Community Legal Centres Queensland

First Nations Framework

2025-2030

Consultation Draft

Acknowledgement

We are committed to honoring Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas and their rich contribution to society[1]. We acknowledge the diversity, stories, traditions and living cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and commit to fostering a culture of learning from and working with First Nations peoples in the spirit of reconciliation and access to justice.

Community Legal Centres Queensland pay our deepest respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples* as the traditional custodians of the land and seas in Australia, and recognise their continuing connection to land, water and culture.

We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past and present, and particularly pay deep respect to the Turrbal and Jagera peoples, traditional custodians of the lands around Meanjin (Brisbane), on which the Community Legal Centres Queensland office sits and all of the lands on which community legal centres across Queensland are located.

We acknowledge sovereignty was never ceded, and take meaningful steps to supporting self-determination for all First Nations peoples.

Always was. Always will be.

* "Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander" and *"First Nations"* are used interchangeably throughout this document.

Appreciation

Community Legal Centres Queensland would like to pay special thanks to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who so generously offered their insights, time, energy, expertise and grace to the consultations that took place over two years.

Centring First Nations voices and expertise is paramount across our entire work program, particularly our First Nations work. We are incredibly grateful and express our deep appreciation to our First Nations stakeholders who helped guide us in developing this Framework.

– The **CLCQ First Nations Reference Group**, our steering group for the project, who have provided a vital sounding board and guide, been our 'critical friend', and ensured we undertook the work in a way that provided safety for everyone. Our deep thanks to: Andrea Kyle Sailor, Bino Toby, Candice Hughes, Kathleen Wincen, Patrina Benton, Trish Johnson, Simone Matthews and Sammy Cooper.

– **First Nations Community Controlled CLCs,** who shared their wisdom and perspectives and gave us invaluable insights:
    o Aboriginal Family Legal Services Qld (Maruma-li-mari)
    o First Nations Women's Legal Services NQ
    o Institute for Urban Indigenous Health
    o Qld Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service

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[1] Source: Welcome to Country & Acknowledgement of Country - Creative Spirits, https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/spirituality/welcome-to-country-acknowledgement-of-country

– The **CLCQ First Nations Employee Network**, more than 60 First Nations employees across Queensland who work in community legal centres, whose experiences and perspectives, so generously shared, form the foundation upon which the Framework has been built.

Thanks also to our **'mainstream' CLC leaders**, who have participated in the process of developing the framework with openness and honesty, and a willingness to acknowledge challenges, organisational weaknesses, areas for improvement and opportunity for growth. We are grateful for their generosity of spirit and preparedness to step up for this journey.

About this Framework

In late 2022 CLCQ secured project funds from the Department of Justice and Attorney-General (DJAG) to develop a First Nations Strategic Framework for the CLC sector in Queensland focusing on initiatives to improve cultural safety within the CLC sector for First Nations peoples and support the recruitment and retention of First Nations peoples as part of the CLC workforce.

CLCQ identified a range of drivers for the development of a strategic framework, including:

➢ Ensuring that CLCQs future work for and with First Nations peoples reflects the needs and priorities of First Nations organisations and workers in our sector, and supports them to meet the needs of their clients and communities

➢ Addressing gaps in our understanding of what mainstream and specialist CLCs see as their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges in working with and for First Nations peoples

➢ Elevating and centering First Nations voices in the sector and foregrounding First Nations peoples as experts in their own story

➢ Identifying initiatives to more effectively support First Nations workers in the CLC sector

➢ Developing mechanisms to support accountability for outcomes and benefits for First Nations clients, families and communities

➢ Analyzing the effectiveness /impact of the cultural safety standard of the accreditation scheme

➢ Identifying and supporting opportunities for collaboration and networking in the sector

Key aims of the Framework include to guide ongoing action to help CLCs in Queensland to meet reporting obligations and the requirements of accreditation, and to support meaningful relationships within CLCs and their communities

Approach

In developing the Framework CLCQ has prioritized elevating the voices and lived experience of First Nations peoples and organisations in the community legal sector to support change, and in continuing to build the capability of mainstream CLCs to work with and for First Nations peoples.

Consultation through conversations with First Nations stakeholders was at the heart of the project to make sure the Framework is community designed and community led. Consultations

were held during 2023 with community-controlled organisations in the sector, First Nations sector leaders, the CLCQ First Nations Reference Group and with the First Nations Employee Network in 2023 at Wunya, the state-wide First Nations Employee Network Conference run by CLCQ. Engagement was undertaken in ways that best responded to the needs and availability of our stakeholders, and guided by principles of good practice and culturally appropriate engagement.

Consultation with 'mainstream' CLCs started in November 2023 at the CLCQ Leadership Forum, and continued in the first half of 2024 through targeted conversations with a range of individual CLC members who represented the breadth of our membership (including size, locality and service focus (ie generalist or specialist)).

Consultations were structured around 5 key domains:

1. Key issues facing First Nations people

2. CLC sector culture

3. Capability in the CLC sector

4. Workforce development

5. Implementation (including data and evaluation)

We recognized and were thoughtful about the interlinked nature of the consultation domains, with the areas of capability in the sector and workforce development being particularly co-dependent given that capability is a pre-requisite for effective recruitment and retention of First Nations workers.

Development of a draft structure for the framework followed analysis and 'sense-making' of the consultation outcomes, with the CLCQ First Nations Reference Group considering and endorsing the proposed approach, which was also subsequently shared with the CLC First Nations Employee Network at Wunya 2024.

Vision

The Framework vision is that **First Nations peoples feel safe and confident to access assistance and work at every Queensland CLC.**

The initiatives captured in the Framework reflect the complexity and scale of the work that is needed to achieve our vision.

Principles

The following principles underpin the development of the Framework and will inform its implementation:

➢ Being First Nations led

➢ Elevating the voices and lived experiences of First Nations peoples in the CLC sector

➢ Advancing a strengths-based approach to building cultural intelligence and cultural safety.

➢ To make sure we hear from people, and bring the whole sector on the journey

Framework Structure

The framework is structured around four key pillars that capture the main themes that emerged from our consultations:

Pillar 1: Constantly improving cultural capability in working for and with First Nations peoples

Pillar 2: Supporting the current and future First Nations workforce of Queensland's community legal centres

Pillar 3: Building community connection and relationships

Pillar 4: Evaluating our impact and measuring our progress

Within these pillars, the framework clusters the key areas that we think need focused action to make progress under the pillar, and then identifies primary initiatives and actions that we will work to deliver.

Strategic pillars and areas for action

Pillar 1

Constantly improving cultural capability in working for and with First Nations peoples

Governance & Management
Leadership development & upskilling
Organisational values and philosophy
Workplace culture
Resourcing
Organisational frameworks (policies, procedures, guidelines)
Professional and personal development
Culturally safe governance

Clients & Stakeholders
Service models & design
Models for stakeholder engagement & relationship building
Relationship based partnerships
Commitments to allyship & elevation of First Nations voices

Pillar 2

Supporting the current and future First Nations workforce of Queensland Community Legal Centres

Cultural & psychological safety and support
Recognising, respecting & responding to cultural factors
Commitment to culturally safe workplaces & support systems
Access to cultural supports and cultural activities

HR systems & management
Recruitment & retention policies, procedures & guidelines
Remuneration
Systems for workforce engagement /input /feedback
WH&S (cultural & psychological safety)

Workforce Development
Work pathways
Training, personal & profession development
CLC entry pathways
Partnerships

Pillar 3

Building community connection and relationships

Stakeholder & community engagement
Principles and philosophy
Mapping & Planning
Training & development
Promoting commitment
Building local knowledge Culturally safe and strategic models of engagement
People centric relationships

Supporting workers
Organisational frameworks (policies, procedures, guidelines)
Understanding Cultural Load and impact of responding to community expectations
Service design inputs

Pillar 4

Evaluating impact and measuring our progress

Measuring progress
KPI identification
Cultural safety performance measures / indictors (or proxies)

Evaluation
Evaluation of strategies, initiatives & relationships embedded in First Nations ways of knowing, being and doing

Cultural safety evaluation

Embedding principles of Data Sovereignty

Pillar 1:	Constantly improving cultural capability in working for and with First Nations peoples	
Areas for action	**Governance & Management** Leadership development & upskilling Organisational values and philosophy Workplace culture Resourcing Organisational frameworks (policies, procedures, guidelines) Professional and personal development Culturally safe governance	**Clients & Stakeholders** Service models & design Models for stakeholder engagement & relationship building Relationship based partnerships Commitments to allyship & elevation of First Nations voices
Key initiatives	Develop template policies and procedures on: - Cultural safety - Support for First Nations employees (cultural supervision and mentoring; cultural leave, flexible work practices) - Salary recognition via cultural loading Develop resources to support good organisational practice - Good practice guides - Guides for assessing cultural safety across all organisational frameworks and systems - Information on culturally safe governance - Leadership - role and responsibilities of Board and CEO in fostering culturally safe workplaces Identify /develop resources to support and encourage culturally competent CLC leaders and develop commitments to personal and professional growth	Develop template framework for client engagement Identify/ develop resources about client journey mapping Provide information and training on developing culturally safe referral pathways – and how to become a culturally safe referral partner Foster genuine commitment to acknowledging and celebrating First Nations Days of Significance Establish a Community of Practice

Pillar 2	Supporting the current and future workforce of Queensland CLCs		
Areas for action	**Cultural & psychological safety & support** Recognising, respecting & responding to cultural factors Commitment to culturally safe workplaces & support systems Access to cultural supports and cultural activities	**HR systems & management** Recruitment & retention policies, procedures & guidelines Remuneration Systems for workforce engagement / input /feedback WH&S (cultural & psychological safety)	**Workforce Development** Work pathways Training, personal & professional development CLC entry pathways Partnerships
Key initiatives	Hold Wunya or equivalent event for First Nations employees in sector regularly Maintain support for CLCQ First Nations employee network Develop best practice guide/s for supporting First Nations staff and understanding cultural factors that can impact First Nations workers Explore options to support CLCs to access tailored Cultural safety training Facilitate access to cultural supervision and mentoring	Develop a toolkit for CLCs to assess their recruitment policies and procedures for cultural appropriateness & safety, including the protection of people's rights. Develop a checklist to assess First Nations staff retention factors across all organisational systems Encourage the embedding of cultural loading salary allowances as 'better practice' in CLCs Establish regular staff surveys as a practice requirement for accreditation in Qld Develop template policy /procedures on psychosocial hazards	Support CLCs to assess and improve progression & promotion pathways for First Nations staff Work with CLC sector to explore options for student mentoring, internships and graduate pathways at the sector level Work with the sector to leverage existing university partnerships Provide sector-wide tailored training and development opportunities for First Nations staff

Pillar 3	Building community connection and relationships	
Areas for action	**Stakeholder & Community Engagement** Principles and philosophy Mapping & Planning Training & development Promoting commitment Building local knowledge Culturally safe and strategic models of engagement People centric relationships	**Supporting Workers** Organisational frameworks (policies, procedures, guidelines) Understanding Cultural Load & impacts of responding to community expectations Service design inputs
Key initiatives	Develop good practice guides for engaging with First Nations stakeholders and communities Provide support for CLCs to establish guiding principles and values for stakeholder and community engagement for their organisation Conduct workshops on how to build relationships in 'community'; Provide training on understanding cultural protocols in community Develop place-based thinking for centres looking towards best practice (wise practice) ways of working with First Nations peoples, families and communities Identify /develop resources on stakeholder mapping and stakeholder engagement planning, and deliver training (eg webinars) Through consultation, identify sector-focused collaboration opportunities (outside of LAQ and ATSILS), and explore options to prepare CLC sector materials on pathways for clients.	Deliver /develop training on managing workplace and community expectations that can be experienced by First Nations workers Develop template policies and procedures for CLCs to customize / adopt in how to support First Nations workers in managing and responding to community expectations Act as a 'phone a friend' for CLCs on a case by case basis in engaging with community on service design improvements.

Pillar 4	Evaluating impact and measuring our progress	
Outcome Areas	**Measuring Progress** KPI identification Cultural safety performance measures / indictors (or proxies)	**Evaluation** Evaluation of strategies, initiatives & relationships embedded in First Nations ways of knowing, being and doing Cultural safety evaluation Embedding principles of Data Sovereignty
Key initiatives	Develop KPIs for priority initiatives Work with CLCs to develop data capture strategies to support measurement of progress on priority initiatives, informed by principles and practices of First Nations data sovereignty	Develop a First Nations centered evaluation framework underpinned by a Theory of Change, founded on principles of culturally informed evaluation.