



IAHA MEDIA RELEASE

IAHA ACKNOWLEDGE THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION INTO ABORIGINAL DEATHS IN CUSTODY.

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Indigenous Allied Health Australia (IAHA) acknowledges the deep loss and grief of families and friends whose loved ones have passed away while in custody, both before and since the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. Each life lost touches families, communities, and collectively as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

As a community we often express empathy towards experiences of such loss and grief, but we are at our best when we go beyond empathy and act to reduce the causes of that grief and loss. We must do that now. On the 30th Anniversary of the release of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADC) report, IAHA are calling for the full implementation of the recommendations.

As the peak national membership body for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander allied health workforce, IAHA takes very seriously the role it plays in preventing and overcoming health inequalities. IAHA understand that truth telling, healing, and focussing on the cultural determinants of health will help improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, families, and communities now and into the future.

Alongside this, more work is needed to transform mainstream sectors – to increase the cultural safety and accessibility of health care, disability support and other strengthening services, and improve mental health care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The lack of investment in these services shows up in the high human and financial costs associated with our prisons.

We know that systemic racism is a major factor contributing to poorer health and incarceration rates. There is a strong and undeniable link between conditions such as hearing loss, mental ill health and intellectual disability and increased risk of incarceration. Addressing risk factors will reduce the prospect of people interacting with the justice system.

Today, on this 30th anniversary, IAHA makes a pledge to continue working towards challenging and pushing the health and justice systems to do better in delivering positive health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We need true and genuine partnerships, accountability, and to draw on the community and cultural knowledges and strengths to make our systems more responsive and enabling; to prevent more preventable loss of life.

We urge all Australians to take a pause to remember the human cost and lives lost. We can reflect on the past but must also act to put a stop to racism, and together promote the empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to enjoy long and healthy lives, reach their full potential and determine their own futures.

End Message

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