



# Culturally and linguistically diverse care

Supporting older people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds is a priority across all aspects of aged care. This includes (amongst other things):

- communicating in ways that make people feel understood and respected, including in their own language
- providing food that is culturally familiar and meaningful
- acknowledging and celebrating important cultural and spiritual events
- valuing the different life experiences, beliefs, values and rituals, especially in times of illness or end-of-life, and
- creating real opportunities for connection with community and culture.

The Royal Commissioners were clear: aged care must embrace and reflect the diversity of older people in Australia. They said, ‘diversity should be core business in aged care’. Commissioners recommended mandatory training on cultural safety and trauma-informed service delivery for all workers who are involved in direct contact with people seeking or receiving services in the aged care system.

## What has happened since the Royal Commission?

The new *Aged Care Act 2024* establishes a system underpinned by rights-based, person-centred care. It sets up the foundations for embedding diversity in aged care. Other positive steps have been taken to improve cultural safety, but they do not go far enough:

- The Specialisation Verification Initiative, introduced in June 2022, helps ensure providers who claim to specialise in diverse care substantiate their claims. This is a welcome step towards greater accountability and to safeguard true diversity-embracing care.
- The government has made small funding investments to improve the data collection for diverse demographics. The Older Person’s Advocacy Network (OPAN) was provided with \$6.2 million in funding over 4 years from 2021 to provide local level ‘diversity data’ and educational tools to aged care providers, to drive understanding and meet the diverse needs of their communities. This is a positive step to improving the accessibility of aged care.

## What is missing?

### Urgent, system-wide action

The Royal Commission found the existing aged care system is not well equipped to provide care that is non-discriminatory and appropriately tailored for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. While reform actions such as the Specialisation Verification Initiative are a step forward, diversity is still not embedded in the foundation of the government’s administration of the aged care system.

Stronger efforts are needed to ensure every aged care provider mandatorily builds an inclusive culture and delivers culturally appropriate services to all older people, regardless of their background or life experiences.

### Mandatory training for cultural safety

The *Aged Care Act 2024* calls for culturally appropriate and trauma-aware, healing-informed care for people with diverse life experiences. However, training in culturally safe or trauma-aware care is not mandatory. It should be. It would support aged care workers to provide safe, respectful care to people from diverse backgrounds.

**Embedding cultural safety in aged care will help to create a system where all older people can feel respected, understood, safe and have their identity valued. The rights-based approach needs to embrace and respond to cultural diversity.**