

MEDIA RELEASE

23 February 2023

Under-identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by mainstream services a barrier to health equality

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience significantly worse health outcomes than non-indigenous Australians.

Two new Priority Issues Papers released by Gippsland Primary Health Network provide a snapshot of the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people in Gippsland. They include statistics in comparison to the rest of the state, barriers to accessing health care and support services across the region.

Gippsland PHN Chief Executive, Amanda Proposch, said the under-identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in mainstream health services and national health data sets was a fundamental barrier to achieving health equality for all Australians.

“The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in Australia has historically had, and continues to have, significantly worse health outcomes than the general Australian population,” Ms Proposch said.

A series of videos has now been produced by Gippsland PHN to assist general practice in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

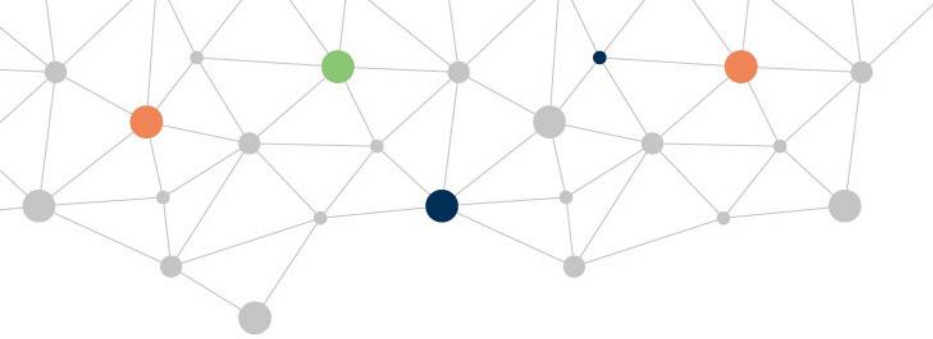
A video called ‘Ask the question’ provides the skills and knowledge for general practice staff in how to ask patients whether they identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. In turn, this enables clinicians to direct those patients to additional services they may be entitled to receive.

Ms Proposch said it was important for health professionals to be aware if a person identified as being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin.

“Understanding a person’s origin means they can provide the right care at the right time,” she said. “Many people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin are at greater risk of developing certain conditions that may be preventable or can be treated more effectively when detected early.

“Asking the question is one step in helping to rectify the current imbalance in the health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.”

Additional videos include: the 715 Health Check (referral options available for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have developed or are at risk of developing a chronic disease);



the Medical Benefits Schedule video (items available to health professionals in the treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people); and the Integrated Team Care video (program contributes to improved health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with chronic health conditions through better access to coordinated and multidisciplinary care).

[Access Ask the question video here](#)

[Access the 715 Health Check video here](#)

[Access the MBS items video here](#)

[Access the ITC video here](#)

The new Priority Issues Papers on [Health and Wellbeing](#) and [Closing the Gap](#) are now available on the Gippsland PHN [website](#).

Ms Proposch said feedback and discussion about the content of the papers was welcome and encouraged interested people to email tellgippslandphn@gphn.org.au.

ENDS

Additional information:

Support for Indigenous Australians can be accessed 24 hours 7 days a week via 13YARN (13 92 76) or online; <https://www.13yarn.org.au/>

Gippsland PHN Indigenous programs and initiatives:

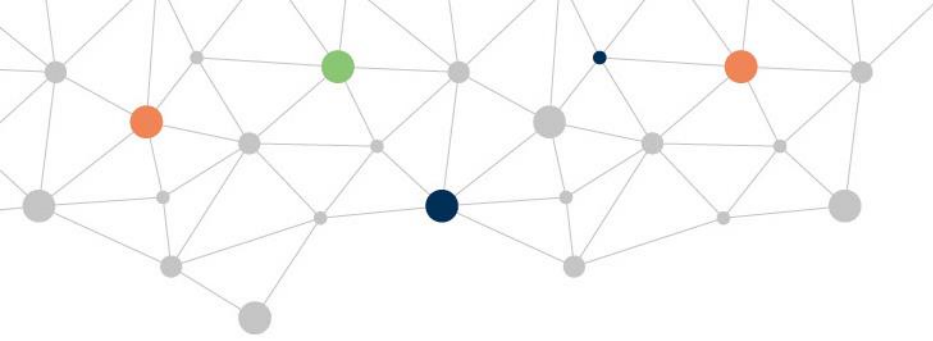
Indigenous Dual Diagnosis Service - provides culturally safe support for people with mental health and drug and alcohol dependencies

Integrated Team Care – helps with improved health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with chronic health conditions through better access to coordinated and multidisciplinary care

Black Pages - A directory of Indigenous services and supports in Gippsland

Education and Training - Gippsland PHN offers cultural diversity and safety training to all Gippsland health professionals

Quality Improvement – offered in general practice, including use of MBS item



715 for assessments

Gippsland HealthPathways – an online portal to be used by health professionals at the point of care. It guides best-practice assessment and management of common medical conditions, including when and where to refer patient.

For more information, contact Lynne Smith on 0437 918 234 or lynne.smith@gphn.org.au