CRANAplus Position Paper: Cultural Respect and Cultural Safety

INTRODUCTION

CRANAplus upholds the values of integrity, social justice, inclusiveness and excellence as principal components of these values in practice. As health professionals, it is essential we have a shared understanding of cultural respect, and provide culturally safe health care specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples’ needs.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up a significantly higher proportion of the population located in remote and very remote areas. The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan and its associated Implementation Plan are significant as they acknowledged racism as a social determinant for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health. Racism had not, up to then been acknowledged in policy as a serious risk to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health. The Health Plan states that:

> racism is a key social determinant of health for Indigenous Australians, and can deter people from achieving their full capabilities, by debilitating confidence and self-worth which in turn leads to poorer health outcomes. Evidence suggests that racism experienced in the delivery of health services contributes to low levels of access to health services by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.¹

The term ‘social and cultural determinants of health’ provides a focused and contextually appropriate way of understanding the nature of the health inequality in Australia². Addressing the social and cultural determinants of health is central to closing the health inequality between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and non-Indigenous Australians. This requires ongoing effort to achieve sustainable improvements in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing³.

CRANAplus adopts the Congress of Aboriginal Torres Strait Nursing and Midwifery [CATSINaM] description that cultural safety is as important to quality care as clinical safety. Cultural safety is the recipients own experience and cannot be defined by the caregiver ⁴. Cultural safety is about how people are treated in society, not about their diversity as such, hence the focus is on systemic and structural issues and on the social determinants of health. Cultural safety represents a key philosophical shift from providing care regardless of difference, to care that takes account of peoples’ unique needs. It requires health to undertake an ongoing process of self-reflection and cultural self-awareness, and an acknowledgement of how one’s personal culture impacts on care.⁵
In focusing on clinical interactions, particularly power inequity between patient and health professional, cultural safety calls for a genuine partnership where power is shared between the individuals and cultural groups involved in health care. Cultural safety is also relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health professionals. Non-Indigenous health professionals must address how they create a culturally safe work environment that is free of racism for their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues.  

**CRANAplus believes**

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a right to access quality health care and will do so when they feel respected and culturally safe.
- In the value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health professionals in delivering culturally safe health services.
- That remote health professionals must uphold codes of professional conduct and ethics, respect the diversity of social values, beliefs and lifestyles, and commit to delivering care irrespective of these differences.
- Education providers must undertake and integrate cultural awareness, cultural sensitivity, cultural knowledge, and cultural respect into all professional education programs.

**CRANAplus recommends that:**

- State, Territory and Federal Governments, education providers and remote health services are responsive to the CATSINaM Position Statement: *Embedding Cultural Safety across Australian Nursing and Midwifery* propositions, by:
  - Promote a framework of cultural respect and safety in health care to improve recruitment, retention and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and health professionals.
  - Embedding cultural safety and responsiveness training of their workforce to deliver safe, quality and equitable health care to Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander people.

**CRANAplus resolves to:**

- Continue proactive engagement and partnership with CATSINaM and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.
- Action the CATSINaM Position Statement: *Embedding Cultural Safety across Australian Nursing and Midwifery* professions and it recommendations through:
  - Promoting Remote Area Nurse Certification whereby Professional Standards of Remote Practice: Nursing and Midwifery are inclusive of cultural safety.
CRANAplus acknowledges the input and endorsement by Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives (CATSINaM) August 2017

- Ensuring all CRANAplus education curricula support cultural safety and are responsive to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ health needs.
- Ensuring CRANAplus provide accessible, affordable, high quality cultural safety training for remote health professionals when required.
- Implementing an organisation wide, practical Reconciliation Action Plan, demonstrating our commitment to address the inequalities experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and to assist self-determination, remove health disadvantage and eliminate racism.

REFERENCES
6. CATSINaM, 2017, The Nursing and Midwifery Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Curriculum Framework (Version 1.0), CATSINaM, Canberra