

COVID-19

RURAL AND REMOTE RESPONSE

Media release

Wednesday 27 May 2020

National Reconciliation Week 2020
27 May – 3 June
#NRW2020 / www.reconciliation.org.au

In this together - supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healthcare during COVID-19 and beyond

With National Reconciliation Week 2020 set against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, the importance of ensuring our First Nations people have access to the healthcare they need and deserve has never been clearer.

Peak rural medical bodies, the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM) and Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA), say the theme of the Week - *In this Together* - is a strong reminder of the need to unite to prevent and manage COVID-19 in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and ensure their ongoing access to equitable healthcare.

“COVID-19 is a significant concern for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, due to their higher prevalence of chronic disease and the greater risk this brings with it” **Dr Adam Coltzau, Clinical Lead of the ACRRM and RDAA COVID-19 Rural and Remote Response, said.**

“In some communities, the close living arrangements of large family groups also makes physical distancing more difficult.

“On top of that, those living in remote communities face the added issue of isolation from health services, and the restriction of additional healthcare workers from travelling to their regions.

“We need to ensure these communities have culturally safe, timely and appropriate supports to protect their families, not just during COVID-19 but beyond.

“It’s also important to provide information and education around COVID-19 in the most appropriate way, and the most appropriate language, for each region and community.”

Dr Coltzau added that while restrictions are being wound back, there is a crucial need to ensure that people visiting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities remain mindful and considerate of the impact they may have.

“While we are in a good position in Australia, it is critical that social distancing and good hygiene practices continue to be taken seriously. The potential for a second wave remains, and we must remain vigilant, particularly where we have communities at far greater risk.”

COVID-19

RURAL AND REMOTE RESPONSE

RDAA and ACRRM have a strong commitment to advocate for the healthcare needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and to ensure they have access to a health workforce that is clinically and culturally appropriate.

Find more information on how to protect yourself, your family and community from COVID-19 at www.health.gov.au.

A high resolution photo of Dr Adam Coltzau is available here:

<https://www.rdaa.com.au/documents/item/712>

A high resolution photo of ACRRM President, Dr Ewen McPhee, is available here:

<https://www.rdaa.com.au/documents/item/968>

A high resolution photo of RDAA President, Dr John Hall, is available here:

<https://www.rdaa.com.au/documents/item/687>

Available for interview:

Dr Adam Coltzau - Clinical Lead, RDAA and ACRRM COVID-19 Rural and Remote Response

Dr John Hall - RDAA President

Dr Ewen McPhee - ACRRM President

Media contacts (RDAA)

Patrick Daley on 0408 004 890

Ineke Kuiper on 0408 669 638

Media contacts (ACRRM)

Petrina Smith on 0414 820 847

ACRRM National Office on 1800 223 226