

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan

Version 4: 9 May 2017



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Introduction

In 2014, Cancer Australia entered into partnership with BCNA in the *Supporting Women in Rural Areas Diagnosed with Breast Cancer* project. This project included a stream of funding to develop an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy for BCNA to improve the journey for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women with breast cancer.

BCNA has consulted with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women with breast cancer and a range of organisations and services that support these women in preparing this action plan. The actions are aligned with BCNA strategic directions of representing, informing, connecting and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, their families, and communities and have been developed as a result of these consultations.

Crucial to the implementation of this action plan is development of trust. The action plan is the first step in building a strong, ongoing relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. The establishment of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group (the Reference Group) will be pivotal in ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are represented and lead the direction forward with BCNA.

BCNA acknowledges that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women come from all over Australia: live in major cities as well as remote areas: are at different stages of life: and have different cultural traditions specific to their lands. To reflect this diversity, Reference Group membership will consider a balance of State representation, Elder representation, age and experiences of breast cancer. This will also ensure that needs at a local level are communicated to BCNA.

BCNA strategic directions and relationship with action plan

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnerships - BCNA has improved collaboration and partnerships with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and sector representatives in health, including NACCHO.

Service enhancement - Appropriate and effective methods and models for informing and supporting people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are developed.

Expanding our reach - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are visible and have a voice in the BCNA online and digital space. Culturally appropriate imagery and video content is developed.

Building capacity - BCNA resources and communications materials will be culturally appropriate and relevant at a local level and in partnership with NACCHO.

Strengthening our organisation - BCNA will implement strategies to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation in BCNA's programs by seeking guidance and advice from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group.

A powerful voice - BCNA Community Liaisons are trained, resourced and supported at a local level to advocate on behalf of, and adequately support people diagnosed with breast cancer.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Think Tank at the National Summit in March 2017

In March 2017 BCNA held its first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Think Tank at the BCNA National Summit. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women from all states across Australia were represented.

Priorities that emerged during this process were partnerships with national Aboriginal health organisations to develop resources and ways of improving the pathways of women through their treatment and when they return home.

Future directions and recommendations from the Think Tank are documented below and in the Action Plan table.

Aims of the Think Tank

The aim was to bring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people affected by breast cancer together to share their lived experiences as survivors and to set clear agreed actions in partnership with BCNA about how to improve survival rates and survivorship.

The importance of the consumer voice

'[We try] to get consumers involved right at the beginning, right at the development of ideas... So you are not just paying lip-service to it, but actually getting them involved.

It keeps you honest... You have to actually have consumers as part of the study team. Their names go on the grant. Their names go on the papers that are written. And they are actually part of the study team, rather than a kind of separate advisory team that get fed a little bit of information and then they feed some back.'

–Christobel Saunders, Deputy Head, University of Western Australia School of Surgery and Former Board Member BCNA **Local needs, local responses**

BCNA is committed to ensuring it supports local solutions, designed and delivered to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women diagnosed with breast cancer in their communities. In establishing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Think Tank, BCNA did not prescribe a preferred model of service delivery to States, Territories or communities. This approach will allow communities to establish BCNA local networks and design projects which address the unique support needs, health needs and aspirations of breast cancer survivors that are appropriate for the community context.

This approach – to keep service delivery models firmly situated in their local contexts – emerged out of discussions with the women at the think tank. By keeping solutions contextually relevant, self-determination is encouraged, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems are respected.

Diverse representation

BCNA acknowledges that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are not a homogenous group. Think Tank delegates represented every state and territory, and one delegate was Torres Strait Islander. Representatives were from a range of locations, from remote communities to rural locations, regional cities to state capitals. BCNA was honoured to have Elders in attendance.

Some Think Tank delegates were Aboriginal health professionals in cancer hospitals who contributed valuable information to the Think Tank: however, the membership of the BCNA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group (the Reference Group) will be exclusively Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander breast cancer survivors. Think Tank delegates advised that Reference Group membership should comprise of diversity, including Elders and younger survivors, and reflect urban, rural and regional needs.



Key outcomes and actions

Drawing on the considerable experience of the representatives at the Think Tank four key outcomes and actions were developed:

- **Reference Group:** An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group is developed with diverse representation, to continue the community consultation process and connect women locally.
- **Supporting and resourcing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health sector and increasing peer support for women who have been diagnosed:** In collaboration with NACCHO BCNA will support the empowering of community members and the Aboriginal health workforce through education and training of workforce staff. BCNA will increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Liaisons and Consumer Representatives to provide peer support for women who have been diagnosed with breast cancer.
- **Cultural Healing Projects:** State based artwork from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women affected by breast cancer is developed to create a culturally safe space in cancer hospitals. A social media network (Online Network group) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who have breast cancer is developed. A DVD is developed of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women affected by breast cancer sharing their stories.
- **MOU with NACCHO:** BCNA to work with NACCHO to establish relationships, raise awareness, advocate for improved access to services, build workforce capacity and develop culturally relevant resources.

A table mapping each action to BCNA's strategic directions is provided below, with a more detailed discussion of each action provided after the table.

Mapping the action plan and deliverables with BCNA's strategic plan

Represent – <i>ensure voices are heard</i>	Action	Deliverable
BCNA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander national reference group	An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group is developed with state-wide representation, to continue the community consultation process and connect women locally	<p>Torres Strait Islander National Reference Group (the Reference Group).</p> <p>Representation: The Reference Group will comprise of 10 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women diagnosed with breast cancer. Representation will consider a balance of State representation, Elder representation and younger breast cancer survivors. The initial Reference Group will operate for 12 months to support the recommendations of the Think Tank. Membership will be reviewed annually.</p> <p>The Chair and deputy chair will be appointed by the BCNA CEO. The CEO will sit on the Reference Group.</p> <p>The purpose of the group will be support and capacity building; health and cultural healing promotion, education and training; and research and evaluation.</p>
Strengthening our organization	A Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) will developed for BCNA	The RAP will be prepared for review by senior management by 30 June 2017

Inform – high quality information in a range of formats	Action	Deliverable
Supporting and resourcing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health sector to improve outcomes and pathways for women diagnosed with breast cancer and increasing peer support	In collaboration with NACCHO BCNA will support the empowering of community members and the Aboriginal health workforce through education and training of more Community Liaisons and Consumer Representatives.	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce is supported with up to date resources that are culturally appropriate More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Liaisons and Consumer Representatives are trained and supported by BCNA
Connect – build support for individuals, groups and communities	Action	Deliverable
Seed funding for cultural healing projects to enhance connection and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people	State based artwork from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women affected by breast cancer is developed to create a culturally safe space in cancer hospitals. A social media network (Online Network group) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who have breast cancer is developed A DVD is developed of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women affected by breast cancer	Possum Skin Cloak project April 2017 (Melbourne) Weaving Project May 2017 (Stradbroke Island/Brisbane) DVD production June 2017 Social media connections June 2017 (National)
Support – services, resources and programs	Action	Deliverable

<p>MOU with NACCHO</p>	<p>BCNA to work with NACCHO to establish relationships, raise awareness, advocate for improved access to services, build workforce capacity and develop culturally relevant resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand the reach of quality, targeted breast cancer information at Forums to current and new BCNA members and supporters in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities • Increase the efficiency of forum delivery, enhance our presence and better target information to local communities as guided and in partnership with Aboriginal Health Services and NACCHO. • Develop a marketing strategy to increase attendance of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at the forums, including social media marketing. • Review and evaluate current program information forums with an aim of improving the format, content and structure of the forums to ensure cultural relevance at a local level. • Align forums with State of the Nation consultations and other BCNA events and activities to ensure Aboriginal Health Services and State representatives from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group are an integral part of resourcing and supporting their own communities.
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BCNA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander National Reference Group

I definitely heard that BCNA has the intent to partner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people affected by breast cancer though as this was the first step to engaging or bringing the voices together the participants need to be reassured/informed how continuity will be expressed. In this session my table and others reminded us of the need to develop TRUST as a priority.

A priority of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Think Tank was to establish a BCNA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander National Reference Group (the Reference Group).

Purpose

The Reference Group would guide all aspects of BCNA's work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The Reference Group would guide any resource development, discuss training options and projects at a local level.

The BCNA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group's role involves working with communities to promote the spiritual, social, emotional, and physical health and wellbeing of individuals effected by breast cancer through its core functions of:

- **Support and Capacity Building** – identifying and supporting the capacity building of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health initiatives in breast cancer research, or gaps in service delivery, at the community level and in response to community needs, by providing relevant research and acting in an advocacy role to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices are heard;
- **Health and Cultural Healing Promotion, Education and Training** – facilitating the promotion and education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their communities affected by breast cancer, including skills training and resourcing of Community Liaisons and Consumer Representatives at a local level.
- **Research & Evaluation** – contributing to an evidence base for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander breast cancer research through community-driven and culturally-appropriate research and evaluation.

Representation

The Reference Group will comprise of a maximum of 10 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women diagnosed with breast cancer. Representation will consist of a balance of state and territory representation, Elder representation and younger breast cancer survivors.

The initial Reference Group will operate for 12 months to support the recommendations of the Think Tank. Membership will be reviewed annually.

The Chair and deputy chair will be appointed by the BCNA CEO. The CEO will sit on the Reference Group.

Guiding Values

Guiding values for the BCNA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group in conduct of its business are:

- Respect
- Spirit and Integrity
- Cultural Safety and Security
- State representation
- Reciprocity
- Professionalism
- Accountability and Responsibility
- Equity

Functions of Reference Group members

- Increase opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Liaisons (CLs) and Community Representatives (CRs).
- Support CL's and CR's at a State based level
- Strengthen the capacity of women to confidently engage communities, share their story and effectively promote BCNA services and programs
- Increase the diversity of trained and active CLs and CRs
- Develop planning cycle that aligns CLs and CRs with events, forums and State of the Nation project.
- Empower CLs and CRs to create opportunities and provide supports for them to do this at a local community level.
- Develop and evaluate online training programs and resources for specific roles, including recommendations for future training approaches.
- Trial and evaluate a campaign approach to promoting BCNA resources in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- Tailor recruitment and training strategies to target Aboriginal women in rural/remote locations.



BCNA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Think Tank

Supporting and resourcing the Aboriginal health sector to improve outcomes and pathways for women diagnosed with breast cancer and increasing peer support

My experience has been supported by BCNA being an Aboriginal Community Liaison and meeting with other Aboriginal women diagnosed with cancer at state forums and networking for all new ways for our women for support, access and promotion.

Empowering community members and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce through education and training is a key part of the support role of BCNA.

BCNA acknowledges the complex nature of the work the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce are asked to carry. Evidence from NACCHO is that when Aboriginal Health Services and Aboriginal Liaison Officers in hospitals are supported with access to up to date resources and emerging research, their capacity to provide services to their community improves: support to people returning to community after treatment improves as a consequence.

Acknowledging the vital role of community support, BCNA trains Community Liaisons (CL's). CL's operate in their community to provide support to other women facing breast cancer. Guided by the Reference Group, BCNA will endeavour to train more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander CL's to empower and equip them to support other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experiencing breast cancer.

Similarly, BCNA trains Consumer Representatives (CR's). Consumer representatives are well-informed on the range of issues important to BCNA members. They regularly engage in discussions with committee or group members and are considerate of the diverse needs and views of women with breast cancer. BCNA CR's contribute in many ways, including providing input on funding applications, advising on project methodologies and results, assisting with information statements and consent documentation, assisting with clinical trial recruitment, and sharing research findings. A key role of the community liaisons will also be supporting other women through a peer support framework.

Action

- BCNA will inform NACCHO of forums and locations to ensure member AHS are invited to participate professionally and to invite consumers.
- Indigenous Allied Health Association (IAHA) will be invited to forums locally to establish professional relationships and support those diagnosed with breast cancer at a local level.
- With the direction of the Reference Group, BCNA will upskill and equip more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to act as CL's and CR's to ensure their voices are heard in all aspects of breast cancer decision making

Culture is Healing projects

More work needed to be done exploring what culturally safe and responsive practice and services look like. Just the beginning of the journey.

The Think Tank prioritised 'Culture is Healing' projects to bring people diagnosed with breast cancer together at a local level to support each other while participating in cultural arts projects.

A number of studies (Christou and Thompson 2013; Manderson and Hoban, 2006; McGrath et al, 2015; Micklem, 2015; Shahid et al, 2009; Thompson et al, 2014) have found that making the hospital environment more welcoming to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is a way of increasing cultural safety with a flow on effect that more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will feel safe to engage with hospital and medical services.

As Camic (2008) states, using arts in healthcare is an idea that has been around for some time (p. 288). Arts in health has applications for the management and prevention of disease, policy development, and the physicality of the health care environment itself (Camic, 2008, p. 288). Communal arts projects build feelings of mutuality and belonging: they can also offer people an opportunity to explore the meaning of the uncertainties of physical illness (Camic, 2008). While Putland (2008) identifies that there are complex issues around the discourses of arts and arts in the healthcare setting, there are many compelling examples from Australia and internationally of projects where art and other aspects of indigenous culture have been used to create cultural safety and improve health outcomes. In the United Kingdom a range of programs are offered as part of Art on Prescription (AoP), with evidence demonstrating that participating in creative activities with others and producing something tangible contributes to positive health outcomes (Bungay and Clift, 2010). A systematic review of the literature on art and healing in the United States by Stuckey and Nobel found that there was considerable evidence that arts programs – specifically music, visual arts, movement-based activities and expressive writing – were associated with strong outcomes for patients, leading them to state:

Through creativity and imagination, we find our identity and our reservoir of healing
(Stuckey and Nobel, 2010, p.261)

In light of this, and feedback from the think tank, BCNA will be funding two cultural healing projects to occur in this financial year (June 2017):

- Possum skin cloak project – Victoria
- Weaving project – Brisbane

Additional funding sources will be explored to allow State based and regional projects to occur.

Cultural healing can be a tool to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women receiving breast cancer care are supported in a culturally safe and supportive environment. Culture is a healing tool in a holistic sense, for women after diagnosis and treatment, to be connected and support each other through culturally relevant and meaningful healing work in the form of art practices from their region and community.

Understanding that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are diverse within clans, regions, states and territories, BCNA will support the development of culturally safe spaces at a

local community level. Funding opportunities will be explored to enable projects to be state and territory based.

The projects will employ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists in each state and territory who have been affected by breast cancer (themselves or family members) to create artwork that can be gifted to the regional oncology ward of the hospital most frequently used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women for treatment.

BCNA resources and symbols will be framed with the artwork to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women visibly link resources and services to visible artwork. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders of these projects will work with health professionals to develop cultural awareness training at a local level.

Possum skin cloak project

The partnership between BCNA and Peter McCallum Cancer Centre in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in breast cancer treatment and their holistic health needs is crucial to their long-term well-being. Their spiritual, cultural, social, emotional, mental and physiological well-being will be enhanced and supported in this new initiative that links traditional cultural practice to long term health and well-being outcomes.

This project brings together Victorian Aboriginal women breast cancer survivors who are members of BCNA. They will establish a network and be supported through the production of a possum skin cloak which will be then used at Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre by Aboriginal women in their cancer treatment.

The partnership between Peter McCallum Cancer Centre and BCNA will be strengthened through this meaningful project. The power of sharing cultural knowledge and empowering women on their cancer journey cannot be underestimated.

The Elders leading the project will train health professionals in the cultural significance of the cloak and Victorian Aboriginal culture. Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, in partnership with BCNA understand that improving engagement with our local Aboriginal communities, and creating a welcoming and culturally appropriate care environment for Aboriginal people, we seek to contribute to closing the gap in the life expectancy differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians.

The sustainability of this project will be the physical resource of the cloak that will be used by Aboriginal women having cancer treatment. They will be physically wrapped in culture at a time that women stated they were most vulnerable - during cancer treatment.

Health professionals at Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre will receive cultural awareness training from Aboriginal leaders of the project. Understanding the cultural significance of the possum skin cloak and Victorian Aboriginal cultural practices will contribute to the cultural safety of women during treatment.

Strategies and activities

Assisting hospitals to improve cultural safety and competency

The training of health professionals by Aboriginal artist, historian and educator, Vicki Couzens, will provide hospital staff with cultural knowledge and respect of traditional practices that has not been delivered previously. This new initiative will develop the skills and competencies of the staff but as importantly, enhance the cultural competencies of the hospital as a whole. In doing so, Aboriginal women will see themselves reflected in this space and will be more likely to return to cancer treatment. It is expected that by acknowledging and respecting traditional cultural practices we will improve access issues of cultural safety for Aboriginal people diagnosed with breast cancer.

Fostering creativity to enrich lives

Aboriginal knowledge holders will guide 10 Aboriginal women diagnosed with breast cancer, through the process of creating a possum skin cloak and creating designs that are then burnt onto the possum skin cloak. For some Aboriginal women, this may be their first opportunity to have a voice and use creativity to heal from grief and their common diagnosis of breast cancer.

Strengthening collective capacity

Aboriginal knowledge holders will build on the cultural capacity of the 10 Aboriginal women diagnosed with breast cancer that participate in this series of workshops. This process strengthens their cultural identity, holistic health, and sense of belonging as breast cancer survivors.

Building collaborative cultural networks

Through this project the Aboriginal women diagnosed with breast cancer will connect with leaders to develop collaborative cultural networks. The long-term goal is that the cloak will be used by Aboriginal women during cancer treatment. Other women having treatment will use the cloak knowing that Aboriginal women who have lived this experience, have created this cultural healing cloak to support their journey.

The partnership with Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre will ensure Aboriginal leaders oversee discussions regarding cultural safety and healing in a cultural context. Vicki Couzens, senior cultural knowledge holder, will document the journey of the women creating the cloak. The creation of a booklet will accompany the cloak and explain its significance to Victorian Aboriginal people.

A detailed plan of the possum skin cloak project is provided below.

Session	Dates	Location	Activity	Facilitators
One	20 May 2017	Peter MaCallum Cancer Centre	<p>20 Aboriginal women living with breast cancer will come together with Elders to create a cloak.</p> <p>Vicki will discuss the significance of the cloaks and different Victorian designs that appeared on cloaks in the past. Designs will be explored and explained.</p> <p>Women diagnosed with breast cancer start creating the designs that they would like to see on the cloak. Sourcing information about particular tribes or stories – this will be led by the facilitators.</p>	Vicki Couzens, Aunty Esther Kirby and Gina Bundle
Two	21 May 2017	Peter MaCallum Cancer Centre	Breast cancer survivors work on cutting the skins, laying out the skins, and sewing the cloak.	Vicki Couzens, Aunty Esther Kirby and Gina Bundle
Three	22 May 2017	Peter MaCallum Cancer Centre	<p>The women will transfer their designs onto the cloak with poker tools and ochre.</p> <p>Completion of the cloak.</p> <p>Celebration and smoking of the cloak.</p>	Vicki Couzens, Aunty Esther Kirby and Gina Bundle
Four	June 2017	Peter MaCallum Cancer Centre	<p>Vicki will work in partnership with Geri McDonald, Director Wellbeing, Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre to deliver training to health professionals regarding the cultural significance of the possum skin cloak and the emotions that may be raised by women wearing the cloak.</p> <p>A booklet will accompany the cloak, with photos of the creation, the historical and cultural significance.</p>	Vicki Couzens, Aunty Esther Kirby and Gina Bundle
Five	July 2017	Peter MaCallum cancer hospital	Launch – to coincide with NAIDOC Week	Vicki Couzens and Aunty Esther

Queensland Weaving Project

To ensure Aboriginal women receiving breast cancer care are supported in a culturally safe and supportive environment and connect with one another to develop support networks within their region.

Cultural connections and traditional art projects, such as the Queensland weaving project will bring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women together sharing cultural traditions of their area.

Understanding that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are diverse within clans, regions and States, BCNA will support the development of culturally safe spaces at a local community level.

Strategies and activities

Stradbroke Island Aboriginal weaver, Sonja Carmichael will facilitate two days of weaving workshops with Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander breast cancer survivors. The workshops will take place at the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Service in Brisbane.

The final art installation will be framed and gifted to the oncology ward of the local hospital most frequently used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander women. The network of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander women will continue to meet and support one another on their journey as breast cancer survivors.

BCNA will:

- Employ an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artist breast cancer survivor to work with women who are living with breast cancer. They will create a joint weaving installation that can be gifted to the regional oncology ward of the hospital most frequently utilised by Aboriginal women for treatment.
- Raise awareness of the importance of culture as a healing tool to connect women breast cancer survivors and provide them with the opportunity to share a cultural exchange while creating an artwork
- Partner with hospitals to promote cultural competency
- Link the artwork with BCNA branding to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women visibly link BCNA resources and services to their artwork.

Social media project

The Think Tank and BCNA have prioritized improving accessibility to online resources and improving the visibility and presence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people diagnosed with breast cancer.

A growing body of research indicates that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are active on social media to a greater extent than non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Balough (2014) identified that 70 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people own a smartphone, compared with 66 per cent of the overall population of Australia: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are also more likely to be members of a social networking site, such as Facebook, compared to the overall Australian population. Carlson (2013) has explored the way that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity is expressed online, and the role that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups on sites such as Facebook can play in extending and developing relationships with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: those who are known in real life and those who are known online. Social media allows for the collectives of people with shared experiences and identities to come together, negotiate relationships, and 'self-write' their identity (Petray, 2013). Online networks are already frequently used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as well as other First Nations peoples internationally, as a way of providing support, connection, and a sense of shared cultural identity.

Rationale

Guided by the reference group, BCNA will ensure there is a visible presence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in all aspects of publications and communications. This will be evident by:

- An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander closed group on BCNA's online network
- A DVD of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women sharing their breast cancer journey, to be used on the website during community forums and used by Aboriginal Health Services for health promotion.

BCNA will create a closed online network for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their families to access support, information and resources online.

There will be an improved presence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in BCNA publications, including The Beacon magazine and The Inside Story.

Appropriate and effective methods and models for informing and supporting people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities will be developed and shared online to ensure Aboriginal health professionals and people diagnosed with breast cancer have access to the most recent information regarding breast cancer research.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will be visible and have a voice in the BCNA online and digital space. Culturally appropriate imagery and video content will be developed.

BCNA resources and communications materials will be culturally appropriate and relevant at a local level. These will be developed in partnership with NACCHO.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander on line network will facilitate the promotion and education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their communities effected by breast cancer. Online support will include skills training and resourcing of BCNA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Liaisons at a local level. Social media resources will enhance the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health professionals and BCNA Community Liaisons to be better resourced to deliver a service within their communities.

Strategies and activities

- BCNA will develop a closed online site that will
 - increase the visibility and visual presence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
 - connect and support families sharing their lived experiences with breast cancer
 - provide people diagnosed with breast cancer with online support and advice from the helpline
- A DVD of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women sharing their breast cancer journey will be used:
 - online to inform and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people recently diagnosed
 - by Aboriginal Health Services, in partnership with NACCHO as a health promotion tool

MOU with NACCHO

Would be good for BCNA to look at partnerships with some key peak bodies, like IAHA. Would be good to look at workforce issues for support for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities.

Recognising that delivering on many of the actions recommended by delegates at the Think Tank can only be achieved in collaboration with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health care services, BCNA will enter into partnership with National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (NACCHO). NACCHO is the national peak body representing local Aboriginal Controlled Health Care Services (ACCHSs), which range from large multi-functional services with several medical practitioners to small services where Aboriginal Health Workers and/or nurses provide the bulk of primary healthcare services. ACCHSs often have a preventative health and education focus, and form a network while maintaining their own autonomy. The services are independent of each other and of government, and are in keeping with the philosophy of Aboriginal community control and a holistic view of health.

BCNA's MOU with NACCHO will focus on:

- Raise awareness of the partnership to support NACCHO member organisations (160 Aboriginal Health Services nationally) to provide relevant and up to date research on breast cancer and its impact on Aboriginal people nationally.
- Explore the opportunities to build the capacity of the Aboriginal health workforce by providing training and support with BCNA Community Liaisons to improve pathways for people diagnosed with breast cancer returning home to community after treatment.
- Explore the partnership of culturally relevant resource development, distribution and information to NACCHO member health organisations nationally.

BCNA will work in partnership with NACCHO to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women with knowledge through BCNA's Information Forums. This will involve:

- Expanding the reach of quality, targeted breast cancer information at Forums to current and new BCNA members and supporters in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- Increasing the efficiency of forum delivery, enhancing our presence and better targeting information to local communities as guided and in partnership with Aboriginal Health Services and NACCHO
- Developing a marketing strategy to increase attendance of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at information forums, including social media marketing
- Review and evaluate current program information forums with an aim of improving the format, content and structure of the forums to ensure cultural relevance at a local level
- Align forums with State of the Nation consultations and other BCNA events and activities to ensure Aboriginal Health Services and State representatives from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group are an integral part of resourcing and supporting their own communities.

Action:

- BCNA will enter into partnership with NACCHO via an MOU
- BCNA will inform NACCHO of forums and locations to ensure member AHS are invited to participate professionally and to invite consumers.
- Indigenous Allied Health Association (IAHA) will be invited to forums locally to establish professional relationships and support those diagnosed with breast cancer at a local level.

Evaluation

A six-month review survey of all delegates from the Think Tank will evaluate:

- The Reference Group's capacity to meet, design and deliver projects at a community level
- Whether partnerships, networks and working relationships developed at the Think Tank have continued once delegates returned home
- The success and challenges of projects such as CL and CR training and resourcing, online network connections and Cultural Healing projects
- Ongoing work and focus changes as needed at a local community level to improve access, resources, information and support to women after diagnosis

Projects

Data collected from funded projects will provide information about each project's performance in line with service agreements. Data will also be collected on agreed outcomes and associated indicators. This data, together with project case studies, will provide a picture of the effectiveness of the cultural healing projects and how they contribute to the larger health, well-being and healing agenda for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Increased participation

Data will be collected to measure the increased number of Aboriginal women participating in BCNA forums, online networks, training and regional networks. The numbers of people participating in 'Culture is Healing' projects will be recorded and evaluated.

Challenges

- Ongoing connection through the BCNA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group.
- Measuring effectiveness of systems and pathways support and access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people effected by breast cancer.
- Financial constraints of localised training and Cultural Healing projects. Partnerships will be strengthened and focused to ensure sustainability.

Conclusions

BCNA looks forward to working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to support a better journey for people with breast cancer. This involves implementing the following recommendations:

Recommendations

1. Establishment of a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group comprising of breast cancer survivors. Membership will comprise of two delegates from each State, one Elder and one younger woman. State representation from a rural and regional delegate will support broader representation. This reference group will continue to guide BCNA in all areas of design, development and delivery of services and support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women diagnosed with breast cancer.
2. State based training of Community Liaisons and Consumer Representatives will support resourcing and information dissemination at a local level, while ensuring resources are meaningful, relevant and culturally and linguistically relevant to that area.
3. MOU and partnership agreement with NACCHO to support the development of culturally appropriate resources and training. This partnership aims to strengthen the relationship between BCNA and Aboriginal Health Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health professionals nationally.
4. The establishment of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander online network to share resources and information and support for families of women diagnosed with breast cancer. The visibility of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people online will make this service relevant, accessible and meaningful as a platform for families to share their lived experiences.
5. 'Culture is Healing' projects which bring breast cancer survivors together to share culture and strengthen their well-being. These projects will be designed, delivered and implemented as relevant at a local level. The Victorian possum skin cloak project and the Brisbane weaving project will begin in April 2017.
6. Working collaboratively with BCNA's State of the Nation campaign to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to have an active voice in all data reporting from BCNA to address the disparity in the health gaps between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the wider community.

Acknowledgements and Further information

BCNA is grateful for the generosity of the 48 participants of the Think Tank. It was a privilege to learn from their experiences with breast cancer and their sharing has enriched this plan. Special thanks also to Professor Jacinta Elston for her guidance.

Further information is provided at the following documents:

[Appendix A: Feedback from Think Tank participants](#)

[Appendix B: Literature Review](#)

[Appendix C: MOU with NACCHO](#)

