



...good health and wellbeing in rural and remote Australia

MEDIA RELEASE

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Action on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health critical

The National Rural Health Alliance, the peak body in rural and remote health throughout Australia, agrees with Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull's summation of the ninth Closing the Gap report that there is a critical need for more community-driven outcomes.

According to NRHA CEO, David Butt, while progress has been seen in some areas, the rates of infant mortality were no longer on target and this was of concern.

"While we have seen positive signs for health, including improvements in numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers not smoking during pregnancy and babies born with a low birthweight, we are still falling behind when it comes to achieving the target of halving the gap in child mortality by 2018," Mr Butt said.

"One of the key priorities for our organisation is improving health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, which is demonstrated to worsen with increasing remoteness."

Mr Butt also stressed that while many of these issues are not new, they are even more pressing in isolated areas given approximately 65% of Aboriginal people live outside Australia's major cities.

"We need greater focus on improving child health, education, and wellbeing and to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to give them the best start in life. It should involve a holistic early childhood strategy which informs high quality, locally responsive and culturally appropriate programs supported by stable, long term funding."

"The NRHA continues to work closely with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander member bodies to achieve these outcomes," Mr Butt said.

The Alliance includes representation from the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives, Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association, Indigenous Allied Health Australia, and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Association.

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The National Rural Health Alliance is Australia's peak non-government organisation for rural and remote health. Its vision is good health and wellbeing in rural and remote Australia.