

MEDIA RELEASE

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We must close the gap: First Nations focus needed in 2026 State Budget

AMA Queensland has called for urgent, community-led investment to improve the health of our First Nations peoples and strengthen the First Nations medical workforce.

AMA Queensland President, Associate Professor Erica Gannon said it was unacceptable that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders continue to die younger and experience higher rates of preventable disease, chronic illness, mental health distress and substance-related harm.

"The Crisafulli government took office with a commitment to repeal the Path to Treaty legislation and replace it with a 'better way forward' that has not been revealed," she said.

"Trust and progress can only be achieved by the government investing in and working through established, respected and representative First Nations bodies."

AMA Queensland's 2026-27 budget submission highlights that 30% of First Nations doctors leave the profession, often due to racism, burnout, and a lack of culturally safe support.

"This alarming loss of expertise undermines access to culturally safe care for wider First Nations communities which already face unacceptable health inequities," Associate Professor Gannon said.

"Queensland needs another 2000 Indigenous health workers by 2034, meaning developing and building career pathways in partnership with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) is vital."

Closing the Gap target areas are worsening, including early childhood development and suicide, showing the need for strong partnerships across the non-Indigenous health sector.

"Programs such as Birthing in Our Community and Deadly Choices demonstrate consistently improved health outcomes, strengthen cultural connection and increase engagement with preventive care," Associate Professor Gannon said.

"Increasing access to culturally appropriate palliative and end of life care, including dying on country, must also be a priority."

Associate Professor Gannon said First Nations communities are disproportionately affected by social determinants of health and mental health.

"Reducing poverty and domestic and family violence, and boosting safe and appropriate housing, food security and nutrition, access to education and employment pathways need to be addressed across urban and rural settings," she said.

"Our budget priority areas of workforce, mental health investment, preventive health and maternity services and women's health need a First Nations focus to ensure no Queenslanders are left behind."