

Australian Medical Association Limited
ABN 37 008 426 793

42 Macquarie Street, Barton ACT 2600: PO Box 6090, Kingston ACT 2604
 Telephone: (02) 6270 5400 Facsimile (02) 6270 5499
 Website : <http://www.ama.com.au/>



AMA CALLS FOR TARGETS TO INCREASE DIVERSITY IN MEDICAL WORKFORCE

AMA Position Statement on Equal Opportunity in the Medical Workforce

The AMA has called for targets to increase the proportion of women in health leadership positions, and the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the medical workforce.

AMA President, Dr Michael Gannon, today released the *AMA Position Statement on Equal Opportunity in the Medical Workforce*.

“The medical workforce should reflect the diversity of the patients it cares for. Doctors from diverse backgrounds bring skills and perspectives that enable the medical workforce to be more responsive and empathetic, not only to individual patient needs but to broader community needs,” Dr Gannon said.

“The AMA recognises that there is an under-representation of women in leadership positions in the medical workforce, and an under-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people throughout the health care sector.

“The AMA supports targets to address the current under-representation in the medical workforce, including medical students, of women and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

“Targets should be realistic, and must continue to be merit-based, but organisations should have a range of positive strategies and initiatives to attract doctors from diverse backgrounds.”

Currently, fewer than 12.5 per cent of hospitals with 1000 employees or more have a female chief executive, and only 28 per cent of medical schools have female deans. Women make up one-third of State and Federal chief medical officers or chief health officers.

In 2012, there were 221 medical practitioners employed in Australia who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander – representing 0.3 per cent of all employed medical practitioners who chose to provide their Indigenous status.

In 2015, the Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand reported that a total of 265 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical students were enrolled across all year levels. Of the 15 medical colleges, four have never had an Indigenous trainee.

“Medical workplaces and training providers must find ways to support Indigenous trainees and medical practitioners,” Dr Gannon said.

“Removing the barriers to employment and training, coupled with targeted recruitment, promotion, retention, and support strategies, will help to achieve a diverse workforce that can respond to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients and communities.”

Dr Gannon encouraged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students currently studying medicine at an Australian university to apply for the 2017 AMA Indigenous Peoples’ Medical Scholarship. Successful applicants will receive \$10,000 each year for the duration of their course.

“There is evidence that there is a greater chance of improved health outcomes when Indigenous people are treated by Indigenous doctors and health professionals,” Dr Gannon said.

“Increasing the number of Indigenous doctors and health workers improves access to culturally appropriate health care and services, and ensures medical services respond properly to the unique needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.”

Applications close on 31 January. More information can be found at

<https://ama.com.au/article/applications-2017-ama-indigenous-peoples%E2%80%99-medical-scholarship-close-31-january-2017>

The AMA also called on workplaces and training providers to ensure that they had processes for reporting and responding to any complaints relating to equal opportunity, and to develop policies on bullying and harassment, flexible work arrangements, return to work following extended leave, doctors’ health and wellbeing, and cultural safety.

The AMA *Position Statement on Equal Opportunity in the Medical Workforce* can be found at <https://ama.com.au/position-statement/equal-opportunity-medical-workforce-2016>

5 January 2017

CONTACT: John Flannery 02 6270 5477 / 0419 494 761
 Maria Hawthorne 02 6270 5478 / 0427 209 753

Follow the AMA Media on Twitter: http://twitter.com/ama_media

Follow the AMA President on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/amapresident>

Follow *Australian Medicine* on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/amaausmed>

Like the AMA on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/AustralianMedicalAssociation>