



## Clinical Placements Position Statement

The Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives (CATSINaM) was founded in 1997. It is the national peak body that represents, advocates and supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives at a national level. We are a membership-based organisation and are governed by a nationally elected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Board.

We believe that nurses and midwives are the backbone of the Australian health system and play a pivotal role in providing culturally safe health services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. As nurses and midwives often work in frontline positions, their capacity to do this effectively is critical.

A strategic direction for CATSINaM is to strengthen our effectiveness in supporting the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in nursing and midwifery. CATSINaM believes that education and health are inextricably connected. Clinical placements offer a range of education and training experiences that facilitate the exposure of students and new graduates to different career options, and play an important role in developing positive learning experiences for them.

Positive clinical experiences in various health settings assist with the retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nursing and midwifery students and new graduates. A secondary benefit to communities arises from the positive experiences and increased cultural safety associated with non- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students undertaking clinical placements in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific health settings.

### Our position

1. CATSINaM supports affirmative action by education providers and health industry leaders to recruit and retain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, registered nurses, enrolled nurses and midwives, and positive clinical placements are key to achieving this goal.
2. CATSINaM believes that under-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the health workforce is a contributing factor to the lower rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples accessing health services comparative to need.
3. CATSINaM supports the view that as quality clinical placements are one of the key determinants in developing competency and professional excellence, Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander nursing and midwifery students and new graduates should be provided with clinical placement opportunities to gain experience within their communities.

4. CATSINaM is committed to working with education providers and employers in promoting the importance of cultural safety and support in workplaces that offer clinical placements to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nursing and midwifery students.
5. CATSINaM affirms that clinical placements in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are best provided through partnerships with education providers, industry leaders and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services.
6. CATSINaM supports the view that clinical placements for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nursing and midwifery students and new graduates in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are mutually beneficial for students, new graduates, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
7. CATSINaM supports the view that all students and new graduates must have achieved at least competency in the cultural safety unit of their respective program as a pre-requisite to commencing their clinical placement at an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific health service or a health service located in an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community.

### We resolve to:

1. Work in partnership with nursing and midwifery education and training providers to take affirmative action with the Australian government, state and territory governments, health industry and community leaders to identify clinical placements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nursing and midwifery students and new graduates in acute and primary health settings where relevant cultural and clinical learning opportunities exist within supervised and culturally supportive environments.
2. Support nursing and midwifery education providers, health industry and community leaders to collaborate in providing clinical placement opportunities for all nursing and midwifery students and new graduates in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community controlled health settings as a means of:
  - promoting cross-cultural exchange
  - providing greater exposure to and understanding about working across the social determinants of health
  - assisting in the development of a sustainable skilled workforce for the future.
3. Work in partnership with the nursing and midwifery education and training providers and other key stakeholders to promote the delivery of high quality cultural safety training by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators to teaching staff, new

graduates and students in order to maximize positive outcomes when new graduates and students undertake clinical placements in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, or where they provide care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

### We recommend that:

1. Nursing and midwifery education and training providers:
  - work with health industry leaders to identify clinical learning opportunities in supervised and culturally supportive environments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nursing and midwifery students and new graduates
  - work with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services and their peak bodies to identify clinical placement opportunities for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nursing and midwifery students and new graduates in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities
  - prepare non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and new graduates for clinical placements in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health services through education in cultural safety.
2. Australian, state and territory health departments:
  - provide support to all Aboriginal health services (community controlled and public), to develop and maintain infrastructures necessary to provide high quality, safe clinical placements in nursing and midwifery.
  - provide additional funding to increase the frequency, quality and capacity of preceptor support for nursing and midwifery clinical placements in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health services and to explore the idea of supervision networks.
  - establish systems to monitor and evaluate support systems provided by their funded organisations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nursing and midwifery students and new graduates undertaking clinical placements
  - require their funded organisations to provide evidence of improved culturally safe health service environments and experiences for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nursing and midwifery students and new graduates.
3. Nursing and midwifery professional colleges and associations:
  - develop and/or update position statements on the importance of increasing access to culturally safe clinical placements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nursing and midwifery students
  - provide information to their members about the availability of high quality cultural safety training

- work with CATSINaM to review how existing standards and guidelines on clinical placements address cultural safety.
4. Health industry providers (government and non-government):
- work with nursing and midwifery education and training program providers to identify clinical learning opportunities in supervised and culturally supportive environments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nursing and midwifery students
  - link clinical placements offered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nursing and midwifery students to their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff recruitment strategy.

## Background

The 2011 – 2015 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Strategic Framework document notes that an increased Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce will lead to better access and improved health outcomes, and play a vital role in closing the life expectancy gap within a generation.<sup>1</sup> Recruitment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples into nursing and midwifery careers requires access to high quality education and training, and appropriate clinical placements in both non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health services.

Clinical placements in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and other settings where care is provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians also provide the opportunity for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nursing and midwifery students and new graduates to develop unique skill sets.<sup>2</sup> However, it is essential that: 1) all students receive appropriate pre-placement education in cultural safety and start developing skills to practice in a culturally safe way;<sup>3</sup> and 2) services are adequately resourced, supported and prepared for offering placements.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council, 2011, *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Strategic Framework (2011–2015)*, AHMAC Canberra, viewed 30 January 2014, <<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/publications/publishing.nsf/Content/work-pubs-natsihwsf-toc-work-pubs-natsihwsf-rev>>.

<sup>2</sup> Victorian Department of Health, 2012, *Victoria's Strategic Plan for clinical placement: well placed, well prepared*, viewed 30 January 2014, <<http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/Well-placed-Well-prepared-Victoria's-strategic-plan-for-clinical-placements-2012-15>>.

<sup>3</sup> Indigenous Nurses Working Group, 2002, *gettin em n keepin em: report of the Indigenous Nursing Education Working Group*, Department of Health and Ageing, Canberra.

<sup>4</sup> CATSINaM 2014, *Cultural safety position statement*, viewed 20 March 2014, <[http://catsinam.serv-dpr-remote1.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Cultural-Safety\\_Endorsed-March-2014.pdf](http://catsinam.serv-dpr-remote1.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Cultural-Safety_Endorsed-March-2014.pdf)>.

The lack of clinical placements for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nursing and midwifery students has been widely reported.<sup>5</sup> Several studies and government reports have identified the importance of adequate support for students undertaking clinical placements. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and new graduates, this support includes ensuring that they are able to practice in a culturally safe environment and have access to culturally specific support and mentorship.<sup>6,7,8,9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Health Workforce Australia, 2011, *Mapping clinical placements: capturing opportunities for growth – Supply (Clinical Training Provider) Study*, HWA, Adelaide.

<sup>6</sup> Victorian Department of Health, *op cit*.

<sup>7</sup> Harris A & Robinson, G 2007, 'The Aboriginal Mental Health Worker Program: the challenge of supporting Aboriginal involvement in mental health care in the remote community context', *Australian e-Journal for the Advancement of Mental Health*, vol. 6, issue 1.

<sup>8</sup> Health Workforce Australia 2011, *Growing our future: the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Project Final Report*, HWA, Adelaide.

<sup>9</sup> Indigenous Nurses Working Group, *op cit*.