



NACCHO

National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation

Media Release

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Closing the Gap is about more than statistics

Despite revisions to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) estimate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander's life expectancy Dr Mick Adams, chair of NACCHO the peak body for over 145 Aboriginal community-controlled medical services, said his members had not experienced any corresponding improvements.

Dr Adams said, "We are concerned by the inadequate and inconsistent ways data is used to inform Aboriginal mortality.

"Evidence on the ground shows ill health severely disadvantages Aboriginal people in terms of quality of life.

"Life expectancy gap projections of 11.5 years for males and 9.7 years for females are a very crude measure of the health of our population.

"The burden of disease or level of sickness, in the Aboriginal population, which is more easily measured, is three times higher than in the general population.

"The lack of power in Aboriginal communities is reflected in the disadvantage in education, housing, employment and life opportunities that impact on health outcomes."

Dr Adams said, "The Close the Gap community campaign launched two years ago has always been about much more than just life expectancy statistics".

"Close the Gap covers our quality of life and the need for Aboriginal peoples to be able to stand proudly in control of our lives as a strong vibrant society.

"The Aboriginal community controlled sector should be at the table setting health priorities in partnership with government (and possibly other health professionals) when decisions are being made, not consulted after the decisions have been made.

"NACCHO and our partners in the Close the Gap coalition see Aboriginal community control of our health services and health planning as a central part of closing the gap.

"Prime Minister Kevin Rudd endorsed the principle in signing the Close the Gap Statement of Intent last year but we are yet to see any practical commitment to it" Dr Adams said.

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