

15 March 2024

Ms Tracey Horsfall
Admin & Project Officer
Productivity Commission
4 National Circuit,
Barton ACT 2600

Via email: philanthropy@pc.gov.au

To Whom it may concern,

RE: FEEDBACK ON THE PHILANTHROPY INQUIRY DRAFT REPORT

Thank you for providing the opportunity for the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists (RANZCO) to make a submission on the *Future Foundations for Giving Draft Report*.

RANZCO's mission is to drive improvements in eye health care in Australia, New Zealand and the Asia Pacific Region through continuing exceptional training, education, research, and advocacy. Underpinning all the College's work is a commitment to best patient outcomes, providing contemporary education, training, and continuing professional development, evidence-based decision making, collaboration and collegiality.

An integral pillar of RANZCO's [Vision 2030 and beyond](#) strategy is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healthcare, which recognises the urgent need to enhance equity of access to healthcare and health outcomes for First Nations peoples.

Feedback on draft recommendation 9.5: improve the usefulness of public information sources on volunteering.

The report details that the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) should improve the usefulness of public information sources on volunteering by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities by amending the questions on volunteering in the Census to capture:

- a) whether respondents engaged in informal volunteering (in addition to whether they engaged in formal volunteering with an organisation)
- b) the amount of time the respondent engaged in formal or informal volunteering (for example, hours each week).

RANZCO sees value in measures that promote community ownership and self-determination, therefore suggests that the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) work with First Nations communities to develop methodologies that enable better measurement of volunteering.

Indeed, cultural load must be taken into account. Like many other efforts to emancipate and uplift disadvantaged and disenfranchised groups, many Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait leaders are working tirelessly, often without compensation. First Nations peoples' power, labour, energy, innovation, cultural capital, networks, and resources hold immense untapped potential. Recognising and valuing these contributions can lead to a more inclusive and equitable future, where diverse perspectives and strengths are harnessed for the collective benefit.

This aligns with RANZCO's philanthropic arm, the Australian and New Zealand Eye Foundation's (ANZEF) desire to support initiatives to close the gap in eye health for First Nations peoples by investing in:

- a) Building knowledge and skills in culturally safe ophthalmic practice; and
- b) Growing a diverse ophthalmic workforce with increasing First Nations representation and leadership.

Feedback on draft recommendation 10.1: Establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander philanthropic foundation.

RANZCO supports the notion that the Australian Government should support the establishment of an independent philanthropic foundation controlled by, and for the benefit of, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

As a funder of First Nations health and education-focused initiatives, we too acknowledge that better health outcomes are present when health care is delivered by First Nations clinical and health support/liaison staff. In this context, there is great potential for positive outcomes when power and control over resources and decisions are placed in the hands of First Nations peoples. This approach not only supports the autonomy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, but also respects their cultural values and priorities.

Additionally, the focus on strengthening community capacity, supporting philanthropic vehicles led by, or supporting, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and administering grants are all crucial elements that can contribute to sustainable development and empowerment.

It is clear that the draft report provides the foundation for the future of Australian philanthropy. If an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander philanthropic foundation is to be established, it is our recommendation that its governance and organisational structure should prioritise self-determination, transparency, community representation, and accountability. Ultimately, by empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through an independent foundation, we can foster collaboration, innovation, and culturally responsive solutions.

Existing College initiatives and other recommendations that help improve access to philanthropy

RANZCO/ANZEF Partnership with the Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association AIDA (AIDA)

Our collaboration with AIDA focuses on a commitment to Indigenous health and education. Through scholarships aimed at recruiting and supporting first nations doctors and medical students into specialisation – including mentoring, fee support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander RANZCO Vocational Training Program (VTP) trainees – we aim to increase First Nations representation in ophthalmology. AIDA's advocacy and leadership amplify the voices of Indigenous doctors, shaping policies and practices in healthcare. Together, we work towards equitable eye health outcomes and cultural safety.

Principles to consider

Philanthropic organisations should engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities by:

- Building respectful partnerships based on mutual understanding.
- Supporting self-determined initiatives and community-led solutions.
- Providing flexible funding that enables capacity building and long-term planning.
- Adopting a strengths-based approach to improving outcomes for First Nations peoples.
- Where relevant, implementing culturally sensitive, trauma-informed language and approaches.

Once again, we thank you for taking the time to seek our feedback and we look forward to seeing the final report.

Kind Regards,

Mark Carmichael
RANZCO CEO