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WORKFORCE COLLABORATION THE KEY TO CLOSING THE GAP IN QUEENSLAND

National Close the Gap Day, Thursday 22 March 2012 is an opportune reminder that collaboration is the key to increasing life expectancy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Queensland.

Improving the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is one of Australia’s highest health priorities with a 10 to 17 year life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

‘GPQ has worked closely with the Queensland Closing the Gap Network to bring together the skills and cultural knowledge of the new workforce by coordinating and supporting a strong network to deliver results in Queensland’ said Dr John Kastrissios, GPQ Board Director.

The collaborative and consistent effort of the Queensland Closing the Gap Network of Outreach Workers, Project Officers and Care Coordinators and has resulted in increased cultural awareness of mainstream health services and the high uptake of 715 health checks compared to other Australian states and territories.

‘The ‘715’ is the MBS item number for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health check undertaken by a GP’ said Dr Kastrissios.

‘Queensland Outreach Workers, Project Officers and Care Coordinators should be congratulated for their excellent work with local health services and their communities. We are now starting to see improved access to coordinated services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in Queensland’ he said.

In May 2011, GPQ and Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council (QAIHC) signed a partnership agreement to work together to overcome the logistical, environmental and lifestyle factors that impact on the life expectancy disparity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

‘This agreement not only represents mutual trust and respect between the two organisations but has also increased collaboration in Queensland’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander on-the-ground workforce’ said Dr Kastrissios.
Uptake of the ‘715 health check’ spiked and continued to increase after collaboration with QAIHC. Prior to the agreement, 4472 checks per quarter were performed, compared with the 7722 checks in the first quarter of 2012 – the highest of any state or territory.

‘This result is a great achievement working towards improving the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Queensland’ said Dr Kastrissios.

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