

# How Healthy is your Approach to Aboriginal Health?

## Introduction

In November 2008, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to a \$1.6 billion *National Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes* to address the target of closing the life expectancy gap within a generation.

Most of the Divisions Network has received funding to implement components of the package in order to prevent and better manage chronic disease by tackling risk factors, improving chronic disease management in primary care, improving follow-up care, and increasing the capacity of the primary care workforce to deliver effective health care to Indigenous Australians.

Aboriginal Health should be incorporated into all programs and services to ensure that the Aboriginal community within your Division has access to culturally appropriate services. This checklist may help you to ascertain any areas for improvement.

## Complete this checklist to assess how healthy your approach to Aboriginal Health is...

### Action Area 1: What do you know about your local Aboriginal population?

- How many Aboriginal people reside within your Division?  
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- Do you know where the Aboriginal people in your area go to access general practice services?  
 Yes  
 No
- Can you name the place/s where Aboriginal people are most likely to access general practice and other health services?  
.....  
.....

### Did you know...

Aboriginal people are more than twice as likely as non-Aboriginal people to die as a result of diabetes or from injuries.

NSW has 28% of Australia's total Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island population

- What is the name of the traditional land owners within your area?  
.....  
.....
- What do you think is the most appropriate term for Aboriginal people?  
 ATSI  
 Koori  
 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander  
 Indigenous  
 Aboriginal

**Action Area 2: Are you aware of the health services available for Aboriginal people?**

- Are you aware of the:
  - Health checks for Aboriginal people
  - Indigenous Health Practice Incentive Payment (PIP)
  - PBS Co-payment measure
- What are the names of the Aboriginal Medical Services in your Division?  
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- Do you know of your local Aboriginal Land Council and any other relevant Aboriginal organisations?  
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- Are the practices in your Division routinely identifying and recording the cultural background of patients?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Some practices
- Is your Division actively promoting the importance of identification of Aboriginal patients to practices?
  - Yes
  - No

**Did you know...**

**145,000**  
**Aboriginal**  
**people reside**  
**in NSW – 2.2%**  
**of the total**  
**population**  
**of NSW.**

**Approximately**  
**60% of**  
**Aboriginal**  
**patients go to**  
**a mainstream**  
**general**  
**practice for**  
**health care**  
**services.**

**Aboriginal**  
**people can**  
**expect to live**  
**17 years less**  
**than other**  
**Australians**

**Action Area 3: How well does your Division plan for and address the needs of the Aboriginal community?**

- How does your Division acknowledge the traditional owners of the land?

- Welcome to Country at Division events
- Acknowledgement of Country at Division events
- Acknowledgement of Country within email signature
- I am unsure
- Other

.....

- Do you have established partnerships with local Aboriginal groups (e.g. Land Council, Local Elders, AMS etc)?

- Yes we have established partnerships and regularly consult with the local elders and a range of Aboriginal Groups in our community (AMS, Land Council, Elders, Aboriginal Community services, other Aboriginal organisations)
- Sometimes – when we have a specific program that targets Aboriginal people
- No – we have not got a strong history of partnership with our Aboriginal community, and would not really know who we should be talking to

- How do you ensure your program meets the needs of the Aboriginal community within your area ?

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**Did you know...**

**Aboriginal people have a higher risk of developing preventable chronic diseases and are one and half times more likely to be admitted to hospital than non-Aboriginal people**

**The NSW Health Aboriginal Health Impact Statement is a useful document on implementing a new program:**  
[http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/publichealth/aboriginal/impact\\_statement.asp](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/publichealth/aboriginal/impact_statement.asp)

## Action Area 4: Cultural diversity in the workplace

Closing the Gap requires some Divisions to employ Aboriginal people to undertake key roles including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Outreach Workers, Chronic Disease Care Coordination roles and others.

- Does your Division have an Aboriginal Employment Strategy in place?  
 Yes  
 No  
 Unsure
- Does your Division have a position dedicated to Aboriginal Health? If so, have you liaised with them about their role?  
 Yes  
 No
- Have you undertaken any cultural training? (eg cultural awareness training, cultural competency training)  
 Yes  
 No

### So... Where to from here? We challenge you to make changes .....

Have you identified some areas for improvement in Aboriginal Health within your role?

Some areas for change are bigger and more challenging than others, but every change you make is a step in the direction of improving your Divisions approach to Aboriginal Health.

**Write down what changes you will take responsibility for when you get back to your Division. You may want to include a time frame for when this will be done and anyone else you may need to work with to achieve the change.**

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GP NSW has partnered with The Echidna Group to develop framework and guidelines for an Aboriginal Employment Strategy within Divisions. Contact the alexswain@gpnsw.com.au for more information.

GP NSW currently offers free online cultural competency training for all NSW Division staff through the Centre for Cultural Competency of Australia. Contact alexswain@gpnsw.com.au for more information.