

Media Release

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Review supports Aboriginal Community Control

Mr Justin Mohamed, Chair of NACCHO says, "The Federal Government report released by Channel Seven last night under Freedom of Information supports what we have been saying for years; that Aboriginal people need to be intimately involved in the design and delivery of programs to ensure they are effective".

"The report, an [Executive Summary of the Strategic Review of Indigenous Expenditure 2010](#), identifies potential savings from bureaucratic inefficiencies and duplication. However, the review highlights useful ways forward and is certainly not, as some media reports might suggest, a condemnation of all Aboriginal targeted expenditure", Mr Mohamed said.

"The review, especially covering health, supports what Aboriginal people have been saying for many years in reports such as the [National Aboriginal Health Strategy](#) in 1989. The review recognises the "maturity" of the Aboriginal community controlled health sector and its peak bodies. It also recognises the progress towards needs based resource allocation in health and the need to progress this further.

"That this report was being kept secret I believe supports NACCHO's call for an independent, impartial, transparent "Aboriginal Health Authority" to publicly report, monitor, and advocate on behalf of Aboriginal health.

"We need the facts about government programs, especially in health, to be in the public domain not just available to governments reviewing themselves", Mr Mohamed said.

The review while searching for efficiencies and better ways of targeting expenditure says, 'A clear message from the recent past is that policies and programs must be targeted to local needs, in close engagement and active partnership with the people they are designed to assist(Finding.11)'.

The review also recommends, 'identifying a range of suitable governance and decision making processes that effectively balance the variety of Indigenous governance styles with the governments' responsibilities for properly managing public funds. These governance approaches should be designed to empower Indigenous people and communities, including equipping them with relevant skills, so that they can progressively take meaningful control of their futures' (Finding 12).

It also says there is a need to ensure public servants have skills to "engage effectively with the Indigenous people they are supporting" (Finding 12).

Finding 5 is especially critical of mainstream providers of services to the Aboriginal community and says there is a need to 'ensure mainstream providers are held properly and fully to account'.

Finding 8, that fewer programs would simplify assessment, delivery and flexibility reflects the process underway in health funding that has been welcomed in the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services.

Mr Mohamed said, "I question the review's call for the transfer of more responsibility to states and territories to free up the Commonwealth funds as other parts of the review highlight failures in the delivery of programs by the states and territories.

"However I call on the government to learn from this report. I believe that the process of its release through FOI just highlights the need for more openness in reporting as would be offered by an independent umpire in the form of an Aboriginal Health Authority," Mr Mohamed said.

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