



Media Release

Closing the Aboriginal health gap goes well beyond hospitals

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Moves announced by the Australian Health Ministers' Council on Friday to look at health system reform that goes well beyond just hospitals are very welcome says Dr Mick Adams, chair of National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO).

"I am very pleased that this much wider health reform agenda was also reflected in the federal government's National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission announced last week" Dr Adams said.

"NACCHO, as the peak body for Aboriginal medical services, is eager to provide policy advice to government and the ten commissioners as part the campaign to Close the Gap in Aboriginal life expectancy.

"NACCHO hopes that the Commission will play an important role in focusing the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments on the need for better service provision to Aboriginal peoples in all areas of health, from primary health care to hospitals, public health programs and other services, and to introduce performance indicators for which funding is contingent in this regard.

Targets should be set for improvements in Aboriginal people's access to hospital procedures including kidney dialysis; population health programs (such as sexual health, cervical screening, dental/oral health, breast screening); rehabilitation services (eg cardiac rehabilitation, Commonwealth Hearing Services Program); residential aged care services, and immunisation services.

"The Commission should play an important role in bringing to fruition the Council of Australian Government's agreement on December 20 last year to work with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population to close the 17 year gap in Indigenous Australians life expectancy and to halve the mortality gap for children under five within a decade.

"There is ample evidence that there is inappropriate and inequitable delivery of care to Aboriginal peoples despite having three times the burden of disease.

"There needs to be an appropriate consultation process with all Australians and with representative bodies for Aboriginal health, such as NACCHO, on what reforms are needed to improve the responsiveness of mainstream health services to Aboriginal peoples" Dr Adams said.

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