

**Australian Medical Association Limited**

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**DEATH OF KUMANJAYI WALKER**

The AMA mourns the death of Kumanjayi Walker, and expresses its condolences to his family and to the Yuendumu community.

AMA President, Dr Tony Bartone, said that too many First Australians have died or been mistreated in the criminal justice system.

“Almost 30 years on from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, First Australians continue to die needlessly,” Dr Bartone said today.

“The landmark Royal Commission, that ran for six years from 1987, identified institutional racism within the criminal justice system as the key contributor to harm and avoidable deaths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It appears little has been learnt.”

The Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association petitioned the AMA Federal Council to stand with the people of Yuendumu as the community grieves the death of Mr Walker. The AMA Federal Council in response unanimously expressed support for Mr Walker’s family and his community.

“The tragic death of Mr Walker is now a matter for the courts. The known circumstances of Mr Walker’s death have impacted around the nation. Sadly, the circumstances are all too familiar,” Dr Bartone said.

“It appears that at the time of Mr Walker’s death, health services were not immediately available in Yuendumu, illustrating the practical challenge of health service delivery in remote communities.

“While the courts will deal with the facts and consequences of Mr Walker’s death, we as doctors have to ensure the criminal justice system always protects lives and avoids harm in undertaking law enforcement.

“Doctors must speak out where health service access is either insufficient or not robust. There are often good reasons why health professionals are not available, or have to leave remote communities, but adequate alternatives must always be in place.

“Across Australia, more work is needed to address racism and unconscious bias in every government agency delivering a service to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

“Within the Northern Territory, it’s also time to review the adverse mental health impacts of the Stronger Futures Act 2012. The Act allows police entry to private homes without a warrant or consent of the residents. This leaves some residents fearful of living in their own homes, and adversely impacts mental health,” Dr Bartone said.

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