Handout 4 - Working With Clients from Culturally Diverse Backgrounds

To ensure the planning process is accessible to people from different cultural backgrounds a worker must respect their diverse needs and:

- Be aware of how the disability is viewed within the person’s own community.
- Be aware of the ways that the person’s community responds to the needs of people with a disability. Make contact with specialist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and CALD services and key people within the community; let them know what service you provide and find out how they work.
- Always obtain the person’s permission before contacting other members of their community on their behalf. They may not want to use their community networks or there may be particular people or groups they do not want to have involved.
- If the person agrees, involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and CALD workers from other services in the coordination of services.
- If the person’s first language is not English you may need to change the way you are used to communicating. For example do not overload the client with too much information, or do too much talking. Go slowly giving the client plenty of time to think. Find out who the support people are within the person’s own network. Take these people into account when developing a support plan.
- Always ensure the person is involved in support planning and their priorities and needs are being addressed, rather than those of the service.
- Do not pressure the client to carry out these tasks. Be patient and /or offer assistance.
- Use an interpreter.

Appropriate cultural considerations

- Support strategies must respect and be responsive to the cultural, linguistic and religious needs of clients. This involves linking the person with ethno-specific services where this serves the interests and meets their wishes.
- The services must be accessible to people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. This may include having written information in a range of community languages, displaying pictures and posters that reflect a range of cultural groups and languages, having staff that reflect the diversity in the local community.
- All staff need to be trained in cross-cultural awareness and communication
- Staff training should include the use of interpreters and the Telephone Interpreter Service. Staff should be confident in the use of these services.

Where possible a person should be matched with a worker with the same language, or will co-work with a relevant worker from another service (if the person wished). If this is not possible an interpreter service will be used for all meetings.