

Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander

CULTURAL SAFETY CHECKLIST

for Neighbourhood
Houses



Central Hume
Primary Care Partnership



The heart of our community

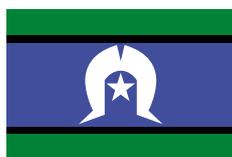
Acknowledgements

Our thanks to Central Hume Primary Care Partnership for their support of this project. We express our deep appreciation to Chris Thorne, Aboriginal Community Support Worker (CHPCP) and Coby Brock, Indigenous Community Support Worker (VACCA) for the open and insightful conversations in developing this checklist, and for the great learning we all experienced. We are humbled by their generosity and knowledge.

This checklist was developed with support from the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation through the Prevention Partnership Program Project *Behind the Scenes at the Neighbourhood House*.

Acknowledgement of Country

We wish to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the many lands across the Network on which our neighbourhood houses operate. We express our gratitude that we share this land today, our sorrow for the costs of that sharing and our hope that we can move to a place of justice and partnership together. We acknowledge Elders, past and present.



Community Connection

Front cover: **'Community Connection'** painted by **Cheniqua Huxley**, a young Indigenous woman, and used with the permission of Pangerang Community House.

The story behind 'Community Connection'

The centre of my art represents Pangerang Community House, based locally in Wangaratta and which supports all local and surrounding Indigenous Community members.

The 'U' represents an adult sitting and the smaller 'u' represents a child, this is the shape our bums make when we sit in and feel the earth/sand/dirt under us, while sitting in a 'gathering/yarning circle'.

The 'Medicine Leaves' surrounding the people in the centre circle represents 'Medicine, Health and Healing'.

The pathways with 'Footprints' represents 'Travelling' our land from surrounding communities to Pangerang Community House.

Australia in the bottom right corner with footprints walking through, represents to me *"we come from all over Australia not just one state/town/mission or mob and we travel far and wide, but we always come together as one."*

Top right corner represents Marmungun Rock (the meaning of this group/area – and is the closest Traditional Pangerang word for Community) and the Bullawah Cultural Trail along the river, are based locally in Wangaratta, a sacred place for community to celebrate and come together on Pangerang land.

Bottom left corner represents a camp/mission on the land, the colours represent 'warm and fire' and our people gathering together.

Top left corner 'Wangaratta' is the Pangerang word for the 'Long Neck Cormorant'. 'Wanga' meaning Long Neck and 'Ratta' meaning Cormorant, these birds are sighted on our two beautiful rivers, the Torryong (Ovens) and the Poodumbia (King).



Purpose

The Upper Murray Regional Neighbourhood House Network (UMRNHN) and Central Hume Primary Care Partnership (CHPCP) have worked together to develop a self-assessment checklist that will:

- Raise the awareness of neighbourhood house staff and volunteers about the importance of cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of the community, and
- Provide the tools to improve the cultural safety of their own neighbourhood house

How the checklist was developed

A day was spent with Chris Thorne (Aboriginal Health & Community Support Worker, CHPCP) and Coby Brock (Indigenous Community Support Worker, VACCA) to assist with understanding the challenges for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people when first entering a neighbourhood house. The two neighbourhood houses in Wangaratta (Open Door Neighbourhood House and Pangerang Community House) agreed to be the venues for a critical walk-through, from which the checklist would be developed. An invitation was extended to the neighbourhood houses in UMRNHN, and a small group of managers attended, as well as the executive officer of Central Hume PCP.

The walk-throughs began on the opposite side of the road to the two neighbourhood houses, progressing to the footpath out the front, the entrance and then inside the building. This was to help the group experience how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enter and see the house from the outside to the inside. The group looked for and discussed:

- How welcoming does the building look: is it open and inviting? Does it look safe? It is important that the entrance is clear and open, that it is easy to see inside, and there is nowhere that someone could be hidden around the entry.
- Is there information that would assist someone to know what happens inside the neighbourhood house? Often anxiety and fear could prevent the person entering, so having the information easily available and visible from the outside is a small enabling step that supports their decision to go inside.
- Is there some sort of indication that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of the community would be welcomed? Are there flags or acknowledgements that would show support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and encourage them to enter?



Key learnings from the day

The walk-throughs were an important opportunity for the non-Aboriginal people present to work with and learn directly from Aboriginal people.

*“Hearing directly from Chris and Coby about their own experiences and that of others in their communities really challenged my views about **the welcoming environment of neighbourhood houses**, and made me realise **we need to be very mindful of other cultural perspectives** when we think about what’s **welcoming**”.*

Trish Curtis, Network Coordinator UMRNHN



Chris Thorne, Tanya Grant and Dee Piazza.



Viewing Community Connection at Pangerang Community House.

The key learnings from the day included the following:

- We need to be aware that past trauma, cultural requirements, and Men and Women’s Business will all influence how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people see and interpret the world, and how they feel about going into a neighbourhood house. For example, it could cause anxiety to enter a building that they cannot see into, and where there may be a perceived threat.
- Ideally there should be enough information easily visible on the outside of the building to help decide if entering is required and/or safe. Information might include current program offerings, visiting and/or available services, and opening hours.
- Having welcoming front and entry areas are vital and help demonstrate that the neighbourhood house is a safe and welcoming space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members. For example, flying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags or having flag decals in highly visible places; having a written Acknowledgement of Country, including the traditional owners if known and undisputed.

*“It was wonderful being part of such a **collaborative process** and being given the **opportunity to experience** a small window into how other cultures see the houses”.*

Tanya Grant, Project Support, Behind the Scenes project

Neighbourhood House

Self-Assessment Checklist

Who should use this Checklist?

This Checklist has been developed for use by the managers (coordinators/EOs) and boards/committees of neighbourhood houses to check if their organisation is welcoming and provides a safe space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It also supports the development of actions that will improve the cultural safety of the neighbourhood house.

How to use this Checklist

The Checklist has four sections:

- Questions to ask yourself about your neighbourhood house
- Information about why what is being asked is culturally relevant and important; information that will help you see your neighbourhood house through the eyes of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person and understand the 'why' of what is being asked
- What evidence you might look for to answer the question/s
- Any actions you might take to make changes/improvements

There is an Action Plan on page 11 which helps you prioritise follow up actions, and useful links on pages 12 and 13.

To get the full benefit of this Checklist, start the process from the outside of your neighbourhood house. Have a look at your building from the opposite side of the road. How the outside looks and feels is important from a cultural perspective so we are:

- Ensuring that your neighbourhood house is safe to enter, is open and easily accessible
- Ensuring that an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community member would feel welcome and feel that they can enter

Try and work through this process objectively and see your building through the eyes of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person. Ask for feedback from any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander you are connected with, if it feels appropriate.

Self-Assessment

Questions	Why this is culturally important	Evidence Indicator	Your actions
<p>Is the outside of your neighbourhood house welcoming to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?</p>	<p>Your neighbourhood house needs to look and feel safe to enter, open and easily accessible</p> <p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members should feel welcome and comfortable to enter your neighbourhood house</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags <input type="checkbox"/> Acknowledgement Plaque (ie acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the land on which the neighbourhood house is located) <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander murals/artwork <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Maps showing mobs/areas/language Australian Map of Aboriginal Tribes <input type="checkbox"/> Window/door sticker/decal showing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags <input type="checkbox"/> Front notice boards are up to date and include services available for members of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural Events Calendar displayed on outside noticeboard Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Significant Dates 	
<p>Is your neighbourhood house easy to see from the road? Easy to locate?</p> <p>Is it easy to find the front door?</p>	<p>It is important that the building is clear and open, and that the inside can be seen easily from the front. We are trying to eliminate hidden areas and any surprises.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Front door is easy to find and open <input type="checkbox"/> Glass in the front door so the inside can be seen from the outside <input type="checkbox"/> Clear and obvious signage for entry <input type="checkbox"/> Welcoming signage at the front door 	

Questions	Why this is culturally important	Evidence Indicator	Your actions
<p>Is your neighbourhood house culturally safe inside?</p> <p>Is there a culturally appropriate way to indicate this?</p>	<p>As with the external part of the building once inside it is important that the cultural safety continues.</p> <p>This includes being aware of Women's and Men's business. It is culturally unacceptable to be engaging in these by the opposite sex so it may be off-putting to have, for example, posters visible in communal spaces that show a woman breastfeeding (Women's Business). This can be about discussing a topic, seeing images or feeling embarrassed about a discussion.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Small Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags for table / entry desk <input type="checkbox"/> Culturally appropriate brochures from local organisations <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Posters – for example promoting events, programs or cultural safety <input type="checkbox"/> Calendar of Cultural events <input type="checkbox"/> Private Breastfeeding areas for mothers <input type="checkbox"/> Multicultural wall (ie art display showing various cultures) <input type="checkbox"/> Koori Mail – newspaper displayed on tables koorimail.com <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander toys etc. for kids <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's books in waiting area or (if relevant) in childcare/playgroup areas <input type="checkbox"/> Gender specific staff available if required 	
<p>What documents / training do you complete to ensure cultural safety in your neighbourhood house?</p>	<p>It is important to develop the policies and plans that imbed cultural safety and understanding within your organisation and make these part of your recruitment and induction for staff, volunteers and committee/board members.</p> <p>It is also important that this includes cultural awareness training for all staff and volunteers. This ensures they understand 'why' things are done.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Reconciliation Action Plan <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural Safety Policy <input type="checkbox"/> Regular Cultural Awareness Training <input type="checkbox"/> Policy that promotes zero tolerance to racism and discrimination <input type="checkbox"/> Observe cultural protocols i.e. Acknowledgement of Country <input type="checkbox"/> Review existing policies to ensure their appropriateness 	

Questions	Why this is culturally important	Evidence Indicator	Your actions
<p>How do you ensure you understand what is happening in your area culturally, and connect with activities and organisations?</p>	<p>If you want to increase your connection with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups and organisations, and get cultural input into your activities, it is important to be involved with what is going on locally.</p> <p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and services are more likely to work with you if they have a reciprocal relationship with you and your neighbourhood house.</p> <p>We cannot expect a Welcome to Country, partnerships etc. if you have not made the effort to build a relationship, and to get involved with local activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Participation in NAIDOC Week <input type="checkbox"/> Participation in Reconciliation Week <input type="checkbox"/> Connecting with Local Area Networks (LANs) <input type="checkbox"/> Connecting with local Elders 	
<p>Does your neighbourhood house understand the importance of <i>identifying</i> and <i>family relationships</i>?</p>	<p>Not everyone can be Identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander by the way they look. Do you ask if clients identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander? Do your staff understand what Aboriginality is?</p> <p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a broader concept of 'family' and 'family relationships'. Close family relationships might include people outside the immediate family, such as aunts, uncles and cousins. This is important where neighbourhood houses are asking for information about family e.g. for playgroup/ childcare or running family-based programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Enrolment/registration forms that ask the question about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identification <input type="checkbox"/> Staff feel comfortable and are skilled in asking questions about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity <input type="checkbox"/> Staff understand the importance of family relationships <input type="checkbox"/> Regular Cultural Awareness Training 	
<p>Do you promote that your neighbourhood house is culturally safe?</p>	<p>Communication about cultural safety at your neighbourhood house will tell Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that you have thought about and respect their cultural safety, and have put things in place to improve their cultural safety at your neighbourhood house</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Acknowledgment of Country on neighbourhood house website <input type="checkbox"/> Noting use of this Checklist <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags <input type="checkbox"/> Acknowledgement Plaque (ie acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the land on which the neighbourhood house is located) <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander murals/artwork <input type="checkbox"/> Window/door sticker/decal showing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags 	

Action Plan from Self-Assessment

1. Identify important Issues to address

2. Identify Actions that can be Implemented

In 6 Weeks

In 6 Months

In 12 Months

Further Information

People to contact / connect with	
Local Aboriginal Network (LAN)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal Local Networks and Gathering Places www.aboriginalvictoria.vic.gov.au/local-aboriginal-networks-and-gathering-places Contacts for Local Government Areas www.maggolee.org.au/local-government-areas-view-by-list/wangaratta
Local Aboriginal Elders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speak to your local council or Aboriginal Local Network to find out the contact details for Elders in your area. Engaging with Traditional Owners
Local Indigenous Organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation – mungabareena.org.au Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency – www.vacca.org Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-Operative – rumbalara.org.au Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service – awahs.com.au
Connect with Aboriginal Liaison Officers	<p>Connect with local community workers who connect with local organisations, ensure they know about the services you provide.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Police – Aboriginal Liaison Officer Health Services – Aboriginal Liaison / Social Workers. Some are listed above www.vaccho.org.au/about-us – list of Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) <p>Government Departments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Education and Training Aboriginal Supports www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/professionals/needs/Pages/aboriginalsupport Koorie Education support www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/marrungregional Victorian Government Departments work with local Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to provide services which support cultural safe practices www.vaccho.org.au/about-us
Ensure you know what is happening in the community that you can link in with	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there a doctor's van / dental van that visits local venues? Check with your local health services to see if there are any in your area. Is there an Aboriginal service that you can link in with? Check with above lists and your local council – some will have an Elder that they work with, multicultural focused role or Cultural adviser.

How to get Involved

Participation with NAIDOC Week naidoc.org.au

Participation in Reconciliation Week www.reconciliation.org.au

Resources

Reconciliation Plan – Reconciliation Australia www.reconciliation.org.au/reconciliation-action-plans

Cultural Safety Policy – DHHS cultural safety framework www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/publications/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-cultural-safety-framework

Decals for the door – www.indigenouspromotions.com.au/stickers

Aboriginal Business Support www.business.vic.gov.au

Aboriginal Community Links www.vaccho.org.au

Koori Mail koorimail.com

Maggolee – local government and aboriginal communities working together www.maggolee.org.au

Korin Korin Balit Djak 2017-2027 Victorian Governments and Victorian Aboriginal health plan www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/health-strategies/aboriginal-health/korin-korin-balit-djak

Traditional Owners – link for land title www.maggolee.org.au/registered-aboriginal-parties-map

Further Information and resources www.aboriginalvictoria.vic.gov.au/aboriginal-victoria
www.aboriginalheritagecouncil.vic.gov.au