



COAG funding boost needed to Close the Gap in burden of disease for Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous Australians

The National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) calls on the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to increase its financial commitment particularly in the area of Comprehensive Primary Health to tackle the high burden of disease for Indigenous Australians when it considers the Close the Gap refresh.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience a burden of disease that is more than twice that of non-Indigenous Australians, contributing to higher mortality rates.

“If COAG is serious about closing the gap in life expectancy between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the general Australian population, they the COAG govts need to get serious about tackling the higher burden of disease felt by too many Aboriginal Australians,” said NACCHO Chairperson, Mr John Singer.

“The significant portion of the overall disease burden is preventable, but aboriginal people are not always able access the care they need in a safe and culturally appropriate way.

Despite the higher burden of disease and mortality rates, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s use of the Medical Benefits Scheme (MBS) is around the same as the rest of the population.

“Drastic but achievable action is needed to turn this situation around,” Mr Singer said. “And it starts with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs).”

A boost in disease specific initiatives delivered and designed and implemented through our national network is also urgently needed in areas where Aboriginal people are particularly vulnerable.

We welcome the Recommendations made by the Australian Medical Association for more effort in the areas of ear health and renal disease as having a significant impact on the burden of disease and wellbeing of Indigenous people throughout their life, but this can only be achieved by our NACCHO members and the National, State and Territory affiliates designing and then implementing our strategies.



“We also know that the higher disease burden for Indigenous people is inextricably connected to the social determinants of health,” said Mr Singer.

“The evidence is overwhelming – if you don’t have a safe and secure place to live, if you don’t have access to nutritious food at reasonable prices and if don’t have access to good education and employment opportunities then we know you will become sick. So, the social determinants can only be achieved through Economic Development” said Mr Singer.

NACCHO has proposed a way forward to Close the Gap in life expectancy in its 2018-19 Federal Pre-Budget Submission and looks forward to working with the Australian Government and COAG on the implementation of its proposals.

While the gap in disease burden between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians remains significant so too will the life expectancy gap.

Media contact: Julian Fitzgerald 0413 982 224