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MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release



Closing the Gap on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health

Thursday 25 March 2010 is National Close the Gap Day. The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) is an active supporter of the Close the Gap campaign, which aims to close the 17-year gap in life expectancy between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians by the year 2030.

The RACGP urges the Australian Government and other stakeholders to continue to support this important campaign by working with community controlled health organisations to develop long-term plans to close the gap. The college has demonstrated its dedication to closing the gap for Indigenous people by recently announcing a new faculty representing the health issues of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

“Improving the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people must be this nation’s number one health priority,” said Dr Brad Murphy, a remote area solo GP in central Queensland and an Aboriginal man from the Kamilaroi people of northwest NSW.

Dr Murphy said that in a wealthy first world nation like Australia, it is a disgrace that some sections of our population share health and life expectancy outcomes that are similar to those experienced in Third World nations.

“The health issues facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are important to me for personal reasons. These are my people and my family. The disparities in health outcomes in remote communities hit close to home for me,” he said.

Dr Murphy, who is the inaugural Chair of the RACGP National Faculty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, believes providing support in terms of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health across the multi-faceted spectrum of general practice, incorporating a collaborative care approach, helps make a difference to health outcomes in communities.

“There is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ model in regards to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health. General practice makes a real difference to health outcomes in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities throughout Australia. We are keen on sharing knowledge and building networks with those people whose work has made a positive impact on health outcomes.

“Our ongoing support to Close the Gap is vital. The RACGP is committed to raising general practitioners’ awareness of Aboriginal health needs and their cultural context, and advocating for health delivery systems, which improve the health outcomes of Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders,” he said.

For more information about the RACGP's National Faculty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, visit www.racgp.org.au/aboriginalhealthunit.

To read more about National Close the Gap Day and to find out what you can do to support the Close the Gap campaign, visit www.oxfam.org.au/act/events/close-the-gap-day.

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About the RACGP

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) sets and maintains the standards for quality clinical practice, education and training, and research in Australian general practice, and represents Australia's urban and rural general practitioners. Visit www.racgp.org.au.