



# Reconciliation Action Plan

May 2020 - May 2022



Royal Australasian  
**College  
of Surgeons**



**RECONCILIATION  
ACTION PLAN**  
**INNOVATE**



## Message from Reconciliation Australia

On behalf of Reconciliation Australia, I am delighted to see the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons continue its reconciliation journey and to formally endorse its first Innovate RAP.

Through the development of an Innovate RAP the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons continues to play an important part in a community of over 1,000 dedicated corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have formally committed to reconciliation through the RAP program since its inception in 2006. RAP organisations across Australia are turning good intentions into positive actions, helping to build higher trust, lower prejudice, and pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

Reconciliation is no one single issue or agenda. Based on international research and benchmarking, Reconciliation Australia, defines and measures reconciliation through five critical dimensions: race relations; equality and equity; institutional integrity; unity; and historical acceptance. All sections of the community—governments, civil society, the private sector, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities—have a role to play to progress these dimensions.

The RAP program provides a framework for organisations to advance reconciliation within their spheres of influence. This Innovate RAP provides the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons with the key steps to establish its own unique approach to reconciliation. Through implementing an Innovate RAP, the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons will strengthen its approach to driving reconciliation through its business activities, services and programs, and develop mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.

We wish the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons well as it embeds and expands its own unique approach to reconciliation. We encourage the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons to embrace this journey with open hearts and minds, to grow from the challenges, and to build on its successes. As the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation reminded the nation in its final report:

“Reconciliation is hard work—it’s a long, winding and corrugated road, not a broad, paved highway. Determination and effort at all levels of government and in all sections of the community will be essential to make reconciliation a reality.”

On behalf of Reconciliation Australia, I commend the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons on its second RAP, and look forward to following its ongoing reconciliation journey.



**Karen Mundine**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Reconciliation Australia

## President's Message

The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) recognises and acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of Australia and pays respect to their continuing connection to culture, land, sea, community and family.

RACS is proud to be part of the reconciliation journey and embraces our obligation as a peak national health organisation to make meaningful ongoing commitments to the principles of Reconciliation.

RACS' core mission is to lead and advocate for surgical standards, performance, education and professionalism to improve patient care in Australia and New Zealand. RACS is serious about addressing the disparities and inequities faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Therefore, its Strategic Plan 2019 – 2021 states:

“The College recognises the importance of relationships and collaboration. It is through collaboration and relationships that joint strategies and partnerships can be formed to achieve significant outcomes in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.”

Our College recognises to achieve effective relationships and collaboration it is necessary to support initiatives and to raise awareness and understanding of issues and circumstances affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people located in remote, urban and regional centres.

Significant gains toward addressing Indigenous health have been: the decision for the Indigenous Health Committee to report directly to RACS Council; and therefore Indigenous Health is now a standing item on Council agenda; Indigenous Health Committee to be chaired by a Councillor; and the addition of 'Cultural Competence and Cultural Safety Competency' as part of RACS' Surgical Competence and Performance standards.

We are a long way from achieving health equity and understand that, in order to make significant change, RACS will need to acknowledge and address the legacy of colonisation processes and the resultant racism and privilege at curricular and institutional levels.

Our Innovate RAP provides the mechanism in which to do so. Building upon our experience when implementing our Reflect RAP, we have gained exposure and knowledge to better guide and organise ourselves to continue this very important journey.

As with our overall approach to Indigenous health, we have come too far not to go further, and we have done too much not to do more.



**Dr Anthony Sparnon**  
President

---

## Message from the Chair, Indigenous Health Committee

The RACS Indigenous Health Committee (IHC) extends a warm acknowledgment to the Traditional Custodians of the lands in which we reside and pays respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Māori Fellows and Trainees comprise the executive membership of the RACS IHC. It is through our collective and shared experiences as Indigenous people that we understand the complexity of issues and circumstances afflicting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Combining our expert community and, medical specialty knowledge and experiences, the IHC is uniquely positioned to provide RACS with the necessary support, guidance and advice on how the surgical community can best serve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Acknowledging the intergenerational harm and damage caused by colonisation and institutionalisation of racism and poverty in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and families is well overdue.

The IHC applauds RACS Council for committing to continuing the journey of Reconciliation with the RACS Innovate RAP. The good will and intent demonstrated with significant gains in critical strategic operational areas of the organisation is highly commendable. The IHC wishes to encourage and support RACS as it continues along a path of transformational change focused on reconciliation and health equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Consistent with RACS' commitment to addressing Indigenous health inequities, RACS Innovate RAP is a document designed to align with Reconciliation Australia's aims and objectives as well as outlining our commitment to improving the health inequities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Indigenous health Committee proudly supports RACS embracing its obligation to support and be part of Reconciliation Australia's initiatives.



**Dr Maxine Ronald**  
Chairperson  
RACS Indigenous Health Committee

---



## RACS and reconciliation

### Our vision for reconciliation

RACS is committed to contributing to improving the health inequities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Our vision for reconciliation is for no health discrepancies to exist between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous populations of Australia.

As Australasia's surgical college RACS is uniquely placed to champion the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Our aims are:

- The rate of infant mortality should not differ,
- There should be no significant discrepancy in life expectancy,
- The overall rates of disease and sickness should not differ significantly,
- The rates of injury should not differ significantly,
- There should be equity of access to medical and allied health services, including primary care, surgical and other hospital care, as well as after hospital care,
- There should be improvements in the social determinants of health to enable equity in health outcomes.

Embedding RACS commitment to improving the health outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in core business; RACS has introduced a 10th competency, 'Cultural Competence and Cultural Safety Competency', to the Surgical Competence and Performance Guide, developing and implementing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Surgical Pathway program, and making Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples health a standing item at Council meetings.

### Our business

#### Professional skills and training

RACS was formed in 1927, and is the leading advocate for surgical standards, professionalism and surgical education in Australia and New Zealand. RACS has nine offices in Australia and New Zealand. RACS is a not-for-profit organisation that represents more than 7,000 surgeons and 1,300 surgical trainees and International Medical Graduates and has over 231 administrative and support staff across Australia and New Zealand.

We currently have three surgeons, five trainees and two staff members who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

RACS supports healthcare and surgical education in the Asia-Pacific region and is a substantial funder of surgical research. RACS trains nine surgical specialties: Cardiothoracic Surgery, General Surgery, Neurosurgery, Orthopaedic Surgery, Otolaryngology Head-and-Neck Surgery, Paediatric Surgery, Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, Urology and Vascular Surgery.

RACS is committed to ensuring the highest standard of safe and comprehensive surgical care for the community by achieving excellence in surgical education, training, professional development and support.



---

## The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander motif

The motif design was created to symbolise RACS' commitment to help Close the Gap in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health across Australia. With dual concepts in mind, it features two snakes winding around the winged staff symbolising medicine and can also be seen as Rainbow Serpents entwined together carving out the land, creating our rivers and mountains. The white dotted pathways descend from the mountains, flow through the rivers and ascend back to the skies reforming as rainbows, the spirit of the Serpent. Symbolic of medicine, the two snakes winding around the winged staff also symbolise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous people coming together. The heights of the rainbow also symbolise greater professional equity as well as improved health, social and economic wellbeing for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities across Australia. The motif was developed by Marcus Lee. Born and raised in Darwin, he is a descendant of the Karajarri people and is proud of his Aboriginal heritage.

---

## Our Reconciliation Action Plan

### History of community advocacy

The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) has a proud history of community advocacy. The College has been influential with policy makers and legislators and was a major contributor in the 1960s and 70s towards mandatory seatbelt wearing, drink driving countermeasures and the compulsory wearing of helmets by pedal cyclists.

### Embracing diversity and inclusion through reconciliation

The RACS Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) reflects RACS values of respecting diversity and being an all-inclusive service provider and workforce. The College recognises that the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia is a public health problem of serious proportions.

Furthermore, the College acknowledges that historical inequalities in social and economic status currently experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people caused through the colonisation process contribute significantly to poorer health outcomes, particularly to decreased life expectancy resulting from colonisation. The College recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are over-represented in every way in the determinants of poor health.

For these reasons advocating and supporting the improvement in health inequities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is why RACS Innovate RAP has been developed.

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health a RACS Council standing item

Part of the process of prioritising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples health has included the decision for the Indigenous Health Committee to report directly to RACS Council. RACS Council oversees all areas of RACS policy, programs and initiatives. Making Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples health a standing item is a significant milestone in the history of the College.

### Cultural competency

A requirement to be a practicing surgeon is the ability to demonstrate competence and performance in several areas. RACS Council has now approved the introduction of a 10th competency: 'Cultural Competence and Cultural Safety Competency'. This represents a watershed milestone in RACS' commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples health.

---

## Our Reconciliation Action Plan (cont)

### Reconciliation Action Plan development

The RACS Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) was developed through consultations with RACS Indigenous Health Committee, RACS Reconciliation Working Group (RWG) and with reference to the RACS position paper on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples health. The RAP development process involved a series of consultation with the two groups between June – October 2019. Implementation of this RAP will involve engagement with our Fellows, Trainees, International Medical Graduates and all staff across RACS including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders, to achieve the vision for equity in health outcomes and reconciliation.

### RACS position paper on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health

This position paper explains the framework in which RACS proposes development of productive and culturally appropriate approaches to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples health. As a professional medical college, RACS is uniquely placed to champion health equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. RACS focuses on both prevention and treatment of surgical conditions and recognises that improvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples health will require collaborative, cross-disciplinary efforts.

### RACS Indigenous Health Committee

RACS Indigenous Health Committee (IHC) was formed in 2008 and was established to oversee the implementation of the RACS Position Statement and strategic commitments in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Māori health. The IHC drives the implementation and review of the RACS Indigenous health portfolio, programs and initiatives, to ensure that RACS continues to meet its aim to improve the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and Māori in partnership with those communities.

### RACS Reconciliation Working Group

A Reconciliation Working Group (RWG) was formed in early 2015 with broad representation from RACS departments to develop ideas and engage with staff across our organisation. The RWG meets quarterly to focus on building relationships, having input into activities and raising awareness with staff to ensure there is a shared understanding and ownership of reconciliation, and to track the progress of initiatives and projects designated to the RWG for implementation.

## How RACS ensures it incorporates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community representation and perspectives

RACS is dedicated to engaging respectfully and constructively with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. It supports equal engagement with the community and understands it is achieved through representation and perspective from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. RACS has incorporated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community representation and perspectives through the following methods:

1. The RACS RWG is chaired by RACS Indigenous Health Committee Senior Project Officer, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identified position. In the capacity of IHC Senior Project Officer (IHCSPO) and Chair of the RACS RWG, the position of IHCSPO ensures the RWG receives input, guidance and advice by both an Aboriginal employee within the organisation and RACS IHC.
2. RACS Cultural Awareness and Safety eLearning course was designed and developed by an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consultant specialising in cultural safety. The knowledge and insight provided by the consultant contributes to incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples perspectives.
3. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander surgeons contribute directly to providing feedback and perspective to initiatives and programs.

4. RACS partners with the Australian Indigenous Doctors Association (AIDA) as part of its commitment to improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples health outcomes. Through AIDA RACS is provided perspectives from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors and medical students.
5. RACS provides secretariat support to the Ear Health for Life Consortium of which a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander professionals and organisations are members. Being a research body, research methods and ethics are strictly adhered to when working in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This process ensures representation and perspectives is a number one priority.

### RAP Working Group members

Paul Cargill  
Fellowship Services Manager

Jessica Redwood  
Foundation for Surgery Manager

Bronwyn Emerson  
Human Resources Business Partner

Damien Loizou  
IHC Senior Project Officer

Jessele Vinluan  
Senior Project Officer, Victorian Audit of Surgical Mortality (VASM)

Katherine Walsh  
Victoria State Office Manager

Caroline Muliaga  
Program Administrator, Australian and New Zealand Surgical Skills Education and Training (ASSET)

Therese Rey-Conde  
Senior Research Officer

Sue Pleass  
ANZ Scholarship and Grant Coordinator

Adam Shepard  
Finance Manager

Agron Dauti  
Digital Media & Internal Communications  
Coordinator

### RAP Champions

The RACS RAP Champions are from our Indigenous Health Committee, RACS Indigenous Health team and RACS Reconciliation Working Group:

Dr Maxine Ronald FRACS  
Chairperson, RACS IHC

Dr David Murray  
Deputy Chairperson, RACS IHC

Dr Kelvin Kong  
Founder, RACS IHC

Paul Cargill  
Manager, Fellowship Services

Damien Loizou  
IHC Senior Project Officer (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Indigenous Health Committee Administrative Team)

## RACS reconciliation journey

RACS' reconciliation journey is reflective in our commitment to contributing substantively to addressing the health inequities experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Since the 2009 RACS position paper, the RACS Indigenous Health Committee (IHC) and RACS Reconciliation Working Group were formed, a senior project officer position for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people was created and filled, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples health is a permanent RACS Council Agenda item, the RACS Strategic Plan 2019 -2021 identifies Australia's First Nations peoples health as RACS priority issue.

Other initiatives and contribution to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples health are described below.

### Ear Health for Life Consortium

The Ear Health for Life Consortium is comprised of Australia's leading experts in ear health and was formed to address the unacceptable situation of ear health in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, which places Australia on the list as the world's worst country for ear health status.

### Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association

For several years RACS has been a major sponsor and has run workshops at the Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association (AIDA) conferences. In addition, RACS has a permanent seat on RACS IHC for an AIDA representative. RACS recognises the importance of our relationship with AIDA and fosters a working relationship as part of our commitment to increase the number

of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander surgeons.

### Scholarships

Since 2016 RACS has offered annual scholarships to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, medical students and young doctors as part of RACS strategy to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander surgeons.

### RACS Reflect RAP

RACS inaugural Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan was launched during National Reconciliation Week in June 2016, with actions across four priority areas: relationships, respect, opportunities and tracking progress, and reporting. The plan outlines 59 deliverables with 54 completed and five in progress. There has been a great deal of support from Fellows, Trainees, International Medical Graduates and staff in working towards reconciliation. Supporting training, our trainers and including reconciliation as part of all College business is ongoing.

Highlights within the priority areas include:

#### Relationships

- RACS relationship with AIDA has continued to grow. AIDA is formally represented on the Indigenous Health Committee. RACS has been a gold sponsor and RACS President has attended AIDA's annual scientific meeting for the last four out of five years. The organisations collaborate leading initiatives in support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pathways into specialty medicine and in advocacy for key health issues.
- RACS has strengthened ties with the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO).



Presenting at their annual meeting in 2017/18 and incorporating them as a partner in RACS ear health for life advocacy.

- Professor Martin Nakata was appointed as an Education Advisor to provide strategic advice relevant to RACS Indigenous health programs. Professor Nakata has addressed Council and the Board for Surgical Education and Training, presented as part of the 2018 Annual Scientific Congress program and is an active contributor through RACS Indigenous Health Committee.

### Respect

- The College has formally introduced 'Cultural Competence and Cultural Safety Competency' as part of our Surgical Competence and Performance standards which will guide surgical training and ongoing professional development for surgeons.
- Acknowledgement and Welcome to Country protocols have been established.
- Commissioning of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander motif has increased the visibility of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health in the College and is prominently displayed during RACS Indigenous health activities.
- In 2018 RACS partnered with the Koorie Heritage Trust in Melbourne to deliver cultural competency training for staff. Training has been offered to all Melbourne based staff with programs investigated in the Australian states.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and cultural competence eLearning courses have been promoted to Fellows through the CPD program.
- In partnership with Australian Society of Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery (ASOHNS), the College has led a three year

Ear Health for Life campaign in support of reducing the burden of ear disease in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. A coalition of supporters has been developed including ear health researchers, allied health providers and peak bodies including the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Association and Australian Medical Association. A research road map was presented to the Australian Medical Research Advisory Board which guides investment in the Medical Research Future Fund at a Roundtable which aimed to set research priorities to improve Indigenous health. Wins to date have included a new \$30 million investment in hearing assessments over four years, Federal Government support for the \$7.9 million program addressing otitis media in the Northern Territory, the establishment of a Hearing Health Sector Committee led by Minister Wyatt and development of national KPIs as part of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) process and the announcement of \$160 million in funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research.

- In September 2018, RACS secured a two and a half year, \$460,000 grant from the Australian Department of Health to support a review of needs across nine surgical specialties in terms of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and cultural safety.

### Opportunities

- The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Surgical Trainee Selection Initiative has been implemented by eight of nine training boards. The first trainee selected as part of the initiative started training in 2019.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Network launched to connect Fellows interested in supporting Indigenous health

initiatives.

- Formalised a list of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suppliers and encouraged the use of Indigenous suppliers.
- RACS scholarships in support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical students and doctors have increased from \$15,000 in 2016 to \$77,500 in 2020 funded by RACS, the Foundation for Surgery and with support from industry.

### Tracking progress and reporting

- RACS reports annually to Reconciliation Australia.
- In addition, RACS has presented public updates on RAP progress at the Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association Conference in 2016 and 2018. In 2017, we presented at the Leaders in Indigenous Medical Education Conference.

RACS' first RAP reflected the overall commitment to contributing substantively to addressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health inequities and coordinating RACS response. This period also saw RACS commitment in funding an ongoing identified Senior Project Officer's role specifically attached to RACS Indigenous health portfolio and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Surgical Trainee Selection initiative.

Image: Photograph of Indigenous Scholarship

---

## RACS Strategic Plan 2019 - 2021

RACS will prioritise Indigenous health, building the workforce and increasing services to better meet the health needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Māori people.

The focus is also on collaborating effectively with our partners and supporting the communities we serve.

The RACS Strategic Plan 2019-2021 presents an opportunity to build on the past while preparing the profession of surgery for a dynamic future. It reinforces our focus on core education, training and advocacy programs, better supporting surgeons to deliver excellence in contemporary patient care. The strategy is underpinned by the established RACS Mission, Vision and Values.

### MISSION

The leading advocate for surgical standards, education and professionalism in Australia and New Zealand.

### VISION

Leading surgical performance, professionalism and improving patient care.

### VALUES

Service, respect, integrity, compassion and collaboration.

---

**THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE RACS STRATEGY**

**Mission and Vision**

**MISSION**

The leading advocate for surgical standards, education and professionalism in Australia and New Zealand

**VISION**

Leading surgical performance, professionalism and improving patient care

**Our three pillars**

**STANDARDS AND PROFESSIONALISM**

Leading surgical practice through training, education and research

**ENDURING VALUE**

Creating opportunity for the surgical profession

**MEMBERSHIP**

Sustaining and supporting Fellows, Trainees and International Medical Graduates throughout their careers

**Indigenous health**

Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Māori

**Collaboration**

Specialty societies

**Community**

Improving health outcomes

**Values**

SERVICE

RESPECT

INTEGRITY

COMPASSION

COLLABORATION

**Governance**

CONSTITUTION

CHARTER

CODE OF CONDUCT

POLICIES

**Principles**

Treat others as its Members would wish to be treated

Be open to, and informed by, the views of others

Develop expertise to act in areas of importance

Do no harm and act for the common good

Be transparent, fair and responsive

Preserve and enhance the sustainability of the College and its Members



## Building relationships

RACS recognises the importance of relationships and collaboration. It is through collaboration and relationships that joint strategies and partnerships can be formed to achieve significant outcomes in Australia's First Nations peoples health. Furthermore, RACS appreciates the diversity in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, languages and spiritual beliefs. It recommends that Indigenous healthcare policies, projects and research from all institutions, specialty societies and organisations are developed in collaboration with Australia's First Nations Peoples to ensure they are culturally relevant and delivered in an understandable and useful way.

| Action  | Measurable target  | Timeline and completion dates   | Responsibility  |
|---|--|---|---|
| Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implement strategies to engage our staff in reconciliation.</li> <li>- Communicate our commitment to reconciliation publicly.</li> <li>- Explore opportunities to positively influence our external stakeholders to drive reconciliation outcomes.</li> <li>- Collaborate with RAP and other like-minded organisations to develop ways to advance reconciliation.</li> </ul>  | 29 April<br>2021 and 2022<br><br>27 May<br>2020 and 2021<br><br>15 September<br>2021<br><br>22 April<br>2021 and 2022 | Reconciliation Working Group (RWG) Chairperson<br><br>RWG Chairperson<br><br>Fellowship Services Manager<br><br>RWG Chairperson |
| Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to consult on our anti-discrimination policy.</li> <li>- Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.</li> <li>- Educate senior leaders on the effects of racism.</li> <li>- Develop, implement and communicate an anti-discrimination policy for our organisation.</li> </ul> | 30 June<br>2020<br><br>31 July<br>2020<br><br>30 September<br>2020<br><br>30 November<br>2020                         | Human Resources Business Partner<br><br>RWG Chairperson<br><br>RWG Chairperson  |

| Action   | Measurable target   | Timeline and completion dates   | Responsibility   |
|--|---|---|--|
| Celebrate and participate in National Reconciliation Week (NRW).   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organise internal event each year at all College Offices to acknowledge and celebrate NRW.</li> <li>- Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.</li> <li>- RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.</li> <li>- Register all NRW events via Reconciliation Australia's NRW website.</li> <li>- Encourage Fellows, Trainees, International Medical Graduates (IMG) and staff to participate in an external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.</li> </ul>  | <p>May 2021 and 2022</p> <p>May 2021 and 2022</p> <p>May 2021 and 2022</p> <p>21 May 2021 and 2022</p> <p>May 2021 and 2022</p>           | <p>RWG Chairperson</p> <p>Communications Coordinator</p> <p>RWG Chairperson</p> <p>RWG Chairperson</p> <p>Communications Coordinator</p>   |
| Develop and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with key local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and organisations which align with our business.             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify opportunities to support initiatives and activities led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations that are relevant to the College's purpose.</li> <li>- Meet with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders to develop guiding principles for future engagement.</li> <li>- Engage regularly with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.</li> <li>- The College will continue to develop and foster relationships with stakeholders by attending conferences, sharing initiatives, collaborating when possible and seek advice from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leaders in Indigenous Medical Education (LIME)</li> <li>• Australian Indigenous Doctors Association (AIDA)</li> <li>• Medical schools with Indigenous medical programs</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Develop and implement an engagement plan to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations</li> </ul> | <p>31 July 2021</p> <p>22 April 2021</p> <p>12 August 2020 – ongoing</p> <p>4 November 2020 - ongoing</p> <p>- 9 April 2021 - ongoing</p> | <p>Indigenous Health Committee (IHC) Senior Project Officer</p> <p>RWG Chairperson</p> <p>Fellowship Services Manager</p> <p>Fellowship Services Manager</p> <p>Indigenous Health Committee Senior Project Officer</p> |
| Optimisation of pathways: Develop collaborative relationships with stakeholders and identify ways to optimise health outcomes and treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- At conferences, stakeholder meetings, Ear Health for Life Consortium participate in meetings which identify opportunities to advocate and support the development and implementation for the optimisation of medical treatment with emphasis on servicing of community needs in collaboration with those communities.</li> <li>- Foster and development relationships for the purpose of identifying opportunities to contribute to RACS' reconciliation vision with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cancer Council of Australia</li> <li>• Ear Health for Life Consortium members</li> <li>• Medical schools</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   | <p>7 May 2021 - ongoing</p> <p>9 October 2021 and 9 October 2022</p>  | <p>Fellowship Services Manager</p> <p>IHC Senior Project Officer</p>   |

## Building respect

The College is committed to making a contribution to improving the health inequities that exist between Australia's First Nations people and non-Indigenous Australians. To achieve this outcome, it is necessary to acknowledge and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, communities and histories. Respect through consultation, recognition and celebration contributes to developing respectful, supportive relationships and reflects cultural and community values.

| Action   | Measurable target  | Timeline and completion dates   | Responsibility   |
|--|--|---|--|
| Demonstrate respect to Australia's First Nations People by observing cultural protocols.                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop, implement and communicate a cultural protocol document, including protocols for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country.</li> <li>- Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.</li> <li>- Include an Acknowledgement of Country or other appropriate protocols at the commencement of important meetings.</li> <li>- Invite a Traditional Owner to provide Welcome to Country at significant College events, including RACS Annual Scientific Meeting and Regional Scientific Meetings.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>31 July 2020 - ongoing</li> <li>31 July 2020 - ongoing</li> <li>31 July 2020 – ongoing</li> <li>20 May 2021 and 2022</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IHC Senior Project Officer</li> <li>Fellowship Services Manager</li> <li>Fellowship Services Manager</li> <li>RWG Chairperson</li> </ul>  |
| Promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander presence and profile of people and cultures within college.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags at College offices during NRW and NAIDOC Week.</li> <li>- Display Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artwork and posters in RACS buildings and offices.</li> <li>- Promote awareness of Indigenous health at the RACS Annual Scientific Congress.</li> <li>- Encourage participation and engagement with RACS Indigenous health objectives by awarding IHC Medals.</li> <li>- Develop RACS Indigenous health communication plan.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May and July 2021 and 2022</li> <li>NAIDOC week July 2020 – ongoing</li> <li>20 May 2021 and 2022</li> <li>20 May 2021 and 2022</li> <li>30 June 2021</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RWG Chairperson</li> <li>Communications Coordinator</li> <li>Communications Coordinator</li> <li>Communications Coordinator</li> <li>Communications Coordinator</li> </ul>                      |
| Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.</li> <li>- Review policies and procedures to remove barriers to staff participating in NAIDOC Week.</li> <li>- Promote and encourage participation in external NAIDOC events to all staff.</li> <li>- Organise internal event each year at all College offices to acknowledge and celebrate NAIDOC Week.</li> <li>- Circulate NAIDOC resources and materials to our staff.</li> <li>- Encourage Fellows, Trainees, IMGs and staff to participate in an external event to recognise and celebrate NAIDOC week.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NAIDOC week June 2021 and 2022</li> <li>NAIDOC week June 2020, 2021, 2022</li> <li>NAIDOC week June 2021 and 2022</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RWG Chairperson</li> <li>Human Resources Business Partner</li> <li>Fellowship Services Manager</li> <li>RWG Chairperson</li> <li>Communications Coordinator</li> <li>RWG Chairperson</li> </ul> |

| Action  | Measurable target  | Time line<br>Completion dates   | Responsibility  |
|---|--|---|---|
| <p>Raise organisation understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples cultures and cultural protocols amongst staff.</p>                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness training program for RACS administrative staff.</li> <li>- Promote Reconciliation Australia's 'Share Our Pride' online tool and resources to all staff (<a href="http://www.shareourpride.org.au">www.shareourpride.org.au</a>).</li> <li>- Recognise and communicate to staff Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dates of significance. List in College calendar.</li> <li>- Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.</li> <li>- Consult local Traditional Owners and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors on the development and implementation of a cultural learning strategy for our staff.</li> <li>- Provide opportunities for RAP Working Group members, HR managers and other key leadership staff to participate in formal and structured cultural learning.</li> </ul> | <p>NAIDOC week<br/>2020 – ongoing</p> <p>NRW<br/>2020 and 2021</p> <p>19 March<br/>2020 – ongoing</p> <p>November<br/>2020</p> <p>23 June<br/>2020 – ongoing</p> <p>5 February<br/>2021 – ongoing</p> | <p>Human Resources<br/>Business Partner</p> <p>Communications<br/>Coordinator</p> <p>Fellowship Services<br/>Manager</p> <p>IHC Senior Project<br/>Officer</p> <p>IHC Senior Project<br/>Officer</p> <p>Fellowship Services<br/>Manager</p> |
| <p>Develop educational programs and materials and support for surgeons that focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people health issues and cultural awareness.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop and implement Cultural Competency Curriculum for all specialties in Surgical Education and Training, under the competencies of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professionalism</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Health advocacy</li> <li>• Management and leadership</li> <li>• Collaboration and teamwork</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Raise awareness and information amongst RACS Governing bodies to support their understanding of initiatives and strategies developed by IHC to assist them with their ability to address issues relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples health.</li> </ul>   | <p>10 February<br/>2021 - ongoing</p> <p>10 February<br/>2021 - ongoing</p>   | <p>RWG Chairperson</p> <p>Fellowship Services<br/>Manager</p>   |

## Building opportunities

Social and economic factors are strong determinants of the wellness or otherwise of the individual and his/her community. These factors are compounded in Australia's First Nations populations by the multigenerational grief, loss and trauma associated with colonisation, the Stolen Generations, many layers of racism, discrimination, cultural dislocation. The College recognises that Closing the Gap is imperative if disparities in life expectancy are to be addressed.

| Action   | Measurable target   | Time line<br>Completion dates  | Responsibility   |
|--|---|--|--|
| Investigate and develop opportunities to improve and increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees within RACS.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support the onboarding of RACS RAP objectives and aims with new employees with information session about RACS RAP.</li> <li>- Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.</li> <li>- Engage with existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to consult on employment strategies, including professional development.</li> <li>- Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.</li> <li>- Advertise job vacancies to effectively reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.</li> <li>- Review HR and recruitment procedures and policies to remove barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in our workplace.</li> <li>- Increase the percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff employed in our workforce.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>31 July 2020 ongoing</li> <li>31 July 2021</li> <li>30 June 2021</li> <li>31 July 2021</li> <li>September 30 2021 – ongoing</li> <li>31 August 2021</li> <li>31 October 2021 and 31 October 2022</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Human Resources Business Partner</li> </ul> |
| Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people supplier diversity within RACS business operations.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement strategy.</li> <li>- Investigate Supply Nation membership.</li> <li>- Develop commercial relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander businesses.</li> <li>- Review and update procurement practices to remove barriers to procuring goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses.</li> <li>- Develop and communicate opportunities for procurement of goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to staff</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>31 August 2020</li> <li>30 September 2020</li> <li>31 November 2021 - ongoing</li> <li>7 May 2021</li> <li>9 July 2021</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finance Manager</li> <li>Finance Manager</li> <li>Finance Manager</li> <li>Finance Manager</li> <li>Finance Manager</li> </ul>  |
| Raise awareness and promote inclusive discourse about supporting Close the Gap in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples health amongst RACS Fellows and administrative staff.                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Host internal staff information sessions to raise awareness and promote inclusive discourse about supporting Close the Gap by informing staff about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and rights.</li> <li>- Assist the <i>Surgical News</i> team to identify suitable stories and updates to be included in <i>Surgical News</i>.</li> <li>- Explore opportunities to raise awareness of IHC and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples health initiatives and news using the various RACS publications.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NAIDOC week June 2021 and 2020</li> <li>31 July 2020 - ongoing</li> <li>31 July 2020 - ongoing</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IHC Senior Project Officer</li> <li>Communications Coordinator</li> <li>Communications Coordinator</li> </ul>   |
| Research collaboration: Understand holistic health issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing and develop appropriate information, policy and research which reflects this understanding. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify and facilitate collaborative partnerships on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health projects with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health organisations, primary healthcare workers, governments and other medical colleges. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide ongoing support to the Ear Health for Life Consortium.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>25 August 2020</li> <li>19 November 2021</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IHC Senior Project Officer</li> <li>Indigenous Health Committee Senior Project Officer</li> </ul>   |

| Action   | Measurable target   | Time line<br>Completion dates   | Responsibility   |
|--|---|---|--|
| Inform Government and NGOs of issues concerning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples health inequalities and advocate for change.   | <p>- Identify and support like-minded bodies in their efforts to advocate for improved health for the communities we serve, including improved Indigenous health. RACS will advocate for improvements in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples health with a particular focus on surgery. The College will advocate for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved health services</li> <li>• Disease and injury prevention</li> <li>• Improved availability of services</li> <li>• Improved access to services</li> </ul>  | 16 September 2020 and 2021  | Policy and Advocacy Manager  |
| Healthy community: Continue to foster and nurture existing relationships to support progression of coordinated approach to improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.   | Support and nurture 'Ear health for life' consortium and investigate opportunities and ways to support research and opportunities for collaboration on research projects either through support in kind, advocacy or fund raising.  | 31 October 2020   | IHC Senior Project Officer   |
| Develop strategies to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander surgical workforce.   | <p>In consultation with Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association, the RACS IHC will develop strategies to increase the number of successful Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander surgical training applicants, so that the proportion reflects the communities served.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consult, develop and implement Indigenous surgeon recruitment pathway project.</li> <li>- Ensure all scholarships are awarded annually to support pathways towards a surgical career.</li> </ul>   | <p>4 November 2020</p> <p>November 2022</p> <p>December 2021 and 2022</p>   | IHC Senior Project Officer   |
| Capacity building: Develop and strengthen the knowledge of historical issues and policies and how they have impacted and contributed to the health inequities experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop and implement an information session around the operation of the poverty cycle in an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community context and the other compounding issues and factors affecting Indigenous health.</li> <li>- Facilitate within the College through inductions, staff workshops and surgical training; understanding of the meaning of cultural safety, the impact of racism and unconscious biases on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.</li> <li>- Review information, policy and research used to inform ongoing surgical workforce and organisational workforce development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop surgical workforce which is culturally safe and competent to service rural and remote communities, and increase the capacity of the surgical workforce in rural and remote communities.</li> <li>- Develop information concerning the variation of issues and circumstances affecting urban and regional areas.</li> <li>- Raise awareness and understanding regional issues and circumstances impacting First Nation People.</li> <li>- Investigate opportunities to support initiatives which take into account remote and regional issues and circumstances.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <p>31 July 2021</p> <p>31 July 2021</p> <p>31 July 2021</p> <p>31 July 2021</p> <p>17 November 2020 – ongoing</p> <p>17 November 2020 – ongoing</p> | <p>IHC Chairperson</p> <p>Human Resources Business Partner</p> <p>IHC Senior Project Officer</p> |

## Governance

| Action  | Measurable target  | Time line<br>Completion dates   | Responsibility   |
|---|--|---|--|
| Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Define resource needs for RAP implementation.</li> <li>- Engage our senior leaders and other staff in the delivery of RAP commitments.</li> <li>- Define and maintain appropriate systems to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.</li> <li>- Appoint and maintain an internal RAP Champion from senior management.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6 May 2020, 2021 and 2022</li> <li>19 May 2020, 2021 and 2022</li> <li>21 April 2021</li> <li>5 May 2020, 2021 and 2022</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RWG Chairperson</li> <li>RWG Chairperson</li> <li>RWG Chairperson</li> <li>RWG Chairperson</li> </ul>   |
| Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop, have endorsed and launch of RACS Innovate RAP.</li> <li>- Meet at least four times a year to monitor RAP implementation.</li> <li>- Ensure appropriate representation from RACS business units sitting on RACS RWG.</li> <li>- To ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are represented on the RWG throughout the duration of the RAP.</li> <li>- Terms of Reference for the RWG updated.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>31 May 2020</li> <li>8 March 17 June 9 September 8 December 2020, 2021 and 2022</li> <li>29 October 2020</li> <li>8 December 2020, 2021 and 2022</li> <li>10 November 2020</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RWG Chairperson</li> <li>RWG Chairperson</li> <li>RWG Chairperson</li> <li>RWG Chairperson</li> <li>RWG Chairperson</li> </ul>  |
| Submit draft RAP to Reconciliation Australia for review, feedback and formal endorsement.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In partnership with Reconciliation Australia, develop a new RAP based on learnings, challenges and achievements.</li> </ul>   | December 2021   | IHC Senior Project Officer   |
| Report RAP achievements, challenges and learnings internally and externally.                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure RACS RAP achievements, challenges and learnings are made publicly available on the RACS website webpage.</li> <li>- Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.</li> <li>- Report RAP progress to all staff and senior leaders quarterly.</li> <li>- Publicly report our RAP achievements, challenges and learnings, annually.</li> <li>- Include RAP Progress and implementation as standing agenda item at RACS Council.</li> <li>- Report RAP progress in the RACS Annual Report.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>30 November 2020</li> <li>30 September 2020, 2021 and 2022</li> <li>7 December 2020, 2021 and 2022</li> <li>15 December 2020, 2021 and 2022</li> <li>31 July 2020, 2021 and 2022</li> <li>31 July 2020, 2021 and 2022</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IHC Senior Project Officer</li> <li>Communications Coordinator</li> <li>Communications Coordinator</li> <li>Communications Coordinator</li> <li>IHC Senior Project Officer</li> <li>IHC Senior Project Officer</li> </ul> |



## Acknowledgements

### Indigenous Health Committee members

Mr Benjamin Cribb  
FRACS

Dr Andrew Martin

Dr Stephanie Weidlich  
FRACS

Dr David Murray  
FRACS Deputy Chair

Dr John Mutu-Grigg  
FRACS

Professor Stephen O'Leary  
FRACS

Dr Maxine Ronald  
FRACS Chairperson

Dr Benjamin Wheeler  
FRACS

Mr Michael Wilson  
FRACS

### Reconciliation Working Group members

Paul Cargill  
Fellowship Services Manager

Jessica Redwood  
Foundation for Surgery Manager

Bronwyn Emerson  
HR Business Partner

Damien Loizou  
IHC Senior Project Officer

Jessele Vinluan  
Senior Project Officer, Victorian Audit of Surgical Mortality (VASM)

Katherine Walsh  
Victoria State Office Manager

Caroline Muliaga  
Program Administrator, Australian and New Zealand Surgical Skills Education and Training (ASSET)

Therese Rey-Conde  
Senior Research Officer

Sue Pleass  
ANZ Scholarship and Grant Coordinator

Adam Shepard  
Finance Manager

Agron Dauti  
Digital Media and Internal Communications Coordinator

### RAP Champions

Dr Maxine Ronald FRACS  
Chairperson, RACS IHC

Dr David Murray  
Deputy Chairperson, RACS IHC

Dr Kelvin Kong  
Founder, RACS IHC

Paul Cargill  
Manager, Fellowship Services

Damien Loizou  
IHC Senior Project Officer (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Indigenous Health Committee Administrative Team)



**RACS Indigenous Health Committee and Indigenous health administrative team contact details**

RACS Indigenous Health Committee  
Royal Australasian College of Surgeons  
250-290 Spring Street,  
East Melbourne VIC 3002,  
Australia

Telephone: (03) 9249 1200

Email: [indigenoushealth@surgeons.org](mailto:indigenoushealth@surgeons.org)

Webpage: [www.surgeons.org](http://www.surgeons.org)

Royal Australasian College of Surgeons Reconciliation Action Plan 2020-2022.

Royal Australasian College of Surgeons. Melbourne, 2020.

© 2020 Royal Australasian College of Surgeons. All rights reserved.

RACS recognises and acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Custodians of Australia and pays respect to their continuing connection to culture, land, sea, community and family.



Committed to Indigenous health

*Service | Integrity | Respect | Compassion | Collaboration*

