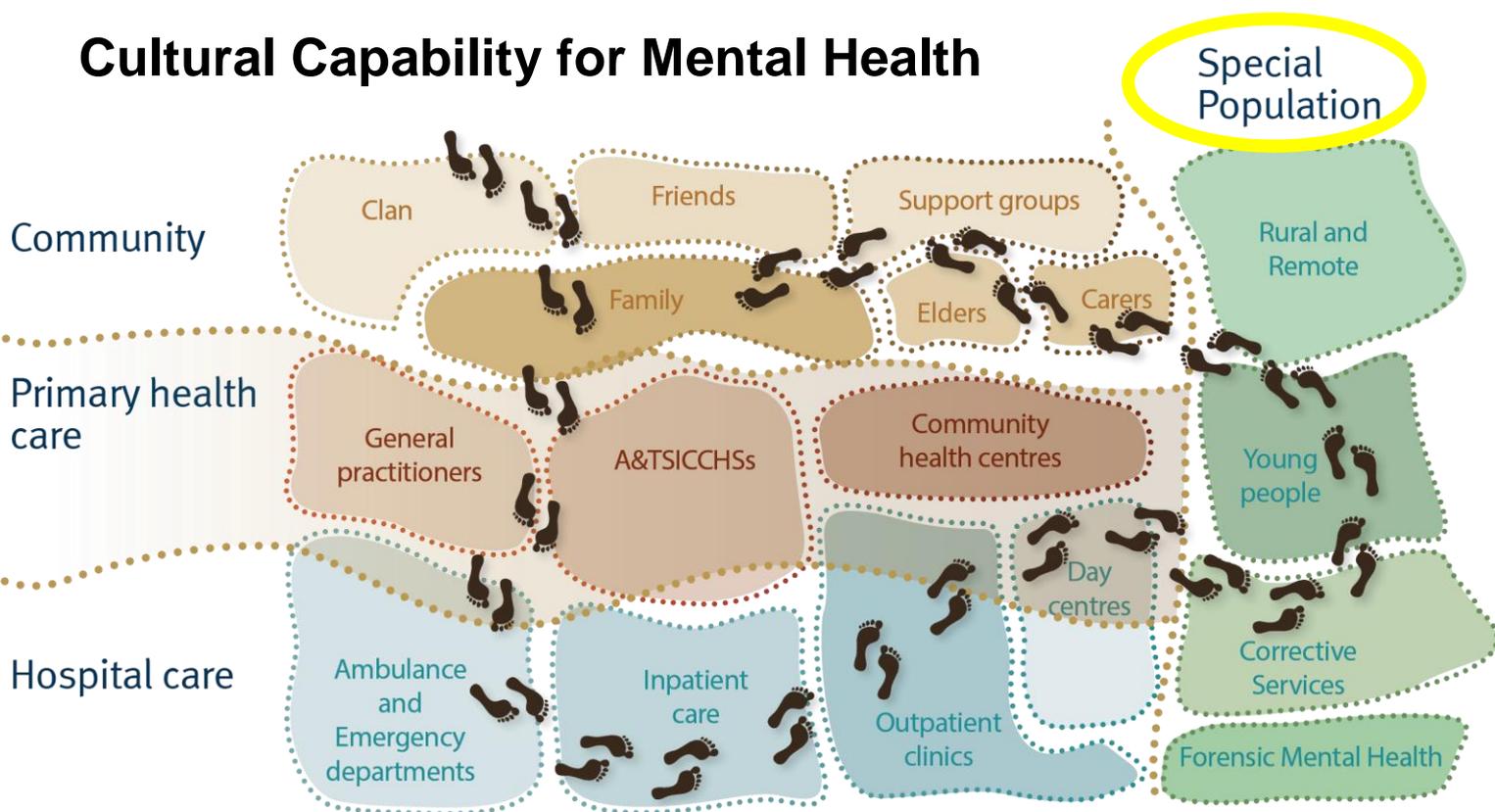


Cultural Capability for Mental Health



Special Population

Rural and Remote

Asking about person's place of origin is more than an engagement tool – it's also a way of knowing about how far a person has come, and how disconnected they may be from their community. People may have travelled from rural or remote areas to access inpatient or specialist services. Some people may not have the means of returning to communities upon discharge from hospital, or because of long-term disengagement may be at risk of homelessness. Careful planning is required by services, and early inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supports, to improve outcomes for people who are far from their land.

Rural and remote communities may lack services, or they may be difficult to travel to, which means that a person may have become very unwell before help is sought. If you're working in a rural or remote outreach service, you may have to invest more of your time in learning about the community, and in direct engagement with people so trust can be gained for proactive support early on.

Young people

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people account for 30% of the total suicide deaths under 18 years of age in Australia. This is extremely disproportionate for a minority population. All of the socioeconomic factors discussed in Chapter Two are present in youth, but their developmental stage means that these may have a greater impact. Risk taking behaviours are increased in this age group. The more exposed young people are to suicide deaths in their community, the greater the risk, as cluster



suicides and contagion are very prevalent. Bullying, lack of belonging, and discrimination are some of the main reasons that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people consider suicide.

Selective interventions can target a range of social and emotional wellbeing approaches, including peer mentoring; school-based mental health literacy and cultural education; diversion and engagement approaches (including sport, music and art); connecting to culture and Elders; and providing hope for the future through education and employment. These work on increasing a sense of belonging and hope.

The mistrust of services that can occur throughout the lifespan may be amplified in youth who are feeling disengaged. It is important to be proactive in bringing services to young people, through outreach, assessment in situ at schools or communities, and linkages with families. Engaging with youth in their own space, whether it's online, at the skate park, or at schools, can bring respect to their strengths and values. Check out programs like [Headspace's Yarn Safe](#) and [School Support](#) for ideas and resources.

Corrective Services

As mentioned in chapter two, Indigenous Australians experience much higher rates of incarceration. For some communities and families, time in jail is almost the norm – everyone knows somebody who is or has been incarcerated. Sometimes connections occur with other family and kin within prison. But incarceration is still felt as an extreme loss of freedom, and impacts on wellbeing greatly.

The loss of identity can increase the risk of self-harm and suicide. The clues to decline in mental health can be hidden or masked in the prison environment and routines. Workers in corrective services, and in prison mental health, are encouraged to develop strong working relationships with the cultural support workers, health workers, and others who can make the connections to identify and address these needs.

Forensic Mental Health

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are also over-represented in the forensic mental health system. They may experience a triple stigma of culture, mental illness, and criminal action. The actions that they committed when very unwell may have led to a disruption from their community. Shame and guilt are heavy emotions that can have a very strong impact on the person's wellbeing. Getting cultural support early and ensuring ongoing cultural connection is a vital part of the person's recovery.