



NACCHO

National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation

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Vigilance and workers key to new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Blood Borne Viruses and Sexually Transmissible Infections Strategy

On-the-ground health promotion and prevention workers in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to counter blood borne viruses and sexually transmissible infections are the key to a new national health strategy launched Wednesday.

Minister for Indigenous Health Warren Snowdon launched the **Third National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Blood Borne Viruses and Sexually Transmissible Infections Strategy** at the Northgate Clinic of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health Service (AICHS) in Brisbane, a member of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO).

Mr Justin Mohamed, Chair of NACCHO, the peak body for over 150 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services nationwide said, "The strategy is an important step forward and was developed with significant input by our health workers along with researchers and other experts in the field".

"However we know from over 30 years experience in delivering primary health care in Aboriginal communities that any strategy is only as good as its implementation", Mr Mohamed said.

"An expanded and fully resourced workforce in Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services, and across all jurisdictions, will go a long way to ensuring that the goals and aims of this strategy will be met.

"To make this Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander strategy work we also need to build on partnerships with stakeholder groups involved in implementing the four other strategies to counter blood-borne viruses and sexually transmissible infections endorsed at the Australian Health Ministers Conference ", Mr Mohamed said.

The strategy notes challenges in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities around blood-borne viruses (BBVs) and sexually transmissible infections (STIs) including:

- sustained and unacceptably high rates of bacterial STIs in many remote communities;
- the rate of acquisition of HIV and viral hepatitis through injecting drug use; and
- continuing new HIV infections among men who have sex with men.

The Strategy's three new priority action areas are:

- Annual, routine and systematic testing, treatment and follow-up for bacterial STIs of sexually active Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people
- Increased primary prevention activities that seek to reduce the number of new cases of HIV and viral hepatitis among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who inject drugs; and
- Competent and accredited workforces consistent across all jurisdictions to address the scope of work outlined in this Strategy.

The strategy is available at: <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-national-strategies-2010>

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