

Wednesday 4 November 2020

## Stronger together: reducing racism in healthcare organisations

The impact of institutional racism in healthcare — and the steps organisations can take to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples — is just one of the topics being explored as part of Dietitians Australia’s inaugural webinar series for NAIDOC week (8-15 November 2020).

Dr Chris Bourke, a Gamilaroi man and Strategic Programs Director at Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association, will be calling on the healthcare sector to reflect on their governance and structure to improve the outcomes of their healthcare for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Dr Bourke, who is Australia’s first Indigenous dentist, highlights the importance of engaging both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous people in organisational leadership positions, ensuring a strong foundation to provide equitable healthcare.

“Statistics show that just under 50% of the factors that contribute to poor health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are related to racism, intergenerational trauma and lack of cultural safety. We all play a role in reducing this inequality, but to influence change within an organisation, First Australians must be included within the governing team,” said Dr Bourke.

Without action, the ongoing impacts of institutional racism are alarming. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people endure longer wait times for vital healthcare treatments such as cancer care, cataract and elective surgeries. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people seeking care for heart health issues are also 30% less likely to receive appropriate care at the time of treatment.

“These statistics should serve as a wake-up call. We all need to reflect and act on the way our healthcare organisations are governed, staffed, resourced, and held accountable. This is a crucial step in reducing the disparity between the health outcomes of First Nations and non-Indigenous Australians,” said Dr Bourke.

“We all deserve to have the same healthcare choices and we need to ensure we give a voice to everyone in our local communities.”

When it comes to making change, Dr Bourke’s first tip is to strengthen organisational foundations.

“Health services that engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at all levels also gain a rich cultural knowledge and strength. Without this, the structure is only built to serve some of our population,” said Dr Bourke.

Dr Bourke will present at 12 noon (AEDT) on Wednesday 11 November 2020. The session will be facilitated by Tracy Hardy, a Gamilaroi woman and Dietitians Australia Board Director Nominee.

To register to attend this session, or another of Dietitians Australia’s NAIDOC week webinars, visit: <https://bit.ly/3mkYRBy>.

### ENDS

**For media enquiries and interviews, contact Pattie King, Dietitians Australia 0409 661 920.**

## **Dietitians Australia's NAIDOC Week events**

Join us online during NAIDOC Week (8-15 November 2020) as Dietitians Australia hosts an exciting range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous speakers, as they share their stories about health, food and nutrition.

The series of presentations include:

- The launch of our 'Reconciliation and Dietitians Australia' publication
- The Journey of AFL star, Shaun Burgoyne
- The impacts of Institutional racism in healthcare organisations with Dr Chris Bourke
- Cooking with Aunty Dale Chapman
- Learning how the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) empowers nutrition outcomes in local Aboriginal communities with Public Health Nutritionists, Amy Rossignoli and Brittney Johnson.

For more information about the event, and to register to attend, visit: <https://bit.ly/3mkYRBy>

Dietitians Australia members receive complimentary registration.