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Taking stock of achievements in Indigenous health gives a reality check for primary health care National Close the Gap day, 5th Anniversary

Australian General Practice Network [AGPN] Chair, Dr Emil Djakic says elements of the Federal Government's \$1.6 billion National Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap are starting to make inroads for Australia's Indigenous communities.

"On this fifth anniversary of the **National Close the Gap day**, it's a good time to take stock of what has been achieved so far and to remind ourselves of the even greater achievements to come as we work towards closing the life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians," Dr Djakic said.

"Through the Federal Government's \$805.5 million Indigenous Chronic Disease Package, which comes under the National Partnership Agreement, the General Practice Network has introduced an Indigenous health workforce of 120 full time equivalent personnel.

"It's through this workforce that one in three general practices across Australia has now signed up for the Indigenous Health Incentive under the Practice Incentive Program. This has enabled over 50,000 Indigenous patients to register and take advantage of improved primary health care services and support.

"Access to services and negotiating the health system can be intimidating however with the availability of Project Officers, Indigenous patients are increasingly becoming aware of the services their entitled to and where to find them.

"In turn General Practitioners are also benefiting from the knowledge and cultural awareness Project Officers who are able to impart to help close the 'cultural' gap between health professionals and Indigenous patients.

"These Project Officers have enabled Indigenous communities and the primary health care sector to collaborate and create best models of care that make a difference for Indigenous communities as opposed to care models that *appear* irrelevant and inaccessible.

"The Federal Government's primary health care reforms to develop Medicare Locals will over time, transform health services for Indigenous communities. Medicare Locals will enhance and nurture the Indigenous components for each catchment area by working in partnership with the Aboriginal Community Controlled sector," Dr Djakic said.

Media contact: Karen Warner, AGPN Media Adviser on (02) 6228 0819/0438 179 520