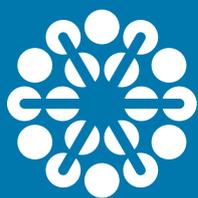


# RESEARCH TO ACTION

>> Bridging the  
gap between  
what we know  
and what we do



Centre for  
Applied Disability  
Research

An Initiative of National Disability Services

**NDS** National  
Disability  
Services

# Culturally Proficient Service Delivery

## A Rapid Review of the Literature



## **THE CENTRE FOR APPLIED DISABILITY RESEARCH**

The Centre for Applied Disability Research (CADR) is an initiative of National Disability Services (NDS). CADR aims to improve the wellbeing of people living with disability by gathering insights, building understanding, and sharing knowledge. CADR's applied research agenda is helping to build the evidence base and support stakeholders to better understand what works, for whom, under what circumstances and at what cost.

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## **SUGGESTED CITATION**

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## **ABOUT THIS RESEARCH TO ACTION GUIDE**

This Rapid Review forms part of the Research Action Guide on cultural proficiency, a suite of resources produced for CADR on this topic. A complimentary Guide, based on the findings of this review, has been developed to support staff working alongside people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds with disability build their individual cultural proficiency. A second guide provides practice leaders and managers in disability services with a practical pathway to cultural proficiency.

The entire Research to Action Guide suite is available at the CADR Clearing House, [www.cadr.org.au](http://www.cadr.org.au).

## **FEEDBACK**

Do you have feedback, or a suggestion for a Research to Action Guide? We welcome your thoughts and ideas. Please contact [info@cadr.org.au](mailto:info@cadr.org.au).



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# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents a rapid review of the literature on cultural proficiency, cultural competence and related terms. The focus is on disability in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities (CALD) across Australia. The aim of this is to inform disability sector organisations in their work with diversity issues as they interact with a changing disability population and service environment. This rapid review is part of a Research to Action Guide, which also includes good practice guides, informed by the evidence. The 2014 Audit of Disability Research and a later update in 2018 confirm there are substantial knowledge gaps in our understanding of the intersection between disability and diversity.<sup>143</sup> A growing expertise and knowledge base is clearly required if equity is to be achieved in this area, as past and present research confirms the lack of a high quality CALD disability research base.

## 2. RAPID REVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

The Culturally Proficient Service Delivery Research to Action Guide has been developed to assist in the provision of accessible, appropriate and effective disability (and related) services. The Guide comprises the rapid review and a number of supporting pieces, all designed to inform the good practice. The aim of this rapid review is to provide a current understanding of the intersection of disability issues with cultural diversity issues in the research literature. The purpose in doing this is to support people in the disability sector in developing their own research-informed strategies and practices for working in the increasingly diverse and dynamic disability environment. The need for better understanding of the intersection of diversity and disability issues can only grow in coming years as the social and scientific understanding of disability as an intersectional field of experience and practice expands and develops.

The rapid review summarises the evidence on the provision of culturally proficient services in the disability, and related sectors. The review included both peer reviewed and relevant grey literature, including previous work undertaken by the authors. Full details of the methodology are presented in Appendix 1. It was developed in response to two key research questions: What are the key aspects of a culturally proficient workforce's practice; and how do you provide culturally proficient services and supports?

The review provides an overview of what is known about disability and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities in Australia. It then briefly reviews the terminology and underpinning philosophies relating to the provision of services to members of CALD communities, followed by a discussion of relevant models and approaches, including their limitations. The report concludes with the Good Practice Summary, which incorporates the core elements of culturally proficient service provision. Issues associated with disability in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are not addressed in this rapid review but are part of the NDS and Centre for Applied Disability Research program of work and dealt with in other resources.

## CONTEXT

The estimates of people with disabilities within CALD communities vary according both to the definition used and the types of disabilities included. The 2016 Census revealed that 67 per cent of the Australian population were born in Australia. 49 percent of Australians had either been born overseas (first generation Australian) or one or both parents had been born overseas (second generation Australian).<sup>1</sup> The 2015 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers showed that a disability rate of 15.8% amongst people born in non-English speaking countries, and 21.0% amongst those born overseas in other English speaking countries. The rate was 13.6% for people whose main language spoken at home was other than English compared to 18.6% for the mainly English speaking population.<sup>2</sup>

It is important to note that due to linguistic and methodological limitations, these figures might be an under-representation, not least of all because language spoken is not an indication of either cultural or religious diversity. In addition, a recent review of the disability and CALD data argues that CALD people with disability are: significantly underrepresented (still rarely above 13% of users) in their use of specialist disability services; have comparable disability rates (given data limitations) with the Australian-born community; have higher rates of profound and severe disability; and have a higher need for assistance than those who speak English at home.<sup>3</sup>

## TERMINOLOGY AND APPROACH

This Research to Action Guide uses ‘cultural proficiency’ as a way of describing appropriate service provision to CALD communities. This term is the latest in a number of attempts to encapsulate the competencies required by providers, including both organisations and individuals in order to achieve this aim. The brevity of this review does not allow for full discussion of the terms, but it is important to note that in both the literature and in practice there are variations. Appendix 2 provides a brief outline of the differences and their origins. The notion of cultural competency has evolved over time<sup>4</sup> and this is reflected in the range of terms used including: cultural competence,<sup>5</sup> cross-cultural competency,<sup>6</sup> cultural appropriateness,<sup>7</sup> cultural safety,<sup>8</sup> cultural sensitivity,<sup>9</sup> cultural humility,<sup>10</sup> and cultural proficiency<sup>11</sup> amongst others. A relatively recent meta-review indicates that there are over 30 models of intercultural competence and over 300 related constructs.<sup>12</sup>

Each definition has a different, although often overlapping, focus. A similar issue arises with the focus of research, with much of the work in this field occurring within the context of healthcare and in relation to disability services in areas such as psychology,<sup>13 14</sup> mental health<sup>15-17</sup> and rehabilitation<sup>18-20 21</sup> which span both fields. Cultural proficiency as a term is still most understood and operationalised within the context of education.

Approaches to service delivery for people with disability have changed significantly over the last decades as the medical model of care gave way to a social model of disability, supported by human rights enshrined in national and international policies and strategies.<sup>22 23</sup> There is also an argument for understanding disability and cultural diversity from an intersectional approach, that is to say from the perspective where vulnerabilities and experiences are both cumulative and interactive<sup>24</sup> (and therefore cannot be ‘teased out individually’<sup>25 26</sup>) and for engaging with the ‘culture of disability’ framework as a way of addressing the inequities experienced across both fields.<sup>27 28</sup>

## WHAT ARE THE KEY ASPECTS OF A CULTURALLY PROFICIENT WORKFORCE'S PRACTICE?

Cultural proficiency can be understood and applied at different levels: systems; organisations or services; teams or units; and individual professional, staff, managers and volunteers.<sup>29</sup> Different elements and factors shape the ability to provide culturally proficient or competent practice at each of these levels. In order to attract and meet the needs of people from CALD backgrounds with disability, a disability service requires culturally proficient professionals, staff, managers and volunteers associated with disability services. However, what cultural proficiency actually means in a disability service provider organisation may vary within the context of specific services and client groups.

A service providing care, for example, for members of largely second or third generation immigrants (as is the case for many descendants of post-World War II immigrants) will need to be culturally aware, but may not necessarily require additional language support. Those providing care for individuals who developed disabilities because of torture and/or trauma in their country of origin, or in transit to Australia, including refugees and displaced persons, may require more specialised knowledge about interacting with their clients.<sup>30</sup>

The literature identifies two intersecting elements that form the basis of this skill mix. These are the organisation or services' ability to identify, attract and retain workers with the required cultural/linguistic skills<sup>31-34</sup> and/or the services ability to support workers to develop and enhance those competencies.<sup>35</sup>

Current research evidence on the contributions of CALD workers in the disability sector itself falls into four key categories:

1. "mere" labour (a preparedness to work for a low wage, including readiness to work in undesired jobs);
2. those competences which are not related to ethnicity (professional knowledge, skills, abilities, work experience);
3. those competences directly related to ethnicity (language, cultural skills and knowledge, networks and contacts, new approaches to work tasks); and
4. the worker's ethnicity itself (as a symbol for cultural accessibility, authenticity, and equity).<sup>36</sup>

With regards to specific workforce competencies, cultural competence, like all competence, can be broken down into the knowledge, skills and attitudes (the 'three legged stool'<sup>40</sup>) required for culturally proficient practice.<sup>41</sup> A list of key competencies is presented in Table 1, below.

**Table 1: Summary of key cultural competencies**

Attributes	Competencies (numbers indicate references)
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cultural knowledge (including both ethnicity/religion and disability) 20 42 27 42–44</li><li>• Ethno-specific, multicultural and general support services<sup>42–45</sup></li><li>• Cultural politics and power relations, including oppression, healthcare disparities and social justice<sup>28 46–50</sup></li><li>• Client (person and family) centred practice<sup>46 51–53</sup></li><li>• Strengths-based approaches <sup>54 55 56</sup></li></ul>
Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Listening skills<sup>57 21 46</sup></li><li>• Interpersonal and rapport building skills <sup>57 58</sup></li><li>• Communication skills <sup>27 43 57 59 60</sup></li><li>• Use of interpreters<sup>21 61–63</sup></li><li>• Interdisciplinary and inter-professional collaboration<sup>45 60 64 65</sup></li><li>• Adaptation of professional skills<sup>59</sup></li></ul>
Attitudes/awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Compassion and emotional support<sup>66 67</sup></li><li>• Honesty and trust building <sup>66 58 68</sup></li><li>• Respect <sup>66 69 70</sup></li><li>• Self-awareness, including to bias<sup>27 71–73</sup></li><li>• Humility<sup>74–76</sup></li></ul>

Employment of bi- or multi- lingual staff or cultural brokers can improve access to services, open up new client groups, improve the quality of service provision, and in a small number of cases has been shown to improve outcomes for CALD communities.<sup>37–39</sup>

The implications of these competencies can be summarised in the definition of cultural competence provided by Suarez-Balcazar et al. (2009).<sup>77</sup> Based on early work by Campinha-Bacote (1999)<sup>78</sup> they argue that cultural competence is “... demonstrated when the practitioner understands and appreciates differences in health beliefs and behaviors, recognises and respects variations that occur within cultural groups, and is able to adjust his or her practice to provide effective interventions for people from various cultures”.<sup>77: 499</sup> As well as the competencies identified above, Campinha-Bacote (2001) includes cultural encounters as essential (direct engagement in cross cultural activities) to the cultural competence process,<sup>70</sup> an approach supported by other research.<sup>79–82</sup>

Cultural proficiency or competence is a set of skills, attitudes and behaviours required for the effective and appropriate delivery of services. One of the seminal articles in this field is by Cross et al (1989)<sup>83</sup> who describe the six stages of cultural competence, running from cultural destructiveness, through cultural incapacity, cultural blindness, cultural pre-competence, cultural competence and finally cultural proficiency (which is described as an organisational rather than individual attribute and will be taken up in the next section). While other authors provide different models<sup>78 84–86</sup> of staging or development, the core concept is that the development of cultural competence needs to be undertaken over a period of time and within a

supportive organisational environment.<sup>5 87</sup>

At present, good quality research-based evidence on the effectiveness of different cultural competency training approaches and methods is limited due to significant differences in definitions, approaches and evaluations of outcomes.<sup>88</sup> Support for developmental approaches continues nonetheless and cannot simply be discounted due to a lack of generalised evidence.<sup>5 89 90</sup> More emphasis needs to be placed, however, on programs which can support intersectional<sup>91 92</sup>, multifaceted<sup>93</sup> and reflexive,<sup>5 94-97</sup> rather than simplistic cultural information, approaches.<sup>98-100</sup> Risks in simplistic cultural competence training approaches include: essentialising the different ‘other’; creating an inflated sense of competence; and creating resistance against incompetence.<sup>101</sup>

New approaches to the development of cultural competencies, including simulation,<sup>102-104</sup> consultations and coaching,<sup>105 106</sup> need to be undertaken within enabling organisational environments which support the changes the training intends to effect.<sup>107</sup> If staff, after having undergone such training return to a workplace environment where it is not valued and supported any learning acquired is extinguished.<sup>108 109</sup> The inclusion of community representatives as participants as well as presenters in cultural competency training is also effective.<sup>110-112</sup> The involvement of community and advocacy groups in all aspects of disability services strengthens the links, knowledge and trust between them.<sup>113 114</sup>

#### **HOW DO YOU PROVIDE CULTURALLY PROFICIENT SERVICES AND SUPPORTS?**

As noted previously, the first definition of cultural proficiency was as the last stage of Cross et al’s (1989)<sup>83</sup> model of cultural competence. Culturally proficient agencies were distinguished by ‘... seek[ing] to add to the knowledge base of culturally competent practice by conducting research, developing new therapeutic approaches based on culture, and publishing and disseminating the results of demonstration projects ... [and by] hir[ing] staff who are specialists in culturally competent practice. Such agencies [are said to] advocate for cultural competence throughout the system and for improved relations between cultures throughout society.’” Burcham (2002) includes cultural proficiency in her model of cultural competence, and drawing on Cross et al<sup>83</sup> and Villarruel<sup>115</sup> locates it at the last and highest level of development,<sup>86</sup> and combines those characteristics with ‘an evidence of commitment to change’.<sup>116</sup> Wells (2000) argues that cultural proficiency is actually a higher order concept than cultural competence, and as such overcomes the limitations of competency models that focus on awareness, sensitivity or even competence.<sup>117</sup>

In short, culturally proficient services recognise the specific factors affecting CALD individuals and groups access and use of services<sup>118-121</sup> and develop strategies to remove barriers and supporting and facilitating culturally proficient care both within individual services and organisations, and across the sector as a whole. One definition of a culturally competent or proficient organisation which has been forwarded is “... one which recognises, respects and responds to diversity in order to achieve the best possible outcomes for all its clients.”<sup>122</sup>

The use of services by people from CALD backgrounds with disability are affected by a range of experiential, local or community and systems factors, the development of responses to meet those need to be both evidence based and context sensitive.<sup>118-121</sup> There is no ‘one size fits all’ approach in responding to CALD communities, but as in the case of practice competencies, there

is a strong synergy between culturally proficient practice in disability organisations and human rights approaches to service provision.

These barriers could be addressed in a number of ways. The Acheson Inquiry into health inequalities provided a set of useful principles around which equitable and appropriate service delivery should operate.<sup>123</sup> The inquiry argued that services serving disadvantaged populations are not of poorer quality or less accessible; that the allocation and application of resources are in relation to need and; positive efforts are made to ensure greater uptake and use of effective services, with extra efforts made to reach those who [are in greater need of such services].<sup>123</sup> In brief, this means that in providing culturally proficient services and supports, disability services need to address (and evaluate) four components: access, utilisation, quality and safety, and outcomes.

Access factors include (amongst others) individual, family and community differences in understanding and responding to disabilities;<sup>62 124</sup> knowledge of available services;<sup>119</sup> isolation;<sup>125</sup> language and literacy barriers;<sup>73 126</sup> concerns about the cost of care;<sup>125</sup> and concerns about the delivery of care.<sup>69</sup> Utilisation of all care services by vulnerable groups is affected by factors including those just listed, but also provider characteristics such as generalisations and stereotyping, bias, prejudice and discrimination, staff anxiety and uncertainty; and organisational factors including the availability and type of services, including community services, and language barriers.<sup>127</sup>

Some specific approaches include removing language barriers by employing bilingual staff, training staff in languages, supporting the use of interpreters;<sup>62</sup> skills development through training and methodologically and conceptually sophisticated development approaches (as discussed previously);<sup>62 77</sup> recognising that culturally competent practice may take additional time and effort on the part of individual staff and therefore the organisation;<sup>71</sup> allocating adequate resources for the use of resources including interpreters, bilingual workers and the development of appropriate materials;<sup>62 128</sup> and utilising strengths and community-based approaches in order to value and capitalise on the strengths within families and communities.<sup>43 62</sup>

The quality, safety and client outcomes of disability services provided are arguably the least researched areas of the field. Several reviews of cultural competency in health care have resulted in similar findings of methodological weakness. While evidence shows that culturally competent services can improve access, quality and utilisation of care, there is little evidence of improvements in outcomes for clients.<sup>129 130 131 132</sup> Several organisational characteristics are required if culturally proficient approaches are to be developed. These include: a clear organisational vision for cultural proficiency; a public commitment to that vision by executive, leaders and champions across the organisation; executive sponsorship of and responsibility for the plan; the use of cultural proficiency audits; a commitment of resources; and a set key performance indicators and metrics (individual and organisational).<sup>133 134 122</sup>

The Victorian Health Promotion Foundation produced a critical review of various audit processes in the diversity practice which still provides a baseline for cultural competency approaches and provides suitable metrics.<sup>135</sup> Multicultural Mental Health Australia (MMHA) has produced a national cultural competency tool specifically for mental health service providers<sup>136</sup>. Robertson and Travaglia<sup>122</sup> developed a comprehensive model for the delivery

of culturally proficient disability services in Australia based on the issues and principles outlined in the previous sections of this report. Their argument is that in order to deliver culturally competent services, a set of inter-related organisational dynamics need to be addressed. A number of organisational characteristics are required if culturally proficient approaches are to be undertaken. These include: structural and system supports (legislation, policies and procedures, planning and resource management); frameworks (access, equity, anti-discrimination and human rights); environment (physical, cultural, safety, forecasting); resources (including financial, all staff, material, relational, relationships with communities and other organisations); information (including data collection, consultation processes, communication and education); people (including planning, competence, development and leadership); activities (including services, provider and staff responsibilities, program and service development); quality (including monitoring, evaluation, improvement and research) and metrics.

### **GAPS IN THE EVIDENCE**

In assessing the evidence for this rapid review what was sought was examples of strategies or interactions to support culturally proficient practice. In closing, two issues need to be addressed. The first is that cultural competency (and most of its derivations) are not without critics. These often relate to the lack of socio-political engagement of some of the models, which are a result, it is argued, of a focus on 'culture' to the detriment of understanding of inequality<sup>137 138</sup> social justice<sup>139</sup> and of more complex nuanced and dynamic notions of individual and collective identity.<sup>140 141</sup> Bhui et al (2007) argue that while cultural competence is relevant as a goal, its implementation is highly variable and largely untested using reliable research methods.<sup>142</sup>

The Report of Audit of Disability Research in Australia<sup>143</sup> canvassed the disability research environment, including the scholarly and grey literature, for the years 2000 to 2013. The researchers reviewed over 2000 research reports and found significant gaps in the available evidence on disability services, as well as an overall lack of strategic thinking and funding in the research current disability research environment. It found that current research does not address in any substantial way the National Disability Research and Development Agenda's four key target groups: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities; people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD); women with disability; and people in regional, rural and remote areas.

These findings support those of this review process. With notable exceptions, in comparison to healthcare, there is limited international research that directly addresses the needs of people from CALD backgrounds with disability, and what is available is often produced as a result of an overlap between the two fields (as in the case of mental health or rehabilitation services). Once the search is directed to the Australian context, the evidence base becomes even more scant. As a result, much of what is known comes from practice-based knowledge. This makes the directive to culturally proficient services to conduct their own research and advocate for their field, even more important.

## APPENDIX 1: METHODS

This project followed a documented, repeatable rapid literature review process which is based on a modified version of the PRISMA method. All details of the processes used in the searches are provided. The purpose in doing so is to make this search process repeatable by subsequent researchers or practitioners and to support the transparency of the research process. In addition, for those new to research processes, this can support their early development of skills and capacities in the research process. These rapid review searches were conducted during the timeframe of 1 March to 14 March 2017.

The timeframe for the literature search itself was the period 2000 to 2017 and five main databases were utilised. We should point out that this is not a comprehensive history of the terminology but a rapid update of its development in the 21st century. As discussed below, cultural competency language and work goes back to the late 1980s. The databases explored were Web of Science (WOS), Medline, Ovid, PsychINFO and the Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL). Some other databases were reviewed for their potential utility and while the authors found a high level of duplication of results, this does not suggest this present selection covers all of the potentially available resources, as many other databases exist. In addition to this, we have supplemented this resource with books, articles and reports from other sources to extend the scope and history of the issues covered and to provide a more rounded resource for researchers and practitioners working in the disability sector.

The main search terms used in the first stage were: cultural competence, cultural competency, cultural safety and cultural proficiency. The terms 'competence' and 'competency' were used because sometimes different researchers, researchers in different academic disciplines or even different countries may emphasise slightly different terminologies, or publishers would index the articles slightly differently by their use of keyword selections. Overlaps were very common and when we merged the grid of downloads from all 25 individual searches and their resulting EndNote files, we reduced the total number of references by almost half. Within these we then searched for four main disability-related terms: disability; disabled; impairment and handicap. Each sub-search was done individually and then the four remaining files were merged and de-duplicated in EndNote™, a popular bibliographic software package (one of several available). The result was a file of 209 unique outputs, mostly journal articles but also including one thesis.

### RESULTS

The tables below shows the individual searches conducted and the results for each individual search. Each search was saved as a separate EndNote database file and these are available in EndNote or plain text formats. The two numbers in each are firstly the total results for each search term by each database, and secondly (in parentheses) the number of results for an initial Quick Search, an Endnote command option, on the term 'disability'. This gave a basic count of the preliminary results and an indicator that the term 'disability' also occurred in journal titles and the like, meaning that it did not necessarily point specifically to an article, report or thesis on that topic. This was achieved by doing a more explicit search within the final consolidated Endnote file including the abstracts for all 209 publications (see Table 2 below)

**Table 2. Search Strategy and Results Summary**

Search No.	Search Terms	Database				
		Web of Science	Ovid	Medline	CINAHL	PsycINFO
1	Cultural competence	2851 (47)	1251 (30)	1451 (23)	5824 (111)	2608 (54)
2	Cultural competency	1104 (20)	730 (21)	4059 (77)	725 (18)	1065 (36)
3	Cultural safety	243 (1)	15 (0)	181 (3)	456 (3)	106 (2)
4	Cultural proficiency	30 (0)	14 (0)	19 (0)	54 (1)	104 (1)
5	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse	831 (22)	139 (0)	259 (1)	226 (15)	842 (13)

**Table 3. Disability Search Terms Results in Consolidated EndNote Search**

Term Used	Results
Disability	169
Disabled	28
Impairment	33
Handicap	3
Sub-Total	233
<b>De-duplicated Total</b>	<b>209</b>

Table 3 above shows that by far the most commonly indexed of the search terms was ‘disability’ itself. ‘Disabled’ came third suggesting that this literature focuses more on the issue of disability itself rather than people with disability as groups or individuals, but more on this below. Lastly, ‘impairment’ was the second most common of the four terms which given the health and medical nature of several of the databases should be no great surprise. Perhaps more surprising is that the term ‘handicap’ was so rarely counted with only three mentions in total. This may be a result of positive changes in the prevailing disability discourse, including the health and medical literature, at least during the period since 2000 when this search starts.

## APPENDIX 2: TERMINOLOGY

One of the issues with the terminology associated with both disability and diversity is that there are ongoing changes, reinterpreted and even new language entering these discussions at semi-regular intervals. The term 'cultural competence' originated with Cross's work in bilingual education and child therapy in the United States back in the late 1980s.<sup>83</sup> Cultural safety emerged from work on Maori health inequalities by nursing theorist and practitioner Irihapeti Ramsden in New Zealand.<sup>144</sup> Cultural proficiency re-emerged (see Cross et al, 1989) in 2000 from another nursing practitioner, Marsha Wells, whose intention was to go beyond the prevailing cultural competence paradigm, one which "extends cultural competence into nursing practice, administration, education, and research".<sup>117</sup> Wells also refers us to the transcultural nursing theorist Leininger's principles for cross-cultural work including (a) keeping a very open-ended view of diversity and differences, and (b) to avoid seeing people as being all alike (stereotyping) on the basis of some shared, but possibly arbitrary, characteristic (language, culture, religion etc.).<sup>145 146</sup> Here too we need to consider if this extensive set of developments from the nursing and psychological/therapeutic domains are appropriate to or even sufficient for a broader disability-oriented environment.

Cultural proficiency had the lowest number of outputs overall, suggesting that there is some way to go if this modified concept from nursing theory is to have a significant impact. The data in these searches indicate that it has had much of its impact to date in the health professions including nursing, medicine and allied health. Leavitt's<sup>147</sup> book on cultural competence uses the term 'cultural proficiency' in relation to disability work but the contents of the book emphasise the more conventional 'cultural competence' terminology. The difference in emphasis appears to position cultural competence as an achievable outcome (progressing from incompetence through to eventual competence) while the smaller 'cultural proficiency' literature suggests an ongoing developmental process with which organisations and practitioners are engaged.

It must be noted that much, even most, of this literature and the concepts it contains is derived from the United States. Some caution is required in borrowing and then applying ideas, concepts and practices that have a very specific cultural and historical context. It is acceptable, even advisable, to ensure that we are not simply replicating American approaches but, instead, adapting them to local situations and contexts. The emphasis on 'race relations,' for example, in American literature (different again in the United Kingdom or New Zealand contexts) often leads to a conflation of terms such as 'race/ethnicity' as though the history and meaning of these terms is either approximately the same or even that they are necessarily connected. The assumption can emerge that using the same language or terminology means we really are all talking about exactly the same things and this is an issue that needs to be clarified. It is important, we suggest, to unpack and think through such terms and their application before rushing to add these concepts and practices to Australian disability environments.

The literature identifies several major concepts that have emerged since the late 1980s, which we briefly describe here to help inform your exploration of your service's starting point and intended direction in terms of developing capacity in this area. These concepts include cultural competence; cultural proficiency; and cultural safety. There is very limited research evidence supporting any of these approaches in terms of their implementation or evaluation with diverse

communities. Most are conceptual devices established by people working directly in those spaces who saw a lack of participation in service use by diverse groups proportional to their representation in the population. This is a key starting point for disability organisations to consider having accepted the need for greater engagement with diverse communities, and this in turn, as identified by the NDIA and others, reinforces the developmental need for better data collection, analysis and use in the sector.

One point should be made very clear before engaging with these concepts and that is the approach utilised towards the very concept of culture itself. 'Culture' is not a simple construct and it can be seen as one of the most complicated conceptual devices in the English language, prone to misuse and oversimplification – especially when applied to others.<sup>148</sup> The American use of terms such as 'race/ethnicity' should also be seen as non-transferable constructs in that this construction is very specific to the American social and historical context. Assuming an understanding of cultures and/or languages based on, for example, commonly held ideas or generalised notions drawn from the social sciences are a risk in this type of work. It is perhaps fortunate that some understanding of this complexity already exists in the disability sector as can be seen in the concept of Deaf community language and culture. Some writers have suggested that disability itself can be seen as a form of or intersectional with diversity itself, implying a significant cultural dimension to the disability experience.<sup>27</sup> While others have even suggested that culture can be seen as disability in that 'disability' status is attributed in particular cultural contexts, that are culturally constructed, rather than existing as an intrinsic property of the individual.<sup>149</sup> In this context, and highly relevant to the terminology discussed here, the very concept of 'diversity' can be viewed as a specifically American cultural construction.<sup>150</sup>

Keep in mind also, as noted above, that there is an existing and continuing critique of 'cultural competency' and related ideas in the literature.<sup>151 152</sup> A common concern is that rather than changing systems to be fundamentally more inclusive, cultural competency strategies may simply work to smooth out the rough edges of established organisations, their services and practices – without necessarily ensuring systemic change or building a sustainable knowledge base. Thus, for example, while we would see interpreters as being essential in complex healthcare environments, and Australia has healthcare interpreter services available, it is still very common for all manner of communication failures to occur in healthcare, to do so regularly and with important consequences for patients and their families.<sup>153</sup>

## CULTURAL COMPETENCE

The term cultural competence emerged from the work done by Terry Cross and colleagues in the late 1980s in counselling children with learning difficulties from diverse backgrounds and in bilingual contexts.<sup>83</sup> This remains a major field for cultural competency development – bilingual childhood education and language training. The concept is specifically American in its origin but has spread, in one form or another, to many other countries often through professional education and training formats.<sup>154</sup> The basic premise of 'cultural competence' is that organisations and individuals can work effectively with people from other cultural backgrounds by improving their knowledge of and skills in cross-cultural encounters. Note also that the concept is essentially an equity based construct (i.e. values based) but not one arising from or

supported by research evidence on the efficacy of applied cultural competencies.

In addition, a number of variations on the theme, including several different models, have emerged as different professionals and theorists engage with the idea of enabling ‘competence’ in cross-cultural encounters.<sup>155</sup> We note that an explicitly principled approach is clearly important in both disability and cross-cultural/diversity work. In the disability context, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) and a more generalised human rights position should also possess the capacity to inform work with CALD communities (in a developmental fashion and not assuming equivalence across communities). In the diversity context, often a social justice approach is simply the best available ethical foundation given past failures in service delivery and client representation.

### **CULTURAL PROFICIENCY**

As noted in the body of the review, the term cultural proficiency was coined back in the early days of cultural competence theorising by Cross and colleagues, making it more foundational than more recent authors suggest. Wells has argued that ‘cultural proficiency’ as a practical and philosophical approach to diversity that overcomes the limitations of previous models, including cultural awareness, cultural sensitivity, cultural humility and cultural competence.<sup>117</sup> Her premise for this was that ‘proficiency’ is a higher order concept than ‘competence’ and thus provides a more overarching construct. Here too, her original article is not evidence-based or supported by research but proposes instead as it’s theoretical rationale, an extension of the received cultural competence concept. We note also that even in the literature search we conducted that the terms ‘cultural competence’ and ‘cultural proficiency’ were often used as though they were completely equivalent terms indicating that this distinction is not well understood.

### **CULTURAL SAFETY**

The cultural safety concept emerged from the field of New Zealand Maori nursing activism and healthcare provision<sup>144</sup> and it has since become popular in some other Indigenous communities and contexts. In Australia, it is mainly utilised in healthcare work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to emphasise the importance of a person’s whole identity being recognised and accepted in the service encounter.<sup>156</sup> Even here, the term ‘cultural competency’ is often as likely to be applied to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as it is with CALD or other forms of diversity.<sup>157</sup> This mixed usage confirms a key issue identified in this rapid review which is that there is a marked variability in how these each of terms are understood, used and applied even within the healthcare systems within which their usage is most marked.

While there is a strong indigenous emphasis in the use of ‘cultural safety’, an area which is dealt with separately by the NDS, NDIA and others, we note that the focus on safety (including individual, collective, organisational and environmental safety) is clearly one which resonates in disability work generally and has direct relevance also to the intersection of disability and cross-cultural or, more broadly conceived, diversity work.<sup>158</sup> Here also the premise is primarily a philosophical position rather than an understanding emerging directly from the research evidence. Clearly if operating from a human rights perspective the safety of the individual with disability is paramount and, also, a failure to address language needs and

cultural factors can put clients and carers at risk of negative outcomes across multiple systems (disability services, healthcare, education, justice etc.). The concept of safety can also apply equally to service providers, especially frontline staff, in what is a complex and rapidly changing sector.

In summary, many of the prevalent concepts in this area originated in the broader healthcare sector and disciplines including nursing, medicine, counselling, mental health and social work. While health itself is very important in disability work, this also means that concepts drawn from healthcare should be assessed against the principles and values of disability work, including the social model of disability. Adapting these types of diversity constructs to disability work is an essential process in ensuring that they reflect the existing and emergent values of disability work, in order that CALD people with disability not be framed simply as patients or clients. Lastly, it is only through this process that a consistent approach to and strategies for cultural competency, or its adapted Australian equivalent, in the disability sector can be fully realised. The alternative is, as in healthcare, a sporadic and poorly-defined approach to cultural competency development, implementation and outcomes.

## APPENDIX 3. POPULATION DIVERSITY AND DISABILITY IN AUSTRALIA

### POPULATION DIVERSITY AND DISABILITY IN AUSTRALIA

This section briefly describes the complexity of Australia's population and its relationship to disability. Cultural and language differences need to be better understood in order to inform disability communication and service delivery strategies. As we note elsewhere in this resource, the research base on the intersection diversity and disability in Australian is poorly understood and a great deal more research and information is needed to fill in the gaps in our current knowledge. As the NDIS rolls out, it is becoming evident that the level of CALD community participation in the NDIS rollout is well below their proportion of the population.<sup>159</sup> If the NDIS and the disability sector generally is to develop competence in this area, then an understanding of the demography of the CALD communities is a minimum starting point.

It is recognised that CALD data is insufficient and using country of birth as an indicator of CALD is inadequate to the task.<sup>160</sup> As at March 2018, the NDIA are developing a CALD Strategy to support people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in accessing the services of the NDIS.<sup>161</sup>

### CENSUS DATA

#### Country of Birth Data

The table below shows the top five countries of birth, other than Australia, from the 2016 Census. The traditional English-speaking countries remain dominant for country of birth, including England and New Zealand. In 2016, there were over 300 separately identified languages spoken in Australian homes, with 21% of Australians who spoke a language other than English.<sup>162</sup> However, the reader can see also how the rapid shift in migration from Asia, with Mandarin, Cantonese and Vietnamese all in the top 5 Languages spoken by a person at home.

The number of people identifying as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin is on the increase. In the 2011 Census, 2.5% of the population identified as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. This has increased to 2.6% of the Australian population in 2016 (650,000). In 2016, 6.7% of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people reported in the Census that they had need for assistance with a core activity. This has increased from 5.4% in 2011.<sup>163</sup>

The following tables from the 2011 and 2016 Census data highlight our culturally diverse nation.

### Language spoken by a person at home (Top 5)<sup>162</sup>

Language	2011		Language	2016	
English only	76.8%	16,509,291	English only	72.7%	17,020,417
Mandarin	1.6%	336,410	Mandarin	2.5%	596,711
Italian	1.4%	299,833	Arabic	1.4%	321,728
Arabic	1.3%	287,174	Cantonese	1.2%	280,943
Cantonese	1.2%	263,673	Vietnamese	1.2%	277,400

### Country of Birth (Top 5)<sup>162</sup>

Country of Birth	2011		Country of Birth	2016	
Australia	69.8%	15,017,846	Australia	66.7%	15,614,825
England	4.2%	911,593	England	3.9%	907,570
New Zealand	2.2%	483,398	New Zealand	2.2%	518,466
China	1.5%	318,969	China	2.2%	509,555
India	1.4%	295,362	India	1.9%	455,389

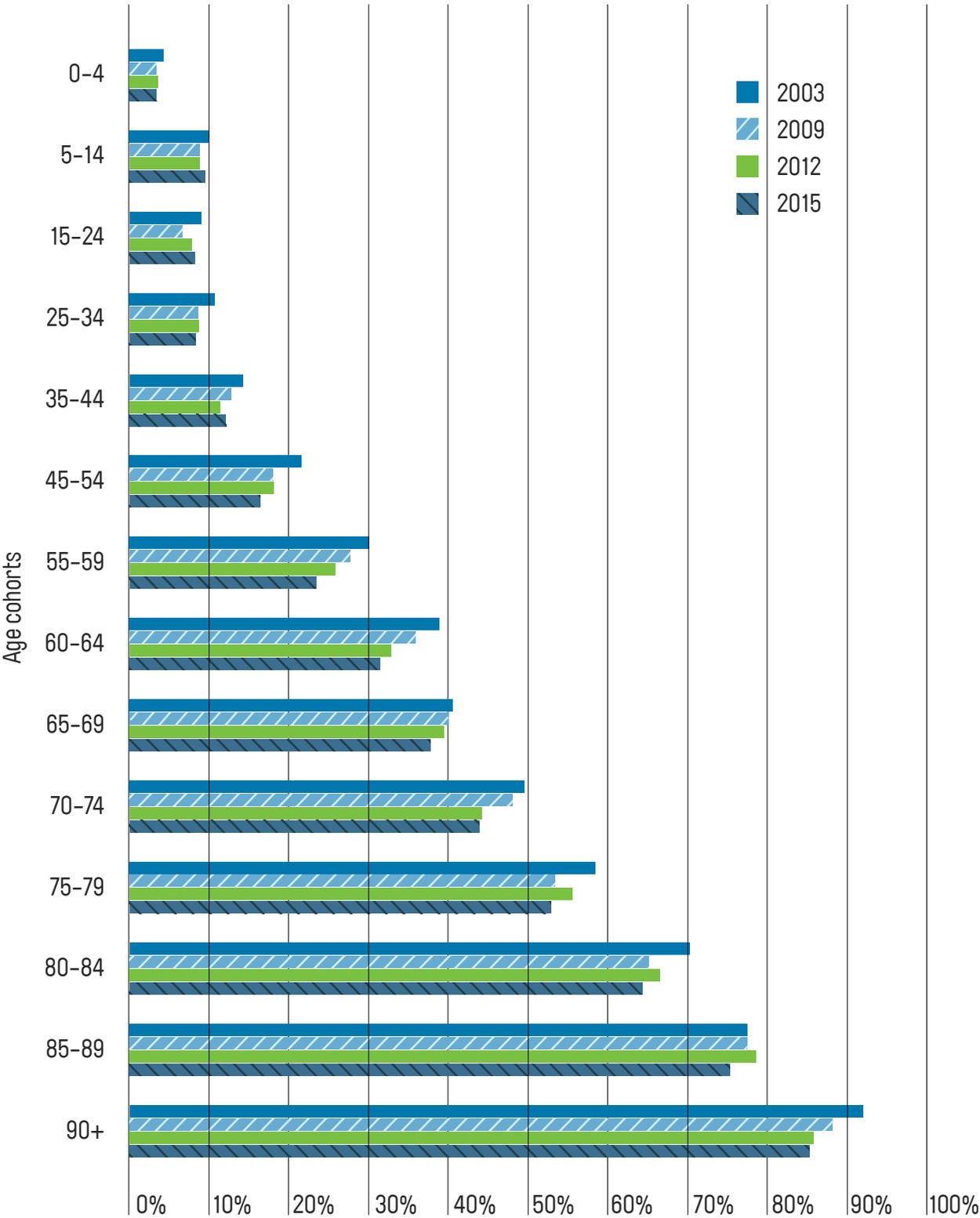
Christianity remains the most common religion in Australia (52.1% of the population). The Islamic population was the second largest (2.6%) followed by Buddhism (2.4%).

### Religion (Top 5)<sup>162</sup>

Religion	2011		Religion	2016	
No religion	22.3%	4,804,267	No religion	30.1%	7,040,717
Catholic	25.3%	5,439,267	Catholic	22.6%	5,291,834
Anglican	17.1%	3,679,907	Anglican	13.3%	3,101,185
Uniting Church	5.0%	1,065,794	Uniting Church	3.7%	870,183
Presbyterian and Reformed	2.8%	599,515	Christian, nfd	2.6%	612,371

The 2015 SDAC data found that “the likelihood of living with disability increases with age, 2 in 5 people with disability were 65 years or older”.<sup>165</sup> The following graph shows the disability status by age since 2003.

**Age-Related Disability Status Data from the Four ABS Surveys<sup>165</sup>**



The table below shows three major cultural characteristics (four if you include gender) of the diversity of the Australian population and their intersection with disability rates. Firstly, inner regional areas have the highest overall rate of disability. Secondly, English-speaking immigrants have the highest disability rates followed by those from non-English speaking immigrant backgrounds. Thirdly, where the language spoken at home is not English, the disability rate is lower than the English-speaking. Lastly, rural rates skew in towards men while country of birth and language rates either match or skew towards women.

The issue of having a ‘profound or severe core activity limitation’ expands this understanding in that for both country of birth and language spoken at home data, the non-English speaking background category had higher rates than the Australian-born or broader English speaking categories. Of particular note here is that the collection of country of birth and language spoken data was not very comprehensive, making the future collection of language usage data a key quality and customer service measure to consider for disability organisations going forward. In addition, we note that being ‘Australian-born’ does not negate the presence of cultural or linguistic differences in relation to disability service provision.

### Survey of Disability, Ageing and SDAC 2015

Disability Rate, All persons by sex and selected demographic characteristics<sup>166</sup>

Major Characteristics	Disability Rate		
	Males	Females	Total
<b>Remoteness</b>			
Major cities	15.7	17.1	<b>16.4</b>
Inner regional	24.3	23.4	<b>23.9</b>
Other	23.4	21.3	<b>22.3</b>
<b>Country of birth</b>			
Australia	18.4	18.7	<b>18.6</b>
Other main English speaking countries	20.3	21.8	<b>21.0</b>
Non-English speaking countries	15.1	16.6	<b>15.8</b>
<b>Main language spoken at home</b>			
English	18.7	18.5	<b>18.6</b>
Other	12.2	15.1	<b>13.6</b>

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