



...healthy and sustainable rural, regional and remote communities.

National Cabinet must make addressing racism a priority

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The National Rural Health Alliance, the peak body for rural health in Australia, is calling for the National Cabinet to make addressing racism against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples a priority.

The call comes as Black Lives Matters protests across the country have shone a spotlight on racism, racial profiling, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander incarceration rates and deaths in custody.

“Improving health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people must start with combating racism and racial discrimination,” said National Rural Health Alliance CEO Dr Gabrielle O’Kane.

“The harmful health effects of racism are well-known. According to the Lowitja Institute they include the direct health impacts of racism, such as racially-motivated assault and the contribution to mental ill health, but also unequal access to medical care and the societal resources required for good health such as employment and housing.

“The Black Lives Matters protests in recent days are a stark reminder that structural racism and racial prejudice are key determinants of health, and often contribute to poorer health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – many of who live in rural, regional and remote Australia.

“The new National Cabinet, which will replace COAG, is best placed to address these issues. Tackling racism requires a serious policy response from the very highest level, and also coordination between the Australian Government and the states and territories.

“We also call for the states and territories to work towards a health care system that is culturally safe for all, and one where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have their cultural identity respected.”

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The National Rural Health Alliance is Australia’s peak non-government organisation for rural and remote health.