

MEDIA RELEASE

23 November 2022



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FIRST STEP TO TRANSFORMING INDIGENOUS ORAL HEALTH

A first-ever conference featuring a wealth of dental experts will explore how to transform Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' oral health and attract more Indigenous dental professionals.

Inspirational speakers including Australia's first Indigenous dentist Dr Chris Bourke and several other oral health specialists and professionals will present at the first Indigenous Dental Association of Australia's (IDAA) National Conference on Monday, November 28.

Only about 0.4% of the approximately 16,000 employed dentists in Australia are Indigenous and Indigenous patients have significantly poorer oral health outcomes than non-Indigenous patients.

"More than 60% of Indigenous patients aged 35-54 have signs of early stage gum disease and almost one-third of Indigenous adults rate their oral health as poor or fair," IDAA President Dr Gari Watson said. "Indigenous children also have significantly worse oral health outcomes than their non-Indigenous counterparts and suffer higher rates of tooth decay and gum disease.

"We can only close the gap in health inequalities by improving Indigenous representation in the workforce and spurring the next generation of Indigenous health professionals. With oral health key to overall health and wellbeing, it is also vital we improve current dental health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

"This conference will help generate ideas for addressing unacceptable oral health inequalities and how we can highlight what's behind every great smile – healthy teeth."

The IDAA is supported by the Australian Dental Association New South Wales (ADA NSW), the peak body for dentistry in NSW and the ACT. Earlier this year the two groups signed a joint Memorandum of Understanding to support Indigenous dental practitioners going forward.

"All Australians deserve affordable and culturally safe dental care when they need it, but current data shows we must work towards improving oral health outcomes for Indigenous patients," ADA NSW President Dr Rohan Krishnan said. "Indigenous dental professionals already hugely contribute to improving oral health in Australia through their dedicated work. We hope this event will further highlight IDAA's terrific efforts representing Indigenous dental professionals, inspire more Indigenous dental professionals and ultimately help more patients achieve good oral health."

The conference takes place in collaboration with the Indigenous Allied Health Australia (IAHA), which is hosting its conference from November 28-30 at the National Convention Centre in Canberra. It can be attended either in-person or remotely.

About: ADA NSW is the peak body representing dentists and dental students in NSW and the ACT, with about 5,200 members. We have been supporting dentists and promoting good oral health in the community since 1929.

Media Contact: Stuart Turner, ADA NSW Media and Communications Advisor – 0451 002 466

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For more details or to register interest, email indigenousandental@gmail.com and for more information on the IAHA conference, visit <https://iaha.com.au/events/iaha-national-conference/>

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For more information or interview requests, contact ADA NSW Media and Communications Advisor Stuart Turner on 0451 002 466 or via stuart.turner@adansw.com.au

More information on IDAA: The Indigenous Dental Association Australia (IDAA) is a not-for-profit professional association supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander oral health students and practitioners. IDAA advocates for improved oral health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the provision of culturally safe care.

Images of Dr Gari Watson and Dr Rohan Krishnan attached with this email.

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