



## *m e d i a   r e l e a s e*

8 March, 2007

### Blackfellas ‘ripped off’ by federal funding

**The nation’s peak Aboriginal health body has slammed the Federal Government for spending less than 25% of recommended funding on Aboriginal primary health care (PHC) services, saying its indifference to the problem was condemning the nation’s sickest people to a very short lifetime of chronic illness and despair.**

NACCHO CEO, Dea Delaney Thiele, has told the National Rural Health Conference in Albury that the government continues to ignore reports it has commissioned itself which recommend \$1244 *per capita* funding. The latest figures show only \$306 is spent *per capita* on Aboriginal health services each year.

Ms Delaney Thiele said NACCHO fully agreed with the aim of the Social Justice Commissioner, Tom Calma, that Aboriginal Australians should achieve an equality of health status and life expectancy within 25 years.

“This aim is quite achievable and should be a national priority—but it can’t be while the Federal Government continues to rip off Aboriginal people by under-spending and under-resourcing vital PHC programs and initiatives,” she said.

“For example, NACCHO is always working hard to increase the uptake of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme for Aboriginal people as the under-spend for this national program alone is \$67 million.

“There are 140 Aboriginal PHC services around the country delivering real results, every day, but they need to be funded at appropriate levels to tackle chronic illness and premature death and to give Aboriginal people real hope for the future.”

Yet she said the Federal Government had directed only 15% of new funding for national Aboriginal programs to PHC services (as announced in May 2006) and none of this had been allocated to Aboriginal-specific services.

Ms Delaney Thiele said that tens of millions of dollars had been spent writing reports and policies in recent years—but the recommendations had never been implemented.

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She said many reports also highlight that Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services are the most effective vehicle to assist with improved health outcomes: “They just need to adequately and appropriately resourced to do their job.

“You don’t need to be a health economist or a brain surgeon to recognise the blindingly obvious—Aboriginal PHC services are the most efficient vehicle for delivering improved health outcomes.

“But while these services are being ripped off by the government and its agencies, little progress will occur and our people will keep just keep on dying.”

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**Information and interviews:**

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