17 April 2019

Sal First Name Surname + post-nominal/s

Company

Add1

Add2

Suburb State Postcode

Via Email:

Dear [insert name]

**Urgent action required to improve healthcare for Indigenous Australians**

I am writing to you as a [physician/paediatrician] practising in [suburb or electorate]. Physicians work hard to improve health outcomes for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients and communities. We need your help to do it in a timely and effective manner.

Australia’s First Peoples, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, are one of the country’s fastest growing populations and provide a continuous link to more than 60,000 years of culture on this continent. Yet Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to suffer greater incidence of ill health and barriers to accessing appropriate and effective care. Australia is also not on track to close the life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians by 2031.

The continuing impact of colonisation has resulted in policies, structures and practices of the health system that do not effectively serve the needs and rights of Indigenous people. We need urgent political action backed by commensurable funding to remedy these systemic problems as quickly and effectively as possible.

In that spirit, I urge you and your parliamentary colleagues to take immediate steps to improve access to specialist care for Indigenous Australians. It is imperative that there is secure long-term guaranteed funding for the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2013-2023 Implementation Plan and for the existing programs that improve specialist access commensurate with the burden of disease, including the Rural Health Outreach Fund and the Medical Outreach Indigenous Chronic Disease Program.

To make real, long-term gains in Indigenous health, the health system needs to recognise the highly skilled leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are best placed to mobilise action and build the platform for change. The Aboriginal Community Controlled Health sector is of vital importance in delivering effective, culturally safe care to Australia’s First Peoples. It is critical that you and other lawmakers designate long-term, sufficient and secure funding to retain and grow the capacity of the sector.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth suicide is a health crisis affecting all Indigenous communities. I call on you and your parliamentary colleagues to prioritise a response to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth suicide. Urgent action is needed to scale up existing community-led responses and address the long-term suicide drivers of poverty, intergenerational trauma and lack of self-determination.

It is our national responsibility to ensure that the health care system is resourced to deliver culturally appropriate and safe health care that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have a right to receive. Therefore, I ask you for greater transparency and accountability provisions for all health service providers, including the establishment of an Aboriginal Health Authority to oversee health service delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians has published a fact sheet on Indigenous health and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Position Statement [attached/enclosed]). These documents outline the urgent need for expanding Indigenous access to healthcare, including specialist care, and set out clear recommendations for improving health outcomes of Indigenous Australians.

As a physician/paediatrician, I want to maximise positive health outcomes for Indigenous patients and families in [your suburb/electorate] and across Australia. I want to ensure that Indigenous patients have the same access to healthcare as their non-Indigenous counterparts and can finally achieve the parity in health outcomes with other Australians.

[consider adding a specific ask or issue that is relevant to your local area/hospital – and the MP’s local electorate based on your clinical experience]

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss these issues with you in person. I look forward to speaking to a member of your staff soon to organise a convenient meeting time.

Yours sincerely

[Your name]

Encl:

Fact sheet: Future-proofing the healthcare system – Indigenous health

Position statements: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Position Statement