



Joint statement

February 2018

NMBA and CATSINaM joint statement on culturally safe care

Racial discrimination is well documented as a contributing factor to poor health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.¹ The Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives (CATSINaM) and the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) are committed to addressing racism and demonstrating leadership to nurses and midwives to ensure they value the needs of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, and promote and provide culturally safe care.

In order to effect change CATSINaM and the NMBA know that regulations and codes establishing health professional standards must clearly communicate the requirement for cultural safety. The NMBA *Code of conduct for nurses* and *Code of conduct for midwives* (the codes), which are supported by CATSINaM:

- acknowledge that Australia has always been a culturally and linguistically diverse nation. Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples have inhabited and cared for the land as the First Peoples of Australia for millennia, and their histories and cultures have uniquely shaped our nation
- require nurses and midwives to understand and acknowledge the historic factors, such as colonisation and its impact on Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples' health, which help to inform care. In particular, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples bear the burden of gross social, cultural and health inequality, and
- provide clear guidance and set expectations for nurses and midwives in supporting the health of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The codes also specifically require that nurses and midwives must:

- provide care that is holistic, free of bias and racism, challenges belief based upon assumption and is culturally safe and respectful for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples
- advocate for, and act to facilitate, access to quality and culturally safe health services for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, and
- recognise the importance of family, community, partnership and collaboration in the healthcare decision-making of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, for both prevention strategies and care delivery.

The codes also advocate for culturally safe and respectful practice and require nurses and midwives to have knowledge of how their own culture, values, attitudes, assumptions and beliefs influence their interactions with people and families, the community and colleagues.

CATSINaM and the NMBA believe that cultural safety and respectfulness is the responsibility of all nurses and midwives. By embracing this principle nurses and midwives provide leadership in building a health system free of racism and inequality, that is accessible for all.

¹ Australian Human Rights Commission (2005) Social Justice Report 2005. Page 10.
Yin Paradies, Ricci Harris, Ian Anderson (2008) The Impact of Racism on Indigenous Health in Australia and Aotearoa: Towards a Research Agenda. Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health Discussion Paper Series: No. 4.