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ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER NATIONAL TECHNICAL SERVICE ROUNDTABLE OUTCOMES SUMMARY

Tuesday, 11 February 2025



Statement of Acknowledgement

Cancer Australia acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia. We pay our respects to Elders, past and present.

We celebrate the ongoing connections of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to Country, culture, community, family and tradition and recognise these as integral to health, healing and wellbeing.

Cancer Australia acknowledges great diversity among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the contribution of the many voices, knowledge systems and experiences that guide all efforts to create a culturally safe and responsive cancer system that is equitable to all.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander National Technical Service Roundtable was prepared and produced by:

Cancer Australia

Locked Bag 3 Strawberry Hills NSW 2012 Australia

Tel: +61 2 9357 9400 Fax: +61 2 9357 9477

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander National Technical Service Roundtable

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Outcomes Summary

- At the population level, clinical trial participation is positively associated with increased survival, access to new and cutting-edge treatments, exposure to leading experts, and can accelerate advances in treatment. However, there are significant disparities in equitable access to trials with low participation of some population groups. Of note, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people access cancer research and clinical trials at a reduced rate when compared with the non-Indigenous population.
- Clinical trials need to include a diverse population to accurately represent those most affected by the disease being studied to ensure interventions and treatments are trusted and effective for all patients, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Support for Cancer Clinical Trials (SCCT) program:

- The [Support for Cancer Clinical Trials \(SCCT\) program](#) provides funding to Australia's 14 Multi-site Collaborative Cancer Clinical Trials Groups (CTGs) to develop investigator-initiated and led cancer clinical trial protocols.
- In line with [Action 4.2.2](#) of the [Australian Cancer Plan](#) (the Plan), the SCCT program focuses on developing clinical trials to address unmet needs and provides vital funding to underfunded research areas, enabling a strong pipeline of cancer clinical trials and accelerating the translation of innovative research into clinical practice.
- Through the SCCT program, Cancer Australia funds National Technical Services (NTS) to provide expert advice and services in areas of common need to ensure that clinical trial protocols and funding applications are competitive and of high quality.
- In 2023, Cancer Australia undertook a review of the SCCT program which revealed, among other things, that the CTGs require support and co-ordinated specialist advice on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement and embedding cultural safety in clinical trial design. Cancer Australia is establishing a new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander NTS to address this identified gap. Establishing collaborative partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations is also aligned with [Action 6.2.3](#) of the Plan.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander National Technical Service Roundtable:

- On 11 February 2025, Cancer Australia held a Roundtable with leaders in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, cancer care clinicians, researchers, and CTG executives to refine the scope of service an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander NTS could provide to CTGs under the SCCT program.
- Central to the Roundtable was a [consultation paper](#) developed in collaboration with CTGs and Cancer Australia's Advisors on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cancer Control.
- Feedback from the Roundtable will be used to inform the procurement and Approach to Market for this new service.
- During the Roundtable, there was strong agreement that:
 - An early activity for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander NTS is to help build the capacity and capability of each CTG in implementing culturally safe and respectful practices. A strong foundation

in cultural safety will help build genuine trust and welcome Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers and participants to join or partner in cancer clinical trials. As such, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander NTS could build a repository of various cultural safety trainings and resources that CTGs or clinical trial sites could select based on their trial design and location, with a particular focus on research-specific topics, such as implementing the principles of Indigenous Data Sovereignty.

- There is already an extensive body of work relating to the barriers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people accessing and participating in cancer clinical trials, as well as research that aims to improve trial design to be culturally safe and to facilitate co-design with Indigenous communities and researchers. It would be useful for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander NTS to collate this existing knowledge and to make it readily accessible to CTGs when designing clinical trials concepts and protocols.
- There is an opportunity to improve recruitment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in cancer clinical trials by reviewing common exclusion criteria for participation. An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander NTS could complete this review and consider whether criteria can be safely removed or reshaped.
- Clinical trials that are delivered on Country or as close as safely possible to where patients live is an important driver to bolster participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, especially in rural and remote areas. As such, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander NTS could:
 - Act as a liaison partner between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers, local Indigenous organisations and CTGs to facilitate research partnerships.
 - Assist CTGs in delivering a greater number and geographical distribution of tele-trials.
- There is great value in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants having access to an Indigenous Health Worker with an in-depth understanding of clinical trials and the research sector. Specifically, to dispel misconceptions, stigmas or fatalistic beliefs of cancer and to effectively communicate all aspects of clinical trials and its importance.

Considerations for Supplier Assessment:

- The Roundtable strongly advocated that interested service providers should:
 - Showcase that they are led and guided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, particularly those involved with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations, to deliver real-world community impact and long-term change.
 - Provide a proven track record of Indigenous-led research, co-designed and engaged with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Consideration and demonstrated understanding of the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is critical.
 - Include any previous commitments to meet the [Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies' Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research](#) and the [National Health and Medical Research Council's \(NHMRC\) principles in ethical conduct in research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people](#) and communities, as well as any history of involvement with NHMRC-funded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research.
 - Include any experience in clinical trial design within the context of the Australian research landscape to prove their understanding of the operational challenges of running clinical studies and how a CTG may operate.

Agenda

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander National Technical Service Roundtable

Date: Tuesday, 11 February 2025

Time: 1:00pm – 5:00pm (AEDT)

Location: Microsoft Teams

Item	Matters for consideration	Lead	Timing
1.	Welcome, Acknowledgement of Country and introductions	Facilitator / Chair	1:00pm – 1:15pm (15 mins)
2.	Confidentiality and conflict of interest declaration	Facilitator	1:15pm – 1:20pm (5 mins)
3.	Background <ul style="list-style-type: none">Implementing the Australian Cancer PlanSCCT program and the role of an NTS in the program	Chair	1:20pm – 1:40pm (20 mins)
4.	Background <ul style="list-style-type: none">Identified gaps in the SCCT program	Clinical Trial Groups	1:40pm – 2:00pm (20 mins)
5.	Setting the task for this Roundtable <ul style="list-style-type: none">In scopeOut of scope	Facilitator	2:00pm – 2:10pm (10 mins)
6.	Session One: Fostering meaningful engagement and genuine collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to define priority outcomes in clinical trials (“the what?”)	Facilitator	2:10pm – 2:50pm (40 mins)
Break: 2:50pm – 3:00pm (10 mins)			
7.	Session Two: Fostering meaningful engagement and genuine collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to improve clinical trial design (“the how?”)	Facilitator	3:00pm – 4:20pm (80 mins)
8.	Session Three: Best practices to approach an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander National Technical Service procurement	Facilitator	4:20pm – 4:45pm (25 mins)
9.	Next steps and any other business	Facilitator	4:45pm – 4:55pm (10 mins)
10.	Close	Facilitator / Chair	4:55pm – 5:00pm (5 mins)