KEEPING OUR KIDS SAFE:
CULTURAL SAFETY AND THE NATIONAL PRINCIPLES FOR CHILD SAFE ORGANISATIONS

Australian Government
National Office for Child Safety

SNAICC
National Voice for our Children

VACCA
Connected by culture
VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL CHILD CARE AGENCY

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In Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, our children and family are everything. When it comes to keeping our children safe, we all have a role – as individuals and families but also, as the community organisations we are part of.

INTRODUCTION

This resource is intended to support organisations engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to implement the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (National Principles) in a culturally safe way.

The National Principles give effect to the child safe standards recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (Royal Commission). The Australian Government engaged the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) to develop the National Principles and supporting resources, including by leading national consultations. The National Principles were agreed by all Australian governments in February 2019.

The National Principles are designed to address the needs of diverse communities when creating organisational cultures and practices that promote child safety and wellbeing. During consultations on the National Principles, stakeholders highlighted the need for additional, culturally appropriate support for implementing the National Principles in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations.

The National Office for Child Safety (National Office) engaged SNAICC – National Voice for our Children (SNAICC) to develop a resource to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations to implement the National Principles and sustain organisational cultures that foster child safety and wellbeing. SNAICC, with the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA), developed this resource in consultation with a range of stakeholders who engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, and their families across all Australian states and territories.

This resource assists Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, their communities and non-Indigenous organisations to embed and reinforce cultural safety across all levels of their organisations, in line with the National Principles. It highlights key cultural considerations that will assist organisations to ensure their spaces are culturally safe, and their programs and activities are free from racism and discrimination. These actions will help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children feel safe to participate and that their culture is respected and strengthened while they are engaged with the organisation.

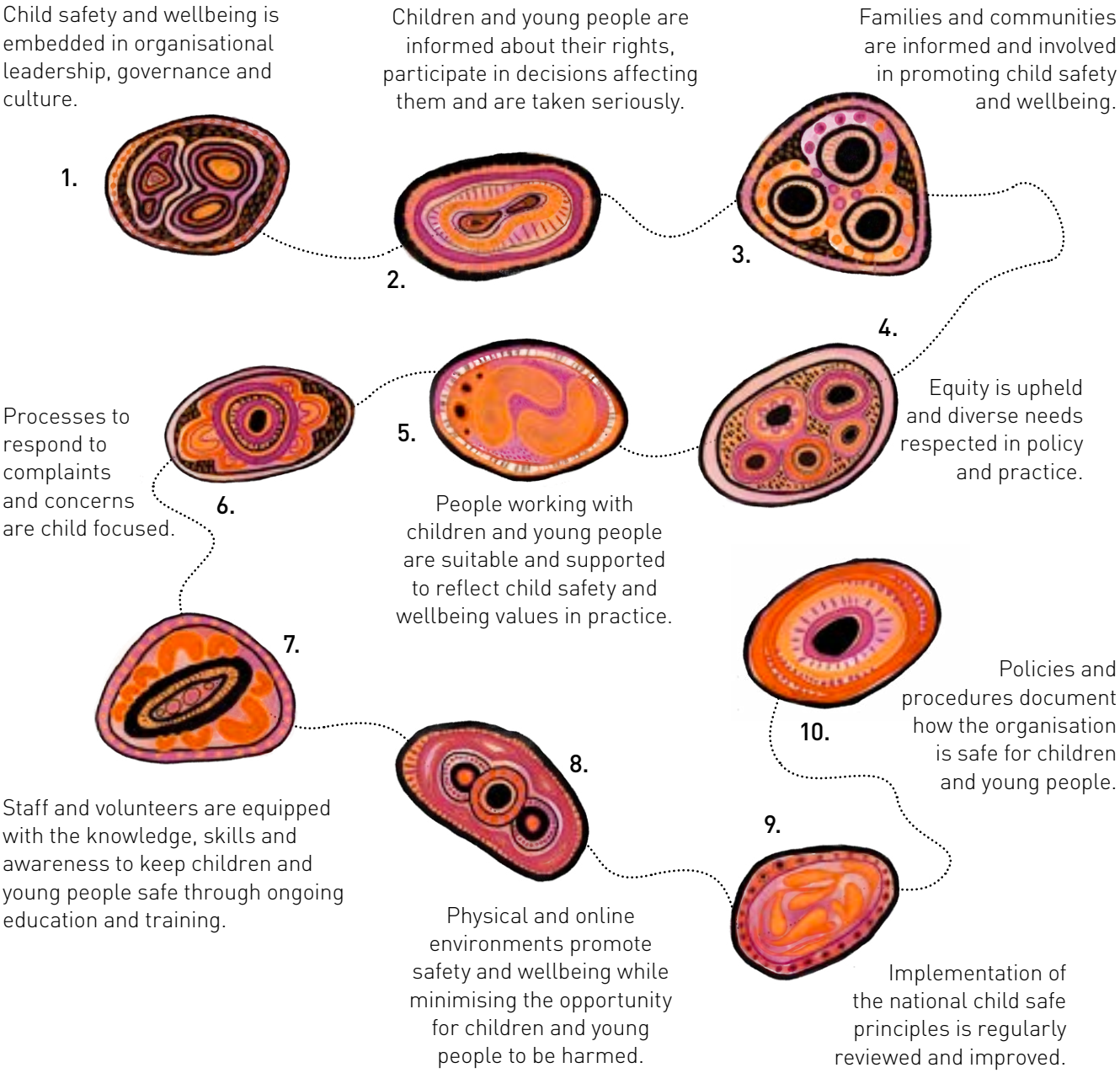
This resource builds on the existing guidance materials available to support the National Principles. It adds a cultural lens for how the National Principles can be implemented to improve the safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

The resource is informed by, and aligns with, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

...Stakeholders highlighted the need for additional, culturally appropriate support for implementing the National Principles in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations...

THE NATIONAL PRINCIPLES FOR CHILD SAFE ORGANISATIONS

The National Principles provide a national approach to embedding a child safe culture in organisations.



The National Principles are underpinned by a child-rights, strengths-based approach to child safe organisations and are designed to be flexible so that all sectors that engage with children and young people, and organisations of different sizes, can implement them.

In summary, a child safe organisation is one that actively:

- creates an environment where children's safety and wellbeing are the centre of the organisation's inspiration, values and actions
- places emphasis on genuine engagement with and valuing of children
- creates conditions that reduce the likelihood of harm to children
- creates conditions that increase the likelihood of identifying any harm
- responds to any concerns, disclosures, allegations or suspicions
- creates child-friendly mechanisms for a child's voice to be heard.[1]

...In a child safe organisation, children, young people, family and community members feel that their culture and identity are respected...

RESOURCE DEFINITIONS

Child/ren	Children and young people under the age of 18.
Organisation	This includes but is not limited to agencies, clubs, schools, sporting clubs, educational settings, and any programs or services facilitating activities for, or engaging with, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and their families.
Executive	Top level in hierarchical structures, such as an organisation's board, the chief executive officer, or management roles with high influence and decision-making, policy-making or stakeholder-defining roles.
Middle management staff	Management staff who report to senior executive staff and are responsible for operational staff. These roles can help improve internal process management and enhance operational performance.
Operational staff	Roles that oversee and manage front of office, direct practice, and operational management staff; involved in hiring and assessing performance and providing feedback; responsible for implementation of services and have direct contact with community and service users.

STAFF CATEGORIES

A key feature of this resource is the breakdown of roles and responsibilities across executive, middle management and operational staff members under each principle.

The key purpose of these sections is to assist your organisation in clearly defining and clarifying roles and responsibilities and provide a basic framework for cooperation between different levels of the organisation. This framework for cooperation will help ensure organisational processes and people mesh seamlessly, which can improve internal process. This leads to the delivery of holistic and high-quality services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

LEGISLATION, STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

It is important to remember that regardless of which sector your organisation represents, there are existing child safety requirements your organisation must meet, including relevant state and territory legislation, such as mandatory reporting, and sector specific requirements. The National Principles do not replace these, instead they provide overarching guidance for the development of child safe standards and policy.

UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL SAFETY

The Royal Commission made a number of recommendations about cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and underscored the importance of cultural safety considerations in the development of the National Principles.

The term 'cultural safety' was first defined by the Māori nursing fraternity in New Zealand, and is expressed as:

> "An environment that is safe for people: where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience, of learning, living and working together with dignity and truly listening".[2]

Cultural safety is the positive recognition and celebration of cultures. It is more than just the absence of racism or discrimination and more than 'cultural awareness' and 'cultural sensitivity'. It empowers people and enables them to contribute and feel safe to be themselves.

When your organisation understands, implements, and monitors the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children it engages with, it creates a foundation for developing cultural competency. Developing organisational cultural competence requires committed leadership at all levels and is a whole-of-organisation approach that should be embedded in the governance, policies, programs, service delivery and practice approaches, including staff screening, training and supervision.[3] This takes time, must be carefully planned, and requires the capacity to thoughtfully and respectfully question and develop respectful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

In a culturally safe environment, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families define what is comfortable and safe. Within this environment, the service provider looks for guidance from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families on how to provide the service and considers how delivery of service will impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's culture.

Cultural safety upholds the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to:

- identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander without fear of retribution or questioning
- receive an education that strengthens their culture and identity
- maintain connection to their land and Country
- maintain their strong kinship ties and social obligations
- be taught their cultural heritage by their Elders
- receive information in a culturally sensitive, relevant and accessible manner
- be involved in services that are culturally respectful.[4]

SNAICC defines cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children as:

> "... the child being provided with a safe, nurturing and positive environment where they are comfortable with being themselves, expressing their culture...their spiritual and belief systems, and they are supported by the carer... (who) respects their Aboriginality and therefore encourages their sense of self and identity."[5]

Cultural safety needs to be consistently applied across all levels of your organisation. This is a way to address the racism and discrimination that still exists across service systems today, impacting children and their families, and in some cases leading to a loss of confidence in organisations.

IMPLEMENTING THE NATIONAL PRINCIPLES FOR CHILD SAFE ORGANISATIONS

PRINCIPLE 1

CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING IS EMBEDDED IN ORGANISATIONAL LEADERSHIP, GOVERNANCE AND CULTURE

This principle reminds us that each organisation's leadership and governance structures are responsible for embedding a culture of child safety within the organisation. These structures create a place where children can feel safe and included, and seek to ensure that the policies developed, monitored, and reported against promote child safety. Being connected to culture and community is a protective factor for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Connection to culture enhances an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander child's safety and resilience and, therefore, it should be a key component when developing and communicating policies and practices, regardless of the activity or setting.

Creating an organisation that is safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children cannot be achieved unless your organisation has – and demonstrates – a commitment to embedding cultural safety in everything you do. This starts with the people at the top – in leadership and governance roles – who set the tone for the rest of your organisation.

One way both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous organisations can demonstrate their dedication to cultural safety is through public commitments. Public commitments signal an inclusive, safe and welcoming space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities.

Adopting and demonstrating a public commitment involves:

- truth-telling about Australian history
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination and social justice
- upholding the human and cultural rights specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities
- working together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, communities, Elders, community leaders and families.

Embedding cultural safety into governance and strategic planning means your organisation will have a commitment to:

- highlighting the importance of cultural safety in all organisational programs and activities
- creating meaningful positions for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person on your organisation's board (if your organisation is a large and/or mainstream agency)
- making service delivery culturally safe and effective for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families
- ensuring local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander protocols are incorporated into governance structures and procedures
- consulting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, community leaders, families and children when writing policies and procedures
- creating opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices to be heard in organisational planning, policies and activities
- including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in discussions about child safety and other decisions that affect them
- understanding the different community groups (and their interests) that your organisation services
- ensuring policies and procedures are translated in local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and local dialects (for example, Kriol), and communicated in a culturally relevant way (for example, visually or through storytelling).

FROM A CULTURAL SAFETY APPROACH, THIS PRINCIPLE IS UPHELD WHEN YOUR ORGANISATION:

- has values, a vision and strategic direction that reflect a commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural safety
- delivers programs and activities that are grounded in and reflect a commitment to cultural safety
- monitors and reviews your commitment to and efforts towards cultural safety
- meets governance responsibilities and statutory obligations towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural safety
- can demonstrate that the behaviour and conduct of all staff and volunteers promote cultural safety throughout your organisation and its direct practices
- has established genuine partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, communities, Elders, community leaders and families.

CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

Cultural lens

Everyone, regardless of cultural background, makes decisions through a cultural lens which shapes a person's view of what is 'normal'. As all decisions – no matter how simple or complex – are made through this lens, everyone needs to recognise and remember that if you are not an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person, your cultural lens is different.

Cultural diversity

While there are some common elements to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures across Australia, each community has their own unique cultural context. Organisations should engage with their local communities to clearly understand what culture means to their communities. This is an important first step before applying a cultural lens to your organisational policies and procedures and to understanding what cultural safety will look like for your organisation.

HOW THE PRINCIPLE IS APPLIED TO ALL LEVELS OF AN ORGANISATION

EXECUTIVE LEVEL

- Lead your organisation towards an organisation-wide ethos of accountability for cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.
- Include cultural safety as a standing agenda item in all board meetings.
- Develop a system where staff are able to report back on issues of cultural safety and feel secure that feedback will be respectfully received and considered.
- Ensure that your organisational vision, purpose and objectives are reflective and supportive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's human and cultural rights.
- Review your organisation's existing policies and practices to ensure they are inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities. Points to consider:
  - Do we promote cultural respect and cultural safety?
  - Does our code of conduct include and define inappropriate behaviours regarding racism and discrimination?
  - Do our policies and practices uphold the unique human and cultural rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children?
  - Are the spaces, programs and activities that we facilitate inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children?
- Support staff and volunteers to have a clear understanding of their roles in promoting and implementing cultural safety.
- Carry out a cultural safety review across your organisation and identify what currently is in place and what needs to be developed or improved (for more information on cultural safety reviews see Resources on page 12).
- Allocate enough funding towards strengthening cultural safety practices across your organisation.
- Prioritise funding allocation towards cultural competency training for everyone within your organisation – this includes (and starts with) the board. This training should not be one off but a continuing journey for all staff at all levels.

EXECUTIVE LEVEL (cont.)

- Attend strategic forums and promote the broader social purpose of enhancing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child rights to stakeholders.
- Create, implement and maintain an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment strategy.
- As appropriate, attend community events and promote these within your organisation.

MIDDLE MANAGEMENT

- Promote the importance of and commitment to cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children across programs and activities that you supervise, and among the staff and volunteers who you supervise, in line with your organisation's public commitment.
- Ensure staff and volunteers understand your organisation's expectations and behaviours around cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities, as it applies to your organisation's code of conduct.
- Ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's human and cultural rights are reflected in operational procedures.
- Establish – or embed in existing structures – monitoring and evaluation frameworks to measure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural safety policies, strategies and governance structures.
- Provide guidance and assist operational staff in performance improvement and accomplishment of organisational objectives, as these relate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural safety.
- Review supervision policies and practices to promote an environment of cultural safety among individuals and within teams and programs.
- Where possible, offer cultural supervision where supervisors are from the same culture as supervisees, and are responsive to their needs, culture and work issues.[6]
- Offer culturally appropriate workshops or training and/or cultural support and mentoring, where required.
- Promote connections to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- As appropriate, attend community events and promote these within your organisation.

OPERATIONAL STAFF

- Actively apply policies and practices of cultural safety that align with your organisation's commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
- Build meaningful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families, communities and organisations.
- Provide culturally safe spaces for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, so that each child feels safe to:
  - participate in programs and activities
  - have a voice.
- Actively implement culturally safe and appropriate services with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, their families and other stakeholders.
- Participate in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural training.
- Uphold and promote the human and cultural rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
- Advocate for the cultural safety, human and cultural rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
- Attend community events as appropriate.

RESOURCES

- *Genuine Partnerships* online audit tool: snaicc.org.au/sector-development/audit-tool
- *Applying for Funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child and Family Services – A guide to best-practice partnerships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous organisations:* 1149_SNAICC_FundingBook_LR-Final.pdf
- *Developing Capacity Through Partnerships – A promising model for capacity building partnerships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services and non-Indigenous services:* snaicc.org.au/product/developing-capacity-partnerships
- *Building Respectful Partnerships – The Commitment to Aboriginal Cultural Competence in Child and Family Services:* VAC.0001.003.0074.pdf childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au
- *Working with Aboriginal people and communities – a practice resource:* community.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/321308/working_with_aboriginal.pdf
- *Creating Change through Partnerships – An introductory guide to partnerships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous organisations in child and family services:* snaicc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/1148_SNAICC_PartnershipBook_LR-Final.pdf

PRINCIPLE 2

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ARE INFORMED ABOUT THEIR RIGHTS, PARTICIPATE IN DECISIONS AFFECTING THEM AND ARE TAKEN SERIOUSLY

This principle relates to children understanding their rights and feeling empowered and supported to use these rights. Children have the right to be and feel safe, to be listened to, and to have their views respected.

The cultural rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are recognised by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).[7] Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have the right to learn about and practice their culture, language and religion with their family and communities.

Cultural rights include, but are not limited to, children:

- learning their histories, stories and traditions
- knowing where they come from and to whom they are connected
- being part of cultural practices, including arts, songs, dance and ceremonies
- learning and speaking their language without discrimination.[8]

The UNCRC also recognises the right of children to have a say in decisions that affect them and have their opinions taken into account.[9] Staff and volunteers must listen, take seriously and act wisely on what children say, including what they communicate through their behaviour.

FROM A CULTURAL SAFETY APPROACH, THIS PRINCIPLE IS UPHELD WHEN YOUR ORGANISATION:

- supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to feel respected and proud of their identity and culture
- creates a culturally safe environment where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children feel safe to speak up and trust that they will be heard
- listens to and acts on the views and opinions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

Trust

> "If you don't get to know kids, build trust and understand their family and culture, kids are unlikely to talk with you about the tough stuff".[10]

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are part of families and communities that historically have not had a voice and have had their rights denied and violated. As a result, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have learned not to trust people in positions of authority.[11]
- If they do not feel culturally safe, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are less likely to engage, participate and tell anyone if they are feeling unsafe or being abused.[12]
- Ensuring children are strong in their identity will ensure that they are better able to have a voice and communicate when they do not feel safe.[13]

Power imbalance

- When seeking to include children in decision-making, staff and volunteers should be mindful of the inherent power imbalance that exists between adults and children, particularly non-Indigenous workers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Staff and volunteers should seek out ways to ensure children are as comfortable as possible within this power imbalance.

Evaluation

- Your organisation, staff and volunteers should be mindful of the frequent divergence in opinions between an organisation and the children and families they service. Organisations often think that they are doing a good job of informing children of their rights. However, children and families may feel overwhelmed and find it difficult to take in this information, particularly when they are accessing the service for the first time.
- Your organisation should evaluate your approach to informing children and families of their rights and adapt processes to make sure you are informing children and families in a way that they understand and feel comfortable with.

Decision-making and traditional cultural family structures

- When including children at the table in decision-making, your organisation should be mindful of traditional cultural family structures and the child's place within these structures.

Engaging children in their early years

- Your organisation should consider ways to engage with and listen to children aged 0-4. It is common for adults to underestimate the capacity of children of this age group. However, these children can tell you an accurate story of their experiences which in turn tells you about the overall quality of a service. To do this, you need to consider an appropriate place and time, the type of support and supervision that family, parents and carers need, and the most appropriate, evidence-based practices for engaging with children of that age.

HOW THE PRINCIPLE IS APPLIED TO ALL LEVELS OF AN ORGANISATION

EXECUTIVE LEVEL

- Ensure that your organisation's vision, purpose and strategic plan prioritise, centre and are informed by the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
- Develop avenues for children to provide advice to the board and executive level, for example, establishment of a youth council and/or inclusion of children on the board.
- Your organisation should publicly commit to take ongoing action to build the capacity of staff to understand and take into account Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's cultural rights, and to foster child participation.

MIDDLE MANAGEMENT

- Create programs or activities that enable children to have a voice and be heard.
- Provide training opportunities for staff and volunteers on the cultural rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and encourage them to listen to the views of children.
- Ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's rights, including cultural rights, are reflected in operational procedures across your organisation.
- Listen to what operational staff staff are hearing from the children they work with and consider and reflect on children's views to improve activities and processes, for example through discussion in team or management meetings.[14]
- Embed opportunities for children to voice their views and opinions in the delivery of services.

OPERATIONAL STAFF

- Create awareness of child safety and cultural rights among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, for example by providing children with a welcome pack that includes information on their rights. Use culturally appropriate language, photographs and artwork for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and links to cultural safety and child safe information.
- Help children identify trusted adults or friends they can talk to.
- Listen to what children say, consider and reflect on children's views to improve their activities and processes, for example through discussions in team and/or management meetings.[15]
- Use culturally appropriate ways of asking Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children if they feel safe, such as during story time, yarning, cultural activities, or through art surveys.
- Understand that children may communicate their views non-verbally, such as through changes in behaviour or participation.
- Build children's capacity and confidence to speak up by regularly providing them opportunities to voice their opinions, as well as by encouraging and listening to them.
- Be attuned to signs of harm and facilitate child friendly and culturally safe ways for children to raise their concerns.

RESOURCES

- *Bringing Child Rights into Your Classroom:* snaicc.org.au/product/child-rights-education-kit/
- *Child's Voice: Our Children have the Right to be Heard:* vacca.org/content/Document/Childs_Voice_Booklet.pdf
- *The Yarn Up Cards:* qfcc.qld.gov.au/helping-families-communities/families-are-first/yarn-cards
- *Speak Up resources:* childsafety.pmc.gov.au/resources/speak-up-make-complaint

... If you don't get to know kids, build trust and understand their family and culture, kids are unlikely to talk with you about the tough stuff...

PRINCIPLE 3

FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES ARE INFORMED AND INVOLVED IN PROMOTING CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING

This principle relates to ensuring that families and communities have the capacity to speak up and drive conversations around child safety and wellbeing and are informed about and involved in decision-making.

Self-determination is a fundamental requirement for better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.[16] Self-determination is realised through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people having control over decisions affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.
A culturally safe environment for families and communities supports self-determination.

> "When the voices of the families and communities we work with are involved, solutions and strategies are much more likely to be effective."[17]

Engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities should align with principles in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.[18] With respect to consultation, your organisation should undertake engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in line with the principle of free, prior and informed consent.

FROM A CULTURAL SAFETY APPROACH, THIS PRINCIPLE IS UPHELD WHEN ORGANISATIONS, STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS:

- actively engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities in decisions affecting their child/children
- respect and value the wealth of knowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities can bring to your organisation, including how to keep children safe, and incorporate this knowledge in organisational practice where possible.

CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander definition of *family*

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families are significantly more than the nuclear family unit and are inclusive of far-reaching extended family members, including blood and/or kinship brothers, sisters, immediate and extended cousins, aunties, uncles, grandparents, non-Indigenous family members, significant others, Elders, and community peer groups.
- Your organisation should be mindful of skin relationships that exist in some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.[19] Skin or moiety relationships may determine participation for some community members.[20] If ignored by your organisation, some members could perceive this as a sign of disrespect and may view the organisation as culturally unsafe.
- Staff and volunteers need to ask themselves whether efforts have been made to involve relevant family members and significant people in a child's life in the decision-making process.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander definition of *wellbeing*

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities describe wellbeing as encompassing the social, emotional, spiritual and cultural wellbeing of a person.[21] All aspects of a child's wellbeing are intrinsically linked and cannot be separated out.[22]
- Families and communities play a central role in promoting all aspects of a child's wellbeing.

Culturally safe community engagement

- Culturally safe environments – where families and communities feel their culture and identity are respected – are essential for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to fully participate in organisations.
- To engage with families and communities in a culturally safe way, you should consider:
  - where you will meet, for example meeting outdoors
  - how you will introduce yourself – be prepared to talk about your family and where you are from
  - where you will sit – side-by-side is generally more relaxed
  - how to connect – talk about who you know in common, have a cuppa
  - being aware of what is men's and women's business will assist in guiding conversations in a way that makes children and their family feel safe.[23]
- It is important that the right person is consulted, depending on the issue of interest. For this reason, your organisation must understand a community's political economy and the interests and levels of influence of different groups within a given community.
- Some consultation topics are sensitive and have the potential to bring up past trauma and trigger negative emotional responses. Therefore, appropriate supports should be put in place for the community.
- While it is important for Elders to be consulted, they can also have many other concurrent commitments, which places them at risk of burnout. For this reason, your organisation must allocate resources to ensure the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders throughout the engagement process.

Strength-based respectful engagement

- Your organisation should take a strengths-based approach that respects and values the wealth of knowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities can bring to your organisation, particularly around how to keep children safe.[24]

  "Respect is key to engaging with Aboriginal families – both showing and gaining respect. Respect is based on relationships rather than position. Understanding who you are and taking time to build relationships are all part of the Aboriginal way".[25]

- Your organisation should provide a variety of opportunities, both formally and informally, for families and communities to be involved in conversations around child safety. This might be through social media and online events, community events, barbecues, open days, newsletters, family focus groups or targeted consultations.

HOW THE PRINCIPLE IS APPLIED TO ALL LEVELS OF AN ORGANISATION

EXECUTIVE LEVEL

- Seek advice from Elders and traditional owners on your organisational strategic direction, priorities and values, and take this advice on board.
- Where possible, seek to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are represented in the executive management team and on the board, and include members of the local community, families and Elders.
- Prioritise the employment of and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff across all levels of your organisation, particularly if it is a larger organisation.
- Prioritise funding allocations towards community engagement and community outreach, for example host community events (NAIDOC events, open days) and/or support a talk at the local school or community group.

MIDDLE MANAGEMENT

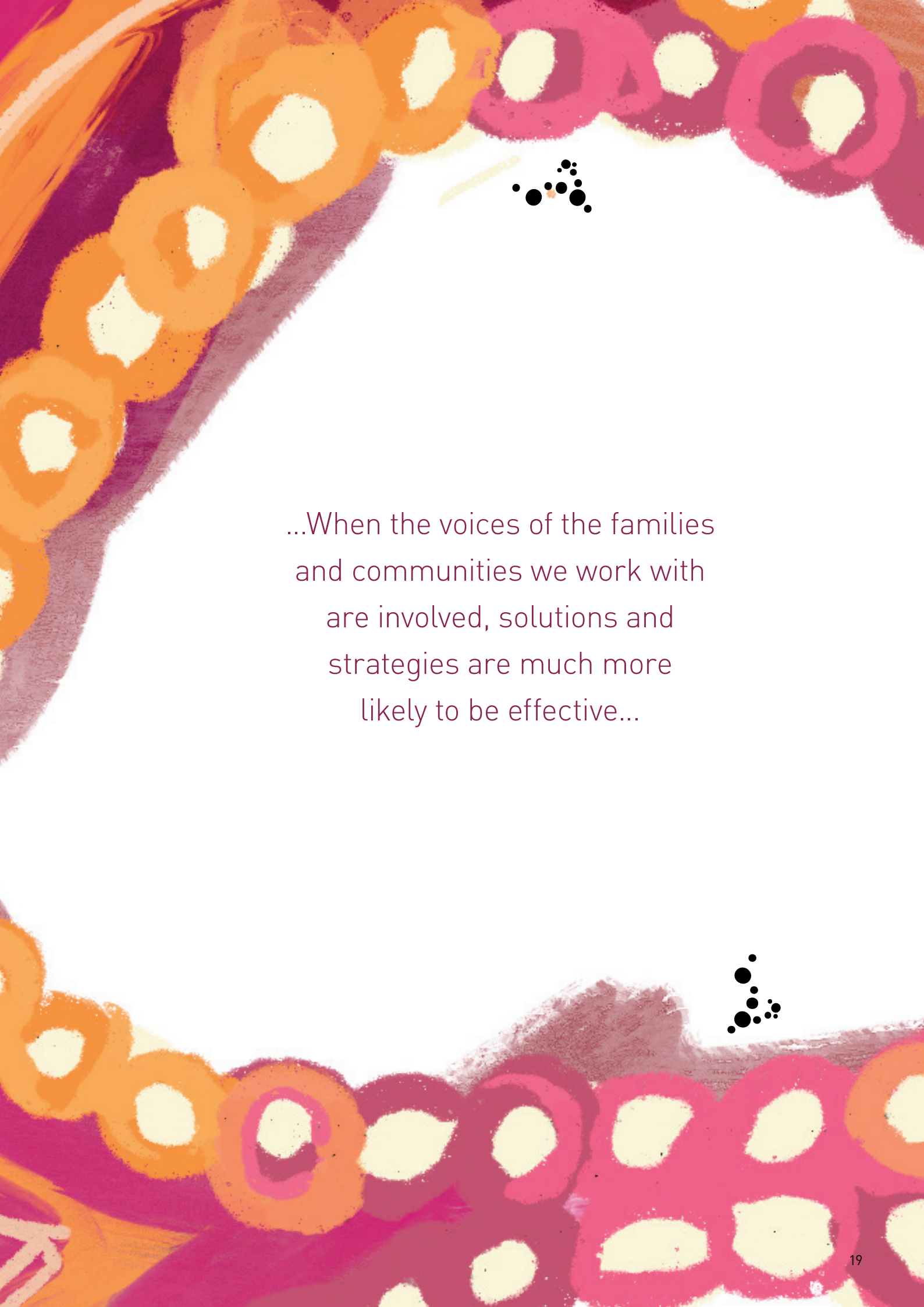
- Consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities when developing strategies, policies, procedures and when solving problems.
- Respond to feedback and input from families and community by making changes to your operational policies and procedures, and feed this up to executive management.
- Co-design programs and projects with families and communities.
- Establish or adapt existing monitoring and evaluation frameworks to measure the implementation and efficacy of community engagement policies and strategies.

OPERATIONAL STAFF

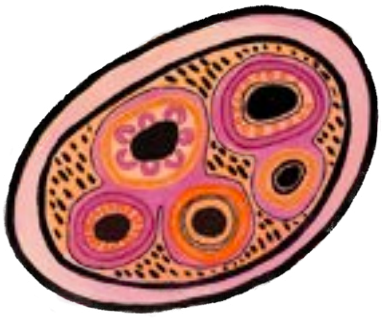
- Take the time to build trusting relationships and mutual respect with families and the community through regular respectful engagement.
- Deliver workshops to families and the community on child safety and support their attendance through the provision of transport, food, etc.
- Actively involve the child's family, Elders and other significant people in any decision-making in the child's life.
- Create culturally safe, welcoming and accessible environments where the organisation can act as a community hub.
- Listen to what families are saying in informal conversations with direct practice staff, and feed this up to middle and executive management.

RESOURCES

- *Yarning Up About Child Sexual Abuse: A Guide for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Parents and Carers.* This publication aims to help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and carers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait children: childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/VAC.0001.002.0103.pdf
- *Working with Indigenous children, families and communities: Lessons from practice:* aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/working-indigenous-children-families-and-communities
- *Journey of Wellbeing: A Preliminary Aboriginal Model of Care:* nswmentalhealthcommission.com.au/resources/journey-of-wellbeing-preliminary-aboriginal-model-of-care
- *Keeping Aboriginal Children Safe in a Mainstream Organisation* – a video resource/tool for mainstream organisations to provide cultural safety for an Aboriginal child in the context of child safe standards: vacca.org/page/stories/educational-resources
- *Engaging with Aboriginal communities: Where do we start?:* acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/acecqa/files/NEL/engaging-with-aboriginal-communities1.pdf



...When the voices of the families and communities we work with are involved, solutions and strategies are much more likely to be effective...



PRINCIPLE 4

EQUITY IS UPHELD AND DIVERSE NEEDS RESPECTED IN POLICY AND PRACTICE

This principle emphasises the need for organisations to be welcoming and embrace all children regardless of their circumstances, abilities, sex, gender, social, economic and/or cultural backgrounds. Staff and volunteers should have an awareness and knowledge of the needs of diverse communities, and proactively ensure that your organisation is accessible and responsive to these needs.

This principle reinforces the importance of cultural safety, including for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and those from other cultural backgrounds. In addition to the cultural considerations set out in this resource, your organisation should actively engage with the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who have diverse needs.

In particular, your organisation should actively seek to engage with the needs of:

- children with disabilities
- children who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and/or queer (LGBTIQ+)
- children who are unable to live at home.

FROM A CULTURAL SAFETY APPROACH, THIS PRINCIPLE IS UPHELD WHEN:

- equity and respect for diversity is protected through your organisational policies and procedures, including anti-discrimination policies and strong complaint handling systems
- your organisational culture celebrates diversity and acknowledges the strengths and individuality of children of all needs and backgrounds
- staff and volunteers are aware of, and responsive to, children with diverse needs.

CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

Diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures

- There are hundreds of unique and distinct Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, cultures and languages throughout Australia.
- Staff and volunteers must avoid assumptions regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and cultures, and instead demonstrate an understanding of and respect for the diversity and richness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.[26] Your organisation should encourage staff and volunteers to learn more about the local cultural groups they provide services to.
- Your organisation should acknowledge moiety and skin groups, particularly in rural and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. For example, there are roles and responsibilities allocated to families based on their moiety and skin group (for example freshwater and saltwater people, male and females).[27]
- Staff and volunteers should take a holistic approach to ensuring that your organisation is accessible and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with disabilities, taking into account the children's social, emotional, spiritual and cultural wellbeing and needs.

Cultural abuse

- Cultural abuse occurs when the culture of a people is ignored, denigrated or intentionally attacked. It can be overt or covert, for example lack of cultural sensitivity or absence of positive images about another culture.
- Cultural abuse is especially harmful for children because it strikes at their sense of identity, self-esteem and connectedness to family and community.
- Staff and volunteers should be sensitive to the possibility that a child or family may have experienced cultural abuse and how this may influence their trust in organisations.[28]

Disability

- The rights of people with disabilities are protected under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and federally by the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*. Your organisation must respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with disabilities' rights to equality and non-discrimination, equal access to education and recreation opportunities, and their right to enjoy their culture and identity.

LGBTIQ+

To support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who identify as LGBTIQ+, staff and volunteers should be familiar with gender expression in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

- **Sistergirl:** a term used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to describe gender diverse people that have a female spirit and take on female roles within the community, including looking after children and family. Many Sistergirls live a traditional lifestyle and have strong cultural backgrounds.[29]
- **Brotherboy:** a term used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to describe gender diverse people that have a male spirit and take on male roles within the community. Brotherboys have a strong sense of their cultural identity.[30]
- Terms such as **Sibling, Sib,** or **Cuz** may be used by some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who identify as non-binary.

> "All are required to promote a culturally-safe environment and may be called on to respond to racist comments or behaviour from a colleague, client or a member of the public."[31]

HOW THE PRINCIPLE IS APPLIED TO ALL LEVELS OF AN ORGANISATION

EXECUTIVE LEVEL

- Foster and promote an organisational culture that respects and celebrates diversity.
- Make training and education opportunities available for all staff and volunteers to increase awareness and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children of diverse needs, including children with disability, LGBTIQ+ children, and children who are unable to live at home.
- Develop, implement and maintain policies and procedures that:
  - promote cultural respect and cultural safety
  - define inappropriate conduct, such as racism, discrimination, homophobia, transphobia, or cultural abuse
  - investigate and respond to reports of racism, discrimination and cultural abuse.[32]
- Ensure that policies and procedures relating to diversity are informed by people who come from diverse groups.
- Ensure that there is a code of conduct in place that:
  - outlines the standards of behaviour your organisation expects from staff in the performance of their roles
  - applies across your organisation, including all board members, staff and volunteers
  - has a clear complaint handling process (see Principle 6).

...All are required to promote
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MIDDLE MANAGEMENT

- Proactively encourage staff and volunteers to complete training on the needs of diverse groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with disability, LGBTIQ+ children, and children who are unable to live at home.
- Design and implement activities and measures that respect and celebrate diversity, for example having rainbow flags on display, promoting activities that are disability-friendly, etc.
- Make an active effort to listen to the voices and experiences of children with diverse needs and act on this feedback.
- Encourage and support staff and volunteers to make disclosures of and respond to incidents of racism, discrimination and cultural abuse.
- Implement documented procedures for investigating reports of racism, discrimination, and cultural abuse that:
  - are timely
  - permit confidential reports
  - accommodate verbal complaints (see Principle 6).
- Develop, implement and maintain – or adapt existing – reporting, monitoring and evaluation frameworks to capture the frequency of reported incidents of racism, discrimination and cultural abuse, and your organisation's response.
- Establish and sustain awareness and knowledge of the needs of diverse communities, and proactively ensure that your organisation is accessible and responsive to these needs.
- Hold regular supervision meetings between staff members and their managers to provide staff with the opportunity to make disclosures of and raise incidents of racism, discrimination and cultural abuse.

OPERATIONAL STAFF

- Create an environment that is welcoming and embraces all children regardless of their abilities, sex, gender, or social, economic or cultural background.
- Provide information to families on your organisation's approach to child safety and wellbeing in formats that meet the needs of service users.
- Engage in training and continuing professional development around the needs of diverse communities including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with disability, children who are unable to live at home, and LGBTIQ+ children.
- Provide children and families with culturally appropriate support throughout the reporting and investigation process.
- Establish and sustain awareness and knowledge of the needs of diverse communities.
- Respond to incidents of discrimination in a timely manner and in line with organisational policy and procedure.
- Inform management of feedback from children and families with diverse needs so that your organisation can continuously improve.

RESOURCES

Disability

- First Peoples Disability Network Australia: fpdn.org.au
- Youth Disability Advocacy Service: yacvic.org.au/ydas
- Children and Young People with Disability Australia: cyda.org.au
- *Disability Discrimination Act Action Plans: A Guide for Businesses* – humanrights.gov.au/our-work/disability-rights/disability-discrimination-act-action-plans-guide-business

LGBTIQ+

- *Guide to LGBTI inclusive practice:* rainbowhealthvic.org.au/research-resources
- *Accreditation process:* rainbowhealthvic.org.au/rainbow-tick
- LGBTIQ Health Australia (formerly the National LGBTI Health Alliance): lgbtiqhealth.org.au
- Elizabeth Morgan House Aboriginal Women's Service (EMH), Victorian Aboriginal community-controlled organisation. Rainbow Tick Advisor: emhaws.org.au/rainbow-tick

PRINCIPLE 5

PEOPLE WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ARE SUITABLE AND SUPPORTED TO REFLECT CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING VALUES IN PRACTICE

This principle discusses the need for your organisation to have appropriate child safety recruitment practices and staff and volunteer development policies in place. This includes appropriate screening, training, and supervision of your staff and volunteers, as well as making sure they understand their child safety responsibilities and cultural safety. It is important to keep staff and volunteers informed of their reporting obligations and support them in using the tools and systems necessary to keep children safe within your organisation, for example record keeping databases.

When your organisation understands, implements, and monitors the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children it engages with, it creates a foundation for developing the cultural competency of staff. This takes time, must be carefully planned, and requires the capacity to thoughtfully and respectfully question and develop respectful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

One important principle for developing respectful relationships and enhancing culturally safe processes is to ensure that local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members are heavily involved in the design and implementation of recruitment and staff development policies. This means that local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are actively and genuinely participating in and influencing recruitment processes and decisions and informing the development of locally tailored cultural training curriculums for organisations.

FROM A CULTURAL SAFETY APPROACH, THIS PRINCIPLE IS UPHELD WHEN:

- alongside child safety, concepts and understanding of cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is assessed in your organisation's position descriptions, interview questions and other recruitment processes
- your organisation has a cultural competency training program in place for all staff and volunteers about cultural competency
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are employed and promoted within your organisation
- your organisation has strong respectful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, communities, Elders, community leaders and families.

CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

Screening

- When screening potential staff or volunteers your organisation should include questions about cultural competency as part of their referee checks.
- If a potential staff member has limited understanding or awareness of cultural safety, your organisation may choose to assess their willingness to build this capability.

Awareness and education

- Often, people working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children do not have an understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, the ongoing impacts of colonisation and intergenerational trauma. It is important that all staff and volunteers in your organisation build their cultural awareness capabilities and understand how it is integral to child safety and wellbeing. For more on awareness and education, see Principle 7.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and volunteers

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and volunteers play a vital role within organisations. They can assist non-Indigenous staff to navigate cultural matters and support non-Indigenous staff members' cultural awareness journey. However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and volunteers should not be made to feel obligated to undertake these roles. Their decision should be respected.

HOW THE PRINCIPLE IS APPLIED TO ALL LEVELS OF AN ORGANISATION

EXECUTIVE LEVEL

- Ensure that staff and volunteers at all levels are required to build their cultural safety skills and cultural awareness, and support staff and volunteers to do this.
- Communicate these expectations through policies, procedures, and the code of conduct. These organisational documents should:
  - set clear expectations of culturally competent behaviour from staff and volunteers and show how inappropriate conduct will be addressed
  - reflect your organisation's commitment to cultural safety, awareness and respect
  - acknowledge and embed the understanding that cultural safety is necessary for child safety and wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families
  - reflect the specific legislative requirements, human and cultural rights that apply to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
  - outline the standards of behaviour that your organisation expects from all staff and volunteers in the performance of their roles
  - promote a culturally safe environment.[33]
- Provide strategic support for child safety and cultural safety through:
  - establishing a strategy to encourage the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff
  - ensuring staff celebrate diversity and the opportunity to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, acknowledging the gaps in their learnings and committing themselves to ongoing cultural supervision and training.

MIDDLE MANAGEMENT

- In selecting and recruiting staff:
  - ensure recruitment processes reflect the commitment of your organisation to cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
  - draft job descriptions and duty statements to reflect the principles of cultural competence and cultural safety
  - include cultural competency in job advertisements
  - design job descriptions to encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to apply for positions
  - include specific questions in the interview process that relate to a potential staff member's understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and current issues, or a willingness to learn about these issues.
- During a new staff member or volunteer's orientation:
  - explain your organisation's commitment to building cultural competence, including self-determination and social justice, as part of child safety and wellbeing
  - explain your code of conduct, including the organisation's commitment to cultural safety and intolerance of racism and cultural abuse
  - ensure staff and volunteers commitment to ongoing training, workshops and supervision in regard to cultural competency and cultural safety
  - train staff and volunteers in any statutory obligations relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
  - ensure staff and volunteers understand and advocate the specific human and cultural rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
- Embed cultural competency as a discussion topic within single or group supervision or reflective practices by:
  - offering cultural supervision or mentoring for individuals or teams, noting that you cannot offer cultural advice if you are not an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person
  - developing cultural training in partnership with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation
  - providing access to professional development training regarding cultural competency and cultural safety, keeping in mind that training should not be one-off and needs to be a journey and a continuing process
  - encouraging staff to attend Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander events and community activities, as this will assist in building cultural competency and a rapport with local community.

OPERATIONAL STAFF

- Attend and participate in cultural safety and competency training and reflect these learnings in your day-to-day practice.
- Incorporate culturally respectful values into your practice.
- Adhere to the code of conduct to promote a culturally safe environment.
- Understand, respond to and report incidences of racism, discrimination and cultural abuse.
- Understand any statutory requirements of your role.
- Understand and advocate for the human and cultural rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, particularly children.
- Attend Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander events and community activities to build cultural competency and rapport with the local community.

...one important principle for developing respectful relationships and enhancing culturally safe processes is to ensure that local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members are heavily involved in the design and implementation of recruitment and staff development policies...

RESOURCES

- *The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle: A guide to support implementation:* snaicc.org.au/the-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-child-placement-principle-a-guide-to-support-implementation/
- *Understanding and applying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle: a resource for legislation, policy, and program development:* snaicc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Understanding_applying_ATSICCP.pdf
- *Aboriginal Culture and History:* vpsc.vic.gov.au/html-resources/aboriginal-cultural-capability-toolkit/aboriginal-culture-history/
- *Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Child Protection Definition and Standards:* qatsicpp.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/57518-CPP-COMMUNITY-CONTROL-BK-spreads.pdf
- *Supporting Carers – What is Cultural Safety:* supportingcarers.snaicc.org.au/connecting-to-culture/cultural-safety/
- *Human Rights – Practical Tools:* childsafe.humanrights.gov.au/tools-resources/practical-tools

PRINCIPLE 6

PROCESSES TO RESPOND TO COMPLAINTS AND CONCERNS ARE CHILD FOCUSED

This principle discusses how your organisation's complaint handling system —including complaints practices, policies and processes — should be readily available, responsive to and widely understood by all stakeholders, including children, families, staff and volunteers. This should be linked to your organisation's code of conduct and processes for reporting concerns when they arise. An effective and responsive complaint handling system is one that is child focused and gives children a voice in the process.

Your organisation's complaint handling system should be culturally safe to ensure everyone, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities feel comfortable and supported in raising concerns. It should ensure a clear complaints process that specifically considers the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and the barriers they may face in raising complaints or concerns.[34] Staff and volunteers also need to be properly informed and trained in how to respond to child safety issues, including concerns or disclosures about neglect, grooming and other forms of harm, in a way that is culturally safe.

FROM A CULTURAL SAFETY APPROACH, THIS PRINCIPLE IS UPHELD WHEN:

- your organisation's code of conduct reflects a commitment to cultural safety as part of child safety and wellbeing
- the complaint handling system, including its processes and procedures, is culturally safe. The system is routinely monitored and reviewed throughout your organisation
- there are culturally safe ways that children can raise concerns within your organisation
- all children in your organisation know who to talk to about concerns, know what will happen if they are feeling unsafe, and feel comfortable and supported to speak up
- your complaint handling system recognises and prioritises the cultural role of families and communities in understanding and using the policy
- all staff and volunteers are aware of the complaint handling system and are trained to respond to concerns in a culturally safe way
- timely feedback is provided to children, families, staff and volunteers who raise concerns or complaints, including reporting back on incidents, concerns and complaints
- your organisation records and analyses information about all complaints and concerns to identify and correct any systemic issues.

CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

Creating a safe environment for complaints

- The views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities in particular should be considered in the design of your organisation's complaint handling system. Their feedback should also be included in consultation processes about your organisation's complaint handling system.
- Children and families need to be able to raise concerns with someone who they feel safe talking to, will take them seriously and who they trust to action the complaint.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are likely to feel more comfortable making a complaint to an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander worker who they have rapport with. It's important that all workers have knowledge of the complaints process, so no matter who the child discloses the complaint to, it can be actioned appropriately.
- Your organisation's staff need to have an understanding of men's and women's business and that a child may feel more comfortable disclosing to a person of the same gender.[35]
- Your organisation's complaints process may need to be translated into a child-friendly version or another language.

HOW THE PRINCIPLE IS APPLIED TO ALL LEVELS OF AN ORGANISATION

EXECUTIVE LEVEL

- Create a culture in your organisation that is complaint-friendly and encourages and supports feedback and continuous improvement.
- Embed considerations for cultural safety in your organisation's complaint handling system.
- Ensure statutory requirements are reflected in your organisation's complaint handling system, including any requirements specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
- Analyse records of complaints and concerns and use this information to inform reviews and continuous improvement of the complaint handling system.

MIDDLE MANAGEMENT

- Make staff aware of your organisation's complaint processes and policies and the importance of a culturally safe and child focused complaint handling system.
- Train staff in how to follow your organisation's complaint handling processes and policies. This should include responding to disclosures of harm and understanding the particular barriers that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families face in participating in the complaint handling process.

OPERATIONAL STAFF

- Be aware of and understand how to appropriately respond to concerns and complaints by children and their families. This includes understanding the barriers that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families face in engaging with complaint processes and understanding the importance of cultural safety in this process.
- Continually reflect and improve skills and abilities in responding to, recording and reporting complaints, disclosures and other concerns.
- Be able to explain the complaint process clearly to children, families and communities in a way that is child-friendly and culturally relevant.
- Meet all legislated requirements relating to children that apply, such as mandatory reporting.

RESOURCES

- *Know your rights: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders* Australian Human Rights Commission guide to racial discrimination and your rights: humanrights.gov.au/our-work/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-social-justice/publications/know-your-rights
- Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Healthcare, *Complaints Handling and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations* safetyandquality.gov.au/standards/national-safety-and-quality-health-service-nsqhs-standards/resources-nsqhs-standards/user-guide-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-health/action-121-improving-cultural-competency
- *Complaint Handling Guide: Upholding the rights of children and young people:* childsafety.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-09/nocs-complaint-handling-guide.pdf
- *Speak up resources:* childsafety.pmc.gov.au/resources/speak-up-make-complaint

PRINCIPLE 7

STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS ARE EQUIPPED WITH THE KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND AWARENESS TO KEEP CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SAFE THROUGH ONGOING EDUCATION AND TRAINING

This principle discusses the importance of staff and volunteers continuing to develop their knowledge and skills to keep children safe.

Staff and volunteers are the 'face' of your organisation. When staff and volunteers provide professional, effective and culturally appropriate services, they make a difference to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families who seek support and assistance. It is important ongoing cultural competency learning for staff and volunteers is deeply embedded in your organisation's workplace environment and processes, to ensure culturally safe and appropriate services are provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

Training and support should allow staff and volunteers to develop an awareness and insight into their own attitudes towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Training should also incorporate a contemporary understanding of child development, safety and wellbeing with respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. This includes understanding risk factors and the ongoing impacts of colonisation, intergenerational trauma, racism and lateral violence within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities. It also includes knowing behavioural indicators for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and how this can impact their ability to feel safe and empowered.

FROM A CULTURAL SAFETY APPROACH, THIS PRINCIPLE IS UPHELD IN AN ORGANISATION WHEN:

- staff participate in continuous development training to gain knowledge of and reflect on ways to keep Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children safe
- staff and volunteers are well equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to be able to keep all children safe, and the knowledge of specific considerations for keeping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children safe
- staff and volunteers understand the impact of cultural harm, intergenerational trauma and the ongoing devastating impacts of colonisation and what this means for their daily practice
- staff and volunteers understand and can implement the role of culture in their everyday practices
- staff and volunteers are trained in the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in relation to record keeping and the possible uses and audiences for records that may be created.

CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Your organisation should have compulsory cultural awareness and cultural safety training for staff and volunteers.
- Consider, if possible, delivering training around local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, language and culture in partnership with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.
- Building and maintaining competency in cultural awareness and safety is an ongoing process. Your organisation should include cultural competency in staff supervision, reflective practices and performance reviews. Cultural competency should be part of the staff code of conduct.
- Cultural factors should also be considered in record keeping and information sharing practices.

HOW THE PRINCIPLE IS APPLIED TO ALL LEVELS OF AN ORGANISATION

EXECUTIVE LEVEL

- Develop locally tailored cultural responsiveness frameworks as part of broader organisational learning and development strategies and performance frameworks. Cultural responsiveness frameworks typically outline a learning process for staff to develop the behaviours and skills required to achieve cultural competency.
- Prioritise training for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural competency and children's rights for all staff across your organisation.
- Promote the broader social importance of child safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to external stakeholders and the wider community.
- Build strategic alliances with education institutions who can develop and deliver training on cultural competency and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child rights.
- Influence government policy through engagement in strategic forums and building relationships with senior public servants and ministers as appropriate.
- Prioritise the employment of local, qualified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to oversee community engagement and service delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.
- Establish relationships with respected Elders within the community for cultural support, consultation on development and delivery of cultural safety training, and mentoring of executives, staff, volunteers and service users.

MIDDLE MANAGEMENT

- Ensure staff and volunteers understand the local cultural and community context and have the capacity to voice their opinions on organisational matters that impact the community.
- Communicate the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural competency training and direction for everyone from senior executive to operational staff.
- Embed cultural safety in all staff and volunteer training material.
- Provide staff and volunteers with time and opportunity to effectively build their knowledge base and cultural competency through various learning opportunities.
- Develop staff capability frameworks that reflect the appropriate skills, knowledge and competencies required to work effectively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families.
- Establish — or embed in existing systems — monitoring and evaluation frameworks and appropriate data collection tools to use in primary research. This will help your organisation build its own evidence base to show and improve the effectiveness of your programs.[36]
- Report qualitative and quantitative data on staff operational matters in relation to staff capability and performance and service delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families.

OPERATIONAL STAFF

- Understand the importance of demonstrating cultural competency in service delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families.
- Understand how operational tasks align with strategic goals, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's rights, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (see Appendix 1) and the National Principles.
- Demonstrate and meet appropriate technical and competency requirements on a consistent basis, particularly in relation to community engagement and relationship building with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families.
- Continuously improve cultural competency through training, education and engagement with communities.

RESOURCES

- *Keeping children safe:* childhood.org.au/our-work/keeping-children-safe/
- *Keeping Aboriginal children safe on Country and in culture:* medianet.com.au/releases/134837/

PRINCIPLE 8

PHYSICAL AND ONLINE ENVIRONMENTS PROMOTE SAFETY AND WELLBEING WHILE MINIMISING THE OPPORTUNITY FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO BE HARMED

This principle discusses how safety, accessibility and effectiveness of services offered by your organisation are impacted by the environment in which the services are delivered. Regardless of the quality of their services, non-Indigenous organisations are outside the community where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people feel most comfortable. An environment that openly displays understanding and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and embraces their cultures can assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to make first contact, express their views and wishes, and develop confidence in their relationship with the organisation.

Creating safe environments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children means ensuring physical environments are reflective of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, such as displaying cultural artwork and artefacts. In the online environment, organisations must implement practical actions for staff to minimise children's exposure to online racism and other culturally unsafe behaviours or materials. The online environment can also reflect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, for example through an Acknowledgment of Country or engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and graphic designers to develop imagery for your website.

Creating a culturally safe and welcoming environment can also assist the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander professionals who may work in partnership with you to deliver services. Welcoming Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to your organisation is part of engaging with them and is essential for ongoing and effective service delivery.

FROM A CULTURAL SAFETY APPROACH, THIS PRINCIPLE IS UPHELD IN AN ORGANISATION WHEN:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have a say in what they want the environment to look like
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families feel welcome in your organisation
- staff and volunteers understand the importance of physical environments in ensuring cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and understand how to create this environment
- organisational settings, activities and the physical and online environment are culturally safe spaces for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- staff and volunteers understand the risks in the online environment and are able to monitor, evaluate and manage the risks.

CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

Physical spaces

- Physical spaces are welcoming, can accommodate and are inclusive of families and broader kinship networks.
- The physical environment reflects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and the community it serves. Your organisation should ask children, families and the local community how they would like to see their culture reflected in the physical environment. For example, displaying an acknowledgment of Traditional Owners, having flag representation and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artwork.
- Where practicable, community events are hosted at the organisation and community groups are allowed to use the organisation's facilities for community gatherings (for example, Elders councils and/or men's groups).

Online spaces

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children may be at greater risk of harassment in online spaces. Ensure your organisation implements measures to mitigate these risks, such as actively monitoring and filtering harmful content and putting in place the highest level privacy settings.[37]
- Your organisation's online space should be mindful of images of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Websites should include a warning that there may be images of deceased persons, and there must be no identification of children or adults in photos.

HOW THE PRINCIPLE IS APPLIED TO ALL LEVELS OF AN ORGANISATION

EXECUTIVE LEVEL

- Develop organisational strategies and frameworks, including measures that enhance child safe physical and online environments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, such as anti-racism and communications strategies.
- Embed cultural safety into the physical and online environments to ensure these environments are reflective of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and related culture and community interests and needs.
- Ensure there is a social media or online policy that prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children, including cultural safety.

MIDDLE MANAGEMENT

- Lead and implement relevant strategies and frameworks across your organisation.
- Share and discuss policies and strategies concerning physical and online environments with the operational parts of the workforce.
- Provide clear guidance to operational staff about their responsibilities in upholding culturally safe and welcoming physical and online environments.
- Ensure all staff are trained in online safety, particularly recognising risks that are specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, such as exposure to racism.

OPERATIONAL STAFF

- Maintain learning and development on cultural competency and understand the importance of culturally safe physical and online environments.
- Facilitate regular engagement with the community to understand and respond to the community's needs in relation to culturally safe physical and online environments.
- Actively maintain safe physical and online environments in your everyday responsibilities.
- Behave in a welcoming and culturally safe manner to ensure the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

RESOURCES

- *Creating a culturally safe space:* cspm.csyw.qld.gov.au/practice-kits/safe-care-and-connection/working-with-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander/responding/creating-a-culturally-safe-space
- *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural safety:* www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/health-strategies/aboriginal-health/aboriginal-torres-strait-islander-cultural-safety
- *Cultural safety and respect in the classroom:* narragunnawali.org.au/professional-learning/90/cultural-safety-and-respect-in-the-classroom
- Online resources aimed at communities: esafety.gov.au/diverse-groups/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples
- *Cultural safety for Aboriginal children:* ccyp.vic.gov.au/assets/resources/tipsheet-cultural-safety-aboriginal-children.pdf

PRINCIPLE 9

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL CHILD SAFE PRINCIPLES IS REGULARLY REVIEWED AND IMPROVED

This principle reminds us that child safe organisations seek to continuously review and improve how they operate and deliver child safe services. Your organisation should conduct reviews to ensure all policies and procedures are being implemented by all relevant staff and volunteers. Your organisation should publicly report on these reviews to share learnings and improve child safety across your organisation and community. In doing so, your organisation can transparently address new challenges or concerns as they arise.

Cultural safety should be included in reviews of each policy and procedure to ensure all staff and volunteers are meeting requirements and complying with the National Principles in a way that is culturally safe. Your organisation should also be implementing a risk management plan that includes both child and cultural safety, aiming to reduce risks posed by the situation, activities, physical environment, and risks relating to the particular needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

FROM A CULTURAL SAFETY APPROACH, THIS PRINCIPLE IS UPHELD IN AN ORGANISATION WHEN:

- organisations seek the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, children, families and communities in regular reviews of cultural, child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and practices
- organisations have processes for regularly reviewing, evaluating and improving child safe practices, and cultural safety considerations are a routine part of this process
- cultural safety and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing indicators are included in review processes
- review outcomes are considered and implemented to improve culturally safe practices
- organisations have a continuous improvement plan that combines learnings from complaints and system failures to keep Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children safe.

CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

Cultural lens

As this resource highlights, culture underpins and is integral to the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and must be embedded in organisational leadership, governance and everyday approaches to operations such as implementation and review. A cultural lens must be applied to organisational management, policies and procedures, and this lens can be applied to all aspects of service development and service delivery.

Cultural diversity

Appreciating cultural diversity is an important first step before applying a cultural lens to reviewing organisational policies and procedures, and to understanding what cultural safety will look like for your organisation. See Principle 1 for more information.

HOW THE PRINCIPLE IS APPLIED TO ALL LEVELS OF AN ORGANISATION

EXECUTIVE LEVEL

- Ensure your organisation has a process to regularly review, evaluate and improve child safe practices, including cultural safety, and receives and actions feedback from reviews.
- Ensure your organisation uses complaints and system failures to develop a continuous improvement plan to keep Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children safe and receive feedback on the plan.
- Ensure record keeping and information sharing practices include cultural considerations.

MIDDLE MANAGEMENT

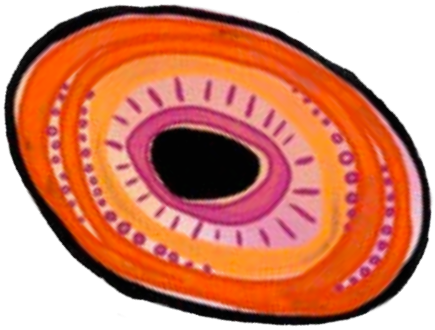
- Conduct regular reviews of your organisation's child safe processes and policies.
- Analyse evaluations incorporating child, family, community, staff and volunteer feedback, and plan and implement ways to improve.
- Provide any training required to implement changes to policies and practices to improve cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

OPERATIONAL STAFF

- Be open to feedback on your work and reflect on your child safe and cultural safety practices.
- Follow all policies and procedures and keep clear records.
- Provide feedback on policies to inform management about how your organisation could improve in child and cultural safety.
- Attend and participate in staff development training as required.
- Participate in supervision and mentoring, using this as an opportunity to further develop cultural awareness and understanding.

RESOURCES

- *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural safety framework:* www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/publications/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-cultural-safety-framework
- *Cultural safety framework:* www.natsihwa.org.au/sites/default/files/natsihwa-cultural_safety-framework_summary.pdf
- *Aboriginal cultural security framework:* territoryfamilies.nt.gov.au/publications-and-policies/aboriginal-cultural-security-framework



PRINCIPLE 10

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES DOCUMENT HOW THE ORGANISATION IS SAFE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

This principle ties together all of the National Principles by reiterating how important it is for your organisation to have a specific child safety and wellbeing policy that articulates the child safety obligations of everyone in your organisation. Documenting and reviewing policies and procedures helps to create consistency across child safe practices and enables organisations to examine and review adherence to each of the National Principles.

It is important that partner organisations adhere to policies and practices outlining how your organisation is creating a culturally safe practice for children. This helps to ensure that they are taking responsibility for building respectful partnerships and meeting child and cultural safety requirements. Each policy and procedure needs to be developed in a way that promotes cultural safety and holds non-Indigenous organisations, including government departments, accountable.

FROM A CULTURAL SAFETY APPROACH, THIS PRINCIPLE IS UPHELD IN AN ORGANISATION WHEN:

- there is a child safety and wellbeing policy that is comprehensive and incorporates cultural safety and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing, to address all 10 National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
- audits of your organisation's policies and procedures provide evidence of how the organisation is keeping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children safe through governance, leadership and workplace culture
- child and culturally safe practices are applied consistently across your organisations, including all staffing levels and volunteers
- all staff and volunteers are compliant with child safe policies and procedures, including culturally safe work practices
- the child safety and wellbeing policy is publicly available and shared with communities and families.

CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

Many of the cultural considerations that apply here are covered throughout the previous National Principles. Some of the key underlying considerations are:

- Consider cultural safety as part of child safety and wellbeing in all organisational strategies, risk assessments and policy development.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, communities, Elders, community leaders and families should be engaged on child safety and wellbeing matters, and their views should be incorporated in policies and practice.
- Culture underpins and is integral to safety and wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and needs to be embedded in organisational leadership, governance and daily operations. Culture, including cultural safety requirements, need to be clearly outlined in your organisation's child safety and wellbeing policy.

RESOURCES

- *Building Cultural Capability – What works?*: www.intercultural.com.au/building-cultural-capability-what-works
- *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural capability framework:* www.apsc.gov.au/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-cultural-capability-framework
- *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships: Cultural Capability Matters:* www.datsip.qld.gov.au/people-communities/cultural-capability

APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1: ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CHILD PLACEMENT PRINCIPLE

Although the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP) was initially developed to address institutional racism in child welfare systems, the elements can be applied in all systems and institutions. It provides a useful framework to use alongside the National Principles to ensure they are implemented in a culturally safe way.

The ATSICPP was established in the late 1970s in response to the continued discrimination faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families in child welfare systems across Australia.

The principle contains five inter-related elements:

- prevention
- partnership
- placement
- participation
- connection.

The ATSICPP is a central guiding framework for legislation, policy and practice to ensure self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families while in contact with the child protection system.

SNAICC has designed resources to support a holistic understanding of the ATSICPP and the laws, policies, processes and practices required to progress its implementation. These resources can be used to complement the implementation of the National Principles. They include:

- *Understanding and Applying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle – A Resource for Legislation, Policy, and Program Development:* www.snaicc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Understanding_applying_ATSICCP.pdf
- *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle: A Guide to Support Implementation:* www.snaicc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/928_SNAICC-ATSICPP-resource-June2019.pdf

Culture underpins and is integral to safety and wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and needs to be embedded in organisational leadership, governance and daily operations.

FOOTNOTES

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The **Muurpa** artwork is by Jasmine Miikika Craciun, a proud Barkindji, Malyangapa artist from Newcastle. *Muurpa means 'child' in Barkindji language.*

"Through this work, I tried to encompass the 10 National Principles of child safety. Each symbol has its own unique story and meaning reflecting the principle it stands for, while the overall work represents these Principles coming together and working cohesively to provide a consistent, Australia-wide approach to creating a child safe culture.

I chose warm tones to give a sense of safety, love, and support with each symbol connected through coloured circles.

These circles represent the organisations supporting and putting into action these Principles to create child safe environments.

I chose to give this work a hand-generated playful feeling to help reflect the innocence and playfulness of children's art, while also referencing and using traditional Aboriginal symbols to help tell the story of each principle."

Jasmine Miikika Craciun