# CULTURAL AWARENESS

## Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide an understanding of cultural diversity as it relates to people and services associated with Meditech. As a culturally diverse organisation, Meditech aims for culturally inclusive behaviour and activities that ensure cultural differences are heard, explored and provided for in service delivery.

## Policy

Meditech recognises that cultural diversity among its staff and the people it supports is both strength and an asset and will continue to value diversity of opinions, perspectives and interests.

Meditech will where possible work in partnership with local community leaders, agencies specialising in Cultural and Linguistic Diversity, and families, to ensure that it understands and implements culturally appropriate services.

Meditech will ensure that all staff members receive training which raises awareness of cultural issues.

Meditech is also committed to the provision of quality services to people from culturally diverse backgrounds and will practise equality and non-discrimination; promote racial and religious freedom and acknowledge the right of all people to be treated with dignity and respect.

Meditech will consult with all service users and/or their families and advocates in order to identify and respond sensitively to their culture, belief and value system.

## Scope

This policy applies to all employees of Meditech, service users, as well as their families, guardians and advocates.

## Definitions

* **Cultural Awareness:** refers to an understanding of how a person’s culture may inform their values, behaviour, beliefs and basic assumptions.
* **Cultural and Linguistic Diversity:** refers to diverse cultural and language backgrounds that frequently reflect diverse ways of thinking and ways of life.
* **Cultural Diversity:** refers to cultural differences based on race, colour, language, ethnic origin as well as political and religious conviction.
* **Inclusive Language:** refers to language which is free from bias and discrimination and avoids stereotyping and false assumptions about people on the basis of their age, sex, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, race, colour, and ethnic origin, religious or political conviction.

## Procedure

1. Staff members must ensure that they consult sensitively with all new service users to identify those cultural issues, beliefs and values systems that are important to the person. All consultations of this nature should use the Beliefs and Values Consultation Form.
2. Staff members must ensure that when cultural issues, beliefs and values have been determined by using the Beliefs and Values Consultation Form and in consultation with the service user, that the form should be retained in an appropriate place on the person’s file.
3. All relevant issues relating to culture, beliefs and values systems must also be responded to sensitively by staff members and be included in the person’s individual/care plans so that all services are delivered in a culturally appropriate manner.
4. Staff members must ensure that the person’s cultural issues, beliefs and values systems are included in all service and planning reviews and updated where required.
5. Staff members must always use inclusive language when communicating with service users, their families, colleagues and members of the community.

## Human Resources

1. Managers must ensure that cultural diversity is addressed in staff recruitment and education. Culturally inclusive recruitment practices will assist with engaging and retaining a culturally aware workforce.
2. Managers responsible for staff recruitment must ensure that those who sit on interview panels are trained in cultural awareness.
3. Managers must consider the cultural and linguistic needs of the service users when recruiting new staff to ensure that support staff members are effectively matched with service users.
4. Managers must ensure that all staff members engage in education and development programs that enhance cultural awareness and maintain a non-discriminatory workplace.

## Communication

1. The first step for staff members in the provision of appropriate services is to address the language and communication needs of the service user. Communication difficulties will compromise the quality of support provided.
2. Where required staff members must ensure that information and support plans are in the preferred language of the service user. This includes any documents which enable the person to contribute to continuous improvement, provide feedback or make complaints.
3. Where required staff members in conjunction with the service user should utilise the services of professional interpreting and translating agencies or bi-lingual staff, especially where informed consent is required. This will also assist with developing support plans and risk management plans.

## Food

1. Staff members must identify if the service user has any religious or cultural requirements and preferences concerning diet and food preparation.
2. Consultations relating to diet and food preparation must use the preferred language of the service user so that communication is effective.
3. Where a service user has dietary or food preparation requirements, staff members must ensure that those requirements are implemented.

## Religion and Spirituality

1. Staff members must ensure that service users are free to express their unique religion or spirituality in an open and non-judgemental environment by helping them to maintain important practices, beliefs and networks.
2. Staff members must ensure that the requirements of the person’s religion or spirituality are properly documented and implemented in relation to matters such as the person’s health care, personal care, dress, diet and food preparation.
3. Where required staff members will support the person to participate in religious organisations, celebrations or festivals with others who share the religion and language of the service user.

## Health and Personal Care

1. Staff members must ensure that translator and interpreter services are utilised where required when developing health and personal care plans and whenever informed consent is required.
2. Staff members should consult with service users and their families regarding the influence of culture and religion on health and personal care support.
3. Staff members should clarify that the role of family members in decision-making about health and personal care has been clearly established and documented.

## Leisure Activities

1. Where staff members are required to assist with leisure and/or activities programs they must ensure that they consult with the service user so that such activities are culturally and linguistically appropriate.
2. Staff members where required should ensure that service users are encouraged and supported to establish and maintain community and family involvement
3. Staff members where required should assist the service user to foster links with local community organisations that share the same culture, language and religion.

# Legislation and Cross-Reference

**NSW Disability Services Act 1993**

**Commonwealth Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986**

**Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992**

**NSW Guardianship Act 1987**

**NSW Disability Services Standards**

* + - Standard 1 Rights
    - Standard 3 Individual Outcomes
    - Standard 5 Service Access

**Other Relevant Meditech Policies and Procedures**

* + - Anti-Discrimination
    - Across-Agency Coordination
    - Consent
    - Decision Making and Choice
    - Planning