



**IAHA MEDIA RELEASE:**

**CLOSING THE GAP REPORT 2019 COMMITS TO PARTNERSHIP WITH  
ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES**

**Available for Immediate Release**

**15<sup>th</sup> February 2019**

Indigenous Allied Health Australia (IAHA) Chief Executive Officer, Ms Donna Murray, attended the release of the Closing the Gap Report 2019 by the Hon Scott Morrison MP, Prime Minister of Australia.

IAHA welcomes the Prime Minister reaffirming his commitment to the COAG decision to establish a genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to inform the future direction of Closing the Gap. We share the vision for a partnership where *“we listen, work together and decide together how future policies are developed – especially at a regional and local level.”*

This commitment, above all, is the most fundamental and the most important. While governments are a key partner, these efforts must be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led and co-designed. This new partnership approach is important considering the Prime Ministers Closing the Gap Report to Parliament.

The 2019 Report shows the extent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to experience inequities in indicators for health, social, emotional and economic wellbeing. This is the eleventh Report to Parliament on Closing the Gap. Despite the significant resources invested under Closing the Gap to date, the progress needed to address the inequities in a generation has not been achieved. Much of the resourcing provided has been poorly targeted, failing to acknowledge the value of or support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led solutions. Further, past policy and approaches to the provision of health care have created a health system through which inequitable access to health and wellbeing services is perpetuated.

The challenges Australia as a nation is seeking to overcome arise in the context of colonisation, intergenerational trauma, systemic and other forms of racism. Truth telling is important. Self-determination and local decision-making are also essential to improving health and social and emotional wellbeing outcomes for individuals and communities. The recently released *Australian Reconciliation Barometer* found that 95 per cent of Australians in the general community agree it is important that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a say in matters that affect them



As the peak organisation supporting the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander allied health workforce, IAHA also supports the announcement of:

- the allocation of \$200 million in forward estimates for educational support, including mentoring and academies. In the spirit of the partnership being pursued, these programs also need to be led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations, valuing and being centred on culture; and
- additional financial incentives for teachers to work in very remote areas through reduction in HELP debt. IAHA would encourage expansion of this scheme to include health professionals in remote areas, noting that it is vital for initiatives such as these to be supported by genuine education pathways and job opportunities in remote communities.

IAHA recognises the commitments made by the Australian Labor Party to respect partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should they form government. As Opposition Leader, the Hon Bill Shorten MP, acknowledged in his response *"if we say that we want partnership with our first Australians then we don't get to pick and choose our partners' values or priorities ... you don't get to tell your partner what to think."*

IAHA, as a member of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Coalition of Peaks from across the nation, look forward to providing legitimate community-controlled representation to governments; as signatories to a formal partnership arrangement on a refreshed Closing the Gap framework, holding governments and ourselves to account on progress toward and monitoring of the Closing the Gap targets.

The full *Closing the Gap Report 2019* can be downloaded [here](#).

## END MESSAGE

### Media Enquiries:

Allan Groth  
P: 02 6285 1010  
E: [allan@iaha.com.au](mailto:allan@iaha.com.au)