Diverse Workforce

A Guide to Supporting Inclusive Workplaces in Aged Care

MCCI

Contents

Acknowledgements 4
- Acknowledgement of Country 4
- Acknowledgement of Contributors 4
- Acknowledgement of Funding Body 4
- Disclaimer 4

About this Guide 5

About About Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra (MCCI) 6

Defining Key Terms 7
- What is Racism? 7
- What is Discrimination? 8

Other Key Terms 9

Workers' Experiences 10
- A Recent Survey 10
- Direct and Indirect Experiences 11
- What was Experienced or Witnessed? 12

Voices of Respondents 14

How People Feel 16

Promoting an Inclusive Workplace in Aged Care 17
- Why is it Important? 17

Taking Action in Your Service 18
- Want to Learn More? 21

Diversity & Inclusion is for Everyone 21
- Frontline Workers 21
- Managers and Executives 22
- Boards and Governing Bodies 23

Voices of Respondents 24

References and More Information 26

Further Resources from the Sector 27

Acknowledgements

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

MCCI acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands upon which we live and work. We offer our deepest respect to Elders past, present and emerging, and we extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF CONTRIBUTORS

We acknowledge the many individuals and organisations who have contributed to the development of this guide. We especially acknowledge the Partners in Culturally Appropriate Care (PICAC) Alliance who assisted in the development of this resource.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF FUNDING BODY

This guide was developed under the Australian Government's PICAC NSW & ACT program and funded by the Department of Health and Aged Care.

DISCLAIMER

Racism and discrimination in workplaces can be a difficult subject matter to navigate. This guide is not intended to provide legal advice nor canvass the legal responsibilities of workers or employers in aged care or any other setting. Accordingly, MCCI expressly disclaims any and all liability to any person in respect of anything done or the consequences of anything done or omitted to be done in reliance or upon the whole or any part of this publication.

About this Guide

The Australian aged care workforce is incredibly diverse. The 2020 Aged Care Workforce Census[1] found that 35 per cent of direct care workers employed in residential aged care (RAC) were from a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) background.

Multicultural workers are vital for aged care providers to support older Australians. Every day, they provide quality care throughout the aged care sector in a wide range of roles, supporting the wellbeing of older people.

In 2023, 18 per cent of Australians said they had been discriminated against in the last 12 months based on their skin colour, ethnic origin or religion. This figure is higher for people born overseas *(*28 per cent*)* and those from non-English speaking backgrounds *(*39 per cent*)*. [2]

As in every part of society, multicultural workers in aged care settings can experience racism and discrimination simply because of who they are.

These actions may be in breach of the law and can be deeply distressing for workers, leading to psychological and workplace safety concerns. And, for some, experiences of racism and discrimination can be a reason why people leave the aged care sector and look for employment elsewhere.

Inclusive work practices are everyone's responsibility.

This guide has been developed to provide practical advice to support inclusive workplaces in aged care settings. It has a particular focus on inclusion as it relates to multicultural aged care workers. In it, we:

- **define** what we mean by racism and discrimination and some of the ways in which multicultural aged care workers might experience them
- **present** some insights obtained from a recent survey completed by MCCI about the experiences of aged care workers
- **highlight** the importance of taking steps to promote an inclusive environment for multicultural workers
- **suggest** some practical tips that you and your organisation can take to support a multicultural workforce in your aged care service.

[1] www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/2020-aged-care-workforce-census
[2] O'Donnell, J., scanloninstitute.org.au/mapping-social-cohesion-2023

About Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra (MCCI)

MCCI is a regional peak body for multicultural communities formed in 1975 to represent the interests of people from CALD backgrounds.

Today, MCCI delivers a wide range of programs for the community as a specialist non-profit service provider in aged care and other services.

This guide has been developed by MCCI as part of the Australian Government's PICAC program. This funding covers NSW & ACT.

Since 2011, under PICAC funding, we have been able to support aged care service providers to deliver care that meets the needs of CALD people.

More detail about the PICAC program nationally is available at the Department of Health and Aged Care website.

Defining Key Terms

WHAT IS RACISM?

The Australian Human Rights Commission defines racism as:

...the process by which systems and policies, actions and attitudes create inequitable opportunities and outcomes for people based on race. Racism is more than just prejudice in thought or action. It occurs when this prejudice – whether individual or institutional – is accompanied by the power to discriminate against, oppress or limit the rights of others.

Racism includes all the laws, policies, ideologies, and barriers that prevent people from experiencing justice, dignity, and equity because of their racial identity. It can come in the form of harassment, abuse or humiliation, violence, or intimidating behaviour. However, racism also exists in systems and institutions that operate in ways that lead to inequity and injustice.[3]

[3] humanrights.gov.au/our-work/race-discrimination/what-racism

WHAT IS DISCRIMINATION?

Similarly, the Australian Human Rights Commission defines discrimination as:

...when a person or group of people are treated less favourably than another person or group because of their background or certain characteristics. This is known as direct discrimination... It is also discrimination when an unreasonable rule or policy applies to everyone but has the effect of disadvantaging some people because of a personal characteristic they share. This is known as indirect discrimination.[4]

Discrimination can be against the law if it is based on a person's:

- age
- disability
- race, including colour, national or ethnic original or immigrant status
- sex, pregnancy, marital or relationship status, family responsibilities or breastfeeding
- sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex status.

Employers are legally responsible for taking all reasonable steps to prevent discrimination on these grounds. Under the Australian Human Rights Commission Act, individuals can also lodge complaints with the commission concerning discrimination in employment because of a range of factors.

For more information about the legal responsibilities, please refer to the Australian Human Rights Commission website or seek your own legal advice.

[4] humanrights.gov.au/education/employers/quick-guide-discrimination-law

Other Key Terms

Throughout this guide, you will come across several other terms.

These include:

CALD
Culturally and linguistically diverse.

LGBTQI+
Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, and intersex.

PREJUDICE
Opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience.

INCLUSION
The action or state of including or of being included within a group or structure.

DIVERSITY
A range of different characteristics among people, such as race, gender, and culture.

CULTURAL COMPETENCE
The ability to participate ethically and effectively in personal and professional intercultural settings.

Workers' Experiences

A RECENT SURVEY

To gain further insights into workers' experiences in aged care settings, MCCI commissioned an online survey in 2023. This survey was intended to gather general sentiment about workers' experiences in residential and home support aged care settings. Although the primary focus was on CALD individuals, a small number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and LGBTQI+ people also participated in the survey.

The survey was distributed via various channels, including stakeholder organisations through the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association and at aged care roundtables, direct e-mails, engagement with aged care providers, social media campaigns, and newsletters from the Department of Health and Aged Care and PICAC Alliance members.

331 responses received

218
66%
respondents said they had directly experienced (94) or witnessed (124) someone else experiencing racism or discrimination in their workplace

104
31%
of respondents said their experiences occurred either daily (7%), weekly (11%) or monthly (13%) in their workplace

DIRECT AND INDIRECT EXPERIENCES

We asked respondents to tell us about their direct or indirect experiences of racism or discrimination in their workplace.

Of the 94 respondents who said they had directly experienced racism or discrimination in their workplace:

DIRECT EXPERIENCES

48 told us they had experienced racism or discrimination from their colleagues or managers

18 told us they had experienced racism or discrimination from consumers

Of the 124 respondents who said they had witnessed racism or discrimination in their workplace:

INDIRECT EXPERIENCES

28 said they had witnessed racism or discrimination by their colleagues or managers

44 said had witnessed racism or discrimination from consumers

Voices of Respondents

Here are some of the direct quotes from respondents about their experiences of racism and discrimination in aged care settings:

> The clients can be racist even though we are here to help them.

> I come from Italy, currently experiencing accent acting from colleagues or clients.

> It was a previous workplace - homophobic discrimination and vilification.

> Attitudes and behaviours that cannot be clearly defined as racism but as biases.

WHAT WAS EXPERIENCED OR WITNESSED?

We asked respondents to describe the broad nature of their experiences of racism or discrimination in their workplace. Most commonly, they referred to situations in which:

- skin colour, cultural background, English proficiency, or accent was a factor in their negative experience
- derogatory terms were used towards them because of their cultural or religious background
- some consumers refused services because of the worker's cultural or religious background.
- qualifications and experience from overseas were questioned
- they felt bullied or belittled by their colleagues or managers and, in some cases, felt they were overlooked for promotion.

Voices of Respondents

Here are some of the direct quotes from respondents about their experiences of racism and discrimination in aged care settings:

I have offered a lady of colour to one of our clients who declined because it wasn't a *"white"* lady. The client asked the lady's name first and then asked if they were "white".

A few years back I worked at a facility and one of my work colleagues refused to work with or take instruction from another colleague with a CALD background and bad mouthed them.

It is mostly ageism. Due to my age, I am overlooked for assignments. Other staff in my team 'change their style of communication' when talking with me which feels ageist. I have also had to stop myself from using ageist remarks (about myself) as a form of humour- self-depreciating and not very respectful generally to older people.

It's all over, staff asking where you studied if you are qualified enough, clients and staff commenting on your accent, people touching your hair, being referred as you people.

I'm Aboriginal and everyone seems to think/ feel they have the right to express their negative opinions of the first peoples of this land to any stranger who visits them.

Worker was labelled as not for promotion/ additional roles as it was perceived she did not have the English language skills to complete higher tasks. Management made plans to transfer this employee from a care role to the laundry where she would not be required to write English.

People of colour are deliberately not being promoted into managerial positions and the organisation is making special exceptions and favouring Australian workers.

Sometimes older people will make a comment out loud without realising they are being racist.

I have witnessed a staff member complaining about the accent of another staff member, and how she is hard to understand.

How People Feel

Promoting an Inclusive Workplace in Aged Care

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Australia is a diverse, multicultural society. Our nation's diversity is reflected throughout the Australian aged care workforce and its consumers. But 'diversity' is only one part of the story.

There is now a wide body of research and practice that highlights the importance of 'inclusion' within workplaces and in society generally.[5, 6, 7]

Apart from the legal responsibilities that apply to all Australian workplaces, inclusive services are more likely to:

- reduce employee turnover
- boost employee engagement, safety, and wellbeing
- build participation, connectivity, and productivity
- result in better and more holistic decision-making
- enrich consumer experiences
- lead to continuous improvement and innovation.

In aged care settings, the strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards (November 2023) have a wide range of responsibilities for providers in respect of their workforce. Of direct relevance to this guide is that the provider should implement strategies for supporting and maintaining a satisfied and psychologically safe workplace (Std 2.8.2).

[5] See for example Diversity Council of Australia: dca.org.au
[6] www.agedcareguide.com.au/information/diversity-standards-and-initiatives-in-aged-care
[7] www.culturaldiversity.com.au/18-resources-/service-provider-resources/44-policy-development

Taking Action in Your Service

Creating an inclusive workplace that embraces diversity, engagement and belonging requires intention and takes effort.

In this section, we outline practical and actionable strategies to help your organisation continuously improve its approach to diversity and inclusion, ensuring a respectful and equitable environment for all staff and recipients in aged care.

Understanding Your Workplace

How is baseline diversity attribute information collected about your employees?

- Review how you collect diversity data on your workforce attributes.
- Reflect on how you can draw upon the diversity of your team.
- Report this data to your executive management and boards.
- Assess whether your workforce diversity matches your consumer profiles.
- Based on the insights, develop targeted recruitment campaigns to enhance workforce diversity.

Awareness

How well do you understand the day-to-day experiences of your diverse employees at work?

- Develop committees to understand diverse employees' daily experiences and challenges.
- Conduct annual surveys to assess the satisfaction and experiences of diverse employee groups.
- Host events for employees to learn about different cultures and perspectives through activities and workshops.
- Ensure senior management keeps an open-door policy for all employees to voice concerns or experiences.
- Regularly review workplace policies to ensure they support diversity and identify areas for improvement.

Leadership Commitment

How is leadership commitment to diversity & inclusion embedded within your organisation?

- Provide diversity and inclusion training for all leadership roles.
- Require leaders to report on diversity efforts and progress in regular meetings.
- Allocate budgets for diversity and inclusion efforts.
- Include diverse members in committees and management teams.
- Define specific diversity goals and hold leaders accountable for meeting them.

Strategy, Policy & Procedure

What strategic and policy/procedure frameworks do you have to promote diversity & inclusion?

- Make diversity and inclusion part of the organisation's core values to influence behaviour and decisions.
- Outline goals and plans for improving diversity and inclusion across the organisation.
- Introduce policies that actively support diversity and inclusion in all operations.
- Ensure leaders regularly discuss diversity policies during team meetings to keep everyone informed and involved.
- Share updates on diversity efforts and challenges openly with employees.

Education & Training

How do you support diversity & inclusion learning across your organisation?

- Make diversity & inclusion training mandatory for all employees.
- Provide online modules* for flexible diversity and inclusion learning.
- Bring diversity experts to share insights and experiences.
- Create a diversity & inclusion resource library for employees.*

Consumers & Participants

How do you work with consumers and participants to raise their awareness of diversity and inclusion?

- Establish a consumer reference group that can provide ongoing feedback and guidance on your diversity and inclusion strategies.
- Distribute information on diversity and inclusion through newsletters.
- Provide stories from diverse groups on your website and social media.
- Ensure all your consumer interactions, both digital and physical, adhere to accessibility standards to accommodate diverse needs.
- Organise events that celebrate and educate on different cultures.

Communication

What processes do you put in place to promote inclusive communication and engagement?

- Provide training on inclusive communication for all employees.
- Implement ways for people to give feedback on communication inclusivity.
- Use visual aids like videos, infographics and diagrams to improve understanding across literacy levels.
- Adapt communications to be culturally sensitive, considering the norms and values of different communities you engage with.
- Communicate using simple, clear language to ensure understanding across all groups.

Support

How are diverse employees supported if incidents of racism or discrimination are experienced?

- Provide training on recognising and preventing discrimination.
- Set up a confidential way for employees to report racism or discrimination.
- Clearly communicate available support resources and update employees regularly.
- Check in regularly to ensure ongoing support and individual wellbeing.
- Apply a strict zero-tolerance policy for racism and discrimination, with clear consequences.

Continuous Improvement

How do you involve all of your teams in the processes of continuous improvement?

- Ensure diverse representation in improvement teams.
- Create diversity committees with representatives from various teams to collaborate on diversity and inclusion strategies.
- Recognise and celebrate achievements in diversity efforts.
- Offer regular diversity and inclusion training to all employees.
- Encourage collaboration and sharing of ideas between the different departments to improve together.

Align yourself with the Aged Care Quality Standards

- Everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect in aged care.
- The Aged Care Quality Standards ensure that providers deliver safe and high quality care and services that meet the needs and preferences of the people under their care.
- Aligning an inclusive workplace with the new Aged Care Quality Standards involves prioritising person-centred care, cultural competence, effective governance, workforce development, and continuous improvement to ensure that elderly residents receive high-quality care that meets their diverse needs and preferences.

  Understand the Quality Standards here
  www.agedcarequality.gov.au/providers/quality-standards/about-quality-standards

*MCCI has free online micro courses that you can provide for your staff.
www.mcci.org.au/diversity-and-inclusion/caldways-courses
*MCCI also provides an online library where you can access D&I resources.
www.mcci.org.au/diversity-and-inclusion/resources

Want to Learn More?

The Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing offers practice guides to support aged care providers in delivering services that are inclusive of people of CALD backgrounds. These guides help ensure services are welcoming, safe, and accessible, addressing the unique cultural and linguistic needs of individual consumers.

www.culturaldiversity.com.au/resources/practice-guides

Diversity & Inclusion is for Everyone

Everyone who works in aged care settings can play a role in helping to promote inclusive workplaces. Inclusion is everyone's responsibility.

FRONTLINE WORKERS

Respect: treat all colleagues with respect and courtesy.

Challenge Racism & Discrimination: where it is safe to do so, call out racism or discrimination immediately and set clear boundaries against such behaviour.

Report Concerns: if you experience or witness racism and discrimination, report your concerns to management.

Promote Cultural Inclusion: engage with others, learn about different cultures, and share your own cultural stories to build connections with others.

Self-Reflection: assess your own attitudes towards diversity.

Seek & Offer Support: talk about your experiences and offer support to your colleagues, utilising resources like an employee assistance program (EAP).

Foster Open Discussions: encourage conversations about diversity and inclusion in the workplace to promote understanding and respect.

Feedback: provide honest and constructive feedback whenever your employer consults the workforce.

MANAGERS AND EXECUTIVES

Respect: treat all colleagues with respect and courtesy.

Challenge Racism & Discrimination: where it is safe to do so, call out racism or discrimination immediately, and set clear boundaries against such behaviour.

Report Concerns: if you experience or witness racism and discrimination, then report your concerns to management.

Promote Cultural Inclusion: engage with others, learn about different cultures, and share your own cultural stories to build connections with others.

Self-Reflection: assess your own attitudes towards diversity.

Seek & Offer Support: talk about your experiences and offer support to your colleagues, utilising resources like an employee assistance program (EAP).

Foster Open Discussions: encourage conversations about diversity and inclusion in the workplace to promote understanding and respect.

Feedback: provide honest and constructive feedback whenever your employer consults the workforce.

BOARDS AND GOVERNING BODIES

Board Charter: document a commitment to diversity and inclusion within the board charter.

Set the Tone: regularly emphasise the board's role in shaping the organisation's culture and its commitment to preventing racism and discrimination and promoting inclusivity.

Lead by Example: individual board members and the board collectively should demonstrate the inclusive behaviour they expect to see within the organisation.

Develop Inclusive Strategies: support executive management to establish and resource a diversity and inclusion strategy to drive continuous improvement.

Promote Diverse Leadership: create opportunities for diverse individuals to assume leadership roles.

Policy Review & Transparency: stay across industry trends in diversity and inclusion practices and keep policies under regular and active review.

Responsive Monitoring: implement a robust system for management reporting of employee engagement, satisfaction, workplace grievances, and incidents of discrimination or racism.

Voices of Respondents

Here are some of the direct quotes from respondents about what should be done better to address racism and discrimination in the workplace:

It feeds down from management. It's a systematic issue. An individual can't address racism for a whole workplace.

Prepare residents before they are admitted to aged care with brochures, photos of staff and information about the multicultural nature of the workforce. **Support groups within the facility to talk about discrimination where attitudes and feelings can be explored in a safe, confidential situation.**

I think emphasising the service user's responsibility to provide a safe working environment free of abuse or discrimination to staff. **Also to include diversity at every opportunity in promoting our services to the community.** Emphasising the boundaries of what is and is not acceptable. Basically, being genuine with people.

To create policy and procedures, acknowledge CALD staff with the organisation, retrain the HR team to be more accommodating than shutting people off.

More consultation with the community and clients around the expectations and inclusiveness of other cultures.

Cultural awareness training and reiterating policies and procedures more often.

I think they should make it known loud and proud that **it's not acceptable and not tolerated.**

Educate older Australians about diversity in a carer-based workplace. Workers have been educated not to judge clients on race/background/life choices so it probably should focus on the receivers of the care to be educated more thoroughly. This could include at least bi-yearly newsletters on accepting diversity and how our country has changed over the years. A lot of the elderly were active participants somehow in wars, or their parents were. They grew up with people or themselves developing a mindset that certain races may trigger horrific memories or stories they heard for a lot of their younger lives.

Enter all interactions with the willingness to understand and to learn from others. Many areas were glossed over when I joined [...], including racism and discrimination policies. I had the feeling that they were a given although they weren't spelt out. Harmony Week gave a good opportunity for the organisation to highlight the diversity of our workforce, but it would also be useful to look at other measures. Diwali was acknowledged across the organisation. It would also be useful to acknowledge Ramadan - we have many Muslim colleagues who are adhering to this time of fasting, charity, and devotion. I also welcome acknowledgements of other religions' significant dates/seasons. I know this as an atheist.

Resources

Aged Care Guide – Diversity Standards and Initiatives in Aged Care
www.agedcareguide.com.au/information/diversity-standards-and-initiatives-in-aged-care

Amnesty International – How to be an Anti-Racism Ally
www.amnesty.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Anti-racismAllyGuide-web.pdf

Australian Human Rights Commission
humanrights.gov.au

Australian Department of Health & Aged Care – Working With Diverse Groups in Aged Care
health.gov.au/topics/aged-care/providing-aged-care-services/training-and-guidance/working-with-diverse-groups

Australian Department of Health and Aged Care – 2020 Aged Care Workforce Census Report
www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2021/10/2020-aged-care-workforce-census.pdf

Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing – Practice Guides and other Resources
www.culturaldiversity.com.au/resources

Diversity Council Australia (DCA)
www.dca.org.au

Dementia Australia – Changes in Behaviour
www.dementia.org.au/about-dementia-and-memory-loss/about-dementia/behaviour/behaviour-changes

NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association – Promoting Diversity and Inclusion for CALD Nurses and Midwives
www.nswnma.asn.au/campaigns/racism-it-stops-with-me/promoting-diversity-and-inclusion

Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra
https://www.mcci.org.au

O'Donnell, J. – Mapping Social Cohesion 2023
https://scanloninstitute.org.au/mapping-social-cohesion-2023

PICAC Alliance – Racism
www.picacalliance.org

Safe Work Australia – Racism
www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/safety-topic/hazards/racism

Western Sydney University – Bystander Anti-Racism Project
www.westernsydney.edu.au/challengingracism/challenging_racism_project/our_research/bystander_anti-racism

> I talk positively about the experiences I have had working & living with other cultures.

MCCI

admin@mcci.org.au
www.mcci.org.au

ILLAWARRA

02 4229 7566
117 Corrimal Street
Wollongong NSW 2500

SHOALHAVEN

02 4229 7566
63 Plunkett Street
Nowra NSW 2541

ACT

02 6169 3986
8 Lyell Street
Fyshwick ACT 2609