

## PCC4U Focus Topic 2 Resource - Key points for communication

Communication with Australian Indigenous peoples regarding serious illness, dying and/or death requires consideration of the following key points:

<p><b>Appropriate terminology</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct statements about dying and death can be inappropriate in many communities and Islands throughout the Torres Strait. This is related to the belief that talking about or showing images of dying / death can bring bad luck or bring death closer.</li> <li>• These terms may also be triggering for those who are still grieving the loss of other loved ones or dealing with the impact of intergenerational trauma.</li> <li>• In these instances, using the words <i>sick person, bad / sad news, finishing up, passed on / away, Sorry Business</i> are more appropriate.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Who to talk to</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When talking with a person and their family about healthcare, and particularly the end-of-life journey, it is important to remember that Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander families are often collective or communal, rather than individualistic.</li> <li>• There may be a family spokesperson or decision-maker who is not the sick person. Alternatively, the sick person may choose to become an active participant in their ongoing care decisions.</li> <li>• Asking the question, "Who would you like us to talk to about your health matters?" can help to clarify this. It is also important to find out who the family would prefer is notified in the event of the person's death (eg, Elder, Marigeth, family spokesperson)<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>
<p><b>Eye contact</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some people will avoid eye contact when communicating, others will not.</li> <li>• Avoiding eye contact can be a polite act between people of the same cultural group, when speaking with a person who is respected, of the opposite gender, or where there is a difference in ages.</li> <li>• It can also mean that a person is feeling uncomfortable or afraid. Interactions should be guided by the person and the family spokesperson; if they avoid eye contact, then it is respectful for you to do the same.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Silences</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some people are comfortable with periods of silence during discussions. If this occurs, there is no need to talk through or rushing these silences, as they allow time for processing information and thinking about the implications when responding to questions.</li> <li>• Sitting, listening and being patient is a sign of respect and will help build trust.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Personal space and body language</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interactions will flow more freely for many people when more personal space is allowed and the person speaking with them is sitting alongside them, rather than directly opposite, and from the same level rather than standing over.</li> </ul>