



External evaluation of the CATSINaM 2013-2018 Strategic Plan: Interim Evaluation Report

Executive Summary

July 2015

CONGRESS OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER NURSES AND MIDWIVES

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Unity and Strength through Caring

DISCLAIMER

This was an independent evaluation; therefore the opinions expressed in this document are those of the evaluators and are not necessarily those of CATSINAM. This document is designed to provide information that assists CATSINAM in assessing its progress over the previous two years with implementing its 2013-2018 plan and determining how it will proceed over the remaining life of the plan.

External evaluation undertaken by:



Reference as:

beyond... (Kathleen Stacey & Associates), 2015, *External evaluation of the CATSINaM 2013-2018 Strategic Plan: Interim Evaluation Report*, CATSINaM, Canberra.

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INTRODUCTION

The Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives, now CATSINaM and formerly as CATSIN, is the health professional body that represents, advocates and supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives at a national level. In 2013, the organisation went through significant change in terms of organisational structure, governance and branding. CATSINaM set in place a five year strategic plan with a clear agenda across four strategic directions that would enable it to expand its reach in terms of Members, external stakeholder engagement, and influence in the pursuit of a larger and better supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nursing and midwifery workforce:

- ① **Strategic Direction 1:** To elevate the profile of CATSINaM as the national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives.
- ② **Strategic Direction 2:** To strengthen our effectiveness in advocating on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives.
- ③ **Strategic Direction 3:** To strengthen our effectiveness in supporting the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into nursing and midwifery.
- ④ **Strategic Direction 4:** To increase our active involvement in research and workforce development projects that realise the vision of CATSINaM.

THE EVALUATION STRATEGY

The Strategic Plan was accompanied by an evaluation strategy. This interim evaluation report outlines the progress to date, two years into the five year plan. The participants included: CATSINaM Members, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives more broadly, a diverse range external stakeholders, and CATSINaM staff.

Data sources and evaluation activities included: records of contact and communication with CATSINaM, records of CATSINaM events and invited presentations, records of CATSINaM representation work, interviews, surveys and review workshops. In addition, an analysis was undertaken of policies, communication mechanisms, website and social media activity, relevant documents, and the relationship status of external stakeholders with CATSINaM.

OUTCOMES

Profile of CATSINaM as a peak body

CATSINaM is re-emerging as a national organisation in the nursing and midwifery professional, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health landscapes. It implemented an effective Membership Recruitment and Retention Strategy that resulted in remarkable membership growth. Members increased from 155 to 604 over two years. This is a 290% improvement, and represents 20% of the current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nursing and midwifery

workforce. They will achieve or exceed their target of 30% representation by 2018 if this rate of growth continues.

Communication to and with Members went through a major upgrade over 2013-2014, resulting in more regular publications that were expanded to include more professional information, Member profiles and updates on CATSINaM activities. New and more regular consultation mechanisms were instituted, Member benefits as incentives to membership were established and more financial assistance packages became available to attend CATSINaM events.

Member responses to these changes, along with the level of support and responsiveness they experience from CATSINaM, have been very positive. CATSINaM fills a unique space in the nursing and midwifery profession, offering them professional information, consultation and support opportunities from a cultural perspective that are usually lacking and often not easily accessible from other sources. This is further evidenced through the growing rate of participation by Members in CATSINaM organised or hosted events.

There has been a marked and sustained level of interaction with external stakeholders over the past two years. CATSINaM is regularly being approached by or initiating contact with a broad range of stakeholders, participating in external stakeholder events, having external stakeholders play specific roles in CATSINaM-led events and exploring opportunities to collaborate on joint initiatives. They clearly recognise CATSINaM as the peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives, and a ‘first port of call’ source of expertise on matters relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nursing and midwifery. They believed CATSINaM had worked hard to “reinvigorate” the organisation, demonstrated effective change management and “punches above its weight”. CATSINaM’s experience of this level of recognition is that it varies between stakeholder groups, with greater recognition from nursing and midwifery, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health peak bodies.

Effective advocacy

CATSINaM has been highly responsive to opportunities for representing and advocating on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives. This advocacy is underpinned by CATSINaM’s core set of policies, with more under development. It is also supported by the Cultural Safety Training workshops CATSINaM runs to ensure external stakeholders have a shared understanding of what cultural safety is, why it is important, and the role they need to play in creating greater cultural safety in their organisations and the profession. The workshops are gaining in reputation and interest, and as a consequence, organisations that attend are showing positive signs they are starting to act on their learning.

Considerable time and attention has been given to building relationships across different stakeholder groups who play key roles in the nursing and midwifery profession, and the development and support of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce. These relationships will be central to CATSINaM progressing major initiatives. This includes the establishment of a ‘Leaders in Indigenous Nursing and Midwifery Education Network’ (LINMEN), which will provide a collective and coordinated mechanism for teaching and assessing Aboriginal health, history, culture and cultural safety in nursing and midwifery programs, and the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

To date, CATSINaM has made the most progress in strengthening relationships with both nursing and midwifery, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health organisations. Staff reported that these organisations had the closest alignment with CATSINaM values and advocacy priorities, and were more likely to be involved with not only coordinating activities, but cooperating on shared priorities and undertaking joint initiatives that support CATSINaM's agenda. It is too early to assess the nature and full extent of health and cultural safety outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health professionals and/or peoples from this work, although the initial signs are encouraging.

The engagement task has been more challenging with education and training organisations, in part due to the high number of them. There are promising signs that this is strengthening with a small core of universities becoming increasingly involved in communicating with CATSINaM, participating in events and exploring shared areas of interest, including creation of the LINMEN. Along with the State/Territory health departments who have shown greater recent interest in CATSINaM activities and priorities, they remain a priority for ongoing stakeholder engagement and relationship building work. They are both crucial players in addressing cultural safety, and increasing the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in the nursing and midwifery workforce.

Recruitment and retention

The ability of CATSINaM to influence and support strategies that increase recruitment and retention is dependent on having effective working relationships. Therefore, the last two years have focused on achieving a platform for this work. CATSINaM has consistently raised the profile of why targeted strategies in recruitment and retention are necessary, and started to galvanise support to undertake collaborative work to design and implement them.

The robust analysis CATSINaM has either undertaken or commissioned, and well-informed and clear ideas of how this can be achieved, is being recognised and appreciated by external stakeholders. However, they are not yet regularly identifying CATSINaM as a 'first port of call' source of information and expertise in relation to **recruiting and retaining** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in nursing and midwifery.

There has been progress on two CATSINaM-led recruitment and retention initiatives: mentoring and professional development. CATSINaM has designed a new, more formal and structured CATSINaM Mentoring Program, which is being promoted to external stakeholders who would be suitable partners and co-funders. There is high potential that one or more programs may be launched over the next year. CATSINaM offers professional development to its Members via the Annual Conference as a national event, and more recently, professional development forums as jurisdictional events. These are highly regarded by Members as culturally safe environments that offer a unique peer and professional networking experience, extend the options available to them, and contribute positively to their professional growth.

Research and workforce development

Strong foundations have been laid in this area. CATSINaM is clear on its research and workforce development priorities, but need further exploration of how it can influence

research agendas, and access funding to support priority workforce development projects it has already identified and/or designed. Interviewed external stakeholders recognised CATSINaM's expertise in workforce development. They are willing to support CATSINaM to lead in and/or undertake relevant projects.

CONCLUSION

CATSINaM has made excellent progress in implementing its Strategic Plan over the last two years. Activity has occurred in all four areas, with Strategic Directions 1 and 2 receiving the highest priority as they set a foundation for the work required in Strategic Directions 3 and 4.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Eleven operational recommendations are listed in Section 5.2 along with the full version of seven strategic recommendations. Short-hand versions of the strategic recommendations are:

1. **Profile of CATSINaM's national representation and advocacy work:** Ensure that the nature and progress of national representation and advocacy work, and its contribution to the advancement of CATSINaM priorities, is regularly shared with Members in a consistent and detailed manner through all available communication mechanisms.
2. **Progressing external stakeholder collaboration commitments:** Develop and implement a targeted follow-up campaign with external stakeholders who attended the 2015 Stakeholder Forum series and identified 'collaboration opportunities' they are willing to pursue that align with CATSINaM's highest priorities.
3. **Innovative funding support:** Develop and implement a campaign on how universities can collaborate with CATSINaM in 'crowd funding' the development and/or enhancement of curriculum content and resources on Aboriginal history, health, wellness, culture, and cultural safety.
4. **Assessing the cultural safety of nursing and midwifery working and learning environments:** Investigate the viability of developing a fee for service cultural safety assessment audit process for external stakeholders that may operate in collaboration with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and/or consultants.
5. **Relationship development with State/Territory Governments, and education and training organisations:** Develop and implement a targeted campaign for greater engagement with State/Territory Governments, and education and training organisations that build on the foundations achieved to date and support Strategic Recommendation 2.
6. **Audit of university research agendas:** Assess the value and viability of auditing the current research agendas of universities that deliver nursing and midwifery pre-registration or higher degree courses, and mapping their relationship to CATSINaM priorities.
7. **Workforce development:** Identify and respond to opportunities for funding priority workforce development projects that CATSINaM can undertake, including in collaboration with external stakeholders.