

Leading from the front and the ground up: Cultural change in CHSP services – Connecting with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and Elders

The Aged Care Royal Commission (2021) found *strong evidence that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people do not access aged care at a rate commensurate with their level of need and often do not have access to culturally safe care*¹.

The Bill for the new Aged Care Act takes a rights-based approach to build a strengthened aged care system in which funded aged care services must take all reasonable and proportionate steps² to implement the Statement of Rights³ – placing cultural safety front and centre in the assessment and delivery of aged care services.

This forum aims to support Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) leaders to consider your responsibilities when your CHSP service is governed by the new Aged Care Act, including how your services can connect with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and Elders.

High-quality care

Section 20 of the [Aged Care Bill 2024](#) (see page 44 to 45) explains the meaning of high-quality care, including, among other things:

- care delivered in a manner that is implementing inclusive policies and procedures, in partnership with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander persons, family and community to ensure that culturally safe, culturally appropriate and accessible care is delivered to those persons at all times, and recognises their unique experiences
- adapting policy, practices and environments to ensure services are culturally appropriate for the diverse life experiences of individuals, including by engaging workers and governing body members with lived experience of diversity.

These provisions are further supported by specific provisions in the [Strengthened Quality Standards](#), which will apply when the new Aged Care Act is in force in July 2025 (subject to passage through Parliament).

This forum is an activity of the CHSP Sector Support and Development Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Working Group. For more information contact sectordevelopment@socialfutures.org.au or sectorsupport@yourside.org.au.

Artwork: The Ripple Effect by Dr Nick Freeburn.

The Statement of Rights, cultural safety and connection to culture, community and Country

The full text of the Statement of Rights is available in Section 23 of the [Aged Care Bill 2024](#) (see page 47 to 49). It outlines specific rights for individuals, including, among other things, to:

- funded aged care services that are assessed, or reassessed, and delivered, in a manner which is culturally safe, culturally appropriate, trauma-aware and healing-informed
- be treated with dignity and respect
- safe, fair, equitable and non-discriminatory treatment
- have their identity, culture, spirituality and diversity valued and supported
- communicate in the individual's preferred language or method of communication
- open communication and support from registered providers when issues arise in the delivery of funded aged care services
- have the role of persons who are significant to them, including carers, visitors and volunteers, be acknowledged and respected
- opportunities, and assistance, to stay connected (if the individual so chooses) with:
 - significant persons in their life, including visits from and to family and friends
 - their community, including by participating in public life and leisure, cultural, spiritual and lifestyle activities
 - if they are an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person, to community, Country and Island Home.

¹ Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety [Final Report Vol.1](#), p 9.

² Section 24, Effect of Statement of Rights, [Aged Care Bill 2024](#), pdf p 50.

³ Section 23, Statement of Rights, [Aged Care Bill 2024](#), pdf p 47.

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land where we live and work and their continuing connection to land, water, sea and community. We pay respects to Australia's First Peoples, to their unique and diverse cultures, and to Elders past, present and future. Artwork credit: Nick Freeman

Inclusion is about the actions we take every day. We welcome, support, and celebrate diversity.