

MEDIA RELEASE

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NURSING AND MIDWIFERY LEADER TO MAKE HISTORIC APOLOGY TO ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES

For the first time in Australian history, a national nursing and midwifery leadership group will deliver an apology to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, for the hurt and harm caused by non-Indigenous nurses and midwives.

On Friday 19 August 2022, Professor Karen Strickland, Chair of the Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery (CDNM), will deliver an apology on behalf of the CDNM and its members, to over 300 delegates attending the 2022 Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives (CATSINaM) National Conference. The majority of delegates will be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander practising or retired, and student nurses and midwives.

The apology will acknowledge the historical contributions of nurses and midwives in the implementation of racially discriminatory government policies, that intentionally or indirectly harmed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people under the guise of 'care'. Nurses and midwives were involved in, and in some cases still are, causing harm to individuals, families and communities, and the professions denied Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people entry into and influence within the nursing and midwifery professions and health service delivery.

Dr Lynore Geia, Bwgcolman, will deliver the *Response to the Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery National Apology* on behalf of CATSINaM, following the apology from Professor Strickland.

Dr Geia states that "an apology from the nursing and midwifery professions is welcomed and long overdue. We know about the roles that nurses and midwives undertook in implementing the punitive government policies that saw the taking of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families and communities, in establishing and maintaining racial segregation within hospital and health services, and through oppressive 'collegial behaviors' towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nursing and midwifery students, intentionally hindering and in some cases preventing students from becoming nurses and midwives and fulfilling their desire to help our own people.

"An apology is based on the premise that we have a professional relationship, we all belong to the nursing and midwifery professions, and any form of discriminatory practice breaches that relationship and causes harm. An apology must go beyond acknowledging the harmful legacy

that the nursing and midwifery professions have inherited to committing to do better through purposeful action to prevent such harms from being repeated in contemporary nursing and midwifery care”, Dr Geia shared.

The apology will mark a new era in the partnership between the CDNМ and CATSINaM, one founded on privileging the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives, promoting trust and supporting truth-telling and genuine collaboration for a new way of working.

Dr Geia states that “purposeful action includes working together in real partnership for reform, recognising the unique knowledge and skills that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island nurses and midwives bring to the professions in developing reforms for better education, research and clinical practice outcomes. An apology means we commit to each other to repair the professional breach and to also maintain a formal process of accountability to each other for the work we need to do and will do.”

The apology will be delivered a day after the opening of CATSINaM's *In Our Own Right: Black Australian Nurses and Midwives Stories 2022* National Exhibition, an exhibition that will platform the stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives, who each tell of their success despite the interpersonal and institutional racism leveled against them, and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses, midwives, and patients.

The apology also coincides with the launch of CATSINaM's '*gettin em, keepin em, n growin em*' (GENKE II) report, that outlines strategies for immediate and long-term initiatives that can only be achieved through consolidating strategic partnerships between CATSINaM, the Australian government and nursing, midwifery leadership organisations.

Additional Information

Professor Karen Strickland will deliver *the Apology to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from the Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery* on Friday 19th August 2022, during Session 1 of the CATSINaM National Conference 09:00 – 10:50.

Dr Lynore Geia, Bwgcolman, will provide *a Response to the Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery National Apology* in Session 4 of the National Conference at 16:25 Friday 19 August 2022.

The CDNM is the peak organisation that represents Deans and Heads of School of Nursing and Midwifery in Australian and New Zealand universities that offer undergraduate and postgraduate nursing and midwifery programs.

Media contact: Dr Lynore Geia, Senior Project Manager (Education & Practice), CATSINaM

lynore.geia@catsinam.org.au