

Statement on the Importance of Displaying Flags in Health Care Settings

Displaying symbols of inclusion such as the Aboriginal flag, Torres Strait Islander flag, rainbow and intersex flag underscores a commitment to health equity. These flags serve nationwide as visible symbols of identity, respect, recognition, and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, as well as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex and asexual (LGBTQIA+) communities.

All people have the right to health, and it is crucial for health services to be accessible and visibly inclusive for the diverse communities they serve. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, along with LGBTQIA+ communities, have historically faced significant barriers to accessing health care. These barriers include negative experiences, stigma, long waiting times, lack of cultural safety, and discrimination. By displaying these flags, health settings send a clear message that they are committed to overcoming these barriers and providing a safe, welcoming environment for all.

Cultural safety is a critical factor and cultural determinant of health. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultural safety involves recognising and respecting their unique cultural identities and ensuring that health care services are delivered in a manner that is free from discrimination and bias. Similarly, for LGBTQIA+ individuals, it is crucial to create a safe environment where their identities are acknowledged and respected, and where they can access care without fear of judgement or prejudice.

Achieving health equity requires addressing the intersecting barriers to universal access. This involves improving the physical accessibility of health services and fostering an environment of inclusivity and respect. The presence of the Aboriginal flag, Torres Strait Islander flag, rainbow and intersex flags in health settings is a tangible demonstration of this commitment. It shows that health care providers are aware of the unique challenges and needs faced by these communities and that they are dedicated to creating a space where everyone feels valued and supported. Health care workers identifying with these flags also feel supported when their identities are acknowledged in the workplace. This builds a more inclusive workplace culture and supports recruitment and retention.

Anti-discrimination practice is a critical component of health equity. By actively promoting anti-discrimination through the display of these flags, health settings affirm their dedication to providing equitable care for all. This practice builds trust and rapport with marginalised communities, encouraging them to seek care when needed and to engage more fully with health care services.

Displaying the Aboriginal flag, Torres Strait Islander flag, and rainbow flags in health settings is a vital step towards creating inclusive, culturally safe, and equitable health care environments. This practice aligns with national and international standards outlining culturally responsive care and inclusivity. It



is a visible commitment to the right to health for all people and a crucial part of ongoing efforts to address and dismantle the barriers that have historically hindered access to care for marginalised communities.

About us

Australian Women's Health Alliance is the national voice on women's health. We highlight how gender shapes experiences of health and health care, recognising that women's health is determined by social, cultural, environmental, and political factors.

We remain committed to working alongside and in solidarity with the health reform priorities led by the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation and the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, including First Nations gender justice work such as Wiyi Yani U Thangani. We will continue to elevate First Nations leadership within the Alliance, connect with the Alliance's First Nations membership and build relationships of trust with First Nations community controlled organisations and peak bodies.

Our [Organisational Anti-Discrimination Statement](#) is available on the Women's Health Hub.

Contact us

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*We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters on which we live and work.
We pay our respect to Elders past and present. Sovereignty has never been ceded.*