



AIDA

The Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association
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MEDIA RELEASE

Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association

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Standardised patient identity question will improve data quality for Indigenous healthcare

The Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association (AIDA) today releases our position statement entitled [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patient identification – 2019](#).

This statement advocates for a uniform question to be asked at the point of admission into all healthcare practices, emergency departments and community centres to determine if a patient identifies as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. With equal importance, we advocate that all healthcare staff undergo cultural safety training.

Due to the impact under-identification has on data quality, AIDA calls for this standardisation with the expectation that data quality will improve, thereby improving policy development and service provision. *The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2013-2023* acknowledges that we need accurate data to monitor health outcomes and redress systemic racism in the healthcare system, and under-identification is a key issue in data collection.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients are more likely to access and experience positive outcomes from services that are culturally safe. Self-reporting is the most accurate way collect information on Indigenous status. Ensuring that patients are supported to self-identify means data quality can improve and the cycle of healthcare for Indigenous patients can be addressed. Healthcare providers have a responsibility to provide culturally safe places for patients and that includes providing ongoing cultural safety training to all staff.

Improved identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients will inform better provision of preventative treatment in many areas, including antenatal health, mental health, and healthcare for the elderly. Similarly, in the field of pathology, knowing if patients are of Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander descent will provide registries with a greater understanding of Indigenous health for the improved management and prevention of cancers and infectious diseases.

AIDA recommends that healthcare providers use the standard question and answers as developed by the ABS and AIHW, and the inclusion of Indigenous status as a mandated question on pathology collection forms. To support the collection of this important information, AIDA recommends cultural safety training for all healthcare staff and the creation of culturally safe spaces for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

END MESSAGE

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