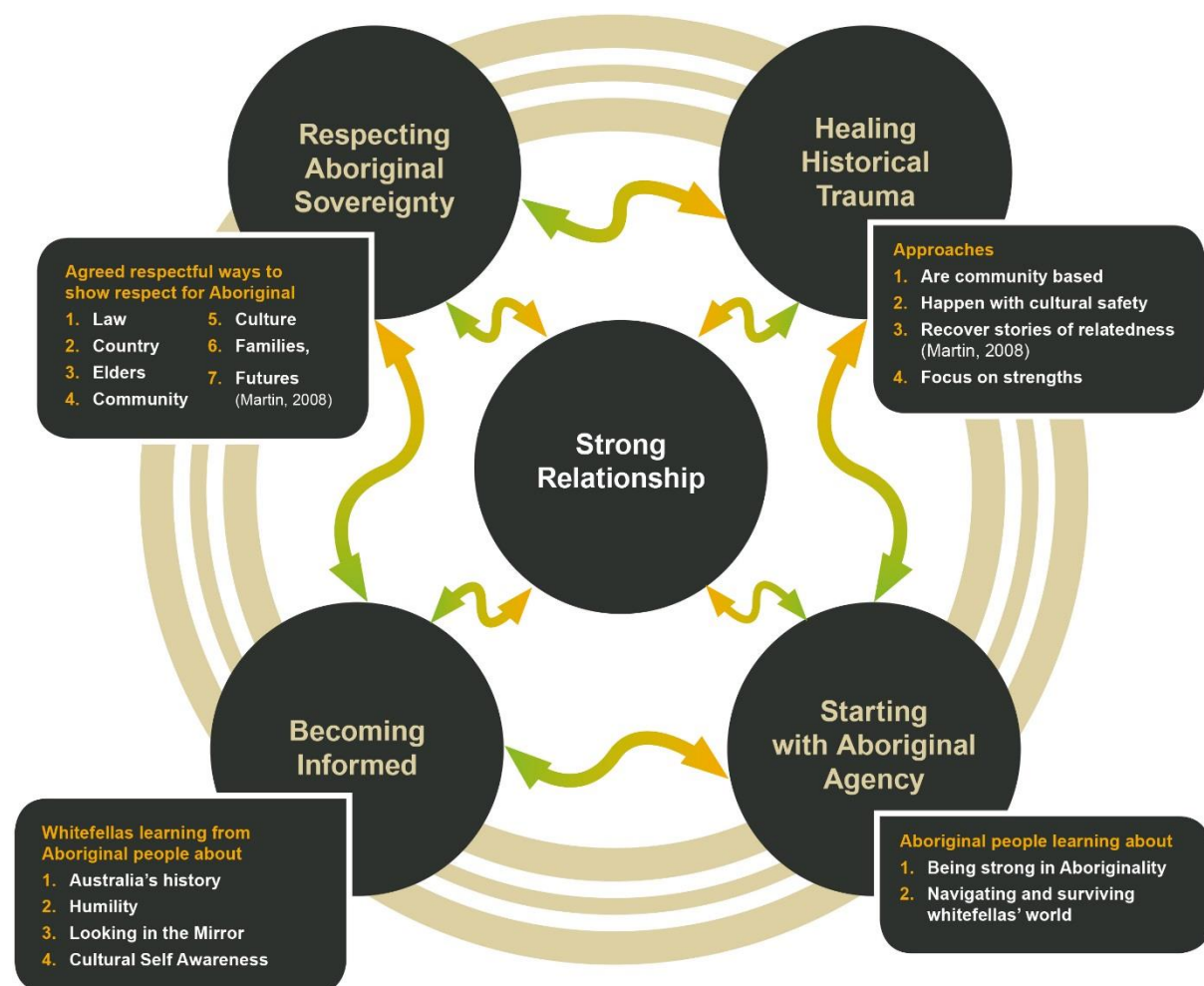
4 The actual knowledge and skills being taught need to be clarified.

Is it, for example,

- a. Listening
- b. Understanding of history
- c. Relationship building
- d. Language and use of terminology
- e. Understanding of a particular cultural situation
- f. Self-awareness

A suggested framework for evaluation of policy and practice

The framework below provides one potential way to evaluate policy and implementation of resulting processes. Further detailed information on the framework is available from Carnes (2014)



(Carnes, 2014; 347)

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In addition, the following set of questions accompany this framework as a way of clarifying progress in implementation (Carnes, 2014: 344-346). They also could prove valuable in evaluation of policy implementation.

Questions to use in evaluation

Utilising the framework effectively involves asking questions and raising critical consciousness within a school, classroom, department, prison or organisation. Asking *'how are we or in what way are we?'* is a place to begin using the framework. Organisations, families, practitioners, teachers and schools can all begin with these questions.

- How are we (am I) in this organisation, school, classroom, parliament, town respecting Aboriginal sovereignty and showing respect for each of law, Elders, country, community, culture, families and futures?

Who says so, who decides?

- How, in this school, town, department are relationships being developed that understand the history of trauma for Aboriginal people in this state, town, country?
- Do we have the ability to provide support, or do we know where to refer in our community, Aboriginal people for healing?
- Is that healing community based?
- Does it occur with cultural safety?
- Does it recover stories of relatedness and focuses on strengths?

Who says this is appropriate healing?

- Is our organisation, department, staff, city, town becoming informed about Aboriginal views of Australia's history, the importance of humility and cultural self awareness?

Who says we are getting anywhere with it? Who are we learning from?

- Does this school, classroom, team, organisation, department support or offer opportunities in our prison, school, classroom, office for Aboriginal people to learn about or practice being strong in Aboriginality and how to navigate and thrive in a whitefellas world?

Who decides what opportunities there are and what is appropriate?

In addition there are a number of useful questions that help tease out assumptions that underly behaviour. I have used these questions in various training situations over the years and find them useful in encouraging people to stop and think about what they are saying.

- Who decides what happens, what is important, who has access, who is excluded?
- What assumptions inform the decisions?

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- Where did the assumptions come from?
- Who decided what went into the sources of information?
- How do you know when something is working and who it is working for?
- Who decides what the indicators of success are?
- Why are things done this way?
- Who decides?

About the Author

Rose's work history includes advocacy and education in the community legal sector, counselling, crisis response, policy development and response, politics, management, domestic violence and community development in Tasmania and Western Australia. She has worked for both government and not for profits in youth, education, health and training. Her focus has, over the past 10-15 years, focused increasingly on issues facing Indigenous people accessing mainstream services. She has made it Some recent work in this area has been working with Peel Community Legal Centre in developing cultural self-awareness in order to move towards meeting national standards in this field.

Rose has a Bachelor of Education and a Bachelor of Social Work (Hons). The outcome of her PhD, *"Unsettling white noise: yarning about Aboriginal education in Western Australian prisons"*, includes a model for respectful research with Indigenous communities as well as a framework for improving accessibility to mainstream services and agencies for Indigenous people. She has published and presented on a number of related areas including provision of education in prisons; the link between unacknowledged sovereignty and trauma and comparison between regional and urban prisoner education in Western Australia.

Rose received the 2011 AARE Postgraduate Student Researcher Award for a paper on Aboriginal education in Western Australian prisons. In 2013 she received a Western Australian Institute for Educational Research Award for her thesis.

Rose has been the Discipline Co-ordinator for Aboriginal Studies at University of Notre Dame Fremantle. This role included teaching into this area of study. Her current position is with the Centre for Rural, Regional Law and Justice with Deakin University in Geelong, Victoria.

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