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Sustained investment in Indigenous medical education is delivering strong outcomes

Medical Deans today welcomed the new funding being provided by the Australian Government for the LIME Network's continued work supporting quality and effective teaching of Indigenous health and growing the Indigenous medical workforce.

"Increasing the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait doctors is vital to closing the health gap that still exists between Australia's first peoples and non-Indigenous Australians. LIME's work connecting Indigenous medical educators and student support leads is fundamental to ensuring medical schools' approaches are Indigenous-led" said Professor Sandra Eades, Dean of Curtin University Medical School, and member of Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand (Medical Deans).

Professor Eades, a Noongar woman from Mount Barker in Western Australia, was one of the first two Aboriginal doctors to graduate from the University of Newcastle's medical program, the first Aboriginal medical doctor to be awarded a PhD, and was NSW Woman of the Year in 2006 in recognition of her research contributions to Aboriginal communities.

"We thank the Australian Government for their continued commitment to LIME's work. While we know there is still a long way to go, in the last decade the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical graduates has tripled" said Professor Eades.

Student statistics data¹ collated by Medical Deans shows that 46 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical students graduated from Australian medical schools in 2019, up from 14 in 2012; and this year 121 commenced in year 1, up from 70 in 2012.

Another key focus for LIME is supporting the quality and effective teaching of Indigenous health and culturally safe care to all medical students.

"Doctors who are trained and equipped for this not only play a vital role in closing the unacceptable health gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and non-Indigenous Australians, but will provide better care to all their patients" reiterated Professor Eades.

Data from the Medical Schools Outcomes Database, a survey of all final year students in Australian medical schools, reveals that 47 percent of respondents were interested in Indigenous health being a part of their future career².

"We thank all the Indigenous academics, staff, and doctors within the LIME Network for their tireless commitment, enthusiasm, expertise and openness. We could not have achieved the outcomes we have without their leadership" said Professor Eades.

Contact

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¹ https://medicaldeans.org.au/md/2020/08/2020_MDANZ-Student-Statistics-Report-1.pdf

² https://medicaldeans.org.au/md/2020/08/2020-MSOD-National-Data-Report_2015-2019-Full-report.pdf

The LIME Network is a dynamic network dedicated to ensuring the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning of Indigenous health in medical education, as well as best practice in the recruitment and retention of Indigenous medical students and trainees.

We do this through establishing a continuing bi-national presence that encourage and supports collaboration within and between medical education institutions in Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand and by building linkages with local Indigenous communities and with other health science sectors.

The LIME Network is a program of Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand and receives funding from the Australian Government Department of Health.

Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand Inc. (Medical Deans) is the peak body representing professional entry-level medical education, training and research in Australia and New Zealand. The organisation's membership comprises the Deans of Australia's 21 medical schools and the two New Zealand schools

As well as having an extensive representative and advocacy role in the advancement of health and education, Medical Deans auspice and manage a number of projects in relation to medical education and the medical workforce, including the Medical Schools Outcomes Database (MSOD), Indigenous health and the LIME Network, graduate competencies and quality assurance, student health, research, and social accountability.