



**NEW SOUTH WALES NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION**  
**AUSTRALIAN NURSING AND MIDWIFERY FEDERATION NEW SOUTH WALES BRANCH**



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# **POSITION STATEMENT ON THE HEALTH OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES**

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**NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association**  
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# Position Statement on the Health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

The NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association supports the commitment to closing the gap that exists between the health outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians. The problems that have evolved through generations of accumulated loss and dispossession cannot be resolved without the cooperation of governments and non-government organisations, as well as the Australian community as a whole.

Nurses and midwives have a vital role to play in improving the quality and accessibility of health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The NSWNMA is committed to working to address the inequalities experienced by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and to help achieve self-determination and health equality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

## THE NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION RECOGNISES THAT:

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) areas of concern for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples resident in NSW include<sup>1</sup>:

- The age-standardised proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples women smoking during pregnancy (45%) was four times the rate for non-Indigenous women (11%) in 2014.
- Death rates from chronic diseases in 2011–2015 were much higher for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples than for non-Indigenous Australians; more than three times as high for diabetes (50 compared with 15 per 100,000); and, almost twice as high for respiratory diseases (90 compared with 51 per 100,000).
- Death rates for some cancers in 2011–2015 were much higher for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples than for non-Indigenous Australians; more than three times as high for cervical cancer (3.1 compared with 0.9 per 100,000); and, almost twice as high for lung cancer (56 compared with 31 per 100,000).
- The incidence of end-stage kidney disease for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples rose from 6.5 per 100,000 in 1996 to 14 per 100,000 in 2014.



- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples had higher rates of hospitalisation for injury than non-Indigenous Australians (38 compared with 25 per 1,000) between July 2013 and June 2015.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples had lower rates of hospital procedures than non-Indigenous Australians (63% compared with 80%) between July 2013 and June 2015.

## **THE NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION ADOPTS THE POSITION THAT:**

- Self-determination must be a key characteristic of measures aimed at improving the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and therefore we support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community control in health as a key means of reducing health inequalities.
- The NSWNMA has an important responsibility to raise nurses and midwives' awareness of the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their cultural context and to advocate for health services and systems that improve the health outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Through our Reconciliation Action Plan, the NSWNMA is committed to:
  - Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to develop a greater understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' culture within the NSWNMA and its members.
  - Developing and maintaining partnerships with key stakeholders, such as:
    - the Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives (CATSINaM);
    - Australian Indigenous Doctors Association (AIDA);
    - Oxfam;
    - National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO); and
    - Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR) in lobbying for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' health equality.
  - Participating in and supporting the work of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) Indigenous Advisory Committee to provide advice on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' issues.
  - Supporting efforts, in consultation with CATSINaM to attract Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives to become involved in the NSWNMA and other union activities.



- Promoting successful examples of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples self-determination and healthy communities.
- Aboriginal Health Workers are a vital component of multidisciplinary teams delivering health care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples undertaking nursing and midwifery training must be encouraged and supported.

## REFERENCES

1. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2017. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework 2017 report: New South Wales. Cat. No. IHW 182. Canberra. AIHW.