

Working together to close the gap on Indigenous health

Allied Health Professions Australia (AHPA) and its members and friend associations will join Indigenous Allied Health Australia (IAHA) on March 17, 2017 to sign a Statement of Intent that expresses each organisation's commitment to working towards a reduction in the gap in the health status and life expectancy of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

"The 2017 Closing the Gap Report, released in February, showed that Australia is not on track to reduce the gaps in life expectancy and infant mortality, with Indigenous Australian's continuing to live an average of ten years less than non-Indigenous Australians and their children twice as likely to die during infancy", said Professor Lyn Littlefield, AHPA Chairperson.

"We recognise that the allied health sector has an important role to play in supporting improved health outcomes and to reducing the inequity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and are proud to make this collective commitment", said Professor Littlefield.

"Allied health professionals are diverse and intersect across many sectors including education, community services, justice, aged care, disability and health and therefore they are key players in achieving positive health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples," said Ms Nicole Turner, IAHA Chairperson.

AHPA's 22 allied health member associations and its 7 friend associations are all participating in the process, a reflection of the strong commitment the associations have made to improving their understanding of Indigenous health and wellbeing and engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The Statement of Intent builds on a previous commitment made by AHPA and its members in 2014.

"We are committed to working with IAHA to build and strengthen the allied health workforce to meet the complex healthcare needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples," said Professor Littlefield. "This includes increasing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people participating in the allied health workforce and strengthening the cultural responsiveness of our organisations and our professional members."

"Australia's health system needs a greater commitment to building culturally safe and responsive health services that are free of racism", said Ms Turner.

"By working together and taking a whole-of-sector approach, led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, we can achieve sustainable, long term change", she said.

The re-signing of the Statement of intent will occur at Koorie Heritage Trust – Federation Square, Melbourne, Victoria on Friday 17 March 2017 at 3.30pm.

The following organisations are signatories of this Statement of Intent:

Indigenous Allied Health Australia (IAHA), Allied Health Professions Australia (AHPA), Australian Association of Social Workers, Australian Music Therapy Association, Australian and NZ Arts Therapy Association, Australian & NZ College of Perfusionists, Australian Orthotic Prosthetic Association, Australian Physiotherapy Association, Australasian Podiatry Council, Australian Psychological Society, Australian Society of Medical Imaging and

Radiation Therapy, Audiology Australia, Australasian Sonographers Association, Australasian Society of Genetic Counsellors, Chiropractors' Association of Australia, Dietitians Association of Australia, Exercise & Sports Science Australia, Optometry Australia, Osteopathy Australia, Orthoptics Australia, Occupational Therapy Australia, Rehabilitation Counsellors Association of Australia, Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia, Speech Pathology Australia, Australian Diabetes Educators Association, Australian Hand Therapy Association, Australian Association of Practice Managers, Diversional Therapy Australia and Hearing Aid Audiometrist Society of Australia, Myotherapy Association of Australia, Podiatric Association of Australia.

Media contact

Please direct media inquiries to Lin Oke, Executive Officer, AHPA on 0414 473 482.

About Allied Health Professions Australia

Allied Health Professions Australia (AHPA) consists of 22 national allied health professional association members and a further four associations with whom it is formally allied. The collective membership of these 22 national associations is almost 95,000 allied health practitioners, with more than 12,000 working in rural and remote localities in Australia. AHPA and its association members play a key role in promoting the role of allied health practitioners and in advocating for their needs.

Allied health professionals represent almost 20% of the health workforce, providing diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation, often autonomously and across a variety of public, private and not-for-profit settings. Australia's 175,000 allied health professionals deliver an estimated 200 million health services annually. Together with doctors and nurses, allied health professionals are regarded as the third pillar of health care in Australia.