

Press Release

14 February 2017

Communities Voice is Key to Closing the Gap

Today's ninth Closing the Gap Report highlights the health challenges facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Apunipima Cape York Health Council CEO Cleveland Fagan said, "The report identifies small gains that are being made by Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations such as Apunipima, however with the targets looking increasingly out of reach we urge government to work more closely with communities and look at serious reforms to give us a chance to close the health gap between mainstream and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We urge the government to listen and work with the community who know what is needed for themselves and their families.

"We know that mainstream services do not deliver the outcomes we are all looking for and this report is further evidence that community led and community driven services are the way forward for better health outcomes in community.

"Community is central to any debate about the future of our health services – evidenced by the planned transition of five Cape York communities to community controlled primary health care by 2019. Community wants to be in control of their services and in Cape York at least, government is listening. Today the Prime Minister acknowledged that the Closing the Gap initiatives need to be community driven and that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are central to the process of finding solutions which are culturally appropriate.

"Our recent performance against the NKPI's demonstrates that in Cape York we are moving in the right direction, however support is needed to go further. We know that mainstream services do not deliver the outcomes we are looking for and this report is further evidence that community led and community driven services are the way forward for better outcomes in health in communities.

"We will continue to work with our regional partners, TCHHS, Royal Flight Doctor Service (RFDS) and Cape York Cairns Indigenous Mayor Alliance (CIMA) to name a few in a collaborative manner to ensure the communities in Cape York receive the best health and wellness outcomes."

Apunipima continues to work to address these major physical and social and emotional challenges and to generate health parity for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Cape York.

Halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade (by 2018)

'This is not on track, however in a long term perspective it has declined.'

What Apunipima is doing:

Apunipima's Maternal and Child Health team's award winning Baby One Program is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker led program designed to support women, babies and families from pregnancy until the bub is 1000 days old (nearly three).

In 2015-16,

- 45 per cent accessed antenatal care before the thirteenth week of their pregnancy
- 82 per cent of babies were born within normal weight range
- 90 per cent of Cape York babies were born after 36 weeks gestation
- 86 per cent of children under five were recorded as fully immunised

Close the gap in life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a generation (by 2031).

“We are not on track to close the gap in life expectancy by 2031, over the longer term Indigenous mortality rates have declined by 15% since 1998”

What Apunipima is doing:

As chronic disease accounts for three quarters of the mortality gap Apunipima is dedicated to preventing and managing chronic disease on Cape York.

Diabetes and chronic kidney disease accounts for the greatest burden of chronic disease amongst our patients.

We employ four Diabetes Nurse Educators, a nurse with a special interest in renal health, a Care Coordination team which helps chronic disease patients navigate the health system and access specialist care, a Nutrition team and are in the final stages of writing a Chronic Disease Strategy which is a cross organisational enterprise designed to inform work plans for the next five years.

ENDS

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