

# Homelessness NSW Conference 2018 Housing Ends Homelessness

**Improving Cultural Competency best practices to address the growing rate  
of Aboriginal Homelessness**

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# A definition of Cultural Competency

## Cultural competence

1. includes **knowledge, behaviour and attitudes** - not simply knowledge.
2. is a skill which needs to be **expressed in behaviour** as the capacity to function effectively in inter-cultural contexts - not simply knowledge and awareness.
3. extends beyond individual professional behaviours and **includes organisations and systems** - a culturally incompetent system can undermine the work of culturally competent professionals.

# Cultural Competency and the Industry

Cultural competence requires an organisational culture which is committed

- ▶ to social justice, human rights and the process of reconciliation
- ▶ through valuing and supporting Aboriginal cultures, knowledges and peoples as integral to the organisations core business.

# What is Cultural Competency?

Speech by Tom Calma, National Race Discrimination Commissioner and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, 8 Sept 2006

- ▶ Firstly, how an understanding of cultural competence contributes to an understanding of the right to equality; and
- ▶ Second, how an understanding of, and commitment to, the *right to equality* underpins the achievement of cultural competence in any organisation and is essential to such competence flourishing at the national level.

# Cultural Competency and the Industry

It requires effective and inclusive policies and procedures

- ▶ monitoring mechanisms and allocation of sufficient resources
- ▶ to foster culturally competent behaviour and practice at all levels of the institution.

# Key areas to improve industry best practice

## **Systemic**

Requires effective policies and procedures, monitoring mechanisms and sufficient resources to foster culturally competent behaviour and practice at all levels

## **Organisational**

Requires skills and resources to meet client diversity, an organisational culture which values, supports and evaluates cultural competency as integral to core business

# Key areas to improve industry best practice

## **Professional**

Depends on education and professional development and requires cultural competence standards to guide the working lives of individuals

## **Individual**

Requires the maximization of knowledge, attitudes and behaviours within an organization that supports individuals to work with diverse colleagues and customers

# Aboriginal Cultural Competency Standards

- ▶ In 2011 the Community Housing for Aboriginal people (CHAP) project was rolled out into the mainstream sector. One of the key deliverables of the CHAP was the development of a cultural competency standards for the mainstream sector.
- ▶ In August 2016 the Federation launched the resource to the sector and rolled out a small series of seminars and webinars to assist the sector begin the implementation phase.
- ▶ The resource is voluntary tool for housing providers to undertake a self assessment of their organisation to determine levels of cultural competency.
- ▶ It is not an overnight fix.

# Aboriginal Cultural Competency Standards

There are seven Standards to address in the resource:

- ▶ Rights
- ▶ Historical and Social Factors
- ▶ Person and Family Centred Practice
- ▶ Services Access and Support
- ▶ Service Delivery and Practice
- ▶ Governance
- ▶ Feedback Issues Resolution

The completion of each Standard will depend on the organisation's capability and capacity including a number of key factors such as Board backing and integration into the strategic plan, available staff, time & financial resourcing.

# Where to start

## Its about **Learning**

- ▶ Knowledge and understanding of different cultures, histories and contemporary realities and awareness of protocols;

## It's about **Reflection**

- ▶ on one's own personal and professional idea's in order to understand cultural limitations;

## It's about **Engaging**

- ▶ Working effectively in Aboriginal contexts similar to the expectations of Australian peoples; and

## It's about **Change**

- ▶ Effecting positive change as an individual, organisation, community, sector

# Next Steps

## Homelessness NSW and Industry Partnerships Cultural Competency Train the Trainer project

- ▶ Starting from 1 July 2018
- ▶ By 2020, there will be 30 Aboriginal SHS trainers for the sector undertaking training on the Aboriginal Cultural Competency Standards
- ▶ Opportunity for the SHS sector to begin implementing new cultural competency practices and improving service delivery

For further information please contact Homelessness NSW