

On November 12, 2024, the Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association (AIDA) convened a meeting of the Specialist Trainee Support Program (STSP) Cross-College Project Group on the ancestral lands of the Gadigal people. Representatives from various non-GP medical colleges and partner organisations gathered to foster collaboration, advance cultural safety, and support the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors in non-GP specialty training programs.

The meeting, chaired by Dr. Karen Nicholls (Medico-Cultural Lead, AIDA), began with her acknowledging the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation and their Elders past, present, and emerging. She also covered housekeeping, facilitated introductions for in-person and online attendees, acknowledged apologies, and outlined the agenda.

Dr. Nicholls introduced Dr. Elissa Elvidge, Post Doctoral Research Fellow at the University of Newcastle, who delivered a comprehensive and thought-provoking presentation on cultural safety and anti-racism in healthcare. Dr. Elvidge emphasised that cultural safety is defined by the patient's experience and discussed the need to address both individual biases and systemic racism. She shared findings revealing that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients encounter racism in healthcare, which weakens trust and contributes to adverse health outcomes. Dr. Elvidge encouraged participants to reflect on their own cultural identities and biases using the Cultural Iceberg Model. The session included an interactive exercise where participants assessed their confidence in providing culturally safe care. Dr. Elvidge concluded her presentation by discussing her research on cultural safety frameworks, highlighting data from hospitals in New South Wales. This led to discussions on how medical colleges and institutions can better implement cultural safety and support anti-racism efforts.

Following Dr. Elvidge's presentation, Brittany Lee (Events and Communications Lead, AIDA) provided an update on the upcoming PRIDoC (Pacific Regional Indigenous Doctors' Congress), highlighting key details and new features designed to boost participant engagement. With tickets sold out, the event is shaping up to be a landmark occasion. A new mobile app, launching a week before PRIDoC, will offer session reminders, facilitate QR code scanning for networking, and provide interactive tools to enhance attendee experience. The congress program is being refined, with a focus on expanding the fellowship session, and feedback is being gathered to fine-tune the format. A call for prize contributions has been made to enhance the competition pool. The event app will also feature points tracking and QR code scanning at exhibition booths. Attendees are encouraged to engage on social media using the official event hashtag. Each day, nine exhibition stalls will be showcased, including stalls from the local Kaurua community. A gift-giving ceremony will be held on Friday in Hall C, with additional details provided during the Wednesday night dinner.

Following this, Jacinta Haseldine (Program Coordinator, AIDA) facilitated a discussion to review and update the Terms of Reference for the Specialist Trainee Support Program – Cross-College Project Group. The group provided valuable input, refining the Terms to align with current priorities and objectives. This collaborative effort ensures the program remains focused on enhancing the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors in non-GP specialty training. Key actions for the coming months were identified, with a strong commitment to advancing these priorities.

Next, Bianca Field (STSP Trainee Support Officer, AIDA) facilitated a discussion focused on the Regional Medical Training Hubs/AIDA specialities pathway flyer. The group agreed to send their updated information to Bianca for inclusion, ensuring the flyer reflects the most current and relevant details.

To conclude, Stephanie May (Director, Programs and Outcomes, AIDA) led a discussion on Workplan Readiness, helping the group align on key upcoming goals and the steps required to ensure their successful execution.

Dr. Nicholls then opened the floor for “Other Business”, where the group discussed developing a statement and agreed to include it as an agenda item for the next meeting on 04 March 2025.

In conclusion, a key outcome of the meeting was the group's strengthened commitment to advancing anti-racism efforts and their renewed commitment to the Terms of Reference for the Specialist Trainee Support Program – Cross-College Project Group. Dr. Nicholls concluded the meeting by reflecting on the importance of ongoing collaboration and reminded attendees of the upcoming Cross-College meeting scheduled for March 4, 2025.

Attendees:

1. Australian Indigenous Doctors Association
2. Department of Health and Aged Care
3. Australian Orthopaedic Association
4. Australasian College of Dermatologists
5. Australasian College for Emergency Medicine
6. Australasian College of Sports and Exercise Physicians
7. College of Intensive Care Medicine of Australia and New Zealand
8. Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists
9. Royal Australasian College of Surgeons
10. Royal Australasian College of Physicians
11. Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists
12. Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists
13. Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists
14. Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists
15. Royal Australasian College of Medical Administrators
16. Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia