



IAHA Media Release – Allied Health Collaboration Crucial to Close the Gap

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Indigenous Allied Health Australia (IAHA), the national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander allied health organisation, asserts that national commitment, effort and focus within allied health is required to create sustainable generational change and truly close the gap on health inequality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

IAHA member Danielle Dries, a physiotherapist who is now studying Medicine, was pleased to welcome Prime Minister Abbott to speak at the Close the Gap (CTG) Campaign parliamentary event held yesterday to coincide with his second report to parliament on progress towards closing the gap.

“Close the gap is important to me because it means my grandmother doesn’t lose all her siblings before 60 to diabetes,” said Ms Dries. “It means my uncle doesn’t die from a stroke at 53. It means challenging thoughts and beliefs about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and looking toward a positive future in partnership where our children have equality in health care, education and life expectancy.”

“Following the Prime Minister’s address to parliament yesterday we are pleased to see that closing the gap in health equality between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians is still an agreed national priority,” said Ms Donna Murray, IAHA Chief Executive Officer. “IAHA and our partners on the CTG Steering Committee believe that it is imperative that the government stays the course and continues to lead the Closing the Gap strategy, in coordination with all state governments.”

The 2015 Close the Gap Progress and Priorities Report, released yesterday, notes that there are high numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with undetected treatable and preventable chronic conditions that impact significantly on life expectancy.

“We join our partners in urging the Federal Government to focus on equitable access to primary health care services to detect, treat and manage chronic health conditions in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities,” said Ms Faye McMillan, IAHA Chairperson. “Allied health professionals are valuable contributors to health promotion and the ongoing management of chronic conditions within interdisciplinary primary healthcare teams.”

In his speech the Prime Minister stated that even though every community is different, in every community the foundations of success are the same – education, jobs and a safer living environment, underpinned by better health. He also indicated the need to change entrenched and multigenerational disadvantage.

“Strengths based approaches are essential to create generational change and ultimately improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples,” said Ms Murray. “IAHA advocates strongly for interprofessional collaboration across the health sector in order to make significant Indigenous health and life expectancy gains.”

IAHA will continue to work with our members, partner organisations, the allied health sector and governments to support the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander allied health workforce and improve access to allied health services, all of which are crucial to close the gap and achieve health equity within a generation.

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