

## GUIDE: What is CALD?

CALD is the acronym for 'culturally and linguistically diverse' or 'cultural and linguistic diversity'. This describes Australia as a culturally, religiously and linguistically diverse population. One in every four Australians was born overseas. In NSW that increases to almost 28%, and Sydney has the highest overseas-born population of all capital cities.

### Migrant communities

Australia's range of cultural values, beliefs and perspectives is vast. For example, Arabic is the official language in 22 separate nations, and is spoken by many more people in other countries and of many different religions. Consider the level of diversity if you include all the other countries and cultures represented in Australia.

### Language diversity

Linguistic diversity is also significant. One in five people in NSW speak a language other than English (LOTE). This increases to 37% among the Sydney population. Language defines cultures, allowing communication of traditions, beliefs and values. Common languages spoken in the home, other than English, are:

- Mandarin
- Cantonese
- Arabic
- Vietnamese
- Hindi.

We work in a culturally diverse context so must consider how to adapt and adjust services. Working well in this environment requires awareness, knowledge and skills. To access, understand and service the community, we need to reflect community diversity and leverage the great talents of all people.

## What is culture and why does it matter?

Culture is often likened to an iceberg. A small part is visible above the water, but the majority sits below the waterline, unseen (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=woP0v-2nJCU>).

Cultural behaviours are visible and observable: what people do, what we wear, how we speak. People often adjust and adapt their behaviour in different cultural contexts. Cultural values and beliefs are not immediately visible or obvious but they can affect behaviour.

For example, in many Asian cultures people are taught to show humility. In an interview, an Asian colleague may consider it inappropriate to promote their own work. This can lead to Australian organisations failing to recognise the skills of their Asian staff.

Cultural values and beliefs can take a long time to change. Everyone has a culture and a 'way of doing things', which is their 'normal'.

It's helpful to be aware of some of your own cultural values and practices and those in your workplace or community. Significant diversity exists within cultural groups, because of age, generation and lived experience.

A recognition and respect for diversity ensures effective service delivery.