



Indigenous Policy

Purpose

To ensure Camcare as a whole organisation, including the Board and staff, is culturally sensitive, competent and responsive to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples * who need our services on the basis of an understanding of their history, and the importance of their connection to their culture. Wherever possible, we will do this by working with Aboriginal Controlled Organisations, local Aboriginal communities and by listening and responding to those Aboriginal people who come to Camcare for assistance.

Background

Camcare's Board and staff acknowledge the history of Aboriginal people in Australia and the impact on them of white settlement and subsequent discriminatory and destructive policies and practices. Aboriginal communities have sought to preserve their culture while living in a dominant culture. This is important to their identity and well being.

In the social welfare field, Camcare recognises that current rates of notification and out of home care for Aboriginal children are disproportionately high as a result of the disadvantage many Indigenous people experience. Aboriginal women and children are also over-represented in family violence statistics.

Context

At the last census there were 167# Aboriginal people recorded as living in Boroondara, the main municipal catchment for Camcare's programs. Notwithstanding the small numbers of Aboriginal people in the local population, Camcare's Strategic Plan commits the organisation to undertaking several strategies to ensure our services are inclusive of people from Aboriginal as well as other cultural backgrounds.

We aim to provide programs targeting identified populations in order to improve services to members of our community facing personal hardship or difficult life circumstances.

We commit to building responsive and inclusive attitudes and promoting respect for diversity in the community and undertake to ensure community voices through advocacy and consultation in order to create a more aware and responsive community.

One of Camcare's key values is social equity with a focus on facilitating social inclusion by promoting the rights of individuals to participate in the community.

*We have used the word `Aboriginal' throughout this document to refer to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

Source – City of Boroondara Indigenous Policy. Census 2006.

Definitions

"Staff" refers to all workers, paid and unpaid

"Clients" refers to all members of the community who access service at Camcare; a formal "case" or "episode of service" does not need to be activated on the IRIS database system in order for a member of the community to be considered a client;

"Cultural Rights" cultural rights can be viewed as an integral component of universal human rights. In this context, all individuals have the right to participate in the cultural life of their choice and conduct their own cultural practices, subject to respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the law.

"Cultural competence" is acceptance and respect for cultural diversity within an organisation which works with different population groups to review and adjust service delivery to meet their diverse needs.

Legislation and Other Guidelines

The **Children, Youth and Families Act 2005** includes Best Interests of the Child principles which promote "..... the need, in relation to an Aboriginal child to protect and promote his or her Aboriginal cultural and spiritual identity and development by, whenever possible, maintaining and building their connections to their Aboriginal family and community.

The **Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006**, S 19 recognises that Aboriginal people hold distinct cultural rights, including:

- the right to enjoy their identity and culture; and
- the right to maintain and use their language; and
- the right to maintain their kinship ties; and
- the right to maintain their distinctive spiritual, material and economic relationship with the land and waters and other resources with which they have a connection under traditional laws and customs

In 2008 the Victorian Government commissioned Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) to develop an **Aboriginal Cultural Competence Framework** to guide mainstream Community Service Organisations in the development of management strategies, policies and direct practice which will provide better outcomes for Aboriginal children and families. Camcare has based this policy on the Aboriginal Cultural Competence Framework.

Policy

Camcare seeks to promote and support Aboriginal self determination and work with Aboriginal controlled organisations to build their capacity to deliver services to their people.

In the provision of our services Camcare endeavours to make Aboriginal people welcome, to understand their cultural identity and the meaning this has for those with whom we have contact. Recognising and celebrating indigenous culture supports Aboriginal people's identity and values their heritage. In the context of working in the best interests of Aboriginal children with whom we work this acts as an important protective factor.

Service Delivery

Camcare, with our partner agencies in the Inner East Integrated Family Services Alliance and other networks, will take a proactive approach to developing a service environment that promotes participation and respects the cultural background and tenets of Aboriginal people by:

- Working in respectful partnerships with Aboriginal organisations and communities
- Addressing barriers to Aboriginal people accessing our services.
- Seeking information from Aboriginal controlled organisations, local Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal clients about their culture for the purpose of supporting their access to our Agency and offering culturally appropriate services to those who come to our Agency.

Camcare will endeavour to ensure our staff are informed about Aboriginal culture and engage Aboriginal Controlled Organisations to advise and assist us in designing and delivering high quality services that are culturally sensitive and inclusive of Aboriginal individuals, children and families.

Through training and collaborative practice with Aboriginal Controlled Organisations, Camcare will apply a cultural lens in our practice with Aboriginal children and families so that culture is an important consideration in providing for the safety, stability and development of Aboriginal children with whom our staff have professional contact and we eliminate any cultural bias or blindness (inability to see or value another's culture).

Camcare's commitment in our service delivery is to:

- Ensure that Aboriginal families have the choice to access an Aboriginal service.
- Provide high quality services to Aboriginal individuals, children and their families who seek service from Camcare
- Deliver culturally competent and responsive services that are respectful of the indigenous people we serve
- Understand the impact of intergenerational trauma in the lives of Aboriginal individuals, children, families and communities
- Provide culturally aware and safe service environments. This includes ensuring that Aboriginal children, young people and families are not subject to cultural abuse or neglect in our practice with them.

Within our capacity and resources as a smaller community services organisation, and in collaboration with other like minded agencies, Camcare will ensure:

Our staff have access to training from indigenous organisations and individuals and other opportunities to build their understanding of indigenous culture, the impact of the past on indigenous people and to practice in a culturally sensitive, aware and competent manner.

We encourage staff self reflection about the impact of our dominant culture and the effect of trauma on Aboriginal people.

We consult and, where appropriate, partner with Aboriginal controlled organisations in the design and delivery of services to Aboriginal individuals, children and families.

We embed culture as one of the foundations of our practice in our approach to assessment, intervention and planning across our services.

We positively represent Aboriginal culture in our work sites.

We build networks that support the Aboriginal people we work with and establish positive connections to indigenous culture and community.

We promote positive stories about Aboriginal children, young people, families and communities.

We hear the voice and learn from our Aboriginal clients, local Aboriginal community representatives and leaders.

Working alongside parents, we seek to understand and promote connection for Aboriginal children and young people to their culture, and community as this contributes to their resilience.

In partnership with Aboriginal controlled organisations, we work to reduce the incidence of child abuse and family violence in Aboriginal families in our catchment area.

We actively support Aboriginal controlled organisations to obtain the resources to provide services and achieve improved outcomes for Aboriginal individuals, children and families.

In order to achieve the intent expressed in this policy we need to ensure our whole organisation, including Board members and staff (paid and volunteer), are informed about Aboriginal culture through Aboriginal people and Aboriginal Controlled Organisations; that our Strategic Directions include objectives that focus on developing the Agency's cultural lens in relation to Aboriginal communities, children and families; that all relevant Agency policies include references to cultural competence and that there is alignment between these, our programs and practice.

Board, staff and others associated with Camcare will be encouraged to demonstrate knowledge, attitudes, values, understanding and skills in indigenous culture and its importance for the individual, family and community.

Advocacy

Camcare will:

- Support Aboriginal organisations to secure the funding they need to provide a continuum of child and family services including prevention and early intervention services
- Advocate for better education, health, welfare outcomes for Aboriginal individuals, children and families.