

The Hon. Michael Sukkar, MP
Assistant Treasurer
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA, ACT 2600

Dear Minister,

Re: CATSINaM Pre-Budget Submission 2022-23

The Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives (CATSINaM) is pleased to provide the attached 2022-23 Federal Pre-Budget Submission.

CATSINaM is the national peak body that represents, advocates, and supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives at a national level and more recently nurses and midwives working in the Aboriginal and Community Controlled Health Services sector. We are a membership-based organisation and are governed by a nationally elected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Board.

Our 2022-23 Pre-Budget Submission details actionable workforce solutions to support the goal of improving Indigenous Health. It outlines significant challenges to meeting the health needs, rights and expectations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and presents ways forward to support the Australian Government's goal of improving Indigenous Health.

CATSINaM recommends investment in Indigenous health by investing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives and in the Cultural Safety of the wider nursing and midwifery workforce through funding the following four actionable solutions to grow and strengthen our workforce. These include:

1. The development of a *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nursing and Midwifery Workforce Strategy*.
2. Establishment of the CATSINaM National Support Line for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives.
3. Development and stewardship of the CATSINaM Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Cultural Safety *Education Standards* and Endorsement Program.

4. Development and stewardship of the CATSINaM Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Care Practice Standards and Endorsement Program.

National investment is required to support new nationally coordinated initiatives that leverage the capacity and capability of CATSINaM. We aim to better support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives and to drive Culturally Safe practice across nursing and midwifery to improve the health and health outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Please do not hesitate to contact me in relation to this or any other matter.

Yours faithfully,



Professor Roianne West
CEO, CATSINaM
16 December 2021

Yumalundi

Yumalundi means “hello” in the Ngunnawal language.

The Ngunnawal People are the Traditional Owners of the Canberra region.

The Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives (CATSINaM)

Pre-Budget Submission 2022-23

CATSINaM

Unity and Strength Through Caring

We are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives

The Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives (CATSINaM) was founded in 1997. We are the national peak body that represents, advocates, and supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives at a national level and more recently nurses and midwives working in the Aboriginal and Community Controlled Health Services sector. We are a membership-based organisation and are governed by a nationally elected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Board.

CATSINaM's vision is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives play a pivotal and respected role in achieving health equality across the Australian health system for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities.

Invest in Indigenous nurses and midwives to invest in Indigenous health

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are Australia's First Peoples for over 60, 000 year. Sadly however, compared with non-Indigenous Australians, it is well understood that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples experience profound inequity in outcomes. While health measures indicate positive gains in some areas of Indigenous health progress has stalled or worsened in other areas over the past decade.¹ Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nursing and midwifery workforce, due to its role diversity and extensive distribution at the forefront of health care, has a pivotal role in addressing these inequities. The Australian Government has committed to fund *Indigenous-led, culturally appropriate initiatives to increase access to health care and improve the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people*.² Furthermore, all Australian government ministers, with direct responsibility for health matters, have, through the Health Council, committed to shared priorities including to *Work to achieve comparable health outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians*.³

As a national member of the Coalition of Peaks, CATSINaM is committed to working together with governments in the collaborative spirit of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap to overcome the many health inequities experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. CATSINaM's 2022-2027 strategic direction aligns with the nationally agreed [Cultural Respect Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health](#) to guide strategies to embed Cultural Safety across the many domains of health care as it relates to nursing and midwifery. Accordingly, this Pre-Budget Submission considers **Challenges** to meeting the health needs, rights and expectations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and features key **Actionable Solutions** to support the Australian Government's goal of improving Indigenous Health.

¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2020). *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework 2020 summary report*. <https://www.indigenoushpf.gov.au/getattachment/65fbaaf3-100c-4df5-941c-a8455922693c/2020-summary-ihpf-2.pdf>

² Australian Government Department of Health.(2021). *Indigenous Australian's Health Program*. <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/indigenous-australians-health-programme>

³Health Council. *Health Council Priorities*. <http://www.coaghealthcouncil.gov.au/CHC/Priorities#>

CATSINaM Pre-Budget Recommendations

National investment is required to support new nationally coordinated initiatives that leverage the capacity and capability of CATSINaM to better support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives. CATSINaM plays an important role in the vision of governments to deliver better health and wellbeing for all Australians and our strategic goals aim to improve the nursing and midwifery workforce and therefore the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people receiving care.

CATSINaM urges the Australian Government to ***invest in Indigenous health by investing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives and in the Cultural Safety of the wider nursing and midwifery workforce*** by funding the following recommendations as part of its suite of reforms to improve Indigenous health.

| CATSINaM Pre-Budget 2022-23 Recommendations | |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Recommendation 1 | That the Australian Government invest to develop a <i>National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nursing and Midwifery Workforce Strategy</i> |
| Recommendation 2 | That the Australian Government invest \$720,284 over four years to formalise the CATSINaM National Support Line for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives |
| Recommendation 3 | That the Australian Government invest \$728,412 over 4 years to fund the development and stewardship of the CATSINaM Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Cultural Safety <u>Education Standards</u> and Endorsement Program |
| Recommendation 4 | That the Australian Government invest \$728,412 over 4 years to fund the development and stewardship of the CATSINaM Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Care <u>Practice Standards</u> and Endorsement Program |

Investing in Indigenous health

Reports and research nationally and internationally reinforce that Culturally Safe recruitment, retention and support strategies for health workforce, and the involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in health education, practice and service delivery are crucial to improving the health outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

1. National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nursing and Midwifery Workforce Strategy

Recommendation: That the Australian Government invest to develop a *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nursing and Midwifery Workforce Strategy*

Challenge

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives are significantly underrepresented in the Australian nursing and midwifery workforce occupying just 1.3% (approx.) of the overall workforce.⁴ This is well below parity and, despite growth in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives, the proportion of our workforce is not increasing.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives are pivotal to improved health outcomes and equitable access to quality health care services by Indigenous people. Our professional reach, and our cultural knowledges coupled with our nursing and midwifery knowledge, are essential to ensuring health care policy, education and practice meet the different needs, rights, and expectations of our people.

Increasing the size, recognition and utilisation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nursing and midwifery workforce reduces the impacts of systemic racism in health systems and, effectively, health care related harm through promoting Cultural Safety. Growing and nurturing our workforce continues to be a challenge. A major constraint is the lack of a dedicated and nationally coordinated strategic approach for preparing, developing, and supporting our workforce.

Actionable Solution

The Australian Government can address this challenge by tasking the Office of the Chief Nurse and Midwifery Officer to develop and implement a dedicated *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander*

⁴Australian Government Department of Health. *Factsheet, Nursing and Midwifery 2019*.
<https://hwd.health.gov.au/resources/publications/factsheet-nrmw-2019.html>

Nursing and Midwifery Strategy (the Strategy) to augment its planned *National Nursing Strategy*. The Strategy would address significant strategic knowledge gaps to better inform, direct and guide national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nursing and midwifery workforce recruitment, development, distribution, and planning.

The Strategy would aim to assess and address workforce pipeline, engagement, and retention challenges to increase the size of our workforce aiming for parity and to improve Cultural Safety across education and practice. Importantly, due to comparative very low course completions rates of 30% less than their peers, the Strategy should include the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander undergraduate students in line with R. West’s key research recommendation:

“Development and implementation of a national strategy for the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander undergraduate students entitled ‘Creating walking tracks to success’ be considered by the Office of the Chief Nurse, Department of Health and Ageing”⁵.

The responsibility and accountability for increasing and supporting the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nursing and midwifery workforce sits with the professions as well as with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health. Therefore, the Strategy should be developed as a priority adjunct to the anticipated Australian Government National Nursing Strategy and implementation of the Educating the Nurse of the Future Report.

Investing in the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives

Indigenous knowledge is critical in delivering on the promise of closing the gap in health outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians. Just as Indigenous knowledge is not possible without Indigenous people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nursing and midwifery knowledge is not possible without Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives. We have the exclusive ability to proficiently entwine nursing and midwifery knowledge with Indigenous knowledge to lead our profession to rising to the challenge of our time. The pool of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives is concerningly small and strategies, supported by investment, are required to retain, grow, and strengthen our workforce and roles.

⁵ West, Roianne (2012) *Indigenous Australian participation in pre-registration tertiary nursing courses: an Indigenous mixed methods study*. PhD James Cook University.

2. CATSINaM National Support Line for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives

Recommendation: That the Australian Government invest **\$720,284 over four years** to formalise the CATSINaM National Support Line for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives.

Challenge

The provision of Culturally Safe health services is heavily dependent on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives particularly at the frontlines of care. While our nurses and midwives work diligently to meet the health needs of our communities, too often dedicated systems are not in place to support their professional and personal needs. This is particularly the case in resource constrained rural and remote service settings. With 62.6% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in regional, remote and very remote locations,⁶ it is paramount that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives servicing these communities are supported to cope with personal and professional demands. It must be recognised that nurses and midwives experience diverse and changing personal and professional needs throughout their career journeys and should have access to support systems when needed.

Actionable Solution

There are 150 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHSs) across Australia in remote, rural and urban settings which form a crucial part of comprehensive primary health care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. A dedicated national support service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives, including our students, working in ACCHSs would provide much needed access to Culturally Safe advice for our colleagues seeking confidential personal or professional reassurance, information, support, and/or guidance outside of their normal work settings.

Forming a practical and actionable retention strategy, the CATSINaM National Support Line for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives should be funded to provide direct telephone or email access to an experienced nursing and midwifery adviser. The adviser would be available to share knowledge, experience, and guidance to assist nurses and midwives with information needs or to support them manage personal or professional challenges, including those faced in transitions to practice. Investment in this service is sought for program scoping and design, implementation planning, and program delivery. The program would be a significantly scaled up, quality assured and formalised extension of an ad hoc service CATSINaM provides to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives. This ad hoc service arrangement has demonstrated a need for a structured and regular nursing and midwifery advisory service.

⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics (June 2016) 'Estimated resident Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander population, Remoteness Areas' [dataset] [Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians](#), accessed 12 September 2020.

3. **CATSINaM Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Cultural Safety Education Standards and Endorsement Program**

Recommendation: That the Australian Government invest \$728,412 over 4 years to fund the development and stewardship of the CATSINaM Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Cultural Safety Education Standards and Endorsement Program.

Challenge

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities have a right to Culturally Safe care provided by nurses and midwives. Currently, there are no nationally coordinated and recognised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and Cultural Safety education standards or quality assurance processes for nursing and midwifery education, including continuing professional development (CPD) activities. An endorsement program is required to guarantee that providers of nursing and midwifery education have met a minimum set of quality standards to promote Culturally Safe nursing and midwifery and to reduce health related harms experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Actionable Solution

CATSINaM is ideally positioned to scope, design and develop the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Cultural Safety Education Standards and Endorsement Program. CATSINaM has a long-standing history of providing quality Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Cultural Safety education for nurses and midwives in Australia. CATSINaM has expertise in developing and reviewing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Cultural Safety education specifically targeted at meeting the needs of the nursing and midwifery professions. In addition, our newly established strong academic governance structure Muliyan ensures all our programs are quality assured.

Endorsement provides a national benchmark for the nursing and midwifery profession and would apply to all programs of study, educational events, products, and materials of relevance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nursing and midwifery such as, short courses, workshops, conferences, clinical manuals and multi-media products. The program would utilise *The Nursing and Midwifery Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Curriculum Framework* and a set of specifically devised Cultural Safety standards to develop a quality endorsement process. The Endorsement Program will incorporate contemporary and evidence-based processes including feedback methods for continual improvement of education and training activities.

CATSINaM seeks to provide an endorsement service aimed at enhancing the midwifery and nursing professions leading to improved Indigenous health outcomes for our community. The endorsement process will be designed to enable nurses and midwives to recognise that CATSINaM endorsed education and training activities:

- Have been scrutinised against a set of standards that are developed in-line with professional nursing and education requirements.
- Meet the standards set by CATSINaM.
- Add value to nurses' and midwives' professional development.

Continuing Professional Development Endorsed CPD activities will be allocated CPD hours to assist nurses and midwives in meeting the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia's (NMBA) Registration Standard for Continuing Professional Development.

4. CATSINaM Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Care Practice Standards and Endorsement Program

Recommendation: That the Australian Government invest **\$728,412 over 4 years** to fund the development and stewardship of the CATSINaM Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Care Practice Standards and Endorsement Program.

Challenge

There are significantly lower health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and the continuing prevalence of all forms of racism in Australia's health care system contributes to these inequities. In Australia, in 2021 the National Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia reported there are 465,291 nurses and midwives in Australia, of this 465,291 approximately 1.3% identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Health care is provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in mainstream health care services, and as such the 465,291 nurses and midwives will play a major role in the delivery of health care, and health outcomes. Therefore, it is essential they have a better understanding of the particular health care needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and the ability to deliver these in a culturally appropriate manner. The work of the Leaders in Indigenous Nursing and Midwifery Education Leadership Network has focused on the development of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nursing and midwifery workforce and has made a significant contribution to addressing Cultural Safety, however, has not focused on the whole of the nursing and midwifery workforce.

While there are various health sector initiatives to address this mounting problem, there are no nationally consistent standards of practice for nurses and midwives providing expectations for their work in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health. This presents an unacceptable safety and quality risk for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people engaging with our health systems.

Actionable Solution

To help reduce this risk, CATSINaM as the expert organisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nursing and midwifery, should receive funding to develop the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Care Practice Standards and Endorsement Program. Standards are explicit statements of

expected quality in the performance of a health care activity, they form statements of expected health care outcomes, among other formats. The development of a set of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Care Practice Standards will support all nurses and midwives to better support the health care of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

CATSINaM's Membership provides a deep and exclusive pool of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nursing and midwifery experts and, together, we can develop professional expectations and requirements for how our professions will approach working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The Standards would specify core knowledge, skills and competencies required for the delivery of quality, holistic and Culturally Safe approaches by nurses and midwives working in the Australia health care sector to improve the health outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

The online education modules will be developed to be utilised by individuals, health care services, education, and training centres and universities, providing evidence-based, easily accessible education and training for all nurses and midwives. The purpose of this project is to improve the health outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders through the professions of nursing and midwifery. Objectives include:

1. The development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health care practice standards for nurses and midwives.
2. Using the standards, develop education and training modules for nurses and midwives.
3. Development of a learning management system to deliver the education and training modules.
4. Application of the standards through a dedicated Endorsement program.