

# Tips for Careworkers: First Australians - Communication



**What it is:** Appropriate care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples includes talking with them in a culturally sensitive way. It also includes cultural safety. This is about recognising, respecting, and nurturing their cultural identity.

Culturally appropriate care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples:

- has people and their needs at the centre
- includes the context of their family, community, and culture.

**Why it matters:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have high risk of life-limiting conditions. This includes advanced heart, kidney, and lung disease, and dementia. Being able to talk with the person and their family is important.

**What I need to know:** For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, “family” members may not be related by blood but through traditional kinship or cultural groupings.

To build good relationships, introduce yourself and begin with a relaxed conversation. This is sometimes known as ‘having a yarn’.

Acceptable terms to describe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are Aboriginal person, Torres Strait Islander person, and First Australian.

## Note

Post-death practices or requirements will differ across communities. Only certain people can touch or move a dead body.

## Do

Ask the person if they want to hear information about their care; or whether they prefer you to talk to family members instead.

## Do

Ask who has the right to make decisions on behalf of the person; this may not be the “next-of-kin”.

## Do

You might like to ask:

- ‘Are there cultural or spiritual practices that affect the way you wish to be cared for?’
- ‘Are there other people we should include in talks about your care?’

## Do

Tips for talking together:

- don’t talk too fast or be too direct
- some people avoid eye contact; this doesn’t mean they aren’t listening
- listen, ask questions rather than giving answers
- avoid questions requiring a “yes” or “no” answer.

**Name:**

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## My reflections:

When I first meet with an older Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person what could I do to make them feel comfortable?

What are important things to remember when talking with First Australians?

## My notes:

See related palliAGED Practice  
Tip Sheets:  
Culturally Responsive Care -  
Communication  
People with Specific Needs  
Person-Centred Care

For references and the latest version of all Tip Sheets visit  
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