



THE CULTURAL NEEDS SCALE (CNS) FOR ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIANS

Thank you for completing the Cultural Needs Scale for Aboriginal Australians (CNS). We hope that the experience was worthwhile and that the feedback will be of assistance to you.

The CNS was developed by Dr Tracy Westerman, an Aboriginal psychologist from the Nyamal people (between Port Hedland and Marble Bar in the North-West of Western Australia). The CNS was developed as a result of the low rates of Aboriginal employment in Australia which has been linked very strongly to cultural differences that exist between Aboriginal people and the workplaces that employ Aboriginal people. The greater the difference, the more barriers that exist and greater chance that Aboriginal people do not remain in the organisation.

The work of Indigenous Psychological Services (IPS) has led to a clearer understanding of what these barriers actually are. The CNS that you have just finished has been developed based on over 13 years of research with Aboriginal people in employment which has told us that the following issues create the most barriers to employment and retention (staying in employment for a long time):

1. **Cultural Exposure/Connection/Culture Stress.** The amount of exposure you have had to Aboriginal traditions and culture compared with non-Aboriginal culture. This is hard to figure out as 'culture' is a very personal thing and can have very different meaning for every person. What we do know is that the more exposure you have had to the traditions of your culture, the greater number of 'barriers' there will be for you when you enter employment. This can result in a high level of stress if the difference between these two worlds is too hard to deal with,

2. **Knowledge.** It is important to have a good understanding of the government treatment of Aboriginal people and how this has led to a higher level of health and mental health problems in the current day. It is also important to have good knowledge because this helps you to deal with different types of racism that you might come across. It also helps in developing a strong sense of your Aboriginality and identity,

3. **Skills.** Being aware that communication and learning styles are very different between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. These differences are often confused by non-Aboriginal people for a lack of motivation/understanding etc., by Aboriginal people,

4. **Organisational Culture.** What do you think about your organisation as a place for Aboriginal people to work in? Do you think the organisation is culturally appropriate? Do they show a commitment to cultural issues? How?

The CNS covers all of these very important areas and the report is divided into four sections which provide you with feedback on the four areas of cultural need as explained above. Table 1 (below) shows you the different areas of Cultural Support Needs which will be referred to in the report as "Domains" or Major Areas of Cultural Support Needs and "Sub-domains" which are the 'parts' to each Domain.

Figure 1: Domains and Subdomains of the CNS

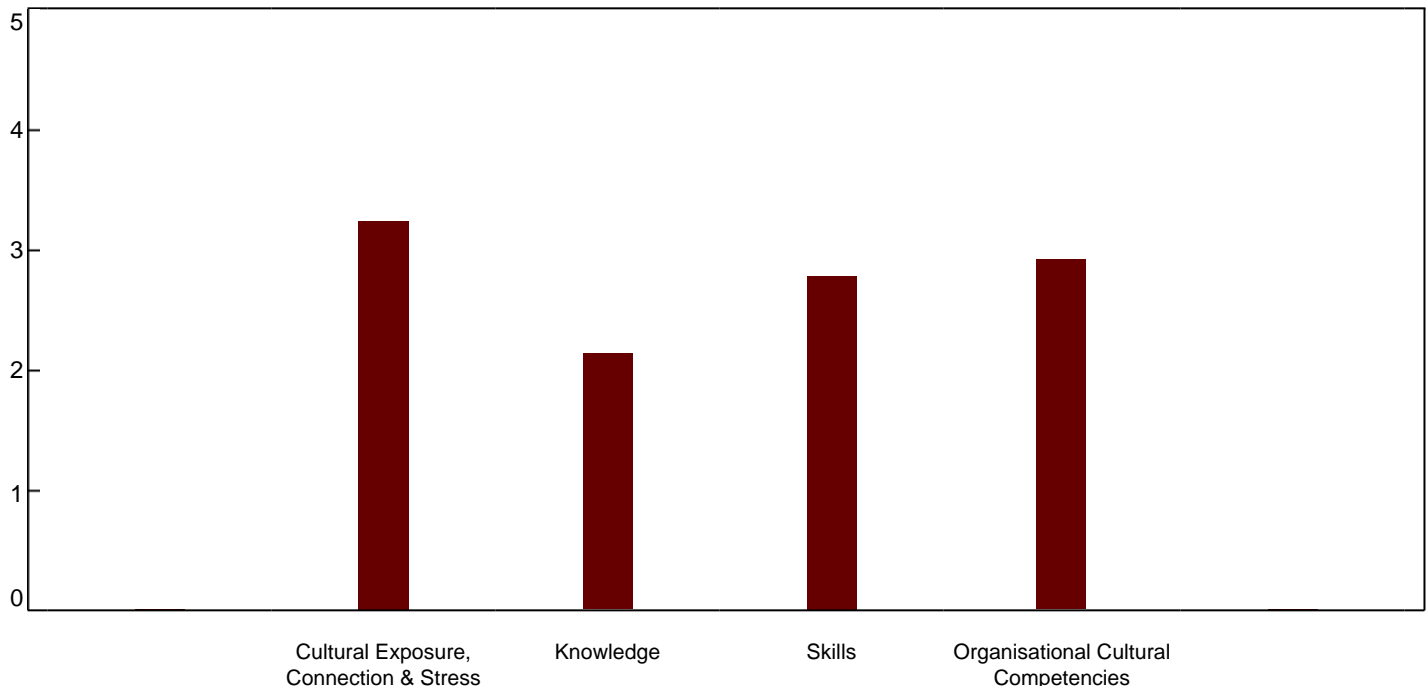
Domains	Sub-domains
<i>Cultural Connection, Exposure and Stress</i>	Exposure to Culture Connection with Culture Culture Stress
<i>Knowledge</i>	General Cultural Knowledge Application of Knowledge Health and Wellbeing Knowledge
<i>Skills</i>	Cross-Cultural Support/Awareness Cross-Cultural Engagement Skills
<i>Organisational Cultural Competencies</i>	Implementation of Cultural Programs Capacity and Commitment to cultural competence>

Due to the different experiences of Aboriginal people some of these areas and questions might have seemed more relevant to you than others. If a question didn't seem relevant, then this particular issue may not be a barrier for you, or there may not be an awareness of how your cultural background is impacting upon our daily work.

Importantly, your results not only provide you with feedback about your own personal cultural support needs, but it also allows IPS to give some CLEAR direction to your organisation about the sorts of changes that need to happen to make sure that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people are able to work together at a more culturally appropriate level. At the same time that you completed the CNS, managers and supervisors of Aboriginal people have also completed the "General Cultural Competency Test for Aboriginal Australians" (GCCT). Both of the CNS and GCCT allow IPS to make a good assessment of the culture of your company from the viewpoint of Aboriginal workers and supervisors.

The graphs provided in this report are presented only to give you information on areas identified and help you to focus your energies effectively (in a personal development capacity for instance) on specific aspects of Cultural Support Needs most relevant to your own day-to-day work as well as your cultural identity.

Domain Summary



Your overall responses to the four domains or areas of Cultural Support Needs Scale needs are provided in Table 2 above. This represents your personal profile of cultural need as assessed by the CNS. Important to note, is that this graph is a guide only. There could be many reasons why any one individual scores more or less highly on any of these sub-domains. With this in mind, the following report is designed to help you identify specific reasons for your responses.

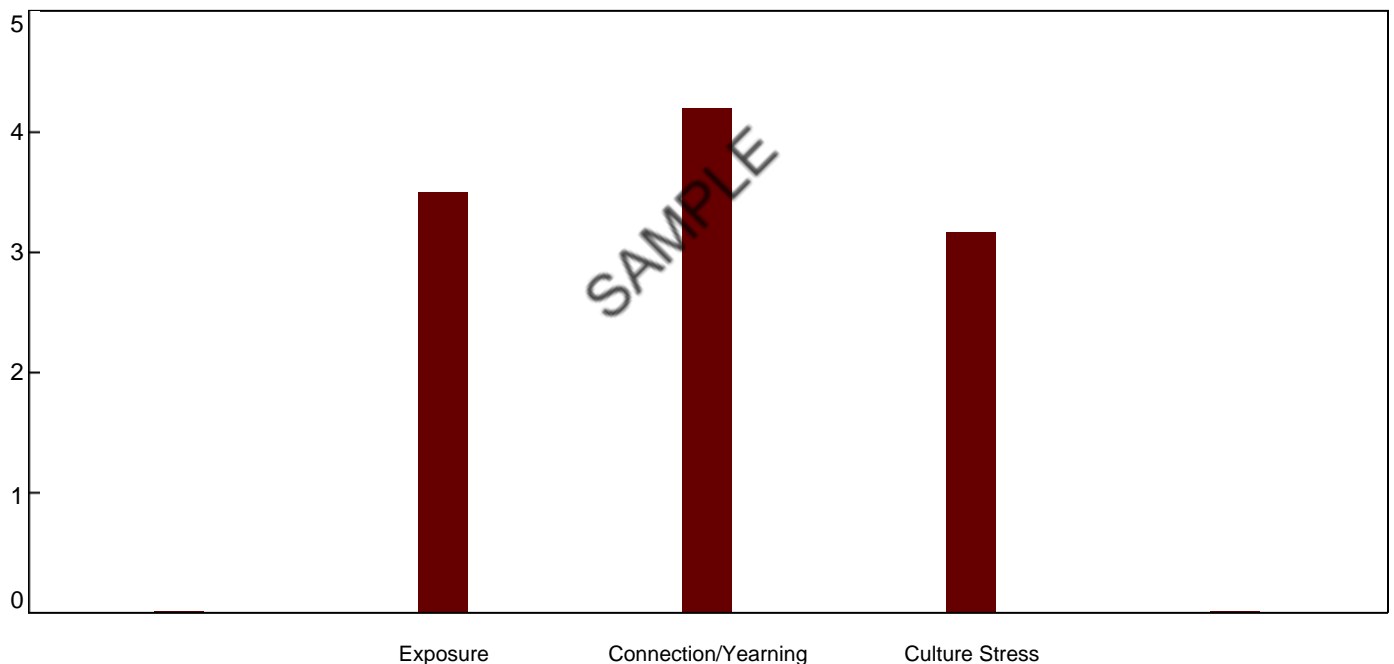
CULTURAL IDENTITY DOMAIN

CULTURAL EXPOSURE, CONNECTION & STRESS SUB-DOMAINS

Cultural identity looks at three different areas (we call these 'sub-domains'). First, it looks at how much 'exposure' you have had to your Aboriginal culture. This is in terms of being raised in your 'traditional' culture and how much you continue to be involved in traditional practices within your culture. Second, it looks at the sense of 'connection' that you feel with your Aboriginal culture compared with non-Aboriginal culture. Finally, it looks at how you manage moving between two different cultures; Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal and what level of stress this may or may not create for you. All of these issues have been linked with good health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal people, and most importantly with keeping Aboriginal people in the workplace long-term. If the cultural differences are too big, there will be more barriers for Aboriginal people and staying in the workplace can feel hard on most days. For non-Aboriginal people, often cultural issues aren't understood properly and therefore not dealt with or talked about at all.

Your responses on the Cultural Identity sub-domains will now be discussed.

Cultural Connection, Exposure & Stress Domain



EXPOSURE SUB-DOMAIN

Your answers on your level of exposure to the Aboriginal culture sub-domain indicate that, when compared to other Aboriginal people, you have had a high degree of contact with your traditional Aboriginal culture. This means that you have most likely spent your life in your traditional culture. While you have most likely had some exposure with non-Aboriginal culture it is likely that you do not feel completely comfortable in this environment. You are likely to have a preference for being with other Aboriginal people and feel more comfortable when in your own community and with traditional Aboriginal culture and values. You know who your relations and people are and probably have daily or very regular contact. You see culture as a lifelong learning experience and know who the key elders are and understand that elders and other key people have earned your respect through who they are culturally. The other important thing is to understand how difficult it is to manage moving between two cultures. Ideally you would feel comfortable in both environments. In practical terms, this means that you are most likely to speak your traditional language very well or even fluently and may not feel as comfortable with Standard

Australian English (SAE) as a sole method of communication. You are comfortable with the traditional beliefs of your people and this is why you probably feel conflicted when in non-Aboriginal environments. Some of it may be that you struggle with how to make sense of the two cultures together. For example, the concept of payback and how this doesn't fit with the 'Whiteman's justice system', working away from your 'country' or community and finding this difficult.

CONNECTION/YEARNING SUB-DOMAIN

Your responses on the yearning for Aboriginal culture sub-domain indicate that you have a very strong degree of desire to have contact with your traditional Aboriginal culture. This means that you make constant efforts to learn more about your traditions and cultures. Your desire to learn about your culture is likely to result in you finding it difficult to maintain commitments that you perceive as being more 'non-Aboriginal', that is, not being able to go home for funerals, be part of traditional activities and so forth. The result is that you often feel conflicted when living and working in non-Aboriginal environments and yearn to be in the company of your traditional or other Aboriginal people. You have a constant yearning for your culture and for others to understand and appreciate it. If you have children it is also likely that you desire that they are raised within the Aboriginal culture and probably do not see much benefit for them in living within the non-Aboriginal culture. You are most likely to travel regularly, or live permanently with your traditional people and have constant exposure to the traditions of your culture. You would insist on always doing the right thing culturally such as going to funerals to pay respects for someone who has passed away and have a desire to return home when this happens and will do so despite commitments to work and other issues. This means that you will need to learn how best to talk these issues through with people in your organisation otherwise it may create problems for you throughout your work life.

CULTURE STRESS SUB-DOMAIN

In looking at your answers on the culture stress sub-domain, you indicate that, compared to other Aboriginal people, you experience a high level of stress with managing the differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures. All Aboriginal people experience some level of stress with living and working in a mostly "non-Aboriginal" world; however, it is also known that there are a lot of differences in how each of us manages this. For you, it appears that the way you cope with this is not working very effectively and that the stress you experience is greater than what most people would experience. The important thing is to figure out how you can deal with these issues in a better way - or a way that doesn't lead to as much stress for you.

The high levels of stress you experience are most likely due to your responses to experiences of racism and prejudice which result in a considerable amount of stress for you. This is to the point that these experiences are likely to 'eat away at you' for days and days and you struggle with how to release these emotions in a more effective way. This may be a source of frustration for you i.e. you feel angry, stressed or upset that you react to people who have these sorts of opinions in the way you do. You also regularly feel conflicted in managing the differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures in your day-to-day work and home lives. You are likely to be of the opinion that most non-Aboriginal people generally have a lot of racism towards Aboriginal people.

It is likely that you are still figuring out why you react in the way you do and allow these types of attitudes to affect you. It is simply a matter of 'arming yourself' a little better with strategies to deal with these experiences in a better way. It may be that you communicate your view but not in a way that results in you having to lose your cool. This is often difficult to achieve as these experiences are fairly emotional ones. The best way to start is to figure out whether your current way of dealing with living and working in a mostly "non-Aboriginal" world is healthy for you i.e. if it causes you stress, then it is not working for you. So, consider other approaches - communicating your opinion in a controlled way is always the best response to these sorts of attitudes. It is also worth looking at how these experiences have affected you - for instance do you have a belief that there is racism everywhere? Are you on edge waiting for the next racist comment to come? This leads to a build-up of unnecessary stress - again, having some very good, almost rehearsed strategies to deal with barriers created by a mainstream world as well as racism is the best method of reducing this stress.

Dealing with shifting between two very different cultural 'worlds', you mostly find difficult to manage and this would be due to many reasons. It could be that you feel frustrated with 'mainstream' and how it is so inflexible when it comes to Aboriginal people. It may also be that you feel overwhelmed by the expectation of your community in being able to 'achieve' in a mainstream world. Importantly, the sense of pride you feel in your Aboriginal culture and identity is the most helpful way of dealing with these feelings - and leads to a lower level of stress responses associated with experiences of racism and marginalisation when they happen.

KNOWLEDGE DOMAIN