

MEDIA RELEASE



**Palliative
Care
Australia**

Palliative Care Australia Inc.

Level 1, 21 Napier Close, Deakin ACT 2600 | PO Box 24, Deakin West, ACT 2600
t: 02 6232 4433 | f: 02 6232 4434 | w: www.palliativecare.org.au | e: pcainc@palliativecare.org.au



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20 March 2014

Close the Gap Day: A call to end Indigenous Health Inequality

Today (20 March 2014) is National Close the Gap Day and Palliative Care Australia (PCA) is joining other leading health organisations and thousands of supporters to call for equal access to healthcare for all Australians.

‘We expect that everyone in our community should have equal access to health services,’ said Dr Yvonne Luxford, Chief Executive Officer of PCA. ‘Yet it is still the case that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples can expect to live almost 20 years less than non-Indigenous Australians.’

National Close the Gap Day is an occasion for everyone to show their support for Indigenous health equality and to ask governments to prioritise action on closing the gap.

‘We’ve set the target to end health inequality by 2030 and while some progress has been made, it’s vital that there be continued effort to meet this target,’ said Dr Luxford.

‘The National Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes expired last year and we call on the Federal Government to take a leadership role and work with states and territories to forge a new nationally coordinated approach to funding and implement a long term Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan,’ she said.

Improvements to Indigenous health outcomes also need to consider palliative and end of life care. As a Close the Gap campaign partner, PCA is also calling for palliative care for Indigenous peoples to become a priority.

‘Palliative care services should be flexible enough to meet the needs of all groups in our communities, no matter their differing values or needs around death and dying,’ said Dr Luxford.

‘There is an urgent need to provide palliative care education and training for Indigenous Health workers and staff based in Indigenous healthcare settings, and ensure that all health professionals receive education in cultural awareness and Indigenous issues in palliative and end of life care.’

Critical to the success of improving end of life care for Indigenous Australians is working in partnership with Indigenous Communities to develop local, sustainable strategies for quality end of life care.

‘Indigenous peoples have different cultures and histories and in many instances different needs,’ said Mick Gooda, co-chair of the Close the Gap Campaign and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner. ‘Solutions must come from within the local community, with local consultation and engagement. Without ownership by the community, sustainable improvements in quality end of life care are not possible.’

‘Palliative care can, and should, improve end of life outcomes for Indigenous people,’ he said.

For more information, or to show your support for National Close the Gap Day visit
<https://www.oxfam.org.au/act/events/national-close-the-gap-day/>

Contact: Claire Maskell Gibson– PCA National Communications Manager– 02 9239 2906/0406 258 722

PCA is the peak national organisation representing the interests and aspirations of all who share the ideal of quality care at the end of life

Patron: Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia