



**RANZCO**

The Royal Australian  
and New Zealand  
College of Ophthalmologists

# RANZCO Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Engagement Strategy 2023-2025

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*We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures; and to their Elders past, present and emerging. In recognition that we are a bi-national College, we also acknowledge the Rangatiratanga of Māori as Tangata Whenua and Treaty of Waitangi partners in Aotearoa New Zealand.*

## **Our commitment to reconciliation**

In November 2019, the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists (RANZCO) was pleased to launch its first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) 2019-2021, marking the College's commitment to recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's First Nations peoples. Our second RAP (2021-2023) focused on implementing cultural safety training as a protocol for staff and trainees, while it is anticipated that our third Innovate RAP (2023-2025) will take further steps to refine and support the process of First Nation employment processes, with the goal of welcoming Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff members to RANZCO. We recognise that this is a crucial step in bridging the gap between an Innovate and Stretch RAP. In developing this new RAP, we have been encouraged to be bold in our unique deliverables, challenging ourselves to set the standard for equity of access to eye healthcare.

This engagement strategy is a commitment made under the RANZCO RAP and will be used by the college as a guide on how to continue to work in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health. RANZCO is committed to undertaking our work in a respectful and culturally safe manner, and we hope that our ways of advocating, communicating and engaging continue to evolve and grow along our reconciliation journey.

RANZCO respectfully acknowledges the Gadigal Peoples of the Eora Nation as the Traditional Owners of the land on which our office is based in Sydney. We also respectfully acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia, and elders past, present and emerging. Finally – we acknowledge and thank Reconciliation Australia for the guidance and support provided to develop the RANZCO RAP.

## **Our journey so far**

Since the launch of the College's first RAP, RANZCO has developed a strong collaborative partnership with the Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association (AIDA). This was formalised in 2021, when RANZCO and AIDA signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), collaborating to achieve a common goal: to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ophthalmologists in Australia. Subsequently, the College was able to recruit two Aboriginal and one Torres Strait Islander trainees, with another Aboriginal trainee set to start in 2024 into the specialist training program.

Another key milestone under the College's second RAP was the implementation and maintenance of an Outreach Portal, which facilitates service provision to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities all over Australia by identifying gaps where services are yet to be available. It is anticipated that the Outreach Portal will provide a solution to the ophthalmology workforce shortage by improving information sharing amongst members to help connect RANZCO Trainees and Fellows to services in rural communities.

## **Improving how we engage**

To achieve our goal of partnering and collaborating with First Nations peoples, we have embedded the following activities to underpin our engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led organisations and communities:

***Learn about, reflect on, and understand the history, culture and achievements of First Nations peoples:***

Along with our philanthropic arm – the Australian and New Zealand Eye Foundation (ANZEF) – RANZCO will continue to participate in, sponsor and facilitate internal and external events to celebrate:

- National Reconciliation Week
- National Aborigines' and Islanders' Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) week
- The National Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Eye Health Conference
- The AIDA conference via:
  - Attendance
  - Sponsorship
  - Facilitating the “Growing our Fellows” workshop

***Maintain a dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health Committee:***

The College brings together ophthalmologists from across Australia who have experience in service provision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to form the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health Committee. The Committee will continue to inform RANZCO’s projects, policies, and advocacy work, with current focus on refining [innovative service delivery models](#).

***Participate in federal and state-based policy and advocacy forums:***

RANZCO will continue to be represented on the following forums:

- Vision 2020 Australia:
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health committee
  - Vision and Eye Care for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples committee
- Australian Indigenous Doctors’ Association:
  - National Medical Training Advisory Network Specialist Trainees Project
- Rural Doctors’ Network:
  - NSW/ACT Aboriginal Advisory Committee
- Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia:
  - SA Aboriginal Eye Health Working Group
- Rural Health West:
  - WA Aboriginal Eye Health Advisory Group

***Track outcomes against the Reconciliation Action Plan:***

The RANZCO RAP will guide the college on a range of activities over two years to enhance how we engage within our own membership, with our staff and with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.

A specific target within the RAP that will be particularly crucial to enhancing collaboration with First Nations peoples is ensuring that the College actively explores ways to enhance its employment processes, ensuring that recruitment policies do not possess any barriers to

prospective Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples in applying for College-based roles.

***Embed the acknowledgement of Country into standard protocols:***

RANZCO strives to show an awareness of, and respect for, the traditional custodians of the land by ensuring an acknowledgement of Country is embedded into all formal and informal Committee, Council, Staff and Board meetings and email signatures. By including an acknowledgment of country as a requirement in meeting protocols, staff and members are regularly reminded to reflect on whose country they are on, and respectfully acknowledge the traditional owners of the land of where the meeting occurs.

***Visible demonstration of the College's commitment to reconciliation:***

The College proudly displays a bespoke artwork titled 'seeing country' by Riki Salam, commissioned specifically for its Reconciliation Action Plan in our head office. The artwork is located at the entrance of the building and in a meeting room, positioned such that staff and visitors are constantly reminded of the College's commitment to reconciliation.

***Recognise First Nations people's identities:***

RANZCO understands that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity is source of strength and pride for First Nations peoples. We also understand that it is important to collect this data on our trainees so that we can map our own workforce growth. We support and promote the "asking the question" resource developed by the Indigenous Eye Health Unit at University of Melbourne.

***Ensure cultural safety learning is made available to all members:***

RANZCO recognises that biases, racism and structural privilege are impediments to fostering respectful partnerships with First Nations peoples, therefore, staff, trainees and Fellows are encouraged to complete an online cultural safety course via the Learning Management System (LMS). Undoubtedly, developing cultural safety is a continuous process of learning, listening and reflecting, however, the course equips individuals with the basic skills needed to look inward and challenge one's own thought processes to enhance dialogue with First Nations peoples.

**Priority areas**

- Implementing RANZCO's Vision 2030 and beyond, with a key focus on ensuring that Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples have access to timely, effective, high-quality, appropriate, and affordable health services.
- Ensuring that the Outreach Portal is regularly updated to provide reliable information on outreach services, therefore increasing access.
- Piloting three cultural learning and outreach training placements to build trainee skills and confidence in providing respectful, culturally safe and responsive ophthalmology services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The three sites include:
  - The Northern Territory: Deadly Vision Centre (DVC) in partnership with the Royal Darwin Hospital (RDH) Eye Clinic

- Victoria: Victoria Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS) Fitzroy and Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital (RVEEH)
- Western Australia: WA Urban Inreach and Rural Outreach
- Working towards equity of access to sight saving procedures and advocating for increased public access in consultation with NACCHO.
- Continue our engagement with AIDA to grow the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce in collaboration with donors.
- Improving cultural safety across eye health care.
- Demonstrate allyship by working with the First Nations Eye Health Alliance leadership group, attending, sponsoring and supporting the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health Conference.
- Collaborating with the University of Melbourne Indigenous Eye Health Unit to elevate and explore activities, projects, and initiatives to end avoidable vision loss and blindness that are led or guided by First Nations peoples and organisations.
- Facilitating a public meeting on Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Eye Health annually to update, inform and educate the community on research and innovative models of care pertaining to First Nations health and wellbeing.
- Embedding the outreach training program into the fabric of our curriculum to provide tailored cultural training, outreach experiences and structured mentoring designed to build trainee skills and confidence in providing respectful, culturally safe and responsive ophthalmology services to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Supporting the government achieve its goal of ending avoidable blindness by 2025.

## Additional Resources

[Reconciliation Australia](#)

[Australian Indigenous Doctor's Association](#)

[Leaders in Indigenous Medical Education](#)

[The Fred Hollows Foundation](#)

[National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation](#) (NACCHO)

Indigenous Eye Health Unit University of Melbourne, [Close the Gap for Vision Roadmap](#)

[Lowitja Institute](#)

[Uluru Statement from the Heart](#)

## Record of amendments to this document

Page	Details of amendment	Date approved
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