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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Self-determination the key to Close the Gap - RANZCO

Self-determination is the key to closing the gap between the health and life expectancy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians, according to the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists (RANZCO).

On National Close the Gap Day, RANZCO President, Dr Grant Raymond, acknowledged that progress has been made in some areas of the [Closing the Gap Strategy](#) but stressed that [more needs to be done](#) to reduce the large and, in some cases, widening gap between the health and life expectancy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians.

“We know from evidence that self-determination is the key to improving the health of First Nations peoples and therefore echo the calls from the [Australian Human Rights Commission](#), the [World Health Assembly](#), the [Australian Indigenous Doctors Association](#), the [Closing the Gap Campaign](#) and [others](#) for an ongoing focus on self-determination in Indigenous health,” Dr Raymond said.

“We welcome recent government initiatives to strengthen Indigenous self-determination, including the creation of a [National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People](#), and acknowledge the ongoing vital work being done by [NACCHO and the community-controlled Aboriginal health sector](#).

“In the eye health sector, I would also like to highlight the significant contribution of the [First Nations Eye Health Alliance](#) in building equitable and sustainable changes to eye health care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people,” Dr Raymond said.

Dr Raymond also highlighted RANZCO's commitment to strengthening the Indigenous ophthalmic workforce through scholarships, awards, and grants to address the barriers faced by Indigenous people to medical education and training. He noted that RANZCO is currently supporting outreach training pilots in Western Australia, Northern Territory, and Victoria to provide trainees with opportunities to serve Indigenous communities.

“I am proud of RANZCO's commitment to reconciliation at an organisation level, via our third [Reconciliation Action Plan](#) and am grateful to Reconciliation Australia, the RANZCO Reference Group, Fellows, and staff for their ongoing contributions to the development and implementation of the plan.

“As we continue our reconciliation journey, I would like to emphasise the importance of recognising historical injustices, truth-telling, and supporting self-determination as foundational elements in efforts to close the gap,” Dr Raymond said.

See [here](#) for more information on RANZCO's initiatives and the third Reconciliation Action Plan.

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The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists (RANZCO) is the medical college responsible for the training and professional development of ophthalmologists in Australia and New Zealand.