

# Participant Materials

## Module 1: What is Cultural Competency?



Ethnic Communities Council of NSW and  
NSW Community Options  
2006



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**- DISCLAIMER -**

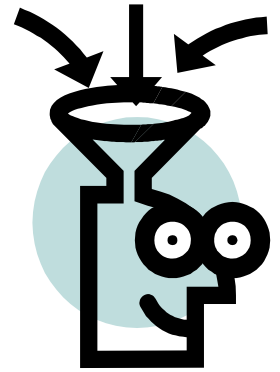
*This training and the handouts are general in nature and give a broad overview of cultural competency within the context of providing community care case management services. This training package may not provide you with ALL the information you may need to know about this topic, or your role.*

*Independent professional advice should be sought about specific issues.*

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# Learning Objectives and Assessment Tasks



## Learning outcome

1. Identify and name your thoughts and feelings in response to a stimulus.
2. Discuss some attributes of culture
3. Analyse common responses and your individual responses to encountering diversity.
4. Formulate a knowledge and skill set required of a culturally competent case manager.

## Assessment task

1. Identify and name your thoughts and feelings in relation to a piece of music.
2. Analyse 3 scenarios and:
  - identify some attributes of culture;
  - describe examples where behaviour is determined by cultural norms; and
  - discuss the feeling of not knowing the cultural norms of a particular group.
3. Read a case study and analyse your thoughts, emotions and assumptions in response to it.
4. Watch a video and compile a knowledge and skill set for cultural competency in case management.

## Introduction

Culture is a very broad and complex concept.

It is a learned set of behaviours that is shared with other people within a group. Culture is:

“the integrated pattern of human behaviours that includes thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values and institutions of a racial, ethnic, religious, or social group”.

(Wells & Black, 2000: 149)



Culture incorporates all aspects of our lives, both conscious and unconscious, material and non-material.

It is difficult to define, but there is common agreement that culture is:

- learned;
- shared; and
- constantly changing.

And culture affects how we:

- behave;
- perceive things; and
- adapt to the world.

### Activity 1 (Introduce Yourself)

Introduce yourself, telling us:

- your name;
- the service you work for and the programs you case manage in; and
- what you'd like to get out of the day, or what you expect of the day?

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## Activity 2 (Orientation)

In this activity you are asked to identify your immediate thoughts and feelings in response to some music. This is an exercise to practice the first step in self-awareness.

Record your immediate thoughts and feelings by answering the following questions:

What is the first word that comes to mind?

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How do you feel?

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What do you associate with that thought/feeling?

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## Activity 3 (Ground Rules)

If we are going to get the maximum benefit out of the day, we need to feel free to engage and explore the topic of cultural competency. To be able to do this, we will need to feel safe and supported. Having ground rules is the best way to ensure this.

What ground rules do you think the group should have?

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## TOPIC 1: What is Culture?

A person's culture is a learned set of behaviours that is shared with other people within a group. Culture includes material and non-material things.

### Material Culture

- houses
- food
- utensils
- tools
- methods of transport
- artwork
- clothes
- language



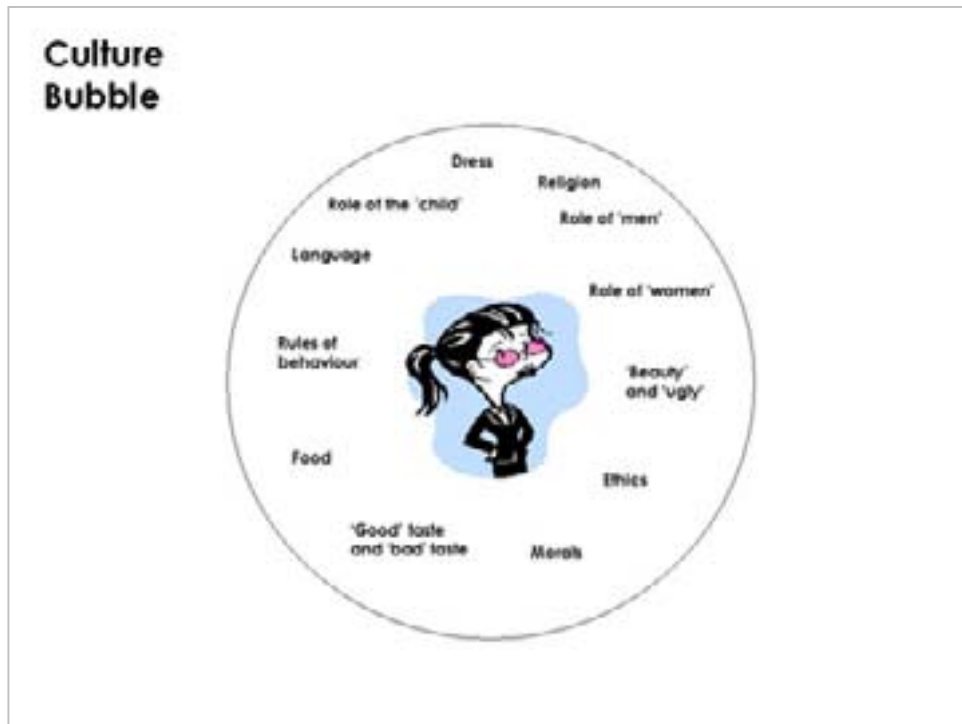
### Non Material Culture

- beliefs
- values and attitudes
- belonging
- rules of behaviour
- language



## Culture Creates Meaning

Our culture has been developed and will continue to develop through a lifetime of learned and shared experiences. This creates a 'culture bubble' that surrounds us and through which we interpret the world and define our place in it.



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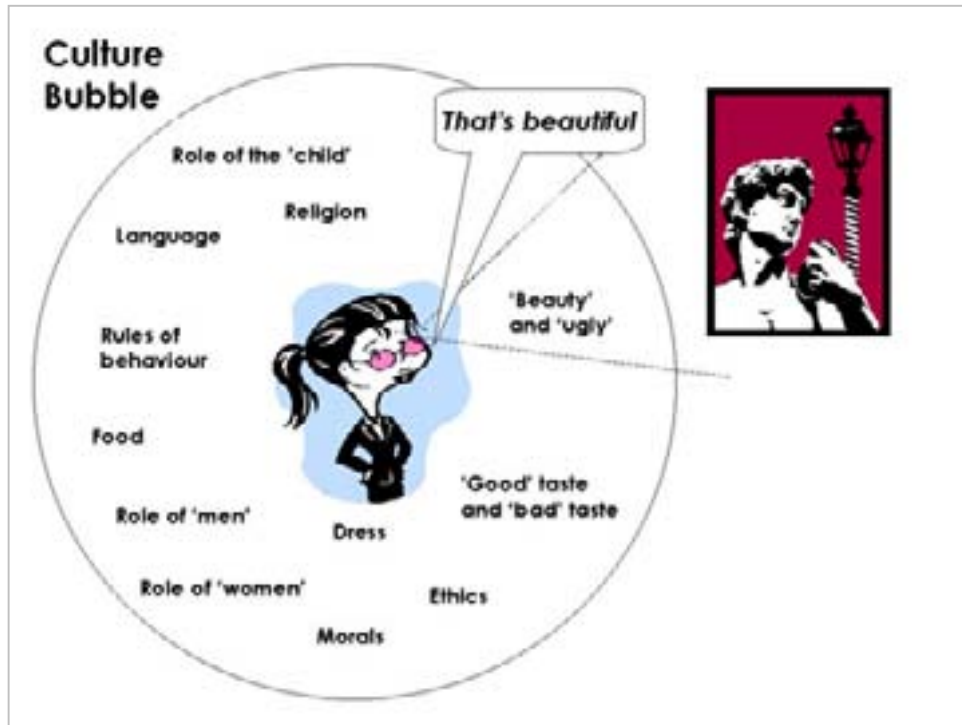
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Culture shapes our attitudes, beliefs, values and behaviours (Randall-David, 1989:5).

It shapes the way we make sense of the world.

We interpret everything we encounter through the filter that is our culture.



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### Activity 4 (Attributes of Culture)

This activity was designed to demonstrate how culture affects our understanding of what are the rules of appropriate or respectful behaviour and the strategies we use to cope and adapt to a situation that is unfamiliar to us. The activity will also introduce you to some of the thought processes that occur automatically when we are placed in a situation of difference.

Form into small groups. There are 3 scenarios your group has to consider:

- Have dinner with the Queen and Prince Phillip in Buckingham Palace;
- Attend a Jewish wedding; and
- Conduct an assessment with an elderly man who is a Muslim.

For each scenario, answer the question at the top of the column and jot down your answers in the table. Don't worry if you have no experience of any of these situations. Think about how you would cope or adapt to the situation.

	How would you behave? Where did you get these rules of behaviour?	What would you wear or not wear? Where did you get these rules of dress?	What do you know, guess or assume about this situation?	Where did you get that knowledge or those assumptions?
The Queen and Prince Phillip at Buckingham Palace				
Attend a Jewish Wedding				
Conduct an assessment with an elderly Muslim man.				

## TOPIC 2: Diversity and Responding to Difference

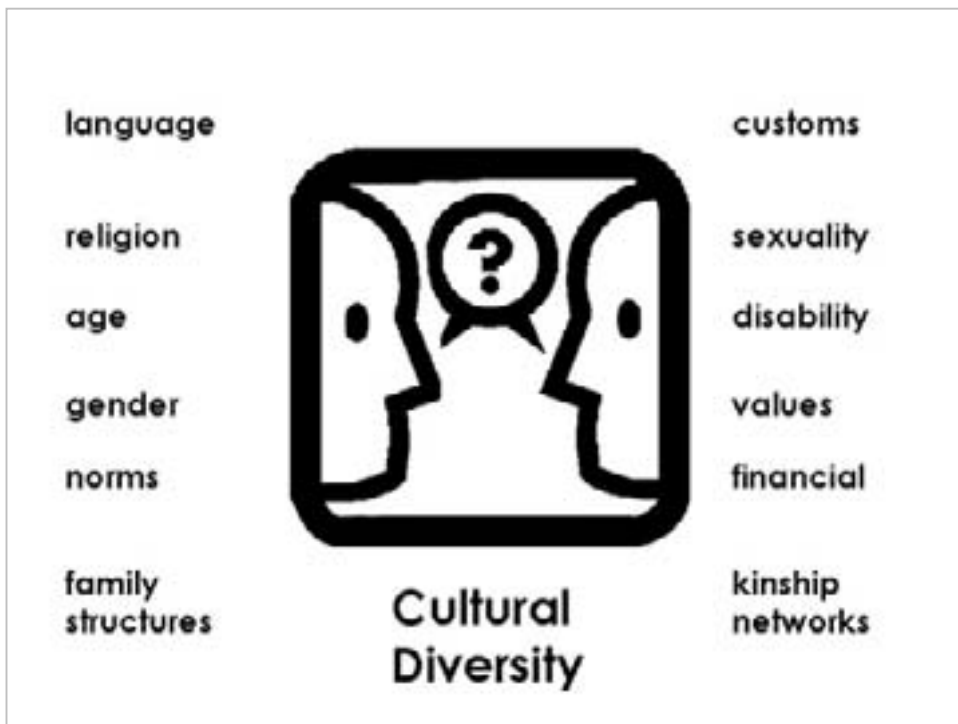
Culture is an integrated pattern of human behaviour, which is transmitted from generation to generation and is dynamic in nature (Wells and Black, 2000:147).

The particular collection of cultures that we belong to is unique.

This means, we are culturally diverse in many different ways.

We are diverse in terms of:

- language;
- religion;
- gender;
- age;
- sexual preference; and others.



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## Visible Cultural Groups

Not all diversity is immediately obvious or apparent to us.

Some difference is visible, for example, people who are in a wheelchair appear obviously different to those who are not. Difference may also be apparent because of codes of dress, or because of physical or ethnic characteristics

## Invisible Cultural Groups

Examples of invisible cultural groups include a person's religion or beliefs, or their sexual preference.

When we talk of diversity, we are not just talking about language or race. As case managers, you are likely to encounter both visible and invisible forms of diversity and need to be able to work with these.

There are some common responses to diversity that we need to be aware of, such as stereotyping and prejudice. These need to be monitored, as they are not constructive.

Other responses, such as a sense of curiosity, admiration and a desire to show respect can be very constructive.

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### Activity 5 (Responding to Difference)

This activity gives you an opportunity to focus on and analyse how you respond to difference, both cognitively and emotionally.

Read the case study on the next page. Once you have read it, fill in the table by answering the questions in each column about each person.

	What are your immediate thoughts and feelings about this person?	What do you know, guess or assume about this person?	Where did you get that knowledge or those assumptions?
Mr Ali			
Asmaa			

**Case Study: Mr Ali**

Mr Ali is an 80 year old man who was born in Turkey. He lives with his 55 year old daughter, Asmaa, who was born in Australia. Both Mr Ali and Asmaa speak English.

Asmaa has a physical disability and she also has Turners Syndrome. Mr Ali tells you, in front of Asmaa, that she is “stupid, retarded”. Asmaa has lived all her life with her parents and Mr Ali says she has no friends. “Look at her”, he says, “people would not want to be seen with her.”

Mr Ali says they have never “needed help from anyone” and that the only reason he let you in was because he was told the government would take Asmaa away if he did not. He tells you he has never used any services before, “What for? Would this make her better? No! Of course not, she is as she is, but she is my responsibility”, he says.

There is no record of the family accessing any services or specific medical attention for Asmaa since she was 14. That was when she had a heart operation. Asmaa had attended the local school for a few years and then went to a disability specific school. There are very few records relating to her schooling and you are told she is unable to read or write.

Nine months ago, Mr Ali’s wife died. She had been completely responsible for the cooking and cleaning of the house. Since her death, Asmaa has had to take over these duties, which she appears to be doing adequately.

Throughout the visit, you ask Asmaa for her opinion. “Yes”, is all she says and, “It is as Father says”. She looks at the floor the entire time with a neutral expression on her face.

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## Automatic Thought Processes

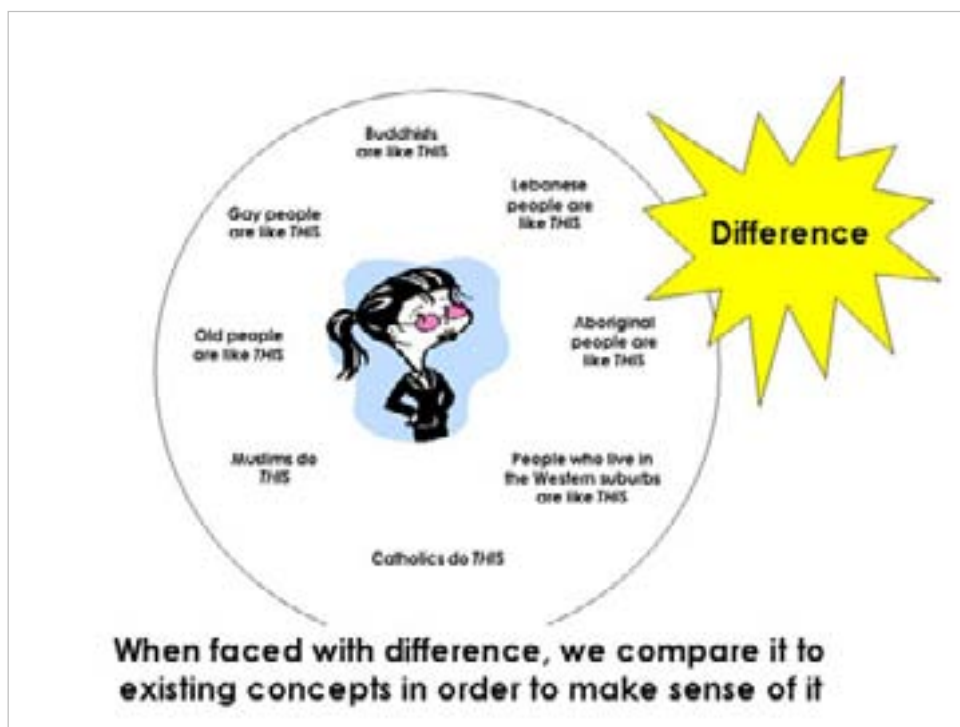
We encounter diversity when a new concept does not align with our culture bubble.

The only way we can encounter difference, others and the world is through the FILTER of our culture bubble. We do not get an 'untainted' view.

When confronted with difference, we immediately compare things to the bank of concepts we have built up in our own culture bubbles.

This is an automatic process.

These are AUTOMATIC cognitive processes, but they can be problematic and get in the way of us working effectively in a cross-cultural environment.



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## **Stereotyping**

Stereotyping also includes assuming all people from a particular cultural group are the same, when in fact, there is great diversity within cultures.

## **Prejudice and Discrimination**

Prejudice is related to stereotyping. It is literally 'pre-judging'. Prejudice is related to our thoughts and values, while discrimination relates to our behaviour.

## **Value Judgements**

When we encounter new things, we compare them with our culture and almost automatically make a VALUE JUDGEMENT about them.

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## Encountering Difference

Cultural competency requires a high degree of self-awareness.

The first element of awareness is the awareness of how we encounter and respond to diversity or difference. Some processes are 'built into' the way humans think and process information.

When we encounter difference, on a cognitive level we:

- compare the NEW to existing concepts;
- use the encounter to add to our concept map (culture bubble);
- pre-judge or judge the new encounter; and
- make value judgments, or evaluate the new encounter.

Case managers need to be aware of these thought processes, be able to interrupt them and be prepared to challenge them.



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On the emotional level, when we encounter difference or diversity we may experience a range of responses that include, feeling:

- uncomfortable;
- curious;
- fearful or afraid;
- excited;
- embarrassed; and more.

We need to be aware of our emotional responses as they affect our behaviour.



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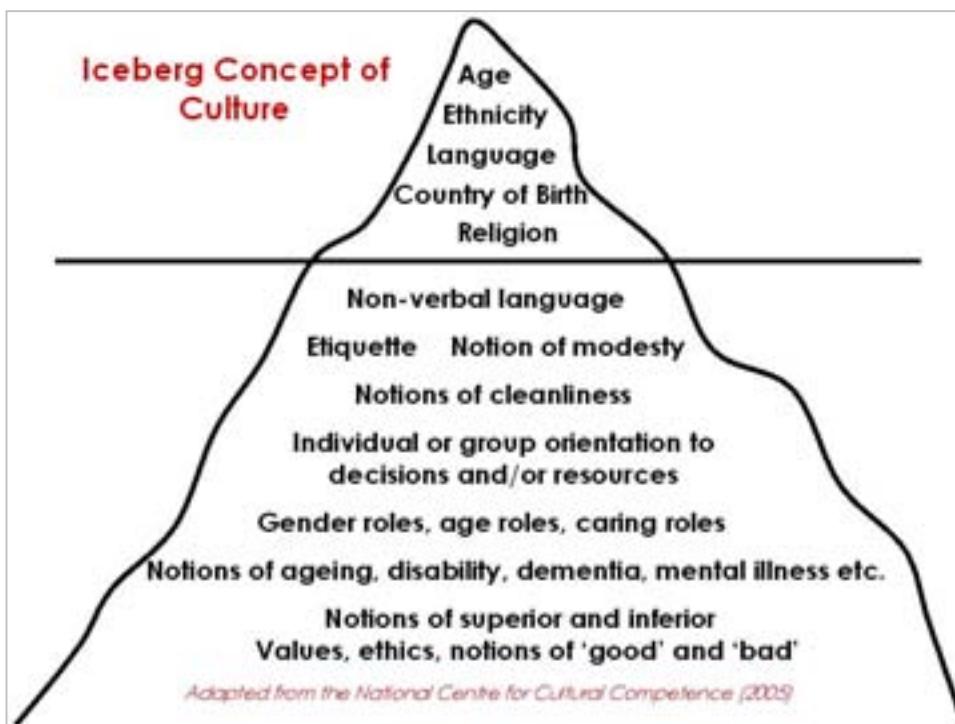
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## Iceberg Model of Culture

The iceberg model of culture is an image to remind us that what we 'see' of a person's cultural being is just the very 'tip of the iceberg'. Above the surface, we have immediate items such as ethnicity, country of birth and language spoken at home. These correspond to the items that we are generally required to collect for a data set.

But just accommodating the tip of the iceberg is not enough. To be effective case managers we need to get below the surface level. If we are truly going to tailor our service delivery to individual needs and preferences, then for each person we need to understand and appreciate the deeper levels of a person's cultural being. This takes skill, knowledge, commitment and a willingness to challenge ourselves.

The iceberg model of culture is widely used in the public domain. See for example, the Peace Corps and Gender in Peacekeeping ([www.peacecorps.org](http://www.peacecorps.org) or [www.genderandpeacekeeping.org](http://www.genderandpeacekeeping.org)). It also appears very effectively in the National Centre for Cultural Competency (2005).



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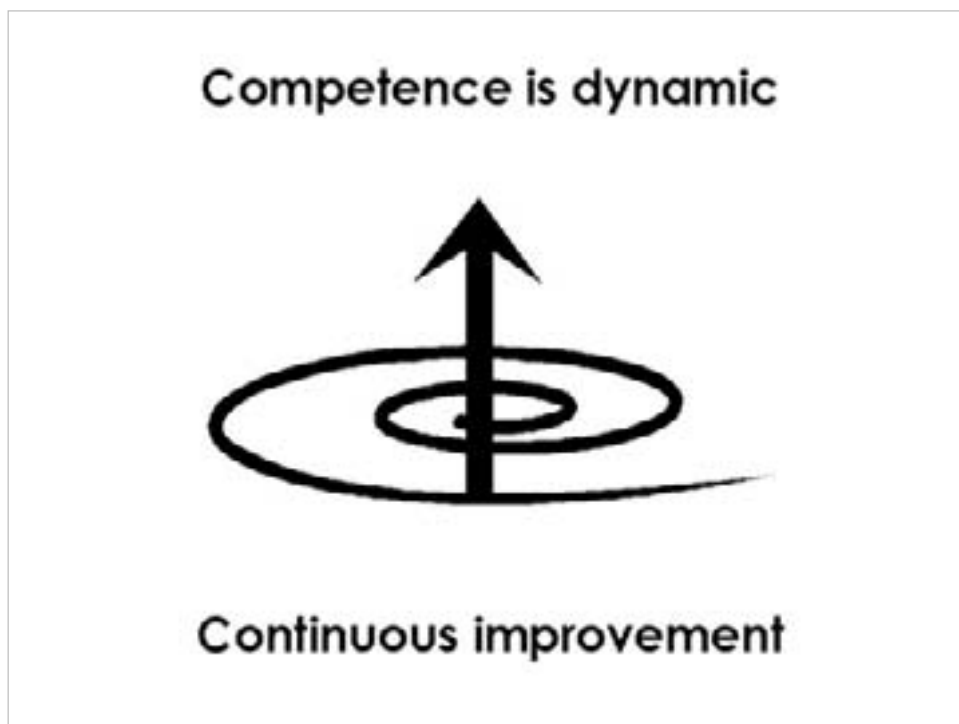
## TOPIC 3: What is Cultural Competence?

### What is Competence?

On the material or measurable level, competence is having the necessary skills, knowledge and experience for a certain purpose.

Competence also has an emotional component. This is when we feel confident and in control of what we're doing. This includes the confidence in our abilities and the self-esteem to feel comfortable challenging ourselves to improve by looking at our strengths and weaknesses.

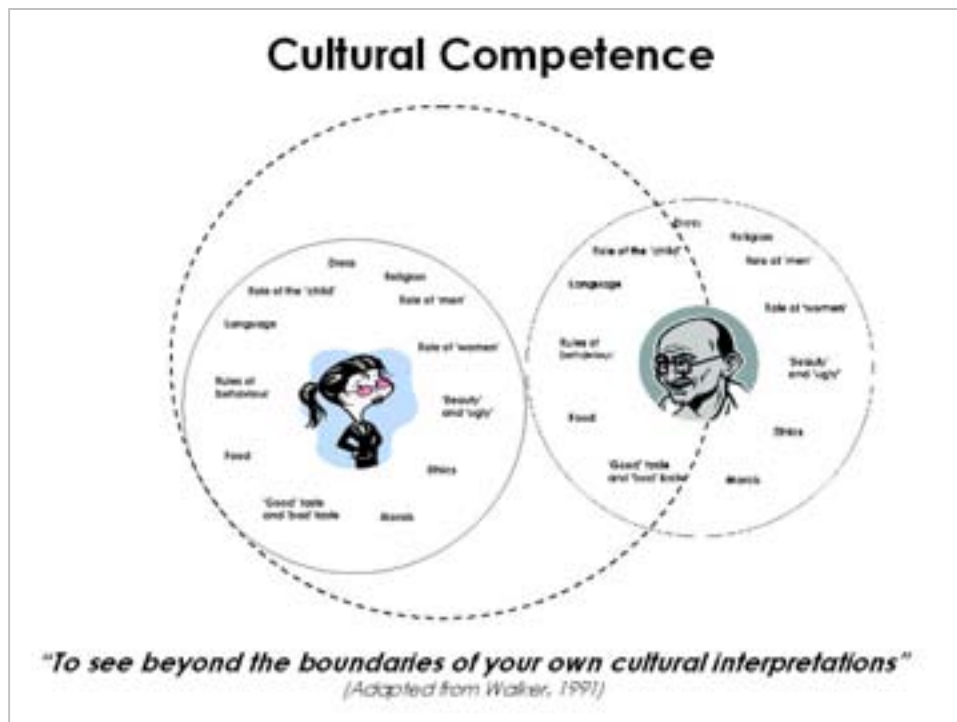
A critical component of competence is to be engaged in a continual process of reflection, challenge and change.



## What is Cultural Competence?

Cultural competence means having the skills, knowledge and experience that enable us to work productively within a context of diversity. It also involves continual development of such necessary skills, knowledge and experience (Wells & Black, 2000:147).

One cultural competence theorist (Walker 1991) defines cultural competence as the ability to see beyond the bounds of our own cultural interpretations.



For example, a woman was sitting in church when she saw a man enter. He looked like a Pacific Islander and was not wearing shoes. She immediately assumed he was poor and then ran to the opportunity shop to bring him a pair of shoes.

A culturally competent person would allow for the possibility that his behaviour may be part of his cultural framework. As it turned out, the gentleman had removed his shoes in order to show respect and humble himself in the House of God.

Cultural competence is the ability to maintain objectivity when faced with difference. This often means challenging our automatic cognitive processes, as well as the emotional components of our thoughts, beliefs and values.

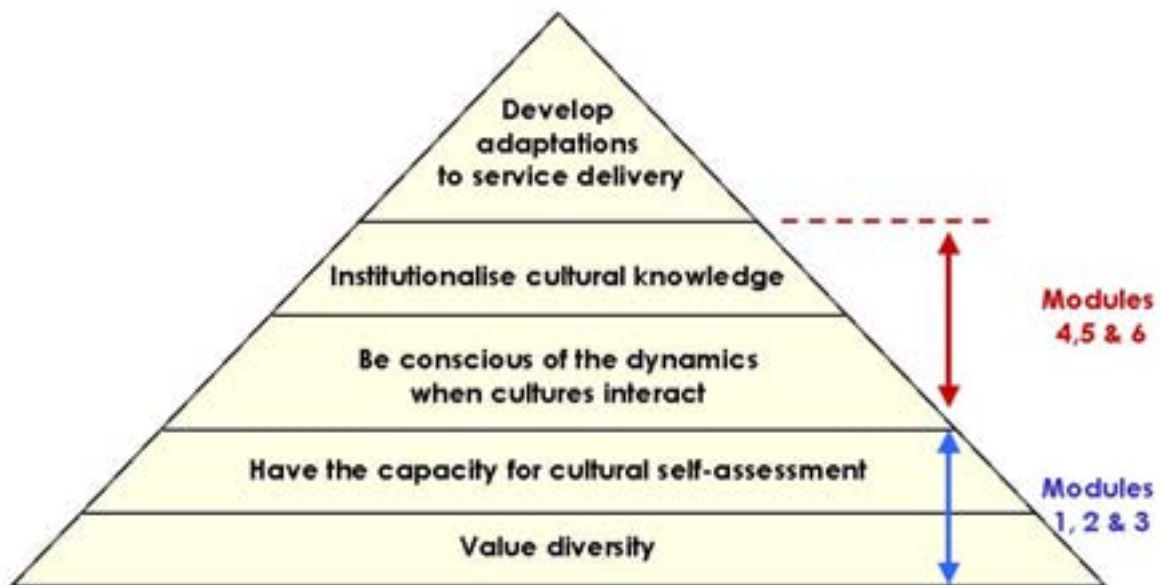
It is also being able to interpret and understand the behaviour of people different to us by interrupting our automatic thought processes and judgements. We are then better able to identify and challenge our biases.

For a system or a person to become more culturally competent, five elements are required. They should:

- value diversity;
- have the capacity for cultural self-assessment;
- be conscious of the dynamics that can occur when cultures interact;
- work to institutionalise cultural knowledge; and
- develop adaptations to service delivery reflecting an understanding of diversity between and within cultures.

(National Centre for Cultural Competence, 2005).

## Cultural Competency Pyramid



*(Adapted from the National Centre for Cultural Competence, 2005)*

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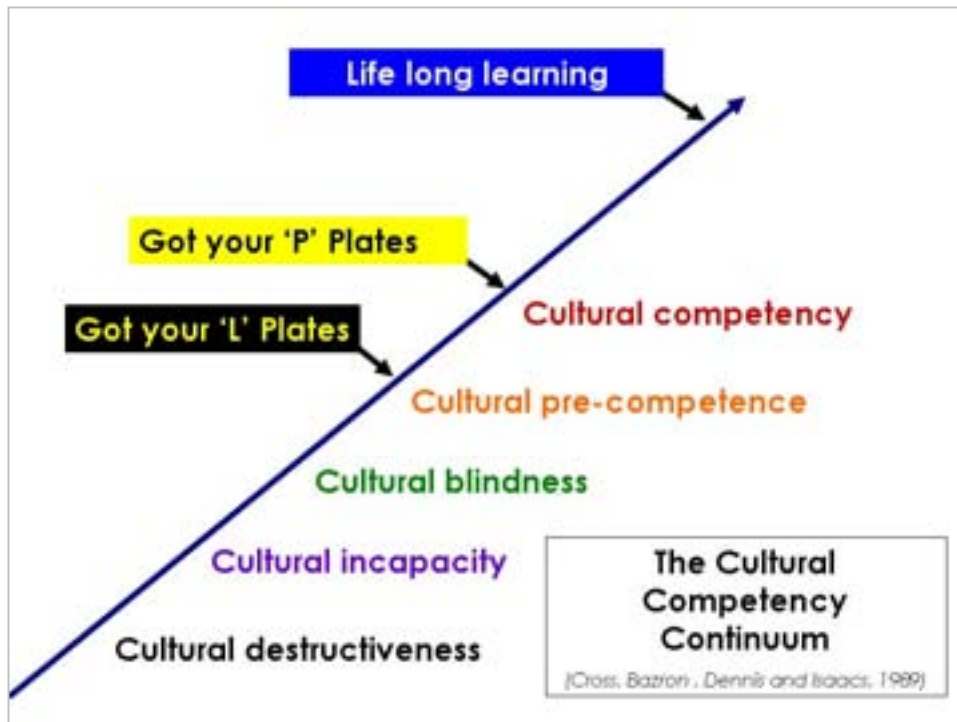
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## The Cultural Competency Continuum

The cultural competency continuum is an important aspect of many theories of cultural competency (Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs, 1989; Goode and Harris 2004). The continuum relates directly to the second element that we mentioned, 'the capacity for cultural self-assessment'.

Cultural competency is a developmental process that occurs along a continuum. There are five possibilities, starting from one end and building towards the other.



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**Cultural destructiveness**

Cultural destructiveness is where there is an active process to destroy or replace another. An example is where one culture invades another and the dominant culture deliberately sets about replacing and destroying the pre-existing culture by banning the speaking of language and the practice of rituals etc. People in this stage see their own culture as fundamentally superior and think others would be 'better off' if they assimilated. In this context, culture can be seen as 'a problem' or 'something to get around'.

**Cultural incapacity**

In this stage, people lack cultural awareness and skills. They may have been brought up in a homogenous environment and have never questioned the way they think or behave. In this stage there can be a tendency to see one's own culture as 'better'. And incidentally, we all start at a disadvantage because all cultures have a tendency to view themselves as the 'right' culture. If we didn't think we were being 'right' in our culture, we would change to other practices and beliefs.

People in this stage might maintain stereotypes and/or take on a 'paternalistic' position.

**Cultural blindness**

In this stage, a person believes in 'treating people the same'. A person assumes all people think the same and that their needs are fundamentally the same. They may also believe that treating everyone 'the same' is the ultimate ideal in service delivery.

**Cultural pre-competence**

In this stage, individuals begin to realise that others can see the world completely different to themselves. They may start to educate themselves about differences. At this stage, individuals may also become a bit complacent by just learning enough to get through and to adapt their service according to what they know about the tip of their client's culture iceberg.

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## Cultural competency

Cultural competency is the start of the continuous process of learning. There is no 'end point' where you say "ah-ha! I'm competent. No more learning for me". At the basic end of this stage, individuals:

- accept, appreciate and accommodate cultural differences;
- value diversity and accept and respect differences;
- accept the influence of their own culture;
- can start to manage the dynamics of interacting with diverse cultures; and
- are willing to explore cross-cultural interactions.

Beyond this position, an individual may actively seek out new knowledge and skills when working in a context of diversity and even to set about educating others about cultural differences.

At the Pre-Competence stage, you are akin to the Learner Driver. You may have your 'L' Plates in terms of beginning to understand and respond openly to diversity. You will still need a bit of guidance to keep developing and to be able to enter the realms of 'competency'.

Once you move into the competency stage, you have your 'Provisional' plates. Developing and working on the skills, knowledge, values and attitudes required for working really successfully in a context of diversity may require a bit of effort.

You then begin your life long journey of learning. Reaching the competency stage is just the beginning. Times change, people change, your skills need to change, develop, broaden and deepen. By this stage, you're 'hooked' and enjoying the process.

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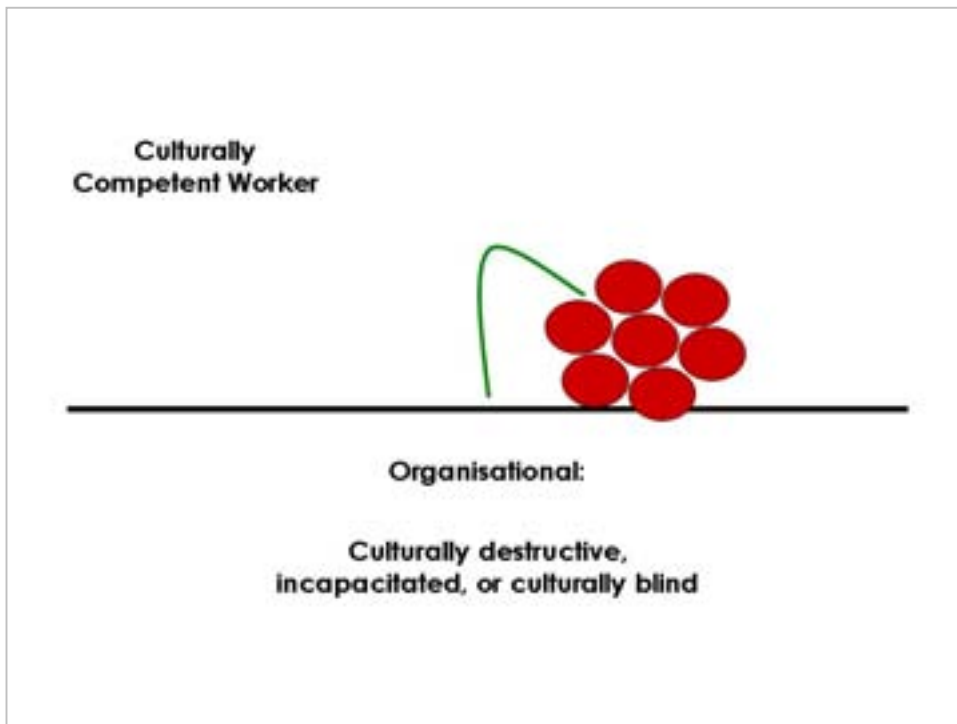
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## The Rose Analogy

Cultural competency should ideally manifest at every level of the service delivery system from the individual through to the system and organisation levels. It needs to be reflected in attitudes, structures, policies and services with all of these working in tandem.

A case manager who practices cultural competency is most effective when operating in an organisation or environment that embodies cultural competency. The organisation supports the worker with compatible supervision, policies, systems and resources that reflect the attitudes and values of cultural competency.

Without this environment, a case manager who practices with cultural competency will not be as effective and certainly will not flourish.



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## Cultural Competency and Case Management

For the individual case manager, cultural competence is having and continually improving, the skills, knowledge and experience needed to provide case management to a diverse range of clients.

It is possessing a high level of skills and knowledge that you are able to TRANSFER from one group to another. Having these knowledge and skill sets means you can also FEEL competent when faced with DIFFERENCE.

You may know how to work with a PARTICULAR community, but is the associated knowledge and skill set TRANSFERABLE to all situations that involve difference?

Cultural competence knowledge and skill sets relate to those elements that enable you to respond constructively to all encounters involving difference.



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For the organisation and management, cultural competence is having and continually improving on the attributes that enable the organisation to reflect diversity and provide services within a diverse context.

Some elements of cultural competency may include:

- management/boards reflects the diversity of the community;
- having cultural networks;
- encouraging and supporting staff to be culturally competent;
- ensuring the workforce reflects the diversity of the community; and
- encouraging and facilitating culturally competent partners, including brokered services and government agencies.

(Dreachslin, 1999: 427-439)



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## Diversity and Cultural Competency

Just as diversity exists on many levels, so too, can cultural competency. For example, Judy is a Wiradjuri Woman and an Aboriginal community care worker. She is not diverse from many people in her community, but if she moves north and works with the Biripi community, she will need to use her cultural competency skills and knowledge.

At a policy level, diversity is often referred to as diversity from an unspoken concept of mainstream culture. So when policies use the term "Culturally and Linguistically Diverse", it means culturally and linguistically diverse from English-speaking Australian mainstream culture. The paradox here is that 'mainstream culture' can never be defined because it is made up of too much diversity.

This training package relates only to the individual level, the manager and organisational level.



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## Activity 6 (Identify Required Knowledge and Skills)

In this activity you are asked to watch a video scenario and to think about the knowledge and skills a case manager would need to work in this context. What knowledge and skills do you think are needed to get below the surface of the 'iceberg' of the client's culture?

Think about how competent the worker is. What makes them competent or incompetent and how culture is playing a part in the scenario.

Once you have watched the video, you will form into small groups and answer the following questions.

What did you think of the worker undertaking the visit?

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What was good about what they did?

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What do you think could be better?

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What did your group list as the competencies required of this worker?

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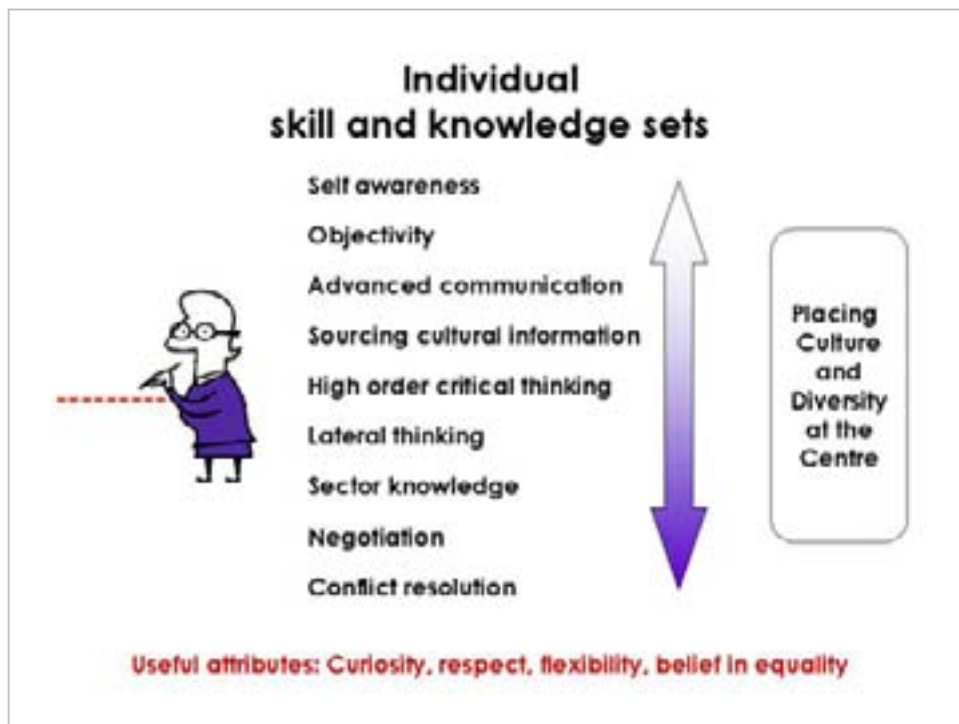
We will then discuss your answers.

## What is Cultural Competence?

These skills and knowledge sets will be highlighted and practiced throughout the training package. They include:

- self awareness;
- objectivity;
- advanced communication;
- the ability to source cultural information;
- high order critical thinking skills;
- lateral thinking;
- sector knowledge;
- negotiation skills; and
- conflict resolution skills.

In order to be culturally competent, we need the understanding of culture and diversity - how we respond to it, how we can learn to respond to it – to become the focal point of everything we do.



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## Summary

This module introduced you to the concept of cultural competency. Cultural competency was defined as having and continually improving on, a set of TRANSFERABLE knowledge and skills that enable us to work within any context of diversity. It was also noted that cultural competency must exist not only on the individual level but also on the organisational and systemic levels.

For details on developing the knowledge and skill sets that constitute cultural competency, work through the *Cultural Competency in Case Management* Training Package. The modules are:

Module 1	What is Cultural Competency?
Module 2	Self-Awareness
Module 3	The Ethics of Culture in Case Management
Module 4	Communication and Developing Rapport
Module 5	Collecting Cultural Information
Module 6	Cultural Competency for Managers

PLEASE COMPLETE YOUR EVALUATION FORM