



## Media Release

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### **A good news story in Closing the Gap: Medicines Access**

One of the good news stories in Aboriginal health, a program that means more Aboriginal people get the medications they need, brought together delegates from Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services and the Pharmacy Guild of Australia in Melbourne on Thursday and today (Friday).

The QUMAX (Quality Use of Medicines Maximised for Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders) National Conference delegates include the doctors, Aboriginal health workers, nurses and management who work in Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services, the pharmacists working with these services, and the community pharmacists providing QUMAX services to their clients.

Over 150 delegates from Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services are attending.

The QUMAX program commenced in November 2008 as an initiative of NACCHO\* and the Pharmacy Guild of Australia and is funded as part of the Fourth Community Pharmacy Agreement between the Federal Government and the Guild. NACCHO\* and the Pharmacy Guild of Australia jointly manage the \$10.9m QUMAX program.

It has subsidised the cost to clients, drastically improved medication compliance and health outcomes through the quality use of medicines by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples attending participating Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHSs) in rural and urban areas.

Clients of remote area Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services already had access to free medicines through the successful Section 100 scheme prior to QUMAX.

As of the beginning of February 2010, 20,230 clients at 68 participating Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services have received prescriptions under QUMAX, advice and dose administration aids. Under QUMAX, 284,414 medicines have been prescribed and 131,364 prescriptions dispensed.

Mr Justin Mohamed, the Chair of NACCHO says, "QUMAX has been an unprecedented success in increasing medicines access for many Aboriginal patients. They are now getting the prescriptions they need and their repeats filled. The program is an example of true partnership in Closing the Gap.

"By getting the medicines they need, patients are visiting clinics earlier, treating their illnesses more quickly and better managing chronic disease. They are receiving advice tailored to their needs from pharmacists about using their medications. The scheme sets up a bond between local pharmacists and the Aboriginal community, overcoming barriers that existed before.

"Each Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service prioritises patient's needs within their community, managing medication costs, dosage administration aids and patient transport," Mr Mohamed said.

The QUMAX National Conference delegates are looking at changes to the scheme under the COAG Chronic Disease Package and are sharing ideas about improving the quality use of medicines in the Aboriginal community.

An independent evaluation of the program for the government by Urbis Pty Ltd presented at the conference documented outcomes showing more patient visits to services, earlier clinic visits for acute infections, better medication adherence, improved control of chronic disease, and stronger interest by patients in managing their own health. ACCHSs wholly endorsed the program.

\*The National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) is the peak body for over 150 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services across urban, regional and remote Australia.

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