

The relevance of trauma informed care to Aboriginal primary health care services

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Within Aboriginal Australian health there are histories of traumatic events that have occurred from colonisation, including dispossession of land, forcible removal practices and the oppressive legislative policies of the day. There is extensive evidence to indicate that historical events continue to impact significantly on Aboriginal Australian peoples in the form of complex trauma. In recognising the significant health issues for Aboriginal Australian peoples, it is important to acknowledge that living remotely presents additional challenges. This presentation argues that recognising, understanding and responding appropriately to trauma is critical for those working with Aboriginal Australian peoples, due to the greater level of complex trauma. If trauma is overlooked, unresolved trauma may reduce the effectiveness of services provided within trauma affected communities, and place individuals, communities and also the workers at risk of further harm.

Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHSs) have established a significant role in the effective delivery of Comprehensive Primary Health Care (CPHC) services to Aboriginal people within Australia. These services address social and emotional wellbeing, alcohol and other drug concerns. CPHC has been highlighted as a critical component of reducing the gap in health equality that exists for disadvantaged populations worldwide. Becoming trauma-informed or articulating our trauma-informed practices may help us understand how to work better with people when providing services in rural and remote Australia. The following are identified as key to trauma-informed service provision: preventing re-traumatisation; awareness, understanding and education; safety; control and choice; relationships, connections and collaboration; empowerment, strength and resilience; and, cultural competence and diversity. These principles are in line with evidence to date of what *works* and *improves* social and emotional health with Aboriginal Australian peoples.

There are a number of ways that the principles of trauma-informed care and ACCHSs align. They both aim to increase the accessibility of services, promote self-reliance, participation, collaboration and control, and recognise the underlying social determinants of health. We conclude that with its compatibility with the principles of ACCHSs, an integrated trauma-informed approach represents another possible step forward. Our organisation is currently supporting our services to become more trauma informed, by facilitating comprehensive community consultation, to ascertain what trauma informed practices are in place, and what trauma informed practices may be introduced if requested. This strength based, holistic and culturally appropriate approach inspires the possibility of greater outcomes for Aboriginal Australian peoples.