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## MEDIA RELEASE

### **Indigenous Doctors lead groundbreaking program to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Specialist Trainees**

A new program aimed at increasing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors interested in undertaking non-GP specialist medical training, has secured funding in a first for the Australian medical workforce.

The *Non-GP Specialist Trainee Support Program (AIDA STSP)*, funded under the government's Flexible Approach to Training in Expanded Settings (FATES) Measure, will see Indigenous non-GP medical specialists in Australia supported through a unique specialist trainee network, as well as a range of other initiatives with the aim to provide ongoing, tailored and culturally appropriate support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainees.

The funding has been awarded to The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists (RANZCR) on behalf of a Consortium of 11 medical colleges\*. The Consortium has commissioned the Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association (AIDA) to lead the development, management and implementation of the initiative.

"This is a significant step towards providing greater support to our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainees," Monica Barolits-McCabe, CEO of AIDA said.

"In 2021, only 150 (or 0.19% of medical specialists) identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, compared to more than 78,000 medical specialists nationally. We know that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors face unique challenges such as cultural isolation and discrimination on their path to Fellowship, which often deters them from successfully graduating," Ms Barolits-McCabe said.

In the last quarter, the Australian Government launched three critical 10-year strategies to address shortages in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical specialists. These include: the *National Medical Workforce Strategy 2021-2031*, the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2021-2031*, and the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan 2021-2031*.

"AIDA was involved in the development of these strategies and has a critical role in the design and delivery of appropriate supporting programs," Ms Barolits-McCabe Said. "The STSP will be the first Indigenous-led initiative established to provide peer and collegiate support to non-GP doctors in training, with the goal to increasing numbers into training programs and supporting them through the program so that we see high success rates of graduation," Ms Barolits-McCabe said.

"RANZCR is privileged to be working with AIDA to support the increase in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainees training in speciality training programs. This initiative aligns closely with RANZCR's Indigenous Action Plan, which seeks to improve the health of all Australians wherever they reside. Furthermore, that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander junior doctors are afforded the support they need to thrive as a specialist doctor in their community," Mr Duane Findley, CEO of RANZCR said.

Initiatives under this program include the establishment of a peer network and forum for connecting trainees, developing resources for trainees, skill development opportunities, and increasing opportunities for engagement with the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) across Australia. The program also supports supervisors to provide culturally appropriate supervision to trainees and will develop a range of resources for supervisors.

“As co-designers of this program, we are confident that the STSP will provide that unique medico-cultural support our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainees seek in their journey through medicine,” Ms Barolits-McCabe said.

The STSP will be funded by the Department of Health to the amount of \$501,977 for 12 months.

*\*The Consortium consists of The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists (RANZCR), The Australian College of Dermatology (ACD), Australasian College of Sport and Exercise Physicians (ACSEP), College of Intensive Care Medicine (CICM), Australasian College for Emergency Medicine (ACEM), Royal Australasian College of Medical Administrators (RACMA), Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP), Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP), Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (RANZCA), Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG), and Royal Australian College of Ophthalmologists (RANZCO).*

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*AIDA is the peak professional body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors and medical students in Australia. AIDA advocates for increasing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical students and doctors, as well as strengthening the education and training of all doctors through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health being embedded throughout the curriculum. For more information, visit: [aida.org.au](http://aida.org.au)*

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