An Aboriginal Cultural Safety & Security Framework for Mainstream Healthcare Governance

COMMITTIX
Committee Analytics

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Introduction

Project: The Aboriginal Cultural Safety & Security Framework: Improving Aboriginal health outcomes through culturally safe and secure mainstream healthcare governance and practice.

The Aboriginal Cultural Safety & Security Framework (ACSSF) project investigated how mainstream healthcare organisational contexts can become culturally safe and secure and thereby lead to improved health outcomes of Aboriginal people on the Mid North Coast of New South Wales.

The ACSSF was developed during 2016-2018 in the Mid North Coast region. The project was overseen by the Mid North Coast Aboriginal Health Authority, funded by the Mid North Coast Local Health District and lead by Ngiyampaa academic Mark Lock who ensured that Aboriginal cultural voice was integrated throughout the project.

The resulting 88 recommendations focussed on the central concept of governance and how cultural safety & security could be enabled through diverse activities from the 'ward to the Board' approach to organisational change management.

Partners

Mid North Coast Aboriginal Health Authority: Durri Aboriginal Corporation Medical Service, Galambila Aboriginal Health Service, Werin Aboriginal Corporation, Mid North Coast Local Health District and the North Coast Primary Health Network.

An Aboriginal Cultural Safety & Security Framework

Objectives

The aims of the ACSSF project were to:
1) Discuss the concept of cultural safety and security with Aboriginal people (yarning groups and interviews).
2) Describe the governance context of Aboriginal health in the Mid North Coast region (policy document review).
3) Describe the dimensions of Aboriginal cultural safety and security (purposive literature review).
4) Identify other programs that address indigenous cultural safety and security (program mapping).
5) Develop an Aboriginal Cultural Safety and Security Framework.
6) Formulate a strategy for implementation and evaluation of the ACSSF (evaluation plan).
7) Refine and finalise the Mid North Coast ACSSF with the priority to develop real world activities and benefits for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

Methods

1) **Stakeholder engagement** (yarning groups and interviews). We privileged Aboriginal voices through establishing yarning groups that allowed culturally embedded perspectives to shine through in the Framework. We also conducted interviews with a wide range of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to gain individual perspectives of cultural safety and security.
2) **Academic journal review** (purposive literature review). This was aimed at deriving current evidence about the intersection of governance, cultural safety and cultural security.
3) **Auditing current Australian programs** that address the cultural safety and security of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – a unique program mapping methodology to see what's being done about cultural safety.
4) **Governance context description** of policies, strategies, and reports to understand the architecture of healthcare governance and "see" how to enable cultural safety & security.

Cultural Security is a commitment that the construct and provision of services offered by the health system will not compromise the legitimate cultural rights, views, values and expectations of Aboriginal people. It is a recognition, appreciation and response to the impact of cultural diversity on the utilisation and provision of effective clinical care, public health and health systems administration.

What does cultural safety & security mean for Aboriginal people?

"My values, my views when I go into any facility or service are respected, and I don't have to justify my values and interest and my views around my Aboriginality" (Aboriginal community member)

"I've had dealings with the mental health "so-called" system and I find that extremely disempowering, because they're more interested in diagnosing and labelling and then drugging rather than understanding the reasons why I might be in extreme mental distress" (Aboriginal community member)

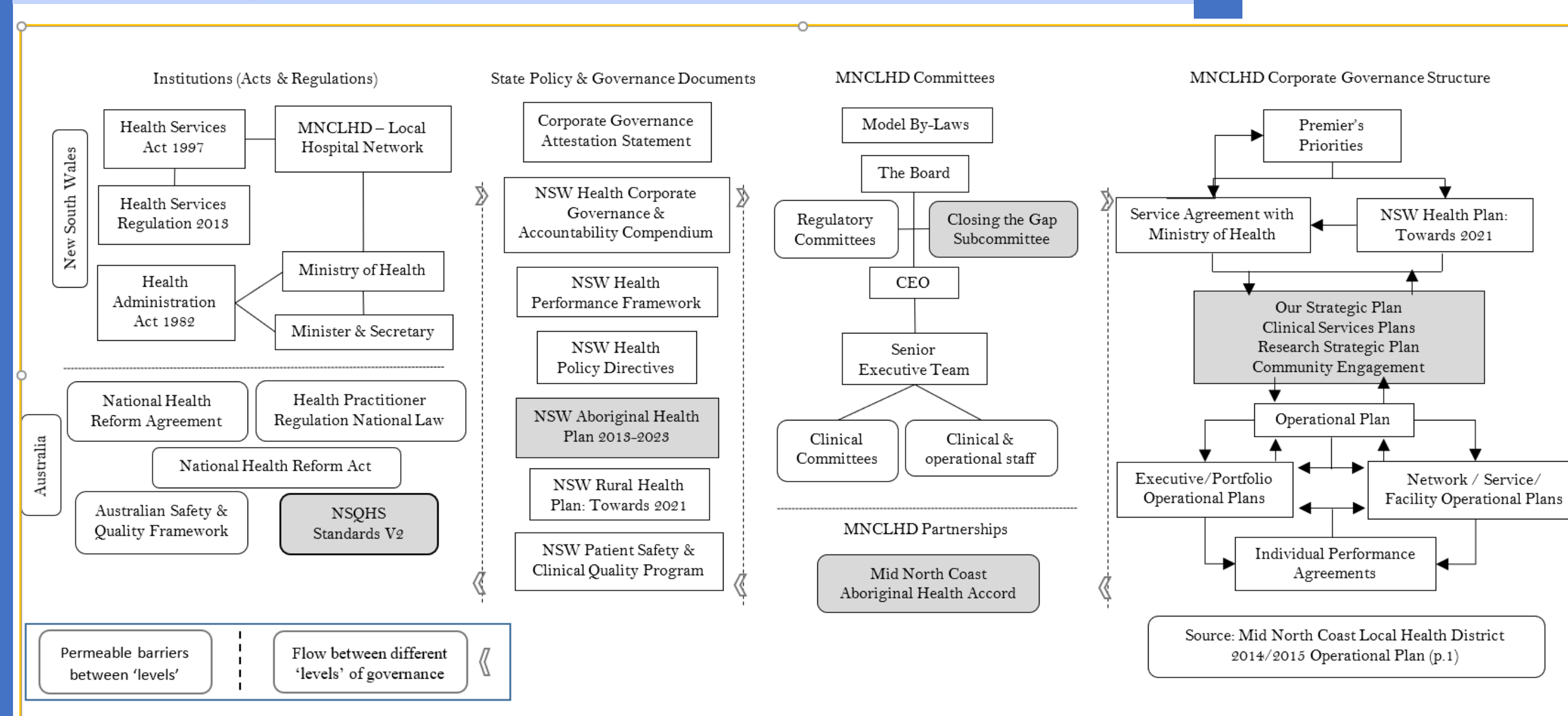**Do you feel empowered to be in control of your wellbeing after using a health service?**
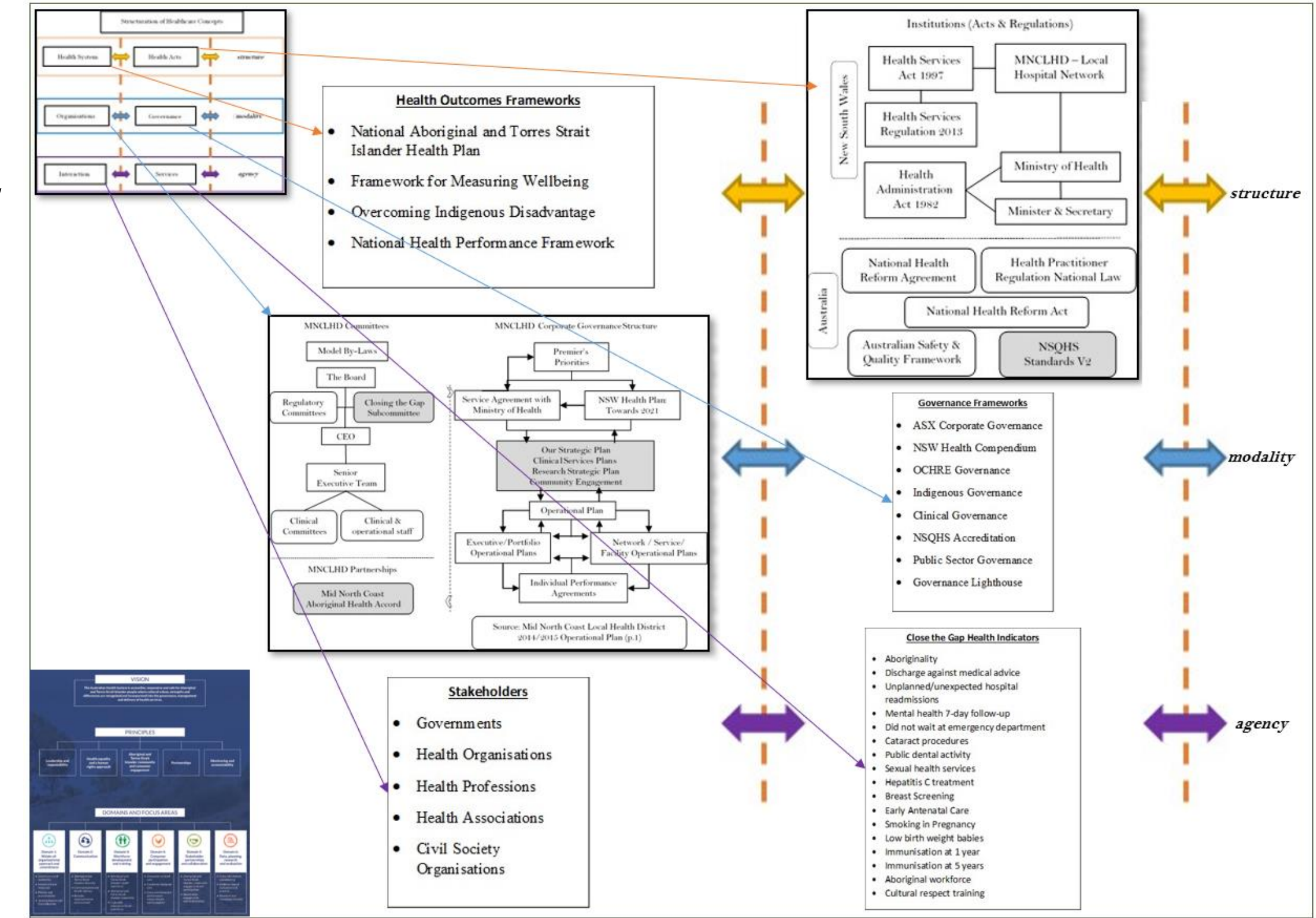
A holistic healthcare governance framework – the Aboriginal Cultural Safety & Security Framework

Lessons Learned

1. The **major challenge** is to reorient thinking to a 'systems' perspective: cultural safety & security are relevant for every point and pathway of healthcare governance – not just when health professional communicate with patients.

2. It produced a **definition** cultural safety and security for mainstream healthcare governance as the brokerage of moral obligations into every point in an organisation so that protocols for cultural safety operate in every service pathway to create and sustain culturally secure environments for Australia's First peoples. The primary intent underlying that definition is to bring in cultural voice - the human cultural perspectives of Aboriginal peoples – into Australian healthcare governance.

3. The **88 recommendations** are for governance from the 'ward to the board' of organisations. Now, the Mid North Coast Local Health District is developing an implementation plan for its organisation.

4. There are over 270 healthcare organisations – how will they engage with and implement different aspects of the ACSSF?

5. How will leaders and stewards head the lessons from the ACSSF:

   - **Yarning** groups provided an overall sense that healthcare governance is mostly culturally unsafe and insecure.

   - The **interviews** revealed many points of enablement and constraint of cultural safety and security when Aboriginal peoples access mainstream health organisations.

   - The **literature** review revealed the lack of a quality and safe evidence base to inform healthcare governance decisions.

   - The **project mapping** found no guidelines for healthcare executives to use in assessing whether their organisations' projects contribute to a culturally safe and secure environment.

   - The **governance context review** showed an Australian norm of excluding cultural voice from influencing healthcare governance

   - These problems appear to be the result of institutional norms which are invisible rules circulating in healthcare governance culture.

Cultural safety is an environment that is spiritually, socially and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for people; where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience, of learning together with dignity, and truly listening.

Impact/What's Next?

The Aboriginal Cultural Safety & Security Framework is the first empirically develop framework of its kind in Australia. It is now up to leaders and stewards of healthcare organisations to engage with the recommendations of the ACSSF to improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people.

Example 1: An implementation plan is being developed by the Mid North Coast Local Health District.

Example 2: Committix is engaging with mainstream organisations to consider the implications of the ACSSF.

Example 3: Communication of the ACSSF on websites, in presentations and through personal communications. See: https://committix.com/projects/an-aboriginal-cultural-safety-security-framework/, and https://committix.com/2019/09/27/embedding-cultural-voice-into-healthcare-governance/

Acknowledgements

A systems view of healthcare governance shows the complexity of enabling cultural safety & security