

Assessment of the training framework for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Respiratory Infection POCT Program

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Background

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Respiratory Infection Point-of-Care Testing (RIPOCT) Program (previously COVID-19 Point-of-Care Testing [POCT] Program) encompasses multiplexed molecular SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19), Influenza A, Influenza B and Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) testing using the Cepheid GeneXpert®. A total of 102 health services in regional/remote locations across six Australian states/territories are currently enrolled in the program, as endorsed by the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Protection Sub-committee of the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (formerly the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group on COVID-19). The program has aligned with changes in the Australian public health COVID-19 response. Here we describe the training and competency framework essential to the conduct of POCT and analytical quality of test results.



Fig 1. The Cepheid GeneXpert®

Methods

The operator training framework and resource package

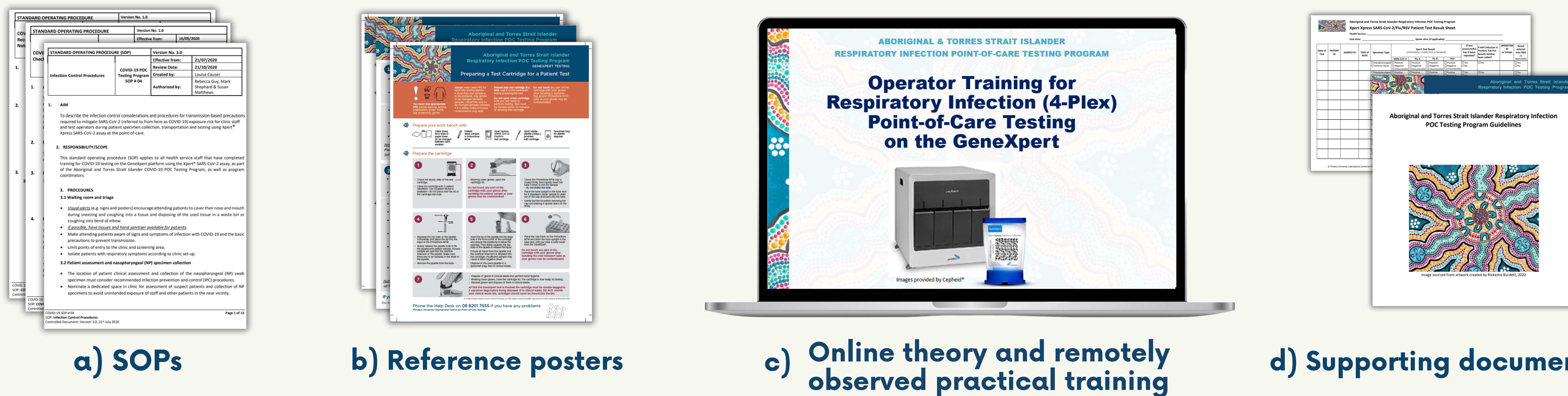


Fig 2. Examples of RIPOCT training materials; a) Standard operating procedures (SOPs), b) Reference posters, c) Online theory and remotely observed practical training, and d) Supporting documentation

The operator training framework and resource package includes prerequisite work health and safety modules, online theory and remotely observed practical training, reference posters, standard operating procedures (SOPs), and supporting documentation. Successful completion of written and practical competency assessment underpins POCT operator certification for one year. For recertification and/or POCT operators transitioning from COVID-19 POCT to RIPOCT, completion of truncated online theory training, written assessment and self-directed practical assessment is required.

Results

Since the program began in May 2020...

- More than 1260 COVID-19 POCT and RIPOCT theory and practical training sessions (>1780 hours) have been delivered as of January 2023.
- A total of 826 operators achieved competency in COVID-19 POCT and/or RIPOCT (Fig 3).
- The breakdown by location of POCT operators who completed the competency assessments are shown in Fig 4.
- Fig 5 displays competency achieved by health profession.

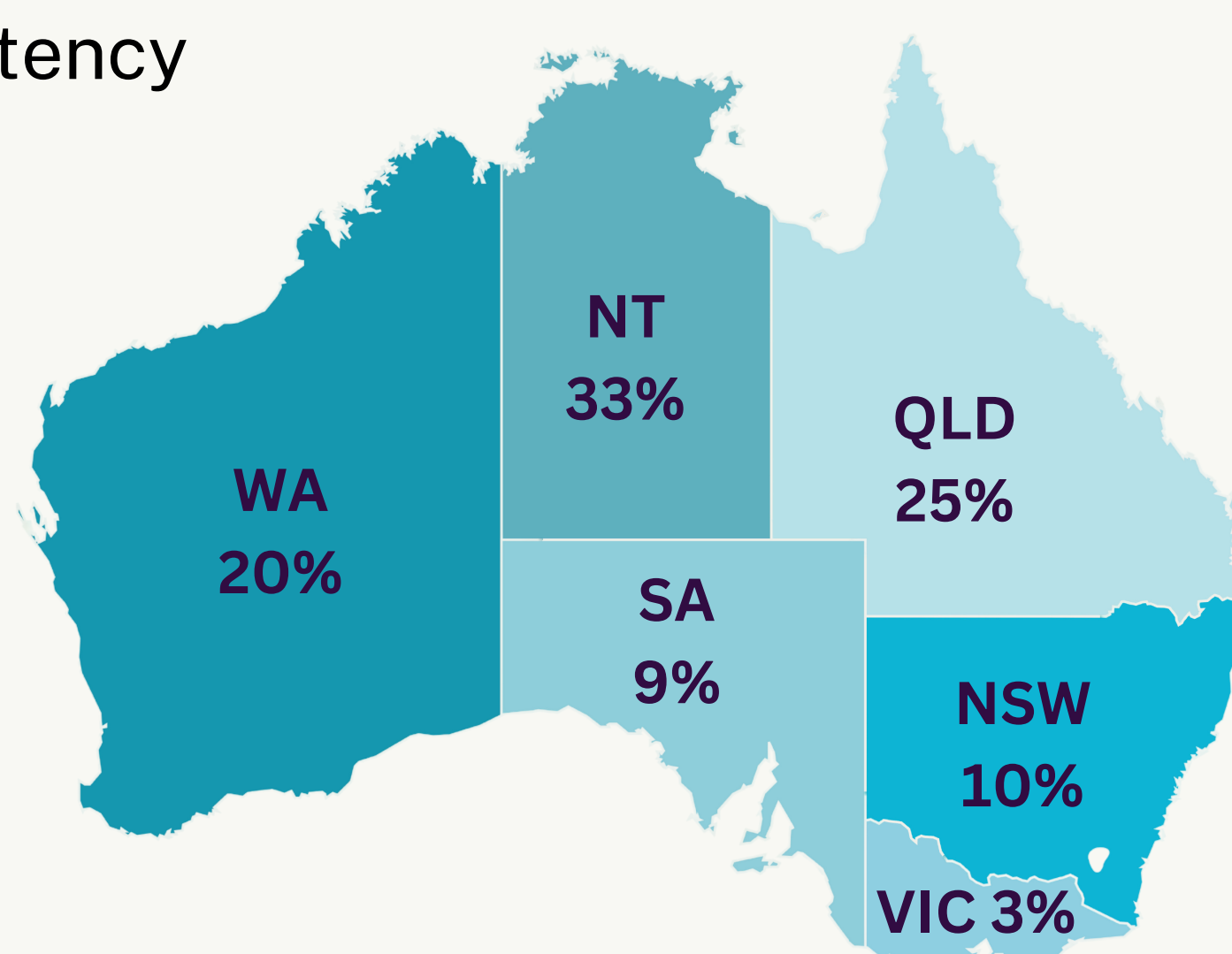


Figure 4. COVID-19 POCT and RIPOCT competencies achieved in each Australian state/territory as a percentage of total RIPOCT and COVID-19 POCT competencies achieved

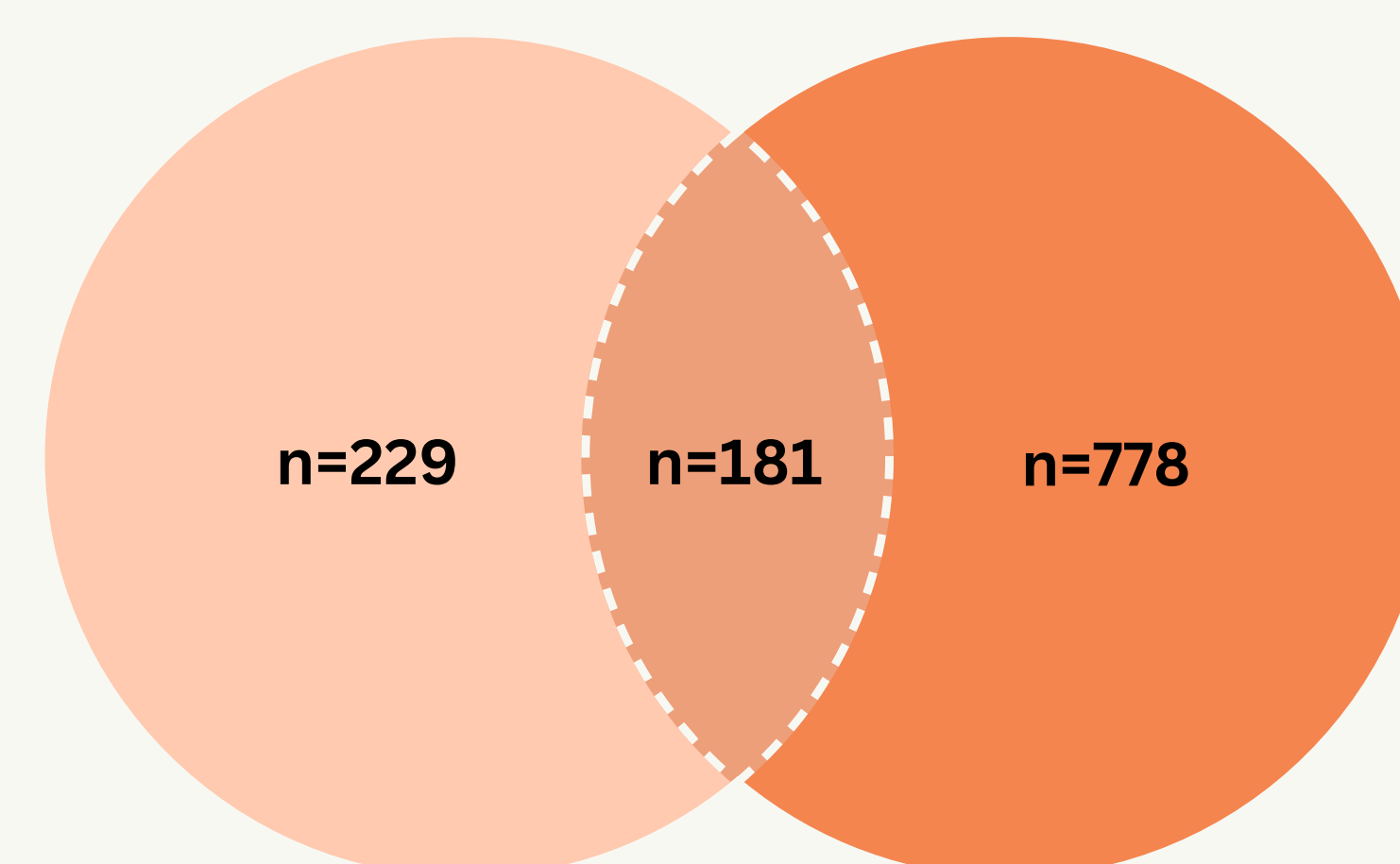


Figure 3. Breakdown of COVID-19 POCT and RIPOCT competencies achieved

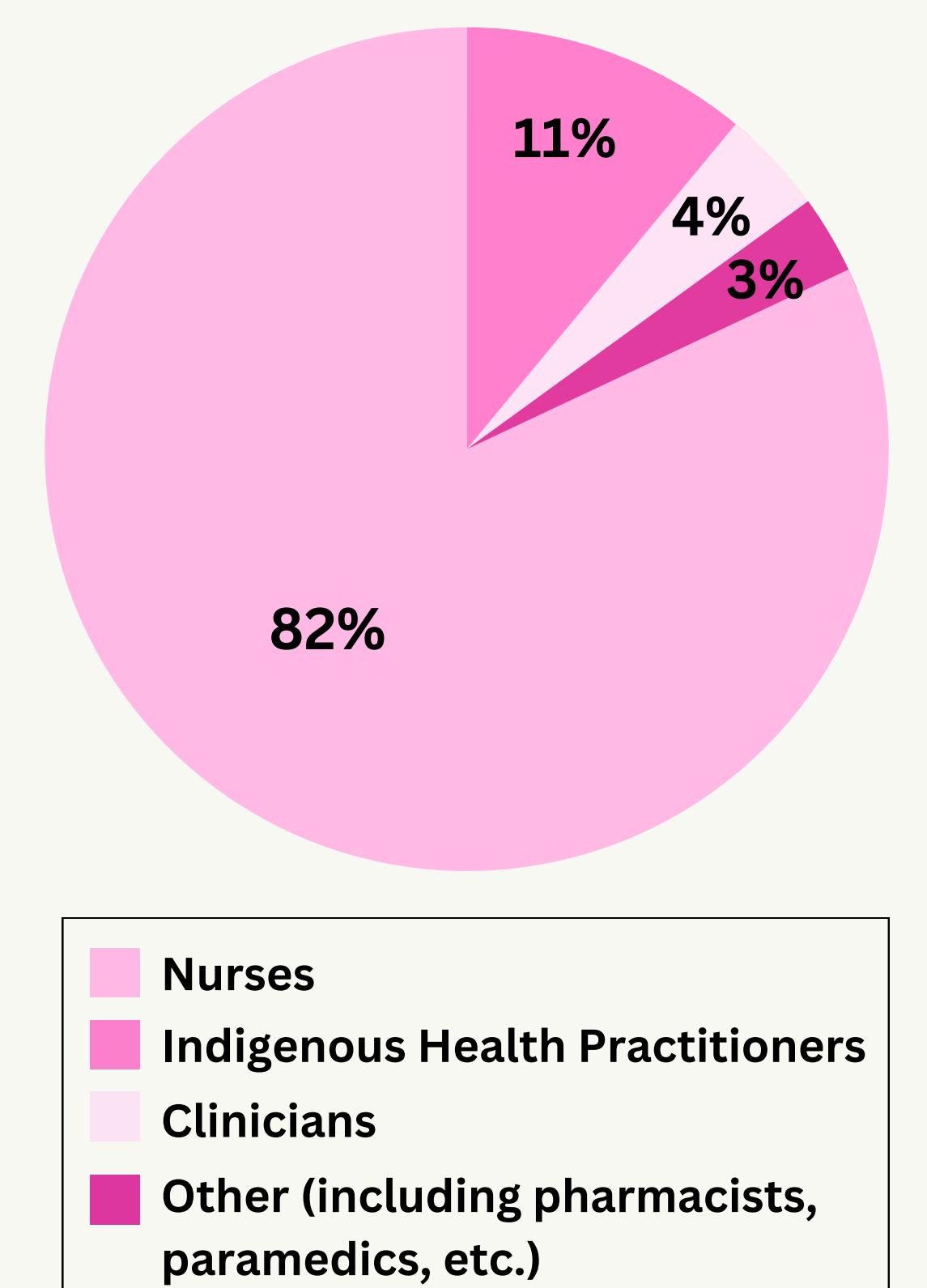


Figure 5. Descending breakdown of total COVID-19 POCT and RIPOCT competencies achieved by profession

Conclusion

- The training framework described here has facilitated a strong workforce of local POCT operators that are able to conduct RIPOCT safely in regional/remote primary health care settings.
- The training system will be further developed to continue to align with national POCT regulations, but offered in more flexible formats for health service staff, including integrated training modules via an online learning management system.

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