

On 4 March 2025, the Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association (AIDA) convened the Cross-College Meeting at the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO), located on Wurundjeri Country. Representatives from various non-GP medical colleges, government agencies, VACCHO, and partner organisations gathered with a shared commitment to strengthening recruitment, retention, and support strategies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors pursuing non-GP specialist training.

Dr Karen Nicholls, AIDA's Medico-Cultural Lead, opened the meeting with an Acknowledgement of Country, paying respects to the Wurundjeri People as Traditional Custodians of the land. Attendees introduced themselves, shared their roles and affiliations, and apologies were noted from absent representatives.

The day began with a presentation from Clare O'Reilly, Director of Health and Healing at VACCHO, who introduced VACCHO's Model of Care, the Members and Associate Members Map, and the services available to community members. Clare highlighted the importance of strong, respectful partnerships between medical colleges and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations in embedding cultural safety within specialist training programs. Her reflections reinforced the meaningful role of community-led healthcare in improving health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Following this, Blake McDonald, Assistant Director at the Department of Health and Aged Care (DoHAC), provided an update on the Flexible Approach to Training in Expanded Settings (FATES) funding. He encouraged greater data sharing to strengthen the evidence base and enhance support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainees.

The morning continued with a session led by Dr Elissa Elvidge from the University of Newcastle, who facilitated a reflective and engaging discussion building on her previous presentation at the last Cross-College Meeting. The session focused on cultural safety and anti-racism, with participants sharing examples of culturally safe practices, acknowledging ongoing challenges, and reaffirming their commitment to fostering inclusive, accountable environments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainees across all stages of specialist training.

As part of the ongoing discussions, Jacinta Haseldine, AIDA Programs Coordinator, facilitated a session to explore progress and identify shared priorities through a review of college work plans. The discussion reinforced three shared areas of focus for 2025: expanding peer-to-peer mentoring networks, strengthening examination preparation support, and trainee selection processes to increase accessibility and equity.

In the afternoon, Dr Karen Nicholls and Stephanie May facilitated a discussion on self-assessment reporting for 2025. The group explored the importance of measurable metrics, accountability, and transparent progress tracking in improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors. The group also provided constructive feedback on refining the self-assessment tool to ensure it remains a meaningful mechanism for continuous improvement in specialist training.

The meeting concluded with a shared commitment to collaboration, cultural safety, and continuous improvement. Future meetings will focus on the agreed shared priorities, with progress reviewed regularly.

The Cross-College Meeting continues to play a significant role in strengthening partnerships, advancing equity, and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors along their specialist training pathways.

Attendees included representatives from:

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

Apology:

1. Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia