



ANZCA
FPM

ANZCA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Māori Health Strategy

Health inequity is a safety and quality issue

ANZCA's purpose is to serve the community by leading high quality care in anaesthesia, perioperative and pain medicine, optimising health and reducing the burden of pain.

The colonisation of Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand has had a devastating impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Māori peoples. The survival of knowledges, language and culture is a testament to the resilience and strength of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Māori peoples and cultures. Nevertheless, the cultural trauma and racism has left a growing and immeasurable amount of health and wellbeing issues.

There are significant inequities in health outcomes between Indigenous and non- Indigenous people in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, reflecting that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia, and Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand, don't have access to appropriate health services, as well as the broader social determinants of health, in proportion to their needs.

Equity is defined by the World Health Organization as "the absence of avoidable or remediable differences among groups of people." Inequitable health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and Māori can therefore be viewed as a safety and quality issue. ANZCA considers redressing health inequity as fundamental to achieving safe, high quality patient care in anaesthesia, perioperative medicine, and pain medicine. ANZCA supports the Australian and New Zealand governments' commitment to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, which states that "Indigenous people have an equal right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health."

Policy setting in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand

In Australia, Closing the Gap is a commitment made by all governments to achieve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health equality by 2030. It aims to reduce disadvantage with respect to life expectancy, child mortality, educational achievement, and employment outcomes. The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2021-2031 supports the strategy, and aims for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to enjoy long, healthy lives that are centred in culture, with access to services that are prevention-focused, culturally safe and responsive, equitable and free of racism.

The Treaty of Waitangi, signed in 1840, is New Zealand's foundation document. There are two accepted versions of the Treaty of Waitangi – the Māori text known as Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and the English version called the Treaty of Waitangi. Under law they are both accepted as the Treaty of Waitangi, but their interpretations differ significantly.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi is a living document that is fundamental to the relationships between Māori (known in Aotearoa as Tangata Whenua) and Tangata Tiriti (People of the Treaty, non-Māori). Te Tiriti influences all aspects of life in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The articles of Te Tiriti have been interpreted and expressed through a set of principles. These principles are Tino Rangatiratanga/self-determination, Pātuitanga/partnership, Mana Taurite/equity and Whakamarumarutia/active protection.

These core government commitments in both Australia and New Zealand have informed the guiding principles underpinning ANZCA's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Māori Health Strategy.

Table 1: Principles underpinning ANZCA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Māori Health Strategy

Partnership

We will work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Māori people, communities, and organisations.

Participation

We will promote full, ongoing participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Māori individuals and communities in decision making, service planning, design and implementation of policies supporting their health and wellbeing.

Equity

We will work to ensure equity in health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Māori individuals and communities.

Accountability

We will monitor and report on implementation of the strategy within a continuous quality improvement framework.



Where ANZCA can have an impact

A key component of addressing inequities in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Māori health is to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Māori health practitioners in the health workforce. Naturally, this is an area where specialist medical colleges have the potential to make a meaningful impact, through initiatives such as supporting the training of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Māori doctors. In line with this, the ANZCA Strategic Plan includes an objective to support recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Māori people within a culturally safe training environment.

However, workforce development involves more than the recruitment, retention and support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Māori health practitioners. It also involves ensuring that non-Indigenous practitioners are equipped to practice in a culturally safe and responsive manner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Māori people and improving the ability of mainstream health services to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Māori people. An important aspect of improving mainstream health services will be the ability of health practitioners to acknowledge and challenge institutional racism within health systems.

Bearing in mind the principles detailed in the table above, medical colleges can also work to address health inequities through other means, such as advocacy to government and involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Māori people and communities in policy development and decision-making.

The medical training pipeline and example of potential ANZCA initiatives



Four pillars to support the ANZCA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Māori Health Strategy

ANZCA has considered where it is best placed to have influence, together with the concept of health equity and the principles of Australia's commitment to Closing the Gap and Aotearoa New Zealand's Te Tiriti o Waitangi. From this, the college has identified four pillars to frame its work towards health equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia, and Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand.

These pillars are:

Governance
Partnerships
Workforce
Advocacy

This framework represents a clear and public statement by the college on its areas of focus in Indigenous health.

ANZCA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Māori Health Strategy framework

Governance

ANZCA will ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Māori voices are represented at high levels across its governance structure.

Partnerships

ANZCA will develop relationships and work together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Māori community groups, consumers, academic groups, service providers, and health organisations.

Workforce

ANZCA will develop initiatives to support recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Māori doctors, undertake education through its training, curriculum and CPD programs, and strengthen cultural safety training for all trainees, fellows and ANZCA staff.

Advocacy

ANZCA will advocate for health equity issues to be addressed across a wide range of spheres, including research, education, policy, and service provision.



This strategy outlines the colleges principles and pillars to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Māori health. Initiatives, actions and deliverables to support this are detailed in our Reconciliation Action Plan and Te Tiriti o Waitangi Roadmap.