

# MEDIA RELEASE

Sunday, 4 August 2024

## Doctors honoured for advancing equity and inclusion

Dr Clara Tuck Meng Soo and Dr Dinesh Palipana have been awarded the Australian Medical Association's 2024 Diversity in Medicine Awards.

AMA President Professor Steve Robson said the pair were being honoured for their outstanding contributions to advancing diversity, equity and inclusion in the medical field.

"Dr Soo and Dr Palipana are both exceptional medical practitioners who are dedicated to providing the best possible care for their patients," Professor Robson said.

"We'd like to honour Dr Soo and Dr Palipana for their commitment to providing compassionate and inclusive healthcare for all. Their compassion and empathy have made a profound difference in the lives of countless individuals and families across Australia."

Dr Soo, a Canberra-based general practitioner known for her dedication to the LGBTIQ+ community, has been instrumental in promoting the rights and well-being of transgender and gender diverse people.

Dr Soo said she was honoured to accept the award.

"The AMA's award for diversity in medicine sends a strong message about the importance of the diverse communities working in medicine and the diverse communities that we serve," Dr Soo said.

"In giving me this award, I see it as the AMA acknowledging my work with the LGBTIQ community and in particular the trans community, and I am grateful for this powerful gesture of support."

Dr Palipana is an emergency doctor living with quadriplegia. He was the first quadriplegic medical intern in Queensland and the second person to graduate medical school with quadriplegia in Australia.

He is a passionate disability advocate, dedicating his professional life to working, teaching and researching health.

Dr Palipana said he was proud to accept the award.

"If we are to thrive as a profession and remain relevant, we must reflect the community that we serve," Dr Palipana said.

"The journey, coming to medicine from a country divided in ethnic and political wars to Australia, then sustaining a spinal cord injury in medical school, has been a personal reminder of the diversity of people in our world.

"It is heartening to have the AMA enable diversity within us, so we can be the best doctors for the humanity we have the privilege of healing."

The awards were announced last night at the AMA's National Conference on the Gold Coast in Queensland.

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## For background BIO

### Dr Clara Tuck Meng Soo

Dr Clara Tuck Meng Soo was born in Malaysia and studied medicine at Jesus College, Cambridge. Dr Soo went to King's College Hospital, London, for her clinical studies and graduated with MBBS(Hons) in 1985. Dr Soo migrated to Australia and obtained a Graduate Diploma in Population Health from the Australian National University in 1993 and her FRACGP in 1994.

Dr Soo was awarded the OAM for services to the Canberra community in the Queen's Birthday honours in 2015. This was returned in January 2021 as a protest at the elevation of Margaret Court to the Companion of the Order of Australia.

Dr Soo frequently gets invited to give talks and lectures and be on discussion panels. She believes it is important for a trans woman of colour to be seen and heard to increase the visibility of both trans people and LGBTIQ+ people of colour, and hopefully promote greater understanding and acceptance.

### Dr Dinesh Palipana

Dr Dinesh Palipana is a doctor, lawyer, disability advocate, and researcher.

Dr Palipana was born in Sri Lanka and grew up in Brisbane. While in medical school, he was involved in a car accident that caused a spinal cord injury.

He was the first quadriplegic medical intern in Queensland and the second person to graduate medical school with quadriplegia in Australia.

Dr Palipana works in the emergency department at the Gold Coast University Hospital and is a researcher and senior lecturer at the Griffith University.

He is a founding member of Doctors with Disabilities Australia. He was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in 2019. His autobiography, *Stronger*, was published in 2022.

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