

20 March 2024

## No magic pill for Closing the Gap – greater knowledge & understanding is key

National Close the Gap Day  
Tomorrow (Thursday 21 March)  
#CTG #CloseTheGap

The Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) has launched an initiative to help rural doctors Close the Gap through greater understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and perspectives.

RDAA is supporting members to access an online Cultural Awareness Training course, developed and provided by the Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association (AIDA).

**RDAA President Dr RT Lewandowski** said that working to Close the Gap was an important part of providing care as a rural and remote doctor.



“As doctors who provide care to rural and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, we are all invested in working towards delivering the best possible care and the best possible health outcomes for our patients” **Dr Lewandowski said.**

“But Closing the Gap takes more than just medical care...that care needs to be provided in a way that works within the context of each patient.

“To equip our members with the tools to provide the best care to Indigenous patients, we are pleased to partner with AIDA to provide discounted access to their on-line training module, *Cultural Awareness – An Introduction to Cultural Safety*.

“Developed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors and designed specifically for doctors, nurses and other healthcare workers, we think it will provide the best possible introduction to cultural awareness and its application to health practice.

“This course is the entry point to AIDA's cultural safety program and we hope it will provide a starting point for discussion, build greater understanding of the historical context to the health realities of Indigenous people, and ultimately improve the way we deliver care to our patients.

“While we often see introductory cultural awareness training offered to employees at State health departments and hospitals, it is really important that training is available to doctors and healthcare professionals working in general practice as well.

“We also hope that members who take advantage of this introduction will then be inspired to also complete AIDA’s Cultural Safety training, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health in Clinical Practice*, which helps to extend knowledge about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and culture, and understand specific ways to be more culturally aware.”

While First Nations people are more likely to live in urban and regional areas than rural and remote areas, the proportion of the total population who are First Nations is much higher in more remote areas. Less than 2 percent of city populations identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, but in remote and very remote areas this percentage is massively increased to 32 percent.

“While the number of Aboriginal Medical Services is growing, the reality is that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people access healthcare through their local rural GP practice” **Dr Lewandowski said.**

“This means that rural doctors are commonly caring for First Nations patients, and increasing our ability to provide care that is culturally aware is one of the best ways of ensuring these patients feel safe, comfortable and heard.

“RDAA will continue to look for ways we can help our members work toward Closing the Gap and improving health outcomes for Indigenous patients.”

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**Photo:**

[Dr RT Lewandowski](#)

**Available for interview:**

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