

The ASA has expressed its support for Closing the Gap which acknowledges the ongoing strength and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in sustaining the world's oldest living cultures.

Closing the Gap is underpinned by the belief that when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a genuine say in the design and delivery of policies, programs and services that affect them, better life outcomes are achieved. The objective of Closing the Gap is to overcome the entrenched inequality faced by too many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people so that their life outcomes are equal to all Australians.

The Medical Board of Australia has expressed the intent to work together to achieve equity in health outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and other Australians to close the gap by 2031. This is to share a commitment to ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have access to health services that are culturally safe and free from racism so that they can enjoy a healthy life, equal to that of other Australians, enriched by a strong living culture, dignity, and justice. We also commit to ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples are actively leading the design, delivery, and control of health services.

The Uluru Statement from the Heart is an invitation for all Australians “to walk with our [First Nations] people in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.”

In Australia, many influential Medical Groups such as the AMA, RACGP, RACP, Australian Indigenous Doctors Association and RANZCP are indicative organisations committed to working closely with First Nations communities to ensure their voices are heard, and their rights are upheld.

The ASA Board and Council has resolved to support the Uluru Statement from the Heart after deep consideration. As a significant issue, the ASA's position was determined by the Board and Council to reflect the Values of the specialty and Society.

The ASA recognises members may have differing views and aim to facilitate constructive discussion, with education and engagement as part of our commitment. The ASA acknowledges that we are all on a journey.

The ASA will not be telling members how to vote during the referendum campaign. Every voting Australian will determine their own position, based on their individual view.

The ASA recognises and respects that not all of our members may agree with our view – as with other governance positions advanced by the Society over the years.

The ASA welcomes consultation on the terms of the Voice referendum and the national conversation on establishing a Voice to Parliament. The Australian Government have subsequently established an information site <https://voice.gov.au/> that details Recognition through a Voice.

To assist members with their understanding, we have also referenced Reconciliation Australia, which was established in 2001 and is the lead body for reconciliation in the nation. Reconciliation Australia is an independent not-for-profit organisation which promotes and facilitates reconciliation by building relationships, respect and trust between the wider Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Reconciliation Australia focuses on influencing organisations, people and policies, and has published significant resources to inform people about the Voice to Parliament <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/reconciliation/support-a-voice-to-parliament/>.

The ASA has developed this Position Statement based on current evidence and may be subject to change as more information becomes available. It is intended for anaesthetists in Australia (promulgated 31/07/2023). For the latest version, please visit <https://asa.org.au/position-statements/>.