



## NATIONAL RECONCILIATION WEEK *Prof Nitin Verma AM* 26 May 2020

Hello, my name is Nitin Verma and today I am filming from the lands of the Muwinina People. I pay my respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. I'd also like to acknowledge the traditional owners, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples across Australia on whose land members of our College live and work.

Many of you would know that National Reconciliation Week is happening from the 27<sup>th</sup> May to the 3<sup>rd</sup> June, with the theme of 'In This Together'. I am here to talk about some of the work that RANZCO is doing to support reconciliation across the organisation.

Last year, RANZCO was proud to announce our first Reconciliation Action Plan, R.A.P or the RAP as it was called. This is an opportunity for the College to focus on ways to embed reconciliation across our work, with all our staff, our Fellows and members having a major role to play. The RANZCO RAP is a two-year initiative, with goals that span our corporate, education and policy areas. RANZCO is also focused on growing our relationships with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health sector so that we can share knowledge and continue the journey towards reconciliation.

RANZCO has taken some of the positive steps so far, some of these include:

- Encouraging RANZCO staff and Committees to Acknowledge Country in their day to day business
- Reviewing our cultural competency learning resources
- Displaying and promoting the 'Asking the Question' resource to encourage wider discussion around the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity
- And finally, encouraging RANZCO corporate area to use Supply Nation accredited suppliers

I understand the importance of providing culturally safe health care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients in my clinical practice. It is important for all of us to do our best to ensure that all people can access eye health care that they need, and that socio-economic status is never a barrier to essential eye care.

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With the onset of COVID-19 and the huge impact that it's had on our country – we must never forget that we still have ongoing responsibilities to our First Nations peoples to ensure access to equity of health care. RANZCO supports the initiatives that some of our members have taken on their own, to bulk-bill Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients in their practices. I think this is one of the most practical steps towards reconciliation that we as ophthalmologists can take in the practice of our profession.

And finally – I'd like to extend my respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for National Reconciliation Week this year. I hope that your communities continue to stay healthy and strong as Australia continues to manage the impacts of COVID-19. I commend the work of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health leaders to keep communities safe during this challenging time and I think that 2020 is a great year to have the theme 'In This Together'.

Thank you.

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