

# CLOSING THE INDIGENOUS HEALTH GAP

The Prime Minister's 9th Closing the Gap report showed Australia is not yet on track to improve the gap in average life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Despite small improvements in Indigenous mortality rates from chronic diseases, the gap in deaths from cancer is widening.

The Government established Primary Health Networks (PHNs) in 2015 to help remove barriers to good health, particularly in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.

On Close the Gap day, Thursday 16 March, Murray PHN will join with the Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service, Albury Wodonga Health, Gateway Health, Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation and Wodonga Council at an event that aims to bring people together in support of achieving Indigenous health equality by 2030.

Murray PHN has more than 14,800 people who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (14,800+), and whose health status continues to be considerably lower than the wider population.

PHNs are working in partnership with Aboriginal health services and community organisations, to provide appropriate screening, assessment and early intervention programs, especially in chronic disease, smoking rates and pain management.

Murray PHN CEO Matt Jones pointed to a number of barriers Indigenous people face to accessing mainstream services, including the shortage of Aboriginal health workers and that health services are often not seen as being culturally safe.

"Investing time and effort in both engaging and applying culturally safe practices in primary care can improve health outcomes for this group and reduce demand on hospitals and emergency departments." Mr Jones said.

"We encourage everyone to take part, not just to experience the great culture of our Indigenous peoples, but for our communities and health services to talk with one another about their goals and priorities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health," Mr Jones said. "Through engagement and genuine partnership, we can make steps towards Closing the Gap."

This year's Close the Gap event is from 11am-1pm in the Sumsion Gardens Wodonga, with traditional performances, arts and craft, guest speakers and a BBQ.

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For more details, or to request an interview with Matt Jones, contact Jackie Grant, Communications Coordinator e: [jgrant@murrayphn.org.au](mailto:jgrant@murrayphn.org.au) or t: 03 4408 5613 m: 0472 842 066