

17 March 2016 | For immediate release

Time to focus on closing the Indigenous Mental Health Gap

On the ten year anniversary of closing the gap, Mental Health Australia is calling for a sustained national effort to address poor Indigenous mental health and wellbeing.

"For too long, we have watched the gap increase between Indigenous Australians and other Australians in regards to levels of psychological distress and illness," Mental Health Australia CEO Frank Quinlan said today.

"Indigenous Australians are, on average, twice as likely to be hospitalised for mental health issues, three times as likely to report psychological distress levels that impact on their mental health and twice as likely to take their own lives.

"Mental health accounts for 10% of the health related gap for Indigenous Australians, with suicide contributing a further 4%. It's just not good enough.

"With huge reforms to the mental health system now underway, we must prioritise a real and meaningful improvement in Indigenous mental health and wellbeing.

We need to build on previous work such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social and Emotional Wellbeing Framework, develop and implement appropriate targets and indicators, culturally appropriate and accountable programs and services and greater community awareness and connection.

"We need to support community based approaches that focus on healing and recovery and on addressing the social determinants that impact so heavily on our Indigenous brothers and sisters.

"The time for action is now."

Media Contact: Chris Wagner – 0434 378 939

