



AIDA

The Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association
ABN: 84 131 668 936

MEDIA RELEASE

Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association

13 October 2017

Indigenous doctor mental health and the health care system

Today the Australian Indigenous Doctor's Association (AIDA) released our policy statement entitled [*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctor mental health and emotional wellbeing in the health care system*](#). This statement highlights AIDA's position on doctor mental health and our recommendations on improving doctor mental health outcomes, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical practitioners, who are subject to unique pressures within the health care system.

AIDA is concerned with the prevalence of poor mental health in the doctor workforce, which is affected by long unpaid work hours, excessive workloads, research burdens and high expectations from patients, colleagues and consultants. In addition to these general population issues, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors are additionally affected in the profession through the broader contexts of colonisation, dispossession and intergenerational trauma, as well as community expectations.

The additional pressures facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors were highlighted by the responses to [*beyondblue's 2013 National Mental Health Survey of Doctors and Medical Students*](#), which reported that 24.1% of Indigenous doctors experience increased stress from bullying, compared to 4.4% of non-Indigenous doctors. Furthermore, 15.9% of Indigenous doctors, yet only 1.6% of non-Indigenous doctors, identified racism as a source of workplace stress.

The promotion of good mental health and wellbeing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors is particularly important, not only because of the unacceptable mental health disparity between Indigenous doctors and their non-Indigenous colleagues, but because Indigenous doctors play a crucial role in closing the gap in the health outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

AIDA CEO Craig Dukes said "we know that bullying, racism and harassment have negative impacts on Indigenous doctors, this is in addition to stresses present for the general population. Employers must prioritise mental health and emotional wellbeing for all doctors by targeting the known causes. Furthermore, equal focus must be applied to support Indigenous doctors by implementing a culturally safe health care system free from bullying racism and harassment."

Additional reading

In 2016 AIDA published a policy paper entitled [*Racism in Australia's Health System*](#) that discussed the impacts of bullying and racism, and its effect on the wellbeing of doctors. The paper renewed calls for robust measures in the workforce to address instances of racism and bullying, including lateral and hierarchical natured incidents.

In July 2017 AIDA released [*Bullying, racism and lateral violence in the workplace – Report on the findings of the 2016 AIDA member survey*](#) that outlined Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors being subjected to instances of systemic racism that remain unaddressed and become condoned workplace behaviour.

END MESSAGE

Media enquiries to

P: 02 6273 5013

E: communications@aida.org.au