

# **Australasian Health Facility Guidelines**

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## **Culturally Sensitive Planning and Design**

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# 01 CULTURALLY SENSITIVE PLANNING AND DESIGN

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF PAPER

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Australia and New Zealand are culturally diverse nations. A common principle to health systems across both countries is the need to ensure equitable access to quality health care for all people and that those from culturally, religiously and linguistically diverse backgrounds have an opportunity to contribute to decisions about health services that affect them.

This paper provides information relating to the process for engaging with cultural representatives and overarching design considerations to assist Users in ensuring that healthcare facilities incorporate culturally sensitive planning and design solutions.

## 1.2 ENGAGEMENT WITH CULTURAL REPRESENTATIVES

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The Australasian Health Facility Guidelines do not include specific planning and design strategies relating to cultural requirements given the diversity in population demographics across the various jurisdictions, as well as different requirements within a cultural group depending on their particular location. For example there are a large number of Aboriginal tribes or nations across Australia which have varying cultural requirements.

Given the strong focus on achieving health equity for Maori and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in all health districts across New Zealand and Australia respectively, AHIA supports the establishment of design solutions that promote improved quality of life and wellbeing for Indigenous communities.

The various district health boards, area health services and local health districts within each jurisdiction will have tailored strategies and service models for their own communities based on local need and population demographics. It is also recommended that the local cultural context is considered when undertaking planning and design processes through engagement with local cultural groups to ensure their needs are incorporated within the design of the facility.

## 1.3 OVERARCHING CULTURAL DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

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The following considerations are provided to assist in the establishment of appropriate design solutions, whilst noting that they need to be considered on a project by project basis with input from local cultural groups.

- The incorporation of culturally sensitive planning and design solutions for indigenous populations should seek to align with the key principles set out in the He Korowai Oranga, New Zealand's Maori Health Strategy (2014) and National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Health Plan (2013-2023).
- The design of facilities should celebrate the cultural heritage of the local area and provide a welcoming environment for all people. Design strategies may include displaying local, culturally relevant artworks or artefacts and the use of culturally sensitive colour schemes. The approach to this should be established through consultation with representatives from local cultural groups.
- Wayfinding solutions should be in culturally specific languages for the cultural groups that predominately access the hospital's services. It should include the use of universal pictorial symbols and also consider the use of braille symbols.

- With the ageing population and increasing number of people with sight impairment, the use of colour is very important for wayfinding. This should also be taken into account when considering the appropriate use of colour for culturally diverse groups.
- Access to culturally appropriate areas should be provided, for example consideration of outdoor waiting, meeting and consultation spaces where appropriate and access to spiritual care areas that meet religious requirements of the local population.

## **02 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING**

- He Korowai Oranga, New Zealand's Maori Health Strategy (2014)
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Health Plan (2013-2023)
- Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care, 2017, Improving Care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, Section 4: Creating Safe and Welcoming Environments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Consumers
- Aboriginal Environments Research Centre (AERC), University Queensland.