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Good health and wellbeing in rural and remote Australia.

Closing the Gap is central to improved rural and remote health outcomes

On the occasion of National Close the Gap day, the National Rural Health Alliance – Australia’s peak non-government organisation for rural and remote health – asserts that any new National Rural and Remote Health Strategy must place the health and wellbeing of Australia’s First Peoples at its core.

Given the fact that health outcomes are known to worsen with remoteness, and that 65% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders live outside of major cities, CEO Mark Diamond, explains that Closing the Gap remains a priority issue for the Alliance:

“Within the Alliance’s 34 Member Bodies, many of which are working at the frontline on initiatives to help close the gap on Indigenous disadvantage, there is no shortage of commitment, passion and ideas.”

The Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association, for example, has proposed changes to prescriber categories for Closing the Gap prescriptions to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients have access to key medicines, regardless of setting.

Another affiliated Alliance Member Body, the Australian Psychological Society, has today emphasised the need for bipartisan, long-term commitment to fund and implement the National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People’s Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing to help address Australia’s ongoing Indigenous mental health and suicide crisis.

Reflecting on the fact that the mortality and life expectancy gaps between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians are actually widening, Mr Diamond asserts that efforts to close the gap must be re-doubled:

“The Alliance supports the findings from the ten-year review of the Closing the Gap Strategy for a re-commitment and ‘reset’ of the Strategy, founded on the 2008 *Close the Gap Statement of Intent* commitments.”

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