



# Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability Framework 2025-2028



Townsville



Bowen



Normanton

# Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we live, learn, and work, and pay our respects to their Elders past, present, and emerging. We honor the rich histories, cultures, and contributions of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and recognise their enduring connection to the lands, waters, and skies.

We are committed to forging strong relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and stakeholders, recognising the unique perspectives and experiences in the communities we deliver services in. We strive to engage with First Nations communities and families in genuine and respectful ways that empower and strengthen for current and future generations.



Cloncurry



Mount Isa

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A decorative graphic of green palm fronds is located in the top left corner of the page, extending downwards and to the right.

## Message from Mola Consulting

This Framework is the result of deep and meaningful consultation with staff across all levels of Centacare North Queensland. It reflects the valuable time, insight, and commitment of those who came together to help shape a more culturally safe and capable organisation. Their contributions are a testament to a shared commitment to fostering an environment where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples feel respected, included, and empowered.

As part of this process, Mola Consulting delivered “Shaping the Future with Torres Strait Islander Knowledge” cultural awareness training to approximately 80 staff. This training supported learning, reflection, and meaningful dialogue around cultural capability and truth-telling. In addition, a comprehensive desktop review was conducted to inform and align the Framework with current best practices and organisational priorities.

Mola Consulting would like to thank the Centacare NQ Leadership Team for their vision and commitment in driving this important work forward. We also extend our sincere thanks to the staff from the Townsville and Mount Isa Centre's who participated in the cultural capability consultation workshops and completed the online survey. We hope this Framework captures your voices and honours your passion for working alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

## Serpent Mural

Artist: Nicky Bidju Pryor

At our Townsville Centre there is an outdoor gathering space, surrounded by native greenery and the central focus being a Yarning Stone and the Rainbow Serpent Mural. The Yarning Stone was secured with the help of a local Traditional Owner and former member of staff, Mrs Lenora Aldridge, to identify the purpose of the area.



Mr Pryor worked collaboratively with Centacare NQ to bring the presence of children and families to the space in a symbolic way. The Serpent (Gulbul) is significant to the Townsville and surrounding regions, and Mr Pryor chose this for the mural as the Serpent represents the story of creation, a parallel to Centacare NQ's faith base in understanding the story of Creation. The 'scales' of the serpent are actually handprints of children and young people we have worked with over the years, transposed into silhouette form along the length of the serpent.

## Centacare NQ Cultural Symbol

Artist: Lenora Aldridge

Lenora Aldridge is a proud Bindal woman from Townsville. As a First Nations advisor and staff member at Centacare NQ, we acknowledge and thank Lenora for designing the cultural symbol and her valuable contribution to the organisation.

The large circle represents Centacare NQ. The dots on the bottom, leading into the circle, are clients seeking assistance. The dots on top of the symbol, leading out of the circle, are workers going into the community. The connected dots, in the middle of the circle, represent Centacare NQ working with the family unit: the mother, the father, and the children.



## Indigenous Design Elements

Artist: Luke Duffy

This design was first incorporated in the Centacare NQ's Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan. Centacare NQ first collaborated with Mr. Duffy in 2019 with the creation of the Centacare NQ 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary staff shirts and more recently with the Centacare NQ supporter shirts.



# About Centacare NQ

Centacare North Queensland (Centacare NQ) is a values-driven, community-focused organisation committed to strengthening individuals, families, and communities across North and North-West Queensland. With a proud history of service grounded in the Catholic social teachings of dignity, respect, justice, and compassion, Centacare NQ has been walking alongside people of all backgrounds for more than 40 years.

Operating across vast and diverse landscapes including remote, rural, and urban settings, Centacare NQ offers a broad range of services, including family and relationship support, mental health and wellbeing programs, community engagement, homelessness support, disability services, and domestic and family violence prevention. The organisation's commitment to inclusion and empowerment underpins all areas of its work, especially its engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

## Our Commitment

Our ongoing commitment to becoming a more culturally capable organisation will be visible in all aspects of our organisation and its operations. We will be intentional and courageous in this endeavour, embracing new approaches and ways of working to foster a more inclusive, empowering, respectful workplace and service to the community.

## Strategic Plan 2023 - 2026

### Wellbeing For All

Enhancing wellbeing and resilience through respect, dignity and service excellence. Centacare NQ is committed to achieving five strategic priorities:



Focus on our people.



Transition to new corporate structure and sustainable future.



Grow and diversify our services.



Pursue Service Excellence.



Strengthen our place in the community.

# What is Cultural Capability

The concepts of Being, Doing, Knowing, and Belonging are foundational to a Cultural Capability Framework when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as they reflect interconnected ways of living, learning, and relating grounded in First Nations perspective.

## KNOWING

The ongoing commitment to deeply understand Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures, and experiences. While we critically reflect on our own worldview, to build the foundation for respectful, informed, and culturally safe engagement.

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## BEING

Being is the practice of self-awareness, humility, and integrity in how we relate to others, recognising our own cultural identity and responsibilities, and showing up with empathy and respect in every interaction.

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## DOING

Doing is the consistent application of cultural knowledge and values through meaningful action, embedding respect, accountability, and cultural safety into our decisions, relationships, services, and systems.

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## BELONGING

Belonging is the deep sense of connection to community, culture, and country, nurtured through inclusive practices that honour identity, build trust, and create culturally safe spaces where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples feel respected, valued, and heard.

# Why we developed a Cultural Capability Framework

The Leadership Team and staff were asked a simple but powerful question: What is your "why"? This was to understand what inspired the need for a Cultural Capability Framework, what led to its creation, and what was driving the desire to bring it to life within the organisation. Their responses were honest, thoughtful, and deeply grounded in their shared commitment to creating a culturally safe, respectful, and inclusive workplace. These collective insights became the foundation of our Framework Values, ensuring they are not just words on a page, but a true reflection of the hearts and minds of our staff.

*“Contribute to a positive and fulfilling workplace that generates meaningful and goal-oriented outcomes for everyone involved at Centacare NQ, including various service providers and clients”*

Staff Member

While staff expressed it was difficult to identify their 'why' as there are many reasons and motivations that drive their desire for the Framework - however, there was an overwhelming sense of eagerness to get it right. For this reason, the Values that have been identified further demonstrate the support with the organisation and foreshadow the success of this Framework.

## VALUES



**RESPECT**



**CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE**



**EMPOWERMENT**



**RELATIONSHIPS**



**SERVICE EXCELLENCE**

# Key considerations for the Framework

The Cultural Capability Framework is grounded in Centacare NQ's Reconciliation Action Plan and Strategic Plan. It sets clear, non-negotiable expectations to create culturally safe, respectful, and inclusive environments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

It moves beyond awareness to embed cultural capability into behaviours, policies, and programs. All staff are committed to build cultural understanding, honour protocols, and prioritise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge in their work. Cultural capability is a core responsibility, it is a continuous journey of learning and accountability, led by strong leadership and embedded at the heart of Centacare NQ's purpose and everyday work.

## **Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)**

The RAP is a powerful expression of our commitment to truth-telling, healing, and justice. It acknowledges the need to go beyond symbolic gestures by embedding practical, meaningful actions that promote equity, inclusion, and genuine partnership with First Nations peoples.

Developed through consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, community members, and Elders, the RAP sets out clear goals that are reflected in the everyday decisions, behaviours, and systems within Centacare NQ.

## **Strategic Plan**

Strategic Plan outlines the organisation's long-term vision and purpose: to support individuals, families, and communities to flourish through inclusive, values-based, and person-centred services.

The plan sets a strong foundation for operational excellence, sector leadership, and social impact. Through this strategy, Centacare NQ affirms that cultural capability is not a 'nice-to-have', it is essential to providing ethical, high-quality services and achieving long-term positive outcomes for all people, especially those most impacted by structural disadvantage.

Consultation workshops with staff from the Townsville and Mount Isa Centres provided a deeper understanding of where we are currently at as an organisation and where our staff see opportunities for achieving better outcomes. During these workshops, staff provided insights, frustrations and their vision for the organisation, they also told us about their needs and expectations for the Framework.

## WHAT WE HEARD

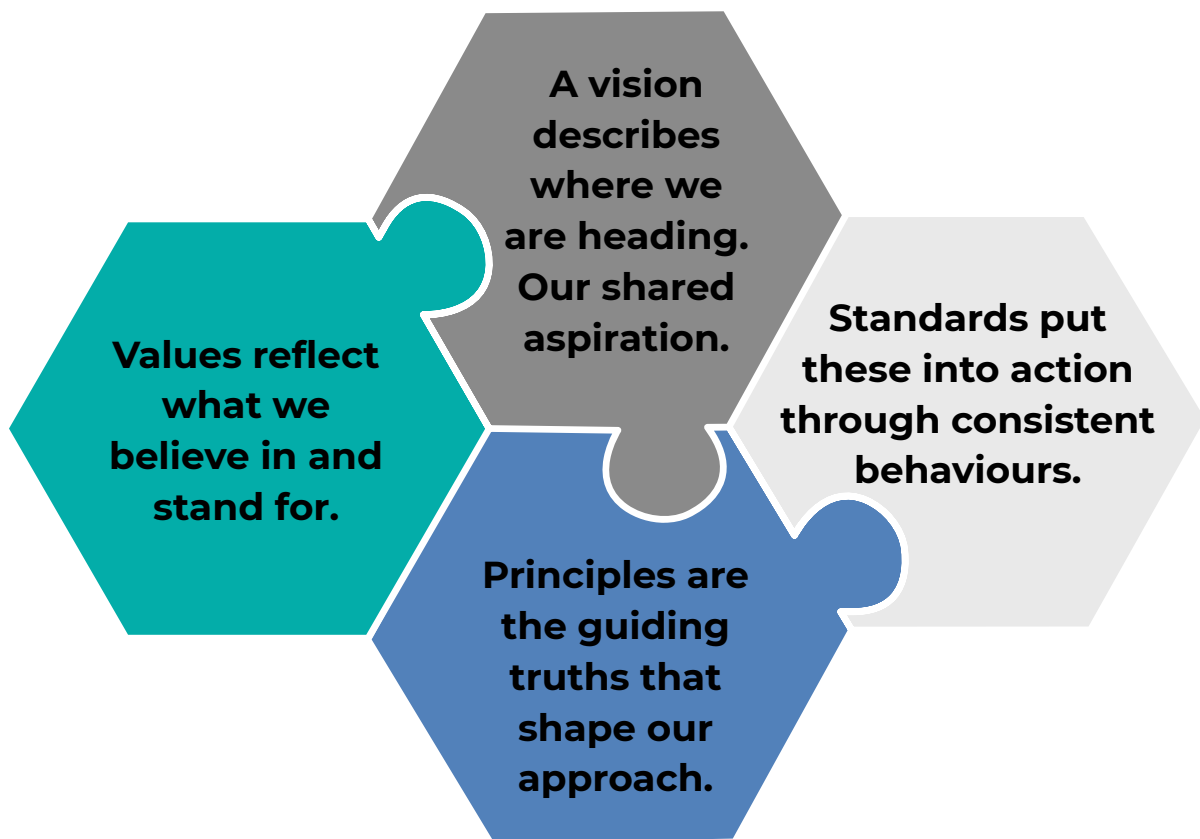


- We have a strong willingness to learn and are open-minded about building our cultural capability.
- We want to feel safe, respected, and able to have tough conversations.
- We need a workplace where First Nations culture is visible, valued, and understood.
- Build community partnerships and attend cultural events (such as NAIDOC).
- Need for ongoing, context-specific, and strengths-based cultural learning.
- There's a strong sense of pride in how we work with community and advocate for our clients.
- The cultural training we have received has made a difference, and we see the impact in our day-to-day practice.
- We understand the importance of historical trauma and are actively working to be trauma-informed.

# About the Framework

Centacare NQ's Cultural Capability Framework is built on a clear vision, guiding principles, and defined standards that shape how we work with and alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The vision sets our long-term goal, the principles guide our everyday approach, and the standards outline the behaviours and practices expected of all staff to ensure culturally safe and respectful services.

The following explains the purpose and meaning of the framework's principle, standards, vision, values to support staff in understanding how to apply them in their everyday work.



# VISION

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To foster a culturally safe, inclusive, and responsive environment where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' knowledge, perspectives, and leadership are embedded and respected in all aspects of our work.

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# PRINCIPLES

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- 01 Strengthening Cultural Knowledge Foundation**  
Objective: Build a workforce equipped with deep cultural understanding, awareness, and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, traditions, and perspectives.
- 02 Elevate First Nations Voices**  
Objective: Build a workforce where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are included and influential in decisions that shape the organisations direction, services and culture.
- 03 Deliver Service Excellence with Cultural Integrity**  
Objective: Empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through respectful, culturally safe services that prioritise their identity, leadership, and right to self-determination.
- 04 Walking Together in Truth**  
Objective: Build a workforce that understands the true history of Australia and the lasting impact of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People. Our work will respect culture and its place in the lives of people we work with.
- 05 Community Voices and Partnerships**  
Objective: To deeply listen, respect, and collaborate with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, ensuring their voices guide and shape our services and relationships.

# STANDARDS

## 01 Strengthen Cultural Knowledge Foundations

Objective: Build a workforce equipped with deep cultural understanding, awareness, and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, traditions, and perspectives.

### Principle in action:

- Review and implement a cultural learning strategy with input from Traditional Owners, delivering region-specific training and workshops led by Elders and community representatives.
- Prioritise cultural awareness training, learning and development opportunities for all staff that incorporate culturally responsive practices, protocols and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge.
- Develop, maintain, and annually review resources, embed cultural awareness in staff induction, and offer cultural supervision as part of personal development.
- Promote cultural respect by displaying flags, including Acknowledgement of Country, facilitating Yarning Circles, and supporting participation in key events like NAIDOC Week and Reconciliation Week.
- Recognise Staff self-reflection and skills development in relation to cultural capability through training and performance appraisals.

**“Knowledge is growth. I can work on my knowledge to better understand, build stronger relationships, foster empowerment and be a part of building a stronger and positive culture within the organisation.”**

Staff Member

# STANDARDS

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## 02 Elevate First Nations Voices

Objective: Build a workforce where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are included and influential in decisions that shape the organisations direction, services and culture.

### Principle in action:

- Ensure strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation and leadership on the RAP Working Group, including co-chair roles.
- Develop a Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employee Network to elevate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices to inform, guide, and strengthen culturally safe practices across the organisation.
- Through our commitment to continuous improvement, we have actively addressed barriers to the recruitment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across service delivery programs by creating more entry pathways to employment.
- Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff through cultural supervision, onboarding, cultural leave, ceremonial leave, and recognition of cultural obligations.
- Partner with employment services and training providers to create accessible entry-level and pathway roles that support long-term career development.
- Embed cultural safety across service delivery and organisational practices, empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to lead and shape solutions.

“Create a video to share during induction of what we have in place already”

Staff Member

# STANDARDS

## 03 Delivering Service Excellence with Cultural Integrity

Objective: Empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through respectful, culturally safe services that prioritise their identity, leadership, and right to self-determination.

### Principle in action:

- Engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in co-design and decision-making processes to ensure services are culturally appropriate, responsive, and community-led.
- Embed cultural safety and culturally responsive practice into all service delivery by incorporating cultural protocols, values, and local knowledge into program design and implementation.
- Create culturally safe spaces through artworks, flags, Acknowledgement of Country, yarning spaces, and culturally informed orientation and events.
- Continue to develop and expand on partnerships with local Elders, Traditional Owners, and community leaders to guide cultural practices and maintain accountability to community expectations.
- Provide culturally appropriate advocacy, support services, and client engagement strategies that empower First Nations clients and reflect local consultation.
- Capture and act on feedback from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and stakeholders to continually improve the cultural integrity of services.
- Ensure accessible and culturally inclusive communication by using appropriate language, imagery, and channels that resonate with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

**“We have a good name in the community for helping families with their worries”**

Staff Member

# STANDARDS

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## 04 Walking Together in Truth

Objective: Build a workforce that understands the true history of Australia and the lasting impact of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People. Our work will respect culture and its place in the lives of people we work with.

### Principle in action:

- Appoint a senior RAP Champion, engage leadership and staff in RAP delivery, and establish systems for regular reporting and external liaison with Reconciliation Australia.
- Embed cultural safety in policies, service models, recruitment, and develop culturally safe referral pathways and action plans.
- Promote honest and respectful conversations about Australia's shared history and its ongoing impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Create Reconciliation and Truth-Telling Commitment Statement. Include a public-facing statement or policy that affirms the organisation's commitment to truth-telling and respectful engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Commit to continuous reflection on power imbalances, privilege, and systemic bias, with transparent reporting on progress, cultural learnings, challenges and organisational accountability.

**“We all have a willingness to learn and improve”**

Staff Member

# STANDARDS

## 05 Community Voices and Partnership

Objective: To deeply listen, respect, and collaborate with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, ensuring their voices guide and shape our services and relationships.

### Principle in action:

- Engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as partners in the design, delivery, and evaluation of programs and services.
- All new programs and initiatives involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are co-designed in meaningful collaboration, reflecting shared decision-making and mutual responsibility.
- Ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, community members remain actively involved through forums or advisory roles that directly inform policies, practices, and organisational direction, placing their voices at the heart of decision-making.
- Continue to develop and expand on partnerships with local Elders, Traditional Owners, and community leader to guide cultural practices and maintain accountability
- Prioritise consultation with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives in new service development and cultural safety initiatives.
- Report back to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities on how their contributions have influenced actions and outcomes, reinforcing trust and ongoing commitment to meaningful partnership.
- Regularly assess partnerships to ensure they uphold cultural respect, provide mutual benefit, and are genuinely guided by the priorities and leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

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# FRAMEWORK TIMELINE

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**2025**



## FOUNDATION & ACTIVATION

The focus will be on launching the Framework and establishing strong foundations for cultural capability.

**2026**



## INTEGRATION & PRACTICE

Cultural practices will be embedded into everyday work, policies, and community engagement.

**2027**



## STRENGTHENING & ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability will be strengthened and progress in cultural capability will be evaluated.

**2028**



## REVIEW & RENEWAL

A full review will assess impact and inform the next phase of cultural development.

# Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability Framework | 2025 - 2028

## VISION

To foster a culturally safe, inclusive, and responsive environment where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' knowledge, perspectives, and leadership are embedded and respected in all aspects of our work.

## VALUES



**RESPECT**



**CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE**



**EMPOWERMENT**



**RELATIONSHIPS**



**SERVICE EXCELLENCE**

### Strengthen Cultural Knowledge Foundations

Build a workforce equipped with deep cultural understanding, awareness, and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, traditions, and perspectives.

### Delivering Service Excellence with Cultural Integrity

Empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through respectful, culturally safe services that prioritise their identity, leadership, and right to self-determination.

### Walking Together in Truth

Build a workforce that understands the true history of Australia and the lasting impact of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People. Our work will respect culture and its place in the lives of people we work with.

### Elevate First Nations Voices

Build a workforce where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are included and influential in decisions that shape the organisations direction, services and culture.

### Community Voices and Partnership

To deeply listen, respect, and collaborate with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, ensuring their voices guide and shape our services and relationships.



This framework reflects Centacare NQ's living and evolving commitment to reconciliation. Guided by the principles of Knowing, Doing, and Being, we acknowledge that cultural capability is not a one-time achievement but an ongoing practice that shapes how we think, act, and relate to one another across all levels of the organisation.

We walk this path with courage and humility, recognising that true cultural capability is cultivated through deep listening, truth-telling, and a willingness to change. This work is led by the voices, knowledge, and aspirations of First Nations people, whose strength, resilience and cultural wisdom continue to enrich and guide our shared future.

Cultural capability is not a destination it is a journey and responsibility, we will uphold every day.

*“When we know better, we do better.  
When we walk together, we heal together.”*

