

PEPA

Program of Experience in the Palliative Approach

Funded by the Australian Government
Department of Health and Ageing

THE NATIONAL
PALLIATIVE CARE
PROGRAM



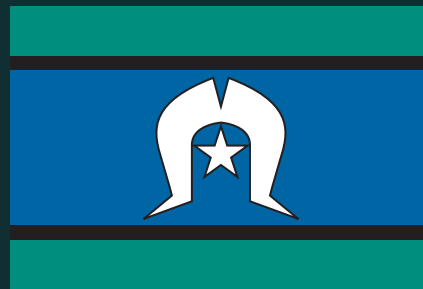
A Program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers

Communication Guidelines

For PEPA Managers, Mentors and others involved



Aboriginal Flag



Torres Strait Islander Flag

Cover Artwork

The Beginning of our Journey: Spiritually, Emotionally & Culturally Entering into the Dreaming



This particular piece of Aboriginal artwork has been titled by the artist: **Kahli Luttrell, Yorta Yorta descendent of Northern Country Victoria** and has been designed for use in Victorian Aboriginal Palliative Care.

"The Beginning of Our Journey"

As you twirl a piece of ribbon you don't know which way it will go and this, of course, applies to the paths and Journeys we can take in our lives, and how these paths can change as we go along in our life.

The Road travelled together is easier than the road travelled alone, that's why the people in the art symbolise the support of our family, friends and community support services.

The cycles also symbolise that many people have travelled in and out of our lives and these people are taking the same path into our Journey of the Dreaming and the auras in the background are our ancestor & family members guiding us to the dreaming.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flags have been used with permission.

The Torres Strait Islander Flag



Designed in 1992 by the late Bernard Namok from Thursday Island.

Description and Meaning:

Green represents the land

Blue represents the sea

White represents peace

The Dhari (headdress) represents Torres Strait Island people and the five pointed star represents the five major island groups. The star also symbolises navigation to represent the seafaring culture of the Torres Straits.

www.dreamtime.net.au

The Aboriginal flag



Designed by Harold Joseph Thomas, a Luritja man and was first flown in 1971 from Central Australia.

Description and Meaning:

Black represents the Aboriginal people

Yellow circle represents the sun-the constant re-newer of life.

Red represents the earth and Aboriginal people's relationship with the land. Red also represents ochre which is used by Aboriginal people in ceremonies.

Acknowledgements

All personnel involved in PEPA wish to acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as First Nation peoples of Australia. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have survived and adapted despite a history of past negative policies. We acknowledge and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and peoples.

Development of all learning materials related to PEPA for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers has been overseen by a Reference Group of representatives from health, education and policy sectors of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

A Working Party comprising the project coordinator, PEPA Managers, Indigenous project officers and the National PEPA team developed Communication Guidelines.

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Disclaimer

This resource has been developed and reviewed by palliative care specialists, and is based on best evidence at the time of writing. It is not the responsibility of, nor does it necessarily reflect the views of the organisations to which individual team members may be affiliated or that of the funding body, the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

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1. General Consideration

The PEPA Communication Guidelines have been developed to provide guidance for individuals and organisations involved in the implementation and evaluation of PEPA and to enable them to work within local cultural practices and protocols.

Statement about 'Men's and Women's business'

Traditionally Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have had a clear division between 'Men's and Women's business' particularly in regards to health issues and gender specific body parts and functions.

Throughout PEPA workshops, clinical placements and other educational events, educators and participants are encouraged to be mindful and respectful of the mores associated with 'Men's and Women's business'. Materials and concepts presented in PEPA should be respectful of the feelings of each participant, and ensure that the teaching and learning environment is at all times effective and culturally safe.

A strategy for cultural safety is to ensure that PEPA participants are supported in their right to leave the facility at any time should they find material or situations confronting or contrary to their own belief system about 'Men's and Women's business'. Should the situation arise where participants demonstrate their discomfort because of incongruence with their values, it is the responsibility of PEPA Managers, mentors and educators to review and adjust content or style of current and future programs. Consultation with local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander health care personnel is recommended to gain further understanding about protocols relating to gender issues.

Cultural Respect

The PEPA Communication Guidelines are underpinned by the principles of a Cultural Respect Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health 2004-2009¹ which should be applied in the development, implementation and evaluation of PEPA for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers.

Cultural Respect is defined as:

Recognition, protection and continued advancement of the inherent rights, cultures and traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (2004, p.7).

The broad principle of Cultural Respect is that interventions or services should 'not wittingly compromise the cultural rights, practices, values and expectations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' (ibid).

¹ Australia Health Ministers' Advisory Council's (AHMAC) Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Working Party. *Cultural Respect Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health 2004-2009*. Department of Health South Australia, March 2004.

2. Cultural Respect in PEPA

The Practice Principles identified in the Resource Kit: *Providing culturally appropriate palliative care to Indigenous Australians (2004)*², provide the framework for implementing cultural respect principles in PEPA.

Practice Principles

1. Engage with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander organisations and personnel in the planning, delivery and evaluation of PEPA to ensure educational activities are culturally appropriate
2. Communicate with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers, health care organisations and providers in a sensitive way that values cultural difference
3. Provide information or training to all personnel involved in delivery of PEPA to ensure the principles of cultural respect are applied

Recommended organisational and personal strategies for applying each practice principle are listed below.

Principle 1

Engage with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander organisations and personnel in the planning, delivery and evaluation of PEPA to ensure educational activities are culturally appropriate.

Organisational strategies for applying principle 1:

General

- A Reference Group with representation from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Education organisations will oversee development, implementation and evaluation of PEPA for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers
- A Working Party of PEPA Managers and Indigenous project or education officers will consider the recommendations of the Reference Group when developing guidelines, policies and educational material
- Reference should be made to state or territory guidelines on protocols relating to implementation of cultural respect principles - see for example www.AustralianIndigenousHealthinonet.ecu.edu.au. This site links to published cultural protocols and guidelines from different jurisdictions.

² *Providing culturally appropriate palliative care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples Resource Kit*. Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation, Wodonga Institute of TAFE. 2004. Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

2. Cultural Respect in PEPA

Specific

The 'Acknowledgement of Country' and/or 'Welcome to Country' should be observed at the beginning of PEPA workshops or similar events. In addition, individual presenters, lectures or mentors may choose to incorporate an 'Acknowledgement of Country' at the beginning of their presentation.

Welcome to country is a very important protocol; please ensure that you observe protocols relevant to the community in which you gather. A Senior Aboriginal person (recognised Elder of the community) usually gives the 'Welcome to Country' for the local area. An Elder is not necessarily an older person, but rather someone who has the trust and respect of their community and is recognised as a cultural knowledge keeper³. A fee may be charged by the local Indigenous organisation for their representative to perform the 'Welcome to Country'.

'Acknowledgement of Country' is provided by a non-Indigenous person or Indigenous person not from the land where the meeting is held. Information about your local Indigenous community or region may be obtained from your local Indigenous organisations. In addition you can learn about local Indigenous regions and language groups by accessing Internet sites, for example: www.Alatsis.gov.au/aboriginal_studies_press.

Example of 'Acknowledgement of Country' statement

"I would like to acknowledge the _____ people, as custodians and traditional owners of this land, and their elders past and present, and on whose land we now meet".

- Local Indigenous people should be employed to co-facilitate PEPA workshops and implement PEPA activities, where possible. This is important when addressing all aspects of patient care associated with end-of-life issues
- Where possible and as desired a local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Health Worker or similar person should be engaged to accompany the course participants during the clinical placement visit
- Use existing information materials developed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients and families dealing with chronic or advanced illness
- Ensure a culturally safe learning environment, which considers strategies for emotional safety, recognition of cultural mores, appropriate and respectful language, and time and space that accommodates various learning styles

Personal strategies for applying principle 1:

Undertake and facilitate cultural awareness orientation for yourself and others involved, as necessary

³ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocols. 2005. City of Sydney, viewed on 11 September 2008: www.AustralianIndigenousHealthinonet.ecu.edu.au

2. Cultural Respect in PEPA

Principle 2

Communicate with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers, health care organisations and providers, in a sensitive way that values cultural difference.

Organisational strategies for applying principle 2:

Factors influencing communication, as listed in the Resource Kit (2004, p.62-68), that are particularly relevant to PEPA include:

- Using appropriate language
- Appropriate non-verbal communication and attire
- Considering gender issues (discussed on page 4)
- Using appropriate communication

Using appropriate language

Some Indigenous people are uncomfortable with the term 'death and 'dying', preferring terms such as 'not going to get better', 'unwell', 'very sick' or getting ready to 'finish up'. Referring to the terminally ill person as 'the sick person' is common. For some Indigenous Australians these alternative terms reflect the desire to maintain hope.

The term 'sorry business' usually refers to the time after the death of someone who is from the community, but some Indigenous people may also use 'sorry business' in relation to the time before death when the sick person requires palliative care.

Appropriate non-verbal communication and attire

Cultural safety for some Indigenous people may be compromised by unconscious 'messages' sent through non-verbal communication, and mode of dress, that can be associated with past negative experiences. These include:

- Persistent questioning, direct questions, prolonged eye contact, loud voices, being too close, and rigid routines
- Uniforms, worn by authorities such as nurses and doctors, may trigger memories of past negative experiences with health services and bureaucracy

Using appropriate communication strategies

A communication process should be established that provides regular updates, feedback and opportunity for commentary from local and national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Registered Training Organisations (RTO) and other relevant education facilities

A support network of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers who have completed PEPA, should be established.

Personal strategies for applying principle 2:

- Gain information about the local Indigenous language/nation group
- Develop and nurture professional relationships with local Indigenous health personnel

Principle 3

Provide information or training to all personnel involved in delivery of PEPA to ensure the principles of cultural respect are applied.

Organisational strategies for implementing principle 3:

- Work with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers, Hospital Liaison Officers, interpreters and others to distribute available resources relating to cultural safety principles, to PEPA host sites
- Access local teaching resources and where possible involve personnel from states or territories, Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) responsible for Indigenous Health Workers education.

Personal strategies for applying principle 3:

- Pursue learning opportunities relating to cultural safety. Cultural safety training includes orientation to the local Indigenous community and services.

Definition of cultural safety training

*Cultural safety training focuses on the concept of self as a 'cultural bearer'. It includes the historical, social and political influences on palliative care and Indigenous Australian attitudes to palliative care services. It supports the development of relationships that build trust.*⁴

⁴ *Providing culturally appropriate palliative care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples Resource Kit.* Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation, Wodonga Institute of TAFE. 2004. Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. p.71.

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