

Health Workforce Summary:

First Nations

First Nations people are consistently under-represented in our health workforce.

AHPRA data reflects that nationally, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples' participation in the regulated health professions was 1.2 percent, well short of the 3.2 percent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation in the general population.

The publication of the [National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan 2021–2031](#) in March last year signals a renewed focus on the building of Australia's First Nations health workforce. The plan was further supported by the Australian government in the October 2022-2023 federal budget through a commitment of \$314.5 million to expand Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (ACCHO) services and strengthen the First Nations health workforce.

In Queensland, the establishment of partnerships to co-design an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce plan, as outlined in Strategic Initiative 2.1 of the national plan, has commenced. Support for First Nations workforce growth across clinical and non-clinical roles has also been strengthened this year with 14 out of 16 Hospital and Health Services (HHS) publishing their Health Equity Strategies in accordance with Health Legislation Amendment Act 2020.

As Table 1 below indicates, the number of AHPRA registered health professionals who identified as being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin in the 2021 National Health Workforce Dataset (NHWDS) survey was not available at the time of writing with data from 2019 and 2020 presented.

Table 1: 2019 and 2020 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander AHPRA registered health professionals in MM 2-7 Queensland

| Registered Health Profession | 2019 | 2020 |
|--|------------|------------|
| Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker/Practitioner | 91 | 114 |
| Paramedic | 51 | 59 |
| Practice Nurse | 42 | 44 |
| General Practitioner | 19 | 19 |
| Psychologist | 27 | 25 |
| Physiotherapist | 20 | 20 |
| Dental Practitioner | 15 | 14 |
| Midwife | 10 | 9 |
| Occupational Therapist | 12 | 20 |
| Pharmacist | 8 | 7 |
| Medical Radiation Practitioner | 6 | 9 |
| Chiropractor | 5 | 6 |
| Optometrist | 0 | NA* |
| Podiatrist | * | * |
| Total | 306 | 345 |

Note: Data provided by Queensland Health; *Number suppressed because less than 4

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AHPRA highlights in their [Annual Report](#) that increasing participation in the registered health workforce is a goal of their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Cultural Safety Strategy. Seven identified positions have been created within AHPRA in areas of Registration, Research and Evaluation, Statutory Appointments, and the Health Strategy Unit to support this.

In education and training, the Grow Your Own Workforce Seed Funding pilot program commenced in the Western Queensland and Northern Queensland regions. The program is designed to build the capacity of the health workforce in remote, rural and regional areas by supporting place-based education to employment initiatives.

Funded by CheckUP, the program aims to strengthen First Nations health workforces and reduce local disparities in education and employment. Depending on the success of the pilots, the program will be expanded to other regions of Queensland in the future.

Also of note is the commencement of the Indigenous Allied Health Association (IAHA) leadership program in March 2022. Recognising the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership in driving transformational change, IAHA hosted 65 participants from across 20 allied health disciplines in their inaugural leadership program. Expressions of interest for the IAHA 2023 leadership program opened in late 2022.



Photo taken by Sandie Read, Mundubbera