



Partnership to increase support for Indigenous medical students

The Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association (AIDA) and the Australian Medical Students' Association (AMSA) will formalise their joint commitment to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical students through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The MoU acknowledges their commitment to supporting Indigenous medical students, informing and supporting a culturally safe health care system, and providing input into high level public health policy.

“Growing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical students is a key priority for AIDA, and this agreement will strengthen our relationship and efforts to achieve this joint goal,” said AIDA President Dr Kali Hayward. “As an Aboriginal GP myself, I know only too well the challenges that face our medical students and how much of a difference good support can make to their success in medicine.”

AIDA is a not-for-profit professional association contributing to equitable health and life outcomes, and the cultural wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. AIDA's ultimate goal is to reach population parity of Indigenous doctors, and to inform and support a culturally safe health care system.

AMSA is the peak representative body for Australian medical students. Their key mandate is to connect, inform and represent every one of Australia's 17,000 medical students. AMSA provides an annual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elective Bursary and an annual Rural Elective Bursary for students.

Aboriginal medical student Ms Kersandra Begley was recently elected as AIDA's Student Director and will continue the work in progressing the partnership with AMSA's incoming President Ms Elise Buisson.

Ms Begley is also the Chair of AIDA's Student Representative Committee (SRC), which has an Indigenous representative from most of the medical schools across the country.

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical students face incredible obstacles,” Ms Begley said. “Many students are isolated within their medical schools – some feel pressured to educate peers about culturally safe practices, and are often questioned about their identity or stereotyped. The MoU establishes AIDA and AMSA as allies in making medical school a more culturally safe space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical students. Creating a more understanding culture in medicine, benefits medical students more broadly, informing and improving their future practice.”

As part of the MoU the two associations are committed to growing the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical students and identifying professional development opportunities including access to bursaries, sponsorships and scholarships.

“By establishing strong partnerships with peak bodies such as AMSA, we hope to address the gap in health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples,” said AIDA President Dr Kali Hayward. “This is the first year our SRC has worked collaboratively with the AMSA council, and are now making a commitment to ongoing support and engagement with the MoU.”

The launch of the MoU will take place on Friday 4 December 2015 at AIDA's office in Old Parliament House in Canberra.

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