



**Victorian  
Public Sector  
Commission**



# Glossary of terms

## A glossary of terms used throughout the toolkit

The term 'Indigenous' is not used in this toolkit as historically it was a word used to describe animals and plants and then used to include Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people. When referring to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, you should refer to them by their language group – e.g. Yorta Yorta or Dja Dja Wurrung – or their broader geographical identity – e.g. Koori or Koorie in Victoria and NSW and Murri in Queensland.<sup>1</sup>

## Community

Community refers to and acknowledges all Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people living in Victoria. Community can be used to describe the entire Victorian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Community or smaller specific Communities.

## Country/Land

Country and Land encompasses everything within the landscape including: landforms, water, air, trees, rocks, plants, animals, medicines, minerals, stories and special places. Country also includes cultural practices, knowledge, songs, stories, art and people past, present and future. Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people have custodial responsibility to care for their Country.

## Cultural abuse

Cultural abuse happens when abusers use aspects of a victim's cultural identity to inflict suffering, or as a means of control.<sup>2</sup> Cultural abuse can include: using racial slurs, mocking someone's accent or appearance, or not letting someone observe cultural days.

## Cultural safety

Cultural safety means “an environment that is safe for people: where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared knowledge and experience, of learning, living and working together with dignity and truly listening”.<sup>3</sup>

## Designated position

A designated position requires a demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the Victorian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Community, society and culture. You can only fill a designated position with an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander applicant.

## Elders

An Elder is a respected member of the Community who has gained recognition as a custodian of knowledge and lore, and who has permission to disclose knowledge and beliefs.

## Identified position

An identified position requires a demonstrated knowledge and understanding of Victorian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Community, society and culture, as well as the issues impacting on it. Identified positions require a demonstrated ability to communicate sensitively and effectively with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Communities. You can fill an identified with any applicant, though you must preference Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander applicants.

## Lateral violence

Lateral violence is a product of historical, cultural and social dynamics that results in a spectrum of behaviours that include: gossiping, jealousy, bullying, shaming, social exclusion, family feuding, organisational conflict and physical violence. Lateral violence can impact Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees when their Community holds them accountable for the actions of their workplace or employer. Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees may work and live in the same Community and so the lateral violence extends from their work life to their personal life.

## **Racism**

Racism is a belief that a particular race or ethnicity is inferior or superior to others. Racism may take the form of stereotyping, name calling or insults, negative commentary in the media, speeches at public assemblies, property damage or abuse on the internet. Racism can also take the form of excluding people from accessing services (directly or indirectly), employment, education or sporting activities. Racism can occur systematically, as the result of policies, conditions and practices that affect a broad group of people.<sup>4</sup>

## **Self-determination**

Self-determination means Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people being able to make their own choices and live according to their own values and beliefs.

## **Traditional Owners**

Traditional Owners are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people who hold traditional rights and interests over particular Country.

## **Treaty**

A treaty is an agreement between states, nations or governments. The Victorian Government is in the process of negotiating a treaty or treaties with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Victorians. See more at [Victorian Treaty](#), which describes 'What is a Treaty':



## Useful links and other information

(1) [Creative Spirits: How to name Aboriginal people?](#)

(2) [6 Different Types of Abuse – REACH](#)

(3) Williams, R. (2008), Cultural safety; what does it mean for our work practice? Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, 23(2):213-214.

(4) Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, Racism: definition, research and laws.