

MEDIA RELEASE

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CATSINaM

Need to keep focus to close the gap

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives today urged the Federal Government to continue to focus on building the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce to help close the gap.

Shane Mohor, President of the Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives welcomed the bipartisan commitment to continue to meet Close the Gap targets but said there was still a lot of work to do to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.

“It is encouraging to see some headway being made in reducing child mortality and improving maternal health,’ Mr Mohor said.

“But we still have a long way to go to reduce the huge gap in life expectancy between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People and non- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

“There is no quick fix. This requires a long-term commitment which looks at all the social determinates of health in order to achieve generational change for our people.

“The Abbott Government’s focus on education and employment is important but if we have kids in school who are sick or can’t hear the teacher; or adults too ill to go to work, then it won't matter how good the education system is or how many jobs are generated – the issues will still exist in ten or twenty years time.

“That’s why we need to continue to invest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and continue to support measures that grow the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce and services.

“There is a growing body of evidence that shows that the best results in Aboriginal health are achieved when Aboriginal people treat Aboriginal people.

“While we grow this health workforce we also need to ensure non-Aboriginal health and education workers are culturally competent and can provide care and education services in a way that is sensitive and respectful to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.”

Mr Moher said the latest Close the Gap report was evidence of the need for all levels of government to recommit to the National Partnership Agreement.

“It’s critical we continue to tackle Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander challenges and opportunities in a coordinated way, across all levels of government.

“The last 5-year Close the Gap National Partnership Agreement expired more than six months ago. It’s now long overdue for all states and territories to sit down with the Federal Government and look to the next five years and beyond.”

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