



# CLOSE **THE** GAP

NATIONAL CLOSE THE GAP DAY

YOUR 'HOW-TO' GUIDE



**National Close  
the Gap Day:  
Getting together.  
Sharing stories.  
Taking action.  
Closing the gap.**







# ABORIGINAL HEALTH CAN NO LONGER WAIT

## THE TIME IS NOW TO CLOSE THE GAP

This National Close the Gap Day, we have an opportunity to send our governments a clear message that Australians value health equality - via high quality health service provision - as a fundamental right for all.

Despite a decade of Government promises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health in Australia is still largely in crisis.

We are so lucky to live in a rich country with a universal health system that is the envy of many other countries. However, many of Australia's First Peoples don't have the same access to healthcare that non-Indigenous Australians take for granted.

Aboriginal people are dying from preventable disease at more than double the rate of the rest of the population and yet their use of health services is far lower than what is needed.

The support of many Australians, by participating in the ever-growing National Close the Gap Day, has been crucial in much of the work the Campaign has done to ensure that Indigenous health inequality remains a national priority.

With your ongoing help and commitment, the Close the Gap Campaign is continuing to hold our governments accountable for the good health and wellbeing of Australia's First Peoples.

Our message this year is clear. Words alone are not enough, we need real action from governments to Close the Gap!

Every NCTGD event – whether in an office, at a school or out in our community – demonstrates to governments, at all levels, that Australians value health equality for all.

You can make this message crystal clear by asking everyone you know to support Close the Gap this year at your event:

[www.oxfam.org.au/closethegap](http://www.oxfam.org.au/closethegap)

Thanks again,

Rod Little

Co-Chair, Close the Gap Campaign

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers should be aware that this publication may contain the images or names of people who have since passed away.**

**This guide will help you prepare and maximise our collective impact on NCTGD.**

For more information, visit: [oxfam.org.au/closethegap](http://oxfam.org.au/closethegap)

If you have any questions, please call our customer service team on Freecall 1800 088 110 (9am – 5pm AEST).

# BEING A YOUNG ABORIGINAL WOMAN IN AUSTRALIA TODAY



**Danielle Dries, 30, is one of many exceptional young Aboriginal people making their mark today. A Kurna woman (whose traditional country includes Adelaide). Danielle graduated as a Doctor of Medicine and Surgery from the Australian National University in December 2016. This year Danielle will be a resident medical officer and will be starting her GP training with the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine.**

**Close the Gap Campaign Lead, Tom Widdup, finds out how — despite continued high levels of Indigenous disadvantage, and a disconnect that still hinders relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia — Danielle and many young Indigenous Australians like her are working to overcome these barriers.**

## **What is it like being a young Aboriginal woman in Australia at the moment?**

This is a very difficult question to answer.

I believe young Aboriginal women have a certain level of privilege that our parents and our elders never had. On the whole we have more opportunities, but many Aboriginal girls and women continue to suffer significant disadvantage in comparison to non-Indigenous Australians.

I'm not saying I've had it easy. I have experienced a lot of racism and discrimination as a young Aboriginal woman. It's rarely blatant racism, but I am regularly made to feel less than those around me; people question why I would want to identify as Aboriginal. There's still definitely a lack

of understanding in Australia about Aboriginal history, culture and the vast diversity among our people.

Trying to balance my Aboriginal culture within a westernised Australian community is also very difficult. One thing I do know is that I'm proud of the many people that have fought for the rights that have given us more opportunities.

## **Why did you choose to study medicine?**

I started off as a physiotherapist prior to pursuing medicine at the ANU. An elective subject in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, together with my Aboriginal ancestry, made me want to do more for our people.

As a physio, I couldn't find many jobs in Aboriginal Medical Services or in remote communities, so I decided to study medicine. This opens up more opportunities to work in Aboriginal health, but also to advocate for allied health positions. This year I will be completing my internship in Canberra while sitting on the board for Indigenous Allied Health Australia.

Access to services is a complex issue; and it doesn't necessarily improve for Aboriginal people living in the city. My Nan, who is now 80 years old, has had diabetes since she was 29. Three of my uncles have diabetes as well, and two had a stroke in their 50s. All live in the city, not rural or remote locations. Levels of chronic disease are high among our people everywhere. But while living in the city has helped my grandmother live longer (with good access to multidisciplinary care), services in cities are not always accessible to Indigenous people for other reasons, such as cultural appropriateness.





Parliament House, Canberra: From left, Dr. Jackie Huggins, Close the Gap Campaign Co-Chair; Katarina Keeler, a Kokatha woman and registered nurse; Danielle Dries, a Kurna-Meyunna woman, physiotherapist and Doctor of Medicine and Surgery; Dr. Artiene Tatian, an Arrente man from Central Australia and medical doctor at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in Sydney; and Mick Gooda, former Close the Gap Campaign Co-Chair. Photo: Lukas Coch/AAP Image/OxfamAUS.

One of the key ways to improving Indigenous health will be to improve access to quality, culturally responsive, multidisciplinary care. To do this Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health needs to have a significant presence in the core curriculum of all health degrees across Australia.

### What are Indigenous communities saying about Indigenous health?

I hear communities saying: “too many of our people are sick” and “too many of us are dying too young”. For years there have been policies and ‘interventions’ that have been trialled and failed. There is a belief that health programs will fail before they begin, or when they do work, that funding will be cut.

This is a huge stress for our people. Communities want mainstream Australia to listen to them and understand the health problems they face; they want to have empowerment over their health and their healthcare.

Closing the gap will take time: health outcomes won’t improve overnight.

### How do you get people to listen?

I used to get frustrated when people blamed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for their poor health: saying things like “they’re lazy”, or “they don’t want to work”, or our problems are just alcohol and other ‘lifestyle’ diseases. As if the levels of disadvantage we face today (and the subsequent health problems we face) is a lifestyle choice.

But with guidance from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous mentors, I’ve realised that it’s not helpful to get angry or frustrated at comments like these. It just makes people shut down. I’ve learnt to be more open and understand why people have these negative stereotypes and to start a conversation about Aboriginal culture, history and the strengths of our people. Education is key.

## Facts about the Indigenous health gap

- Indigenous people live 10 fewer years than non-Indigenous Australians, and despite the Government’s promises, the gap has begun to widen again.
- The rate of mortality among Indigenous children is double that of other children.
- The incidence of illness among Indigenous Australians is 2.3 times that of the rest of Australia, with diabetes six times as high.
- Australia is the only high income country in the world to have trachoma, which is found exclusively in Aboriginal communities.

Despite this situation, the Federal government is yet to restore savage cuts to health programs made in the 2014 budget, and nor will it fund the fund the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2013-23*

# HOW TO HOST A GREAT NATIONAL CLOSE THE GAP DAY EVENT











## STEP 1: WHAT SORT OF ACTIVITY?



It could be a few friends over to your place or at a local cafe. Or it could be a large event at work with 10, 50, or even 100 people. It could be held at your work, in a local park, in another community space, or on a university campus.

Whatever you choose, have fun and get as many people involved as you can. The aim of National Close the Gap Day (NCTGD) is to bring people together, to share information, and most importantly, to take action making it clear to Government that there is a strong public demand for policy, practice and funding that can achieve Indigenous health equality by 2030.

The key to hosting a successful activity is starting new conversations with people who perhaps aren't aware of the extent of our Indigenous health crisis. You can start by sharing your thoughts on the resources we provide as part of this event. Then, we encourage you to take the suggested actions outlined later in this guide.

Together, this is how we will help close the gap.

## INVOLVE YOUR GOVERNMENT

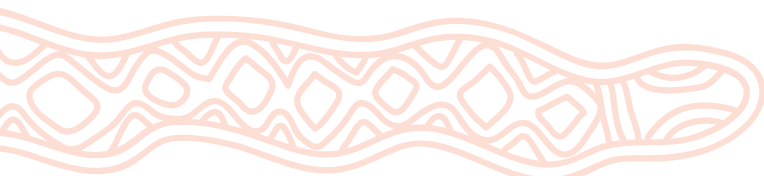
We need to see real changes at the top. To amplify the impact of your event, you can:

- Invite you Federal and State representatives to your event (just telling them it is on is important)
- Write to them asking for them to take action
- Phone or visit your local member

## HOW DO WE CLOSE THE GAP:

We're calling on governments to end this national shame and provide adequate health services to Aboriginal peoples in the following ways:

1. Fully cost and fund the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan
2. Build the capacity and provide increased long term funding to extend the reach of Aboriginal Medical Services (AMS) to meet the demand that exists
3. Ensure that health solutions are culturally appropriate and community focused and controlled
4. Expand the training of Aboriginal medical professionals so they can be at the forefront of addressing this crisis.







## OTHER IDEAS:

### GET TALKING, GET ACTIVE

You can link up with an existing activity or start your own.

Invite a guest speaker to share their experiences and insights. Watch this year's Close the Gap video to get people thinking, talking and taking action (you can also watch videos from throughout the 10 years of the campaign online).

Incorporating "action" into your activity is vital. This can be done via social media, signing the Close the Gap action (and encouraging others you know to sign too) and sending an e-letter to the PM. Calling, visiting or writing to your local member is even more effective.

You can also fundraise as part of your event. All money you raise will help achieve Indigenous health equality by 2030.

And lastly, have fun!

### MAKE A MEAL OF IT

If you're having food, think about including some bush tucker. There are lots of Aboriginal catering companies to choose from. Supply Nation, the Australian leader

in supplier diversity, can connect you with Indigenous businesses across the country. To search for Indigenous businesses, go to [www.supplynation.org.au/search](http://www.supplynation.org.au/search)

You can also support a local Oxfam producer partner like Outback Pride. Outback Pride promotes the Australian native food industry by developing the industry and supporting a network of production sites within traditional Aboriginal communities.

### GET CREATIVE

Think about including Close the Gap messages in creative ways. You could:

- Hold a trivia competition using the "chatterboxes" supplied.
- Include NCTGD in your staff meeting or conference.
- Design a banner, sculpture, chalk-artwork or mural painting.
- Set up a display promoting NCTGD with banners, balloons and temporary tattoos.
- Make your own health promotion posters.



Laidley State High School students in conjunction with Kambu Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation for Health spell out Close the Gap for National Close the Gap Day. Photo: Jason Malouin/OxfamAUS.





## STEP 2: DATE, TIME & LOCATION



We're asking you to hold your activity on **Thursday 15 March 2018**, to maximise the impact of National Close the Gap Day.

But if that's not possible for you, we encourage you to hold your event on another day in March, or for instance on Harmony Day (21 March), during NAIDOC week (3–10 July), or during Reconciliation week (27 May to 3 June).

## STEP 3: BEFORE YOUR ACTIVITY



A bit of preparation can go a long way to ensuring the success of your activity and the overall impact of National Close the Gap Day.

### INVITE YOUR GUESTS

Any event is a good event, but the more people you invite, the bigger your impact.

- Tell your family, friends and workmates what you're up to. They might want to help you run your activity, or even register their own. Send out invitations by email, through social media, and put up the posters we've supplied. You can download and print more posters from our website: [www.oxfam.org.au/nctgd](http://www.oxfam.org.au/nctgd)

If you're holding a public event, think about promoting it in your local newspaper, community newsletter or on community noticeboards.

You can access and edit your NCTGD event page using the unique URL provided when you confirm your event online.

### SEND A REMINDER

Remind everyone about your event the week before.

## AND THEN...

- Download more resources. If you're holding quite a large activity, visit [www.oxfam.org.au/nctgd](http://www.oxfam.org.au/nctgd) to download additional chatterboxes, posters and Close the Gap action/petition forms.
- Close the Gap t-shirts are discounted in the lead up to NCTGD. Get in quick and make sure your shirts arrive in time via: [www.oxfam.org.au/nctgd](http://www.oxfam.org.au/nctgd)

**For large orders of ten or more please contact Freecall 1800 088 110.**

- Watch the NCTGD 2018 video online (you can also watch video stories from the last 10 years of the campaign too). If you're having an outdoor event, forward a link to the video so people have a chance to watch it before the day. If you live in regional or remote Australia and your internet connection won't come to the party, then Freecall 1800 088 110 and we can send you the video files.
- Taking action to influence our political representatives is the most important thing you and your guests can do on the day. Encourage everyone there to sign the action. Other simple actions you can do on the day include calling, tweeting, visiting or writing to your local member. The message is straight forward – Business as usual is failing: Governments must work WITH Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to Close the Gap.

## THINK ABOUT FUNDRAISING

Your donation will help Oxfam and the Close the Gap Campaign continue to work for Indigenous health equality.

There are heaps of ways to fundraise and this is completely up to you — no idea is too big or too small. It can be as easy as charging a gold coin for a sausage sizzle, baking cakes to sell, or charging an entry fee.

The best way to get started is to add a fundraising goal to your event page and then encourage your guests to make donations online — donations can be made before, during or even after your event.

You may be surprised how many people will want to support you, and remember, the more you raise, the bigger the difference you make to Close the Gap.

## STEP 4: ON THE DAY

Your activity can be any shape or size, but here are some tips for a fun event that will also help Close the Gap. There are a couple of things we'd like you to include.

### WATCH, DISCUSS, LEARN AND SHARE

- Start with an acknowledgement of the traditional owners of the land you're meeting on.
- Thank everyone for attending and explain the importance of their involvement in NCTGD.
- Watch the 2018 National Close the Gap day video.
- Use the chatterboxes that are supplied in your pack. These are great way to break the ice, start conversations, and help people understand the extent of the health crisis.
- **This is really important: Ask everyone to take an action, either on their phone or by distributing the Close the Gap action forms.**

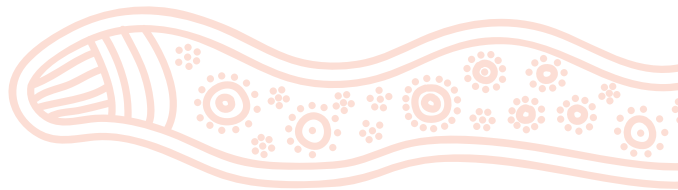
Make sure you have enough copies for everyone attending your event.

### TAKE ACTION

We can't stress enough how important it is to take action on and around NCTGD.

Here are some things you can do to boost the number of people who join in:

- Encourage people to sign the Close the Gap action and if they are really keen to write a letter directly to the Prime Minister or your local member of parliament. You'll find "Action" forms in your event pack. Ask people to return their forms to Oxfam as soon as possible.
- Ask people to sign the Action using their smart-phone\*. Go to [www.oxfam.org.au/closethegap](http://www.oxfam.org.au/closethegap).
- Write to the Prime Minister. You can download and print off template letters or do it online at [www.oxfam.org.au/closethegap](http://www.oxfam.org.au/closethegap)



### DONATE TO CLOSE THE GAP

- Ask your guests to make a donation. By donating to the Close the Gap campaign you're giving us the best chance to achieve health equality by 2030.

**Remember to get everyone to sign up to the action. The more we let our political leaders know that Indigenous health Equality is an important issue, the more change we can create.**

### SHARE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

- Tell the world what you're up to. Share pictures of your event: include photos of people holding up close the gap materials. Also include a caption encouraging people to sign the Close the Gap pledge or to write to the Prime Minister. And don't forget to include this link [www.oxfam.org.au/closethegap](http://www.oxfam.org.au/closethegap), and this hashtag **#closethegapday**



Photo: Bonnie Savage/OxfamAU



Photo: Jason Malouin/OxfamAU







Photo: Blue Razoo/OxfamAUS



## **STEP 5: AFTER YOUR ACTIVITY**

**There are a couple of really important things to do after the day.**

### **YOUR FEEDBACK**

We'll be in touch towards the end of March to get some feedback about your activity. The online survey will take 10-15 minutes to complete. Your input is vital and will help us shape and improve future events.

### **RETURNING DONATIONS**

The easiest way to deposit the money you raise is to make an online donation to your own event page. Total the cash you have collected then make the donation with your card.

You can download additional instructions on how to return collected donations from our website.

### **RETURNING COMPLETED ACTION FORMS**

The Close the Gap pledge is an ever-growing group of people calling for an end to the Indigenous health crisis.

Please return completed petition forms to Oxfam ASAP so we can add your event invitees to this list of concerned Australians. Even after your NCTGD activity you and other supporters can continue to collect and send in petition forms.

### **CELEBRATE YOUR SUCCESS AND THANK EVERYONE**

Thank everyone who came to your event and remind them how important their involvement is to achieve health equality.

You can include some of the achievements listed in the chatterboxes or visit [www.oxfam.org.au/closethegap](http://www.oxfam.org.au/closethegap) for more examples. Remind your invitees of their Close the Gap petition, and encourage them to fill and return this to us as soon as they can.

Then let the world know what you got up to: what inspired you, what you talked about and what you learned. Remember to give yourself a pat on the back – it's people like you that make National Close the Gap Day and the Close the Gap campaign the tremendous success that it's been.





Titenara and Shakarri are members of an Aboriginal Group that runs health and wellbeing activities for children aged 5 to 17 years. Photo: Jason Malouin/OxfamAUS.







GETTING TOGETHER. SHARING STORIES.

TAKING ACTION. CLOSING THE GAP.

# CLOSE THE GAP

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