



IAHA Media Release:

**PLATFORM TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO ESSENTIAL ALLIED HEALTH CARE FOR
ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES**

Available for Immediate Release

26th February 2019

Indigenous Allied Health Australia (IAHA), founded in 2009, is a national not for profit, member-based organisation, building and supporting the growth and practice of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander allied health workforce.

IAHA understands and respects the critical role that the allied health workforce plays in Australia's efforts to transform systems to renew the health and social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The proposed policy agenda set out below will, if fully funded and implemented, help increase access to quality allied health care services to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and enable the improvements in health outcomes all Australian governments have indicated they are committed to achieve.

IAHA calls for and seeks commitment that:

1. *The Implementation Plan of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2013-2023*, and complementary frameworks such as the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Medical Workforce Plan*, be properly costed and resourced to ensure effective implementation. These plans and strategies are key to improving health and wellbeing outcomes and must be co-designed and enabled to operate in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
2. Greater support be provided through these plans to foster major growth in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander allied health workforce, to increase access to services and to deliver and promote culturally safe and responsive care across the health system. Increasing this workforce requires a focus on local, sustainable workforce development and allied health training pathways, integrated with service delivery, and leading to job outcomes.
3. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled services are enabled to increase their capacity to provide holistic, blended models of care to meet demand for allied health and disability services, including in rural and remote areas. Community controlled services are well placed to support and develop the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce and need to have access to funding mechanisms and surety to provide sustainable services.



4. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led allied health research is recognised as being critical to building a culturally informed evidence base for the development of functional Indigenous health policy. Research must be conducted ethically, with a central objective being the translation of knowledge for the benefit of communities and community decision making. Greater emphasis is needed for research demonstrating the value and impact of allied health, as well as opportunities to better utilise allied health to reduce the burden on other areas of the health care system.

IAHA welcomes the recent commitment from the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people *“based on mutual respect between parties and an acceptance that direct engagement and negotiation will be the preferred pathway to productive and effective agreements.”*

IAHA looks forward to continuing to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations, as well as governments through a new agreement, to improve health and social and emotional wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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