

## **First Nations Abortion Access- Starting Difficult Conversations; Establishing Cultural Safety**

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### **Background/Purpose:**

The legalisation of termination of pregnancy in Queensland didn't equate to access. Many populations continued to face multiple barriers to care. In 2022, Cairns Sexual Health staff analysed the numbers of First Nations people accessing pregnancy options and asked if culturally safe care is possible? There was no clear answer. The Pregnancy Options and Culture team have spent 2 years exploring this concept.

### **Approach:**

The project applies four concepts:

1. Starting difficult conversations.
2. Building a network of 'First Nations Safe People' across Queensland.
3. Connecting safe people to abortion seekers and a peer support network for sustainability.
4. Growing cultural safety knowledge amongst Queensland's health workforce.

### **Outcomes/Impact:**

The project's impact spans from the Torres Strait in the North to the Qld/NSW border. This is evidenced by the rise in numbers of Indigenous Health Workers with an interest in pregnancy options care across the state. These safe people report increased knowledge, confidence and pride in supporting their communities to access reproductive choice.

The project employs co-design principles to create workforce and consumer resources.

The result is an increased understanding of what constitutes culturally informed care.

### **Innovation and Significance:**

The project has resulted in the inclusion of the First Nations voice in abortion healthcare for the first time in Queensland, arguably Australia. The project captures the perspectives of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including men and women, through story, video and training resources. These are significant for Indigenous and non-Indigenous healthcare providers alike and constitute a movement to embed cultural safety into all aspects of abortion service development and delivery.

More broadly, this project models co-design for challenging cultural taboos and the amplification of marginalised voices for innovation and equity.