Karen Wyld reported on the Australian Indigenous Doctors’ Association’s Annual Conference held in the Hunter Valley of New South Wales from 20 – 23 September, 2017, for the Croakey Conference News Service.

#AIDAconf2017

Croakey is a social journalism project for public health based in Australia. http://croakey.org
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Since the first Indigenous doctor graduated in 1983, more than 300 other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have gone onto become doctors.

The Australian Indigenous Doctors’ Association (AIDA) has played an important role in contributing to the growth of this critical workforce through the strong support it provides Indigenous doctors and medical students, according to writer and author Karen Wyld.

AIDA celebrated its 20th anniversary during its annual conference (and you can read some of the stories of its members in this publication, Journeys into Medicine). Wyld covered the conference for the Croakey Conference News Service and provides a comprehensive preview below.

Karen Wyld writes:

This week, there will be more than a few doctors in the house at Cypress Lakes Resort in Pokolbin, New South Wales, when the Australian Indigenous Doctors’ Association (AIDA) holds its annual conference.

This AIDA conference theme was Family Unity Success – 20 years strong, which is well reflected in the program. Featuring VIP guest speakers, informative sessions with inspiring leaders in health, and numerous cultural activities and networking opportunities.
From little things, big things grow

AIDA is a strong, supportive network of over 500 doctors, medical students, and partner organisations. This year’s conference will be its biggest ever, with more than 360 registered delegates and speakers.

AIDA emerged following a meeting between some of Australia’s first Indigenous doctors in 1997. That meeting was held to discuss the idea of forming an organisation that would provide collegiate support for Indigenous medical students and doctors. That event took place in Salamander Bay in the Hunter region of NSW. And in 2017 AIDA returns to NSW, this time in the Hunter Valley, for their 20th year celebration.

Since its inception, AIDA has been achieving its goals of contributing to equitable health and life outcomes and the cultural wellbeing of Indigenous people by reaching population parity of Indigenous medical graduates and supporting a culturally safe health care system.

The culturally-appropriate high-level support that AIDA provides members, especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical students, is both a contributing factor to the association’s success and to an expanding Indigenous health workforce.

With a Secretariat led by CEO Craig Dukes, AIDA continues to grow from its base in Old Parliament House Canberra. The Board of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors and a Student Director provide direction to the Secretariat.

AIDA’s Student Representative Committee (SRC) is another means of supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical students. With representatives from most Australian medical universities, the SRC provides advice to AIDA on initiatives to support Indigenous medical students to succeed in their studies and personal career aspirations.

Through strengthening collaboration with key medical bodies and colleges, AIDA continues to influence the Australian health care system to work towards strategic changes within provision of health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Conference highlights

Starting on Wednesday 20 September, with member-only sessions and the AGM, this year’s AIDA conference has plenty to offer delegates. In the morning, James Wilson Miller and Laurie Perry of the Wonnarua Nation will conduct the Welcome to Country. Dr Kali Hayward, AIDA President, and Dr Louis Peachey, AIDA Life Member, will present a session on the history of AIDA, and the vision for its future.

The agenda will be complemented with cultural activities, including a dance workshop and yarning circles. The day will finish with an evening gathering that includes a smoking ceremony, dance performances, unveiling of the AIDA art collection including two new pieces by the Ngangkari and artist Saretta Fielding, and Indigenous astronomy.

With renowned journalist and filmmaker Dr Jeff McMullen AM as MC, Thursday and Friday’s agenda has many informative sessions and skills-based workshops. AIDA has also attracted many Australian and international special guest speakers, including:

- The Hon Ken Wyatt AM, MP, Minister for Indigenous Health
- Senator Richard Di Natale, Leader of the Australian Greens (who was unable to attend due to a cancelled flight)
• Professor Tom Calma, AO National Coordinator Tackling Indigenous Smoking, and Consultant to Commonwealth Health

• Associate Professor Papaarangi Reid, Deputy Dean Maori, Tumuaki, University of Auckland

• Dr Michael Gannon, President of the Australian Medical Association

• Mr Philip Truskett AM, Chair-Elect of the Council of Presidents of Medical Colleges, and AIDA Patron

• Dr Martina Kamaka, Associate Professor, Department of Native Hawaiian Health, John A. Burns School of Medicine

• Dr Nathan Joseph, Chairperson, Te Ora

A presentation by the Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women’s Council Ngangakaris on Thursday is another highlight in an agenda that features Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives of health and wellbeing, and cultural activities.

Thursday evening, AIDA’s SRC will be hosting a networking event with sponsorship from National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers Association (NATSIHWA). And on Friday night the Platinum Gala Dinner and awards ceremony will be held, MCed by Steven Oliver, Aboriginal writer, performer and comedian.

On the Saturday, an optional tour of Baiame Cave is offered to delegate and guests, or a choice of three specialised professional development workshops.

**Moving forward with cultural safety**

After presenting a VIP address in the plenary session on the Friday, the Hon Ken Wyatt MP will be participating in the Cultural Safety Panel. With his previous experience working within the health sector, and current appointment of Minister for Aged Care and Indigenous Health, Minister Wyatt’s contribution to this panel will be a conference highlight.

The cultural safety panel builds on recent work that AIDA has conducted in strengthening cultural competency within the Australian health sector. In 2016, AIDA conducted a survey to collate feedback from members on incidents of bullying, racism and lateral violence in the workplace. AIDA is now working on strategies to address the key issues that arose from the survey report.

A recent commitment to work with the Australian Government, National Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) and the Council of Presidents of Medical Colleges (CPMC) will see further improvements in health systems capabilities to deliver appropriate services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

**Presidential perspectives**

Dr Kali Hayward, AIDA President, is looking forward to celebrating the 20th year milestone with fellow AIDA members, by reliving AIDA’s history and acknowledging those who have contributed to its success.
Since the first Indigenous medical graduate in 1983, there are now over 300 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors, specialists and surgeons. AIDA's strong support of the Indigenous medical workforce and mentoring of Indigenous students in medicine has contributed to this outstanding growth in the number of medical practitioners.

Dr Hayward acknowledges the supporting environment that AIDA's conferences provide Indigenous medical students, and speaks highly of the Growing Our Fellows session. This provides Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical students an opportunity to have a one to one conversation with a representative from fifteen medical colleges. With strong competition to get into college training programs, this is unique opportunity for students to discuss their career pathways through medicine.

Whilst the CEO and Secretariat have worked tirelessly to ensure this year's conference will be special, AIDA's strong reputation has meant that they received many offers of support. This has resulted in an enviable conference program. Dr Hayward says that AIDA is very appreciative of people giving their time, with many VIP speakers and guests eager to celebrate the 20th milestone.

Dr Hayward also stated that she “…is very proud to be the current President. Proud of the students, and other AIDA members. And proud to be able to help create a safe environment for students and doctors to come together.”

Looking at how far AIDA has come since 1997, there is much to be proud of, and many examples of Family Unity Success to celebrate at the conference.

Karen Wyld is an author, consultant and freelance writer from South Australia. Of Aboriginal descent (Martu), she has a background in community development, social/health research, health workforce training, and Aboriginal community-controlled health. She currently has a draft novel long-listed for the 2017 Richell Prize. Read her recent articles for Al Jazeera, Monumental Errors, and for @IndigenousX: Ongoing administrative errors afflict the Indigenous Advancement Strategy. Follow on Twitter: @1karenwyld

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You can track Croakey's coverage of the conference here.

Conference Partners

Indigenous doctors @AIDAustraliia · Sep 11
AIDA wishes to thank our Gold Partners for #AIDAconf2017:
@NswHeti and @RACSurgones

#FamilyUnitySuccess

Thank you to our Gold Partners

HEALTH
EDUCATION
& TRAINING

ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN
COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

Indigenous doctors @AIDAustraliia · Sep 11
AIDA wishes to thank our Evening Function Partner for #AIDAconf2017:
@NATSIHWA

#FamilyUnitySuccess

Thank you to our Evening Function Partner
sponsoring the Market Stall Dinner Thursday, 21 September

NATSIHWA
National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Association
You can track Croakey's coverage of the conference here.

Indigenous doctors @AIDAAustralia - Sep 13
AIDA wishes to thank our Silver Partners for #AIDAconf2017:
@Flinders @acemonline @defencejobsaust
#FamilyUnitySuccess

Thank you to our Silver Partners

Flinders University
Australian College for Emergency Medicine
Navy
Army
Air Force

Indigenous doctors @AIDAAustralia - Sep 14
AIDA thanks our Bronze Partners for #AIDAconf2017:
@GPRALtd @RANZCRcollege @nswaci @rannzcog @NTGPE @TheRACP
@healthgovau AMC @theracgp

Thank you to our Bronze Partners

ACN
Indigenous Medical Registrars Network
Northern Territory
Australian Medical Council Limited
The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists
The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health

#AIDAconf2017
#AIDAconf2017 – trending nationally, with a focus on racism and health

The critical importance of tackling racism within health systems and more widely has been a recurring theme at the Australian Indigenous Doctors’ Association (AIDA) conference.

A panel discussion on cultural safety will feature on Friday at the conference, which marks the twentieth anniversary of the Association, and is being held in NSW’s Hunter Valley with the theme: Family Unity Success – 20 years strong.

Writer and author Karen Wyld, who covered #AIDAConf2017 for the Croakey Conference News Service, reports below on discussions about the importance of love and culture for health and healing.

Beneath her story is a selection of tweets and selfies from the active conference tweeps, who kept the hashtag trending nationally for most of Thursday.
Karen Wyld writes:

Dr Kali Hayward, who has been re-elected AIDA president, welcomed delegates and acknowledged the Wonnarua, on whose lands the conference is being held.

She spoke of her own pathway into medicine, and the supportive role that AIDA played, and how proud she was to see the Association going from strength to strength over the past 20 years.

Dr Hayward reminded delegates of the need to keep addressing racism within health systems, a theme also reflected in the keynote address, by guest speaker Associate Professor Papaarangi Reid.

Associate Professor Papaarangi Reid, Deputy Dean Maori, Tumuaki, University of Auckland, shared common experiences in Indigenous health from a New Zealand perspective.

She reminded delegates of colonisation and racism as the core roots of disease and health inequalities for Indigenous people, and critiqued how cultural awareness is being softened, to make it more palatable to non-Indigenous people.

She warned that the same fate could await cultural safety. Associate Professor Reid talked about how unconscious bias creates barriers to change and positions culture as a cause of health problems, rather than recognising it as a positive factor in addressing inequity.
She highlighted the importance of critical race consciousness in enabling change.

Associate Professor Reid said it could be dangerous to name racism, because you can be labelled as radical, but it’s important to acknowledge that racism harms Indigenous people, as do racism deniers.

Associate Professor Reid called for systemic racism within health to be named as a major barrier to improving Indigenous peoples’ health. Unconscious bias was part of the reason health systems continued to fail Indigenous people, she said.

It was time to rewrite the story, she said, to acknowledge “the health system does not protect Indigenous people from early death”.

She called for the teaching of anti-racism and described the backlash that occurred when white privilege is threatened as “whitelash”.

Decolonisation and breaking down racist systems starts with loving our people, she said, and urged that medical students be educated “about our humanity”.

Her presentation melds well with the supportive nature of AIDA to mentor and grow the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical workforce, and to encourage health training and service sectors to strengthen their cultural competency.

Janine Mohamed, CEO of the Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives (CATSINaM), told Croakey that addressing unconscious bias was crucial. It was important to continue honest discussions, rather than allowing cultural safety to be made palatable for non-Indigenous people, she said.

The theme of loving our own people also featured in a later presentation, by Dr Derek Chong, a Senior Psychiatry Registrar with the Institute for Urban Indigenous Health.

He opened his speech with an acknowledgement of the strong women who had addressed delegates during the day, and the strong Indigenous women that have been a big part of his life.

Dr Chong talked about Australian colonial history by sharing his own family’s stories – including past Acts that controlled Indigenous peoples, massacres, the Stolen Generations, Indigenous men fighting wars in foreign countries, White Australia policy, violence, racism, and the rights movement.

All of these stories can cause flashbacks, as this history is recent, the trauma is still fresh, and the stories and trauma are passed on.
Remnant fear from past events can come out years later as flashbacks, or unconscious responses within parental and other relationships.

Dr Chong spoke of how hyper-reactions are sometimes misinterpreted in Indigenous men, and seen as control issues or violence. Trauma then remains unacknowledged, and adds to the level of racism and unfair perceptions that Indigenous men face on a daily basis.

This was also an issue for Indigenous male doctors, he said, who could be judged by non-Indigenous strangers, and unfairly labelled.

He described working on MomenTIM, a mental health project for young Indigenous men that acknowledges intergenerational trauma, racism and bias, and helps young men to receive the supports and services they need.

Dr Chong said social change comes from us all being proud of culture, of who we are, and not by hiding or excusing our Indigeneity.

Strength in culture, community, family is what achieves results. Like Associate Professor Reid, Dr Chong said that change comes from loving our people and culture.

• Read the speech by AMA president Dr Michael Gannon: Turning Words into Action.
Tweet reports from these presentations

Colin Bell @AColinBell · 12h
Family, Unity, Success. 20 years strong. #AIDAconf2017

Sonja Cronjé @SonCronje · 12h
Brilliant keynote address by A/Prof Papaarangi Reid at #AIDAConf2017 - #racism drives the #health #gap.

Ruth Mitchell @druthmitchell · 12h
Listening to @Papa_R speaking about critical race consciousness is brilliant. #AIDAConf2017 #FamilyUnitySuccess

Tricia Murphy @TriciaM76 · 12h
Critical race consciousness has nothing to do with culture & is what's needed to deal with racism, not cultural awareness. #AIDAConf2017

Ruth Mitchell @druthmitchell · 11h
Maybe you are not racist, but you may still have access to white privilege @pap_r #AIDAConf2017

Croakey team Retweeted
Ruth Mitchell @druthmitchell · 11h
Word of the day: whitelash - backlash when white privilege is threatened. Thank you @pap_r #AIDAConf2017

Croakey team Retweeted
Tricia Murphy @TriciaM76 · 11h
Cultural awareness isn’t the prob, 3% of the pop isn’t the prob. the prob. is the 97% that can’t see itself. Teach anti-racism #AIDAConf2017
You can track Croakey's coverage of the conference here.

#AIDAConf2017 – trending nationally, with a focus on racism and health

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**Ruth Mitchell** @drruthmitchell · 12h

The many names of #racism - Unconscious bias, as though you were under the influence of anaesthetic @Paps_R #AIDAConf2017

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**Croakey team** @CroakeyNews · 12h

Papaarangi Reid talking about cultural awareness vs critical race discourse....and challenges of changing uni curriculums. #AIDAconf2017

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**Croakey team** @CroakeyNews · 12h

Assoc Papaarangi Reid reminds delegates of roots of disease & health inequalities for Indigenous peoples - including racism #AIDAconf2017

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**Croakey team** @CroakeyNews · 11h

Papaarangi Reid gives examples of NZ Close the Gap experiences. White privilege needs to be addressed. Need to be unafraid. #AIDAconf2017

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**Dr Mark Wenitong** @WWeno7 · 11h

#AIDAconf2017 assoc prof Reid maintaining deficit narrative of Indigenous people can be used to justify less health rights

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**Kelvin Kong** @KelvinKongENT · 12h

Always love listening to @Papa_R sharing wisdom with #AIDAconf2017 We are very lucky

---

**Tricia Murphy** @TriciaM76 · 12h

Racial & ethnic inequities are a result of racism..so deeply ingrained that we don't register it...powerful quote from @Papa_R #AIDAConf2017

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**Kelvin Kong** @KelvinKongENT · 12h

Shout out to @drobond wishing you were here at #AIDAconf2017 many references to your work 🤘

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**Tricia Murphy** @TriciaM76 · 12h

Day 2 opening address by Jeff McMullin, have to admit I’m having a girly fan moment having grown up watching him on tv #AIDAConf2017
You can track Croakey’s coverage of the conference here.

David Scott @scottday44 · 11h
Why is access to safe drinking water not a national health right? Dr Jeff McMullen. It’s a social determinant of health #AIDAconf2017 @ANZCA

Tricia Murphy @TriciaM76 · 11h
Absolutely fantastic way to start day 2 of #AIDAConf2017 with post keynote panel discussion. Hard hitting but honest & thought provoking

Croakey team @CroakeyNews · 11h
Reminder from floor - Indigenous people not looking for something extra or special; asking for equitable access to services. #AIDAconf2017

Croakey team @CroakeyNews · 11h
Jeff McMullen is asking excellent questions, challenging @amapresident to probe deeper with responses. #AIDAconf2017

Kelvin Kong @KelvinKongENT · 12h
and great to see and meet international guests

Croakey team @CroakeyNews
Over 360 delegates here for #AIDAConf2017 & to celebrate 20th year of AIDA. #FamilyUnitySuccess
You can track Croakey’s coverage of the conference here.

#AIDAConf2017 – trending nationally, with a focus on racism and health

Voices of experience

Indigenous doctors @AIDAAustralia · Sep 19
Dr Louis Peachey talks to members about the early days of AIDA.
#AIDAconf2017
#FamilyUnitySuccess
You can track Croakey's coverage of the conference here.

#AIDAConf2017 – trending nationally, with a focus on racism and health

**Narawi Foley Boscott** @nazanatoris · Sep 19

"The media still portrays there are only 1 or 2 well educated Aboriginal people..." #AIDAconf2017

**Olivia O'Donoghue** @Liv_O_Toots · Sep 19

Dr Peter O'Mara-Be yourself. Don’t try to be someone else. All of you are amazing #AIDAconf2017 #FamilyUnitySuccess
You can track Croakey’s coverage of the conference here.

Olivia O’Donoghue @Liv_O_TOots · Sep 19

Our holistic views on health and healing, is good for everyone. It’s what we bring to the art of medicine Prof Milroy #AIDAconf2017

Tammy Kimpton @TammyKimpton · Sep 19

The myth, the legend, the amazing Prof Milroy. What an honour and a privilege to have this woman in my life @AIDAAustralia #AIDAconf2017

Croakey team @CroakeyNews · 11h

President Kali Hayward challenges mainstream attitudes of ‘too hard’ re remote infrastructure & services. #AIDAconf2017
Cultural and clinical workshops

Indigenous doctors @AIDAAustralia · Sep 19
NPy Women’s Council dance workshop
#AIDAConf2017
#FamilyUnitySuccess
#CulturalProgram

Andrew Hayward @AH4RRR · 7h
#AIDAConf2017 mentoring workshop - developing your skills
@AIDAAustralia @HWQld @JohnFlynnPP
You can track Croakey's coverage of the conference here.

#AIDAConf2017 – trending nationally, with a focus on racism and health

@ACastrioum 7h
Knee examination workshop @ACSEP Fellow @DrKrishantNaidu must have solid clinical examination skills. Don’t rely on scans! #AIDAConf2017

Larkspur_Joy 9h
Surgeon skills like a boss, thanks RACS. #aidaconf2017 #FamilyUnitySuccess #IndigenousDrs

RACSurgeons 8h
If you’re at #AIDAconf2017 come by the @RACSurgeons booth to learn more about a career in surgery and scholarships.
You can track Croakey's coverage of the conference here.

#AIDAConf2017 – trending nationally, with a focus on racism and health

Kelvin Kong @KelvinKongENT · 10h
Surgical skills in the sun #AIDAConf2017

Kelvin Kong @KelvinKongENT · 10h
Suturing skills #AIDAConf2017 @NewHeti @RACSurgeons
You can track Croakey’s coverage of the conference here.

Selfies and snaps

Dr Mark Wenitong @W Wen07 · Sep 19
#AIDAconf2017 new Aida board impressive young people!

Krishant Naidu @DrKrishantNaidu · 4h
Grow your Fellows with @ACastricum @ACSEP_ #AIDAconf2017

Sonja Cronje @SonCronje · 4h
Talking about a #career in #ClinicalRadiology at #AIDAconf2017
@InsideRadiology @RANZCRcollege
You can track Croakey’s coverage of the conference here.
You can track Croakey's coverage of the conference here. #AIDAConf2017 – trending nationally, with a focus on racism and health #AIDAconf2017

Sonja Cronjé @SonCronje · 10h
@kelneedham1 & @poulsermg at the @RANZCRcollege booth at #AIDACconf2017 · ready to talk about #radiation #therapy

NATSIHWA @NATSIHWA · Sep 19
#AIDACconf2017 #NATSIHWA Team ready to go!!
You can track Croakey’s coverage of the conference here.

#AIDAConf2017 – trending nationally, with a focus on racism and health

Congratulations flowed
You can track Croakey's coverage of the conference here.

21 September 2017

Congratulations to the Australian Indigenous Doctors’ Association (AIDA) on its 20th anniversary

AIDA's dedicated pursuit of leadership, partnership and scholarship in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical education and workforce development has made a significant contribution to the health and well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The benefits of building a specialised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical workforce are enormous. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors are unique in the medical workforce as they bring together the powerful combination of clinical excellence and Indigenous knowledges. As the critical mass of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors grows each year, so too does their visibility and power in driving change for our people.

For this reason, AIDA's role is so central to our future efforts to tackle inequity in this country.

On this, their 20th anniversary, the Lowitja Institute congratulates AIDA on its many achievements. We are very proud to have AIDA as a member organisation of the Lowitja Institute.

I am particularly honoured to have served as AIDA CEO from 2005 until 2014 and offer my warm personal congratulations.

Romlie Mokak
Chief Executive Officer
The Lowitja Institute

@jacanab: Congratulations on 20 years @AIDAAustralia

@CroakeyNews: Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association: twenty years strong - croakey.org/australian-ind...

@CICMANZ: CICM congratulate AIDA on 20 years strong-supporting and growing the Indigenous medical workforce #AIDAconf2017 #FamilyUnitySuccess

@druthmitchell: Such an honour to be at this very special birthday party 🎉, @AIDAAustralia moving from strength to strength #AIDACONF2017

@kaliwanita: Replying to @amapresident @AIDAAustralia and 4 others

Thank you for sharing in our 20th anniversary

#AIDAConf2017 – trending nationally, with a focus on racism and health

#AIDAconf2017
Federal Indigenous Health Minister Ken Wyatt has stressed the critical importance of listening to and working with communities to develop local solutions to improve the health and well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

In an address to the Australian Indigenous Doctors’ Association (AIDA) conference, Minister Wyatt also challenged medical colleges to do more to combat racism, which is widely acknowledged as harming Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients and health professionals.

He also outlined plans to map the distribution of Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations and GPs against the distribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, to identify gaps in service delivery.

As writer and author Karen Wyld reports below for the Croakey Conference News Service, the connections and strengths of Indigenous peoples globally were evident at the conference, together with some of the similarities of the challenges facing them.

Wyld also reports that messages of hope emerged from conference discussions – not least with the news that Maori people are now graduating from medical schools in numbers proportionate to their representation in the population.
Karen Wyld writes:

Themes of family, unity and culture dominated the keynote presentations at the AIDA conference today, as First Peoples leaders in health from around the globe shared their stories, with journalist and author Dr Jeff McMullen as MC.

The Honourable Ken Wyatt AM, Minister for Indigenous Health and Aged Care, shared some of his personal and professional journey in a keynote address, including how he once thought of becoming a doctor but was dissuaded from doing this.

Instead, Minister Wyatt, who has broken many barriers in his career, became the first Indigenous person to be Minister for Indigenous Health, and had an impressive career before holding this position, including working in health and education.

Minister Wyatt outlined his strategic approach to Indigenous health, wanting his Department to respond to health disparities in an evidence-based way, but also listening to Indigenous voices. He stressed the importance of working with communities to identify local solutions and warned against “one size fits all” approaches.

Minister Wyatt wants services to be provided where they are needed, saying “we have to do better.” When he visits communities, Minister Wyatt sees a different story than the improved statistics provided to him by his Department. He sees stark signs of where services are not being delivered, where the inequities are not closing.

He stressed that we all need to have a role in creating change. AIDA, its members, and other doctors, need to use their leadership to influence change within the medical colleges. Like other speakers, Minister Wyatt acknowledged the work that the colleges are doing, but stressed that more is needed.

Minister Wyatt shared his intended areas of focus, including improving renal health for Indigenous people.

He encouraged everyone to increase the uptake of health checks for Indigenous clients, to catch the markers of diseases earlier, and improve treatment outcomes. He wants the 0 – 5 years focus extended to include children up to 17 years of age, and believes this will prevent health problems developing, and also support youth suicide prevention.
Minister Wyatt wants to see more Indigenous people reaching the age of 50, and enjoying a healthy old age. With a family-focused wrap-around model of care, Minister Wyatt believes Indigenous health disparities could be turned around within a decade.
You can track Croakey's coverage of the conference here.

Hearing from "an awesome" global family – Indigenous doctors share their stories

Michelle Gonsalvez @MGonsalvez · 9h
@KenWyattMP highlights importance of preventive health assessments no 715 @RACGP @NACCHOAustralia #AIDAconf2017

Indigenous doctors @AIDAAustralia · 11h
@KenWyattMP addressing delegates at the #AIDAconf2017 #FamilyUnitySuccess

CATSiNaM_Nursing @CATSiNaM
Thanks @KenWyattMP for appreciating the uniqueness and importance of our orgs & members #AIDA2017 @AIDAAustralia
A global family

Dr Martina Kamaka, a family physician and Associate Professor in the Department of Native Hawaiian Health at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, John A. Burns School of Medicine, also shared stories from her own career pathway, as well as the need for medical schools and mainstream services to increase their understanding of why health gaps exist.

When studying medicine, she was told to be colour-blind but this did not make sense to her lived experience as an Indigenous woman in Hawaii. She was surprised how little her senior colleagues knew of health disparities amongst Indigenous people, and set about raising their awareness.

Dr Kamaka spoke of a pivotal moment for her – meeting Dr Ngaire Brown and learning about AIDA. She realised the commonalities between Indigenous doctors, and the similar barriers they faced to improving health outcomes.

From this meeting, the Pacific Region Indigenous Doctors Congress was born. PRIDoC has connected many Indigenous doctors from many nations, allowing for sharing of strategies and models of change, as well as strengthening of cultures.
Dr Kamaka shared a story she was given by an Indigenous grandmother in Canada – the prophecy of the white animals.

The white buffalo, the **white giraffes**, and other white animals that have begun to appear across the world, including the **white whale** off the eastern coast of Australia, are signs of hope – that change is happening, she said.

Ending her presentation, Dr Kamaka left us with the gift of Aloha.
Inspiring words

Professor Tom Calma AO, National Coordinator Tackling Smoking and consultant to Commonwealth Health, started his talk with photos of family and community.

Professor Calma, a Kungarakan and Iwaidja man with a long history working in health and the public sector, spoke of the importance of family, community, and growing leaders.

“Culture is central, and people are central,” he said.

He shared his reflections on past government strategies, and the creation of many Indigenous-led organisations.

Professor Calma acknowledged Minister Wyatt’s strong approach to the Indigenous health portfolio, saying action is needed to create much needed change.
Everyone needs to contribute to change, not only Indigenous people and organisations. Mr Philip Truskett AM, AIDA Patron, ex-president of RACS (Royal Australasian College of Surgeons) and Chair-elect of the CPMC (Council of Presidents of Medical Colleges), outlined AIDA’s strategic directions.

Mr Truskett spoke of how partnerships between Indigenous peak organisations and health and medical schools are a key part of AIDA strategies, as well as the Association’s ongoing commitment to members and communities.

Family matters

The morning session ended with family. Like Minister Wyatt, Dr Kamaka and Professor Calma, the last speaker reminded us of the importance of family – Whanau.

Dr Nathan Joseph, Chairman of Te Ora, representing Maori medical practitioners, gave a personal and powerful presentation.

He talked of the resilience that has survived despite colonisation violence and intergenerational trauma, and the importance of knowing who you are, where you come from. He believes these are part of the tools that help us do the work.

From his father, Dr Joseph learnt that you never give up, despite the odds.

He urged the younger delegates to know their strengths. He said: “You are loved. You are valued. Work your tail off but don’t give up.”

Taking his father’s advice has led Dr Joseph to carve a career in medicine. And he has passed down these messages of family and resilience to his own son, who is studying medicine – creating yet more hope for the future.
Dr Joseph showed an image of beautiful blooming wildflowers and said: “The seeds are already there, they just need the right conditions to grow.”

Family, knowing who you are, and being proud of culture and identity – these provide the tools to create greater equity for Indigenous peoples. There is hope.

Looking to the future

Also symbolic of hope for the future was the presence of surgeon Associate Professor Kelvin Kong, who was caring for his two young children during the presentations today.

Minister Ken Wyatt shared with conference participants how he had watched Associate Professor Kong’s career pathway into otolaryngology, head and neck surgery, and admired his achievements with a sense of pride.
You can track Croakey’s coverage of the conference here.

Hearing from “an awesome” global family – Indigenous doctors share their stories

Other conference sessions

NPY Womens Council senior women sharing their new book Tjulpu and Walpa about making strong choices for strong family #AIDA2017 @croakeyblog
You can track Croakey's coverage of the conference here.

Hearing from “an awesome” global family –
Indigenous doctors share their stories

The RACP @TheRACP · 6h
"As healers and educators we use song, dance, and stories to instill strength and knowledge to young mothers," @NPYNgangkari #AIDAconf2017

Romlie Mokak @RMokak
Ngangkari Josephine Mick : "we feel a great surge of love for our people and we willingly give our treatment". Aust hlth systm lots to learn

Tammy Kimpton @TammyKimpton · 7h
It is always a blessing to sit and listen to the @NPYNgangkari Stories and song in language #AidaConf2017

The RACP @TheRACP · 5h
Our President Dr Catherine Yelland introduces A/Prof Wendy Edmondson & Dr Angela dos Santos, facilitating our workshop #AIDAconf2017

Quality doctor - community engagement: benefits for all
Exploring benefits, challenges and strategies for engaging communities and non-traditional organisations in medical education

Croakey
“Conference News Service”
You can track Croakey's coverage of the conference here.

**Sonja Cronje @SonCronje - 5h**
Great work being done by @RACGP Faculty of #Aboriginal & #TorresStrait Islander #Health to #CloseTheGap #AIDAConf2017

**Michelle Gonsalvez @MGonsalvez - 5h**
@RACGP Working hard to grow our Indigenous GP workforce #AIDAconf2017 #specialistinlife

**The RACP @TheRACP - 4h**
Cris Carnage, Indigenous Program Officer at UWS, with RACP Advanced Trainee Dr Angela dos Santos at #AIDAConf2017 workshop.
You can track Croakey’s coverage of the conference [here](here).

**Hearing from “an awesome” global family – Indigenous doctors share their stories**

**Snaps and selfies**

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**You can track Croakey’s coverage of the conference [here](here).**

**Hearing from “an awesome” global family – Indigenous doctors share their stories**

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**You can track Croakey’s coverage of the conference [here](here).**

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Hearing from “an awesome” global family – Indigenous doctors share their stories

Meeting @KenWyattMP 🙌 being star struck+asking about nutrition/diabetes/renal disease #daymade #AIDA2017 #FamilyUnitySuccess #IAHANational

Indigenous doctors @AIDAAustralia · 9h
Dr Jeff McMullen has been an outstanding MC at the #AIDAconf2017 #FamilyUnitySuccess

Ruth Mitchell @druthmitchell · 9h
The fresh air and the red earth on beautiful Wonaraa country greeted @SheonaMitchell & I as we walked to #aidaconf2017 #FamilyUnitySuccess
Hope and strength as a new generation of Indigenous doctors is welcomed at #AIDAconf2017

The recent Australian Indigenous Doctors’ Association conference was marked by themes of hope and strength, and provided delegates with a culturally safe space for open discussions about the impact of colonisation and racism within Australian health systems.

Writer and author Karen Wyld reports below that the 20th anniversary conference heard of the benefits of decolonising approaches to health care and wraparound service models that are inclusive of families and communities.

Another key theme was the importance of critical race discourse and cultural safety to improving health and education systems, services and outcomes.

Minister Ken Wyatt also stressed the importance of implementing cultural safety into aged care.

See more tweets and selfies from conference sessions and social events beneath the article.

Karen Wyld writes:
The theme of the recent Australian Indigenous Doctors’ Association (AIDA) conference was very apt. Throughout the many presentations, workshops, cultural and social activities, Family Unity Success was evident, time and again.

AIDA conferences are always well presented, but this year was special. AIDA turned 20 and many members and friends were there to celebrate this milestone.

The conference was held in Pokolbin in NSW’s Hunter Valley, on Wonnarua country.

With a strong line up of speakers and presenters, VIPs included: Dr Jeff McMullen AM, the Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP, Professor Tom Calma AO, Associate Professor Papaarangi Reid and Dr Nathan Joseph (New Zealand), Associate Professor Martina Kamaka (Hawaii), Dr Michael Gannon and Mr Phil Truskett.

Driving change

Throughout the conference, other recurring themes emerged, such as: hope, culture, identity, family and community-led solutions.

Whilst many speakers spoke of the need for culturally safe care to improve health outcomes for Indigenous people, ongoing barriers were also named. These included intergenerational trauma, disenfranchised First Peoples in settler colonisation, unacceptable health disparities, racism, racism deniers, and health and education systems that still are not culturally competent.

And, as often occurs when Indigenous peoples gather to talk about issues impacting on communities, strategies were put forward to address the barriers.

Positive ways forward included: decolonising approaches to health care, implementing wraparround service models that are inclusive of families and communities, and critical race discourse.

Another key strategy is creating culturally safe learning environments and ongoing support for Indigenous students/practitioners to successfully grow their career pathways in medicine. This is an area where AIDA demonstrates its leadership to drive change.

With a range of practical and theoretical professional workshops, the Growing Our Fellows session, and presentations on career development, delegates were inspired to further map out their career pathways.

Strengthening the workforce

Encouraging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to grow a career in health starts early.

Donna Murray, CEO of Indigenous Allied Heath Australia (IAHA), spoke of one such program for young people.

In partnership with Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance NT (AMSANT), IAHA manages a Health Academy to support young Indigenous people’s pathway into the health workforce.

Unlike some other Indigenous youth programs, this Academy is not sports-based, and is instead focused on educational achievement.

The Health Academy’s model for workforce development is: support, grow, transform and lead. As Donna Murray says, “With Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people leading the programs and solutions, there can only be better outcomes.”
You can track Croakey's coverage of the conference here.

Hope and strength as a new generation of Indigenous doctors is welcomed at #AIDAConf2017

Romiie Mokak @RMokak · Sep 21
Donna Murray: sharing exciting new @IAHA_National @AMSANTaus NT Aboriginal Health Academy model where culture is the strength and supported

Ruth Mitchell @druthmitchell · Sep 21
Love this! Health Academy model- grow, educate, support, retain. @IAHA_National #AIDAConf2017 #FamilyUnitySuccess

Sonja Cronje @SonCronje · Sep 21
To CloseTheGap, we also need to grow the Indigenous AlliedHealth Workforce #AIDAConf2017 #FamilyUnitySuccess

IAHA Workforce Development

Our Priorities:
- **SUPPORT** – leadership, professional development, cultural responsiveness and career development
- **GROW** – our own allied health workforce & sector, pathways
- **TRANSFORM** – health system, curriculum, professional standards, accreditation, workforce retention flexible delivery
- **LEAD** – workforce innovation, workforce models, cultural safety, sustainability
**Centring Cultural Safety**

The need to develop culturally safe systems and services was very much a focus of the AIDA conference, with many solutions put forward to overcome barriers to change.

Systemic racism continues to be a major issue within the health system, and it’s critical to address this to close the gaps for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

As **Associate Professor Papaarangi Reid** said: “Failure to respond to racism in the health system cannot be an option.”

Ensuring health systems are free of systemic racism not only increases the likelihood of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people receiving better levels of care, but will build culturally safe work and study environments for the Indigenous health workforce.

The cultural safety panel of distinguished guests provided the opportunity to delve deeper into current flaws within the health system, and to put forward possible solutions.

A conference highlight, this panel consisted of: Associate Professor Gregory Phillips (MC); the Hon Ken Wyatt, Minister for Indigenous Health; Professor Helen Milroy, Commissioner at Australia’s Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, AIDA Life Member; Dr Kali Hayward, AIDA President; Ms Theanne Walters, Deputy CEO Australian Medical Council; Professor Brian Kelly, University of Newcastle; and Mr John Batten, Royal Australasian College of Surgeons.

Cultural safety is recognised as a model of health care that is not only anti-racist but addresses the ongoing effects of colonialisation, such as intergenerational trauma, and is based upon analysis of power and issues such as whiteness and institutional racism (read more about the history and evolution of cultural safety in [this previous Croakey post](#)).

During the panel discussion, Professor Helen Milroy stated that: “We need an intergenerational trauma-informed approach.”

Minister Ken Wyatt reminded delegates that aged care also needs to adopt cultural safety models as many Indigenous aged care residents “…are fearful, given memories of institutional life”.

The importance of embedding cultural safety in the curriculum for all medical students was recognised as a contributor to a more competent workforce as well as creating a safer passage for Indigenous students.

As Associate Professor Shannon Springer commented from the audience: “Doctors are not clinically competent unless they are also culturally competent.”
You can track Croakey's coverage of the conference here.

Hope and strength as a new generation of Indigenous doctors is welcomed at #AIDAConf2017

Cultural safety cannot occur without trauma informed approach #AIDA2017 #familyUnitySuccess #culturalsafety

Vicki Wade sharing her extensive knowledge and health sector journey, and narrative approach to cultural safety and health. #AIDACONF2017

"Cultural safety includes aged care residents, many of whom are fearful given memories of institutional life," @KenWyattMP #AIDAconf2017

Hope and strength as a new generation of Indigenous doctors is welcomed at #AIDAConf2017
Two-way health

Culturally safe health models must include acceptance and incorporation of Indigenous health practices, and an understanding of the importance of family and community.

When speaking of her vital work as a Ngangkari, Josephine Mick said: “We feel a great surge of love for our people and willingly give our treatment.”

This sentiment that was evident in numerous presentations throughout the conference, demonstrating the point-of-difference that Indigenous medical practitioners often bring to their work.
**Broadening the discussion**

Many sessions spoke of the barriers that Indigenous doctors need to constantly navigate.

Terminology such as decolonisation, critical race discourse, social determinants of health, and systemic racism were unpacked.

The need to deconstruct the patriarchy in medicine was also discussed. Dr Ruth Mitchell reminded delegates that surgery was still not a level playing field for women.

And Indigenous women are up against racism and sexism, as they forge a career pathway.

Dr Mitchell said that “as surgeons we cannot fully serve patients unless our workforce reflects the same diversity” within Australian communities.
Celebrating success

A gala dinner on the last evening brought AIDA members and friends together, to celebrate the 20th anniversary.

James Wilson Miller welcomed everyone to his country, the lands of the Wonnarua Nation, and read out a moving piece that allowed everyone to ‘see’ the beauty of this country from pre-invasion to now.

Steven Oliver, who MCed the night, also shared some of his poetry and spoken word. With his well-known fusion of humour and sharp social commentary, Mr Oliver received a standing ovation.

Nova Peris OAM, AIDA Patron, shared the stage with Dr Kali Hayward, AIDA President, to present graduates with their well-earned stethoscope.

With 31 graduating Indigenous medical students, the biggest cohort to date, as well as 5 graduating Fellows, this moment was a shining example of AIDA’s success.

Mr Phil Truskett, AIDA Patron and AIDA Life Member, presented the Indigenous Doctor of the Year Award to Associate Professor Kelvin Kong. As Mr Triskett is one of Associate Professor Kong’s earliest mentors, this was a proud moment for both doctors.

Other awards were for Indigenous Student of the Year – Mr Luke Hamlin, and Associate Member of the Year – Professor Annemarie Hennessy.

Twenty years ago, when AIDA started, there were only a few Indigenous doctors. There are now more than 320 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors, and over 265 medical students. And every year more Indigenous medical practitioners are breaking barriers to enter new specialisations, to become known as another ‘first’.

With the forging of stronger relationships with the medical colleges and peak bodies, AIDA will continue to provide the high level of leadership, support and mentoring for which it is known.

After immersion in a culturally safe space at the conference, many delegates left with a renewed sense of hope, knowing they had support to grow their careers in medicine.
Conference tweets and selfies

Croakey team @CroakeyNews · Sep 22
Replying to @CroakeyNews
There’s about 20 Indigenous med school graduates being given their stethoscopes here at #AIDAConf2017 gala dinner. More #deadlydoctors 🎉

Croakey team @CroakeyNews · Sep 22
Nova Peris and Jordan Corey, with Dr Kali Hayward at #AIDAConf2017 gala dinner. New Graduates are getting their stethoscopes 🎈🎈🎈

Erika CB @erikanardle03 · Sep 25
Had an amazing time at #AIDAConf2017. Special photo with my mentor Dr Marilyn Clarke after receiving my graduation stethoscope. #AIDA #Q&G
You can track Croakey’s coverage of the conference here.

Hope and strength as a new generation of Indigenous doctors is welcomed at #AIDAConf2017 #FamilyUnitySuccess #IndigenousDr

In 2017 there are 302 Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Drs. Here with 7 of the 285+ Indigenous Medical students #Aida2017 #AlwaysStriving
Great to be at @AIDAAustralia 20th celebration -congratulations everyone on a great conference. @CroakeyNews @kaliwanita #AIDA2017

Powerful words from Steven Oliver - inspiration for all & inspirational @AIDAAustralia #AIDACONF2017 @HWQld

Absolutely love the @AIDAAustralia tie on Phil Trusett here. Deadly. @mikkymai #AidaConf2017 #ILookLikeASurgeon
You can track Croakey’s coverage of the conference here.

Hope and strength as a new generation of Indigenous doctors is welcomed at #AIDAConf2017

Wattleseed.Nutrition @Wattleseed_Nutr · Sep 21
The people you have the privilege to meet at #AIDA2017 @NovaPeris
Hope and strength as a new generation of Indigenous doctors is welcomed at #AIDAConf2017

You can track Croakey's coverage of the conference here.
Talking Just Justice at 2017 AIDA Conference

In the video below Dr Jeff McMullen AM and Dr Louis Peachey discuss health rights of Indigenous prisoners in Australia. [https://youtu.be/donPUXG0zHk](https://youtu.be/donPUXG0zHk)

Warm thanks

Our appreciation to all who shared the #AIDAconf2017 news via Twitter and other social media.

For the period of Croakey’s coverage of the conference, there were 668 participants on Twitter and more than 20 million Twitter impressions. The conference hashtag trended nationally on Twitter on both days. Read the Twitter transcript [here](https://twitter.com/search?f=realtime&q=#AIDAconf2017).
You can track Croakey’s coverage of the conference here.

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Croakey Conference News Service

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