



AIDA

The Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association
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MEDIA STATEMENT

Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association

7 December 2020

AIDA calls for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led approaches to overcoming Indigenous disadvantage

The Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association (AIDA) welcomes the publication of the *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Report 2020*. AIDA commends the Productivity Commission for developing a report that offers a strengths-based and contextualised review of progress made and work to be done in key areas of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage. AIDA also strongly supports the Commission in highlighting the barriers that undermine Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's wellbeing.

AIDA is pleased to see improvements in some of the early childhood indicators such as health behaviours during pregnancy, child mortality rates and ear health. It is also promising to see improvements in the number of potentially avoidable deaths and a decrease in the rate of smoking. However, even in those improved areas, unacceptable gaps remain between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health outcomes and those for non-Indigenous Australians.

AIDA is alarmed about the regression in other key health and wellbeing indicators such as obesity, mental health, suicide, and self-harm.

Obesity rates among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to increase and AIDA calls on governments at all levels to work in close partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak bodies and the community-controlled health sector to address the growing gap and rise in the burden of chronic disease.

The fact that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults experience high/very high psychological distress at more than double the rate of their non-Indigenous peers clearly indicates that Australia's health system needs to substantially increase its focus on providing more holistic and culturally safe care.

Suicide and self-harm increased by 40 per cent and is twice the rate for non-Indigenous people, and this is an area that is linked to mental health outcomes and community wellness. AIDA advocates for the *Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Declaration* to be widely adopted across the health care system to provide culturally safe and relevant mental health and suicide prevention and treatment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

AIDA calls on federal and state governments to seek out and actively support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led approaches to addressing all of the key indicators to improve the health outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and progress a culturally safe health care system.

END MESSAGE

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