



Feedback from Community Forums

This document provides some information about what people told us in community forums we ran for the **Decolonising practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care** research project.



What did we do?

We held community forums in Adelaide, Alice Springs, Darwin and Nowra with **38** local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members. In these community forums, we asked about people's views about health services.



Colonisation... I think that it really impacted on us today. Whether it's health, schooling, housing, and especially with culture...I also found that there was no two-way approach. It was just one-way governments.

We're fighting the system now to better blackfellas ... The lack of knowledge that the wider world's got for Blackfellas is not gonna change. We've gotta make a change for ourselves.

Colonisation is having our health went down, our beliefs were taken away while we're still in a colonised form and it's modernised obviously... for me colonisation still exists.

What did community members tell us?

Most people who came to the forums talked about the impact of **colonisation**.

Colonisation is still going on, rather than being in the past.

In the forums, people spoke about the idea of **'Decolonisation'** as something that resists or takes action against colonisation. People spoke about the types of things they understood by **'decolonisation'**.

I guess we're trying to get all our privilege and rights back. We're trying to show that we can be there for our people.

Is it also like Aboriginal people having more of a voice in the wider community?

Not just within our own services, but within Centrelink and dental care and all them services.



Some people also spoke about the role that non-Indigenous Australians have in decolonisation.

What do you think the non-Aboriginal person or other Australian's role is in this as well?

So their role is to be informed, to know us, rather than we know them, because we know them, because we live in both their worlds. We got our own world, we got their world and they got their world...if you want to know why we're doing what we're doing and the way we do things... you need to listen and come and talk to us ... get to know who the hell we are.

What does an ideal health service look like?

In the community forums we asked what does an 'ideal' or 'decolonised' health service look and feel like? Most people told us that they feel comfortable when they go to a health service that has Aboriginal staff.

It's good when you walk in and you see a blackfella in there and you go, ohhh yes You'll go straight to them before you go to a whitefella. That's what I do, I look for the black face. Or if I know they're black.

I think that, to me, I'm not saying you can't have non-Indigenous staff, but I'd like the majority of the staff to be Aboriginal.

You know you can get tea and coffee, you know blackfellas can have a yarn whilst your waiting for your appointment and they'll have a cup of tea or coffee waiting for you. So providing that space for you, not just sitting in a dry waiting room.



People also told us about the importance of having staff from the health service **support** and **advocate** for them when they have to talk to other services like Centrelink and housing

So, they [health service workers] are providing the voice for us with their advocacy... It would be beneficial for us to speak for ourselves, but still have our worker there but be able to express ourselves with the problems are that we're dealing with every day.

The support workers are known in the community, so when you come with them, they know that you're there, do you know what I mean?

You know you've got that support behind ya. You're not just walking in by yourself.

People said it was important that health services were run **for the community by the community**. It was important that different groups within the community had representation.

Making sure that those Boards have got strict guidelines for their membership so it's not just all one mob on there. That it's a good share of the community to have input into it.

What next?

We will use these findings to understand what health services can do to be 'decolonising' – and how they can take action to improve health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

We will come back to community members in Adelaide, Alice Springs, Darwin, Brisbane and Nowra to talk about how they rate their own local health services – what do they think they are doing well and how can they improve?