

Message from Michael Hogan

Former Director-General

The Valuing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' knowledge lens was developed by the former Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services for use by all Queensland Government agencies to support the development of more culturally responsive services and systems.

The lens should be applied at all levels, from the smallest projects through to strategic redesign and reform initiatives. By doing this, government's capacity to provide the right services that are innovative, holistic and culturally capable will be enhanced.

Government's traditional approaches to policy generation, program design and service delivery have not made a significant enough impact on improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, so it is essential to rethink how we work for and with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders.

The evidence tells us that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples having self-determination, ownership of and meaningful influence over all decisions, policies, programs, projects, procurement and practices that impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities is the most effective way to achieve improved social and economic outcomes.

By applying the lens to every aspect of our work across government, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations will be empowered and supported to guide and where possible, lead the development of more effective public services.

Working in this way will require us to respectfully listen to and be responsive to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authority, to trust in culturally informed wisdoms and most importantly, rebalance the power between government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to create a future where shared responsibility is possible.

We must be open to, and accepting of, a future where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples decide, design and deliver the services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Using the lens can facilitate the changes necessary if such a transformational shift is to be achieved.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, families and communities have deep cultural wisdoms and knowledge that will, if valued, help inform better government services for the benefit of all Queenslanders.

I look forward to continuing to lead this initiative and seeing examples of how the lens is being applied across the Queensland Government.

When to use the lens

Are you doing a redesign, review, or reform of a policy, program, project, procurement or practice? Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' knowledge will need to be embedded in your work, and the lens should be applied.

It is equally as important to use the lens for existing pieces of work. There are always opportunities to rethink current policies, programs, projects, procurement and practices and respond in different ways. The lens can also be applied retrospectively as part of a reflective or review process.

The lens is designed to enable you to commence using it flexibly at any stage in your work, however it is the department's intent that all staff will automatically apply the lens as a forethought from the earliest stages of commencing a piece of work and throughout.

The lens questions are structured in a way that aligns with most standard work cycles: Exploration and evidence gathering, Planning and design, Implementation and delivery, and Evaluation and review.

How to use the lens

First, look at the instructions provided on the diagram. The diagram will lead you through a cycle of personal and team reflection and connecting with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners before applying the 'lens questions' to your work. There are 12 lens questions designed to drive and guide the process for ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples knowledge is embedded in all aspects of your work. The final step is to include the 'answers' to the lens questions in all key decision making processes (including, but not limited to, Memorandums for Approval, board submissions, Work Package and Project documentation).

There is no template or specific form you need to complete as you use the lens, however decision makers must be able to clearly see that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders have had meaningful influence in the options and decisions being presented. This process, where responses are 'built-in not bolted on' aims to create sustainable long lasting cultural change that embeds using the lens into the DNA of the Queensland Government.

The lens is designed to be applied flexibly and, depending on the nature of the work, not all lens questions will be relevant for every piece of work.

Informed by: Australian Policy Handbook (2012) Queensland Government Gender Analysis Toolkit (2009) Victorian Government Aboriginal Inclusion Framework (2011) World Health Organisation Health in All Policies (2013)

About the lens elements



The Accountability 'stop sign'

In the centre of the lens is a question that is a catalyst for decision makers at all levels of the organisation to be accountable for ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices have had ownership of or meaningful influence in the decision being presented. It is at this point that decision makers are expected to challenge instances where they can't see evidence or examples of where and how the lens has been applied.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and Respectful communication

These elements are central to, and underpin all aspects of, the lens. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, world views and ways of knowing and being cannot be defined or categorised. The only way we can truly understand and infuse the unique strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' knowledge is through genuine and respectful negotiation, consultation and partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.



The lens questions

These are a series of questions that highlight key opportunities to seek out and embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' knowledge in your work. These questions are aligned to most standard work cycles.



Instructions

A suggested approach to use the lens most effectively.



Continuous quality improvement

The orange lines indicate that continuous quality improvement must occur both as part of the work cycle, and also in our own personal and team process of applying the lens.



The cultural capability journey

An ability to accept the complexity, be open-minded and self-reflective, understand the historical context of the disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and maintain a desire to learn and understand are essential qualities for every person working in every area of the department.

