



# Social & Emotional Wellbeing for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Communities

## Unit 4 AOS 2 DP 1: What Influences Mental Health & Wellbeing

### Social & Emotional Wellbeing Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities

The term **social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB)** is used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to describe the physical, social, emotional, spiritual and cultural wellbeing of a person.

The **Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing framework** is one approach to understanding *all elements* of being (and therefore wellbeing) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It is **multidimensional** (has many different components) and **holistic** (considers the whole person).

**The Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing framework:** A framework that includes all elements of being, and therefore wellbeing, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

- **Political Determinants** include government policies such as legislation that has affected wellbeing by restricting the rights of self-determination and sovereignty.
- **Historical Determinants** include the impact of past government policies and the oppression and cultural displacement experienced by individuals, families and communities since colonisation

### Dimensions of the SEWB Framework:

#### Connection to Culture:

A strong sense of identity, values, tradition, and connection between the past, present, and future that drives behaviour and beliefs

#### Connection to Country:

Connecting to traditional lands of a particular language or cultural group, both geographically as well as spiritually, emotionally, and intellectually

#### Connection to Spirituality:

A concept that connects all things, and shapes beliefs, values, and behaviour. It guides knowledge systems, culture, and all that is life for Aboriginal people, including connections to ancestors, the past, the present, and the future

#### Connection to Ancestors:

A belief that a family and community ancestors are interconnected with Creation spirits and Country and watch over, guide, and protect families and communities in the physical and spiritual world

#### Connection to Body:

Connecting to the physical body and health in order to participate fully in all aspects of life

#### Connection to Minds & Emotions:

Ability to effectively manage thoughts and feelings

#### Connection to Family & Kinship:

Connecting to immediate and wider family group (and community)



This diagram is a representation of the SEWB — a multidimensional and holistic framework of social and emotional wellbeing with **domains** that encapsulate all elements of being an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person.

Outside of these domains are **overlapping cultural, social, political and historical 'determinants'** that influence the domains.

- **Social Determinants** are factors such as education, employment, income and housing which contribute to an individual's health and wellbeing status.



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### Connection to Community:

Connecting to wider social systems, allowing families to connect with and support one another

### Examples of the Dimensions of the SEWB Framework:

#### Connection to Culture:

Elders passing on traditions, speaking local languages, participating in rites and rituals

#### Connection to Country:

Taking only what one needs from the land so it continues to thrive, belonging to the land and maintaining a connection to the territories of one's language or cultural group

#### Connection to Spirituality & Ancestors:

Knowing that one's ancestors watch over them, offering guidance and answering questions when needed

#### Connection to Body:

Accessing good nutrition, managing illness and disability

#### Connection to Mind & Emotions:

Maintaining self-esteem, having confidence and a sense of identity

#### Connection to Family & Kinship:

Spending time with family, caring for the ill

#### Connection to Community:

Accessing and being part of community services and support networks

### Determinants of Health:

The SEWB framework also acknowledges that **all aspects** of social and emotional wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are impacted by **social, historical, and political determinants** of wellbeing.

These determinants circle the dimensions of wellbeing within the SEWB framework, which signifies that the experience of wellbeing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is **impacted by wider societal forces**. As with all influences on wellbeing, these three categories are interrelated and, at times, are hard to separate.

### Social Determinants:

The circumstances in which people grow, live, and work, and the systems put in place to deal with illness (WHO, 2008).

- Socioeconomic status (level of wealth)
- The impact of poverty
- Unemployment
- Racial discrimination

### Historical Determinants:

The ongoing influence of events, policies, and trauma on groups of people (AHRC, 2007).

- Colonisation and its legacy (for example, the ongoing loss of culture and language)
- The impact of past government policies (for example, policies of Aboriginal child removal)

### Political Determinants:

Political policies that shape the process of distributing resources and power to individuals and communities, and create or reinforce social and health inequalities (Dawes, 2020).

- Unresolved issues of land
- Control of local resources
- The rights of self-determination and sovereignty (individuals and communities making their own choices and managing their own lives in culturally informed ways)