



Dr Janine Mohamed
CEO of Lowitja Institute

lowitja.org.au



- Good morning, everyone.
- I would like to begin by paying my respects to the Turrbal and Jagera/Yuggara peoples upon whose lands this conference is being held..

- I would also like to acknowledge the Dja Dja Wurrung peoples on whose lands I am fortunate to live and work on — to Elders, past and present and to future and emerging generations for whom our collective work is so important.
- And to acknowledge the long history of our peoples sophisticated - holistic knowledge systems that have informed our **historic and** ongoing roles as custodians-- caring for Country
- I am a proud Narrunga Kurna woman, and CEO of the Lowitja Institute – Australia’s National Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Health Research.



- Can I say how pleased I am to come together with a group like yourselves –
- people who are committed to working “towards”
 - net zero emissions,

- climate resilience, and
 - an equitable and environmentally sustainable healthcare sector that is **ensuring** good health for all”.
- That tells me that you are committed to doing the hard work that is involved in changing entrenched systems that normalise inequity.
 - It tells me that you have some sense of what it means to be working to transform dominant culture.
 - Those challenges are something I know well -- through my work to embed cultural safety across the health system and to impact racism.
 - And it tells me that you understand the importance of holistic understandings of health -- that our health and wellbeing are directly related to the health of our Country.
 - This is something that my people have known for tens of thousands of years....
 - And that the contemporary health sector is now grasping through concepts such as “environmental determinants of health” and “planetary health”.



- I'd like to speak to you today about much needed research we have undertaken on climate change and our health.
 - This could not have been achieved without the Climate and Health Alliance – who have been fantastic allies for us in doing this work.
 - They helped us to navigate systems and open doors for us that otherwise may not have opened.... like being able to participate in a side event at COP26.
 - Can I encourage you that if you are working for a more sustainable and equitable healthcare sector – to take some lessons from the allyship that we've experienced with CAHA.
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- This slide shows you our *Climate Change and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health* Discussion Paper.

- It was prepared for the Lowitja Institute and the National Health Leadership Forum by:
 - HEAL — the Healthy Environments and Lives (HEAL) Network
 - the Centre for Research Excellence in Strengthening Systems for Indigenous Health Care Equity AND
 - the Climate and Health Alliance.
 - And we thank particularly Dr Veronica Matthews for leading this work.

- You can find the report on the Lowitja website....

- Please download it — read it – and share it with your
 - colleagues and networks.
 - Include it in your newsletters;
 - feature it in your journal clubs...

- I encourage people to engage deeply with its messages and calls to action.

Making headlines



Lowitja Institute @LowitjaInstitut · Nov 12
Have a 'listen' to this @Croakey Podcast with Pat Anderson and others: "Listen to Us" – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people demand to lead Climate Change responses' croakey.org/croakey-voices... #IndigenousClimateJustice21

Episode: 14
"Listen to Us" – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people demand to lead Climate Change responses

Editor: Cate Cerngen | November 7, 2021



Croakey News @CroakeyNews · Oct 27
Wrapping the tweets from a landmark event, #IndigenousClimateJustice21 croakey.org/wrapping-the-t... #publichealth



- I was very proud to to officially launch the report at a side meeting at the COP26 -- following its discussion at a virtual roundtable meeting last month – you can see tweets from the events on the slide
- We have seen incredible leadership shown by many Indigenous peoples globally through their activism and contributions to COP26.
- It was also great to see many young Indigenous people advocating in Glasgow
- It reminded me of a wonderful quote from the 2021 Close the Gap report – which was written by the Lowitja Institute.
- It covered the exceptional legacy and leadership role of Indigenous people in the face of multiple crises, including the growing toll of climate change.
- The quote that sticks out in my mind is from Seed Mob youth climate movement who declared:

“All around the world, sea levels are rising. And so are First Nations peoples.

- For the Lowitja Institute, our journey to this contribution to climate action began in developing our strategic plan — acknowledging that climate change was a policy area that needed immediate attention when it came to the health and wellbeing of our peoples.
- The report highlights the disproportionate effects of the climate crisis upon our people.



- We heard about them directly at our roundtable last month.
- We heard from a Warumungu Elder from Tennant Creek in Central Australia, Mr Norman Jup-urr-ur-la Frank, who described how extreme heat was affecting the health and wellbeing of himself, his community and of course his Country.

- He told us that when he went away for dialysis, which he did on a regular basis, he returned to find his power off, food spoilt, and medicines unable to be kept safely cool.
- *The Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health* has just published an article by Mr Jupurrurla and a non-Indigenous doctor, Simon Quilty, which address the many ways that heat and the changing climate are harming our cultures, our peoples, and our Country.

Climate change: A Wumpurrarni-kari and Papulanyi-kari shared problem

“Now we are just watching these hot days that are getting hotter more often and for longer. Finding a cool time and place is getting harder.

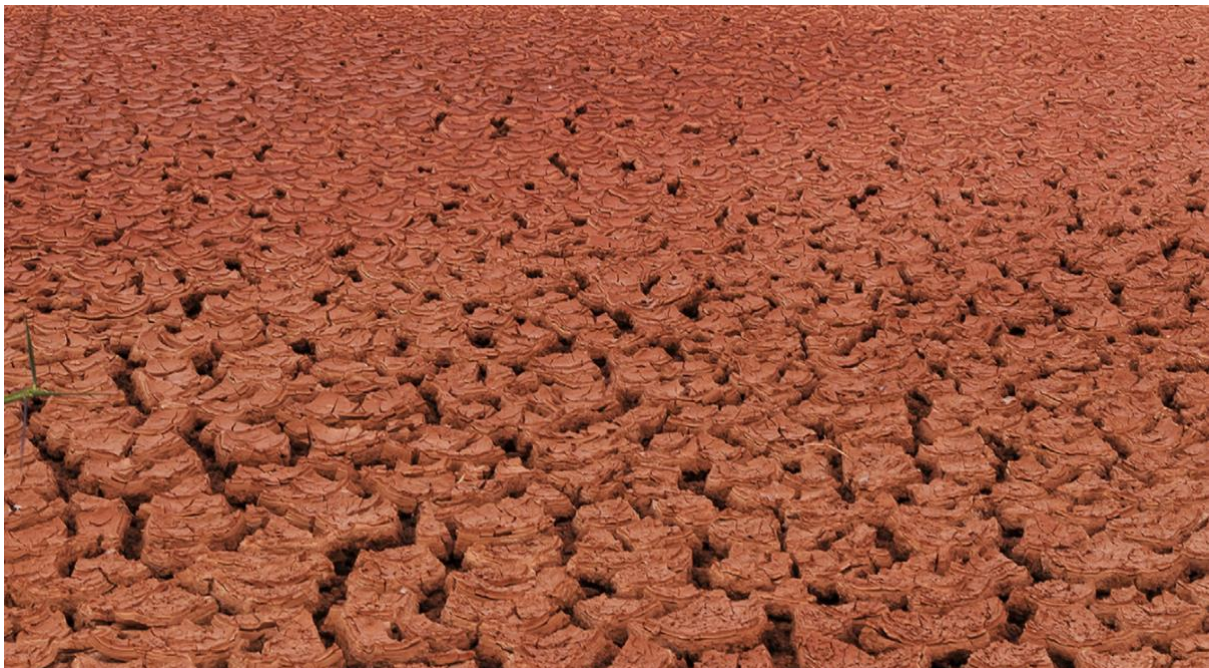
It's getting too hot for Ceremony. Ceremony is all about keeping things level, between people and country.

Now it's getting hard to find a safe time and place for young fellas to go through Ceremony, a place and time when it's not too hot. That's not healthy for our people or our Manu [country].”

Mr Jupurrurla, *Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health* – November 2021

- In the article, Mr Jupurrurla says these words on the side :
 - *“Now we are just watching these hot days that are getting hotter more often and for longer. Finding a cool time and place is getting harder.*
 - *It's getting too hot for Ceremony. Ceremony is all about keeping things level, between people and country.*

- *Now it's getting hard to find a safe time and place for young fellas to go through Ceremony, a place and time when it's not too hot. That's not healthy for our people or our Manu [country].*
- The concerns he expresses are widely shared.
- Our report shows that climate change is compounding historical injustices ---and disrupting cultural and spiritual connections to Country that are central to our health and wellbeing, and our cultural determinants of health.

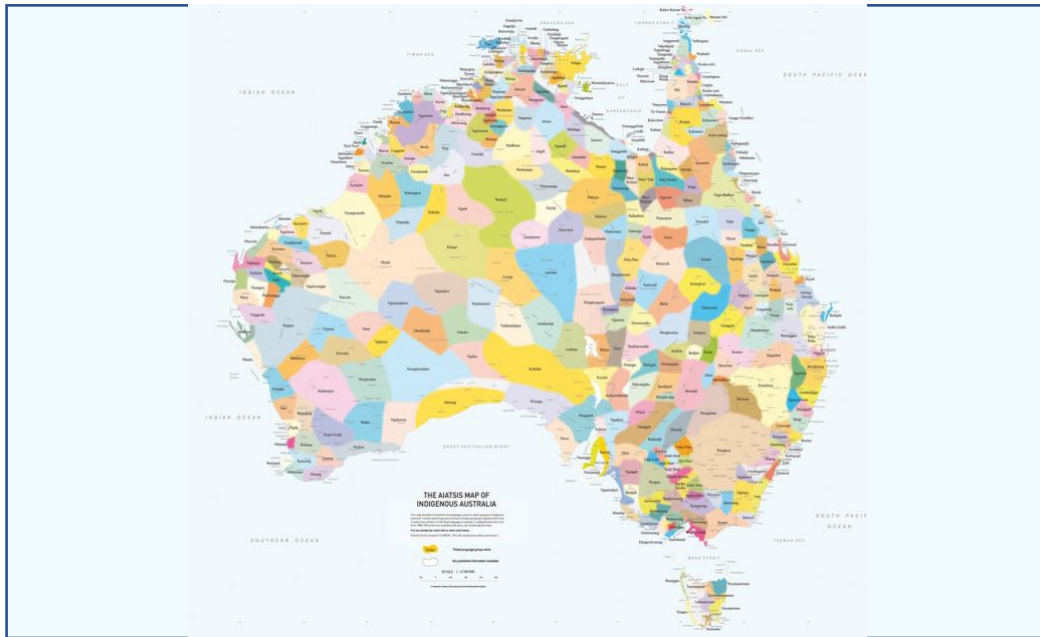


- It also highlights that our health services are struggling to operate in extreme weather with increasing demands and a reduced workforce.
- All these forces combine to exacerbate already unacceptable levels of ill-health within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations
- And here I want to highlight strengths based discourse ---and that we should not be seen as a 'vulnerable' population -----but as a 'priority

population', which really is important to changing the narrative and the focus of this issue.



- Yet-- despite being a priority--to date we have not been sufficiently included in national conversations about climate change —
- And environmental health determinants have largely been absent from national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health policies.
- There are gaps in research and data and most reporting on climate change does not include our voices or our local knowledge.
- Many solutions are known but there is not equal or equitable access to them.
- And the report finds, importantly, that these issues are inevitably linked to structural and systemic racism.



- As many of you will know, prior to colonisation, Australia consisted of more than 250 Nations representing a broad diversity of cultures and knowledges.
- Central to all our cultures is an understanding of the holistic nature of health and wellbeing – that good health is dependent on respectful and reciprocal relationships to Country, culture, spirituality, community and family.
- For **at least** 65,000 years, we have developed a unique connection and equilibrium with the lands, seas and environments in which we live.
- We took our role as custodians of Country very seriously.
- But colonisation severely disrupted and devastated these connections and our custodianship of our lands.

“From an Indigenous health perspective, climate change can be seen as an intensification of colonialism”

– Dr Rhys Jones



- As Maori scholar Dr Rhys Jones says, from an Indigenous health perspective, climate change can be seen as an intensification of colonisation.
- Colonisation ignored Indigenous ways of knowing, doing and being, right down to the weather — insisting that we live according to just four seasons brought here from England, instead of the many seasons our people knew and respected. We even had our weather colonised!
- And in doing so, it threatens to make this country uninhabitable — ironically, terra nullius – yet again.
- So if we’re honest about the truth telling needed in our country, we must be honest about what made our Country sick in the first place.



- But this brings strength and opportunity as well....
- Climate change presents an opportunity for **re-dress** and empowerment of our communities to lead climate action based on our intimate knowledge of Country.
- That's why the Lowitja Institute and the National Health Leadership Forum is working with CAHA to spread the word on our Discussion Paper and its recommendations — so that it can have meaningful impact on policy and health outcomes, through Knowledge Translation which is at the heart of the Lowitja Institute's work.
- Our paper maps out clear calls for rights-based climate action and place-based adaptation and mitigation.
- Its four high level calls are

Take action that respects human rights and achieves equitable health and environmental outcomes for Indigenous peoples



- **1. Take action - that respects human rights and achieves equitable health and environmental outcomes for indigenous peoples**

Value and centre our knowledges and rights as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples



- **2. Value and centre our knowledges and rights as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.**

- We have protected Country for millennia and have survived dramatic climatic shifts. Remember, we were here in Australia at the last Ice Age!
- We are intimately connected to Country and our knowledges and cultural practices hold solutions to the climate crisis.



- **3. Work with us to protect Country and do the work on adaptation and mitigation planning.**
- We need equitable access to housing, renewable energy solutions and our lands and waters — and united efforts to stop our government ripping every mineral out of the ground.

Create movement for Climate Justice – Climate change will affect us all but some of us more than others.



- **4 Create a movement for Climate Justice – climate change will affect us all – but some of us more than others.**
- We need to ensure climate action learns from historical truth-telling and commits to not repeating the wrongs of the past.
- This is climate justice. And it is deeply linked to race relations in Australia.
- We are the only first world nation with a colonial history whose Constitution does not recognise its First Peoples.



VOICE. TREATY. TRUTH.

ULURU STATEMENT FROM THE HEART

- The current Federal Government dismissed what was offered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as a gift to the nation — the Uluru Statement from The Heart.
- The statement calls for Voice, Truth, Treaty — in my view, you cannot be taking serious action on climate unless you are acting on self-determination and climate justice.
- I would love to see each and every one of you at this conference — and all your organisations and networks to commit to:
 - Supporting the Uluru Statement
 - Integrating its calls to action into your work; and
 - Putting climate justice at the heart of your work going forward in building sustainable, equitable healthcare systems.



- As we work for transformative change so that our health systems are equitable, climate resilient, sustainable and net zero – I want to highlight the work that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations have done to embed cultural safety into health systems as a blueprint for change. And a possible learning for greening our healthcare sector...
- First, let me talk about what cultural safety means and how it is critical to transforming the health sector to achieve equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.....
- And then I'll outline how our efforts to embed cultural safety in health care can show the way forward for us on transformative climate action, in and out of the health system.



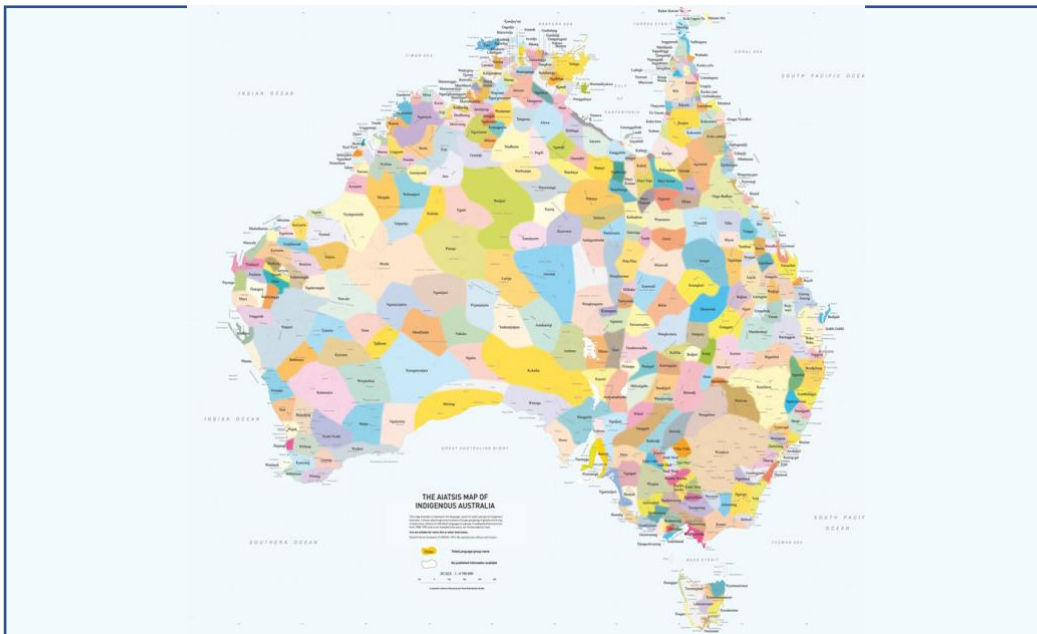
- In Australia we tend to use the terms “cultural safety” and “cultural awareness” almost interchangeably.
- But they are different.

Cultural Awareness

- Acknowledges differences
- Doesn't seek broader context or understanding
- The gaze is outwards
- Comfortable
- Cultural Voyeurism

- Cultural awareness is focused on improving the knowledge of non-Indigenous Australians.

- It “others” us as Indigenous peoples by examining our cultures, the way we live our lives.
- It is a process of ‘looking’ at us —so the gaze is outwards.
- Non-Indigenous people don’t have to examine themselves.
- This is often a comfortable experience for non-Indigenous people.



- Cultural Awareness can also reinforce the simplistic notion that all Aboriginal peoples are the same.
- But we’re not -- as you can see from Tindale’s map — we are uniquely and beautifully different.
- And you can never know all there is to know about us.

Cultural Safety is 'knowing thy self', the gaze is inward, not outward. It aims help participants to identify and challenge their biases and myths and to understand where these beliefs come from.



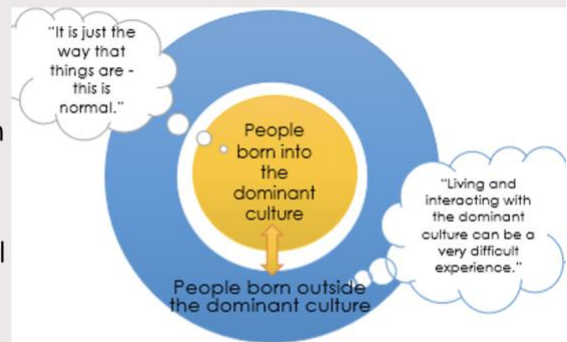
- With cultural safety, the gaze is inwards.
- It's about critical self-reflection. Tuning into your racial orator.
- It is about examining racism.
- When learning about cultural safety-- non-Indigenous people are asked to critically examine themselves-- their own worldviews, assumptions and beliefs.
- They come to recognise how these ideas-- attitudes and beliefs are formed intergenerationally and embedded in organisations and systems — in our very structures.
- Cultural Safety asks non-Indigenous people to acknowledge how these views, assumptions, practices and beliefs may be harmful for their Indigenous colleagues ---and then to challenge and unlearn them 😊

What do we mean by 'dominant culture'?

The set of values, beliefs, standards and systems that govern and organise our lives.

This were brought to this country by the British when they claimed and colonised Australia.

This included laws, structures, decision-making processes, ideas about the individual and families, science, health and education systems - they were established as 'normal'.



They are the basis of how we do things now and used as the required norm for everyone who lives here.

- Cultural safety unpacks the concept of dominant culture.
- When you are a member of the dominant culture your identity is constantly affirmed and reinforced, in ways that you possibly don't even realise.
- But for those of us living outside of this dominant culture, it can be challenging.
- As the slide says ---It is important to acknowledge that when non-Indigenous people arrived here, they redefined what was 'normal'

The Statement of Intent has the vision that patient safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples is the norm and recognises that:

patient safety includes the inextricably linked elements of clinical and cultural safety, and this link must be defined by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.



- Before I was given the privilege to lead the Lowitja Institute, I was the CEO of the Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives — or CATSINaM. Another disruptive organisation!
- I was pleased, while at CATSINaM, to work closely with AHPRA and many other stakeholders to launch a new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Cultural Safety Strategy.
- It recognises that cultural safety is a critical component of patient safety.
- The strategy sets a clear direction and course of action for AHPRA, and the National Boards and Accreditation Authorities who regulate Australia's health practitioners.



- We also worked with the peak bodies for nursing and midwifery to embed cultural safety into new nursing and midwifery codes of conduct, our education accreditation standards and into Health Services Standards through the Health care safety and quality commission.
- But we faced an hysterical and ill-informed reaction, fired up by elements of the media — something that all of you seeking climate action will know all too well! (See some of the news reports on the slide)



Joint statement

23 March 2018

Cultural safety: Nurses and midwives leading the way for safer healthcare

In response to Graeme Haycroft's recent comments, we welcome the opportunity to provide further information on how important cultural safety is for improving health outcomes and experiences for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

Indigenous groups hit back over nurses, midwives' 'white privilege' code of conduct

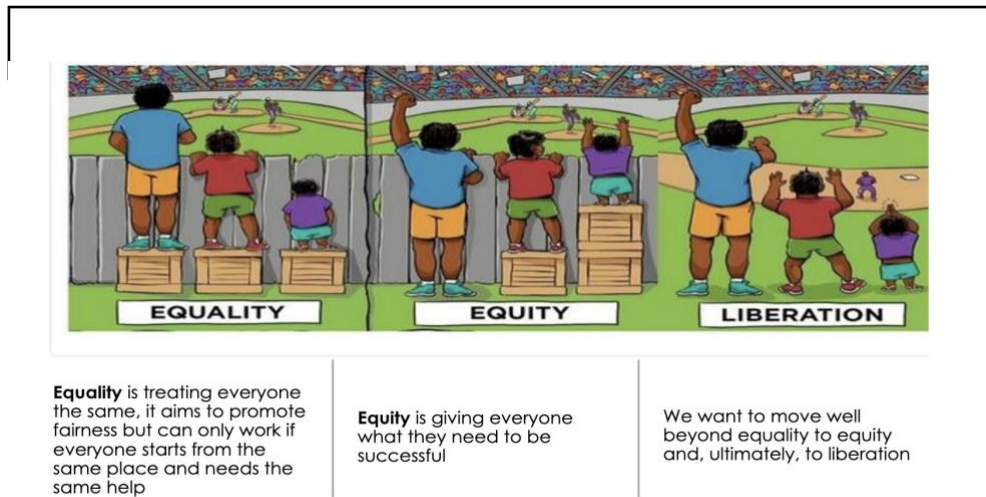
A NEW code of conduct for Australian nurses and midwives was slammed for including a reference to "white privilege". But this is why it's necessary.



Rohan Smith [@ro_smith](#)

news COMING MARCH 26, 2018 10:50PM

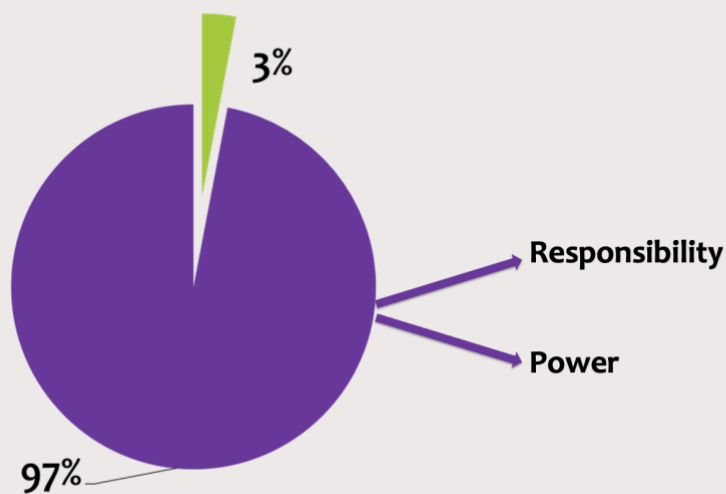
- Amid that backlash, it made such a difference for us that the nursing
- and midwifery leadership were solid in their support for cultural safety.
- And it made a difference that many of these leaders had done cultural safety training and a lot of critical self-reflection,
- So these non-Indigenous women understood about their power and privilege, and that it wasn't the work of the Indigenous nurses to counter the backlash, it was their work.
- Cultural safety is an approach that understands that equity and equality
- I think this slide explains it beautifully



- Equality usually focuses on people getting the ‘same’ experiences and opportunities – this is what people mean when they say, ‘I treat everyone the same’ usually in the name of ‘fairness’.
- And as we know, that can only work if everyone starts from the same place-- and needs the same help.
- In contrast, **equity** is understanding that
 - people come from different experiences and
 - We need to meet people where they are at and
 - give people what they need to be successful.
- That is critical both in health care and climate action.
- And the growing focus on cultural safety is now evident in the position taken by many national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health organisations over the last decade.
- Almost all have policies, position statements, and frameworks that address racism and cultural safety.

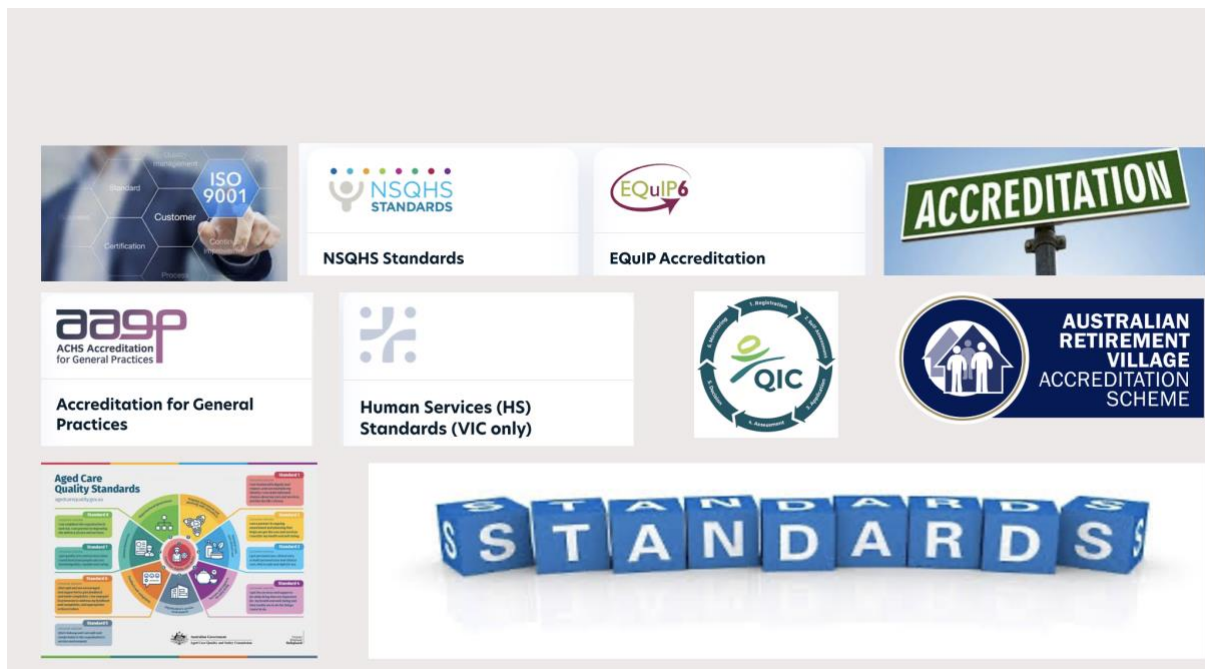
- Cultural safety has started to gain traction in mainstream health organisations at a national level. Too
- But words must be translated into action.
- And ---his is where allies come in.

Whose problem? Whose responsibility?



- Understanding allyship and cultural safety is a lifelong journey but I encourage you to start that journey today.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples represent 3% of the total Australian population.
- Just imagine what could be possible if the 97% of other Australians were allies in addressing racism, promoting equity, valuing culture and country, creating cultural safety — AND acting to address climate change, particularly in their workplaces?
- We need multiple voices working together, on the same page.

- But we need governance at all levels that privileges Indigenous leadership – and not just putting one Aboriginal person on a reference group, not just adding a paragraph to a climate strategy about the impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We need authentic involvement and knowledge translation.



- Like we saw with cultural safety, perhaps we could develop accreditation standards for climate action and a low carbon health system? so that action is hard wired into systems and not dependent on individuals, and then measured and reported on – publically 😊
- We need to do that at every level — there are opportunities to embed climate action accreditation standards, from the RACGP and ACCRM accreditation standards through to Minister Hunt’s office....
- Like with cultural safety, if you embed change, it’s long-lasting — otherwise it’s just more ticking boxes.

- And, like in anti-racism work, people may think they're doing great work to little effect until they measure it....
- And we all benefit from good examples, case studies of how to do well – communities of practice to show how these accreditation standards can work, that this is how you do it well.
- We don't know what we don't know ---and what's exemplar!
- And of course, we need to develop a climate and health workforce to support the work...and
- Privilege the voices and expertise of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations.



- On that note, can I finish by inviting you to one of our signature Lowitja Institute events ---next year..... a knowledge translation event to further spread the word from our *Climate Change and Aboriginal*

and Torres Strait Islander Health report, to ensure our recommendations are widely taken up.

- I look forward to seeing you there!
-