

10 March 2016

Training and Assessment Working Group
Department of Education and Training
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Dear Secretariat

Quality of assessment in vocational education and training discussion paper

The Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives (CATSINaM) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the call for submissions regarding the Quality of Assessment in Vocational Education And Training Discussion Paper, January 2016.

CATSINaM's primary role is to represent, advocate and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives at a national level. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses, midwives and other health professionals, play a critical role in the delivery of improved social and emotional wellbeing outcomes for all Australians. Our members hold a unique combination of clinical and cultural knowledge and are committed to providing national leadership on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health policy development and implementation.

In any sector there are three principles that are central to successful strategies focused on making positive change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. They are self-determination, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and genuine partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations. These provide a clear orientation to how to do business and must be apparent in the design, implementation and evaluation of any initiative.

Education and training are intrinsic components of the social determinants of health and we draw your attention to the vision within the Commonwealth Government's National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2013-2023 (NATSIHP):

'The Australian health system free of racism and inequality and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to health services that are effective, high quality, appropriate and affordable. Together with strategies to address social inequalities and determinants of health, this provides the necessary platform to realise health equality by 2031.'

We encourage the Working Group to look to ways to embed NATSIHP's vision and principles within the vocational education and training sector. The significant concern for us is the continuing failure to meeting the *Close the Gap* targets. Contributing to this failure is the lack of in-depth understanding and appreciation of what underpins the gaps in health, education and employment between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and other Australians. The health statistics on their own do not explain or provide context nor give meaning to the health outcomes that the *Close the Gap* campaign is attempting to address. For an education or training professional to work safely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (students and staff) there needs to be more contextual information provided. These include the impact of colonisation and the racism that underpinned the policies and programs and shaped the behaviours and attitudes of those within our educational and health settings and which continue to influence health outcomes today.

The training of the teachers/ assessors needs to give weight to these issues to fully inform the knowledge base of the training professional. Training and education must also be closely aligned to industry and reflect industry needs, while expecting industry to take responsibility for ensuring that jobs are long-term and sustainable. We believe people need to be trained to meet demand and for jobs that exist, or will need to exist, based on current analyses and forward projections and planning.

Explicit to achieving a training and education environment that meets the needs of industry as well as students and staff within the sector is Cultural Safety. Cultural safety and responsiveness, cost and location are factors that interweave to form complex issues for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' access to education and health services and employment. While it is well known that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are more likely to access, and experience better outcomes from, services that are culturally safe and responsive, approaches to education and training and quality assurance remains ad-hoc.

Cultural safety is the final step on a continuum in which systemic change occurs within an organisation or service, as staff develop awareness of their own identity

and how this impacts on provision of services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Working in a culturally responsive way is about strengths-based, action-oriented approaches to achieving cultural safety that can facilitate increased access to affordable, available, appropriate and acceptable service delivery. It is a cyclical and ongoing process, requiring regular self-reflection and proactive responses to the person, family or community with whom the interaction is occurring.

We also submit the following points for consideration of the Working Group as part of the new system for training and product development in Australia:

- ⑥ That the Australian Industry Skills Committee and all Skills Service Organisations (SSOs), such as SkillsIQ, undertake impact assessments as part of their normal governance arrangements to determine any negative impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, staff and organisations.
- ⑥ That all SSOs and Industry Reference Committees (IRC) include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. That is, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are involved in all across the vocational education and training sector not just having representation on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker IRC.
- ⑥ Central to achieving a culturally safe environment is to ensure that the TAE qualifications and skills set include culturally safe teaching practice as a key attribute. For this to occur across the entire VET sector a national professional association would enable a consistency in approach in cultural safety training, and as with the general SSO governance arrangements this should include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to lead the development of this training. This also means that an affirmative action approach to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to become assessors should all courses not just the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care courses.
- ⑥ CATSINaM advocates for affirmative action by government and service providers to increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people participating and employed in education and training. Affirmative action through dedicated education and training programs targeting specific areas of need have and will result in real differences, so funding must be allocated to attain parity in employment, education and training. An affirmative action approach should be taken to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are employed in SSOs, are teachers, trainers, assessors and involved in all IRCs.

We submit our position statements on cultural safety and recruitment and retention for the Working Group's consideration. We also submit the Commonwealth

Government's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capacity Framework as a guide to building the cultural capability of the Vet sector.

Once again thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this important work and we look forward to welcoming the final report from the Working Group.

Yours sincerely

Janine Mohamed
Chief Executive Officer

Attachments

1. CATSINAM Cultural Safety Position Paper
2. CATSINaM Recruitment and Retention Position Statement
3. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capacity: A Framework for Commonwealth Agencies