

Standards for First Nations Cultural Safety Review

Independent Rapid Literature Review and Environmental Scan



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The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (Commission) commissioned an independent rapid literature review and environmental scan to inform options for strengthening cultural safety in Australian hospitals and support the Commission's broader standards for First Nations Cultural Safety Review. This work was undertaken by Jayde Fuller, Director of Indigenous Regulatory Practice.

This report is being shared as an evidence resource to support consultation, engagement and co-design with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations and other stakeholders. The findings are intended to inform discussion and the development of future options for strengthening First Nations cultural safety in hospitals. The report does not represent final Commission policy or decisions.

The review examined five key questions relating to:

- The meaning of culturally safe care from the perspective of First Nations patients and communities;
- How cultural safety should be measured;
- What governance and accountability mechanisms drive system-level change;
- What conditions support structural transformation; and
- What would be required to shift standards from a competency-based to an accountability-based approach.

The review comprised:

- Part A: A rapid literature review of 145 peer-reviewed publications from Australia, Canada, Aotearoa New Zealand and the United States.
- Part B: An environmental scan of policy, standards, governance, accountability and measurement frameworks across the same jurisdictions.

The review identified a consistent gap between what the evidence suggests is required to achieve culturally safe care and what current regulatory and accountability frameworks

require. Current approaches often focus on compliance and activity rather than outcomes experienced by First Nations patients, families and communities.

Table 1 Key themes and potential approaches identified in the review

Theme	Approach
Cultural safety	Align standards with a clear, patient-determined definition of cultural safety.
Organisational accountability	Establish organisational requirements linked to measurable outcomes, rather than process completion.
Measurement	Strengthen community-reported and patient-validated measures of cultural safety.
Transparency	Increase transparency, public reporting and accountability for cultural safety outcomes.
Governance	Embed First Nations leadership, oversight and governance within accountability arrangements.

The review also identified important evidence gaps, including limited national data on cultural safety from First Nations patient perspectives and limited evaluation of the impact of existing standards frameworks.

This report is intended to inform, not determine, future policy decisions. It is provided as an independent evidence resource to support discussion, consultation and engagement. The findings will inform conversations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities, organisations, health services, professional bodies and governments, and contribute to the next phase of the Commission's work, including stakeholder engagement and co-design of future approaches to cultural safety in hospital settings.

The Commission acknowledges that the 2026-2031 National Health Reform Agreement (NHRA) Addendum is now in force and resolves the definition of cultural safety for NHRA-related work.

For more information

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