



Submission to the Indigenous Voice Discussion Paper

About RANZCO

RANZCO is the medical college responsible for the training and professional development of ophthalmologists in Australia and New Zealand. Our mission is to lead eye care by setting and improving standards, providing lifelong education, promoting research and innovation and advocating on behalf of patients, their communities and our membership.

RANZCO is committed to the reconciliation process with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. RANZCO has affirmed our commitment to strive for health equity and equality for all Australians, including Australia's First Nations Peoples by endorsing the Uluru Statement from the Heart, which calls for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution and seeks a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about Australia's history.

Our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) framework launched in November 2019 commits RANZCO to activities that:

- seek to achieve equity in access and health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples;
- continue to build collaborative partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and the health sector;
- build on our existing commitment to increasing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ophthalmologists in Australia;
- improve and enhance our organisation's cultural awareness;
- support education and training that ensure doctors are aware of the impact of their own culture and cultural values on the delivery of services, historically and at present, and have knowledge of, respect for and sensitivity towards the cultural needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples; and
- close the gap in eye health inequality.

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists (RANZCO) is pleased to make a submission to the Indigenous Voice Discussion Paper.

Our Support of the Indigenous Voice

RANZCO supports the proposed models for a National Voice, and a proposed framework to enhance local and regional decision making and regional governance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

As a healthcare organization, RANZCO acknowledges that health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples are inextricably linked to self-determination and that there is strong evidence to support improvement in health outcomes when Indigenous peoples take greater control over their health.

RANZCO appreciates the challenges that arise with delivering appropriate and effective health care to communities and supports a genuine partnership approach to work with government and



communities to enhance service delivery, strengthen regional networks and support Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations to further embed eye care in their service delivery models.

We are committed to working with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations to identify innovative ways to co-design systems to ensure effective patient awareness of the engagement with eye care services. Local and Regional Voice will provide a mechanism to understand the genuine needs of local communities and determine the best way to deliver services in the local communities.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers are critical to delivering culturally appropriate care to their local communities. They can reduce communication gaps, improve follow-up practices, help with medical advice and provide cultural education. RANZCO is committed to growing the number of ophthalmologists who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and has developed measures to encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors to enrol in our vocational training program. However, there has been limited development in this area. Recruiting and retaining the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce requires funding and policy support from the Australian Government.

With the National Voice, we are hoping the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can provide perspectives that help shape relevant policies and legislation and make positive changes to the system, enabling self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples during the process, such that, the Government will:

- Commit to providing adequate and long-term financial resources to achieve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health equity
- Invest in real partnerships, including increased Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation and control around health service delivery
- Address the critical social issues of housing, education and self-determination that contribute to the health crisis affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and present a barrier to closing the gap no matter how much funding is put towards healthcare

RANZCO is particularly supportive of the following points that are included in the proposal:

- Flexibility to tailor Local and Regional Voice arrangements to their circumstances, in recognition of the difference between the regions. As such RANZCO is supportive of the Structural Membership Link – Model 1 in the Discussion Paper
- Training and professional development to be offered to National Voice members. We think that appropriate induction and upskilling sessions should also be offered to the Local and Regional Voices
- Links between the Local and Regional Voice and the National Voice, to keep the communication channels open

In addition to those roles outlined in the Discussion Paper, RANZCO would also be supportive of both the Local and Regional Voice and the National Voice being available to engage with organisations such as RANZCO to provide advice on healthcare delivery to First Nations peoples and submissions to government.

RANZCO is appreciative of the opportunity to provide the submission and encourages ongoing public consultation to ensure the voices are heard. We look forward to seeing the final proposal and recommendations, and all future developments.