



AIDA

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

MEDIA RELEASE

Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association

Thursday, 23 July 2020

Indigenous doctors call for public protest to be postponed

The Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association (AIDA) unreservedly supports peoples' right to protest and acknowledges the historic and ongoing role that protest has played in changing laws and practices that have discriminated against Indigenous peoples.

From the 1938 Day of Mourning and the Freedom Rides to the Wave Hill Walk Off, the AIDA remembers those who stood up for equality between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

We also understand the historic devastation that unchecked viral contagions can bring to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

For the sake of our Elders and most vulnerable, AIDA urges people not to attend the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protest marches in Sydney this weekend until the risks of further spread of COVID-19 can be mitigated.

We acknowledge the work of Black Lives Matter protest organisers in limiting the spread of COVID-19 in protests held so far, and do not link existing cases of COVID-19 to previous protests. Despite this, as doctors we are bound to remind everyone that social distancing is still the best way to prevent the further spread of this potentially deadly new virus.

COVID-19 is currently spreading through communities in Victoria and in New South Wales, and restrictions on mass gatherings need to be respected.

The Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association recognises the legacy of racism and calls for greater commitment to justice reinvestment strategies, diversion programs and culturally appropriate approaches that address the core issues of injustice raised by the BLM movement.

We do not encourage any action that will increase the risk of COVID-19 entering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

We will continue to support the community's rights to engage in advocacy and encourage people to protest by other means during this health crisis, due to the inherent danger posed by mass gatherings at this time.

END MESSAGE

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