



IAHA MEDIA RELEASE:

ALLIED HEALTH UNDERVALUED IN 2018 FEDERAL BUDGET

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Improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing must remain a national priority.

Action is needed to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Those actions must involve: a coherent strategy to tackle the causes of disadvantage and enable our people to achieve their potential; governments showing the stamina to address issues that come from generations of trauma and disadvantage; and commitment to work with, hear and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the knowledge they bring to issues that shape their lives.

IAHA now has a commitment of funding for a further four years. We also have a commitment of \$1.55M per year in additional funding to share with our fellow Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce peak organisations: AIDA, CATSINAM and NATSIHWA. We have proven our approaches deliver results and build the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce.

IAHA has a significant advocacy role and interest in several other initiatives announced in the 2018-19 Budget, including measures responding to urgent needs across Australian communities, including:

- \$105M over four years to improve access to aged care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- \$30M over four years for ear health assessment in pre-schools
- \$34.3M over four years for eye health and
- Extra commitment to suicide prevention, additional mental health care.

IAHA CEO Donna Murray said “For initiatives to deliver for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, community must be involved in how those measures are developed and implemented. This applies to new measures and to addressing existing acute allied health shortages in health, disability, aged care and other social services.”

A culturally safe and responsive skilled workforce, is critical in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities. To ensure the workforce has the skills needed to deliver results, strategies and solutions need to be developed and delivered in partnership with IAHA, our members and communities.

“IAHAs success thus far in developing and implementing innovative allied health career pathway programs and supports, providing leadership opportunities and development, mentoring, in partnering and in promoting person-centred, multidisciplinary care needs to be leveraged further. We therefore welcome a stronger partnership with Government to enable this success to continue and grow”, said Ms Murray.

IAHA chairperson, Nicole Turner, commented “By leading and facilitating inter-professional approaches that fit with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander notions of health and wellbeing, we’ve supported and enabled rapid growth in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce. But we still represent less than 1 per cent of the allied health workforce. Our workforce must continue to grow. Continued funding for IAHA is a vital step in the right direction.”

IAHA welcomes the \$550M allocated to the Stronger Rural Health Strategy and the aim of ensuring the right health professionals are available when and where they are needed. However, IAHA remains concerned and disappointed that acute shortages in rural and remote allied health services have been largely ignored, and particularly that there appears to be almost no gain for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities who have little or no access to allied health services at present.

CEO, Donna Murray, added “IAHA will continue to advocate for the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan and Implementation Plan to be fully funded. IAHA will continue to seek opportunities to work constructively with Government to achieve this result.”

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