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BOLSTERING INDIGENOUS HEALTH WORKFORCE KEY TO CLOSING THE GAP

On Close the Gap Day the AMA has said it is committed to supporting the growth of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors across the Australian medical workforce, highlighting that more needs to be done to support medical education and training opportunities across all areas of medicine.

AMA President Dr Omar Khorshid said Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors offer unique perspectives and expertise yet remain under-represented in Australia’s health workforce. “We know that culturally safe health care leads to better health outcomes both in terms of access to health care and treatment. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians have a right to access appropriate, affordable, and responsive health care – wherever they are in Australia,” he said.

“The AMA is also committed to embedding cultural safety across the medical profession to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can access appropriate and responsive health care. Everyone has a role to play.”

Dr Khorshid said the AMA was a proud member of the Close the Gap Campaign Steering Committee and said governments were just not doing enough to close the gap. He said more commitment and action was needed to create systematic transformation.

He said the AMA supported the recommendations from the 2022 Close the Gap report, [*Transforming Power: Voices for Generational Change*](#), released today, which included:

- Full implementation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, including an enshrined Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament.
- Full implementation of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2021–2031 and other supporting plans, with a commitment to long term (10+ years) needs-based and coordinated cross-sectional funding by Commonwealth, State, Territory and local governments.
- Investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led data development at the local level and uphold the principals of Data Governance and Sovereignty by empowering communities and individuals to access place-based data to design community-driven initiatives.
- Development of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led research agenda for health and wellbeing, with a particular focus on the impacts of systematic racism in health systems. This should include an investment in knowledge translation and research impact.

“The AMA is committed to the growth of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors across the Australian medical workforce. Not only does parity improve the current workforce gaps, but also brings a depth of knowledge, experience and diverse perspectives into the health system.

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led organisations and programs are leading the way in strengthening the health and wellbeing of communities. We saw this as communities and the community-controlled sector took control of the response to the threat of Covid-19 with a coordinated, swift and culturally appropriate response.

“Close the Gap Day is not only a reminder that we have more work to do, but it’s also a chance to take pause, and listen to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and honour their experience and direction,” Dr Khorshid said.

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