

# Measuring what really matters – racism and cultural safety in healthcare

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Australia's health system remains a long way from ensuring culturally safe care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Despite growing recognition of the impact of institutional racism on health outcomes, efforts to embed and measure cultural safety remain fragmented and underdeveloped.

Released today by the Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association (AHHA) Deeble Institute for Health Policy Research, the Issues Brief [\*Measuring what really matters for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples – racism and cultural safety in healthcare\*](#) examines how systemic racism in hospitals continues to affect the experiences and outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients, and outlines the evidence needed to drive reform.

'We know that racism in healthcare leads to poorer outcomes, reduced trust and disengagement from services,' said AHHA CEO Tony Farley.

'But good intentions are not enough. We have a national framework for measuring Australia's health and wellbeing, *Measuring what Matters*, and yet indicators of quality health and care services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are absent.' 'Without robust data and agreed measures of cultural safety, we cannot track progress or hold health services to account.'

'To create lasting change, these reforms must be designed and led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.'

Authored by 2025 Deeble Scholar Dr Elissa Elvidge and AHHA Executive Director Adj AProf Rebecca Haddock, the Brief highlights the need for a nationally coordinated approach led by Indigenous voices and backed by clear policy direction, consistent standards and comprehensive data collection.

'Cultural safety is not optional, it is essential to deliver equitable, respectful and effective care,' Mr Farley said.

'Without rigorous data and transparent evaluation processes, we risk perpetuating further systemic inequity and the continuation of implementing solutions that do not consider or address the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.'

***The Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association Limited (AHHA Ltd) is the independent peak membership body and advocate for the Australian healthcare system and a national voice for universally accessible, high-quality healthcare in Australia.***

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