

**The Council of Academic Public Health Institutions Australasia supports the Uluru Statement from the Heart and the establishment of a Voice to Parliament.
05 October 2023**

The Council of Academic Public Health Institutions Australasia (CAPHIA) is the peak organisation that represents public health in universities that offer undergraduate and postgraduate programs and research in public health throughout Australasia. Our mission is to improve the public's health by advancing public health education, research and workforce development. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health is central to our mission.

As an organisation, CAPHIA supports the Uluru Statement from the Heart in full.

At CAPHIA we recognise that the health inequities impacting on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are due to ongoing colonisation, dispossession of land, culture genocide, and subsequent intergenerational trauma and grief. As these are complex issues, they require complex solutions, as well as deep and ongoing commitment from the Australian Government to work with and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. We recognise that leadership and voice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our governing systems has been and continues to be critical to addressing these wrongs.

In our Call to Action: Public Health Education for a Sustainable Future (Taylor et al., 2023), we emphasise the importance of embracing Indigenous knowledges (knowing, being and doing) from First Nations peoples to shape a positive future for all Australians. It is crucial to decolonise and codesign public health curricula and pedagogy in a way that prioritises Indigenous-led initiatives and incorporates Indigenous knowledges and leadership.

Momentum ceases, and progress is lost with the forming and disbanding of governance structures which are subject to leadership changes. The Voice provides a protected mechanism to work together in partnership to learn, to improve, and to create a healthier Australia. This step could initiate a journey of positive change addressing the social and economic factors that impact the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

On October 14 2023, the Australian population will be asked to vote in a referendum to alter the Constitution, to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Voice. We urge you to vote yes.

References

Taylor J., Roiko A., Coombe L., Devine S., Oldroyd J., Hallett J., Murray Z., Nona F., Amato Ali D., Crawford G. and Gurnett T., Council of Academic Public Health Institutions Australasia, Public health education for a sustainable future 'Call to Action', Aust N Z J Publ Health, 47 (2), 2023, 100042