



AIDA

The Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association
ABN: 84 131 668 936

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MEDIA RELEASE

Indigenous Doctors urge Territorians to get the jab and be COVID-safe to protect NT community

With the number of COVID cases in remote Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory (NT) continuing to grow, the Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association (AIDA) is asking Territorians to get vaccinated as a matter of urgency and adhere to health restrictions to stop the spread.

As of the 18th of November 2021, the NT has recorded over 20 cases of COVID-19, with an indication that this number will continue to grow. Of even greater concern is that most of these cases are Aboriginal Territorians.

In areas of concern such as the Barkly region, vaccination data shows second dose vaccinations are as low as 9% in some parts of the region, which is considerably lower than the overall NT vaccination rate*. These figures are deeply concerning considering that our people are much more at risk of being seriously ill due to the virus. AIDA maintains its position of achieving 90-95% vaccination rates across Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities prior to significant easing of border restrictions and access by non-residents to remote communities.

AIDA reiterates that all vaccines available in Australia are safe and effective measures against the disease. Getting vaccinated is the most effective and safe way for us to keep ourselves, our families, and our community safe.

AIDA is also extremely concerned that the lack of culturally appropriate access to healthcare in remote communities, coupled with poor housing infrastructure in many communities, making it difficult for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to isolate within their own household, will further compound these COVID positive numbers and cause the virus to spread rapidly within communities. This will burden an already short-staffed health sector in the NT, causing even more issues.

AIDA supports the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory (AMSANT) in calling on the NT government to commit to shared decision-making with Aboriginal communities and their key institutions when discussing a COVID-safe reopening of the Northern Territory. AIDA also joins AMSANT in supporting the Doherty modelling that indicates children aged 5-11 are to be included in reaching the 80% vaccine coverage before opening up.

As the peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors, AIDA is urging all Territorians to get vaccinated, be COVID-safe by wearing a mask, sanitising your hands regularly, and maintaining social distancing whenever possible. Our people – and our culture – are at risk. If you are worried about getting the vaccine, we urge you to speak to your health care professional to be assured what is right for you. For the sake of your families and your community, please get the jab.

* <https://coronavirus.nt.gov.au/current-status/additional-data>

ENDS

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