



CONSUMER ACTION LAW CENTRE CULTURAL SAFETY FRAMEWORK

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY



Consumer Action is located on the land of the Kulin Nations. We acknowledge all Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognise the continuing connection to the lands, waters and communities. We pay our respects to cultures, and Elders past, present and emerging.

THIS FRAMEWORK

Cultural safety for First Nations people can be articulated as 'an environment 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.'¹

Cultural load is 'the often-invisible additional load borne by First Nations people at work, where they are the only Indigenous person or one of a small number of Indigenous people.'² Cultural load can include First Nations staff being expected to educate others about First Nations people and culture, and an expectation that they represent and can speak on behalf of all First Nations people.

This Framework sets out **actions, roles, and responsibilities** to address cultural safety. We seek to become an employer of choice for First Nations staff, and cultural safety is a critical foundation to support this goal. This is a living document that may change over time and as our organisation evolves.

VISION

Consumer Action's vision is for a just marketplace where people have power and business plays fair. We partner with First Nations people, community and organisations to support access to justice, First Nations power in the marketplace and a First Nations voice in systemic change. Our Impact Framework sets out the outcomes and impact we seek to make. We understand we can only achieve these outcomes if we are culturally safe for our people, partners and community.

In our workplace staff have provided examples of the cultural load that affects their cultural safety. These include being asked to comment on any issue affecting First Nations people, clients or community; being expected to lead celebration of events like NAIDOC Week; being expected to provide support to other First Nations staff (in addition to core work) and a lack of recognition that First Nations staff are personally accountable to community for the work Consumer Action does.

Self-determination can mean different things to different groups of people. At its core, self-determination 'is concerned with the fundamental right of people to shape their own lives'.³ Self-determination is a collective rather than an individual right.

OUR COMMITMENTS TO CULTURAL SAFETY

1.

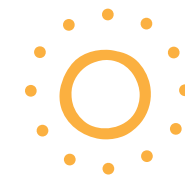
We recognise the expertise of First Nations staff and the cultural load they carry.

We recognise and respect the cultural expertise of First Nations staff. We recognise that First Nations staff are accountable to community for the work they do at Consumer Action, and this may affect their ability to undertake some work (e.g., speak on behalf of community).

We acknowledge the cultural load First Nations staff carry in the workplace. We recognise this contributes to over-work and less time to complete their core role. We take steps to identify and reduce the cultural load on First Nations staff, while recognising that this cannot remove all the cultural load.

Our actions

- ▶ We support our First Nations staff member to have a mentor to support them on cultural issues.
- ▶ We ensure access to culturally appropriate EAP and/or debriefing services.
- ▶ We provide additional cultural and ceremonial leave to First Nations staff, including for Sorry Business.
- ▶ We remunerate identified First Nations roles in recognition of specialist cultural expertise required for such roles.
- ▶ We work with First Nations consultants to provide us with organisational advice and support on recruitment and our internal policies and procedures relating to First Nations staff. We do not expect First Nations staff to lead this work. We do commit to consulting with First Nations staff on all policies and procedures that directly affect them. We make space in their workload to give them the time they need to provide feedback.
- ▶ First Nations staff are supported to work with First Nations communities and peoples in line with the organisation's strategic priorities.



¹ Williams, R. (2008), Cultural safety; what does it mean for our work practice? Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, 23(2):213-214

² Diversity Council Australia/Jumbunna Institute (2020), Gari Yala (Speak the Truth), Synopsis Report.

³ Australian Human Rights Commission, Self-determination, <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-social-justice/self-determination>

Cover Artist: Dixon Patten

Dixon is a proud Yorta Yorta and Gonnai man and has family bloodlines from Gunditjmarra, Dhudhuroa, Wiradjuri, Yuin, Wemba Wemba, Barapa Barapa and Monaro.

2.

We support our non-First Nations staff to be culturally aware.

We seek to build a culture where all staff develop understanding of First Nations history, culture and community and to develop their confidence in working with First Nations staff, clients and communities.

Our actions

- ▶ We train our non-First Nations staff in cultural awareness, from the start of their employment and continuously.
- ▶ All staff should renew their cultural awareness training on a regular basis. We provide a Koori Best Practice Guide to support this work.
- ▶ We have organisational events and First Nations speakers for important dates, including Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week.
- ▶ We acknowledge country in ordinary business and organise a paid welcome to country for events.
- ▶ We commit to marking dates and events significant to the First Nations community and use these as an opportunity to learn. We do not expect First Nations staff to organise or lead this work. We have a Reconciliation Working Group that includes the CEO and members of all teams that takes the lead on events.

3.

We support our People Managers to be culturally safe.

We recognise that our non-First Nations People Managers need to have expertise and skills to effectively manage First Nations staff in a way that is culturally safe.

We acknowledge that First Nations staff and their managers both have accountability and need to work together to manage this. First Nations staff are accountable to community as well as Consumer Action. People Managers are accountable to the CEO, Board, partners and funders.

Our actions

- ▶ We require People Managers to undertake cultural awareness and cultural safety training to build skills to manage First Nations staff.
- ▶ We provide access to mentoring from a First Nations consultant for all Managers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

4.

We work to improve our service response to First Nations people.

We recognise that increasing accessibility to our service for First Nations people requires us to engage and partner with First Nations Community Controlled Organisations. We recognise that First Nations clients may require more support with their legal/financial issue to get a good outcome.

Our actions

- ▶ We employ a dedicated ongoing role (First Nations Engagement Lead) to lead engagement with First Nations organisations and community.
- ▶ Our partnership with VALS is an organisational priority and involves all teams.
- ▶ We consult with First Nations people, community and organisations to build partnerships.
- ▶ We get out to regional and metro community events whenever we can and support as many staff as possible to do so.
- ▶ We prioritise consumer contacts to the Koori Help Advice Service.
- ▶ We regularly review calls to the Koori Help Advice Service to ensure the service is evaluated and is delivered in a culturally informed way.
- ▶ Our Koori Best Practice Guide and cultural training supports staff to respond to the individual needs of clients, including cultural needs.
- ▶ When making decisions about whether to take on or refer a case, we consider the impact on community including trust in our service. This can affect the reputation of First Nations staff.

5.

We respect the expertise and cultural authority of First Nations people, community and First Nations Community Controlled Organisations including our key partner organisations. We respect self-determination.

We recognise that First Nations people have expertise in their own lives. We respect self-determination. We respect community members' choices about their service needs.

Our actions

- ▶ We ensure any First Nations related work is led by and informed by First Nations staff, partners and community.
- ▶ We actively inform, consult and partner with First Nations organisations in our advocacy on issues that affect First Nations people.
- ▶ We provide warm referrals to both First Nations and non-First Nations organisations depending on what the client wants.
- ▶ We take steps to ensure cultural safety of our staff in our partnerships, including with First Nations organisations. We ask our partners to link our First Nations staff to a First Nations staff member at any First Nations organisation.

6.

We respect the professionalism of all staff.

We value free, clear, open and respectful communication. We expect all staff to act in accordance with the Code of Conduct.



ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Our Board

Our Board is committed to ensuring the organisation's cultural safety and keeps the organisation accountable to our commitments, including by seeking regular reports about strategies and actions under this Cultural Safety Framework. All Board members undertake training in cultural awareness.

CEO and Management Team

The CEO and Management Team take responsibility for ensuring that the organisation is a culturally safe working environment for First Nations staff. This responsibility includes the implementation, ongoing monitoring, evaluation and reporting the impact of the implementation of Cultural Safety Framework and associated policies.

The CEO and Management Team ensure organisational policies and procedures are in place to support this framework and promote cultural safety in the organisation. Relevant policies include:

- ▶ Cultural and Ceremonial Leave
- ▶ Consumer action Wellbeing Framework
- ▶ Koori Engagement Best Practice Guide
- ▶ Consultation with Staff

Regular review and update of all policies and procedures will consider how they promote cultural safety. The CEO and Management Team will, where appropriate, seek advice from our external cultural safety adviser as well as First Nations staff.

Broader staff responsibilities

Staff and Management teams at all organisational levels will make it a priority to maintain ongoing Cultural Awareness and Building Cultural Capacity training, as well as self-directed learning opportunities as part of their First Nations knowledge building journey.

Cultural Advisory Committee

The purpose of the Consumer Action First Nations Advisory Committee (the Committee) is to provide advice and recommendations (where appropriate) to the CEO, Board and Management Team in relation to:

- ▶ Strategic decisions relating to the engagement with the Victorian First Nations community.
- ▶ Input into Consumer Action policy and decision-making processes.
- ▶ Informing, monitoring the implementation and evaluating the impact on First Nations Community of our service delivery, projects, campaigns and policy advocacy.
- ▶ Assisting in the development of future action plans with specific focus of the Victorian First Nations community.

The Committee shall have regard to the Consumer Action Strategic Plan and Impact Framework and act in accordance with Consumer Actions strategic objectives and priorities.

Members of the committee will receive a sitting fee in recognition of their cultural expertise and be reimbursed for any out of pocket expenses associated with travel to and from the committee meetings.

REVIEW AND ORGANISATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

This framework will be reviewed annually, including tabled at a board meeting. As part of this, the Board will review any organisational policy and procedure relating to cultural safety, identify any gaps, and contribute to strategies to continue to build the organisation's cultural safety.





consumer
action
Koori Help

KOORI HELPLINE

 **1800 574 457**
K R I H L P

Monday - Friday 10am - 1pm & 2 - 5pm

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