

Wellways practice framework: Working with people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

It is well recognised that people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have poorer health and mental health outcomes than the general population. Working with people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities requires culturally respectful engagement, a holistic understanding of wellbeing, genuine engagement with families and commitment to building partnerships with local communities and leaders.

1.1 Wellways principles in working with people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

When working with people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, we will:

- acknowledge the impacts of racism and social disadvantage on the well-being of people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and be aware of inequalities of power and privilege
- recognise existing frameworks of healing within Indigenous communities, including the importance of culture and spirituality in relation to wellbeing
- support self-determination and enable individuals and families to take a lead in decision making and support processes
- build partnerships with local community organisations and leaders in the development and delivery of culturally safe and effective services

1.2 Evidence base for the Wellways approach to working with people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

Evidence shows that many of the strengths and resources that support wellbeing for people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds feature in traditional Aboriginal culture such as a collective sense of self that is reinforced by kinship networks, beliefs and customs around healing, and physical and spiritual connectedness with the land.

This holistic understanding of wellbeing is key to working effectively with people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.

1.3 Features of the Wellways approach to working with people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

Wellways will:

- promote a culture of critical reflective practice and provide support for staff to develop cultural competence
- offer culturally-appropriate assessment and involve specialist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services where appropriate in considering what the person and their family need
- recognise the centrality of family and kinship networks and welcome involvement and input from important people in the person's life, such as healers
- wherever practicable, adapt practices, tools and physical environments in response to cultural needs
- create a welcoming environment through the use of language, images and physical spaces
- work in partnership with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and leaders to build relationships, address stigma and develop shared approaches to mental health
- involve people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds in the development, planning and evaluation of services
- wherever practicable, adapt practices, tools and physical environments in response to cultural needs.

1.4 References

Purdie, N, Dudgeon P, Walker R. (2010). Working Together: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health and Wellbeing Principles and Practice. Commonwealth of Australia.

Community Recovery Model

People affected by mental health issues have the right to create a good life by making a home, engaging in meaningful work or learning, and building good relationships with friends, family and people in their community.

The Wellway's Community Recovery Model recognises that real and lasting recovery does not occur in isolation, and can be best achieved by working at three levels to:

- promote recovery and positive change for people with mental health issues
- assist families and friends in building resilience
- create welcoming communities.



Family and friends

- We understand mental health issues
- We know what helps recovery
- We look after our own wellbeing

Individual

- I can take charge of my life
- I feel connected to people
- I am part of my community

Community

- We include people with mental health issues
- We stand up for equal rights
- We create opportunities for people