



IAHA RELEASE

Cultural safety in the health workforce – no time to wait

Available for Immediate Release

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Indigenous Allied Health Australia (IAHA), the peak organisation for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander allied health workforce, is committed to supporting the good health and social and emotional wellbeing of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce, our people, families and communities, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

IAHA stands against all forms of racism and discrimination, which have no place within the health system and Australian communities. Racism has been demonstrated to contribute to poor health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, both by actively causing harm and acting as a barrier to essential care.

IAHA support the release of the *No place for racism in healthcare* statement from Ahpra and the National Boards which calls on practitioners to provide culturally safe care, free from racism. Ahpra acknowledges these issues continue to exist and cites disturbing examples of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been subjected to racism and culturally unsafe care. Unfortunately, these are not isolated instances and can have particularly damaging impacts in these challenging times. Ahpra's work in this area is welcomed and extremely important.

IAHA Chairperson, Nicole Turner said "IAHA joins Ahpra in their message to health practitioners and in condemning all forms of racism and discrimination. IAHA look forward to real change from National Boards and professions in stamping out racism and building cultural safety and responsiveness across the breadth and depth of allied health professions."

IAHA reinforces the message that racism will not be tolerated, whether as people being cared for or providing that care. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health professionals are also subjected to racism, discrimination and unsafe work environments. Under no circumstances should this ever happen.

The existing inequities in health, social and emotional wellbeing and the social determinants of health, place Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at a higher risk of adverse outcomes associated with COVID-19. IAHA, alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peer organisations, have been working with Ahpra and the National Boards to embed cultural safety within the registered professions, in order to improve access to care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This is critical in transforming health practitioner behaviours, attitudes, perspectives and assumptions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



IAHA Chief Executive Officer, Donna Murray, said “during the COVID-19 response, access to culturally responsive health care remains as essential as ever. Not only do we need to ensure appropriate access to COVID-19 testing and treatment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, but primary care and allied health services that help keep people well and support them to be managed away from acute and more high-risk healthcare settings.”

It is important that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities are empowered to expect and receive culturally safe and responsive care and to be able to report instances where services do not meet these standards.

END MESSAGE

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