



Closing the Gap requires strong partnerships.

Thursday 19 March 2015

Premier of Victoria, the Hon. Daniel Andrews MP hosted a *Closing the Gap in Victoria* event at Parliament House today to celebrate Victoria's ongoing commitment to reducing health inequality for Victorian Aboriginal peoples.

Ms Jill Gallagher AO, CEO of VACCHO, the peak body for Aboriginal health in Victoria addressed the Premier and guests which included the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the Hon. Natalie Hutchins, Leader of the Opposition the Hon. Matthew Guy, Members of Parliament, leaders from the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Sector, together with members of the Coalition for Aboriginal Health Equality in Victoria and invited guests.

"Partnerships are not just desirable in themselves, but essential in achieving Aboriginal health equality," said Ms Gallagher. "True partnerships will help remove the barriers in achieving health equality and enable the government, organisations and communities to work together," she said.

Today is *National Close the Gap Day*, commemorating the signing of the Statement of Intent to Close the Gap by all Parties - at both the Federal and State level six years ago. The National Close the Gap Steering Committee released its annual report on progress toward Closing the Gap, and strongly recommended efforts to address health inequities be led by the Commonwealth at the Council of Australian Governments (COAG).

Ms Gallagher called on both sides of politics to prioritise Aboriginal health. "We cannot afford to let Victorian Aboriginal peoples be subject to inequality for another generation. Aboriginal health must be a COAG priority: making sure that Aboriginal health stays everybody's responsibility," said Ms Gallagher.

"We must have our efforts led by the Commonwealth through the Council of Australian Governments," She said.

Ms Gallagher thanked the Premier of Victoria and the Leader of the Opposition. She urged all political parties to maintain and strengthen their collaborative efforts towards closing the gap in Aboriginal health outcomes in Victoria through a culturally competent health system, a vision for sector sustainability and a commitment to engagement with Aboriginal communities.

VACCHO believes that a commitment to true partnerships and engagement with Aboriginal communities in all aspects of their health and wellbeing will achieve vibrant, healthy, self-determining Aboriginal peoples, Aboriginal families and Aboriginal communities.

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