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**GENUINE COLLABORATION NEEDED TO MAKE BIG ADVANCES IN
 CLOSING THE GAP**

National Close the Gap Day, 17 March 2016

AMA President, Professor Brian Owler, said today that Australia needs to see an era of genuine collaboration between all political parties to close the Indigenous health gap.

On National Close the Gap Day, Professor Owler said that all levels of government, government agencies and departments, and health services must work together if significant enduring advances in closing the health gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians are to be achieved, and for Close the Gap justice targets to be met.

“Good intentions need to be transformed into tangible actions to achieve widespread improvements in health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders,” Professor Owler said.

“We have seen encouraging improvements in some areas of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing over recent years, but we need to see consistency of positive outcomes across the country and across the major health indicators.

“Smoking rates are reducing, and we’re on track to halve the mortality rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young children by 2018.

“But much more needs to be done to close health inequality gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

“Health should be a foundation that underpins improvements in other measures as well.

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to experience stubbornly high levels of treatable and preventable conditions, such as type 2 diabetes, rheumatic heart disease, kidney disease, and other life-shortening conditions, high levels of chronic conditions at younger ages, high levels of undetected and untreated chronic conditions, and higher rates of co-morbidity in chronic disease.

“Indigenous Australians also die 10 years younger than their non-Indigenous peers on average, but in many areas there is a 20 year difference in life expectancy.

“As a nation, we have changed the way we talk about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and, as a nation, we can now take the next step to close the health and life expectancy gap.

“National Close the Gap Day is an important reminder for all Australians to take action and support Indigenous health equality.

“Closing the gap is everybody’s business.”

This year is the tenth anniversary of the Close the Gap campaign to address the health inequality that exists between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

The Close the Gap Coalition — a grouping of Indigenous and non-Indigenous health and community organisations — has the support of nearly 200,000 Australians in calling on governments to take real, measurable action to achieve Indigenous health equality by 2030.

The AMA, as a proud supporter of the Close the Gap campaign, encourages people to show their commitment to health equality by [signing the pledge](#) to close the gap.

Professor Owler said the AMA believes that closing the health inequality gap is a national priority.

“It is inexcusable that Australia, one of the world’s wealthiest nations, can allow three per cent of its citizens to have poorer health and die younger than the rest of the population.

“A genuine partnership between governments, across the political spectrum, would be a catalyst to achieving significant and much-needed health and lifestyle improvements for all Indigenous Australians.”

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