

SAFE PRACTICE GUIDE

Creating Culturally Safe Environments

Why is this important?

Positive connection to culture, and cultural identity, are protective factors, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. It can help develop positive self-esteem, emotional strength, and resilience.

The National Catholic Safeguarding Standards emphasise the importance of creating culturally safe environments for Aboriginal, and Torres Strait Islander people, and others from diverse cultural backgrounds.

'Cultural safety' is defined as:

an environment that is safe for people of all ethnicities and cultural identities: where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need.

What should we be doing?

Parishes, ministries and agencies that interact with Aboriginal people, Torres Strait Islander people, or people from ethnic and culturally linguistic backgrounds, should adopt practices that enhance cultural safety. Some recognised practices that enhance cultural safety include:

- Consulting people from culturally diverse backgrounds about their culture and cultural support needs.
- Recognising, and honouring other cultures. (e.g. acknowledging Aboriginal traditional owners of country)
- Actively seeking to understand and integrate cultural norms and customs. (e.g. adopting Aboriginal welcome to country ceremonies)
- Actively addressing cultural biases and assumptions.
- Displaying posters, symbols, decorations or artwork that nurture a sense of identity and belonging.
- Promoting cultural diversity in newsletters/bulletins, on websites and social media (where applicable).
- Participate in diversity related civic activities and campaigns (e.g. Harmony Week Australia, Refugee Week)
- Accommodating language and communication needs (e.g. providing information in various languages and formats where applicable).
- Provide safeguarding and complaints management information in various languages and formats.
- Raise awareness about circumstances that may increase vulnerability to abuse and barriers to disclosing abuse, particularly in cultural contexts.

Recommended Resource

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council

Web: www.natsicc.org.au