

## Special *Closing the Gap* edition

Ten years have passed since the commencement of the Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) *Closing the Gap* targets. The tenth annual *Closing the Gap Prime Minister's Report* was delivered to the Australian Parliament in February 2018 by the Honourable the Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull.

This edition of Vibe is themed in recognition of the importance of having and enabling a workforce to support the health-related *Closing the Gap* targets (Refer Chapter 6 of the Report).

Included in this edition of Vibe are a number of reports of innovative service and workforce models targeting enhanced health service delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Details of Queensland's commitment to building Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce are also included.

[Link to report](#)

### Developing the rural health workforce to improve Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health outcomes: a systematic review

Closing the gap in life expectancy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders remains a priority for all levels of government. A culturally competent and skilled workforce is critical to improving health outcomes. This study identifies a number of evidence-based strategies to help recruit and retain an effective workforce to deliver appropriate services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders living in rural and remote areas.

Critical evaluation of 26 peer-reviewed articles identified four key findings:

1. The experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the health workforce affects their engagement with education, training and employment;

2. Particular factors influence the effectiveness and longevity of the non-Indigenous workforce working in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health;
3. Attitudes and behaviours of the workforce have a direct impact on service delivery design and models in Indigenous health and
4. Student placements influence the likelihood of applying for rural and remote health jobs in in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities after graduation.

[Link to report](#)

### Beating the odds: how Indigenous nurses and midwives are closing the health gap

It is well known that building an Indigenous health workforce is crucial to reducing health inequality amongst Indigenous Australians. Even though Indigenous Australians make up 3% of the Australian population, only one percent of our health workforce is Indigenous. Despite the increasing need for more Indigenous health workers, there has been limited growth over the last ten years.

This article includes a number of personal stories, exploring how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses are having a positive impact in helping to close the gap.

[Link to report](#)

### Working towards 'Closing the Gap' at Central Australia Health Service

Improving health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders living in the Northern Territory is challenging and complex. The Northern Territory Department of Health is committed to developing a culturally competent and accessible health workforce.

Some of the initiatives discussed in this article include Telehealth, 'grow our own' programs for health care staff, and the role of enrolled nurses. The article also refers to the importance of cultural safety and cultural competence in patient-centred care, and how this may be achieved in the delivery of health services to Aboriginal people.

[Link to report](#)

## The road to registration: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner training in north Queensland

The new role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner was registered in 2012 under the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009*. The role was established in response to the growing disparity in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and in recognition of the contribution that Indigenous Health Workers have on improving health outcomes.

Over 50 Indigenous Health Workers completed the upskilling program in 2014-15 and this article describes some of the issues and challenges as well as key milestones that were experienced along the road to registration.

[Link to report](#)

## Clinical encounters of Australian general practice registrars with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients

Data from almost 70,000 GP consultations across Australia was analysed to explore interactions between general practice registrars and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients. The objective of the study was to gain a better understanding of the health needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients and to inform training of a culturally and clinically competent general practice workforce. While there were significant positive encounters, only 1% of consultations identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander patients.

[Link to report](#)

## Queensland commitment to Closing the Gap

Queensland Health is committed to improving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders, and to empowering and enabling a culturally capable and responsive workforce that contributes to the provision of quality healthcare across all settings.

The *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Strategic Framework* aims to increase the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce across all occupations and levels of employment within Queensland Health. This in turn will support the broader economic and social well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders.

[Link to Framework](#)

## Events

### 2018 Australian Healthcare Week

Be part of Australia's largest healthcare event.  
21-22 March 2018  
International Convention Centre, Darling Harbour, Sydney

[Find out more](#)

### 15th WONCA World Rural Health Conference

27-29 April 2018  
India Habitat Centre, New Delhi, India

[Find out more](#)

### NAIDOC Week 2018

2018 National NAIDOC Poster competition and Award nominations open now

[Find out more](#)

## Food for thought

[Queensland committed to Closing the Gap](#) Source: Queensland Government

[To close the health gap, we need programs that work. Here are three of them](#) Source: The Conversation

[Closing the gap: Australia is failing on Indigenous disadvantage goals](#) Source: ABC News

[Close the Gap – 10 year review \(2018\)](#) Source: Australian Human Rights Commission

*Note. Please note that all references to Indigenous people and Indigenous Australians made in this edition of Vibe relate directly to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.*