



*Return to Country – Land, Sea and Sky: Artist Riki Salam, Gilmbarra*

# WORKING WITH ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE

The Life Without Barriers Practice Approach



Championing opportunity for all







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# WHO WE ARE

Life Without Barriers (LWB) is one of Australia's leading social purpose organisations working in more than 300 communities across all states and territories. Our services currently support just over 14,500 people in urban, rural and remote areas across Australia.

We support children, young people and families, people with disability, older people and people with mental illness, people who are homeless and refugees and asylum seekers. Across all of our program areas, over 1,000 of those we are currently supporting identify as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

LWB currently has over 350 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and carers, each of whom bring in-depth knowledge and understanding of their culture and share connections to their respective and diverse communities. LWB is enriched by this generous sharing of knowledge and connections, and the practice approach described in this document has been developed in collaboration with key staff who hold a wealth of knowledge and experience of what works.



# WORKING WITH ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE – THE LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS PRACTICE APPROACH

LWB's purpose in developing a practice approach to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is to provide practical guidance for staff about how we can offer genuinely respectful and culturally safe services to children, families and communities, and to embed the key tenets of this approach in all levels of the organisation.

The development of a practice approach reflects the evolution of our reconciliation journey and continued commitment to sharing and learning on this journey to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the same life opportunities as other Australians.

The primary objective of this practice approach is to resource all of our staff in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who access LWB services. It is intended to underpin a whole-of-organisation practice approach to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within the local context of their communities and cultures and traditions. The approach applies to all levels of the organisation, all programs and all staff.

## OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this practice approach are to:

- Promote consistent practice across staff
- Establish expectations for staff
- Build staff confidence and capacity
- Reflect best practice in working in partnership.

## CONTEXT

In recognition of the needs of a diverse and dynamic national organisation, LWB implemented a shared practice framework – the *Pillars of Practice* – to guide and be a reference point for all practice decisions and organisational improvement plans. The *Pillars of Practice* are underpinned by LWB's core values and represent the key activities that support the development of a culture that promotes good practice.

Similarly, the *Engaging and Empowering: Life Without Barriers Approach to Partnering* has been developed to support a systematic and coherent approach across the organisation to listening to our clients.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander practice approach complements both the *Pillars of Practice* and *Engaging and Empowering*. It is an additional resource for staff and management to enhance their work in acknowledging and building the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to achieve their goals and aspirations, to deliver culturally safe and respectful services and programs, and to work in partnership with clients, organisations and communities.

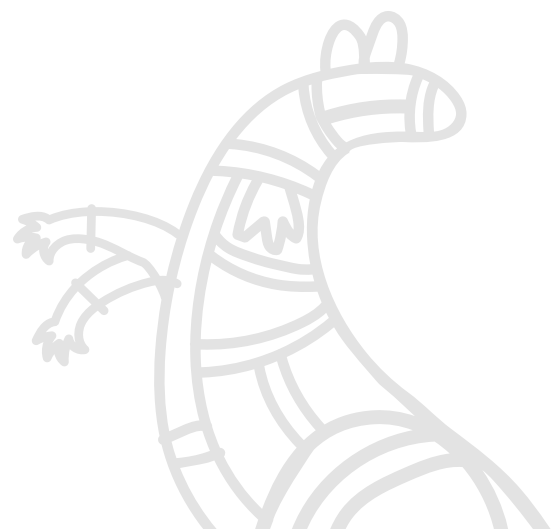
The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander practice approach is an important part of our broader commitment to reconciliation and improving opportunities and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and organisations. Our vision for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people we

support is that all people in Australia understand and respect the importance of cultural, spiritual and physical connection to emotional wellbeing and commit to addressing issues of equity and justice.

Since 2009, we have formalised our commitment to this vision with the development and implementation of multiple Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs). June 2015 saw the completion of our second RAP and in February 2016, we launched the 2016-2019 Stretch RAP, which extended our reconciliation commitment and includes a whole-of-organisation suite of targets, deliverables and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, carers, families and communities. The development of a practice approach to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people was identified as one of the priorities of our Stretch RAP.

## DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

It is worth noting that the reconciliation portfolio at LWB sits within a broader diversity and inclusion agenda. Diversity encourages people to be true to their individual differences. Inclusion seeks to reject discrimination and to break down barriers to access and participation. In simple terms, diversity is the mix, inclusion is getting the mix to work well together.



# OUR APPROACH

The primary focus of our approach is acknowledging and building the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and organisations to achieve their goals and aspirations.

Fundamental to this approach is:

- Identifying and recognising the existing capacity of people, groups, organisations and communities
- Identifying opportunities and taking actions to work with people, communities and organisations to build their capacity.

The three phases to acknowledging and building capacity are:

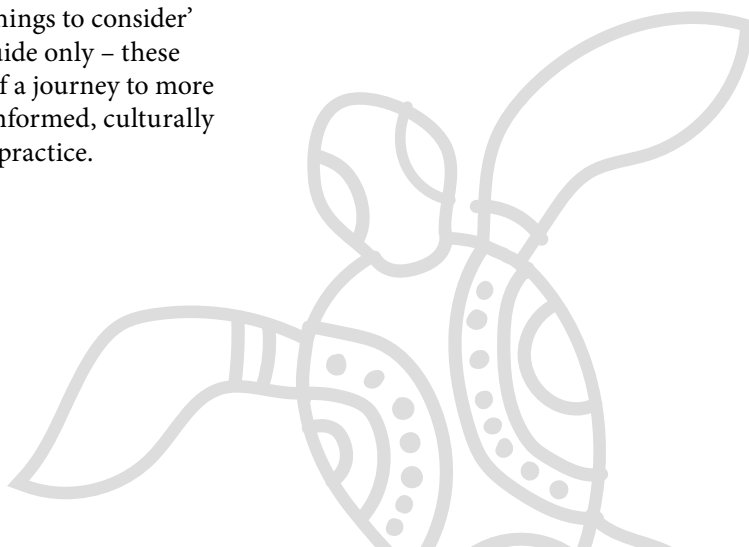
- Identifying key people, groups and organisations
- Developing relationships with those people, groups and organisations
- Connecting those people, groups and organisations with resources and services.

Our approach is based within the broader context of culture and community, as outlined in the table to the right.



This approach is a two way process that seeks to enhance the capacity and capability of both LWB and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people we work with. It is concerned with identifying what we need to know – and how we can find out – so that we are able to do our work and add value. This orientation is important when working cross-culturally with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as it recognises and respects cultural differences and starts from an acknowledgement and understanding of what we don't know and an openness and curiosity to find out, learn and contribute.

Outlining our approach is intended to assist you in thinking about your work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The information provided and the 'things to consider' are intended as a guide only – these are the beginning of a journey to more responsive, better informed, culturally safe and respectful practice.





# PRINCIPLES

## CULTURAL RESPECT

Cultural respect is concerned with the attitude and values of people and organisations. It involves recognising and valuing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and traditions and understanding the diversity of those cultures and traditions. There is no single culture or group – rather, there are many groupings, languages, kinships and diverse ways of living. Cultural respect is also about recognising and celebrating cultural protocols in an environment of respect for and pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

It is therefore important to acknowledge and understand local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural knowledge, history, lived experience and connection to community and country (Benevolent Society, 2013; VACCA, 2008; WA Government, 2016). Australian researcher Anthony Dockery notes that ‘in the current pursuit of equity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, increasing non-Indigenous knowledge, understanding and respect of Indigenous cultures may well be the most important gap to close.’ (Dockery, 2011, p.19).

## SELF-DETERMINATION

Self-determination is concerned with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander control and autonomy over their lives. It involves children, individuals, families and communities actively participating in decisions that impact their lives including the development and delivery of services, programs and policies designed to meet their needs (SNAICC, 2012; VACCA, 2008; WA Government, 2016).

It is supported by adopting culturally appropriate processes for individual, family and community decision making. If asked, it may also involve resourcing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations

to design, develop and deliver services, and to access funding available through government or other sources.

Where there is an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander non-government organisation willing and able to provide a service or development activity, LWB will not directly compete with that organisation. Rather, we will seek, where appropriate, to work collaboratively in accordance with these principles (Aboriginal Peak Organisations, Northern Territory, 2013; SNAICC, 2012, VACCA, 2008).

## CULTURAL SAFETY

Cultural safety is concerned with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ experience of services and whether they feel safe to be themselves and where there are challenges, safe to challenge (VACCA, 2008). It involves:

- Employing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff
- Providing an environment that considers, respects and values the individuality and culture of everyone
- Valuing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and cultural beliefs
- Reflecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldviews and values in service delivery, policy and practice
- Displaying posters and symbols (such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags) or a plaque that recognises the Traditional Owners/Custodians of the land
- Public support for Aboriginal cultural events (WA Government, 2016).

Where possible, each of these means of promoting cultural safety should have relevance to the local community and cultural context in which LWB is working.

## HOLISTIC AND STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACHES

Holistic and strengths-based approaches are concerned with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s collectivist worldviews, and understanding the relationship and connection of people to their kin, communities, land and country. They involve inherently relational and inter-dependent approaches (WA Government, 2016) and an understanding of the social, physical, emotional, cultural and spiritual dimensions of wellbeing. The latter includes a focus on both the individual and the community (Gee, 2014) – this requires an orientation to understanding and working with the individual in the context of their family, community, country and culture.

All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities have pre-existing abilities and strengths. A strengths-based perspective reminds us that every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child, family and community holds the skills, experience and knowledge necessary to grow, learn and change (WA Government, 2016).

## PARTNERSHIP

Partnership is concerned with mutual capacity building through long term sustainable relationships between people, groups, organisations and communities based on trust, respect and shared responsibility, as well as accountability for shared goals (Hunt, 2013; SNAICC, 2012).

It involves relationship-building and development, negotiation and agreement making, ongoing partnership management, resourcing and facilitating partnerships and monitoring and evaluation (SNAICC, 2012). It must be grounded in an understanding of and a capacity to respond to culture, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander concepts of wellbeing (Hunt, 2013), as well as understandings of relationships and relationship-building.

# UNDERSTANDING CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

Culture is important to everyone. It helps define ‘How you attach, how you express your emotion, how you learn and how you stay healthy.’ (Bamblett and Lewis, 2006 p.45). Further, ‘culture is fundamental to identity – it is our past, our present and our future... We need our culture to sustain us and to keep us well. But importantly, we need culture because it tells us who we are.’ (Calma, 2008).

Fundamental to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is an understanding of the importance of culture to how people understand and view the world. It is important that we are all aware of our own culture and worldview and how they are similar and different from those of others.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, culture is particularly important due to a continuous connection to land and sea for many thousands of years, as well as due to living more recently in a dominant culture that is not their own. The historical and continuing impact of colonisation and the forced removal of children from their families must also be acknowledged in terms of racism and socio-economic disadvantage.

This primarily speaks to the resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the importance of celebrating what are the oldest continuing cultures in the world. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are strong and can have positive effects on people and communities (Lohoar, Butera and Kennedy, 2014).

It must also be acknowledged that Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people have distinct cultures, traditions and customs. Within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities there are also different cultures and traditions. There is no one Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander culture or community. Nations have different values, languages, knowledge systems, kinship structures and processes, and protocols.

One result of colonisation and the forced removal of people from their lands and children from their families is that:

*‘There are many different kinds of Indigenous ‘communities’ located in rural, remote and urban areas, with networks stretching far and wide. Some are discrete geographic settlements. Others are ‘communities of identity and interest’ that are physically dispersed across different locations.’*

(Hunt, 2013, p. 9).

It is therefore important that staff have an understanding of the local community in which they are working and, in relation to working with individuals and families, the community relevant to them.

## DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY PROFILE

Rather than workers each developing individual community profiles, LWB regions will develop regional profiles. These will run alongside local community profiles as relevant to their region and will be supported by State/Territory and National profiles. Each region must develop a process and identify who is responsible for developing the profiles, with development, documentation and review overseen by the relevant State/Territory Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Initiatives Lead. In addition, the State/Territory Leads will promote staff awareness of, and access to, the relevant profiles.

The development of a local community profile is a critical step towards the engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The process for developing and documenting the profile itself demonstrates cultural respect and contributes to cultural safety. It therefore lays the groundwork for effective engagement and working in partnership, and provides staff with a baseline understanding and knowledge of the community in which they are working.

All staff will have access to their relevant local profiles and will be expected to be familiar with them when commencing work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Staff will also need to be familiar with the relevant community profile when working with individuals and families across all of our program areas.



### TIPS FOR DEVELOPING A PROFILE OF THE COMMUNITY IN WHICH YOU ARE WORKING

- What is the history of the community?
  - Who are the original nation and clans?
  - Was the community a ‘reserve’ or ‘mission’ where people from other nations were brought into the area and, if so, who are they and where were they from?
  - What are the significant milestones in the development of the community and any significant events?
- What are the geographic boundaries of the community?
  - Are there areas of particular traditional and cultural significance?
  - Are there any contested boundaries? If so, how can these be treated appropriately and respectfully?
- Who are the current Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people in the community or geographical area?
  - Who are the Elders of the community?
  - What Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander groups and organisations exist in the community and what do they do?
- What are the governance arrangements in the community and what protocols exist for ‘working’ within that community?
  - What are the kinship structures and processes in the community?
  - Who do you need to talk to about what (local governance, men’s business/women’s business)?
  - What local, state and national events are recognised in the community?

### THINGS TO CONSIDER

Developing an understanding of the local community is an ongoing process. It takes time to build trust and an understanding of community structure. Information needs to be collected from multiple sources and understanding built over time.

As a starting point the relevant LWB region should consider:

- Drawing upon what is already known within your team
- Consulting with LWB Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander key workers
- Consulting with key Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, community representatives, organisations and Land Councils
- Checking state or territory websites for historical information and population data.

Consideration is also required of how staff will be made aware of the profile/s as part of their induction to the organisation. This will include the opportunity to discuss the profile as it relates to their particular role and responsibilities.

# ROLE AND PURPOSE OF ENGAGEMENT

Before commencing any engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, it is necessary to be clear about your role and the purpose of the engagement. The operational context of LWB has three different levels:

## 1. INDIVIDUAL (INCLUDING FAMILY AND COMMUNITY) :

The direct work undertaken by staff with individuals, families and communities, which includes:

- Providing care and working with children, young people or adults
- Providing casework and/or therapeutic services for children, young people or adults and their families
- Providing disability and aged care services
- Contributing to community development through community based initiatives including the delivery of programs and services.

## 2. PROGRAM

The design, development, implementation and review of programs collaboratively undertaken by area/state/national teams.

## 3. ORGANISATION


The governance and management of an organisation includes its people, resources, policies, planning, systems and partnerships enabling the delivery of quality evidence-informed programs and practice.

As noted in *Engaging and Empowering*, while each of these areas is inter-related, the levels have been differentiated to support the development and implementation of engagement strategies that enable peoples' voices to be heard at all levels and across the whole organisation.

## THINGS TO CONSIDER

- What is your role? What is it that you need to do and with whom?
- What are you asking of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders?
- Think about how you might be perceived by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people:
  - How would you explain your role and purpose?
  - How might they understand your role and purpose?

Some suggestions for thinking about this are in the table on the right.



It is important to have a clear understanding of your role and purpose

What is My Role and Purpose?		
Individual, Family and Community	Program	Organisation
<b>What type of direct work am I undertaking?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual care and work with a child, young person or adult</li> <li>• Family work</li> <li>• Community work</li> </ul>	<b>What type of program work am I undertaking?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design</li> <li>• Development</li> <li>• Implementation</li> <li>• Review and evaluation</li> </ul>	<b>What type of organisational work am I undertaking?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy development and review</li> <li>• Strategic planning</li> <li>• Human resource management</li> <li>• Partnership development</li> </ul>
<b>Who am I caring for and/or working with?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual child, young person or adult</li> <li>• Family</li> <li>• Community</li> </ul>	<b>Who is the program for?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual child, young person or adult</li> <li>• Family</li> <li>• Community</li> </ul>	<b>Who is impacted by the organisational work?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clients</li> <li>• Staff</li> <li>• Community</li> <li>• Organisations</li> </ul>
<b>How might others understand my role and purpose?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is my role voluntary or statutory?</li> <li>• What is the person's or family's previous experience of working with LWB or other non-indigenous organisations?</li> </ul>	<b>How might others understand my role and purpose?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How was the program initially conceived and/or developed?</li> <li>• What involvement have service users and other community members had in the development or review of this program?</li> </ul>	<b>How might others understand my role and purpose?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who is initiating the contact?</li> <li>• What previous contact have those impacted by the organisational work had with LWB?</li> </ul>

It is important to have a clear understanding of your role and purpose – and that of LWB more broadly – so that you are able to explain this to the people you are directly working with and those that you need to engage. A range of factors may impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' perceptions of you, your role and purpose and that of LWB more broadly. These include colonisation and the forced removal of nations and clans from their lands, the forced removal of

children from their families, previous experiences of receiving assistance from LWB or other non-Indigenous organisations, and experiences of racism. Reviewing your community's profile and talking with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff within LWB will provide a starting point for thinking about this.





# IDENTIFYING PEOPLE, GROUPS AND ORGANISATIONS

This phase is concerned with identifying key people, groups and organisations with whom you need to engage. It requires both general knowledge of the community or geographical area (here both will be referred to as 'community') and specific knowledge relating to your role and purpose. It is important that you have general knowledge of the community in which you are working as this demonstrates cultural respect, illuminates a pathway for fulfilling your specific role and purpose and provides a foundation for working collaboratively.

**If you are not Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander or you are but not from the community in which you are working, it is important to seek guidance from an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person/s local or otherwise connected to the community to assist you to identify who you need to engage with about what and the order in which you engage them.**

There are important ways in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities organise and disclose information relating to lore, hierarchies, skin groups and gender (Westerman, 2010). Guidance is therefore required from an appropriate 'cultural consultant' which could include a client, community member, LWB staff member, staff member of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation, Elders and/or a recognised cultural consultant for that community (Westerman, 2010). In the case of a community level initiative, you will need to seek specific advice about the order in which you engage people, groups and organisations within that community.

## THINGS TO CONSIDER

You will need to identify who you need to engage with to fulfill your role and purpose. This will include:

- Reviewing the local community profile as it relates to your role and purpose (in respect to working with individuals and families, this should include the community profile relevant to them)
- Identifying who can assist you to work out who you need to engage with
- Identifying whether there is an appropriate sequencing of the engagement.

Some suggestions for thinking about this are in the table to the right.



Identifying Who to Engage With		
Individual, Family and Community	Program	Organisation
Who are the Elders, community members, groups or organisations that you may need to engage with to care for and/or work with individuals, families or community?	Who are the Elders, community members, groups or organisations that you may need to engage with to undertake the program work?	Who are the Elders, community members, groups or organisations you may need to engage with to undertake the organisational work?
<p><b>Who do you need to talk with to identify and access the right people?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk with the child/young person/ adult/family you are caring for and working with – they may identify kin and/or community people who they want you to talk with</li> <li>• Talk with community Elders and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander professionals from another organisation to assist in identifying kin and other community people and making contact with them.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Who do you need to talk with to access the right people?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk with people who are using the program or for whom the program is intended</li> <li>• Talk with community Elders and an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation about needs and what else is already available in the community</li> <li>• Talk with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Council about entering a community and the need for a program – they may offer to make contact with community Elders for you.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Who do you need to talk with to access certain people?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk with people and organisations who work with and/or represent the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people</li> <li>• Talk with a state or national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander body to identify needs and opportunities for strategic partnerships to meet its objectives (e.g. broad based, particular sectors – disability, child protection, mental health, or particular communities).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Talk with the LWB Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Key Worker</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with the Key Worker to identify who you need to talk with and the order in which you might approach people and organisations.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Talk with the LWB Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Key Worker and State/Territory Lead</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with the Key Worker and State/Territory Lead to identify who you need to talk with and the order in which you might approach people and organisations.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Talk with the relevant LWB Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leads and the National Manager Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Initiatives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with the relevant State/ Territory Leads and the National Manager to identify who you need to talk with and the order in which you might approach people and organisations.</li> </ul>

Developing an understanding of the community in which you are working and who you need to talk with is an ongoing process. Where possible, start this process before you have a specific purpose. For example, if you are new to an area, take opportunities to visit groups or organisations and attend

important events. This makes you more visible to people within the community and gives them an opportunity to get to know you or of you. As you build your understanding and knowledge you may need to challenge and change what you had previously thought to be true.

# ENGAGING

This phase is concerned with developing relationships with the people, groups and organisations that you have identified as necessary to fulfil your role and purpose. It is an ongoing process of conversation that builds trust and relationships and moves towards the development of shared understandings and goals. It is a mutual journey that can and should take time. 'Effective engagement is a sustained process that provides Indigenous peoples with the opportunity to actively participate in decision making from the earliest stage of defining the problem to be solved' (Hunt, 2013).

## THINGS TO CONSIDER

### PREPARE YOUR APPROACH

- Review your community profile and identification of the people, groups and organisations you need to engage
- Develop a process for engagement that is culturally safe:
  - Who, what, where and how?
  - Think about the order in which you should see people including any permissions that may need to be sought
  - If it is your first meeting, think about whether you need to take an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person with you if you aren't Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander yourself
  - When you set up a meeting, ask the person if there is anyone else they would like to be there
- If it is a formal meeting or event, prepare an Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners and Custodians
- If it is a major function or public forum, organise a Welcome to Country (note that only a representative of the traditional owners or custodians of the land on which you are meeting can provide a Welcome to Country)
- Identify whether there are any other things you need to do to facilitate the interview, meeting or event, such as timing, location, transport or providing refreshments.
- Check that your approach fits the purpose
  - Do you have the right people and processes?
  - Be prepared to change tack as new information becomes available.





Preparing the Approach		
Individual, Family and Community	Program	Organisation
<b>Set out a process for engaging people and organisations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do you best make contact with relevant kin, community members and organisations?</li> <li>Do you need to make contact through a third party such as an Elder who can assist in identifying and making contact with kin?</li> <li>Do you need to take an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person with you? Take advice in terms of trust, gender and protocol issues.</li> </ul>	<b>Set out a process for engaging people and organisations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do you best make contact with people and organisations with an interest in the program?</li> <li>What permissions need to be sought e.g. making contact with an Elder or talking with the local council?</li> <li>Do you need to take an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person with you? Take advice in terms of trust, gender and protocol issues.</li> </ul>	<b>Set out a process for engaging people and organisations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do you best make contact with people and organisations working with and/or representing the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?</li> <li>What permissions need to be sought e.g. making contact with an Elder, talking with the local council or an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander state/territory or national peak body?</li> <li>Do you need to take an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person with you? Take advice in terms of trust, gender and protocol issues.</li> </ul>
<b>Make initial contact</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce yourself and the purpose of your contact</li> <li>Ask the person when and where they would like to meet and if they would like anyone else to be present at the meeting</li> <li>Ask if the person needs assistance to participate.</li> </ul>	<b>Make initial contact</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce yourself and the purpose of your contact</li> <li>Ask the person when and where they would like to meet and if they would like anyone else to be present at the meeting</li> <li>Ask if the person needs assistance to participate.</li> </ul>	<b>Make initial contact</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce yourself and the purpose of your contact</li> <li>Ask the person when and where they would like to meet and if they would like anyone else to be present at the meeting</li> <li>Ask if the person needs assistance to participate.</li> </ul>



## **MEET WITH PEOPLE, GROUPS AND ORGANISATIONS**

- Introduce yourself including your name, role and organisation
- Where appropriate, acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of the country on which you are meeting
- Where appropriate, introduce the person/s who are providing the Welcome to Country
- Ask the people present to introduce themselves
- Share information that helps establish connection:
  - Ask if they have heard of LWB
  - If you are not from this community, tell people where you are from
  - Ask if they are from this community
  - Show an interest in the person/people and their community e.g. local sports/events
  - Consider issues of boundaries and confidentiality
- Clarify the purpose of the meeting
  - State your understanding of the meeting
  - Ask the person/people their understanding of the meeting
  - Develop a shared sense of purpose through two way communication
- Identify the people, groups and organisations already involved
- Discuss how best to develop a plan of action to achieve the purpose
  - What is involved?
  - Who needs to be involved?  
Review your list of people, groups, organisations and other resources from the Identification Phase and what you have found during the Engagement Phase
  - Identify how to bring people together
  - Identify costs involved for people attending
- Acknowledge people's contribution
- Let people know the next step and when they will see you next.

Meeting People, Groups and Organisations		
Individual, Family and Community	Program	Organisation
<b>Introduce yourself</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State your name, role and organisation</li> <li>Ask them to introduce themselves and clarify their connection to the person or family you are working with</li> <li>Share information that helps establish a connection between you both.</li> </ul>	<b>Introduce yourself</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State your name, role and organisation</li> <li>Ask them to introduce themselves and clarify their interest in the program</li> <li>Share information that helps establish a connection between you both.</li> </ul>	<b>Introduce yourself</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State your name, role and organisation</li> <li>Ask them to introduce themselves and clarify their interest in the issue or initiative under discussion</li> <li>Share information that helps establish a connection between you both.</li> </ul>
<b>Develop a shared purpose</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State your understanding of why you are meeting</li> <li>Ask them their understanding of the meeting</li> <li>Clarify any differences.</li> </ul>	<b>Develop a shared purpose</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State your understanding of why you are meeting</li> <li>Ask them their understanding of the meeting</li> <li>Clarify any differences.</li> </ul>	<b>Develop a shared purpose</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State your understanding of why you are meeting</li> <li>Ask them their understanding of the meeting</li> <li>Clarify any differences.</li> </ul>
<b>Identify other people, groups or organisations who are or should be involved with the person or family</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If they are additional to those on your list, clarify whether you will make contact or whether they will make contact on your behalf.</li> </ul>	<b>Identify other people, groups or organisations who are or should be involved</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If they are additional to those on your list, clarify whether you will make contact or whether they will make contact on your behalf.</li> </ul>	<b>Identify other people, groups or organisations who are or should be involved</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If they are additional to those on your list, clarify whether you will make contact or whether they will make contact on your behalf.</li> </ul>
<b>Seek input into how to achieve the purpose</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What, who and how?</li> <li>Clarify if there are any trust, gender, or protocol issues that may impact how you bring people together</li> <li>Identify any potential barriers to people's involvement.</li> </ul>	<b>Seek input into how to achieve the purpose</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What, who and how?</li> <li>Clarify if there are any trust, gender, or protocol issues that may impact how you bring people together</li> <li>Identify any potential barriers to people's involvement.</li> </ul>	<b>Seek input into how to achieve the purpose</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What, who and how?</li> <li>Clarify if there are any trust, gender, or protocol issues that may impact how you bring people together</li> <li>Identify any potential barriers to people's involvement.</li> </ul>
<b>Close the meeting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clarify what has been agreed</li> <li>Acknowledge people's contribution</li> <li>State the next step and when you will see them again.</li> </ul>	<b>Close the meeting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clarify what has been agreed</li> <li>Acknowledge people's contribution</li> <li>State the next step and when you will see them again.</li> </ul>	<b>Close the meeting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clarify what has been agreed</li> <li>Acknowledge people's contribution</li> <li>State the next step and when you will see them again.</li> </ul>

Engaging people with whom you are working is an ongoing process. Initial engagement may need to occur over a couple of contacts and may involve different combinations of people. Be aware that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people may have had negative experiences of people entering their lives and communities. It may therefore take time to build trust. Be prepared to have more than one meeting and keep going back until engagement has occurred.

It is critical at this point that you do what you say you are going to do and, if you can't, that you follow up immediately to let people know and explain why. Be aware that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, organisations and communities may check out your cultural reputation through others (Westerman, 2010). To be engaged with a particular program the person 'need(s) to see the program as relevant to them, their family, and their cultural beliefs and practices.' (Westerman,

2010). The active involvement of people in making decisions that impact their lives is foundational to self-determination and developing a shared purpose.

It is important to reflect on what you have found during the Engagement Phase, the assumptions you have made and the conclusions you have formed. Consult with an LWB Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander key worker and/or State/Territory Lead. Be open to changing your process as you gain a better understanding of the situation and what works.



# CONNECTING

This phase is concerned with bringing together people, groups, organisations and resources to develop, implement and review an agreed plan of action. It is a process of involving individuals, families and communities in identifying their strengths and needs, developing solutions, taking action and reviewing progress.

It is important to think holistically about people and their needs, and be prepared to contribute your knowledge and skills to link people with other resources and services that may be beyond your role. Connecting is focused on building hope and empowering people to realise their goals and aspirations.

## THINGS TO CONSIDER

### BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

- Invite people to attend
- Consider the type of forum
- Consider decision making processes and think about who should facilitate them
- Identify culturally safe locations to meet
- Privilege the voice of those individuals, families and communities impacted by the outcomes.

Bringing People Together		
Individual, Family and Community	Program	Organisation
<b>Develop a process that will assist to achieve the purpose</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review people's input about the process</li> <li>• Identify the type of forum               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– A family meeting</li> <li>– A stakeholder meeting</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Identify the decision making process e.g. person/family led</li> <li>• If there are any 'givens' or limitations to decision making for statutory or other reasons, these must be clearly identified</li> <li>• Identify who is best to facilitate the forum/s e.g.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– You</li> <li>– If you are not Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, an LWB Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander worker</li> <li>– An independent Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<b>Develop a process that will assist to achieve the purpose</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review people's input about the process</li> <li>• Identify the type of forum/s               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– A meeting of service users or potential service users</li> <li>– A stakeholder meeting</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Identify the decision making process e.g. Consensus, community led</li> <li>• If there are any 'givens' or limitations to decision making, these must be clearly identified</li> <li>• Identify who is best to facilitate the forum/s e.g.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– You</li> <li>– If you are not Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, an LWB Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander worker</li> <li>– An independent Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<b>Develop a process that will assist achieve to the purpose</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review people's input about the process</li> <li>• Identify the type of forum/s e.g. A stakeholder meeting involving representatives from relevant groups and organisations</li> <li>• Identify the decision making process e.g. Consensus, community led</li> <li>• If there are any 'givens' or limitations to decision making, these must be clearly identified</li> <li>• Identify who is best to facilitate the forum/s e.g.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– You</li> <li>– If you are not Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, an LWB Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander worker</li> <li>– An independent Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Identify a culturally safe place to meet such as:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A person's/family's home</li> <li>• The office of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation</li> <li>• A community venue</li> </ul> Check this with the people involved.	<b>Identify a culturally safe place to meet such as:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The office of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation</li> <li>• A community venue</li> </ul> Check this with the people involved.	<b>Identify a culturally safe place to meet such as:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The office of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation</li> <li>• A community venue</li> </ul> Check this with the people involved.
<b>Think about how to privilege the voices of those impacted by the outcomes e.g. communication styles; the order in which people speak; the way in which decisions are documented; how decisions will be communicated.</b>	<b>Think about how to privilege the voices of those impacted by the outcomes e.g. communication styles; the order in which people speak; the way in which decisions are documented; how decisions will be communicated.</b>	<b>Think about how to privilege the voices of those impacted by the outcomes e.g. communication styles; the order in which people speak; the way in which decisions are documented; how decisions will be communicated.</b>

## DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A PLAN OF ACTION

- Discuss strengths and needs and factors impacting on addressing needs
- What resources and services are available to meet the identified needs?
- Identify goals, actions, responsibilities and timeframes
- Check the plan with those involved and impacted
- If needs are identified that are outside your scope, work with people to identify how these may be addressed and provide any support you or LWB more broadly can offer or otherwise access on their behalf
- Review progress and amend the plan as necessary
- Celebrate success – acknowledge the contributions of all involved
- Obtain feedback from the people involved about their experience of the process and views of the outcomes.

Taking Action		
Individual, Family and Community	Program	Organisation
<b>Identify the current state</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the strengths and needs of the person and their family?</li> <li>• What resources and services are available to meet the identified needs?</li> </ul>	<b>Identify the current state</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the strengths and needs of the people who are using or who may use the program?</li> <li>• What resources and services are available to meet the identified needs?</li> </ul>	<b>Identify the current state</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the strengths and needs of the issue/situation to be addressed?</li> <li>• What resources and services are available to meet the identified needs?</li> </ul>
<b>Develop a plan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify goals</li> <li>• Build on existing strengths and draw on available resources and services</li> <li>• Identify what additional resources and services LWB has to assist in meeting the identified needs</li> <li>• Identify actions, responsibilities and timeframes.</li> </ul>	<b>Develop a plan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify goals</li> <li>• Build on existing strengths and draw on available resources and services</li> <li>• Identify what additional resources and services LWB has to assist in meeting the identified needs</li> <li>• Identify actions, responsibilities and timeframes.</li> </ul>	<b>Develop a plan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify goals</li> <li>• Build on existing strengths and draw on available resources and services</li> <li>• Identify what additional resources and services LWB has to assist in meeting the identified needs</li> <li>• Identify actions, responsibilities and timeframes.</li> </ul>
<b>Deal with other needs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there other needs that are outside of LWB's scope to address?</li> <li>• If so, work with the person/family to identify how these might be addressed and provide whatever support you can or otherwise access on their behalf.</li> </ul>	<b>Deal with other needs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there other needs that are outside of LWB's scope to address?</li> <li>• If so, work with the people using the program and other stakeholders to identify how these might be addressed and provide whatever support you can or otherwise access on their behalf.</li> </ul>	<b>Deal with other needs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there other needs that are outside of LWB's scope to address?</li> <li>• If so, work with the groups and organisations to identify how these might be addressed and provide whatever support you can or otherwise access on their behalf.</li> </ul>
<b>Monitor and review progress with the person/family</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amend the plan as necessary</li> <li>• Acknowledge and celebrate success</li> <li>• Actively seek feedback and reflect on the process and outcomes achieved.</li> </ul>	<b>Monitor and review progress with the people using the service and other stakeholders</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amend the plan as necessary</li> <li>• Acknowledge and celebrate success</li> <li>• Actively seek feedback and reflect on the process and outcomes achieved.</li> </ul>	<b>Monitor and review progress with the groups and organisations involved</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amend the plan as necessary</li> <li>• Acknowledge and celebrate success</li> <li>• Actively seek feedback and reflect on the process and outcomes achieved.</li> </ul>



**COORDINATE**

- Link people to available services and resources
- Facilitate integration of responses to promote access
- Identify and address any barriers arising.

Coordinating		
Individual, Family and Community	Program	Organisation
<div>Link and integrate</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Link people/families to the services and resources identified</li><li>• Ensure that services are working together</li><li>• Identify and address any barriers to access or to realising the benefits.</li></ul>	<div>Link and integrate</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Link people/families to the program</li><li>• Ensure that the program is being delivered as intended</li><li>• Identify and address any barriers to accessing the program or to realising the benefits.</li></ul>	<div>Link and integrate</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Link groups and organisations to the initiative</li><li>• Ensure that the initiative is achieving its intended outcomes</li><li>• Identify and address any barriers to accessing the initiative or to realising the benefits.</li></ul>





## ADVOCATE

- Identify gaps and opportunities to develop resources and services
- Advocate to address outstanding issues.

Advocating		
Individual, Family and Community	Program	Organisation
<b>Advocate</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with others to identify and address gaps in resources and services available to meet the person's/family's needs</li> <li>• Advocate to address outstanding issues internally and through service networks.</li> </ul>	<b>Advocate</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with others to identify and address gaps in resources and services available to meet people's/families' needs</li> <li>• Advocate to address outstanding issues internally and through service networks, and the development of local alliances.</li> </ul>	<b>Advocate</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with others to identify and address gaps in resources and services available to meet people's/families' needs</li> <li>• Advocate to address outstanding issues internally and through state and national alliances, and making representations to state/territory and national governments.</li> </ul>

## FINAL THOUGHTS ON CONNECTING

Connecting people, groups and organisations relies on good identification and engagement. It acknowledges and builds on existing strengths of all stakeholders leading to improved capacity and capability. It provides a new platform for ongoing development towards

achieving peoples', organisations' and communities' goals and aspirations. The process continues anew in determining if you have an ongoing role. If you don't have an ongoing role, it is important that you exit the process with a shared understanding of the next steps and what support, if any, that you or LWB may be able to provide.

Where value has been added for people, organisations and communities, you and LWB become an important resource for them, and they become an important resource for you. In essence, this is what we strive for through our approach: a two way process that builds capability and capacity and moves each of us closer to realising our goals and aspirations.



## CONCLUSION

Going forward, there are several critical steps to implementing and embedding the practice approach in LWB's organisational culture. The focus is to establish clear expectations for staff, build staff capacity and practice maturity in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients, carers, families and communities, and to reflect best practice for working in partnership.

Responsibility for developing an implementation plan, including a communication strategy to raise awareness of the practice approach and measures to track our progress, will rest with the National Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group. This group meets quarterly and is co-Chaired by the Chief Executive and the National Manager Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Initiatives, with representation from across the organisation and with linkage to state based RAP committees.

It is our view that this Practice Approach to Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People represents another key step forward in extending our commitment to providing culturally respectful services. Perhaps more importantly, it is another step in the shared journey toward reconciliation and ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the same opportunities as other Australians. Our goal is for all levels of LWB to be part of this important journey.



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