

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER LGBTIQ+SB PEOPLES

PART TWO

A QLIFE GUIDE
FOR HEALTH AND
SOCIAL CARE
PRACTITIONERS,
SERVICE PROVIDERS,
AND FOLKS WHO
CARE

Contact QLife

Health professionals wanting to know more can contact

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QLife acknowledges the Traditional Owners of country throughout this land now known as Australia, their diversity, histories and knowledge and their continuing connection to lands, waters and communities. This QGuide was developed on unceded Yugarabul lands, and Gadigal lands. QLife pays our respects to Elders and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples across this country we know as Australia.

This QGuide was developed in collaboration with Matika Little, Queer Wiradjuri and Kamilaroi woman, and Brendon Moorfield- Rainbow Mob.

February 2024

This QGuide is part two of two. See part one for a Respectful Engagement Glossary, and some statistics.

Addressing stereotypes

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+SB individuals can face stereotypes when engaging with health providers and support services. Factors like racism, misconceptions, biases, and lack of cultural awareness can influence stereotypes, which have a resultant impact. Let's break some of these stereotypes down.

Cultural Homogenisation

- **Stereotype:** Assuming that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have the same cultural beliefs and practices.
- **Impact:** This stereotype overlooks the diversity within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, ignoring the unique experiences, histories, traditions, lore, languages, and identities that exist. It can lead to inappropriate and culturally insensitive care, as well as disregarding the distinct experiences of LGBTIQ+ peoples and communities.
- **Reality:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are diverse with distinct cultures and varying levels of personal connection and expression of culture. This diversity means each community and person will have differing needs and unique solutions when it comes to health-related outcomes.

Blood Quantum and Skin Colour

- **Stereotype:** Assuming that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have dark skin and dark features and that those who don't must have a lower percentage of ancestry.
- **Impact:** This stereotype reinforces assimilationist narratives that can impact individuals' self-esteem and hinder access to services, as well as contribute to racial profiling. This oversimplification dismisses unique identities and deep cultural connections, as well as the ongoing impacts of colonisation and the attempted genocide of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- **Reality:** Recognising the diversity within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is essential for fostering cultural awareness, equity, and inclusivity. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples do not recognise blood quantum as an important aspect of cultural connection and instead focus on ancestry (regardless of blood quantum), personal identification and community recognition.

Victimhood Stereotype

- **Stereotype:** Portraying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+SB individuals solely as victims of discrimination and trauma.
- **Impact:** While acknowledging the historical and ongoing injustices faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is important, focusing solely on victimhood overlooks the strength, resilience, and agency of these individuals, and their communities. This stereotype can further marginalise them and undermine their ability to access holistic healthcare that addresses their overall wellbeing.



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Tips for engaging with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+SB peoples

Cultivate Cultural Knowledge:

- Research and understand the diverse cultural backgrounds, traditions, and histories of the communities in which you work and live.
- Approach each individual with humility and a willingness to learn from their unique experiences.

Use Inclusive Language:

- Respect and use appropriate pronouns and names, ask if you are unsure.
- Familiarise yourself with relevant terminology to communicate effectively and respectfully.
- Use plain English.
- Tailor your language to reflect that of the service user, avoid use of clinical or specialised jargon.

Ongoing Learning and Reflection:

- Regularly update your knowledge about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and cultures and LGBTIQ+SB identities. For example, organisations such as Blaq Aboriginal Corporation deliver the professional development program Rainbow Mob.
- Reflect on your own biases and assumptions to provide unbiased care.

Acknowledge Intersectionality:

- Recognise that individuals have multiple identities and lived experiences that intersect (e.g., cultural identity, gender, sexuality, disability, etc.). Approach individual experiences with sensitivity and mindfulness to these intersections.
- When approaching a person experiencing multiple intersections, don't view or avoid viewing these intersections as points of weakness, but as points of strength, particularly during help-seeking behaviours. Eg. Someone who is Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, experiencing mental health challenges, and on substances reaches out for support during a mental health episode – it should be viewed as a strength that they are reaching out. Acknowledge the resilience demonstrated by showing up and seeking help.
- When working with mob, always work from a strengths based approach. Focusing on the strengths and intersectionalities leads to better engagement and outcomes.

Understand Self-determination:

- Take the time to read about what self-determination means for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples: see [Self-Determination and Treaty, an article from Deadly Story](#) for further reading on this topic.

Tips for engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+SB peoples (continued)

Prioritise Relationships and trust building:

- Building trust is essential; take the time to listen, learn, and connect on a personal level before moving forward.
- Understand and hear the story. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people often describe their experiences through story rather than provide detail of their experiences. Acknowledge experiences and use questions to gain greater understanding. Deep listening is a great tool to build trust. If Mob are telling you a story about themselves how they got there in detail they are trusting you. They trust that you will read between the lines at times and understand or bring out the problem via the story, rather than speaking directly to the problem at hand. So deep listening and understanding need to be developed.
- Understand the complexity and history behind Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+SB peoples interacting with specific organisations such as healthcare and government departments and how this has led to a lack of trust in these institutions for many.

Culturally Tailored Support:

- Provide the option to access to culturally sensitive resources and services.
- Address topics like sexual health with cultural humility, recognising potential stigma or cultural differences in discussing such matters. To read more about cultural humility, check out the [QGuide on Anti-Oppressive Practice](#).

Client-centred Care:

- In the interest of self-determination, a client centred approach to work is more in keeping with this ethos as the individual has input and say in the direction of their care and support.

Engage Families and Communities:

- With the individual's consent, it may be appropriate to seek the involvement of family and support networks in care decisions, respecting the role of family, Elders and kinship networks for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures.
- Discuss appropriate options for care including community-based organisations and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations and other health providers. It is a client's choice of how and by whom they want to seek further assistance and support.

Trauma-Informed Care:

- Approach care with sensitivity and understand the continued impacts of colonisation on the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+SB peoples.
- Avoid re-traumatisation by developing a space that the service user feels is safe and supportive enough to be able to facilitate engagement. It is not up to us as service providers to dictate what a safe space is, but the service user. This is entirely the service user's discretion, and whether the space is perceived as safe will change from service user to service user. See the Australian Psychological Society's resource [Trauma-Informed Care: Culturally responsive practice working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities](#) for further reading.

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References and further reading

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- *Trauma-Informed Care: Culturally responsive practice working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities*
- <https://www.watarrkafoundation.org.au/blog/the-role-of-family-kinship-in-aboriginal-culture>
- <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/mentalhealth/psychosocial/principles/Pages/trauma-informed.aspx>
- <https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/our-work/partnering-consumers/person-centred-care>
- <https://qlife.org.au/uploads/Anti-Oppressive-Practice.pdf>
- https://deadlystory.com/page/culture/articles/Standing_Strong
- <https://healingfoundation.org.au/app/uploads/2019/12/Working-with-Stolen-Generations-GP-fact-sheet.pdf>
- <https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/people/how-to-name-aboriginal-people>
- <https://deadlystory.com/page/culture/articles/self-determination-and-treaty>

*Note - This list is not exhaustive and may not include all networks and organisations available to the community.

BlaQ Aboriginal Corporation

BlaQ is the peak organisation for Aboriginal Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual + Sistergirl and Brotherboy (LGBTIQA+SB) Peoples and Communities in NSW.

<https://blaq.org.au/about-blaq/>

2 Spirits

2Spirits is a program devoted to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex, Queer, Sistergirl and Brotherboys. The program offers support services including health promotion, forums, peer education, referrals and more. They also provide links to community support groups in Brisbane and Cairns.

<https://www.qc.org.au/2spirits>

Black Rainbow

Black Rainbow is a national volunteer Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQA+SB social enterprise aimed at pursuing the positive health and wellbeing of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQA+SB community located in the Top End capital, Darwin, Northern Territory.

<http://www.blackrainbow.org.au/>

IndigiLez Women's Leadership and Support Group

IndigiLez Leadership and Support Group was formed in 2008 and has since become one of Queensland's prominent social support groups for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lesbians and same-sex attracted women.

<https://www.yarnsheal.com.au/indigilez>

Gar'ban'djee'lum Network

gar'ban'djee'lum is a Brisbane-based, independent social and support network for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people with diverse genders, bodies, sexualities and relationships.

<https://www.yarnsheal.com.au/garbandjeelum>

SistersBrothersNT

Celebrating Diversity and striving for First Nations Rainbow Acceptance, celebration, raising community awareness, improving wellbeing, and reducing stigma and discrimination for First Nations for Sistergirls and Brotherboys. Based in the NT.

<https://www.facebook.com/SistersBrothersNTCelebratingDiversity/>

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