

Personal and professional transformation  
through cultural safety training:

Learnings and implications for evaluators from  
two decades of professional development

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Consulting and Training



Cultural Respect Training  
and Consultancy

# History of the workshops

**1994**

Camp Coorong  
'Journey of  
Healing'

**1994-1999**

First partnership  
Workshops in  
human services  
sector

**2001-2008**

Learning brought  
into university  
teaching (health,  
human services,  
education)

**2004-2009**

Expansion of  
partnership  
Workshops in  
health and  
human services  
sectors

**2013-2018**

Workshops extending  
into education, early  
childhood, higher  
education, law and  
justice, planning and  
transport, retail and  
environmental  
sectors



# Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal partnership



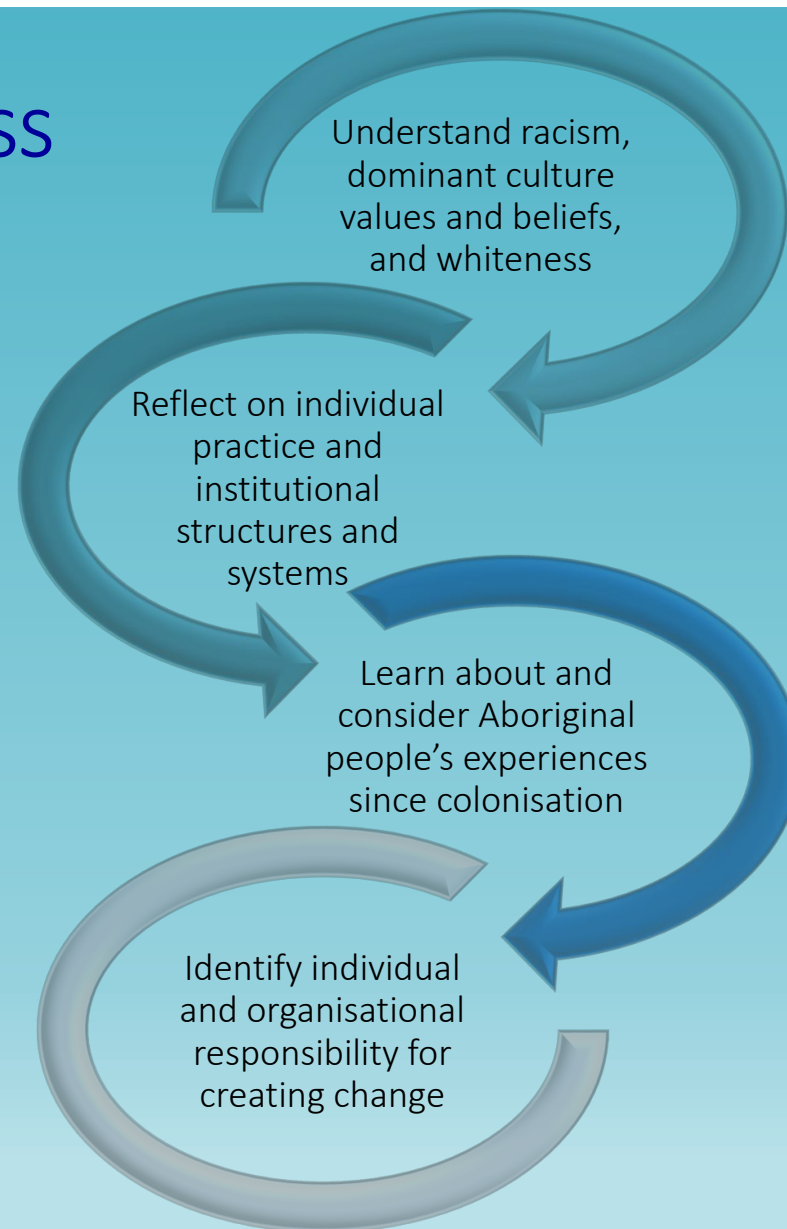
# Focus of the training

Participants gain the opportunity to:

- ω identify, understand and respond to racism, including institutional racism
- ω recognise and understand how dominant culture and whiteness impact on the experiences, opportunities, and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians
- ω appreciate the impact of colonisation and dispossession for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, including the historical and ongoing effects in their everyday lives
- ω support and implement initiatives for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians as part of their work roles



# Content and process over two days



# Cultural safety – what is it?

The **lived experience** of cultural safety depends on:

Aboriginal peoples **not** being subjected to and experiencing racism, where Aboriginal peoples define whether racism has occurred.



This includes **individual racism** - when individual staff members practise racial prejudice and racial discrimination, and



**institutional racism** - when organisational policies and practices do not consider or make room for Aboriginal people's knowledges and experiences, and their cultural values, meanings and protocols.



# Preparing organisations for workshops

Key points to address with senior staff:

- ω clarify their purpose or intention for requesting the training
- ω take an organisational approach - senior staff first
- ω have a strategy for how to engage the rest of the staff
- ω discuss risk management and support structures
- ω prepare staff for having emotional responses
- ω clarify that it is not cultural awareness training



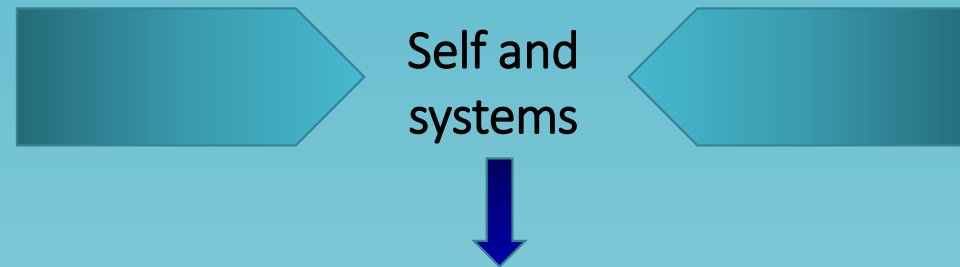
# Who attends?





# How is cultural safety different from cultural awareness?

## Cultural safety

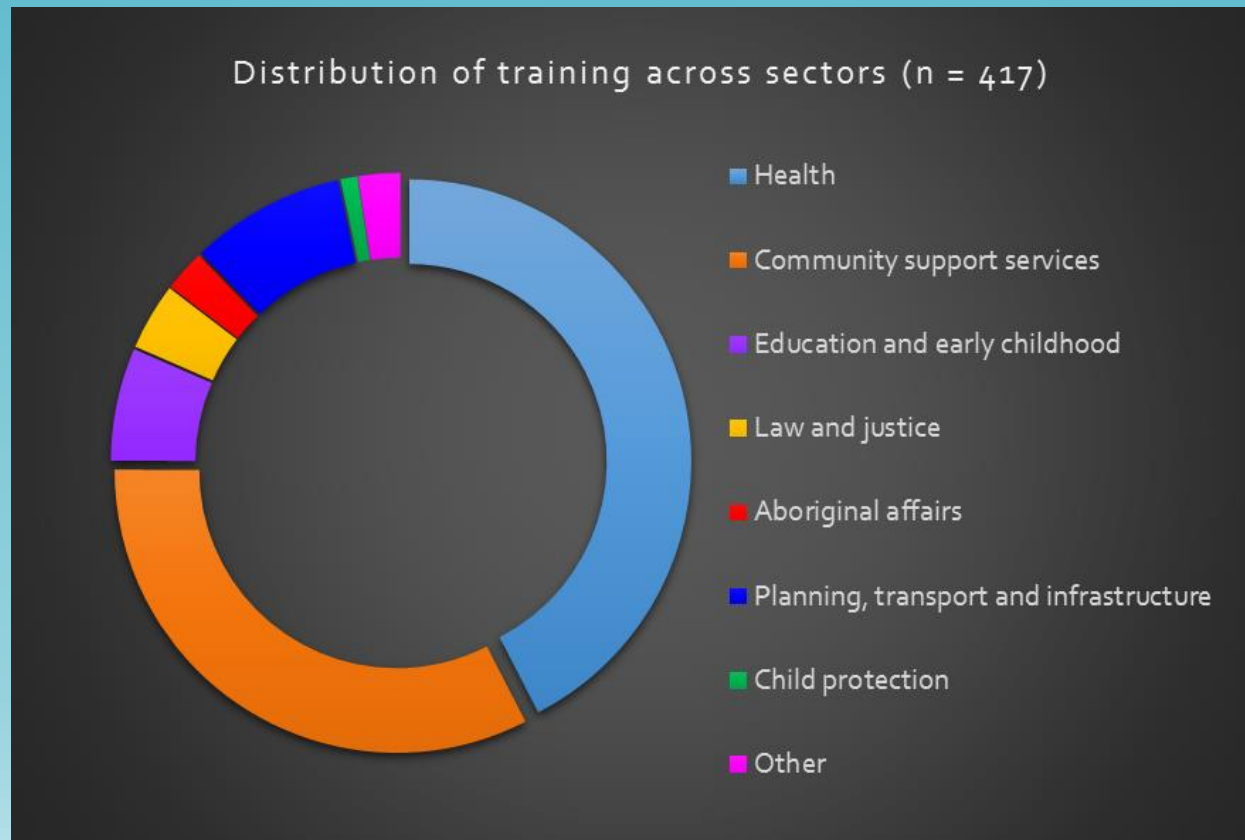


impact on relationships with and services provided to  
Aboriginal people, and on Aboriginal people's experiences

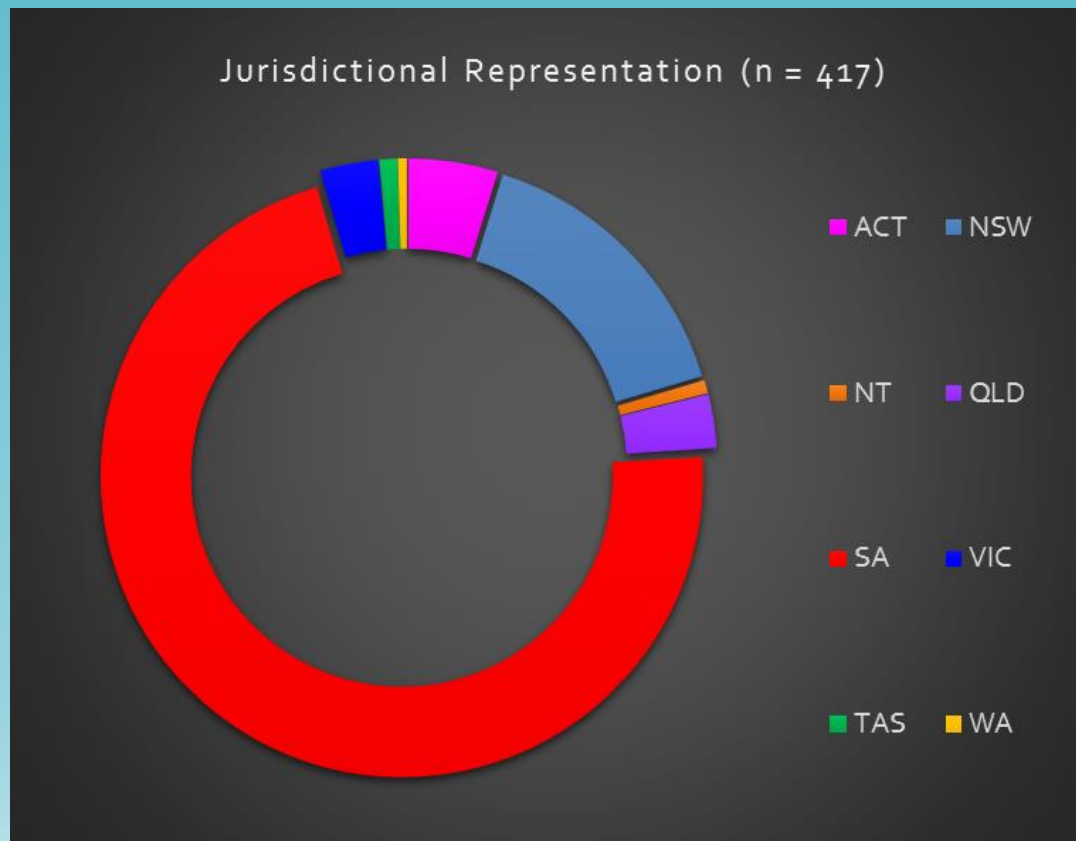
## Cultural awareness



# Workshops across sectors since 2004



# Workshops by jurisdictions since 2004



# Evaluation at the end of the workshop

Two key questions:

1. How were the presentations and exercises useful to you?
2. Has the workshop contributed to your thoughts about your work role?  
If so, how?



# Analysis process

## **Trial process**

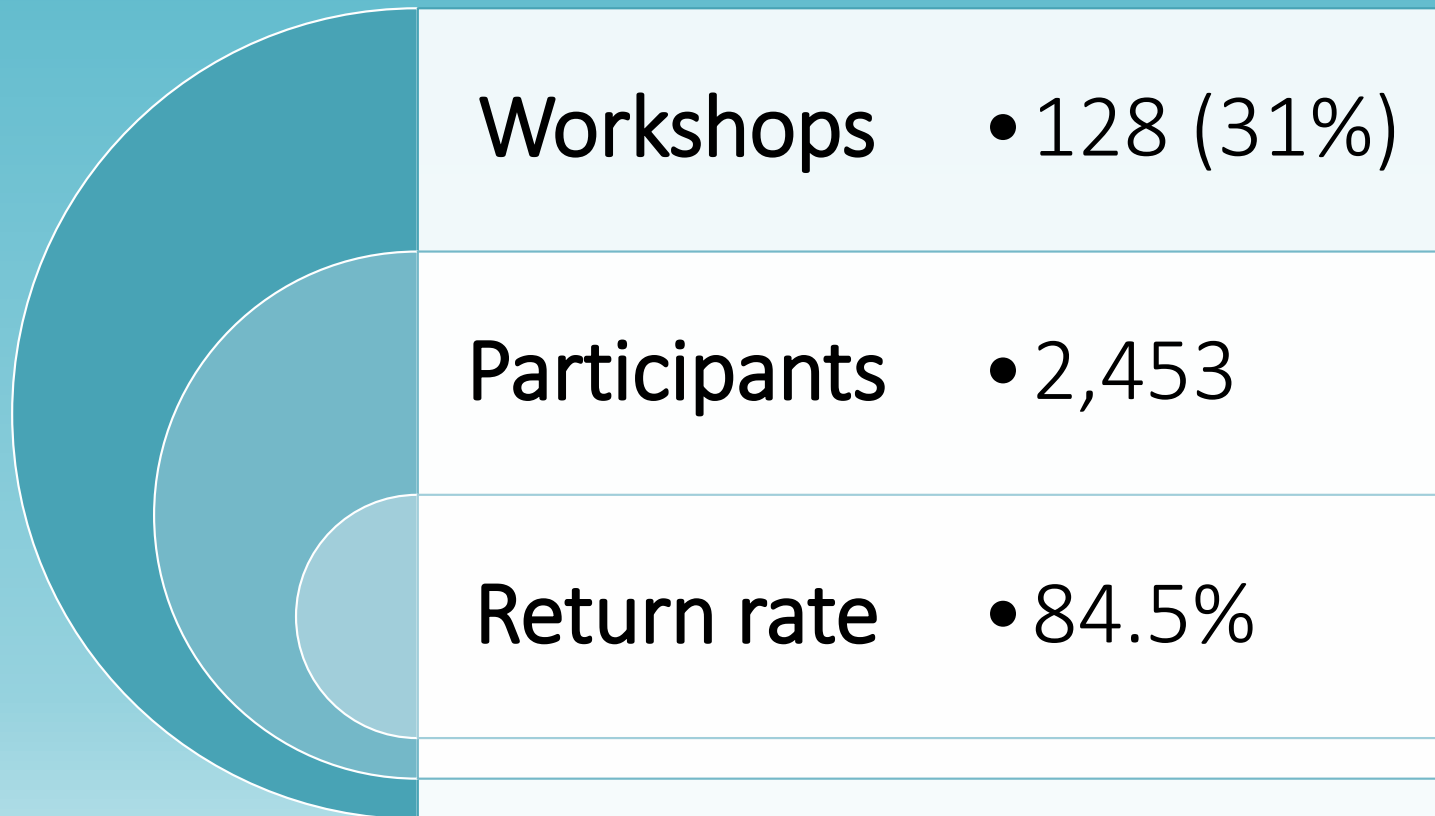
- ω Qualitative thematic analysis undertaken by one co-facilitator
- ω 14 workshops from different years and sectors (2006 to 2015) for 205 participants
- ω Initial set of themes

## **Final process**

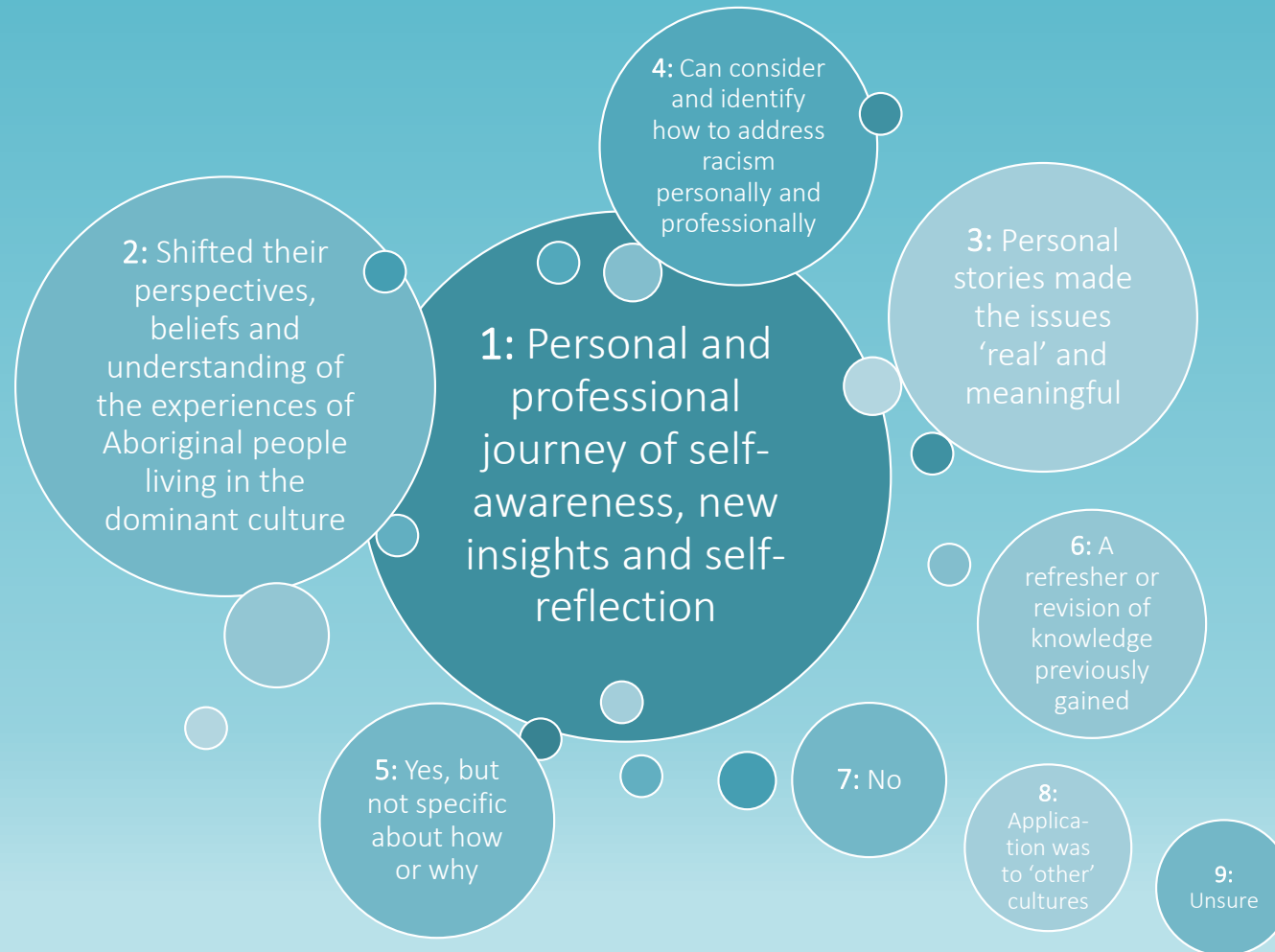
- ω Qualitative thematic analysis undertaken by independent and informed colleague
- ω Worked with and expanded on initial themes until saturation reached
- ω Ongoing analysis of all years and sectors for whom we have data
- ω Consultation with co-facilitator to clarify themes and allocations, i.e. quality assurance



## Data analysed to date



# Usefulness of presentations and exercises: Core themes



# Usefulness of presentations and exercises

**Theme 1:** Personal and professional journey of self-awareness, new insights and self-reflection

“Addressed the “elephant in the room” which is racism and white privilege. Explored racism as more than just individual ignorance and meanness. Helped me examine and understand my white privilege, and not just Aboriginal disadvantage .”

“Very powerful and helped me reflect on my behaviours, attitudes and beliefs. They have helped me to reframe my outlook.”

“Made me think in a way and about things that I have never been asked to consider before. This thinking will need to continue for a long time, but I am looking forward to the challenge of change both personally and professionally.”

“I am awake – to my whiteness. To racism. To the hidden history of the Australian story and I am ready to consciously use my voice to speak truth in all my relationships that were once challenging invisible political disguises. I now begin my unlearning.”

“I have a deeper understanding of many aspects: my whiteness, history, institutionalised racism, barriers...[this] has increased my confidence to question, explore and advocate both personally and professionally.”





# Usefulness of presentations and exercises

**Theme 1 - sub-theme:** Challenging and confronting, but important for moving forward and beyond other cultural learning

"The presentations and exercises made me step out of my comfort zone and challenge my thoughts towards cultural respect. While conversations at times were challenging, it is something we must do to understand and reflect. Because we may not have been exposed to Aboriginal culture and [Australian] history at school, it is important to have these discussions."

"Having come to the workshop with no sense of my whiteness and privileged position in society to gain an understanding of this has been a gut wrenching, enlightening experience."

"They were confronting but necessarily so. They increased my awareness and improved my knowledge about racism, white privilege, and the reality of Australian history. I feel like I am seeing the world and myself differently."

"The two days have been both confronting and enlightening. My learning has been huge and I know it's only the start of the journey. I am thankful for the exposure I've had to Aboriginal culture and white privilege, and I know my learnings will stay with me and guide me through the future."



# Usefulness of presentations and exercises

**Theme 2:** Shifted their perspectives, beliefs and understanding of the experiences of Aboriginal Australians interacting with the dominant culture – historically and currently

“Increased my awareness of the obstacles affecting Aboriginal Australians when navigating between the white dominant culture and their own.”

“Understanding of historical structural practices that impact on Aboriginal people today and will continue in the future if white people don’t make changes.”

“It made me think and evaluate my thoughts and ideas on Aboriginal people and their culture. It opened my eyes and gave me a better and deeper understanding.”

“Particularly important to understand the day to day realities of Aboriginal people and the privilege that is normalised and inherent for white people.”

“Helped changed my perception and understanding of Aboriginal people and culture in a very positive way. I learnt a great deal on what is racism and answered a lot of questions I was afraid to ask.”

“Reminded me and extended my knowledge of the trauma experienced by Aboriginal people and the way we unconsciously and consciously perpetuate disadvantage through racial and institutional discrimination.”



# Usefulness of presentations and exercises

**Theme 3:** Personal stories made the issues 'real' and meaningful – at times emotionally impactful

"Courage and honesty and willingness to be vulnerable and share vulnerable feelings by Sharon in particular made the issues very real and it easy to keep an open mind and heart to the fact that yes, I am part of the problem and change is essential."

"I found the authentic presentation with honesty and real stories highly valuable. The presenters own experiences in coming to understand 'whiteness' and the impact on their lives made information so much more thoughtful."

"The stories in particular provided valuable insights. It was a privilege to hear them."

"I particularly appreciated the honesty and vulnerability of both presenters when recounting their own life experiences."

"The presentations, conversations, stories and experiences were all useful, hit me in the chest and at times made me cry."

"The facilitators were very knowledgeable and generous with their experiences. Whilst there were confronting elements, it was a safe place to be vulnerable."



# Usefulness of presentations and exercises

**Theme 4:** Can now consider and identify how they can address racism personally and professionally

"Amazing and challenging experience. I will be able to use knowledge gained in all aspects of life especially in workplace."

"It will continue to shape my thoughts, words and actions."

"Great for bringing the concept of whiteness to my radar and as a tool to initiate conversations on how to take action in the workplace."

"I was able to recognise that I have privilege in my work and personal life that I take for granted. I have a massive advantage...I will use this to act and make changes to racist views and practices."

"Realisation that I need to walk a new path, start change in my personal life, work life and lead by example...I will stumble but this is what life is about."

"It gives the organisation and individual workers the confidence and strength to work better in the community in addressing racism and responding respectfully as a service with Aboriginal people."



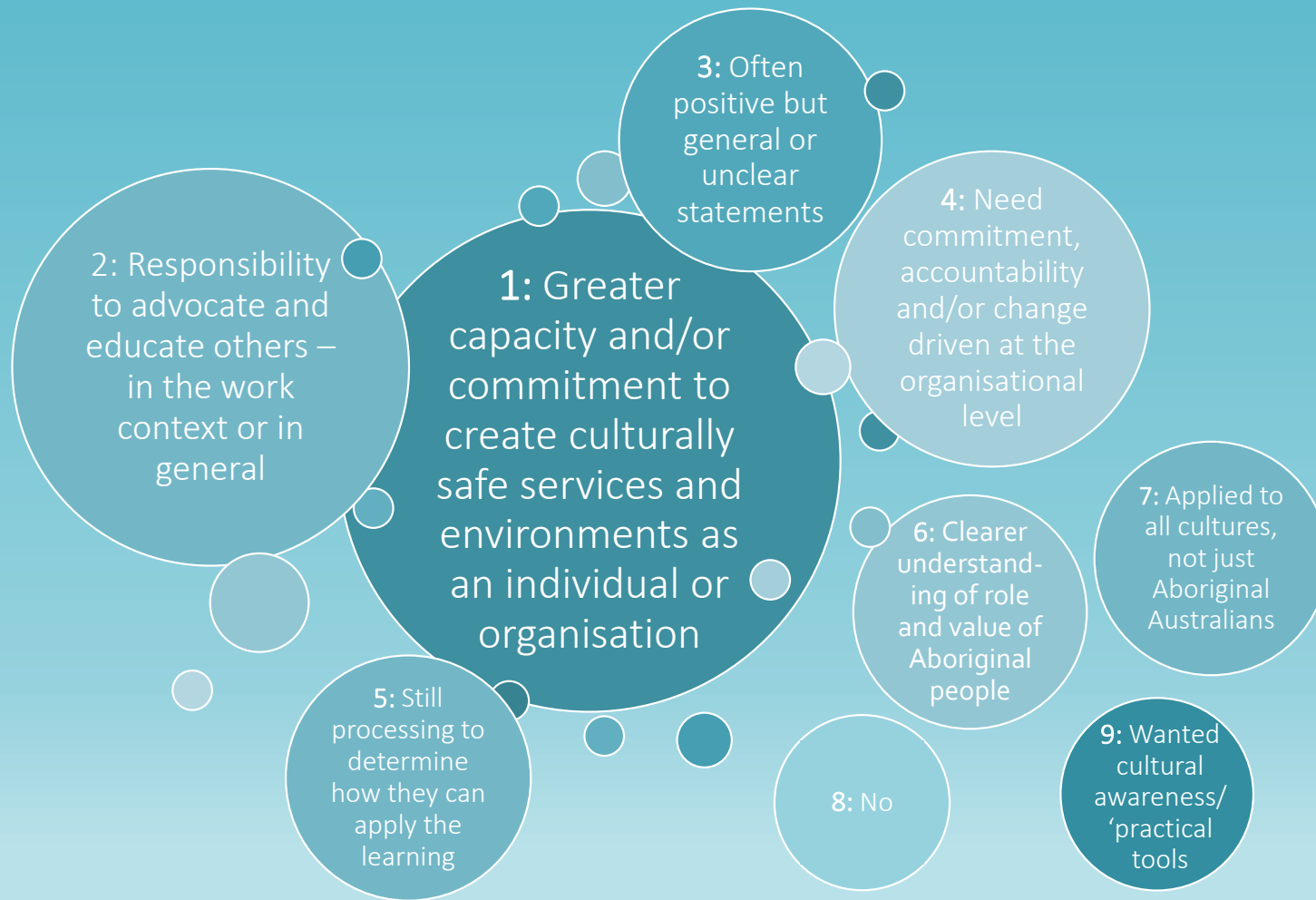
# Usefulness of presentations and exercises

Less frequent themes:

- ω **Theme 5:** Yes, but participants are not specific about how or why – 2.1%
- ω **Theme 6:** A refresher or revision of knowledge previously gained – 1.1%
- ω **Theme 7:** No, including those who critique the content or process and/or have strong emotional responses – 0.7%
- ω **Theme 8:** Talk about how the learning applies to relationships 'other' cultures rather than specifically Aboriginal cultures – 0.7%
- ω **Theme 9:** Unsure, unclear or named one activity with no description – 0.8%



# Service provision or program and policy development and implementation: Core themes





# Service provision or program and policy development and implementation

**Theme 1A:** Greater capacity and/or commitment to create culturally safe services and environments - *individual* work practice

"It has given me the tools I need to change my approach, in what I say, do and what I can say and do and write and advocate in the white privilege organisations I work in – what a mind and heart changing experience."

"I need to educate student midwives, midwives and AMIC workers. The messages are different for each but I know how it is more than just changing attitudes. "Whiteness" has blinded me- I think you have given me tools and understanding to help others see their own 'blind spot'. We must work on our own attitudes and own the problem."

"I will question, is our way the right way? Is our service meeting my needs or the needs of the Aboriginal person? How can I change my thinking to make a small difference?"

"How can we be operating in a culturally safe and sensitive manner? How does whiteness create institutional racism? What can I do as someone working within the system, to effect change/create a safe space?"



# Service provision or program and policy development and implementation

**Theme 1B:** Greater capacity and/or commitment to create culturally safe services and environments - *organisational* policy and practice

“Has contributed to the building of sounder internal attitudes and understandings as a platform for all future activities and initiatives.”

“What we will do as a service do to ensure that we look at the safety and sense of belonging of families that access our service and seek community involvement.”

“I am able to give more informed consideration to the structure, design and delivery of our services. Able to reflect more on the contributors to Aboriginal health and see more clearly where changes in policies, processes and practices need to occur. We need to reshape our Aboriginal Health services to be more responsive and culturally appropriate.”

“[The workshop] allowed space for discussion and review of current practices. Opportunities to begin planning process of projects, structural changes both internal and external as well as strategies to implement at program and site level”





# Service provision or program and policy development and implementation

**Theme 2:** Personal responsibility to advocate and educate others: **A** – at work, **B** – in general

“It has made me realise that I could start by creating awareness in my own children and other people I interact with.”

“From little things big things GROW. I reflect on my own practice but I also will REALLY call my friends and colleagues on any racism/attitudes I experience from here on in.”

“We have a broader responsibility within our roles than just policy development and implementation. We have the responsibility to ensure the department and broader health system really understands racism and its impacts. This is bigger than identifying levers and opportunities - its about being a strong ally and advocate.”

“Knowing I now have an awareness of whiteness and privilege [I am] empowered and dedicated to the part of the social movement to address racism.”



# Service provision or program and policy development and implementation

**Theme 4:** Need commitment, accountability and/or change driven at the organisational level

“Made me realise more clearly how many barriers there are around institutional racism but also in regard to current approaches – these are not going to be easy to knock down plus will require courage by individuals **and will at the organisational level** to do things differently.”

“Our agency needs to become a champion for change at a systemic level and across the agency.”

“We have a lot of work to do to make a difference. This needs to be incorporated at all levels for people to make any changes.”

“How do we educate all our staffing groups about cultural respect. Look at change across the whole organisation to have this embedded into our culture.”



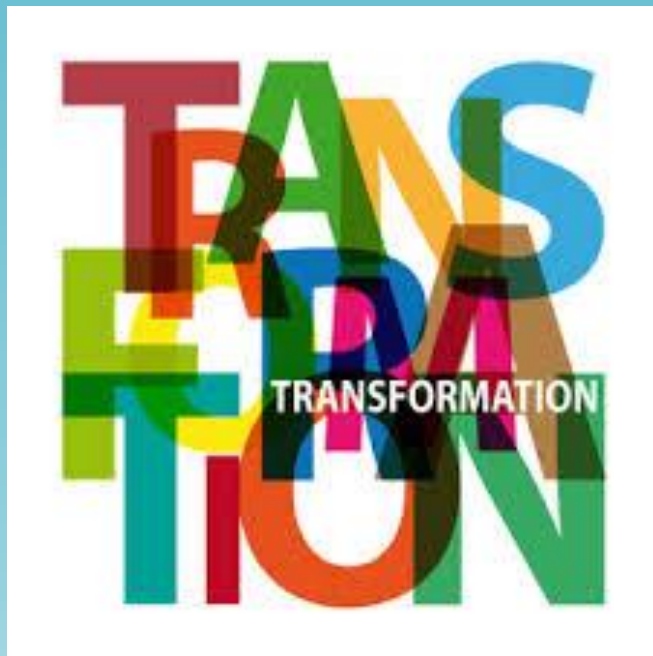
# Service provision or program and policy development and implementation

Less frequent themes:

- ω **Theme 3:** Often positive but general or unclear statements – 5.7%
- ω **Theme 5:** Still processing to determine how they can apply the learning – 3.7%
- ω **Theme 6:** Clearer understanding of the role, value and support needs of Aboriginal staff and people in their work context – 2.1%
- ω **Theme 7:** Applied the ideas to all cultures, not specifically Aboriginal Australians – 1.6%
- ω **Theme 8:** No – 1.3%
- ω **Theme 9:** Wanted cultural awareness and ‘practical tools’ for working with Aboriginal people – 0.7%



# Self



An  
ongoing  
journey



# Implications for design, implementation and evaluation of programs that are for or inclusive of Aboriginal Australians

What are we thinking about as evaluators?

## Culture

Keep culture as the central reference point – always consider how culture is present in what you are doing and how you are doing it.

## Identity

Maintain consciousness of self – this means who you represent as either an Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal person and what responsibility you have in that identity.

## Power

Pay attention to power relations and the impact of dominant culture values on the priorities, content and process of what you are doing



# Conclusion: Cultural safety as a vital lens in evaluation

## Biological pathways 1 – Chronic Stress

