

13 August 2021

Ms. Emma Gleeson
Skills Engagement Executive
SkillsIQ
GPO Box 4194
Sydney NSW 2001
emma.gleeson@skillsiq.com.au

**Re: Endorsement of the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Worker
Training Package Products**

Dear Ms Gleeson,

The National Association of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioners (NAATSIHWP) **supports** the proposal to replace the Certificate IV in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care Practice, with a Diploma. The change is appropriate, consistent with review findings and acknowledges that the content of the current Cert IV in Practice is more closely aligned to Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Level 5 rather than AQF 4 standards.

As the national peak body with responsibility for ensuring the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker and Health Practitioner Workforce is embedded as a vital and valued professional component of the health care system, we represent a growing national membership network of over 1,100 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioners from regions across Australia. Given our role we are obliged to carefully consider any reforms that have direct implications for those we represent and support.

Even though evidence consistently connects our workforce to improved health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the life course. We know that it continues to be under-supported, under-recognised and under-utilised. Health system bias, an overall lack of understanding about the role and value of the workforce and ad-hoc inconsistent workforce policies continue to hinder the expansion and development of the workforce nationally. These issues are not new and were first raised over a decade ago.

With this context at the forefront of our thinking NAATSIHWP and its members consider the proposed reforms to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Training Package, and in particular those that would result in the current Certificate IV in Practice being superseded by a Diploma level qualification, represents a strong step forward in the professional journey of this Aboriginal led, governed and operated workforce.

More specifically we consider that the proposed qualification upgrade provides a number of tangible benefits for individuals and the workforce. In this respect the proposed change:

- reinforces and validates what we have always known - that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners are trained to high professional standards

- provides a more appropriate level of professional recognition and aligns the skills and expertise gained through training to a more suitable qualification
- provides an improved career pathway onto University Study
- supports the case for the introduction of a national minimum scope of practice and national harmonisation of medicines authorities and
- helps to embed strengths-based paradigms by reinforcing our workforce as capable and competent, with the ability to learn and take on new challenges and
- reinforces the need for service providers to embed these professionals in the centre of more appropriate models of care.

In regards to the review and consultation process of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Training Package, as a whole, NAATSIHWP considers that all key stakeholders have been given sufficient opportunity to express their needs and that these have been responded to and incorporated appropriately. Given the significance of this reform NAATSIHWP have also supported this process by collaborating with and informing stakeholders regarding the changes and their potential impacts, including the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency, relevant workforce unions, Registered Training Organisations, our members and other groups from across the healthcare sector.

We also consider that the proposed new Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Training Package Products in their entirety are more tightly focused, and in step with the current and future health needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People. In this regard all courses work together to promote quality assessment practices and training outcomes, remove unnecessary duplication, provide more appropriate recognition of skills and expertise and promote skills portability across sectors.

As the peak body for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker and Health Practitioner Workforce NAATSIHWP looks forward to collaborating with SkillsIQ into the future and is well placed to provide advice and expertise in relation these professions. We are committed to ensuring these Training Package Products remain reflective of the primary health care needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People both now and into the future.

If you have any questions or require clarification about the contents of this letter please don't hesitate to contact me via email at: chair@naatsihwp.org.au.

Kind regards,



Mr David Follent
Chairperson
NAATSIHWP Board