

26 May 2023

MEDIA RELEASE: NATIONAL SORRY DAY 2023

Today marks National Sorry Day, which the National Association of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners (NAATSIHWP) stands in solidarity with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across the nation. Sorry Day, observed annually on 26 May, is a reminder of the historical injustices endured by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and serves as a platform for truth-telling. We pay tribute to the resilience and strength of those who were forcibly removed from their families and communities, as well as those who continue to bear the intergenerational trauma resulting from these actions.

NAATSIHWP recognises that National Sorry Day is not only about acknowledging the past but also about taking collective responsibility to address the present challenges faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We know that our children continue to be removed from their families at alarming rates: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are [10.4 times more likely to be in out of home care than non-Indigenous children](#). The [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principles](#) must be abided by in all cases when out of home care is required.

As an organisation dedicated to improving the health and well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, NAATSIHWP remains committed to improving health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by ensuring the nation's health centres are staffed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health experts with an acute understanding of the social and cultural determinants of health. We strive to ensure that community voices are heard and valued in all decision-making processes, and to make culturally safe healthcare accessible for all.

However, to achieve this, we need governments to recommit to the policies and agreements we co-designed. NAATSIHWP calls on the Federal Government to prioritise the [National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#) in line with the principle of self-determination.

Importantly, in order to achieve the health and social wellbeing targets in the National Agreement, we ask that the commitments of funding and partnership made under the [National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan 2021-2031](#) be upheld. This comprehensive roadmap recognises that the employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within Australia's health workforce is critical to closing the gap, improving the holistic wellbeing of our people, and healing harms caused by the past. The Implementation Plan sets out a clear course for the training, recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health professionals. However, to date, most Implementation Strategies in the Plan have not been funded.

Without ongoing actions to ameliorate the effects of colonisation and Stolen Generations policies, the commemoration of Sorry Day by our governments means very little. Today we ask, as we have so many times before, that you stand by your commitments, better your systems, and work with us to improve the health and wellbeing of our people.