

Media Release

RACP offers scholarships to increase Indigenous specialist numbers

Tuesday 11 October 2016

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) is offering eight Indigenous health scholarships with a total value of \$320,000 over four years to address the under representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and Maori doctors.

Currently, the number of Indigenous doctors in Australia is estimated to be approximately 261, well short of population parity. Building the capacity of the Indigenous health workforce has long been recognised as a priority by the Close The Gap campaign.

Chair of The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Committee Dr Tamara Mackean said increasing the Indigenous medical specialist workforce is crucial and has been identified as a priority by the membership.

“The RACP is committed to encouraging Indigenous doctors across Australia and New Zealand to train as specialists, as part of a commitment to grow and support this vital and valuable workforce,” said Dr Mackean.

“Currently, Indigenous health professionals are grossly underrepresented in the medical community and the RACP membership is no exception. These scholarships can provide financial support to facilitate Indigenous medical graduates progression into RACP specialties, thereby playing some part in helping to reverse this trend.”

Dr Mackean said the health sector would benefit enormously from an increased Indigenous presence.

“A greater number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander physicians will have a very positive impact on the Australian health sector, particularly on the health outcomes for Australia’s First Peoples.

The benefits in having Indigenous doctors treating Indigenous health issues are well recognised.

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors can provide a bridge to understanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and needs and are well placed to treat and manage the higher levels of chronic disease and health issues our communities face.”

For more information on the RACP Indigenous Health Scholarship Program, visit racp.edu.au.

Ends

Media contact: David Walsh ph: 0401 164 537 david.walsh@racp.edu.au

Follow the RACP on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/TheRACP>

About The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP): The RACP trains, educates and advocates on behalf of more than 15,000 physicians and 7,500 trainee physicians across Australia and New Zealand.

The College represents a broad range of medical specialties including general medicine, paediatrics and child health, cardiology, respiratory medicine, neurology, oncology, public health medicine, occupational and environmental medicine, palliative medicine, sexual health medicine, rehabilitation medicine, geriatric medicine and addiction medicine. Beyond the drive for medical excellence, the RACP is committed to developing health and social policies which bring vital improvements to the wellbeing of patients.

The College offers 60 training pathways. These lead to the award of one of seven qualifications that align with 45 specialist titles recognised by the Medical Board of Australia or allow for registration in nine vocational scopes with the Medical Council of New Zealand.